

Emerging Role for Retired Academicians in Digital Era

The Case of ekhaikk.in

After retirement in the year 2011, I was very happy that I shall be able to do whatever I wanted to do by choice. I thought of devoting 2 days equivalent a week to teaching, 1 day equivalent to MHRD/AICTE work, 1 day equivalent to philanthropic work of SMF/ IIMs and 1 day equivalent to consulting, keeping Sunday absolutely free.

It worked for 3 months, after that body started giving up, with several ailments, prime among them being knee joint pain and heaviness in heart. Somehow I pulled on cancelling consulting altogether. Gradually other ailment too caught up, and by 2014-15, I was suffering with over 10 ailments, including haemorrhage in eye, tinnitus, spondylitis, a prostate, bleeding due to increased internal dryness as well as usual ailments at this age such as diabetes and high blood pressure. As a result of this all my academic activities almost came to end. Finally I had to undergo knee joint operation which took over six month to be on my own.

But in the meantime hernia problem cropped up. Normally it is simple operation but it turned out to be nightmarish and I suffered acute pain for over four months, so much so that I almost started counting my days asking almighty that if he wanted me back, do it fast, why torture? One night it occurred to me that nature does not take away something if there is no utility of it. "Is there still something left to be done?" I wondered.

I just remembered that long back I had promised my students to bring out a book, but never got opportunity to do justice, It was also part of the dream of establishing an Academic Resource Park that we had envisioned in 1994 as a part of perspective plan for IIM Lucknow. "May be that is what I can do" I thought. But the finger joints used to pain, which did not allow me to type or write as I wished. Nor could I look at lap top screen for more than 15-20 minutes as vision used to be blurred and spondylosis pain used to start. There was no office or staff assistance.

Old Age and Digitisation

Old age brings own issue of physical disabilities. But it has its own side advantages. You have more free time, more flexibility to do things as you wish, often don't get sleep at night, reduced financial burden if your family is settled. But you are often alone and feel like moving out to your kids who stay away from you. With wife also moving along, there is no one to look collect letters/ cheque book, nor be able to go your bank to withdraw money, settle various bills and so on.

Fortunately, digitisation is expanding in many ways, smartphone mobiles with high resolution camera, broadband/ wifi internet facilities etc. are available, albeit with some limitations. That helps in moving out and take care of many things without being in hometown, which all of us are familiar with. But is digital era relevant in many other ways? My experience endorses the view that new things can be done for which one does not get time before retirement and old age, and grandparental role can be played, to support the efforts of next generation.

Developing Literature Based upon First Hand, Unusual but Useful Experiences

Anyway, I started writing few sentences here and there, when an idea occurred be it bathroom or midnight when not able to have sleep, waiting for flight or travelling by train. No hurry no worry. After few pages were scribbled, I took photograph or scanned and emailed it to first name that crossed the mind. It could be my old secretarial assistant at IIM Lucknow or Kozhikode, a professor or even Director of a management Institute. I was able to locate few dependable cybercafé who will type for me from Jabalpur, Kanpur, Pune or Lucknow and I could settle payment online. I could do editing myself and get a print out from some Xeroxing shop. Over five research papers, over 25 short and long cases and chapters of the books were prepared like this.

Reflecting on past experiences and preparation of such write up gave many insights into working of India organisations and power and behaviour of India people, the [Hanumans of India](#). It also convinced that threats are opportunities and weaknesses are [mental blocks](#). Application of [creativity](#) for overcoming constraints, reconceptualising [manpower](#) (as two words to manage growth and diversification), and resources (as [asset or liability?](#)), [Power of Check listing](#) as a management technique, [growth as a matter of choice](#), techniques of ensuring viability of organisation business, benefiting from various stakeholders support, getting autonomy etc. This led to short stories, which can be [meaningfully used as short cases to generate class interest](#) for more advanced discussion.

The same happened with the long cases like [Kingfisher Airlines](#), [Adani Enterprises](#) etc. The cases also refined many concepts in SM area like the [process of strategic derailment](#). The most exhilarating experience was [developing a note](#) while convalescing in a hospital for seven days that gave a working insight when a business crosses laxman rekha to enter 'greed' area.

Gradually the cases written were compiled formatted and put in order to develop a five volume [Casebook on Strategic Management](#). It also led to development of [Case Analyses Guide](#) to help faculty members select the cases for their purpose.

Web Application

With soft copies being available, I started putting them on a website that I had hired for my personal use at Lucknow. I had learnt to operate such website in a crude way, while operating Strategic Management Forum website. However, it was in html format. Nonetheless it became a store house and I could download any case or chapter instantaneously on the screen so that all participants to read it and be on same wavelength during discussion. Additional information could be downloaded as required from time to time.

This provides an opportunity to write short (abridged case) and expand it in the class as the class discussion progresses by adding exhibits and notes.

As a corollary it provides an opportunity to condense a long rich case into small parts with some exhibits and information circulated and then added in the class.

At a later date, this May I went to get my printer cartridge refilled and notice that the person had expertise of web design and hosting in 'php' format, which is more user friendly. Once my html site had collapsed and I was badly stuck. I sought his help to hire a site (ekhaikk.in) and learnt to operate and modify it. Thus I can interchangeably use the two sights, each providing a backup to the other.

