



ROOTS OF A FUTURE

Text taken from the work 'Roots of a Future. A History of ESADE and ESADE Alumni', Barcelona 2004, by the work's author, Pere-A. Fàbregas, member of the Board of Trustees of Fundació ESADE and Honorary President of ESADE Alumni.

ESADE is a mild but aromatic blend of elements, all highly significant and of great depth and interest: the City of Barcelona, civil society, university education and the Jesuits.

BARCELONA, CIVIL SOCIETY, THE UNIVERSITY, THE JESUITS (13TH TO 17TH CENTURIES)

Barcelona, an unusual city with a strong personality, is now better known following the 1992 Olympic Games. But centuries ago it was already an open city, a focal point for culture, exchange and knowledge, and a major port. As early as the 13th century it had forged its own legal personality, the authority to make direct representations to the King and to manage its own economy. Its merchants, the entrepreneurs of their day, had also organised around their Junta de Comercio and Consulado del Mar (present-day Board of Trade and Consulate of the Sea).

In other words, by the 13th century, Barcelona could already control its own destiny. Its entrepreneurs had created the most far-flung trade network of its day, bringing the whole of the Mediterranean under its jurisdiction. Faced with a need, a problem or an opportunity, Barcelona's civil society reacted with organisation, effort and professionalism; and the ensuing progress and results were obvious for all to see.

The Mediaeval University was characterised by two main aspects. The first was the *universitas scholarium et professorum*, emphasising community and personal relationships. It had a similar purpose to the Mediaeval guilds: masters passed on their mastery to apprentices, a process which ended when the students had gained *facultas ubique docendi*, the ability to teach as masters themselves wherever they went, and so continue the process. The second aspect was the search for truth, the Greek *a-lêtheia*, where truth is *adaequatio mentis et rei*, the conformity of mind with reality.

The earliest European universities, among them Paris, Bologna and Oxford, appeared in 12th century.

Barcelona was held back by arguments and discrepancies between the King, the city (over the area's first university), the Estudi General in Lleida, and still further delayed by the Catalan Civil War. All this put back the start of activities until the privileges granted by Charles I in the 16th century.

The final element was the Jesuits (Societas Iesu), which also came into being in the 16th century.

Its founder, Ignacio de Loyola, whose strong links with Catalonia and Barcelona led him to write in 1536, with reference to the city: "I think, and have no reason to doubt, that I owe a greater debt of gratitude to the people of Barcelona than to any other people in this life".

All these elements came together for the first time with the constitution of the Colegio de Cordelles in the Rambla in Barcelona. Devoted to higher education and sponsored by civil society through the Cordelles family, its running was entrusted to the Jesuits in 1662.

SCHOOLS OF THE JUNTA DE COMERCIO (18TH CENTURY)

In the 18th century, two events of great importance occurred: the Spanish War of Succession, and Catalonia's definitive loss of its political organisation when Philip V came to the throne (1714). In this difficult context, Barcelona also lost its university, which was transferred to the city of Cervera.

But fifty years later its luck changed, and the foundations were laid for a major change that would let Catalonia go forward again: the Port of Barcelona was authorised by Charles III to trade with the Americas. Charles III also gave the city's traders back their organisational mechanisms: the Cuerpo de Comerciantes (traders' association), the Junta de Comercio and the Consulado.

The potential of trade with the Americas brought with it a great opportunity for Barcelona's traders, but also a great problem: how to train the professionals they needed without a university.

The civil society of the day, the Junta de Comercio, was aware of the need for professionals trained to deal with the dynamics of an evolving society. But it was also aware of the university's remoteness and its failure to adapt to the changing times and new developments. Nor was any solution in sight from an embryonic state that still thought government had no role to play in education. So, civil society of this era invented its own solution – the Junta de Comercio Schools, which filled this gap for many years. Once again, and not for the last time, the process repeated itself: a problem appeared, civil society reacted, and the solution was found.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Junta de Comercio controlled the schools of navigation, the noble arts, chemistry, stenography, botany, mechanics, physics, political economy, commerce, architecture, mathematics and languages.

Obviously, the consolidation of Catalonia's economic development, which initiated with the opening of trade with America, would not have been possible without the professionals coming from these schools. The influence of their alumni on the society of the day was fundamental both in number and in quality.

