

ESADE: A CIVIC INSTITUTION

IN 1959 A SCHOOL WAS OPENED IN CATALONIA WITH THE OBJECT OF MAKING THE ART OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT A SUBJECT FOR ACADEMIC STUDY. OVER THE YEARS, THIS SCHOOL HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT ACADEMIC INSTITUTION WHICH SETS OUT TO COMBINE ITS WISH TO SERVE WITH A RIGOROUS SCIENTIFIC APPROACH, ITS DESIRE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH SERIOUS STUDY AND RESEARCH.



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On 1959, when a group of leading figures in the Barcelona business world reached an agreement for the establishment of a business school in collaboration with the Society of Jesus, the word "empresarial" hadn't yet been approved by the Spanish Royal Academy.

34 students started the new five-year course (BBA and MBA) in 1959, amidst the scepticism of those who questioned the idea of making business management a subject of academic study to be endorsed with a qualification.

Thirty years later, the "Escola Superior d'Administració i Direcció d'Empreses", ESADE, is an establishment housed in four buildings (three in Barcelona and one in Madrid) covering more than 16,000 square metres, teaches business management programmes to 3,000 students from all of Spain's Autonomous communities and more than thirty countries, has a Languages Department with more than 400 courses, has more than 1,300 participants following training courses in their companies, and cannot satisfy the avalanche of entry applications it receives.

This development demonstrates a fact and a reality. The fact is that, like so many other important institutions in Catalonia, ESADE is the result of an initiative on the part of Catalan civil society, which wanted to find the right answer to a need arising in the Catalan economic and business world.

The desire to rationalize a series of business organizations which had their beginnings in an age of autarchy explains two of ESADE's particular characteristics: the wide range of courses and programmes it offers and their adaptation

to reality, reflected in the constantly evolving contents. To the central courses –the five year Bachelor in Business Administration plus Master in Business Administration, Master in Business Administration for university graduates, Master in International Management– are added the functional area studies for candidates with business experience, the specialist programmes in hospital management and public administration, business creation programmes, courses for executives, language courses, etcetera.

But as well as being a teaching centre of recognized prestige, ESADE –both in its origins and in its role in society– is a truly civic institution. This is the result of a series of characteristics which have shaped the nature of the school over the last thirty years.

Rigorousness and training were two of the initial requirements in the founding of ESADE. This is reflected both in the decision to organize full-length programmes devoted exclusively to business management from the beginning, and in the mechanisms for the selection and appointment of teaching staff and their devotion to research.

The pluralism which can be seen in the teaching staff, selected according to criteria of academic rigour and respect for the thinking, beliefs and ideology of others, who share and respect a series of values which go beyond individual differences: the spirit of service, training and Christian inspiration.

Its broad-minded approach to society, economics and politics made ESADE an ideal platform for a wide range of democratic options, in spite of the risk this commitment entailed under the Franco

regime. This attitude has continued under the present regime.

Its internationality made ESADE the European pioneer in Spain and established it as the state's first European Documentation Centre, in 1969. Since then the school has exchanged students and teachers with the most important management schools in the world, set up international programmes and presided the Community of European Management Schools with a view to establishing standard European qualifications with other EEC schools.

Its independence is the result of ESADE's growth and consolidation. While maintaining their influence, ESADE's board of governors and the Society of Jesus have put their trust in a solid, mature institution run by a Council of representatives from all the areas involved in its administration.

The presence of ESADE in today's society breaks with the age-old divorce between university and business. Two of the most obvious examples are the incidence of former students in the world of business and the placement and company relations office.

The school's solidarity, in a society which tends to judge individuals only in terms of money and power, has shown itself in co-operation programmes with poor and developing countries.

This, broadly speaking, is ESADE, an academic institution which sets out to combine its wish to serve with a rigorous scientific approach, its desire for solidarity with serious study and research. In short, a Catalan civic institution which wants to make its presence felt beyond the limits of an educational establishment. ■