

Hello  
Spring!

# THE PINE CHRONICLE

News, Views and Creative Expressions

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## EDITORIAL

Most interface between policy makers and mainstream academics especially social scientists elicits two responses: either skepticism bordering on antagonism or a tendency for uncritical acceptance. The first grows out of on the assumption that academic theory looks good but has no relevance to the actual reality as statistics and analysis can be manipulated to prove a point. The second tendency of uncritical acceptance of an expert opinion is due to a sense of respect towards highly credentialed academics who are assumed to have a better understanding of the issue under consideration. Both these tendencies makes a healthy relationship between academicians and policy makers extremely challenging. If one were to go a step forward and examine the composition and background of policy makers, one would notice people with a wide range of experience, both educational and operational. While someone might have a PhD another might have a degree in engineering and yet another is with a professional degree in law or medicine. Making things even more complicated is the existence of an overarching political leadership that again displays a different kind of skill sets, competencies and priorities. In such a complicated scenario, reducing policy analysis and recommendation to a mere academic exercise without adequately incorporating critical thinking and competence to incorporate crucial skill sets in a dynamic information age with unprecedented threats and operational complexities. To add to these are cultural challenges and ideological moorings. People in the field, be it a politician or the bureaucrat tend to be skeptical of theories produced by academics who do not have practical experience. Unfortunately, this also arouses a total disregard for many of the robust tools and techniques used by social scientists to investigate and hypothesize causal relationships in the real world and create replicable and realistic scenarios. This while a basic understanding of sophisticated causal analysis is considered crucial for policy formulation and implementation! Hence it is extremely crucial to create a synergy between academics and policy formulators and implementers. It has to be accepted that ensuring good governance is not quite easy and success cannot be achieved without substantially enhancing the cognitive capacities of the key players who are expected to conceive, design, and implement strategies and campaigns to achieve the stated goals. In order to do so would also require an increased focus on critical and strategic thinking. This would also include the ability to critically evaluate information and make educated decisions about the likely consequences of different actions or approaches. At the same time it is not necessary for every bureaucrat

to become a social scientist or a researcher, yet the need to inculcate the ability or strategic thinking, understand human behaviour and influence and develop critical thinking and theoretical perspectives are considered basic to the job. This in turn may require creativity, ability to use evidence and iteration to better understand the world and also develop the ability to adapt to and lead social change. Probably, a basic part of policymaking, strategizing, or planning is a strong ability to anticipate the results of one's decisions. Anticipating consequences is, of course, extremely difficult because governance is a complicated interplay of social, strategic, socio-cultural, economic and political environments. Hence, each and every policy decision may produces different results. As a result, even with the luxury of hind sight it may be difficult to establish a definitive causal link between policy and outcome. It is in such a scenario that academia, with their specialised training can contribute to the understanding causal analysis and create pointers for the future. In other words, academic research can certainly contribute to the cause of good governance and the gap between academia and the policymaking has to be bridged. Basic policymaking, strategizing, or planning at any level attempts to anticipate the results of one's decisions. In order to ensure clarity, it is important to ensure that the language and terms used by academics are easily understood and accessible to the practitioner audience. Clothing reports in academic jargon is often counter-productive. While at the same, time it also behoves administrators to imbibe basic academic language, even jargon and be familiar with tools of causal analysis. This will help practitioners make the most of relevant academic studies and powerful analytical tools. Academic research and policy formulation and implementation cannot maintain a position of mutual exclusivity. Both are vital in the process of both producing data for of social science research and help policy formulation. While a basic understanding of how this research is conducted is vitally important to becoming an educated administrator, academics too will gain with ground level knowledge. This synergy is vital for the country.

## ABOUT NUKSA

Nuksa The Pine Chronicle is the monthly news magazine of IIM Shillong.

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This was followed by Shri Thoiba Singh, an ex-Indian Hockey player, having represented India in Olympics and Asian Games, who sang old Hindi songs and ghazals phenomenally.

