

# ORIENTATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ESADE'S EDUCATIONAL MODEL

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## Introduction

In recent years, ESADE has thrown itself consciously and decisively into a global context. This move has transformed the institution's reality, making it more international, diverse and plural. This new context and ESADE's incorporation in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) are, for our institution, an invitation and an opportunity to observe our educational programmes from a new perspective. This perspective is derived from the decision to consider the profiles of the students who participate in our programmes in holistic terms, integrating knowledge, competencies and values in our attempt to educate complete individuals.

This perspective invites reflection on our educational model and highlights the need to deepen the ultimate meaning that our institution – understood as the faculty, the administrative and services staff, the management team and the Board of Trustees – wishes to give to our educational programmes, research activities and promotion of social debate.

This “orientational framework” sets out, for the specific case of ESADE, the content of the framework document of UNIJES, the network of Spanish Jesuit universities, which is entitled “Orientaciones, identidad y misión ante los nuevos desafíos universitarios” (“Orientations, Identity and Mission: Facing New University Challenges”).<sup>1</sup>

## Approach

As highlighted by Rev. Kolvenbach, SI: “Knowledge is not neutral. Instead, it always implies certain values and a certain conception of the human being; teaching and research must not turn their backs on the society that surrounds them [...] Universities must be places for debate on the fundamental questions that concern people and the human community in the areas of economics, politics, culture, science, theology and the search for meaning. Universities, therefore, must transmit human and ethical values; they must serve as a critical conscience for society; through their reflection, they must enlighten those who face the problems of modern and postmodern society; in short, they must be the crucible for in-depth debate on the various trends in human thinking and for the proposal of solutions.”<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, research is not neutral. Choosing an object of research implies prioritising a problem, and this is always done in accordance with particular interests and values. Developing a research policy entails clarifying the top-priority values of an institution. Likewise, teaching is not neutral. In the processes of selecting students, transmitting knowledge and learning, values associated with particular kinds of people and ways of understanding society come into play. Educational and scientific honesty both require that these values be made explicit in a transparent manner.

Therefore, the reflection that we proposed begins with a fundamental question: For what, and for whom, do we work at ESADE? The answer, in keeping with our mission, is as follows:

ESADE works to train people who, freely sharing particular values,<sup>3</sup> contribute as citizens and as professionals in the fields of business and law to building a more human global society – that is, a society that is more just, solidarity-minded, sustainable and respectful of differences.

This premise translates into a series of values that permeate the competency map proposed by ESADE in fulfilment of its mission. The following diagram illustrates the meaning and function of these values:



We selected these values out of our belief that any educational programme aims to train and foster learning among the students, and that any educational approach will tend to accentuate particular aspects of the human being. ESADE's educational approach stresses the need to develop the following aspects of the individual:<sup>4</sup>

- a) The professional aspect: the values of professionalism.
- b) The ethical, social, civic and political aspects: the value of justice.
- c) The personal aspect: the value of human quality.
- d) The internal aspect of the person: the values associated with the inner life of the individual, open freely to the spiritual aspect, whether religious or secular.

These are the aspects of the individual that **ESADE encourages** the students in its various programmes to cultivate and learn. The ultimate goal of the learning process is to develop the underlying competencies and values associated with these four aspects, so that they may serve as criteria to guide personal, professional and social action.<sup>5</sup>

Forming part of a university like ESADE means being committed to the mission and values of the institution. The members of ESADE freely choose to form part of the community and, as part of the basic acceptance of these values, each individual decides personally how to apply them in his or her life.<sup>6</sup>

These values are not – nor should they be – taken into account when evaluating students, since **the decision to cultivate these values is strictly personal and free**. Likewise, **ESADE is responsible for determining whether the institution puts sufficient resources for the development of these values at the disposal of any individual who may choose to do so**.

