



Early Upbringing

I was born in Tanzama (Oct 1957). I lived here for 5 years before going to stay in India for 3 years. In March 1968 I came to England with little or no English. I went to school in Birmingham.

Primary School Experience

I went to a Primary school in Aston, Birmingham. I thoroughly enjoyed my early years education. As I did not speak any English, I had to go to a special school to study English before integrating in a mainstream school. At the age of transfer, I went to Aston Manor School and King Edwards, Aston where I did my 'O' levels before completing my studies i.e. 'A' levels at Strodes School in Egham, Surrey.

I can remember my school days. They were the best days of my life. I thoroughly enjoyed them. The teachers were just great. They encouraged and stimulated me to some wonderful achievements.

I am and was a sportsman. I represented Warwickshire at cricket under 15's and was school captain at cricket, chess and hockey. In my later years, I also became a Head Boy. I was a naughty boy and was often reprimanded by the teachers and headteacher. I could almost have been classed as a 'rebel'.

My Best Teacher

In my secondary school, there were two teachers who encouraged me to look ahead. Mrs Fawdry was an excellent teacher. She developed my interest in Geography and along with Mr B. Jones (P.E.) they are the two teachers who I would say have made a real contribution to my success in education.

What Made Me Think About Teaching

The teachers I had during my school days all helped me develop my thought patterns in the field of education. From the age of 16 I wanted to be a teacher. After my 'A' levels I was offered a place to study Geography and P.E. at St. Lukes College in Exeter. I decided I wanted a break from going to University and was fortunate to secure a job in the Inland Revenue as an

Executive Officer where I learnt all about bureaucracy. This has helped me in my education career. After two years in this position, I worked for British Airways as a Purchasing Officer. My reasons for joining British Airways were very selfish. I wanted cheap flights and to see the world. In my two years with British Airways, I travelled the world and saw some fabulous sights in Australia, Hong Kong, Europe, America, Africa and India. My only regret is that I didn't get to South America. One day!! After two wonderful holiday years, I then decided to leave British Airways and go to university to study for my Qualified Teacher Status.

I went to Gypsy Hill college in September 1991 for my teacher training in the primary sector and made some wonderful friends. It is a wonderful experience and also helps develop your structure in life. I can now cook because of my college days. There are many stories I can tell you about my college days, but that's for another day. Being black can also be a very positive experience.

After leaving college in June 1995 I took up my first appointment at a Church School. I am sure when they saw me, beard, turban and black they must have thought "what on earth are we going to do with him." However, after the interview I was made to feel very welcome and all the staff helped in my probationary years. Every Thursday morning I used to take my children across the road into the church. It was a different type of experience, but one which will be with me for the rest of my life.

I was always ambitious, and left my first teaching post after only two years in order to obtain experiences from different types of schools. Luckily, I was offered an allowance post for Humanities in a large school in Hounslow, Middlesex. After 3 years as a 'B' allowance holder, I started to apply for Deputy Headships. I wanted to become a Deputy Head so I enrolled on a part-time Masters Course in English and Mathematics. This course helped in my thinking in developing language and mathematical skills in children. This was a 3 year part-time course and I received my Masters in 1992. On my third interview I was fortunate enough to succeed and I became the Deputy Headteacher of Alexandra Junior School which is a multi-cultural school in Hounslow. I was young, and had only been in education for 6 years, and here I was a Deputy of a large junior school. The Headteacher, Mr Smith, has been the inspiration I needed in education. I made many mistakes and the Head was always there to support me and at times sweep up behind me. I learnt from him how to be a good man manager. He had so many ideas and many strategies. I used my time with him to develop my own personal style of leadership and management.

In 1994, with only my second application for Headship, I was lucky enough to become a Headteacher of Lea Middle School. This was the largest middle school in Slough, Berkshire. This large 5 form entry multi-cultural school is situated in the heart of Slough. I remember my first staff meeting. I walked in and there were 45 teachers looking at me, waiting to see what I was going to say. The question I had to address was related to "My Vision". I felt that many of the teachers were not happy with my appointment, and some would have been happier if a "white" person had been appointed – as a black person, I have had to deal with this all my life. I am currently the Headteacher of the best school in the country. If anyone knows a better school, please let me know. At a recent Ofsted Inspection, the school was praised heavily on its leadership and management.

What Helped Me Get On

There are many reasons for my rapid rise into Headship and beyond. Firstly, I am not ashamed of my religion or colour. I am very proud of being an ethnic minority and succeeded in a “white” dominated profession. I see myself as a positive role model and am not frightened to stand up and be counted. I challenge all aspects of racism and in my school over 50% of the teaching staff are from the ethnic minorities. I get very annoyed when Headteachers say they cannot recruit “black” teachers. My answer to this is simple, what have you done to recruit them, and in most cases, it is lip service. London Borough are normally very good at recruiting, but if you look at Headships, Deputy and Senior Managers, there is a great gap. Black teachers do not seem to be progressing at senior level and this has to be addressed by Chief Education Officers and Senior Advisors. Institutional racism is rife in education. This must be high on the agenda for all Education Officers.

In 1998 in an authority where almost 50% of the population is from the Asian Sub Continent, a young white 7 year old child asked me “We have chairs and tables and beds in my house, do you have these?” My heart sank, you can’t blame the child, what is society doing, what is the school doing, and what are the parents and media doing? We desperately need black ethnic minority teachers to act as positive role models for youngsters.

What Would You Say To Anyone Who Wishes To Become A Teacher?

Teaching is a wonderful experience. To see children develop after your input is an experience which cannot be found in any other occupation.

As you have seen, it is a career which can progress at the pace you set. Yes, there are barriers, but if you really want to achieve and work hard, you can overcome them. One of these barriers is Institutional Racism (IR). IR can only be tackled if we have more “black” teachers to stand up and point out issues related to racism.

Black children need black teachers as positive “role models.”