

M. TOFAZZAL ISLAM

MY BRITISH COUNCIL TALE

The British Council Bangladesh's Tell Your Tale Contest



I first came in touch with the British Council in 1994 when I visited its resourceful library to find literature on pedagogy and the fundamentals of distance learning, which I badly needed as a young faculty member of Bangladesh Open University. To train young faculties, the Bangladesh Open University invited some British consultants including John Jaworski (a senior producer of the BBC) and Jack Koumi (an expert in audio visuals). Through a series of workshops by these experts, we learnt screen writing, audio-visual production and preparation of self-learning materials as well as familiarising ourselves with cultural insights of the UK. In July 1996, my abstract was accepted for presentation in an annual conference of the 9th Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) in Tehran, Iran. I applied to the British Council for a grant to cherish my first appearance in an international conference. The British Council generously considered my wish and offered me funds for travel, registration and living expenses for attending the said conference. I learnt about the exciting updates and strengths of the ICTs in teaching and learning processes from that global meeting. The linkage developed through that conference helped me to participate in two following annual meetings of AAOU held in Malaysia, and Hong Kong. I came back in touch with British Council again through a visit of Professor Michele Clarke of the University of Nottingham to Bangladesh in 2009. She came to see the real situation of climate in Bangladesh and find a potential collaborator for conducting joint research. The visit and intense interactions with Prof. Michele Clarke prompted us to submit a grant proposal on the “Impact of climate change: food security, water resources and rural resilience of western Bangladesh” to the British Council. This joint project proposal of the University of Nottingham, HSTU and BOU was approved by the British Council in 2010 under its INSPIRE R-3 program for three years.

These institutional and personal linkages that I developed over the years of travel abroad truly helped me to win the Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship in 2012 to work with Prof. Michele Clarke for 3-months on the “Impact of climate change on diversity and interactions of microorganisms in the rhizosphere of plants”. I will never forget my exciting experiences in working in one of the most state-of-the-art laboratories in the Gateway building and the 24 hour open library in the one of the world's most beautiful campuses in the University of Nottingham. My stay allowed me to interact with many great researchers in genomics and bioinformatics including Dr. Richard Emes and Dr. Dov Stekel.

In addition to getting steady supports for enhancing my research and academic collaboration, I received an extra-ordinary 18-month training program on “Strengthening Leadership on Higher Education and Research” funded by the British Council and the government of Bangladesh.

In recognition of my overall contribution to fundamental research in biological sciences, I won several awards including the UGC Award in 2004 and 2008 and the prestigious Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (BAS) Gold Medal and Award 2011 in senior group which was delivered by the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina on April 20, 2014. I'm indeed thankful to the British Council for progressing my research career to achieve these recognitions. I wish to keep in continue my rewarding collaboration with researchers from UK universities through supports from the British Council.