

# I wanted to be a bus conductor for the free travel'

**YAQIN CHING ABDULLAH**

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**A**T a talk, TV host and motivational writer and speaker Datuk Mohd Fadzilah Kamsah, 60, tells the audience: "Don't be an exemplary individual for your company."

After a pause, Mohd Fadzilah adds: "Be exemplary and everyone in your life will gain from it — your family, friends and employer."

In line with this rippling effect, one of his favourite maxims — "If we help others to succeed, we will succeed too" — is at the heart of his endeavours.

He also believes that individuals need to unleash their potential and reclaim excellence. But while we must always do our best, the concept of *rezeki* plays its hand. "I met Datuk Siti Nurhaliza five years before she married Datuk K (Siti Nurhaliza's husband)," says Mohd Fadzilah, alluding in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, that some things are not meant to be.

Guidance and inspiration help to pave the way for success. "Everyone needs an idol," he says. He cites five people who have had a tremendous impact on his life — Prophet Muhammad; Professor Hamka Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, the renowned philosopher and writer from Indonesia; Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad; his parents and his wife Sharifah Md. Nor. "My wife moulded me to be what I am today," he says.

Mohd Fadzilah, a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Sciences graduate from University of Malaya, began his career as a lecturer at Universiti Putra Malaysia in 1977.

He also has a Master of Science in Agricultural Journalism degree from Wisconsin University in the United States.

The 2008 Tokoh Maal Hijrah recipient answers questions on his schooldays:

## **Yaqin: Which primary and secondary schools did you attend?**

Mohd Fadzilah: SK Batu Belah, Klang; SK Simpang Lima, Klang; High School Klang; and Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK). I attended Special Malay Class in primary school. These classes prepared pupils in Malay schools for English-medium secondary schools and were equivalent to Remove Class at Form One.

## **Yaqin: Did you have a favourite teacher and why did you like him/her?**

Mohd Fadzilah: My father always reminds me to respect teachers to get their blessings and become a successful student. Two of my teachers stood out. Mr SP Samy, who taught Maths at High School Klang, instilled into me a love for the subject. I learnt the meaning of self-discipline from Mr Samy. MCKK principal Abd Aziz Ismail taught me self-management, how to be an all-rounded student and display my leadership traits.

## **Yaqin: What subject(s) did you like at school?**

Mohd Fadzilah: I liked Maths, Biology and Humanities.

## **Yaqin: Were you rewarded for good performance by your parents? If yes, in what way.**

Mohd Fadzilah: My father was a labourer and I am the second-born of 11 siblings, so my parents were too poor to

reward me with material things. Their praises and encouragement to my brothers and sisters to emulate my successes were reward enough for me.

## **Yaqin: What was your best school holiday?**

Mohd Fadzilah: It was when I did community service as part of Boy Scouts activities.

## **Yaqin: What hobbies did you have while at school?**

Mohd Fadzilah: Debating, stage activities — drama, singing and *pantun* competition — learning the art of *silat*, giving free tuition to students in neighbouring schools in Kuala Kangsar and composing *sajak*.

## **Yaqin: What was your ambition while schooling?**

Mohd Fadzilah: In primary school, I wanted to be a bus conductor for the free travel. Later, I aspired to be a medical doctor. During my undergraduate days, I aimed to be a lecturer.

## **Yaqin: If you were to live your schooldays all over again, is there anything you would like to change?**

Mohd Fadzilah: I would have liked to play more games. I was quite involved in oratorical activities and debates in school, but less so in sports.

