

THE HUMANISTIC APPROACH

» Marianne Conde Salazar and Philippe Gabilliet talk to Debbie Moss

Program Overview

Please define ESCP-EAP's value proposition? (European School of Management) Our primary objective is to offer a truly European curriculum. MBA courses are not only offered in Berlin, but also in London, Turin, Madrid and Paris – these are the five campuses. The MBA courses are already very strong because the international dimension is very strong. Students can choose 12 out of a possible 36 electives offered. Each elective has a mixed group of MBA participants, so it is a new group for each elective. It's interesting to work with such group dynamics.

One of our strong beliefs is that there is truly a European way of doing business that is very different from others. As a business school we really stress the fact that 2010 executives not only have to be good with business issues, but possess a high level of cultural and humanistic skills. The humanistic approach is very important for us in terms of culture, economy, sociology and ethics. Diversity is also important. Our social mission is to train executives, not only from the viewpoint of acquiring business skills, but also to endow them with a high level of social awareness.

Some schools prefer to use senior faculty members when teaching courses. Is this something that you advocate at ESCP-EAP? Yes, for us the seniority of the professor is a very important part and we have 70 percent of lectures taught by permanent faculty. However, seniority is one

thing, experience is another. Sometimes there are very senior professors who have never been in a company. So, I prefer to have younger professors with experience in real companies. For some issues, like organizational behavior or strategy, the academic aspect is very important, but understanding how to use it and knowing how a given tool can help you to make better decisions is just as important.

The quality and background of the professors charged with teaching and motivating ESCP-EAP's students is clearly very important. However, what sets ESCP-EAP's faculty apart from other schools? We try to be ourselves. We try to be as international and European as we can be. We try to be as diverse as possible and we really try to share the same set of values we talked about earlier. We try to make sure our professors look at new and different ways of teaching their subjects, a humanistic concern that really gives a specific colour to the program.

The ESCP-EAP's EEMBA programme states three ambitions in its quest to shape successful managers into international business leaders. Please explain each.

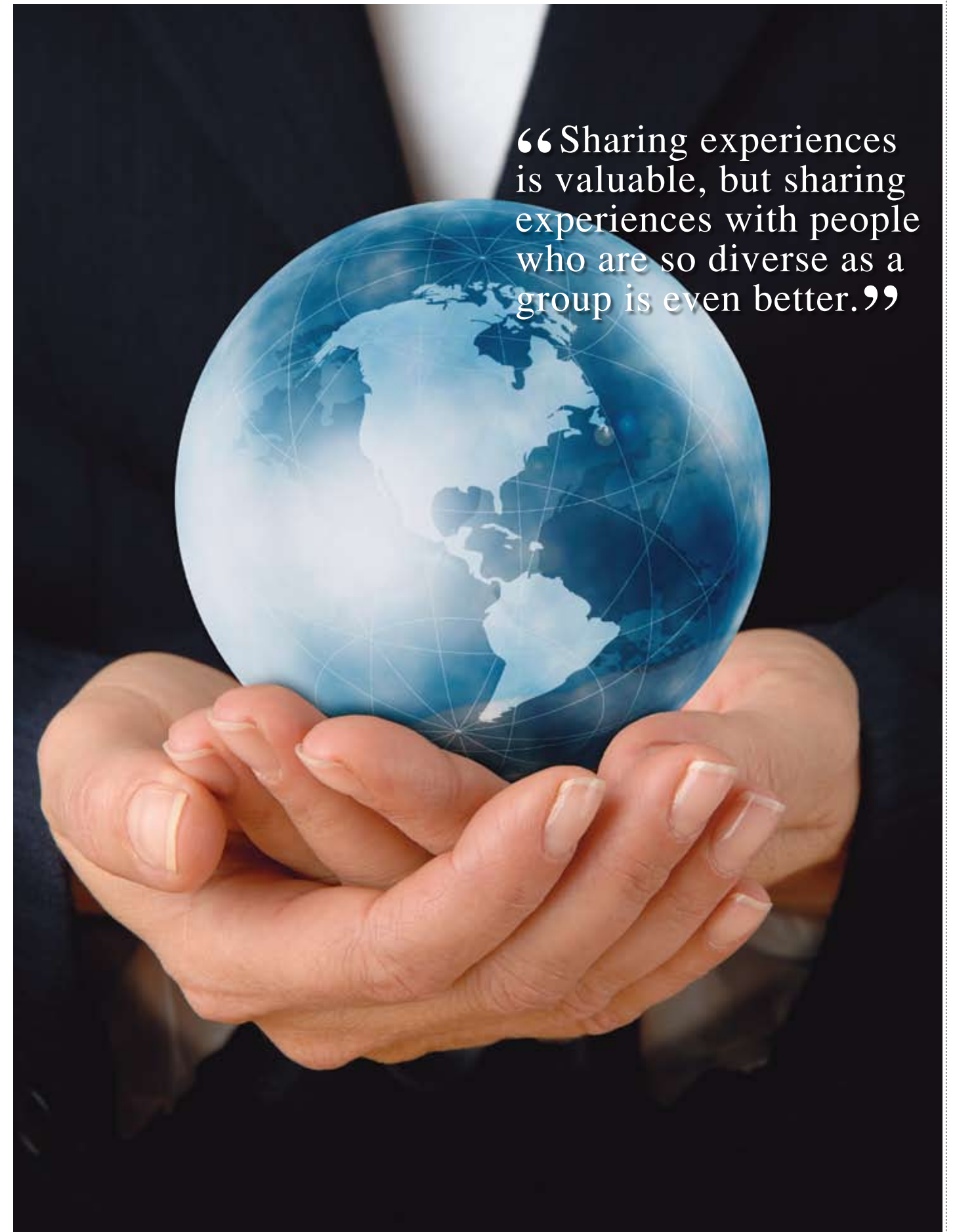
1. TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD BETTER. We achieve this through using new skills, grids, models and concepts.
2. ANTICIPATE THE NEXT MOVE. For us, anticipating means perceiving links among the phenomenon, links among the facts, among the economic and sociological movements and trying to perceive these links before others do. The one who wins is the one who

is playing in advance and predicting what is about to happen - risk-taking, innovation, etc.

