

Getting To Know Our Students

**Tharuka Prematillake Thibbotuwawa,
Master of Arts (Humanities Education) graduate**



Tharuka

is currently working as a Research Associate at NIE and is a Master of Arts (Humanities Education) graduate.

What are you currently working as?

I am currently a Research Associate at NIE, working on a project that aims to develop signature programmes in Humanities.

What attracted you to a higher degree programme at NIE?

Prior to my higher degree, I studied Mass Communication and worked full-time at the Asian Media Information & Communication Centre (AMIC). The job exposed me to various research projects such as labour migration, gender, alternative media, health and environment. It made me realise that research is actually fun if you are passionate about what you are researching on. This inspired me to do a higher degree in an area of my interest and eventually conduct a small-scale research on a topic that is close to my heart – health and population as well as geography disciplines. I applied for Masters in Public Health (University of Melbourne, Australia) and Master of Arts in Humanities Education in NIE. I was accepted to both programmes, but eventually decided on the programme in NIE. The courses offered in the Humanities Education programme were very attractive to me. In addition to geography, this programme also offered courses in history and social studies focusing on both pedagogical (which was new to me!) and disciplinary content. The programme was an

all-in-one package where I could gain a deeper understanding of humanities education. Looking back today, I am absolutely glad at where it has landed me. This is my first time working with teachers and students in Singapore's secondary schools and I am learning exciting things about history and geography curricula, disciplines, and/or pedagogy everyday. The whole package is an absolute wonder!

What was your research on? Did the research yield the desired outcome that you hoped for?

My dissertation looked at the settlement and transition to work-life experiences of foreign graduates in Singapore. I was intrigued by certain findings, especially the differences found between diploma holders' and degree holders' job search experiences as well as their post-settlement plans. The whole research experience was satisfactory, although it was sometimes challenging. It has indeed yielded my desired outcomes and even more!

How would you describe your interactions with NIE faculty members?

I am humbled and extremely grateful for the generous amount of support (in terms of time and feedback regarding work) given by the faculty members. They have been very supportive and friendly, especially my research supervisor, Associate Professor Ivy Maria Lim.

What was the best part of being a student at NIE?

You get educated by educators who teach education, that's kind of unique. It adds another perspective to the disciplinary knowledge especially the interplay between the academic disciplinary approach and the pedagogical approach in learning. All these resulted in a fruitful and a uniquely different learning experience, and that, itself, was the best part of being a student at NIE.

Has the programme been beneficial to you in bringing forth changes in your organisation?

I recently completed my studies and I joined NIE as a full-time research associate. So it is too early to comment on it though I am now able to adequately incorporate both disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge and skills acquired through the programme, in my current work.