The soulful voice of Teesta Galway, a professional folk, blues-rock and blues singer-songwriter and guitarist with a 15-year professional career also regaled the audience

The last performance was by Shri Bankim Phonglo, an FCI Divisional Manager in Dimapur, who made the evening blissful by passionately singing Hindi melodies, from Bollywood and Pop.

The event was extremely refreshing and the audience, comprising of the faculty, students, alumni and all the artists, truly enjoyed it. Everyone got a tour of the 7 sister states, virtually.

## KREN – Annual HR Conclave

UsHR, the HR club of IIM Shillong along with the placement committee has initiated a series of discussions under the banner of KREN – the annual HR Conclave to bring out some of the best HR practices amidst the pandemic to help the participants understand crisis management and get a better idea of situation in hand. The discussions were themed to identify the versatile skills needed by the participants to adapt to an evolving work environment triggered by the pandemic and the new normal.



The Moderator of the event, Prof. Ashutosh Murti divided the discussion into 3 segments to cover as many aspects as possible. In the first Segment each panelist shared how they coped with sudden change in working from office to virtual, the adoption of technology at their companies, employee engagement activities and hiring and induction processes. In the second segment, the panelists were asked their views on how to handle emotionally charged conversations in a virtual set up. To this, our guests shared their recent experiences on appraisals, work performance and pay cheques. It was enlightening to know the challenges of an HR in the virtual mode for conversations which require high level of intimacy and personal touch. Third segment was an open floor for the audience to ask their questions or share their opinions.

The discussion highlighted that IT sectors and some other organizations which already had a work from home module were

able to easily scale the system in place for the whole organization during the crisis. However, the supply chain aspect faced the hassles of the pandemic. Virtual employee engagements beyond work activities and felt relationships from before the crisis were emphasized as the most effective catalysts to a successful online workspace. Each speaker also discussed about how the company found relevance in the current times and how they handled the change in demand and remote decision making processes.

## MÉTIER

- Mandal, P.C. (2020). Generating Ideas for New Product Development – Strategies and Initiatives, *International Journal of R&D Innovation Strategy*, 2(1), 1-21.
  - Mandal, P.C. (2020). Small Businesses – Strategies and Initiatives for Positioning and Branding, *International Journal of Business Strategy and Automation*, 1(3), 24-33.
  - Mandal, P.C. (2020). The Changing Marketplace – Challenges, Strategies and Initiatives for Positioning and Branding, *International Journal of Business Strategy and Automation*, 1(3), 34-43.
  - Mandal, P.C. (2020). Marketing Realities in the New Environment -Challenges and Opportunities, *International Journal of Business Strategy and Automation*, 1(3), 44-51.
1. Prof. Pratap Chandra Mandal conducted an online seminar series on the topic " Marketing and Value Creation during the Pandemic" on 24th, 26th, and 27th June, 2020 for the faculty members and the students of Central Agricultural University, Pasighat (under IDP-NAHEP project) (number of participants - 110).
  2. Prof. Pratap Chandra Mandal conducted an online seminar on the topic " Customer Value Creation Through Supply (Value) Chains During the Pandemic " on 9th July, 2020 for the faculty members and the students of Central Agricultural University, Imphal (under IDP-NAHEP project) (number of participants - 90).
  3. Prof. Pratap Chandra Mandal conducted an online FDP series on the topic " E-commerce and Social Media Marketing " on 15th and 16th July, 2020 for the faculty members of National Institute of Fashion Technology (number of participants - 50).

## ODE

### Uncertain times and an even more uncertain me!

What does the heart want? We ask,  
Is it the beginning of all worries and also the end?  
It leads us to a road unexplored,  
And still in the end of it our question lasts.

What does the heart want? We ask,  
Is it the certainty in this chaotic world or the peace we look for?  
Running behind our thought for answers we expect,

But often we forget that just like everything else, our heart is also masked.

