

An Interview with CEEMAN Champions 2013

By Milenko Gudić

Following its commitment to promote and reward outstanding achievements in the areas considered as critical for the success in business education and management development, CEEMAN launched its fourth CEEMAN Champion Awards competition in 2013. The winners of the CEEMAN Champion Awards 2013 are:

- *Poh-Sun Seow and Suay-Peng Wong, Singapore management University, in Innovative pedagogy*
- *George A. Kohlrieser, IMD-Lausanne, Switzerland, in Teaching Excellence*
- *Miha Škerlavaj and Matej Černe, Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, in Research*
- *Sergey Mordovin, IMISP St Petersburg, Russia, in Institutional Management*

The awards were announced and delivered at the gala dinner of the 21st CEEMAN Annual Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia 27 September.

Traditionally, CEEMAN interviews represent opportunities for CEEMAN readership to learn more from those whose achievements and experiences could offer learning lessons of a broader value. For this reason, we asked the 2013 Champions to respond to the questions that were relevant for the respective areas of their excellence, business education and leadership development in general. CEEMAN Champions are among those from whom we can get first-hand insights into their personal and institutional success stories and therefore also an inspiration for our own strives for excellence and outstanding achievements. We also wanted to understand from their perspective how these awards were perceived in their respective institutions.

CEEMAN Interview with the 2013 CEEMAN Champions Poh-Sun Seow and Suay-Peng Wong

Milenko Gudić: In your nomination for the CEEMAN Champion Awards in innovative pedagogy, Singapore Management University emphasized that you have already received numerous teaching awards. The innovation that was in the center of your nomination is the Accounting Challenge (ACE) – Mobile-Gaming Application for Learning Accounting. What was the inspiration for introducing game and fun into the accounting learning process? How important was your perception and knowledge of students' needs and preferences? How important was the understanding and support that you received from your institution for the development of the innovation?

Poh-Sun Seow and Suay-Peng Wong: We were often told by students that they would appreciate additional resources to help them strengthen their foundation in accounting. At Singapore Management University (SMU), we believe that learning does not stop as students leave the classroom. We saw the potential of mobile

learning as almost every student nowadays has a smartphone. We also wanted to make learning fun and livelier as we believe that people learn the best when they are having fun. Thus, we developed a mobile-gaming application: Accounting Challenge (ACE).

ACE aims to enhance the learning of accounting outside the classroom by engaging students in playing and learning accounting on the go. We want to generate interest in, and motivation for, our digital-savvy students beyond a theoretical study of accounting. After the launch of ACE, people were surprised that we had actually created a mobile-gaming application based on accounting. We hope that we have changed the perception that accounting is a dry and boring subject.

We are fortunate to have a very supportive dean, Prof. Yang-Hoong Pang, who always encourages us to develop new innovations to engage students. She supported our application for a teaching pedagogy grant from the SMU Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE). We are also grateful for the funding and support from CTE. Without



Poh-Sun Seow

Prof. Pang and CTE, ACE would not have been possible.

MG: An important asset of ACE is its potential to be used as a platform in other accounting modules at your school or other departments at the SMU. In addition, there is a growing interest in this application in other countries. We saw that ACE was well received also at IMTA in 2013. What have you already done and what are your future plans in this respect?

PSS and SPW: We recently organized the inaugural SMU Accounting Challenge 2013 in September 2013. The competition was sponsored by the Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants. It started with two days of preliminary rounds, where students tried to score as high as possible while playing ACE on iPads at booths. The top-six scorers proceeded to compete in the Grand Finals. We were happy with the success of the competition and hope to invite other universities in Singapore to join the competition next year.

SMU CTE told us that faculty from other schools in SMU were interested in our ACE application. CTE is considering making ACE the common platform for rolling out similar fast-paced trivia-style quiz-format games in other disciplines.

We are also currently working on our next version of ACE. Students indicated in a survey that they wished to play and learn without any time pressure. Currently, students have 100 seconds for each game session. The next version of ACE will include a practice mode with the timer, score, and leader board turned off.

MG: As in any other profession, achieving excellence in teaching, requires, talent, a lot of efforts, passion, as well as continuous learning and self-development. Faculty development efforts aimed at improving teaching skills play an important role. Your institution is well known for its efforts and achievements through the activities of the Teaching Excellence Center. On the other hand, your faculty members regularly attend CEEMAN's International Management Teachers Academy. As an IMTA alumnus, how do you see the complementarity of the programs carried out within

an institution and those that are inter-institutional and international in approach and nature, such as IMTA?

