

MY BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. This year the British Council is celebrating its 80th anniversary worldwide. From modest beginnings in 1934 now it has over 190 offices in over 110 countries and territories across the world. In Bangladesh, the British Council has been engaged for over 60 years, created many opportunities for its people and changed many lives. To mark this occasion, the British Council has invited Bangladeshis to share their personal stories of growth and fond memories of engagement with the organisation. The respondents were honoured at an Award Ceremony held last week at the British Council's Fuller Road office in Dhaka. Winners will enjoy a range of British Council services for free. Some of the best stories are published here for our readers.

I don't remember my first visit to the British Council but I know that the date must go back to the '70s. We had returned from the UK and our parents wanted to make sure that we don't forget the proper use of the English language. They made me and my brothers members of the British Council Library. It was there that we discovered a treasure trove, a place where the magic of a world of make-belief came to life; where the charms of kind, funny, naughty characters made us laugh and cry.

Alongside learning to read and speak well, we learnt to imagine, to explore, to be kind and responsible, and to make books part of our everyday life. As life's pages turned, we became members of the senior section. The library helped us so much by connecting us with global knowledge at a time when ITC did not rule the world.

Years went by and I became a mother. I too made sure that both my sons benefit from the library, as my brothers and I had. The library has enriched three generations in our family, and I hope it does the same for many more.

– Tahsinah Ahmed

I was born into a family of day-labourers. I cannot remember a day with three meals in my childhood. My parents could not afford even a glass of milk in a week for me. However, I was awarded primary and secondary scholarship and got admission on merit at Dhaka University's Department of Law. During my student life, I also published a book on Constitution, Constitutional Law and Politics: Bangladesh Perspective. This book and a first class degree in LLM gave me a hope to apply for Chevening Scholarship operated by British Council and British High Commission. I never thought I would be studying in the UK and become a barrister. I was awarded the prestigious scholarship in 1998. This was the turning point in my life. Under this scholarship, I studied LLM in International Trade Law at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and then LLB from the University of London. Then I was called to the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn in 2003. On returning to Dhaka, I established Children's Charity Bangladesh Foundation (CCB Foundation) for promoting child rights and child education in Bangladesh. I still get my inspiration from the diverse social works done by the British Council towards the socio-economic development in Bangladesh.

– Md. Abdul Halim, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

It was in 2009 that I first became involved with the British Council's Connecting Classrooms. Before that I never imagined such a style of education. I began introducing ICT into the curriculum through Connecting Classrooms which got students of our madrasa acquainted with partner schools in the UK and taught them how to use international dimensions and themes of global citizenship. The training that I and our teachers received from the British Council on English, ICT, leadership and continuous professional development boosted our confidence and enhanced our teaching skills, English proficiency and IT skills.

As a Madrasa principal, I feel proud in receiving a fellowship from Durham University, UK and Commonwealth Class. Connecting Classrooms is the British Council's global education programme for schools, and it aims at helping young people learn about global issues and become responsible global citizens. As an Ambassador of the British Council, I am working with 30 schools in Chittagong, providing them with peer coaching and CPD courses. The British Council has created a platform for us through Connecting Classrooms and accelerated our expertise as mentors with 21st century skills. I also received the Best Performing Ambassador Award in 2003. With a madrasa background, it would not have been possible for me to achieve such opportunities without the British Council's help.

– Mohammad Mohiul Hoque, Principal, Naziria Naymaia Mahmudia Madrasa

When I sought assistance from British Council Bangladesh back in 2011, I knew right then that I was under the supervision of experts to help me get all the necessary guidance that I needed for applying to universities in the UK for my masters. The most equitable support the consultants of Education UK team give you towards your choice of education, university options and financial cost management had left me spell-bound. I always desired to pursue a degree from the UK because of its global reputation for quality: employers worldwide recognise a UK degree as a sign of high academic standards. British Council had further heightened my intention to study in the UK as they elaborated to me the courses that will give me the required skills, qualifications, and connections that I needed to succeed in my chosen career.

I chose to study at the University of Warwick as its Business School (WBS) is ranked now among the top five UK business schools with excellent faculty involved in credible research.

– Salman Kabir, Public Relations Manager, Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka

The name British Council always reminds me of quality education. As a student of ACCA, I am totally dependent on the British Council because they have the authority for conducting ACCA exams in Bangladesh. Even when I was a student of Heriot-Watt University, all my exams were conducted by the British Council on behalf of my university. That assistance has helped me to become a UK university graduate. I can still remember my first visit to the British Council. I went there for my ACCA exam registration. I was warmly welcomed, provided with the required information and cordially assisted by the staff while filling out the exam registration form. I hardly miss the UK Education Fairs and UK Education Open Days arranged by the British Council because I am planning to go to the UK to complete my MBA. The British Council is more than an educational institution where people from all walks of life with different thoughts, ideas and cultures are welcomed. It is operated by an efficient staff and highly-qualified teachers who will never let you down. The British Council has been operating with quality for last six decades and that's what made them stand out from the crowd.

– Abid Khan Shuvo, student

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