Still we ask, what does the heart want?  
 Is it the open world and the free will?  
 Or the vicarious pleasure we find comfort in?  
 Or just a positive spirit for a mind that daunts.

No one could ever answer, what does the heart want?  
 For everything on the other side looks much greener,  
 A moment of happiness dulls out the shine of the future,  
 A memory of past may overpower a dream come true,  
 And the expectations of tomorrow might bring in shades of hue.

Are we really seeking answers for what our heart wants?  
 Or for why does the heart want what it wants?  
 Why does the certain yet risky world excite us more than our safe home?  
 Why does tomorrow seem brighter than today?  
 Why are we always seeking for more amidst our satisfaction?  
 Why does happiness never remain?

The heart wants what it wants, but is this the answer to all our apprehensions?  
 We are conditioned to demand more, expect the next & move forward,  
 But when would we succumb to what we feel?  
 The world is accelerated and so are we,  
 Are we not to pause to endure our present?

Every moment that is now, is here because we wanted it.  
 Our present is an outcome of our past and is here to fulfil our desires.

The answers to our worries are not in our expectations,  
 But our reality, our today.  
 Often the most difficult thing to do is also the easiest,  
 To ACCEPT.  
 The day we accept ourselves, our emotions, our fears,  
 Is the day we find happiness in the present.

**Bhavika Chhabria**  
**PGPEX2020**

**OFF BEAT**

**How to keep your money safe**

We are all aware of the ongoing covid crisis and the ensuing economic hardships due to it. The lockdown has wrecked a havoc on the economy leading to loss of livelihood for many. As people are struggling to make the ends meet and in the process are running out of money, some are opting to indulge in fraudulent means of making money. They are making every possible attempt to make us part with cash. With limited employment options people are exploring investment options to increase their wealth. The market is flooded with numerous schemes promising very lucrative returns.

With social distancing and travel restrictions comes the online shopping. Almost all of us are now shopping for almost everything

online. And it cannot be avoided as we need to sustain ourselves. The online mode of transactions makes it easy to execute financial frauds. With the number of frauds rising in this sector, one cannot ignore caution and need to proceed with utmost care. Given the poor complaint redressal mechanism in India, it is imperative that we protect ourselves from these unscrupulous elements rather than trying for a recovery post being defrauded.

With so much happening around us, what are the alternatives available to us? Are the various investment schemes being floated are as safe and profitable as projected? We cannot ignore the Franklin Templeton fund crisis that happened quite recently. Also there are examples of numerous online frauds happening around us with alarming frequency. How do we keep our money safe in the current situation?

This is a tough time all of us are going through. But there are some simple steps that can be followed to ensure that we do not fall prey to unscrupulous elements and at the same time protect our wealth.

1. Never reveal/store your PIN or CVV: This is one of the most basic and common mistakes people do. Storing the details on the phone leaves you vulnerable to hacking.
2. Beware of debit and credit card cloning. Always ensure that the card is swiped in front of you and keep track of all the messages pertaining to the card usage.
3. Keep a close track of your credit card billing cycle and credit limit. Always ensure that the bill is paid on time. The penalty is usually steep and is an added burden in already stressed financial time.
4. Always type in the site address physically. Never use google search for the sites used for financial transactions. It may lead you to a phishing site.
5. Verify the credentials of the site before submitting e-KYC. There is a high chance that it is being used for phishing. Look for the security certificate of the web site in the browser.
6. Always use reputable and well known sites for on-line ordering. The new unknown site may be offering a very lucrative deal, but we cannot be sure of its authenticity. It's better to stick to a known site and pay a little extra rather than risking much more money for saving few.
7. Try to keep majority of your savings with a public sector bank. If going for private sector, ensure that the bank is reputed and is in good health. We all remember PMC and YES banks. Do not risk your entire savings for earning few percentages more interest.
8. Last but not the least, never be in a hurry to make any new investments however promising they may sound. Take your time, do the research. If the investment proposal sounds too good to be true, stay away from it. There is a high chance that it is a fraud.

