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## A good teacher must be able to arouse the curiosity about the subject matter in students....

Interviewed by Mahdin Mahboob

**D**R SALEHUDDIN AHMED, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of BRAC University speaks about five of his most favourite teachers in an exclusive interview with Mahdin Mahboob from Star Campus. Here are the excerpts from the interview:

I remember teachers from my school (St. Gregory's High School), my college (Notre Dame College), my universities and also from a Leadership Conference that I attended.

In school, my favourite teacher was Nolini Sarker who used to teach us Bangla. Firstly, his knowledge base was fabulous and I also found his teaching style interesting. He gave us tasks but he also entertained questions. In our country, we see many teachers not entertaining questions which is indeed a very sad thing. In our schools, we were given the idea that 'the teacher has all the wisdom' so in class you are supposed to take notes, do your home work at home and then pass your exams at the end of the year. But Nolini Sir was different in that respect. He also gave insightful feedbacks on the tasks that he asked us to do.

In our school, we were fortunate to have these American Brothers, they were basically the Christian missionaries who were here at that time. The American Brothers taught us English and I think they have laid the foundation for the basic English that we have learned. The grammars, the sentence construction, the style element, all were learnt from them. After that our styles changed and our vocabulary increased as we read more, as we went along interacting with people, and as we went on to specialize in different fields. But the basic English we learnt at that time was final. So we were fortunate to have so good English teachers. The brothers there also used to entertain questions. They not only interacted in classes, but also outside

the classrooms. After school, we used to go to the school to play-at that time the brothers would come and *addafy* with us, which enabled us to really get close to them. That made the learning process much easier.

I also had a wonderful Bangla teacher in my college in the form of Prof. Abdul Hamid. To many, a language class may not be a very attrac-



tive thing to attend. Hamid Sir used to deliver the class in the most fascinating form of presentation possible. He used to use humour and lots of stories which helped us to get attracted to the Bangla language. It was an English medium college, but since he made it so interesting, we wanted to read more of Bangla. It was a challenge for our teachers to generate interest in us to read more Bangla and to wanted to know more about people like Rabindranath and Sharatchandra.

I remember a teacher from my Masters in Manilla, in the Asian Institute of Management. I did a one year Masters in Management from there. Prof. Andy Reyes used to take a course on 'Motivation.' There was a complex theory called Maslow's theory, which talks about how you motivate people. In spite of its complexity, Prof Reyes could make all of us understand that theory through the use of small, sim-

ple examples that everyone could relate to. Examples included situations in a factory, in a management office and any two people for that matter. He emphasized on how important it was to become empathetic. Prof. Reyes always used examples that were simple and down-to-earth so all of us could easily understand him. I myself have used his explanations while teaching. Right now I am teaching students of MA in Governance in BRAC University.

In 2000, I attended a Leadership Conference in Harvard Business School from where I remember Prof. John Kotter. When I attended this 5-week program in executive development program in leadership, we attended many lectures there and although I have forgotten names of other teachers I haven't forgotten that of Mr. Kotter. Most Harvard teachers are not only teachers but performers too - they also perform in the class. They go deep into their subject and become very passionate about it. He took a four-hour class and no one was bored for even a single second! He referred to his book, 'Leading Change' which is regarded as one of the best in business leadership. We were a class of 100 people and to keep the class lively, he kept it very interactive-he asked for comments and asked questions and was open to questions himself. All of us felt that he knew his subject and was really able to engage everyone into the topic.

Summing up, it can be said that the key ingredient for a good teacher is to be able to arouse the curiosity about the subject matter in students. Classes should be interactive and fun but it also has to ensure that students have taken home something from the class. And teachers, who are in control of the classroom should ensure this, irrespective of whether it's a class in a school, college or university, or anywhere else for that matter.