

Silver Jubilee Thoughts

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When the Graduateship in Chemistry (GIC) course began in 1978, I had as a founder lecturer no apprehensions. This was because since 1972, I had played a key role in the then Laboratory Assistants Training Course conducted by the Institute. In fact in the GIC course I was the “Jack of all trades”, teaching basic Biology, Introduction to Natural Products, Aromatics and later topics in Biochemistry and Biotechnology, Cell Biology and Basic Biological Chemistry. The first batch of 4 Graduate Chemists passed out, I believe each of whom has done the Institute proud. The course had its shortcomings and ups & downs in recognition. With the new syllabus in 2005 many problems have been addressed. The course is strong in Pure & Applied Chemistry and it has units in Biology, Mathematics, Computer & Information Science, Environment, Management and Molecular Biology.

As someone who had played a pioneering role of not only introducing Biochemistry to the GIC but also to the Science Faculties of the University of Colombo and the Open University and in addition being Examiner/Moderator of the Biochemistry courses of the Science Faculties of the Universities of Kelaniya and Sri Jayewardenepura and being the Formulator of the Biochemistry Curriculum for the MBBS and B.Sc. Human Biology course in the Medical Faculty of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (SJP), I feel I have a good overall view of the relative standards of Biochemistry of Educational Institutions of Sri Lanka. My view is that in this subject the GIC surpasses the

Open University, SJP (Science Faculty) and Peradeniya University B.Sc. courses but falls short of those of the University of Colombo and Kelaniya. This status I feel is acceptable. If there is a similar status in other subject areas, then the GIC is on a strong wicket.

Inadequacy of practical work & projects have been a major shortcoming of the GIC in past. With the new laboratory facilities of Adamantane House these problems seem to have been overcome.

I sincerely hope that when practicals have a ‘theory of practical paper’, that this paper be made common to all students in a given year (unlike sometime in the past). We must ensure a “Level Playing Field” for all students of a given examination. Research Projects are a step forward; but here too a word of caution as we have learnt from the university system. The student mark is reflective not only on the students’ skill and other attributes but also on the nature of the project supervisor, evaluation, *etc.* Therefore when a mark is given it may not be always fair. This is something I have personally encountered in my university undergraduate days, by becoming a victim of circumstances.

It may be argued that this happens to postgraduates too. This is not strictly a parallel as these degrees are only pass/fail (no more); secondly the student has a say in choosing the project and supervision. So that if he chooses to “waltz with the devil” that is his lookout. The above is relevant to the GIC graduates who wish to pursue postgraduate studies. The message is, choose your project and supervisor well.

Finally, I feel that the leadership of the GIC course has been marvellous and a great deal of credit for the success of the GIC goes to its leader.

Public Lecture

‘Brief Overview of the Pharmaceutical Industry & Its Relevance to Sri Lanka’

Mr. S J Sarath Kumara, a Graduateship student from the first batch of Graduate Chemists delivered a lecture on “Brief Overview of the Pharmaceutical Industry & its Relevance to Sri Lanka” at the PPGL Siriwardene Auditorium on 22nd December 2007.

Mr. Sarath Kumara is a Graduate Chemist (1984) and was the first Graduate Chemist to obtain a M.Phil Degree. He obtained his M.Phil Degree from the University of Kelaniya (the first University to recognize GIC qualifications for post graduate studies) while working as a research assistant at the Ceylon Institute of Scientific & Industrial Research Institute under Prof. E R Jansz. He was the first Graduate Chemist to win the Kandiah Memorial Award (II) in 1986.

Presently he is working as a Senior Product Development Chemist at *iNova Pharmaceuticals* (Australia) Pty. Ltd.