Stay at home and stay safe.

**Usha Nochur**  
**PGPEX2020**

## Why should Institutes think about their customers, The Participants?

**Imagine** a dream. You paid for a ravishing Burberry Jacket. You swipe that shiny debit/credit card and take the package with gleaming eyes. You are too excited and open it immediately to satiate your desirous eyes once again. To your horror, the attractive bag (for which you paid a few extra bucks by the way) contains not your PRECIOUS. It contains a high-resolution image of your beloved jacket.

Perplexed, confused, and angry, you look up at the sales executive for answers. The executive smiles coyly and uneasily and goes on to say- "Well. You can also live-stream your favorite model wearing the same jacket by just scanning the QR code given at the back of that image. Oh, and you can change the colors as well. Have a beautiful day!!

You want to say a cuss word and tell that executive threateningly that you could have downloaded a prettier image yourself without paying the big bucks you just spent. But alas! Your dream snaps at that moment. You turn around to find that package kept on a chair in a corner. MBA students across the country are experiencing something similar right now. Okay, the story may have been an exaggeration. In all fairness, the administration and faculties of different MBA colleges are trying their best to tackle this unexpected scenario thrown up by Covid-19. However, the truth is, the students **paid for Product A and are getting Product Y**, which they do not want. The customers usually have the option to choose what they want, especially when they have paid for the product/service in question.

*Losing out the on-campus experience is like Batman losing out on his Batcave and having to make do from Commissioner Gordon's office*

### So, what could a B-School administration do?

#### Step one: Understand its participants.

Every student is different. Some participants may not have an adequate infrastructure at home to support an online curriculum, and some may lack emotional support from their families while others may not have the financial stability.

By identifying the condition of different participants, B-school admin can figure out how the service to these students could be ideally delivered. They can **differentiate their service** by tweaking the current delivery and modifying it to meet the needs of these different brackets of students.

#### Step two: Formulate options for delivering the service

##### Option 1: Continue with online classes and roll out funds for each student.

Every student could be given 20-30k to create an environment of e-learning. Depending on their needs, the participants can ensure internet connectivity and power backup, study tables and chairs, headphones, anti-glare specs, etc. Whatever would make the process of e-learning more conducive.

Providing 20-30k per student may sound like a big ask. But an institute which does this has a chance of doing the **unthinkable**. This institute can create a niche for itself not just in India, but across the globe. I can already see **Mad Over Marketing** doing a story on this move!

##### Option 2: Why not a "Drop year"

There could be a section of participants who would like to complete the second year of their two year MBA program in the next academic year. Not every student will opt for this decision, but those who want to should be allowed to do the same.

##### Option 3: Get a "Campus Calling" plan ready

The details of the participants' whereabouts should be ready. Participant details like the city, state, pin code, and their willingness to get back to the campus, should be collected.

Students can be called in batches depending on the situation of COVID in the state where the concerned institute is located. The students facing **infrastructure and connectivity** issues could be given priority. They could be followed by students having minimum touchpoints and are from safer states. All students will first be **quarantined** according to the respective state rules. The process will be long but can ensure that an entire year does not go online.

The on-campus experience is the USP of the program. Like the **gurukuls of fore**, a student lives in an atmosphere of learning for nearly two years. Away from the worldly distractions of family, friends, and society at large. Aided with world-class facilities like uninterrupted WIFI (still a privilege for many in India), resourceful libraries and e-libraries, corporate interactions, and **an enthusiastic peer** group who push each other to achieve greatness.

*The three options mentioned above are executable. All it requires is will. And the institute that shows this will, has a chance to get forever its name carved on the annals of time.*

## ALUM SPEAK

A New Star and a New Light.  
Time to See Things Differently?