PSS: I am proud to be an IMTA alumnus. The IMTA program has been a memorable experience and I have benefitted much from it. I will strongly encourage my colleagues in SMU to join the IMTA program and be part of this supportive IMTA network.

This year, there were 28 participants from 21 institutions in 17 countries. The diversity of the participants was amazing. It allows all of us to learn from one another. Everyone was eager to learn and generous to share his experiences. It gave me a lot of opportunities to interact with many people from different countries and cultures. This is not possible for a program carried out within a single institution. It is also a privilege to learn from a team of internationally-renowned professors. I am very impressed by the dedication and passion of the organizing committee and the professors. All of them were very committed. I can see from their high energy level and infectious enthusiasm that they were so happy to be there with us.

Going away for an international program such as IMTA allows me to step back from the daily routines and immerse fully in the program. IMTA is held in Bled, Slovenia which is a beautiful and peaceful place for self-reflection. It is an excellent venue for holding a faculty development program. I treasured the opportunity to reflect on my teaching philosophy and my role and responsibilities as an educator. I was able to slow down, reflect on my teaching journey and improve my teaching skills.

MG: You and other CEEMAN 2013 Champions have already received a number of prestigious awards and recognition for your past achievements. In this context, how do you view the CEEMAN Champion Award that you have just received? Related to this is the question of how this award was perceived by your colleagues and the institution as a whole? This is not the first time that faculty from SMU have received a CEEMAN Champion Award.

Suay-Peng Wong



SPW: We are honored to have received the CEEMAN Champion Award. It is an encouragement, not only for us but also for our colleagues at SMU CTE who worked with us, to develop the application, as well as for our colleagues at the School of Accountancy who gave us a lot of support. We hope that CEEMAN member institutions will also find the application useful for their students. It would be fantastic if it could trigger further ideas to promote the quality of education and innovations in teaching.

Our colleagues and SMU are very proud of this recognition by CEEMAN. SMU, through the CTE, has been working with faculty members to enhance teaching quality. The award will certainly encourage us to create more innovative learning tools that will make learning livelier. We hope that in the future, we can develop applications that have cross-faculty content.

CEEMAN Interview with the 2013 CEEMAN Champion George Kohlrieser:

Milenko Gudić: George, in your nomination for CEEMAN Champion Awards in Teaching Excellence IMD-Lausanne stated a high value of your research-based approach to teaching. Your best-selling book "Hostage at the Table" and the latest book "Care to Dare" are good examples of this. What are the additional dimensions that you succeed achieving by integrating your research into teaching on leadership and organizational development?

George Kohlrieser: Teaching leadership for me is about harnessing the energy of people and inspiring them towards a common goal to enhance the individual, the team, the organization and, ultimately, to make the world a better place. Through my teaching, I hope to show how a Secure Base Leadership style, as described in my books, unleashes the full potential of the individual, the team, and the organization. This is done by creating programs that introduce participants to the mindset and behaviours that characterize a Secure Base Leader and bring them to their own leadership realities through pedagogical techniques such as short lectures, role play, small and large group dialogues, coaching and other action learning activities. The research is essential to be at the "cutting edge" of leadership theory and application.

MG: Another key element in your innovative and inspirational approach to teaching is coaching. How much did you find does coaching contribute to the long-term impact on the development of high performance leaders, and what is the feedback on the role of coaching that you receive from the participants of your programs?

GK: Coaching is an adjunct to the classroom experience and a key to the integration of



George Kohlrieser

learning and the long-term impact on leadership behaviour. Coaching guides participants through the learning process and enhances the individual and the group. Through facilitated small group work, participants get hands-on feedback and intensive practice. With the support of a highly experienced team of coaches, with whom I have worked for many years, we put priority on the needs of each individual in the group. Using these intense facilitated small group work activities, participants gain feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, attitudes and behaviors, and thus raise internal and external awareness. In a recent research project conducted to analyze the long-term impact of the program, the coaching structure was consistently identified as key to behavioural learnings. We often get feedback that this model is "life changing" and "transformational" which touches on the personal as well as the professional aspects of leadership.

