



CREATING EMERGING MARKETS: PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING

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Interviewed by Makena Binker Cosen

MBC: *Thanks again for joining us to discuss the Creating Emerging Markets Project. Could you please introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your background as an educator?*

CT: Hi, my name is Chinmay Tumble. I am a faculty member in the economics department of the Indian Institute of Management – Ahmedabad, which is a management school in Western India, in the state of Gujarat. I've been here for about six years, but previous to that I was working at another university. I was also the Alfred D. Chandler Jr. International Visiting Scholar at Harvard Business School in 2018. I broadly work on the interface of business and economic history, urban economics and migration studies, and have been in academia for about ten years now. I have also worked in Italy, the UK, and the US in academic, corporate, and governmental organizations.

MBC: *Could you tell us how were you introduced to the Creating Emerging Markets Project and how you started using the interviews in a classroom setting?*

CT: I think the first time I heard about it was at an event Harvard Business School organized in Mumbai in 2017. At that event, Geoffrey Jones and the team out there introduced the idea of the Creating Emerging Markets Project, and it was very well thought-out. I was very new to the world of oral histories, which is what the project does.

As a method, concept, and platform, I was deeply inspired by it. And I must say that I have my own oral history projects, one which is already online and one which is in progress. They use CEM as a template. I clearly saw the value and I've used it in different ways in my program. But I would say that it's also spawned new projects.

MBC: *You'll have to tell us more about your projects so we can include them as resources. Did you start using the interviews directly as a resource with students?*

CT: I think that for students, the most important bit is having the video clips. I think the videos work very well in the classroom. They are not very long, just a few minutes, and I often use them in classrooms to veer our discussions around what the person in the video is saying. In that sense, there have probably been more than a thousand students in my elective classes over the last four or five years who have been exposed to the Creating Emerging Markets Project.

One potential for use is as a resource for work on assignments. They also work more specifically for themes and discussion points. I teach a course called the “Hitchhiker's Guide to Business and Economies across Five Centuries,” which is basically on global business history. This resource works very well in it. Instead of me saying something about business in Latin America or Africa for example, there’s a great connect when you see an entrepreneur who's been a business leader for decades say even a few things.

People see how this person looks and speaks and there’s been a great connect for students who come from different backgrounds. It’s been great. Of course, the interviews in India are obviously of interest, but I’ve seen the value of all because the interviews are so broad based. I teach two courses; one is a history course, and the other on urban economics. I have used, for example, the videos of [Jaithirth Rao](#), who started a housing company. He talks a lot about real estate and the problems with corruption and regulation. So that's worked very well in the classroom.

MBC: *Can you give us an example of a video clip that you used in your history course as well?*

CT: There’s a lot about about India's license Raj system and constraints to economic growth in the seventies and eighties. The two interviews I use the most are of [Rahul Bajaj](#) and [Jaithirth Rao](#). Both of them talk about what happened in the past and provide a nice sense of the history. I think the stories work well. They’ve been used to veer discussions around important themes in Indian business history, for instance. That's for the history course. For urban economics, you have Bajaj looking back on that. I like to show segments from Latin America and Africa as well that are shuffled across time periods. It’s been important to show these in the classroom.

MBC: *For teachers and professors thinking about how they can develop their own curricula, can you give examples of what kind of other teaching resources you pair the videos with? I'm sure that the videos are a talking point, but what are you also using as teaching resources during the lessons?*

CT: Typically, it’s a combination. There are many things in the history course to pair with the interviews. For example, it could be a case, a book chapter, or an article. There’s a variety of media that could go with them. It could be a documentary video which is required before class. The videos are often paired with other clips from YouTube, which feature other people. You thus have one viewpoint and then a different one from somewhere else. That's another way in which the interviews are used here in the classroom.

MBC: *How has the way you use the videos changed from the very first time you showed them in the classroom to today?*

CT: Let's just say that in the online world, it's become much simpler. Before, I would pause my presentation in order to check for many things. Now, sharing my screen with sound on has become such a simple functionality. It's seamless. It's actually cut down the transaction cost and time of using these videos in the classroom tremendously. Since I'm in front of the computer, I just have to move from one screen to another. Whereas in the classroom, a physical setting, I'm walking around and have to go back to manage the console and all that. In that sense, the online world makes it even simpler to use this audio-visual content in the classroom.

MBC: *Has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced your approach to teaching, whether it's in regards to using these interviews or otherwise?*

CT: Broadly speaking, I don't think there has really been that much of a change. But I do think that it's easier and maybe I'm using a few more videos than I would have.

MBC: *In terms of using these as talking points, can you expand a little bit on student reactions to the videos?*

CT: It's interesting. I've talked about two of the interviews, and [Jerry Rao](#) is also an alumnus of our business school. There's an obvious connection there. Regarding the Bajaj interview, I especially use the video clip on [family business](#) for our discussions on the topic. Bajaj is well known in India as having been a very forthright, outspoken guy, especially against different governments. Very few business leaders do that. The minute he's on screen, there's a clear connection because the students know him. With business leaders that the students aren't as familiar with from other regions such as Latin America, I need to provide some more background, but I think it's useful and important for people to hear them speak.

MBC: *Who would you recommend the CEM interviews and resources to?*

CT: I think they work very well in virtually any course, whether it's management, international business strategy, or history such as with my course. I have shared the resource across our faculty and there were people who expressed to me the joy of having this available. There is great value for international business, a course which essentially every management school in the world teaches. Another major value I would say it has is in courses focused on increasing the number of women in business, as there are phenomenal female leaders who have been interviewed.

MBC: *Do you have any final suggestions for educators considering using the CEM resources, from how they can approach the database to how they can use interviews to guide discussions?*

CT: It'd be great to have a video playlist function to make it even more seamless. Using the videos in the classroom has worked really well for me. It's been a very enjoyable experience, to show two-minute videos and then have a discussion after. It sorts our class time really nicely. I have used the videos both at the beginning and end of class. That way, we start off our discussion with the clip and can then show a different point of view at the end.

MBC: *You touched on this with the playlist function, but what developments would you like to see from the Creating Emerging Markets Project in the future?*

CT: It would be great to have a CV in addition to the bio of each person, and it would be lovely to have photographs of that individual from the past – a photo gallery. That adds a really nice visual element, and a photo archive could be of interest to historians. I think the transcripts have been fantastic and accessible. With new videos added over time, you can let educators know with newsletters.

We have the [IIMA archives](#) and an oral history project which has some interesting videos. It's our institutional memory. You will see how we have the Dean of Harvard Business School, [Srikant Datar's interview](#), as he is an alumnus of our school. This interview collection is a project that's been inspired by CEM. These interviews work quite nicely at our business school as well going forward. The database has the same outline with the video snippets. It's been inspired by CEM directly and some of these video snippets are also being used in the classroom as a way to connect students with our own history.

MBC: *To wrap up, could you say a few words about the value CEM has for educators, students and beyond?*

CT: I think the Creating Emerging Markets Project has been a fantastic exercise in tapping into the memories of important leaders around the world. It's a terrific tool not only for management schools but any department which wants to connect with various aspects of business. It's not just history as it can connect with international business strategy, marketing, finance – a variety of themes.

It's a very powerful medium because students see business leaders talk to them, so to speak, in the classroom. I've used the interviews in courses at IIMA for many years now, and it's always a pleasure to see students' eyes light up when they are introduced to an entrepreneur they've never known before from around the world, and then have discussions about them. I'm a huge fan of CEM and I should say that it has inspired projects of my own as well.