

Fulbright Essays – Qazi Fazli Azeem

STUDY RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

I want to utilize my background and experiences in new media and multimedia and study applied technology in a multi-disciplinary program. This will enable me to study and contribute in the field of entertainment, mobile application and non-profit support, areas which I am involved in, personally and professionally.

I have worked with Multimedia and technology for over a decade, and have taught undergraduates how to use it for their design needs. I want to study the use and impact of technology in digital media, Animation, Mobile Media, Social Media, Games, Broadcast Design and Computer Graphics.

The graduate program I expect to study will enable me to use digital design as a medium to preserve and promote local content and culture, supporting localized languages both for print and broadcast media. This is relevant to my future objectives as a multimedia designer supporting non-profit as well as a greater use of technology in education. The direct result of this interaction between my education and teaching would enable localized content to match the quality of international media programming, to support special needs education as well as entertainment and educational content development.

Studying Design and Technology will also help me to better highlight disability rights. I am South-Asia's pioneer self-advocate for Asperger's Syndrome and Autism awareness because of my TV interviews shared on my youtube channel qfazeem, as well as my interviews in books, magazines, newspapers and websites across the world. This enabled me to reach out to parents, doctors and special educators in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh who invited me to speak at Autism Conferences and workshops in the region. I want to incorporate my experiences in teaching children with learning disabilities into my studies for better solutions to Information and communication technologies (ICT) needs in special education, with a strong focus on Autism, the world fastest growing disorder.

My proposed study area in Entertainment technology will allow me to make contributions in multiple fields, such as Entertainment, mobile applications, special education and non-profit social sector support.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

I believe in creative solutions to solve problems, where socially responsible design is a tool of change, and my life has reflected this. I started working at an early age to support my family, working with computers to design books and magazines for Pakistan's first Type Foundry. My interests with computers and their application to different fields enabled me to a summer internship in 1999 with IBM Pakistan, in their network support department. This was a life changing opportunity, where I saw the business and learning potential of the Internet, in a corporate environment.

Technology developed and the Internet became media rich, which motivated me join the Newports Institute at Karachi, and I became Pakistan's first multimedia undergraduate in 2006. During my education, I became a senior multimedia trainer at the Arena Multimedia center at Defence, Karachi. My contributions to their developing certificates and diploma program allowed me to train thousands of professionals, who are now leading media organizations across the country.

The year 2006 was pivotal in making me focus on disability rights, finding out about my own self-diagnosed Asperger's Syndrome. This led me to post my Autism-awareness interviews on youtube. My interests in disability awareness and teaching coincided when I was asked to train special educators and speak at Autism Conferences in India and Bangladesh. My use of multimedia therapies and augmented education interested people at Inclusion International, who called me to represent Pakistan at the 2008 Unesco Disability Conference at Doha, Qatar.

In January 2009 I represented Pakistan and presented papers on Autism and augmented digital learning at the South Asian Autism conference at Dhaka, Bangladesh. I was called to train an entire school of autistic children and their special educators at Chittagong, Bangladesh, in the same year. The awareness of Autism and learning disabilities has made me an effective teacher, as it has given me a rare insight into the ways in which people learn.

I joined the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, a leading non-profit Art and design university in Karachi during 2008, and used my experiences to train artists and designers. This led to my own digital art being exhibited in 2009 at leading art galleries in the city, as people started appreciating animation and new media as an acceptable form of Art and expression.

In January 2011, I co-organized Pakistan's first Gaming/Animation Industry-Academia conference at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi. This event got the attention of the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), who invited me to represent my university in a consortium of public and private universities. We successfully won the bid for South Asia's first Nokia mLab (funded by InfoDEV, World Bank, USA). I had an important role in the presentation and the proposal, and my idea of a creative/developer interaction at university level for a revolutionary academia-industry link to co-develop mobile applications, was one of the reasons why Pakistan won the funding for the South Asia mLab, beating other regional consortiums by a small margin. The international exposure to the binding

and collaborative power of technology has re-invigorated my passion and commitment to the field of Multimedia and new media.

My educational goals will enable me to continue on the path to become an evangelist for digital design, training the current generation of designers who will re-brand local content and preserve our heritage for accessibility, with a strong emphasis on social and non-profit support. I will use my decade of experiences to pursue academic study and research in the field of new media and Multimedia.