MG: Faculty development has become an increasingly important issue in business schools worldwide. Most of the efforts, however, are focused on improving and promoting research capabilities and outputs, while teaching skills (and even performance in the classroom, and impact made) are somehow being neglected and/or left to the individuals to develop by themselves. CEEMAN's International Management Teachers Academy (IMTA), while focusing on teaching, is structured around the multiple roles of faculty – the "magical diamond" that combines teaching, research, consultancy, and institution building activities. Based on your own experience, what was the "magic" that the other three components of the diamond produced for your teaching, and what was the "magic" that your teaching created for your research, consultancy and institution-building activities?

GK: Teaching excellence in content and delivery for IMD and for me personally is the foundation that supports all other activities. Teaching is a starting point for opening up a desire for lifelong learning and builds on each stage of an individual's development. Excellence in teaching is essential for inspiring a drive for lifelong learn-

ing. This has a profound impact on teams and organizations to always be concerned with all talent development especially talent development in leadership competences. A magic bullet is to create an environment in the classroom where participants feel safe to access the most challenging intellectual and emotional aspects of learning. Participants need to have an emotional experience that embeds the learning into the brain and into their repertoire of behaviors. This emphasis on the emotional aspects of learning is the most critical; participants need to feel an experience emotionally to incorporate the ideas in themselves and others. When this happens in an ongoing lifelong learning process, the leader is always growing developing talent.

MG: You and the other CEEMAN 2013 Champions have already received a number of prestigious awards and recognition for your past achievements. In this context, how do you experience the CEEMAN Champion Award that you have just received? Related to this is the question on how was this award perceived by your colleagues and the institution as a whole? This is not the first time that faculty from IMD received CEEMAN Champion Award.

GK: To be recognized by such a prestigious organization as CEEMAN and all the faculty represented by its member schools is an extraordinary honor. As a result of receiving this award, so many colleagues both at IMD and around the world have contacted me to offer their personal and heartfelt congratulations. At IMD, our approach to executive education is to always remain at the cutting edge of personal and professional development. I am passionate about teaching leadership and I am supported in this mission by the IMD community and the CEEMAN Teaching Excellence award is deeply inspiring to me and to IMD.

CEEMAN Interview with the 2013 CEEMAN Champions Miha Škerlavaj and Matej Černe

Milenko Gudić: In its nomination for the CEEMAN Champion Awards in research, the Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana (FELU) emphasized your contribution to a better understanding of issues related to knowledge, creativity, and innovation management. The CEEMAN Champion Awards committee found your research highly relevant for both the corporate world and the business education and management development industry. What are the key recommendations and messages for these two groups that you would derive from the findings of the impressive research that you have carried out in the last 10 years?

Miha Škerlavaj: It might sound as a cliché, yet knowledge, creativity, and innovation have long been recognized as significant drivers of organi-

zational performance. Hence, in the research domain is logical to strive to understand and manage drivers, mechanisms, and conditions that facilitate these three closely interrelated phenomena. Our corporate partners are primarily interested in the "how" aspect. And we are responding to such calls by examining the role of the human factor within the knowledge management and innovation processes at work. We emphasize the role of leaders in creating innovative cultures and human resource management practices that support knowledge-sharing and innovation. We also point out the importance of motivational climates that mitigate the costs of knowledge hiding and the need to set up learning networks while exposing less tangible non-technological types of innovations. While we use a set of rigorous methods, the relevant part that motivates our reasoning is always at the back of our minds.

In terms of the implications of our work for business education and management development, we are satisfied with the fact that these topics have a stronghold at most key players around the globe. Unfortunately, there is also a great deal of rhetoric and one-size-fits-all solutions in circulation. This is the inevitable destiny of many popular concepts. We see the role of business schools in combining evidence-based research with experiential learning in the development and implementation of meaningful knowledge, creativity, and innovation management programs.

MG: Research is a continuous journey that helps us discover new things and develop a new body of knowledge. At the same time, new areas and avenues for further research are identified. What do you see at this point in time as new avenues for further research that would build on your previous work, but would also further improve the overall understanding of the role of knowledge, creativity, and innovation management for the knowledge-based economy that is ahead of us?