TECHNICAL STUDIES (19TH CENTURY)

The regency of María Cristina, from 1833 to 1841, was a period of real change in Spain, and one which hastened the country's modernisation. Barcelona regained its university, but Spanish universities by then were very backward institutions. We only need to refer to an official report from 1834, which indicates: "Look at these universities, they still maintain the division of the peripathos and the system or cycle of sciences that was set up six centuries ago. From time to time, and almost against their will, they end up teaching the first elements of mathematics, but never the real physics or chemistry."

When by legal disposition the Junta de Comercio and its schools were disbanded, their place was taken by another element of the emerging civil society: the manufacturers. Through the Junta de Fábricas (association of manufacturers) they created the Instituto Industrial de Catalunya (Catalan Industrial Institute), which, as Roser Solà indicates, reveals "a peculiar Catalan business world, which when faced with liberalising challenges like opening up frontiers, reacted positively, allied with the forces of culture and set off down a path that did not stop at self defence, but set out to find the best technology to gain greater competitiveness". In 1849, the Institute started classes in industrial chemistry, industrial mechanics, spinning, mechanical draughtsmanship and theory of textiles. Later the Junta de Comercio schools became the basis of Barcelona's Escuela Industrial, the predecessor of its Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingenieros Industriales (School of Engineering).

Even so, Spain was still a backward country. One illustration of this: in 1866 there were only 39 industrial stockholding companies, of which 15, practically 40%, were in Barcelona.

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

In general, education in early 20th-century Spain was still in an absolutely deplorable state, with high rates of illiteracy. The first Ministry of Public Education and Fine Arts was created in 1900.

Finally a public initiative related to business appeared. This was the Universidad Industrial

(Industrial University), sponsored by Barcelona Provincial Council and later by the Commonwealth of Catalonia, set up in 1904 to train specialist workers, middle-level technicians and managers for industry. And once again, the project was sponsored by a Board of Trustees made up of the most dynamic forces in the city: civil society.

Meanwhile, the Jesuits were setting up the Ebro Observatory at Roquetes (Tarragona).

There, another major training institution was founded: after its transfer to Barcelona it became known as the Instituto Químico de Sarrià – IQS (Sarrià Institute of Chemistry). Also during these early years of the century, the Jesuits created the Barcelona-based Instituto Comercial de la Inmaculada – ICI (Commercial Institute of the Immaculate), specialising in commercial and accounting training.

Then came the difficult years: the Second Republic, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the dictatorship of General Franco, etc. But almost without warning, in the nineteen fifties, Europe and with it Spain, entered into a period of prosperity and development. The European Union, the then European Economic Community, was created (1957), a project that overcame so many conflicts and confrontations.

After its long years of isolation, Spain signed its first international agreements for co-operation and approved the National Economic Stabilisation and Liberalisation Plan (1959), precursor of years of developmentalism and withdrawal from economic self-sufficiency. Universities created the faculties of Political Science, Economics and Commerce (1953-54).

In 1916, a pioneer specialist business training project was launched. This was the Universidad Comercial de Deusto (Deusto Commercial University), set up by the Jesuits in Bilbao. But it was not until the late 1950s that management training really took off. It was during this period that new institutions began to appear, each with its own perspective: the Escuela de Organización Industrial (EOI, Madrid, 1955) run by the Ministry of Industry; the Instituto Católico de Administración y Dirección de Empresas (ICADE, Madrid, 1956) and the Escuela Superior de Técnica Empresarial (ESTE, San Sebastian, 1956), both sponsored by the Jesuits; and the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de la Empresa (IESE, Barcelona, 1958) which belonged to the University of Navarre (Opus Dei).

THE APPEARANCE OF ESADE (1954-75)

It was during these years of resurgence for the Spanish economy that the first adaptations of the American business school model appeared. Changes like this made it obvious that nothing would ever be the same again, and that new approaches and attitudes were becoming established.

ESADE appeared just as the schools of the Junta de Comercio had in the late 18th century: to meet a need. In times of change, trained people were urgently required to deal with economic development after the end of the hardship of the civil war, the post-war period and prolonged economic isolation. The elite of civil society detected the need and resolved to put their shoulders to the wheel.

