



## **Rajiv Khosla: I was meant to lead the retail revolution, not teach.**

*City of Liverpool College*

Becoming a teacher was never one of the career options discussed in my teenage and early adult life either at school by our careers advisors or at home by my parents, neither was it one that I considered myself. I was destined to take over my father's retail business which he had established in 1966, after working in the cotton mills in Manchester after his arrival in England from India in 1961. Predictably this is exactly what I did! After a reasonably satisfactory (disappointing in my parents' eyes and clearly requiring improvement) education, acquiring a HND (with distinction) at Newcastle Polytechnic in Public Law and Business Administration, I turned down the offer of enrolling on Year 2 of a Law degree and decided to make my fortune in the world of retail clothing. It was this journey that ultimately (albeit 12 years

later) led me to Bolton Institute to enrol on a full time Certificate in Education course.

January 2001 was the start of this major change in career. My business was declining mainly due to the opening of the Trafford Centre in Manchester (at the time one of largest out of town shopping centres in Europe). Our brands were in direct competition with the likes of Selfridges, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to survive. As the lease was up for renewal in May 2001, I decided to give notice to the landlords of my intention to terminate the lease agreement. Judith, one of my regular customers (and now very close friend), became aware of this and offered me a post within their travel company as an Operations Director on a six months' contract. It was this work with Judith, and her husband, Maurice, that was career changing. Both Judith and Maurice had been teachers and had set up a travel company taking school groups on coach tours to Paris and Disneyland Paris. It was the work with these school groups that planted the seed to become a teacher. In September 2001 I had enrolled on a full time Certificate in Education course with a government bursary of £6000 (how times have changed) as there was a national shortage of teachers.

One of the most significant moments in my teaching career was during a family visit to Slovakia during Easter 2002. I was invited to 'meet' an English teacher at the local grammar school by my wife's aunty. I ended up teaching English to 10-18 year olds for a week - something surely was lost in translation? I was 'observed' by my wife at every lesson as she was acting as my interpreter. My first post was a Schools and Careers Liaison Officer for the work-based learning provider I did my teaching practice with in Horwich, Bolton. I soon obtained a full-time role within Alliance Learning teaching Basic Skills Maths and progressed to managing the Skills for Life provision

and a small team of English and Maths tutors. During this time I also successfully obtained a Level 4 teaching qualification in teaching Maths and volunteered as a mentor at Bolton Lads and Girls Club. However, my management role resulted in endless meetings, reports, data analysis and this meant I was only teaching 1 or 2 hours per week, and I decided I needed a change. I had come into teaching for a change in career and I was desperately missing the interaction with students in the classroom. I applied for and was successful in gaining a post at Liverpool Community College in 2006 as a lecturer within the Teacher Education team. **I have been fortunate to work with many inspirational and influential colleagues** during my time in Liverpool, but the most notable was Maire Daley, who was my mentor when I joined the team and when I was appointed as an Advanced Lecturer. Maire's drive, enthusiasm, passion, and intelligence was incredible. I learnt so much from working with Maire and this has provided me with many of the skills and qualities that I possess as a teacher today. My former manager, Mick Smith, was also a great inspiration and his support and encouragement led me to complete a MA in Advanced Educational Practice and complete training as an Additional Inspector for Ofsted.

**Since becoming a teacher educator, there have been many changes both at a macro and micro level.** The increased scrutiny and use of performance management surveillance systems has unfortunately driven many experienced teachers out of FE and led to the decline of potentially new teachers entering the sector. In these challenging times, I feel it is important that teachers in the sector retain the intrinsic feeling of empowerment in order to maintain their drive, enthusiasm, and passion for teaching and for their own personal well-being. Controlling my own personal CPD, retaining my personal values and ethics, and maintaining my interests and hobbies outside of work

have enabled me to continue to develop into the teacher educator that I am today.

***Postscript** Rajiv left City of Liverpool College and worked as a teacher educator at Riverside College, Widnes until September 2020. In October 2021, he began re-training to become a tax inspector.*