

John Mariampillai | University of West London, UK

# STUDENT PROFILE



**John Mariampillai**

**Course**

PhD in Education, University of West London, UK

**Year completed**

2014

**Title of thesis**

*Collaborative provision within UK higher education: Perceptions of stakeholders of UK and Sri Lankan private colleges offering university degrees in business and management*

John's thesis focused on the complexities emerging from the opening-up of higher education (HE) markets to private providers in the UK in relation to students coming from outside of the UK. His research investigated collaborative partnerships between higher education institutions and small private for-profit colleges. He studied specifically the rationale for such collaborations and the perceptions of the stakeholders involved (management, HE and college-based staff, policy-makers, and international students).

There are strong economic motives that have driven the establishment of collaborative HE partnerships with for-profit providers in the UK. This has been supported by various government policies, as providing a partial solution to the difficult financial situation in which universities find themselves in the face of increased global and local competition. At the same time, government intervention in the HE private sector also attempts to exercise some form of control over private institutions through regular reviews to monitor quality, and inspections to monitor compliance. Nonetheless, the growth of collaborative HE has opened-up a space for private HE providers and it enables them to play a significant role within the UK HE sector. As a result, the distinction between public and private higher education provision has become less sharp. There has been very little empirical research published on this phenomenon. John's research is therefore timely. It broadens our understanding of these activities and brings to light empirical evidence that illuminates the motivations of private providers, and the experience of international students within this part of the sector.

In his thesis, John explored the tensions at the heart of public-private collaborative HE and outlined key challenges and implications for both HE institutions and policy-makers. He identified three key findings regarding students' motivation for studying at for-profit private institutions: (a) for-profit provision enabled students to acquire a UK degree at a lower cost; (b) students saw this step as a route to 'regular' higher education; and (c) there was considerable evidence to suggest that students were influenced by private recruitment agencies that represent the interests of their clients, i.e. HE private providers.

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**Supervisors:**

**Dr Anthony Olden**  
**Professor Joelle Fanghanel**

**Tony Olden** is Academic Lead for Research Students and Associate Professor at the University of West London. He has worked in higher education in Africa and the United States. His research interests include library and educational development in Africa, about which he has written extensively.

**Joelle Fanghanel** is Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Scholarship) and Head of the Graduate School at the University of West London. Her research is on higher education, academic work, and academic identity.