3. MAKE BETTER DECISIONS. There's a lot of debate about exactly what it means to make good decisions. When you're living in a stable environment, the right decision is the decision that prepares you for a future crisis. The problem is when you wait too long and find yourself in a crisis with no plan. Uncertain times means the value of your decision cannot be created before making the decision. The problem isn't forecasting anything; the problem is doing the right thing. This is really important for us in terms of strategy.

From where do the most notable benefits come for a student who is studying with 120 executives from over 25 different nationalities? It's about opening one's mind and exchanging, exchanging and exchanging again with people who are very different to you. Sharing experiences is valuable, but sharing experiences with people who are so diverse as a group is even better.

Given the current economic climate, do you foresee there being an upswing in the number of self-funded MBA students attending ESCP-EAP? We don't know. Currently, we are 30 percent self-funded. We'll probably have more information around April or May and we can make our decision then. We're of the same mindset as everyone else in terms of thinking that future months still look a little bit foggy.



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Leadership

In this ever-changing economy, what role does leadership play and to what extent is it addressed throughout the program? Our philosophy is very clear. In troubled times, the person who is supposed to be the leader of the group has three basic missions:

1. DESIGN AND MAINTAIN THE RIGHT VISION FOR THE PEOPLE. Having this vision requires skills in strategy, finance and marketing among other areas.
2. CREATE TRUST. The trust factor in troubled times is critical. Earning trust means being competent with the people around you, as well as being ethical.
3. INSPIRE MOTIVATION. Create a collective commitment between the group and the challenge, the group and the issue, etc.

We ask all professors to keep these three elements in mind, regardless of what they're teaching.

How do you test the leadership qualities of your students and, ultimately, prepare them for the real world business challenges that lay ahead? We are very innovative. Through the elective portfolio, students have the ability to choose leadership classes only - Negotiating, Facing Conflicts, Leadership Development, etc. Our philosophy is that students know what they want to get out of the programme, but we can teach them how to find the right situations and context in which their personal skills and abilities will transform in the leadership process. On that point, we must have an added value.

Accreditation

Do you feel accreditation is an indicator of quality and do employers use it as a benchmark? It is an indicator. More than 70 percent of our MBA participants are financed by their companies and, of course, we maintain contact

with those companies. They are very cautious when it comes to accreditation issues. Yes, it increases the value of MBA programmes. According to the Financial Times we are the 21st most successful programme.

ESCP-EAP is accredited by the AMBA, an accreditation achieved only by those programs meeting strict definitions and standards. A key criterion is the program participant's previous work experience. Please elaborate. It's really important, because we need executives that are able to draw on their managerial experiences. It accounts for the success of much of our programme, which is why we're very careful when selecting our candidates. We make sure they have something to share and that they are already aware of what they can contribute to the programme. Also, we evaluate their work experience from an international standpoint, as well as what they're most proud of.

International Business

Given the competitive demands placed upon corporations today, and increasing globalization – both of which require tomorrow's business leaders to be flexible and manage workforces and internal structures that cross cultural and political lines – have you redefined your MBA programmes? We have always designed in this way, because it's the only way to create a competitive advantage. Since the 90s the concepts of flexibility, cost control dynamics, etc. have been at the heart of the programme. Over the last few years we've been trying to emphasize this even more.

Among the five campuses in Paris, Berlin, London, Madrid and Turin, does the global business aspect of the curriculum change focus? The idea is really to respect the red line of standards in terms of international and global management. We ask each campus to focus on a dimension specific to their country. For example, in London, the financial aspects of management are supposed to be more important than they are

in Turin where marketing and brand management are more important. In Berlin, the human resources aspect is quite different, and in Madrid the entrepreneurial dimension is focused on. Each one proposes to provide a specific identity through its course offerings and electives. We respect a high level of flexibility, diversity and mobility among the campuses.

Looking Ahead

What can new and existing students expect from ESCP-EAP, in terms of programme innovations, over the next 12 to 18 months?

Two issues:

1. With respect to facing a crisis, programme content will be increased.
2. Regarding our internal process, we are proposing post-MBA electives. This allows alumni to keep in touch, not only from a socialization standpoint, but also academically. It will mix those MBA participants taking the elective with perhaps three to five post-MBA individuals.


Since the onset of the global financial crisis, has ESCP-EAP changed the focus of certain courses? Yes, we've asked all professors to really focus on the global aspects of the current crisis. Finance is one thing, but it cannot be understood from the global economic content alone. Crisis leadership is becoming an important topic, as is decision-making. Next year we'll probably increase our focus on the aspect of control management. What does it mean to control what people are doing within the company? This means what they're doing with the finances of the company, the brand and image of the company, etc. ■

Biography


Marianne Conde Salazar is the MBA Programme Director for ESCP-EAP.

Philippe Gabilliet is Dean of the ESCP-EAP European Executive MBA and Associate Professor in Organizational Behaviour and Management.

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