



# Facing the future

**To prepare leaders for a global world, B-schools differ in their willingness, ability and skill in coping with global challenges**

**T**he effects of globalisation on management education are multi-dimensional, and business schools across the globe are transforming themselves in order to respond to the changing landscape.

Simultaneously, globalisation provides many opportunities for business schools. Students are now moving all around the world to study. The worldwide market for higher education is witnessing considerable growth that is likely to continue (student numbers doubled from 100 million to 200 million between 2000 and 2015).

Interestingly, the strategies adopted by different business schools are extremely varied. Here's a brief summary of the four widely applied approaches:

The 'Let's bring the world to us and create a global atmosphere with a highly diverse student body' approach has been adopted by a significant number of good US B-schools. Relying on their strong historical brand names, and by infusing some 'global content' into business cases, these schools incorporate globalisation mainly by ensuring an average of 30 per cent of foreign students on their MBA programmes.

Certain schools have chosen to focus on 'globalising' their pedagogical approach by increasing the international requirements of their curriculum. This can even include requiring that students are trilingual at the MBA level or quadrilingual at the BBA level in order to graduate, and equally, ensuring that students spend at least one year abroad during their studies.

Another strategy involves increasing the school's global reach by creating strategic links with schools located elsewhere. True strategic alliances are challenging to manage and demand deep, long-term commitment at all levels for both schools. Amongst these partnerships are the INSEAD-Wharton and the ESSEC-Mannheim strategic alliances.

Finally, some B-schools have decided to take the plunge and venture overseas to establish themselves in new regions of the world. In some cases, they are opening research centres to create regional case studies (like Harvard Business School) or to establish scholars in a new region to boost global research. Others are setting up business development offices or offering programmes that rely on visiting professors who come on an *ad hoc* basis to deliver programmes – mainly executive – locally. A final category has taken the step of establishing full branches of their operations abroad – offering full-time programmes and executive education, conducting research, fostering

corporate relations and actively recruiting students.

ESSEC chose to integrate all these four pillars into an international strategy that has been under implementation since 2003. Since then, all newly recruited students are international (a factor which increases international exposure in the classroom and global outreach), and we have increased the international requirements for graduation, as well as the scope and number of exchange programmes and double degrees. (ESSEC offers double-degrees at the MBA level with elite schools in Germany, Korea, Japan, China, India, Mexico and Singapore, and has established strategic alliances with IIM-Ahmedabad and Mannheim Business School). A key move was the decision to establish an ESSEC campus at Singapore in 2005, where we offer a full academic portfolio.

The school's identity and day-to-day operations have changed significantly. The doubling of international students in the past six years, from 600 to 1,300, has obliged us to come up with organisational and logistical solutions to cope with different demands and this new-found cultural diversity, encompassing 90 different nationalities. Among the 45 new professors hired in the past four years, 32 are non-French, a characteristic which creates as many fascinating opportunities as it throws up complex challenges through the convergence of different thought processes!

If globalisation shows the emergence of a diverse, multi-polar, diversified world, with the appearance (or re-appearance) of new continents as the main economic and geopolitical powers ('Asia is back'), then the elite business schools will be those that pre-

pare graduates to effectively manage this vast and fascinating diversity. At ESSEC, we are committed to preparing for a world where understanding this diversity, how it will often dictate business behaviour, and strategy based on consumer or company decisions, is the key to success.

As we globalise management education, a final challenge resides in how business schools are integrating (or not integrating) some of the most pressing global challenges into their culture and pedagogical designs. How are topics such as sustainability, global warming, poverty eradication, and water and food shortages, being woven into programmes? To prepare leaders for a global world, business schools differ in their willingness, ability and skill in coping with these issues. If they do not react, schools of engineering or political science will take strong leadership positions and could make business schools partly obsolete. ♦



**PIERRE TAPIÉ**

The author is dean and president of ESSEC Business School, Paris-Singapore