The idea for ESADE followed on from the approach of the 17th-century Colegio de Cordelles, created by a family of notaries, lawyers and canons who, after getting the project under way, asked the Jesuits to run the School.

It was in this context that a group of professionals and entrepreneurs met in Barcelona in 1954. Roglan has summarised the situation: “The ESADE project was conceived in the spring of 1954 by a group of Catalan professionals and entrepreneurs dedicated to the idea of founding a university centre for business research and training. This institution would prepare and equip students with the skills necessary to create and run businesses and associations. ESADE was born.”

The list of the project’s sponsors, all eminent professionals and entrepreneurs, includes thirteen names.

SPONSORS OF THE ESADE PROJECT (1954-1958)

Ignasi Vidal Gironella
 Joan Vidal Gironella
 Antonio Jover Lamaña
 Leandro Jover Lamaña
 Esteve Negra Valls
 Ramon Más-Bagá Cros
 Fernando del Pozo i de Querol
 Albert Folch Rusiñol
 Fernando Maristany Pomar
 Francesc Torras Ferrer
 Antoni Pérez Portabella
 Francesc J. Pérez Portabella
 Josep I. de Anzizu Borrell

They immediately began negotiations to bring the idea to life. The sponsors asked the Jesuits (Societas Iesu) to become involved in creating a centre of higher studies for management and business training. The proposal was raised with the Jesuits’ Superior General, Father Juan B. Janssens, and on 27th May 1958 he signed the letter of approval that started the formal process by which the Society accepted the role of co-sponsor and assigned it the management of ESADE.

On 17th October 1958, the private contract, subsequently converted to a public deed, was signed between the sponsor company, EFSA (Enseñanza y Formación, S.A.) and the Jesuits. Since then, the two sponsor bodies have worked together to adapt the original agreements to changes in society and the evolution of the institution itself. The last of these, in June 2003, restated and endorsed the founding spirit maintained in successive updates, which specifically expressed the determination to retain and strengthen the egalitarian collaboration between the Jesuits and civil society. It also ratified the assignment accepted from the outset by the Jesuits – to assume responsibility for the management of ESADE. To allow them to meet this responsibility, they reserved the right before the governing body responsible for ESADE to nominate the Order’s choice of candidate to occupy the post of Director General.

The main legal entity is currently Fundació ESADE, whose bylaws consolidate and reinforce the legal structure of an institution conceived and based on the egalitarian collaboration between the Jesuits and civil society. The makeup of its governing body, the Board of Trustees, is therefore also egalitarian, and the Jesuits’ Provincial of the Tarragona Province is responsible for nominating half its members.

The first President was a businessman, Ignasi Vidal Gironella, and the first manager was the Jesuit Lluís A. Sobrero Ferrer. In January 1959, the first school was opened in Pasaje de Josep Llovera 4 in Barcelona, and on 1st October of that year the Escuela Superior de Administración y Dirección de Empresas (ESADE) was formally inaugurated, with the start of classes in the first management degree course, with an initial intake of 34 students.

In the years that followed, the Degree in Business Studies was launched, and programmes for managers and some specialist programmes were included in the institution’s

portfolio. In 1962, Leandro Jover Lamaña was appointed President.

The inauguration of the MBA (Master in Business Administration) programme in 1964-65 coincided with the appointment of a new Director, Mariano Íbar. It was precisely this kind of MBA Programme, which later was introduced all over the world, that would bring ESADE international recognition.

As ESADE developed, its facilities had to be extended, and in 1965-66 the School moved to a new 6,500 m² building on Avenida de Pedralbes, considerably increasing its space, its services and obviously its image.

In 1969, a new Director was appointed: this was Xavier Adroer, who directed the School until 1988.

ESADE IN THE DEMOCRATIC CONTEXT (1975-89)

The death of General Franco, the start of the Spanish transition to democracy, the approval of the Constitution and Spanish society's adaptation to the democratic models of the western world were all current events during the years ESADE was emerging from its initial phase. By 1972-73 the School already had 1,000 alumni.

From its inception, ESADE had opted for democratic avenues, working for political openness and, as far as possible, encouraging attitudes that involved plurality of thought, dialogue and co-existence. The coming of democracy reinforced these deep convictions, and ESADE's adaptation or adjustment to the new democratic context was straightforward, quick and efficient.

