

My Experience & Achievements as a Graduate Chemist

Marie Nimalka Kumudinee de Silva Goonetilleke, C.Chem.

Lecturer, Department of Chemistry, Open University of Sri Lanka, Nawala, Nugegoda



It gives me great pleasure to write an article for The Silver Jubilee Issue of Chemistry in Sri Lanka as a Graduate Chemist.

My great desire to continue studies in Chemistry from grade 9 was fulfilled when accidentally I saw an advertisement for GIC programme on the notice board at Aquinas College, Colombo while I was following the Diploma in English programme. Although my parents insisted that I do ICMA, I somehow persuaded them to agree with my wish to study chemistry. Knowing that my results were insufficient to enter University, I decided to join the GIC programme since chemistry was my favorite subject.

Having entered the GIC programme in January 1981 for the Part I Practical Chemistry component I proceeded to follow Part I Theory which commenced in May 1981.

I remember how Professor JNO Fernando taught us Mathematics and Thermodynamics. At the tutorial discussion he used to call us one by one to the blackboard for each & every question, volunteers first; if there were no volunteers then he would look at us and we had to come to the blackboard & explain. This was somewhat unusual and led me to study hard. The first day I escaped but I decided to start studying from the beginning since these were new areas to me. We learnt not only the subject but how to answer problems in the subject during the tutorial classes and I admire his way of teaching.

During weekdays my good friend Ms Dhehini Sirimanne and I went to the CISIR library where the Institute of Chemistry books were kept & we did reference. We got prepared for the tutorials. This was the beginning to my studies in GIC and we continued to study hard. I was very happy when the results of Part I theory were released and came to know that I had obtained the 2nd best performance. I thought that I had not wasted the money spent by my parents.

As students, we enjoyed life at I Chem. C. I fell sick 3 months before the final exam (Part II Theory) and couldn't study much. However, I'm glad that I completed the GIC programme successfully at the first attempt itself. It was a great achievement. I am very grateful that I was able to

achieve all these due to the commitment and dedication of the great teachers we had who came from the Universities of Peradeniya, Colombo, Kelaniya, Sri Jayawardenepura and Jaffna and the CISIR for the GIC programme.

As soon as the Annual Sessions of the Institute of Chemistry were over, my friend Dhehinie and I joined the Open University of Sri Lanka as temporary demonstrators in June 1985. Prof J N O Fernando as the Head of the Department of Chemistry while appointing us advised both of us to "prove our quality". In 1987 I was appointed to the permanent cadre in the Open University as an Educational Assistant, and in 2005 I was promoted as Lecturer in Chemistry at the OUSL. My experience includes teaching chemistry in day schools, conducting practical classes and workshops, co-ordinating some of the courses and lesson writing to the B.Sc. Degree Programme. I have gained vast knowledge and training during these 22 years of service at the OUSL. I also wish to thank the staff of the Department of Chemistry at OUSL for their fullest co-operation extended to me in achieving this experience. Added to this experience my service to the Institute of Chemistry as a Teaching Assistant gave me additional training in teaching in laboratory classes.

Another achievement I received was when I was nominated for the Master of Arts in Distance Education under the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme offered by the Commonwealth of Learning. I owe my gratitude to the Open University of Sri Lanka for nominating me for this programme. I completed both the Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education and Master of Arts in Distance Education successfully. This additional knowledge and training in Distance Education I received was very useful in my teaching career at the Open University of Sri Lanka.

I am glad that by hard work, determination, dedication and commitment to work at the OUSL, I have proved the quality of a Graduate Chemist from the Institute of Chemistry Ceylon. All this I was able to achieve due to the lecturers at the Institute of Chemistry and their teaching not only in Chemistry but also on "quality of life and quality education" which is considered as the hidden curriculum.

Let me wish "Chemistry in Sri Lanka" and the Graduateship in Chemistry Programme long years of fruitful service. MAY GOD BLESS the Institute of Chemistry and the College of Chemical Sciences for many more years of service to the future generations of Mother Lanka.