



Leadership in Participant-Centered Learning

Proposal of docent Jiri Hnilica, Ph.D.

Background

I am an associate professor at the Department of Business Administration, University of Economics, Prague, Czech Republic. In September 2007 I was appointed to the position of Deputy Director of the Department. At the University of Economics, Prague for more than three years I have been involved in CEMS MIM program (Master's in International Management) where I teach a core course (Principles of Managerial Finance) and an elective one (Risk Analysis and Financial Modeling). Within CEMS networking activities I participate in Entrepreneurial Finance course together with Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi, Italy (for its success we came to London School of Economics with this course last year).

A detour: CEMS is a strategic alliance of academic and business leaders. In the Financial Times' international ranking of the best Masters in Management programs, the CEMS MIM ranks number 2 overall, with a first place on value for money, alumni international mobility and international faculty. Currently this joint degree is run in a network of 17 leading European business schools supported by 55 Corporate Partners. The CEMS MIM is designed to give multilingual graduate students from the member schools a unique blend of high-quality education and business focus, and equip them with the skills to thrive in an international environment. Students are required to spend one or two semesters abroad in a CEMS class at other schools in the network and to complete an internship abroad. Link: www.cems.org

From this introduction it is more than evident, that to be involved in this course is a challenge. I am regularly evaluated by students – the results are always discussed at CEMS Meeting of Academic Directors where necessary measures are taken, I am regularly in contact with industry to seek and then to solve the business projects with students and companies.

It's been only a couple of weeks since I was offered to become the Academic Director of this program at the University of Economics, Prague. In May I will be officially introduced to CEMS executives as the successor of current CEMS Academic Director Helena Sedláčková (see her reference letter). Because of this challenging opportunity – which I definitively do not intend to pass by – I decided for a form of intensive training and an internship at some outstanding American business schools.

First I would like to take part in the course at Harvard Business School described below which is in a perfect alliance with my needs. Then I would like to stay for about three months at Daniels College of Business, University of Denver, Denver with my colleagues whom I know from my previous visits to Denver (see below) so that I could practice skills from my home university and of course from Harvard Business School and to compare how studying programs in general (both Master's and executive MBA) are run in the US.

American Partners

My partners are Harvard Business School for *my executive training* (European Entrepreneurship Colloquium on Participant-Centered Learning) and University of Denver, Daniels College of Business for *my internship*.

Harvard Business School (HBS): HBS is considered as one of the best business school worldwide. The European Entrepreneurship Colloquium on Participant-Centered Learning I would like to take part in is an eight-day intensive residential program designed for entrepreneurship faculty members who will play major roles in leading curricula development and research in their respective institutions over the next decade. The focus of the colloquium is on participant-centered learning, with a particular emphasis on case teaching, course development, and the efforts required to introduce participant-centered learning methods into a more conventionally taught curriculum. The colloquium will take place on the HBS campus in Boston. For my purposes there is no better suiting course than this one worldwide. The course takes place on July 18–25, 2008 and costs \$4,250 US. Link: <http://www.exed.hbs.edu/programs/eecpcl/>

University of Denver (DU): I have been to Denver already twice (2006 and 2007), always only for a couple of days attending the Crystal Ball User conference organized by Decisioneering, Inc., a company which produces well-known simulation software named Crystal Ball (now this company is a part of Oracle) which I extensively use in my teaching and research. Shortly before my first visit to Denver – completely incidentally – I had the opportunity to meet Joan Winn, a professor from DU – during her stay at my home University in Prague. We first met when she delivered a case study seminar in Prague. Then we met for a very short of time again in Denver in 2006 and 2007. In 2007 she introduced me to her colleagues from Department of Finance with similar research and teaching interests to mine. After many discussions we all came to the conclusion that my stay at DU might prove very helpful for both sides (see invitation letter enclosed). The reasons are: Daniels College of Business organizes teaching mostly in forms of Participant-Centered Learning (for compliance see HBS course above) and in courses which I teach at my home university. Therefore there is an evident benefit for me – to see how they teach and to teach this way myself at leading US business school. For their side as prof. Michael E. Williams (teaching Entrepreneurial Finance) and prof. Thomas Cook (teaching Financial Modeling) expressed there is a clear benefit to have an access to up-to-date case studies for their teaching from Europe which I will write. Link: <http://www.daniels.du.edu/>

Objectives

Advanced development of my leadership skills in participant-centered learning needed for my (prospective) positions at the University of Economics, Prague.

Detailed Description

As a teacher and a prospective academic director in a highly-demanding study program CEMS MIM I need to develop further my skills for successful work in this field. Although I am quite experienced in teaching (in CEMS scoring last winter I reached 4.8 out of max 5) and in leading a department (as deputy director) there is always room for improvement, considering still relatively low competition in Czech business education. Taking on the CEMS MIM program, I am getting ready for increased competition in the Czech business education. It helps that this program is attended by high expectations and demands from students, about half of which is foreign. First to take part in one of the best courses for academics focused on case teaching and course

development and second to spend a semester at very good American business school and experience the way one should and is supposed to teach personally. Moreover the people I am in contact with at DU belong to those who intensively publish case studies and of course teach using them.

Organization and Time Schedule

There is a slight mismatch in timing of executive training at HBS and the beginning of the semester at DU. Therefore the organization of my stay might be split ideally in the following way .

Boston (HBS): July, 16 – 27, 2008

Denver (DU): September, 15 – December, 20, 2008

I would arrive to Boston for the executive training which takes place July 18–25, 2008, i.e. my expected arrival to Boston about July, 16 and my expected departure on July, 27. Then I have to return back to the Czech Republic because I can stay at DU sensibly from the beginning of semester, i.e. from mid-September. I would leave shortly before Christmas 2008.

Program Benefits

At this point I can hardly find any other project that could better suit my needs in terms of by me perceived required improvements, i.e. in leadership skills for my prospective position as CEMS MIM Academic Director. Although University of Economics is the top university in business and economics education in the Czech Republic it must strive a lot to become an above average university in the EU. What I consider still insufficient is the “international dimension” and rather conventional teaching methods. With my new position I can and will be able to target both areas and at least contribute to strengthen the position of the University of Economics in Prague which has been opening to Europe and which will be facing ever tougher competition.