The website helped in putting the cases, text, research papers etc. in a place that could be easily accessed from any place.

The website also allowed me flexibility to allow the use of my material by SM faculty, and students, without getting into permission by any publisher and distribute it even free if required.

Printing and Publication

I used to get the material Xeroxed on A4 and get them spiral bound. However, they were becoming bulky to carry when I was moving from one place to another. Once a close by taxi fellow started Xeroxing work. We worked together to convert all the cases and books into 18 pts and then print in booklet form. I did binding myself which I had learnt together with my office attendant when I was Dean. This led to conversion of heavy A4 size volumes into more handy volume that one may comfortably carry. I broke long books into 1-150 pages A4/2 size. Still I had to carry whenever I moved from Lucknow to Delhi to Bangalore, which was difficult for person who himself had to be carried by someone.

Finally I decided to gradually upload the entire material and get it print out wherever I went, so that my work does not stop.

In Gurgaon I explored possibility of printing and binding a soft cover book form, with the person who was Xeroxing and delivering material at home as could not move out of my home due to advanced stage of DISH (an ailment), which used giddiness so much so that movement within house was becoming difficult. I contacted Doctors in Lucknow, Medanta Gurgaon, Manipal Hospitals and Narayan Hridayalay, Bangalore with no positive outcome. I lost hope of life again. Fortunately an acupressure specialist gave magnet therapy which improved my condition a bit. He became a friend and promised to arrange delivery by courier wherever I wanted. I just had to send him a soft copy, rest of the job he would do and I would make the reimbursement through electronic remittance.

While walking near my colony in Bangalore I saw a poster for learning French, German and Spanish. A friendship developed and he promised to translate one of my stories in three foreign languages. I translated in Hindi, thanks to google support for Hindi typing. Gradually the story which was published in the Hindu, was translated in [12 languages](#) and put on Website.

The translator friend later got all the stories translated in three foreign languages. Thus the stories (Tales of Grandfather) became available in [5 five languages](#).

Getting story book in five languages, three of which are not spoken so much in India, made me feel it should be exposed to other countries. I therefore learn to get ISBN number for them and put on website for the globe. In the process I came to learn that ISBN (MHRD) allows for self- publication. I therefore took self- publication route so that I can open it to all without banking on business oriented publishers.

Later I looked for a Xeroxing man in Bangalore. I found one who can print books at low cost. This met my requirement of printing even one [customised copy for VIPs](#). I learnt to format for book publication both Ebook and Paperback.

Common Website of IIMs

As a Director at IIMK I frequently needed experts. Many other people used to ask me about IIMs for various purposes. Each IIM had a unique IP address and it was difficult to remember. There were many other academic and non-academic uses possible. I therefore had prepared a Common Website of all the IIMs from the information-links available on respective websites for ready reference. One has to remember one website address, www.iimsworld.in or, just one website address www.ekhaikk.in from where one could navigate to any IIM website.

While getting my works translated, I thought even non-english speaking person should know about growing IIM family. I therefore got the [common website translated into six languages](#) for benefit of the world.

Research

In 2011 an agitation started by social Activist Anna Hazare after 2G scam verdict of Supreme Court of India and in 2012 CAG report on Coal Block Allocation. Heated debates started in Parliament and allegations of corruption were levelled against the central government. It was a rude shock. Are minister speaking lies? There was no way to check the facts. The coal minister was saying he had no role in it and during his tenure to coal block was allocated. One day I landed up to a coal ministry website and was stunned to see that over 4000 MT coal block were allocated during his time. I was stunned. The information was available on coal ministry's website. Further analysis revealed there has been great arbitrariness in the allocation. The valuation by CAG about loss to exchequer was startling. But more importantly my analysis was showing much more. My analysis was showing more than that. There was no way to analyse the difference.

One day I landed up on CAG website and could see CAG report on coal block allocation. The analysis revealed the reasons, differences were caused due to certain assumption made by CAG which I felt were not tenable. My analysis showed that the loss to exchequer was more than double the CAG estimates. [The paper](#) was sent to a conference in April 2014 and even sent to Prime Minister when he opened his portal for public. In August 2014, Supreme court of India quashed the allocation and asked for auctioning all the blocks, not only the one pointed out by CAG. My estimates were vindicated, and when the auction started they started coming true.

During 2013 August the Parliament started discussing the FDI in multi-brand retail (MBR) business, There was ruckus in Parliament. The Prime Minister said if this was not done, there would be economic emergency worse than 1991. The Finance Minister said FDI in MBR is no more a matter of choice but necessity. It made me wonder if after 20 years of reforms we are back to same or worse situation were reforms were going in the write director. An in-depth analysis of RBI and other authentic resources indicated that [it was a reality not a hoax call](#). I almost had heart attack and was carried to emergency for check-up. The information available also indicated that there is lot more than what meets the eye and whether there could be hawala and money laundering cases. It analysis also makes one think whether there is a need for fresh look at the whole process of reforms. The above two papers and two cases studies of Kingfisher Airlines and Adani Enterprise Ltd. indicated that retired academicians can do a lot of meaningful research in the digital era, even from bed, despite yelling and crying all the time, which may be difficult to do for younger faculty colleagues, who are hard pressed for time.