Matej Černe: Conditions in the business environment evolve and change is the only constant. We therefore definitely perceive research as an

Miha Škerlavaj



ever-changing and evolving process focused on phenomena that have the potential to provide some additional explanatory insight into knowledge, creativity, and innovation management, and thereby add to the existing body of knowledge. Some new areas of research that we are currently involved in include a multi-level understanding of the phenomena in question. We are interested in the conditions for successful fostering of creativity and innovation. For example, we want to look not only at top-down processes but also bottom-up: how specific processes of idea generation and idea championing emerge from the individual to the team level, influencing team-driven innovation. Related to this research avenue is a very recent inquiry, indicating that highly creative ideas and their frequent exhibition actually result in lower levels of idea implementation, whereby moderately creative ideas get implemented to the utmost extent. How to boost the implementation of highly creative ideas remains a very interesting and important research avenue, as this could potentially lead to high gains in organizations.

After making a name for ourselves by publishing a study on the consequences of knowledge hiding in terms of creativity (a forthcoming article in *The Academy of Management Journal*: "What goes around comes around: Knowledge hiding, perceived motivational climate, and creativity"), we will in the future be involved in research on the conditions that foster this undesirable phenomenon in organizations and focus on what can be done about it so as to prevent it. In relation to the understanding of proactive organizational behavior phenomena at the individual level, we see pro-social motivation and other-oriented behaviors as promising avenues for future research that could help achieve high levels of an effective knowledge-based economy, both economically and in terms of human well-being.

On a more macro perspective, the empirical investigation of non-technological aspects of innovation is a promising new avenue for future research, as this has long been an overlooked factor in the predominantly techno-centric literature on innovation. Our forthcoming European Management Review paper ("Management innovation in focus: The role of knowledge exchange, organizational size, and IT system development") on the antecedents of management innovation (i.e. innovation in everything that managers do, such as structures, processes, and relationships) is a prime example of this emerging research stream.

MG: Academic research in dynamic societies is still lagging behind management research in established economies. Your research achievements demonstrate that the situation could be improved. How do you see the research potential in dynamic societies and what do business



Matej Černe

schools and their associations need to do to close the gap? In this respect, it would be interesting to learn more from you about the advantages of team work and joint research in general.

MŠ: Research is inevitably a global business where context matters a lot. Both of us have been fortunate enough to be able to stand on the shoulders of several generations of colleagues at FELU. Quite some time ago they recognized the need to open up, internationalize, and gradually create a strong culture of academic knowledge creation and dissemination. It is necessary to invest and reinvest resources, limited as they may be, in high-quality research, and actively integrate into international networks of scholars.

It is hard to generalize across all CEEMAN member countries about the potential for research improvement. Drawing on the Slovenian experience, and comparing it to my current Norwegian one, I would say that the main difference is in the absence of critical mass. With evidently limited resources - human and financial - it is hard to expect excellence in all areas of research activity. I see the potential for academic research institutions and associations from dynamic societies in filling deep global niches. This can be done by identifying where we already have a good starting point and by using our advantage in terms of speed, flexibility, and resourcefulness.

Having said this, I also know that in some other member countries, my colleagues are struggling with issues of a much more basic nature, such as inability to access scientific literature. On the bright side, I meet many truly talented scholars from our part of the world who have great research careers in established institutions. Having them help develop institutions at home would be a good solution. China and its program of "turtles" returning home, flexible arrangements for researchers, and inward and radical internationalization are some of the measures that can be used to close the gap with leading research establishments.

On a more personal note, we see our work as a team sport. The level of specialization has gone

so far that research teams in the management field need to master various disciplines - psychology, sociology, economics, and more. They need to know the relevant theories and have contacts with highly specialized methodologists from the quantitative and qualitative camps. They need access to data and to people with ideas, as well as to those who can implement them. This is simply too much for one person to handle. Research collaboration provides professional competence complementarity but it requires a good deal of personal fit. They work when they are fun.

MG: You and the other CEEMAN 2011 Champions have already received a number of prestigious awards and recognition for your past achievements. In this context, how do you view the CEEMAN Champion Award that you have just received? Related to this is the question of how your colleagues at your institution perceived your award. This is not the first time that researchers from the FELU have been distinguished by the CEEMAN Champion Awards committee.

MČ: Receiving the CEEMAN Champions Research Award was a great honor. For us researchers, to be recognized for what we do and love to do is very satisfactory. CEEMAN is really a worldwide network of institutions and individuals with an impressive tradition of 20 years. It was a great pleasure not only to receive the award, but also to be a part of the anniversary celebrations and networking with wonderful, ambitious, and accomplished individuals from all over the world.