The formulation of these values sets highly ambitious goals. It is possible that this may lead to rejection when an individual sees that it is impossible to fully embrace the values or perceives the possibility of falling into hypocrisy. Nevertheless, we at ESADE believe that, given the institution's identity and mission, we must be honest in explaining the values behind the competency map proposed during the learning process, as well as their transformational potential in both the personal and social realms.

#### **a) The professional aspect**

ESADE is a university-level institution that aspires to the highest level of quality. In this university context, ESADE's educational approach focuses on training professionals with the highest possible degree of competence and excellence.<sup>7</sup> We therefore aim to provide our students with the most up-to-date knowledge about the profession they intend to enter and the society in which they live, and to develop the competencies they need in order to apply this knowledge.

At ESADE, we aspire to instil in our students the intellectual openness and academic and scientific rigor they will need to value and enjoy continuous education, creativity, and the capacity to adapt and innovate in a changing and complex world. We also aspire to encourage the habit of serious and responsible work, as well as the pleasure of doing a job well. This requires that ESADE reflect on its educational practices and establish a personal relationship with each student.

At ESADE, we understand that a profession is a way of earning a living, a means of personal development, and an activity that provides a specific service to society: in our case, the proper functioning of organisations (whether private, public or non-profit) and the correct practice of law and justice. A profession, therefore, has a necessary and legitimate aspect of personal interest, which is justified, in particular, to the extent that it provides a specific service to society.

From this perspective, economic success and the capacity to compete in the market are legitimate and desirable for a professional to the extent that they recognise his or her capacity to correctly address the veritable problems of society. The capacity to properly combine competitiveness and cooperation is therefore fundamental.

At ESADE, we believe that the best way to contribute to our students' professional and personal fulfilment is by exemplifying the concept of professional success, and by offering a holistic vision of the profession that also includes the social aspect.

We are also aware of the difficulties that this concept of the profession can entail in a society as competitive as ours. We also know that transmitting a holistic understanding of success and professional excellence is an essential part of our mission. Without this understanding, the other aspects would be reduced to mere rhetoric.

#### **b) The social and ethical aspect**

At ESADE, students are not just future professionals: they are, above all else, people who act in society and who possess ethical, civic, political and social aspects.

Today's culture does not tend to raise awareness about this social aspect. The culture of individualism obscures personal responsibility for addressing the major economic, social and environmental problems of our world. Moreover, the growing complexity of social problems and the numerous solutions that have been proposed often engender a brand of relativism that paralyses critical thinking and social commitment.

Aware of these characteristics of today's culture, ESADE offers an education that fosters values that develop a sense of, and commitment to, social justice.<sup>8</sup>

A professional, social and ethical commitment need not be paternalistic or limited to philanthropy. Rather, it should be oriented towards the construction of organisational, economic, legal and social structures that are more human. Therefore, in keeping with the social function of the profession, we must provide our students with opportunities and assistance so that they can grow and understand themselves as "men and women *for* others and *with* others",<sup>9</sup> so that they are able to see the practice of law, leadership and business management as services to society at both the local and global levels.

To develop these values, it is essential to cultivate a particular sensitivity and acquire certain knowledge:

- *Sensitivity.* We must help students go beyond their social circle, which in many cases is privileged, so that "throughout their education [...] they allow the disturbing reality of this world to enter their lives, learn how to feel it, think about it critically, respond to suffering and make constructive commitments in this regard, thereby learning to perceive, think, judge, choose and act in ways that promote the rights of others, especially the most disadvantaged."<sup>10</sup>

- *Knowledge.* We must train our students not only in the necessary techniques for the profession, but also in the capacity for analysis and in-depth comprehension of the major economic, political and social cultural problems, as well as their causes at the local and global scales. This knowledge makes possible a well-informed brand of solidarity that guides a person's actions towards a commitment to justice and to the human development of society.