Ignasi M. Vidal Arderiu assumed the Presidency in 1978. In 1982 ESADE initiated its educational activities in Madrid with the introduction of its Executive Education Programmes.

The need for its graduates to obtain a qualification that was recognised in Spain made the School turn to the Universitat Politècnica de Barcelona, now the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC-Barcelona Tech), to certify its business studies courses, a process that was authorised by the Government of Catalonia

in 1985. However, this coincided with the 1983 University Reform Act., which, among other changes, allowed private universities to be established and operate in Spain. The Ramon Llull University was constituted under the auspices of the new law, and ESADE was gradually incorporated.

In 1983, a new ESADE building was inaugurated in Calle Marques de Mulhacén, adding 7,800 m² to available space. In 1984, Jaime Iglesias became President.

ESADE continued its rapid expansion, not only in size and social influence, but also in academic and institutional excellence. In 1988 Jaime Filella was appointed Director General, and the doctoral programme (PhD) was inaugurated.

In 1989, the Government of Catalonia awarded ESADE the Creu de Sant Jordi (Saint Jordi Cross). The citation stated: "For achievements in training students to exercise high-level management and administrative duties, adopting a scientific and humanistic approach with a critical sense of the needs of mankind in a society subject to constant transformation". ESADE's special talent had not gone unrecognised.

CONSTITUTION OF THE ESADE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (1988-2009)

In changing times, and after ESADE's first 30 years, an anomaly came to light. So many years on, there was still no organisation to link the School with its alumni. An organisation that provided alumni with services, dynamised their capacity to contribute to the School, and supported their involvement in all areas. This gap was particularly noticeable at a time when the number of alumni was growing fast, and ESADE needed all the encouragement it could get if it was to continue with its brilliant task of building the future.

To fill this gap, a project was launched to found an alumni association, now known as ESADE Alumni. Its first two sponsors were Pere-A. Fàbregas and Francesc Rafart, who represented alumni on the ESADE Executive Board.

The design of the new institution established that although it was closely related to ESADE, it had its own legal personality. It was therefore constituted as a single association which alumni from all programmes could join. The basic concepts were the promotion of networking and the development of a sense of belonging.

After overcoming the usual teething problems, the development and achievements of these first twenty years of ESADE Alumni have been spectacular. It is now one of the top alumni institutions among European business schools, with 14,360 active members in August 2009. During its existence, the institution has had five presidents, who have maintained the democratic custom of serving for only one mandate and not seeking re-election: Pere-A. Fàbregas, Joan Miquel Albouy, Xavier Pérez Farguell, Francisco Guarner and the current president, Germán Castejón.

The first ESADE Alumni Annual Conference was held in 1995 and conferences are now held in both Barcelona and Madrid, bringing together 2,500 members every year to socialise and enhance relationships. It also hosts the Jaume de Cordelles awards, or as they are now known, the ESADE Awards. Finally, ESADE Alumni forms part of the Assembly of Members of Fundació ESADE and figures amongst its most generous donors.

EARLY YEARS IN THE RAMON LLULL UNIVERSITY (1990-98)

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union brought the dawn of a new era of increasing globalisation and the replacement of traditional points of reference. In Spain, ongoing social development and the gradual incorporation of private universities combined with a low birth rate meant new challenges to ESADE's growth in terms of both competitiveness and efficiency.

In 1992, Lluís M. Pugès took over as Director General and Juan Antonio Delgado as President.

ESADE's evolution continued, and in 1992-93 the School began to offer an English-language version of its MBA. In 1991, a highly individual third building with a surface area of 12,500 m² was inaugurated on Carretera de Esplugues, which progressively took over many of ESADE's activities and programmes.

The creation of the Law School in 1994 marked an important milestone in this evolution. The new Faculty offered a customised degree in law, which complemented strict legal training with a set of skills closely linked to the legal profession, including the analysis of financial statements, information technology for law, international law and languages. It was created under the aegis of Ramon Llull University (URL), to which university studies in management were also incorporated.

