

**A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON ONLINE SUPPLEMENTARY COURSES
IN B.Sc. DEGREE PROGRAMME AT LEVEL 3: STUDENT
PARTICIPATION AND ASSOCIATIONS WITH LEARNER SUPPORT
PROGRAMME & REGIONS**

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The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL), the only national university in Sri Lanka which delivers its degree programmes through the open and distance mode, has also accepted the importance of promoting E-learning. The Faculty of Natural Sciences (NSc) of the OUSL has implemented On-Line Supplementary Components (OLSC) for most of the courses offered by the faculty for its B.Sc. Degree Programme (BSDP). The objectives of this study were to identify student views on the importance/usefulness of OLSC to their educational experience, identify student participation in OLSC offered by the Faculty of NSc, identify any associations between the learner support programmes and student participation in OLSC, and identify any associations between regions and student participation in OLSC, at Level 3 in BSDP. The study was conducted through a questionnaire-based sample survey. The population of this study were the active learners in the academic year 2016/2017 at Level 3 (L3) in the BSDP. In this study, the OLSC offered in the discipline-based courses at L3 in the BSDP were considered. In the academic year 2016/2017 BSDP was conducted in the regional centres at Colombo (CRC), Kandy (KRC), Matara (MRC), Jaffna (JRC), Anuradhapura (ARC), and Batticaloa (BRC). The faculty learner support programme, Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS), was conducted, in all disciplines only at CRC and KRC. Randomly selected 107 students, comprising 42 L3 students (KRC-12, CRC-30) who attended the PASS and 65 students (ARC-3, BRC-4, CRC-30, JRC-5, KRC-17, MRC-6) who did not attend the PASS, were interviewed over the phone and responses to the following questions were recorded. Q1: Do you think that adding an online component to a L3 discipline-based course is important/useful to your learning/academic work in OUSL? The answer was recorded on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, no idea, agree, and strongly agree. Q2: Have you used any online component of L3 discipline-based courses offered in the academic year 2016/2017? If the answer for Q2 is 'yes' the response for Q3: Type of participation ('downloaded the past papers', 'scheduling/administrative matters', 'used online supplementary materials', 'answered for quizzes', 'interact with the teacher for academic matters', 'interact with the peers for academic matters') in the OLSC in discipline-based L3 courses were recorded. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Overall, 94% of the students think that OLSC are important/useful for their educational experiences. However, the majority of students have used the OLSC for 'download the past papers' (82%) and 'Scheduling /Administrative matters' (67%). Using 'Fisher's Exact Test' associations ($p < 0.05$) were found between 'attendance to PASS' and

student online participation in ‘download the past papers’, ‘scheduling/administrative matters’, ‘used online supplementary materials’, ‘answered for quizzes’, ‘interact with the teacher for academic matters’. Also a regional difference ($p < 0.05$) was found between CRC and KRC in student online participation (‘downloading the past papers’ & ‘scheduling/administrative matters’), out of the students who attended PASS. Further large-scale studies on participation in OLSC and factors behind the participation in OLSC in BSDP, motivating the students in using Educational Technology (ET), developing the necessary skills for using ET in students and introducing OLSC to learner support programmes are recommended.

Keywords: On-Line Supplementary Components (OLSC), student participation, significance

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