

Candidature for the position of PaTHES at large board member

Dr Thushari Welikala



The contemporary debates on Higher education across the contexts are getting more vibrant than ever due to a range of geo-political, social- cultural and economic factors. The multifaceted impacts of performativity, commodification and entrepreneurialism have radically challenged our perceptions of teaching, learning and researching as well as the purpose and the nature of higher education locally, nationally and globally.

Within this context, the Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Society (PaTHES) offers an intellectual forum to critically engage in conversation about the philosophical, theoretical and sociological underpinnings of both the practical and conceptual uncertainty of higher education. I joined the PaTHES in January 2021 with the strong ambition to actively participate and contribute to the scholarly debates enabled by the PaTHES community of scholars who lead and care about higher education across multiple borders.

As a transnational academic involved in educational development, I occupy cultural and disciplinary interfaces. Transdisciplinarity is the story I live in my day-to-day work. Currently, I work as a Senior Lecturer in Higher Education at St George's, University of London, which is specialised only in Medicine and Healthcare. Within this context, my sociological imagination is being challenged consistently, urging me to re-imagine knowing and unknowing in unfamiliar ways and thus reminding me of my disciplinary 'placelessness' which enables me to understand that Being an academic and Being a university are both unfinished narratives.

The higher education scholars as well as the higher education sector across the borders are always in the process of becoming and I believe that the multiple activities of the PaTHES community very well reflect this evolving nature of higher education, offering novel ways of reconceptualising the role and the response ability of higher education. As an active member of the Society, I have a clear plan to utilize my knowledge and research experience to contribute to the Society's scholarly journey in multiple ways in the coming years. As a first step, I have been in conversation with the relevant members of the Society to lead on a series of 'Club Meet' events on "Colonisation, Coloniality and the Whiteness in the academy". The cross-border conversations that take place during these events will contribute to developing some PaTHES blog posts that will help readers to enhance their understanding about the current debates on decolonisation of higher education. The conversations that happen in this series will lead to the organisation of a major online international event on "Decolonisation of Teaching and Learning". I will also lead on submitting a proposal for a Special Issue on the same topic for the Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education journal in 2022. In collaboration with the PaTHES community, a proposal for a co-edited book on "Decolonisation of Higher Education" will be submitted to Routledge (2022). I look forward to meeting the PaTHES community members in person at the 2022 conference in Sweden.

I have developed a background in the area of internationalisation and interculturality in higher education and have published and received funding to lead research in this area. My most recent co-edited book "Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: The Context of Being, Interculturality and New Knowledge Systems" will be published by Emerald in September 2021. I have contributed to global higher education debates via invited talks (invited by international organisations, universities and research communities), my publications, consultancy work across contexts and the active engagement with scholarly societies in higher education. As a General Member of the Executive Committee of the British Association for International and Comparative Education, I involve in leading debates on comparative education. I have also shared my views on higher education by writing to media (Times Higher Education; The Guardian Higher Education; and the University World News). I will use my experience and expertise in higher education to actively participate in and contribute to the scholarly journey of the PaTHES community, promoting its mission, nationally and internationally.

