



## **Haroon Hussain – Case Study**

### **Early upbringing:**

**I was born in Azad Kashmir but was brought up in the inner city of Leeds, where I attended the local primary school. I won a scholarship for Leeds Grammar School at the time, but my father made the decision to send me to the same middle school as my siblings.**

**I think that on balance this was a good character building decision. One of my best friends at the time also won a scholarship to the Grammar School, and his parents sent him there. I bumped into him last year and we got talking, and it turned out that he too had become a chemistry teacher, so I guess it just shows that there is more than one road to any given destination.**

### **Primary school experiences:**

**The primary school I attended was truly a multicultural school due to the high percentage of immigrants in the locality. The staff were extremely sensitive to the needs of their students and all in all it was a very pleasant experience.**

**Things in my middle school were quite different. I didn't attend the nearest middle school, and the one that I did attend was predominantly white. It was here that I think I subconsciously felt some discrimination based on the fact that I was Asian. Thinking back, I don't think that I was offered an equal share of opportunities that the white children were given, despite the fact that I was one of the highest performing students in my year**

group. It was the first time that I had been blatantly exposed to racism in the form of name calling by some of the students, but I learned that they did respect sporting ability, and due to my membership in the school football team, the situation improved.

**Secondary school experiences:**

Secondary school was again another contrast, as this was again a multicultural school, with an even smaller white population, with most of the students being either Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or Afro Caribbean. This was a much more pleasant experience, and I feel that the environment for me was one in which I thrived. Having said this, there was every reason not to thrive due to the usual problems of inner city schools. I think the reason that I thrived was because I was finally getting the recognition for my abilities and this just made me love school, and learning.

**My best teacher:**

There have been so many teachers that have influenced me over the years. Mick Gallup, Simon Flowers, Lynda Dobinson, Gareth Dawkins, Brian Berry, Cris Brining, Ian Witham. All of them have left an impression on me in different ways. With some of them it was their approachability and attitude towards their students, with others it was their subject knowledge and with others it was their guidance, even though they did not teach me directly.

**My best subject:**

My best subject has always been science. I can clearly remember at 9 years old, that I became fascinated in how the world and the universe worked and I know that this curiosity hooked me. I don't think there will ever be a time when I become tired of the subject. Like all subjects it is constantly evolving and developing so I can't ever see a time when my interest will wane.

**What made me think about teaching:**

I began thinking about teaching a couple of years after my graduation. I was working on a few projects that were winding up and I think I needed to make a few decisions on which way to go next. It was at that time the government were in full swing of the advertising campaign with the slogan "Those who can,

**teach!”. It always brought a smile to my face because I knew that the slogan was taken from the famous, “those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach!” I always found that funny and often wondered how many people actually realized the origins of the slogan. I then attended a conference run by the Muslim parliament of Great Britain to recruit more Muslim teachers, and some of the concerns that were raised at the conference really got me thinking. It was true that the main teachers of ethnic minority children were in actual fact white**

**I felt I had what it took, but more importantly, it seemed to be just the kind of work that I wanted to do. I saw it as an opportunity to shape the lives of young people who, on the whole are taught by teachers that very often cannot fully relate to the background of students from minority backgrounds.**

#### **College/University experiences:**

**I went to De Montfort University after taking a year out after my A levels. I gained a First Class BSc (Hons) in Chemistry with Business Studies. I think my time at university was the most important in shaping my thoughts and views, and it certainly provided me with the space that I needed to grow intellectually, spiritually and emotionally. I met many wonderful people, and a good deal of them are still very good friends. However one of the most influential people in my life in terms of my career and education was one of my professors, Malcolm Fox. It was through his informal mentoring, guidance and passion for life that I feel I did as well as I did. In many ways, I think it was his influence above all others that brought me into teaching.**

#### **First goes at teaching:**

**I remember vividly my very first part lesson at my first placement school. It was a year 7 lesson and we were learning about the seven signs of life. I was absolutely petrified. I could feel my heart pounding and concentrating on myself, only made the situation worse. Thankfully my mentor was extremely kind to me, and I learned from the experience. I think the one of the most prominent feelings when you first get up in front of a room full of youngsters, is the acute awareness that you are the center of attention. Once you get used to this, the experience becomes**

**a whole lot more enjoyable and you begin to focus on the teaching rather than being self conscious.**

**What helped me get on:**

**Trying out a wide variety of stuff, getting out of my depth, and always looking for better and easier ways of doing things, and never forgetting that probably the most important people are the ones that provide me with support on a day to day basis, whether it is the people that ensure that my room is clean every day, the technicians, resource and support staff or my colleagues. Also never taking anything personally when it came to behaviour issues with difficult students. This is probably one of the most difficult things and in the early days, it is far easier said than done.**

**My career to date is as follows:**

**Post A level, I spent managing the family business, during my degree I spent a year as a chemical engineer, working for one of the major water companies, doing research on treatment methods. After my degree I was developing property for a couple of years as well as working in customer services for a major bank, before doing my post graduate certificate and coming into the teaching profession.**

**What would you say to anyone who wishes to become a teacher**

**If you have determination, a good sense of humour, an unshakeable faith in the power of education, and can be an outstanding role model, if you can work tirelessly, with resilience, if you can constantly look for ways to improve and make opportunities to develop your skills, if you can balance your professional life with your personal life, there is nothing that even comes close the satisfaction and joy you feel when you see your students succeed.**

**It is certainly never boring, sometimes you may ask yourself why you even bother, but when all your efforts with the individuals you educate come into fruition, when you see students making opportunities for themselves, there is an**

**overwhelming sense of achievement for all parties. I also think that having a wider experience of life makes you a much better teacher since there is nothing that could compare with the stories and anecdotes that you could bring into your teaching from your own experiences.**

**I would also say that you shouldn't reinvent the wheel. It is a demanding profession at the best of times, and the chances are that some first rate resources have been already developed so make it a policy to share everything. It will make things a lot easier in the long run.**

**Always be on the look out for opportunities for professional development regardless of what your long term ambitions may be, and what ever you do, make sure you have a life outside your teaching. Whilst educating the future generation is probably the most important job around, (even potential doctors need educating), it is still a job, so take some down time. If you want to get into teaching for the holidays, then forget about it. Anyone that says that teachers have it easy with all the holidays that they get, I challenge them to do a good job at teaching for a term, and then not need the holidays to catch up on the stuff that needs doing, and if they are lucky, recover from the work!**