While reminiscing my research work of the past 40 years it occurred to me though each research work was done independently and gave useful insights into issues and valuable recommendation, the entire set also has another use, providing historical perspective to the whole process of post liberalisation developments in India, the opportunities we lost, and give ideas as to what all we need to do to overcome the around problems, be it pollution or traffic jams or jobless growth and investment crisis, everyday crisis that we face today. The whole set therefore is being brought out as a five volume set on the book [Post Liberalisation Developments in India: A 25 Years Research Journey](#).

Teaching/ MDP

As the Director of IIM Kozhikode I had the opportunity to have first-hand experience of online conducting online courses, including conducting case discussion. It was as active and lively as the physical class room discussion. I had recommended setting up of video conferencing facilities as a part of our report for setting up new IIMs. But more than that I felt the new IIMs and even the old ones can greatly benefit by conducting guest lecture and occasional lecture in regular programmes and MDPs from remote area [without video conferencing studio at the guest end](#). Technology is available and I was ready for conducting experiment but my endeavours failed as there seems to be complete aversion to even try. We have to just make it seamless which is not possible unless it comes to use. The potential benefits, drastic cost reduction, savings in time etc. are not being realised at all which are huge benefits. But even IT faculty is not prepared for the same. It is worth experimenting right away.

For MDP I found it was very useful to embed the course material in the entertainment sheet (see next section) and conduct hassle free class with entertainment in the break period.

Entertainment

The idea of having an entertainment website for retired persons developed when I was confined to bed and didn't have time as I could not move and do my daily routine things due to giddiness. I started visiting 'youtube' music site. I could listen my favourite songs. There were hilarious jokes, gazals, hasya kavi sammelan, and things alike. [I embedded them to an excel sheet and uploaded.](#) Gradually songs for gen next, kids, clips from whatsapp were also added. To this I also embedded the details of my doctors for various ailments, in different cities, contact number of pharmacists in different location, bank account details (with login), booked ticket details, taxi numbers and other details that I require from time to time. I uploaded it for my purpose and could listen to this whenever I was getting bored, depressed or facing loss of sleep. I bought few pairs of earphones, three wifi/ broad band dongle from different mobile service providers, two sets of speakers, two mobiles for the purpose. Two old laptops also supported this endeavour. The kit became an integral of my baggage like a saving bag. I think, the digital era provides a unique opportunity to 65+ people to enjoy without burdening younger generation.

The ***digital era*** thus provided me opportunities for the following academic and non-academic contributions.

1. [Integrating IIMs](#)
2. Spreading IIMs worldwide through [Multilingual Website](#)
3. Preparing Multilingual Stories in [12 Languages](#)
4. Preparing Short ,Insightful, [Management Stories](#)
5. Preparing customised books (click on the respective photographs below)

Sh. Narendra Modi	Sh. Prakash Javadekar	Shri Rahul Gandhi	M. Emmanuel Macron	SR. Mariano Rejoy	Frau Angela Merkel
PM (India)	MHRD (India)	MP (India)	President (France)	PM (Spain)	Chancellor (Germany)
					

6. Preparing book to help Teaching through [Case Method and Case Writing](#)
7. Initiating Low Cost/ Free/ Flexible [books](#)
8. Making Low cost/ free material accessible to needy,
For Understanding the [Strategic Management subject in Simple Manner](#)
9. [Research](#)
Doing Research
Research Dissemination
9. Teaching from [Bed/ ICU](#)
10. Entertainment without movement.

Challenges Ahead

Every technological break-through also has some challenges associated with it. The four main challenges that I could see are described below.

1. **Cost Factor:** The dynamic obsolescence led incidence on costs is phenomenal. Every retired person can't perhaps afford to buy high cost smartphone and laptops every one or two years. Associated with that is the charges of internet service for the above purposes. T
2. **Uncertainty:** The level of uncertainty that is associated with the mobiles, laptops, printers not only because of dynamic obsolescence but also because of compatibility problems are too high to believe and can frustrate at times even the diehard optimist.
3. **Learning at Old Age:** In a country where learning even at young age is a challenge, learning new technology and its application is not easy, especially in "NO NONSENSE" dictate of computer and mobiles. If one does not have young persons at home to help it can be nightmarish, and old persons will quietly retrogress to "I am too old to learn the modern things" syndrome.
4. **Sustainability:** The last but perhaps the most important challenge emerging is the sustainability of technology without imports. For country which can't produce paper and ink for printing currency note, despite facing all the challenges of terrorist funding, banking on technology where all critical components are imported from enemy/ friend country, where industrialists are failing again and again in trading and extended trading leading to huge NPA and unmindfully taking up business in which they have zero experience and being big loan defaulters, one wonder how safe and sound is such a strategy without domestic effort of new product development. Its like furnishing 21st story of a building without being sure of the strength of the foundation itself.



