



**PERCEPTIONS OF THE VISITING ACADEMICS ON COURSE
MATERIALS OF ENGLISH FOR LEGAL STUDIES PROGRAMME IN
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA**

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EAP (English for Academic Purposes) is a needs driven activity; that is, EAP courses, in their design and implementation, aim to address the future academic needs of their participant students (Bruce, 2015). According to Bruce (2015) EAP and such other courses are called *bridging courses*, the underlying idea being that the course forms a metaphorical bridge over which the students can get from where they are, in terms of their current knowledge, skills and educational development, to where they need to be in order to participate in the discipline specific courses of the university. In this process, the teachers' role in identifying and addressing the learning needs of students is crucial to the success of the learning outcome. As such, this study was conducted with the objective of finding out the views of the visiting academics who teach in the English for Legal Studies (Part 2) about the course materials currently being used.

Course materials play a central and a dynamic role, specifically in the courses offered in distance mode. As the course is offered in distance mode, it needs to cater to the demands placed by distance education materials, the mode of delivery and the requirements of the stake holders (learners, teachers, materials writers, language experts and the institution). This study explored the blend of the needs and suggestions of stakeholders (visiting academics) with the mode of delivery and institutional requirements to produce the optimum course outcome. The outcome of the study directly contributes to the development of the new course in English for Legal Studies which is being designed with a supplementary online component.

A sample of 19 visiting academics were selected as a purposive sample to represent the regional centres where day schools are conducted for the English for Legal Studies Programme. Data were collected using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview as research instruments. Data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively

The results revealed that many aspects of course materials need improvement. Though the visiting academics in general acknowledged the high relevance and specificity of materials as ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) materials, supplementation in terms of activities and subject specific content has been suggested. The study concluded with several suggestions from the visiting academics to further update, revise, supplement and make the course more inclusive by taking the less proficient learners into consideration.

Keywords: English for Legal studies, course materials, visiting academics, ESAP

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