COVID-19 is trending. It's giving tough competition to celebrities by hogging up all the limelight. All the 'woods', Holly, Bolly, Tolly, Molly, Kolly, Polly and also Jolly stand insecure to COVID especially considering its international celebrity status, that too without a single hired PR agent. While powerful men were busy setting the new rules for tomorrow, COVID has put all of the self-proclaimed decision makers and their aspirations under lockdown and there seems no retaliation any soon. Global economics has taken a Z-turn without any of the global bodies making any new laws or any B-School already discovering a new model to explain the paradigm shift. Education has been revolutionized too. Now all courses from LKG to PhD are part time and degrees can be available from the comfort of own houses. Culinary Arts is the new CAT of intelligent people. Perhaps CAT should consider adding a section on it next time, 'how to whistle the cat', if it is equally acceptable to non foodies as well.

Some technologists have taken up to their beards and their varying lengths as the new fields of experimentation and learning. Some say that the air has become so clean that you can actually see New York from New Delhi, Hong Kong from Mumbai and London from Shillong. Well, this is at least some solace to many high fi, dapper, biz grads from India with excellent english speaking skills and who couldn't bag an offshore placement this season. Many CFRNs (crises-forced-returning-NRIs) will also concur. May the forces be with you all. Socialising and relationships have taken a hit with the more generous partners (generous enough to date many simultaneously) having suffered the most. If only video conferencing could fulfil all the needs! And the list of wonders is endless.

This time of crises makes me wonder how used we had gotten to an unreal narrative of the world. Now that reality has crumbled and we wonder how to go ahead. Let's reflect and introspect. Most of us have been taught to measure progress only in certain dimensions. Be it career or financial stability or luxuries and comforts of material and social company or fame and popularity. It is still hard to believe that none of these are in our control anymore. Nature says it's high time to pay the bills. Humanity says it's high time to pay the bills. We are just getting to realise that all the fund

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was debt funded and we never cared to create any real assets. How many of us ever thought, what if I did not have access to all the privileged gifts of life? How many of us thought about working for those who actually never had such privileges? Could we as winners have thought better about the losers? Well a loss is never a loss until we can see a possibility of growth in it.

This reminds me of a story. It so happens that Duryodhana, the crown prince of Hastinapur consumed by jealousy towards his cousins the Pandavas plans to kill them off yet again. With the help of Purochana, the architect, and minister in the royal court of Hastinapur, Duryodhana succeeds in building a palace of lacquer in the forest. The plan is to set the volatile lacquer house on fire while it hosts the Pandavas in oblivion. This was meant to be a death trap, but by the Grace of the almighty Lord Sri Krishna, the situation transforms into a strategic advantage for the Pandavas and proves to be a major turning point in the course of events giving the Pandavas ample time in deception to plan their course of action. As per the plan, the Kauravas under Duryodhana invite the Pandavas to stay in the Lakshagraha or the lacquer house. Vidura, the great devotee of Sri Krishna senses the ploy and out of his wisdom, and compassion tries to warn of the Pandavas in Mleecha language. Sheltered by the Graceful Sri Krishna and facilitated by the wise Vidura, the Pandavas arrive at the Lakshagraha hosted by Purochana. From the very first day, Purochana tries to kill off the Pandavas. But Bhima's vigilance, especially in the night hours, ruins Purochana's plans repeatedly. Eventually on the night of Amavasya, taking advantage of the darkness the Pandavas escape the Lakshagriha in disguise. Vidura had managed to forge a tunnel from beneath the Lakshagriha leading straight to the safe banks of Ganga where a boat awaited the freedom of the Pandavas, while Purochana and his other guests succumbed to the treacherous fire of the Lakshagriha.

When bad times come, they bring up a fire in life. But while a piece of wood burns to ashes, the iron metal upgrades to steel. Such is the nature of divine grace.

Sri Krishna declares in the Bhagwat Gita,  
सर्वधर्मात्स्वर्ज्यमामेकं शरणं ब्रज | अहं त्वांसवर्पिभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः || 66||

Abandoning all futile attempts of the body, mind, and intellect, take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not.

Prayers for your safety and wellbeing.



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