RECENT YEARS (1998-2009)

All these institutional changes converged in new ESADE bylaws, approved in 1998, and which defined its mission in these terms: “ESADE is a private higher education institution with a clearly international vocation which is compatible with its founding spirit of loyalty and service to Catalonia and Spain. ESADE’s mission is to promote teaching and research in the areas of Management and Law, in order to contribute to the scientific, social and personal education of individuals who are characterised by a high level of professional competence and fully aware of their responsibility in the development of a society that promotes the dignity of individuals as part of the humanistic and Christian traditions, and in a context of intercultural dialogue”. These deeply-held values of the institution remain firmly focused on the future.

In 1999, Juan Antonio Delgado died unexpectedly and Joan Josep Brugera replaced him as President of ESADE. That same year an agreement was reached with the Jesuits to use part of their Borja Centre in Sant Cugat to create academic and research facilities on a new campus. Activities started here in spring 2009 and this campus took over the teaching of university management qualifications under the recently-adopted European model. This new university campus will increasingly co-operate with the Creapolis Innovation Park, sponsored by ESADE on the same site and founded as an advanced space where innovative research and teaching companies can interact.

In 2000, Carlos Losada was appointed Director General. This new Director General, the new Dean, Xavier Mendoza, and several members of ESADE’s senior management are alumni of the institution.

The incoming management team initiated a rigorous process of strategic reflection, defining new dynamics and a new management model for the School. The growth and success of ESADE’s Madrid-based activities meant it outgrew its original premises, and the use of a 2,500 m² building in the Chamartín area was negotiated, to be added to later by a second adjoining building with a further 1,200 m².

The next step was Buenos Aires, with the founding of a campus for Executive Education Programmes, inaugurated in 2003.

During his introduction to the 2001-02 academic year, Carlos Losada referred to ESADE’s momentum and dynamics in the following terms: “This is no time for complacency. It’s a time for taking a cold, hard look at the world beyond ESADE. We must watch out for new demands from society that may lead us to change direction. It would certainly be very tempting to rest on our laurels, but that kind of attitude would seriously prejudice our aim of creating added value for society, the reason why ESADE was founded and what justifies our existence today.”

ESADE has grown and continues in the ascendant, holding top positions in international rankings in Europe and worldwide.

After its first 50 years, ESADE has achieved both academic prestige and social acceptance. As an institution, it has stayed true to its founding purposes, summed up by Joan Manuel Soler, President of Fundació ESADE from 2005 to spring 2009, in these words: ‘Jesuits and entrepreneurs set in motion an ambitious project to instil responsible individuals with strong social and ethical values, educating them to become executives who are capable of directing and improving both business and society.’

ESADE currently provides training for more than 12,000 people every year at its campuses in Barcelona, Madrid, Sant Cugat and Buenos Aires and in academic centres like its Business and Law Schools, the Executive Language Center and the URL Sant Ignasi School of Tourism. The excellence of its teaching and research is widely recognised.

Its quality, image and strength as an organisation have extended the international scope of ESADE’s activities, attracting students and managers from all over the world.

Its increasingly international faculty is joined by a large research team. This growing internationalisation is also reflected in the School’s administration and support services which employ professionals from a range of international backgrounds.

It has been a long journey. But in only fifty years we have progressed from the inevitable early doubts about how to train professionals for a future beyond the isolation of the 1940s

becoming a fully-internationalised institution equipped to convey knowledge, concerns and values in a global context.

Some years ago I wrote: “ESADE can and should contribute its strength and style to becoming a competitive European university that will facilitate business and social progress, combining the subtlety of the old Europe with a profound respect for its origins. One of Barcelona’s strengths for the future is its ability to create management steeped in Mediterranean aromas; a management bred in one of the cradles of the world’s culture”.

Pere-A. Fàbregas Vidal (Lic&MBA 1967)

Founder and former president of the Association

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fàbregas, Pere-A. (2004). *Arrels d'un futur. Una història de ESADE y de la Asociación de Antiguos Alumnos*. Barcelona: ESADE.

Roglan, Joaquim (1998). 1958-1998. ESADE, 40 anys. Barcelona: ESADE.

Background paper: Professor Lluís Maria Pugés. Professor Ignasi Vila

Additional material by Lluís M. Pugés and Ignasi Vila available at www.esade.edu/history

More information about ESADE's history and identity at www.esade.edu