### **c) The personal aspect**

In keeping with that set out above, the ultimate objective of the educational process must be to educate highly professional individuals who are aware of their responsibilities as citizens both of their countries and of the world, sensitive to causes that embody the values of solidarity, justice and freedom, and capable of living these values by committing themselves to community projects.<sup>11</sup>

But ESADE's mission goes even further. Education at ESADE starts with the recognition of the unconditional value of human beings based on their dignity, their freedom, their reason, and their ability to commit to selfless love.

These characteristics of human beings – essential characteristics of the anthropology assumed by ESADE – must also be taken into account in the educational process. People are at the core of our educational model. We must therefore create an environment that fosters the development of human “quality”, as defined in the “ESADE Community Statement of Values”: “A combination of knowledge, judgment, balance and depth that produces serene, consistent, trustworthy individuals capable of living in accordance with fundamental values”<sup>12</sup> derived from their respective cultural traditions in a context of intercultural dialogue.

This is the humanistic tradition that forms part of ESADE's identity. This humanism, within the tradition of the Jesuits, affirms and celebrates with great hope the value of human beings and their potential to create knowledge, to put it at the service of society, and to create a world that is more just. Moreover, without turning a blind eye to the pain that human beings are capable of inflicting, this humanism – like other secular and religious traditions – affirms that “on the whole, men are more good than bad”.<sup>13</sup>

This humanism forms the basis of the underlying ethical meaning of the competencies that ESADE develops in its educational programmes. At ESADE, we believe that the development of the human quality is valuable in and of itself. Nevertheless, because the human quality lends spontaneity, solidity and depth to those who cultivate it, its development is the best way to promote professional excellence and civic, social and political commitment.

### **d) The spiritual or internal aspect**

Where do the energy and discernment required to develop our commitment to professionalism, justice and human quality come from? What are their ultimate “sources”? As it happens, they are derived from a variety of “sources of meaning”. One of these responds to an ethical and secular approach that is strictly rational and not linked to transcendence. Another source that ESADE offers is the cultivation of the human quality, justice and professionalism on the basis of the spiritual or internal aspect of the individual – an aspect that, in our society, is formulated and experienced in the form of both religious and non-religious languages and practices.

If we speak of spirituality or the spiritual aspect, we highlight<sup>14</sup> the internal life and self-knowledge, as well as openness to the recognition of – and selfless love for – others, which leads to a commitment to other people, in particular the weakest and most oppressed among us. Spirituality also implies integrating the various aspects of human experience and grappling with the ultimate questions about the meaning of life. Adequate cultivation of the spiritual aspect leads to a way of life in which freedom, creativity, the capacity to love freely, solidarity, a sense of justice and hope take on central roles.

ESADE recognises that, over the course of history, various traditions – religious and secular alike – have made major contributions to the growth and maturation of the human spirit. ESADE does not ignore this fact, just as it cannot ignore the negative and inhuman effects that these traditions have caused when they stray from their sources of inspiration and allow themselves to be manipulated by economic and political interests, or by other interests unrelated to the initial intentions of the traditions.

For this reason, ESADE aims to become a plural space that fosters dialogue on the various interpretations – both religious and secular – of human existence, where all members of the academic community (faculty, administrative and services staff, students and alumni) can cultivate their human quality through approaches – either ethical or spiritual, transcendent or otherwise – that they adopt freely and consciously.

Due to its origins and its membership in UNIJES, ESADE is committed to providing and guaranteeing the brand of spirituality most closely related to the institution: that of the Society of Jesus.

In this admittedly plural and intercultural context, the Society of Jesus is committed to collaborating on ESADE's educational project; to promoting dialogue on spirituality and religion among Christians, believers of other religions, and non-believers; and to contributing its own Christian vision and specific spirituality<sup>15</sup> in order to ensure that this educational orientation can become a permanent reality.

