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Md Mamunur Rashid on Shaping the Youth with Empathy Education

Photo: Monon Muntaka

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Md Mamunur Rashid, a lecturer at BRAC institute of Languages at BRAC University, leads a project that focuses on empathy education. The project received International Recognition at the 20th Committee on Teaching about the United Nations Conference at the UN in April 2019. This is an annual recognition to those educators who have demonstrated the ability to inspire their students to collaborate, brainstorm and implement a plan successfully across all domains of learning on selected UN topics and global issues.

After completing his Bachelor's and Master's in English from Jahangirnagar University, he attended New York University (NYU) as a Fulbright Scholar in the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant programme. During his time at NYU, he also served as the Cultural Ambassador of Bangladesh from 2017 to 2018.

Mamunur Rashid believes that empathy education, if applied as a theory of curriculum in general schooling, could teach students to break the walls between "the other" and "the self" from their childhood. His project, 'Shaping the Youth with Empathy Education' is a classroom initiative to inspire, nurture and cultivate the culture and practice of empathy. It considers the youth as the agent for making changes and teaches them how to empathise with children and adults to create a better world.

Through the project, students learn to look at the world through the eyes of a flower girl, a housemaid or a street child, whose lives are very different from their own. Rashid believes that the way we behave with our parents when we are angry and the way we take out our anger on someone less fortunate are all because of our lack of empathy.

The project has been incorporated in the curriculum of BRAC Institute of Languages and is being taught in more than 25 English Language classes each semester. Working on this project, students create an "Empathy Map" of individuals to present their understanding and come up with effective solutions to solve their problems. It aims to improve students' language proficiency as well as global and social awareness.

"I aim to establish Empathy Education as a culture and regular practice in academia and want to dedicate this recognition to my students who I believe can bring positive changes to the world through empathy," says the teacher.