The value of receiving the CEEMAN Champions Award was perhaps even more recognized within the FELU context, as our colleagues were already more familiar with it. We received nothing but sincere well-intentioned congratulations from our colleagues. And personally, even though I have participated in teaching and research processes at the FELU for the last six years, I have been employed full-time at the FELU only since this October. Before that, I was with the Centre of Excellence COBIK, co-founded by FELU and a couple of other research institutions and hi-tech companies. Therefore, the award also helped with my recognition at the FELU and enabled my colleagues to get to know me better. It gives me great pleasure not only to witness the growth and development of the research culture at the FELU, in Slovenia in general, and in the CEEMAN institutional network, but also to participate in it. At the same time, we view this award, as all those that we have received before, - as an inducement for our forthcoming effort to better understand the science and practice of people at work.

CEEMAN Interview with the 2013 CEEMAN Champion Sergey Mordovin

Milenko Gudić: Sergey, when IMISP was established back in 1989 it was the first business schools in St Petersburg and one of the first in Russia as a whole. What was your vision at the time and what institution-building and institutional management philosophy and strategy did you develop and implement to achieve the aspirations and objectives related to the initial vision? In this connection, how important was the international collaboration aspect, which you demonstrated through the collaboration with Bocconi, as well as through your involvement and support of CEEMAN?

Sergey Mordovin: That time we were all too naive and believed it was possible to become one of the ten best business schools in Europe by the year 2000. To be frank, we realized our vision but within Russia first of all because of the collaboration with SDA Bocconi. Our Italian friends taught us a lot, they trained our faculty members, set accounting system etc. However, we realized soon that it was necessary to find equal partners who shared our ideas and fully understood our problems. CEEMAN helped us a lot in finding such friend in Eastern part of Europe. We've got a lot of partnerships through "CEEMANNET". We also formulated our key strategic postulates: independence, niche strategy, Russian market priority, self-support, own resources. We try to follow these principles today as well.

MG: At the 21st CEEMAN Annual Conference on Business Schools as Responsible Change Agents: From Transition to Transformation, you led a session on how business schools need to change in order to benefit their customers, societies and management education as a profession. You addressed the participants of the international conference on Entrepreneurship and Business Education in Emerging World, held at IAB in Almaty. On both occasions you emphasized that business schools need to improve their relevance. What are the main challenges and opportunities related to this from the point of view

Sergey Mordovin



of business schools' leadership and institutional management?

SM: It is very important that we have a clear vision from several points of view:

- 1. Who are our dominant stakeholders: professors, individual managers, companies, founders?**
- 2. What particular products are we going to provide to the markets: research, skills trainings, basic education, development, values change?**
- 3. What is the most appropriate format of our organization to meet the above mentioned requirements?**
- 4. What are the best management practices to be used?**

Unfortunately, the vast majority of so-called business schools even do not think about these trivial questions practicing a dogmatic traditional academic approach. Thus, to my understanding the key challenge for us is to design our own unique way and restructure all the organization accordingly.

MG: IMISP was the first school to receive CEEMAN International Quality Accreditation – IQA, a prestigious international award for the overall institutional excellence. It was also among the first Russian schools to receive AMBA, as a program accreditation. We have been witnessing that Russian schools tend to give preference to the program rather than to the institutional accreditation. Do you believe there are any specific reasons for this? Based on your experience, what are the main benefits from the institutional accreditation process and award in the context of business education and management development in Russia?

SM: We believed 25 years ago and still believe that "quality is about customers/stakeholders satisfaction". That is it. All the discussions about the number of publications, modern technology, etc. have nothing with quality. If there is no queue of clients dreaming to get your product, you are providing the market with something it does not need, thus not quality. IQA is probably the best quality control system which allows to assess quality in market terms. We are very proud to be the first school assessed by IQA due to the above mentioned approach. Fortunately nowadays in Russia, more and more business organizations share such a view point of quality and I strongly believe that business society in the nearest future will take such institutional accreditations as IQA as a vital proof of the high quality of schools' products.

MG: You personally and IMISP have already received a number of prestigious national and international awards. IMISP's high positioning in the respective national and international

business schools rankings further contributes to the overall recognition of the past results of IMISP. In this context, how do you experience the 2013 CEEMAN Champion Award for institutional management? What does it mean for IMISP as a whole?

SM: I really felt happy and my colleagues in IMISP shared this feeling because we believe it is the evidence of our effectiveness in last 25 years.