



Guest Editorial

We are living at a time when serious concerns about equity are being raised in most spheres of life. Globally, humanity is confronted with questions about equity in responding to the climate crisis and the refugee crisis (among others). Regionally and nationally, we are compelled to respond to questions about equity in debt restructuring, political representation, and in respecting substantive rights of citizenship. An issue on Equity by the *University of Colombo Review (UCR)* is, therefore, timely and reflects the high level of sensitivity of the Editorial Board to the challenges that we face. We hope that the intellectual insights offered in this issue will help readers in developing their own thinking on equity. We also hope that it will generate new forms of inquiry that will contribute to knowledge on equity.

The strength of the *UCR* is that it offers a cross-disciplinary space for readers, authors, reviewers, and its editorial team. At a panel discussion held late last year, the academic community of the University of Colombo noted that we should curate more intellectual spaces that would facilitate cross-disciplinary engagement. Both in form and in substance, the *UCR* is one such intellectual space. Cross-disciplinary engagement can involve scholars from different disciplines engaging in research collaboratively. It can also include intellectual exchanges across disciplines where scholars speak from their own discipline, but to a discipline-diverse audience. This issue of the *UCR* is an example of the latter method of cross-disciplinary engagement.

We are pleased to carry a rich collection of short articles that offer insights on equity. The articles examine questions of equity in the professions, in citizenship, in relation to substantive equality for women, equitable treatment of children in law and policy, and the challenges posed by the COVID 19 pandemic to ensuring equity. We present first a collection of articles that offer academic insights into questions about equity in professions. The articles raise questions about the representation and inclusion of women, the recognition afforded to the profession of physiotherapists, the impact of wage differentials in career choices by undergraduates, and of cultural competence in nursing. This is followed by two articles that examine substantive rights of citizenship, in the context of resettlement due to development projects and in the context of monuments.

The two articles that explore equity in relation to women offer two interesting and clearly framed inquiries. One is a study of the ways in which human resource professionals handle sexual harassment complaints. The other is a study of equity in the interrogation

of a witness in a murder trial. The two articles on children deal with understudied and extremely significant issues of equity. One is on the question of law reform to ensure equity and equality in the legal regulation of the adoption of children. The other examines the right to education and right of access to essential services of children with disabilities, focusing particularly on Sri Lanka's rural context. Questions of equity in relation to the COVID 19 pandemic are foregrounded in two articles. One discusses these questions from a broad policy perspective. The other offers a quantitative assessment of the inequities that resulted in the restriction of railway transportation during the pandemic.

In addition to engaging with substantive issues related to equity, for *UCR*, curating this issue has been an opportunity for learning and reflection about questions of equity in academic publication. During this process, the editorial team had discussions about equity in setting academic standards and the languages of publication. The *UCR* publishes for a cross-disciplinary audience as well to a national and international audience. We use the process of double-blind peer review to ensure academic standards. We could draw out the transdisciplinary nature of the journal by developing formats for articles that can reach audiences in our own disciplines as well as in other relevant disciplines. This might make our academic work more accessible beyond our specific disciplines. As you will note in this issue, authors write within the academic traditions of their own discipline. We may want to reflect on how to adapt these writing traditions to communicate with a broader academic audience. The other area in which equity in the academic publication process can be strengthened is in our language of publication. In addition to publishing in English, can we consider the possibilities for publishing in the local languages? Perhaps a starting point would be to publish the abstracts of the articles in both languages. As the *UCR* grows, we may be able to consider the publication of articles in Sinhala and Tamil and/or translations to Sinhala and Tamil. I think this is useful for two reasons. It compels academics to practice equity in providing access to knowledge. It will further contribute to the development of the interactions between our disciplines and local languages.

This issue was developed as Sri Lanka's economic and political crisis unfolded. I acknowledge the hardships that the *UCR* experienced during this time in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. This difficult experience gave us yet another opportunity to reflect on what academic work ought to mean in the context of a crisis. The team endeavored to maintain academic and professional standards while also working with empathy with authors and reviewers at this difficult time. Going forward, offering training workshops for editors, authors and reviewers will help us to learn from these experiences and integrate them into the work of the journal.

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