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### Patron's Message



It gives me great pleasure in writing this message for the inaugural issue of Virtual University of Pakistan's first journal "Journal of Distance Education and Research" which is being launched as a multi-disciplinary peer-reviewed journal to advance research in theory and practice. Virtual University of Pakistan (VUP) is a relatively young university, being only fourteen years old at this time. However, the number of milestones achieved by the institution is quite impressive. The University has given a new meaning and respect to distance education in its modern technology enabled form. It has been the flag bearer for the "Open Education Resources" movement and its open courseware site (<http://ocw.vu.edu.pk>), apart from being Pakistan's first site for such resources, has also won international recognition, having been awarded the "Best new OCW site in the world" award in 2012 by the Open Courseware Consortium, an international body whose membership comprises the who's who of tertiary education around the globe. During its initial decade, VUP concentrated on teaching only, trying to fill the huge gap between supply and demand in higher education. While doing so, it made sure that the world could see inside VUP classroom and all of its courses were openly broadcast and published for the benefit of all knowledge seekers. The quality of its courses, combined with an extremely innovative and transparent examination system led to an enhanced perception about distance learning. Simultaneously, the continuous improvements in pedagogy and procedures practiced by the University led to important research questions that were being addressed by VUP faculty. However, these questions are not confined to the University itself, since the importance of technology enabled on-line education has become recognized the world over as a key supporting ingredient in the quest for the holy grail of lifelong learning. VUP was the leader of Asia-wide research studies on distance education funded by the Canadian IDRC from the years 2005-12 which led to a body of work that has contributed significantly towards understanding this relatively complex field. As the focus of the University changes from teaching to research, the cross cutting nature of modern distance education has provided a strong impetus for publishing its own multi-disciplinary journal. Senior academics from around the globe have graciously accepted to be on the editorial board of the journal and it is expected that the journal will become a thought leader in this vitally important field.

I congratulate the editorial team in launching the journal and look forward to seeing it progress in the times to come.

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