## Conclusion

In short, ESADE's mission is to provide education in the context of a holistic vision of the individual, of the profession and of citizenship so that its students can develop the qualities that, we hope, define the people who have spent time in our classrooms:

- The **competence** to lead and manage organisations or to practice law, and to be able to make decisions reliably under circumstances of increasing complexity and uncertainty.
- **Awareness** of their responsibilities and their duty to help create spaces for collaboration and collective improvement. The integration of ethics in their personal and professional conduct, with continuity of meaning.
- A **committed mindset**, in the knowledge that their competence and conscience require that they be determined to undertake initiatives and projects with dedication, generosity and high-mindedness.
- The ability to offer the best of themselves for the common good; in short, **compassion**, in the original sense of the term, meaning that they “feel with” others and want to help them.

This mission is demanding, but it also generates enthusiasm. ESADE is committed to providing the resources that will allow the institution to pursue these goals, in both its internal operations and its educational processes, while at the same time respecting the pluralism that is essential to any university.

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<sup>1</sup> Document available in the journal *Revista de fomento social*, no. 252 (vol. 63), pp. 741-762.

<sup>2</sup> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus until January 2008. Speech given at the International Meeting on Higher Education organised by the Society of Jesus. Rome, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2001. See: Kolvenbach, P-H., “Discurso 12”, in *Discursos universitarios*, UNIJES 2008, no. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Values consistent with those set out in the “ESADE Community Statement of Values”. See: <<http://www.esade.edu/web/eng/about-esade/aboutus/values>>.

<sup>4</sup> These four aspects (with nuances that reflect the specific history and culture of ESADE) are inspired by the paradigm formulated by UNIJES, of which ESADE is a member. See the framework document of UNIJES, “Orientaciones, identidad y misión ante los nuevos desafíos universitarios” (“Orientations, Identity and Mission: Facing New University Challenges”), published in the journal *Revista de fomento social*, no. 252 (vol. 63), pp. 741-762.

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<sup>5</sup> Father Adolfo Nicolás, SI, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, discussed these four aspects in a talk he gave at ESADE as part of the celebration of the institution's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. See: <http://www.esade.edu/web/eng/about-esade/aboutus/values>.

<sup>6</sup> "ESADE Community Statement of Values". See: <http://www.esade.edu/web/eng/about-esade/aboutus/values>.

<sup>7</sup> This characteristic (in Latin: *magis*) of seeking always to strive further towards a goal is typical of the spirituality of the Society of Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> On this point, ESADE draws on its own tradition and also the reorientation of the Society of Jesus that took place at General Congregation 32 in 1975, in which the Jesuits defined "the promotion of justice" as an element of their identity and mission. Subsequent Superiors General of the Society of Jesus have often called on the Jesuit universities to develop a sense of justice as a fundamental element of their identity. The excerpts reprinted here are taken from speeches by Rev. Kolvenbach. The text of the decree of General Congregation 32 can be found in an appendix of Kolvenbach, *Discursos universitarios*, UNIJES 2008.

<sup>9</sup> The expression "men for others" can be traced back to Rev. Arrupe. Rev. Kolvenbach added the word "women". It is an expression that appears often in his speeches.

<sup>10</sup> P. H. Kolvenbach, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education". Santa Clara University, California, October 2000. See: Kolvenbach, *Discursos universitarios*, UNIJES 2008.

<sup>11</sup> For more information, see the following documents: "Declaration on the Spiritual Aspect of Education at ESADE" and "Education at ESADE and the Spiritual Aspect, in the Framework of Our Institutional Mission". See also: "ESADE Community Statement of Values".

<sup>12</sup> "ESADE Community Statement of Values". Quotation taken from R. Ribera. "Treballar l'esperit". In: A. Castiñeira, A.; Calsina, M. *Catalunya, reptes ètics*. Barcelona: Proa, 2006, p. 270. This text was the result of a long process of reflection on this topic conducted at ESADE.

<sup>13</sup> A. Camus. *The Plague*. New York: Vintage, 1991, p. 129.

<sup>14</sup> Among other things, and without attempting to address the issue exhaustively.

<sup>15</sup> For a broader discussion of this aspect, see: "Declaration on the Spiritual Aspect of Education at ESADE".