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## **EMPOWERING CHANGEMAKERS FOR A BETTER SOCIETY: THE CASE OF IÉSEG SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, FRANCE**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents the case of IÉSEG School of Management, Lille and Paris and its attempt to move from being an internationally recognized, triple-accredited school to a truly intercultural one. By focusing on the deep-visioning process that allowed the school to redefine its vision, mission and values, the paper will highlight the central role that has been given to the ethical, CSR and intercultural aspects of education and management. Concrete examples of the courses, projects and extra-curricular activities are given to illustrate how the school tries to reach its objectives. It is hoped the paper might provide insights that other schools might like to explore in the light of their own contexts in relation to internationalization and the development of the teaching of ethics and CSR.

**Key words:** Cultural intelligence, ethics, CSR, intercultural communication, higher education

### **A Short History of the School**

Established in 1964, IÉSEG School of Management is one of the top business schools in France. As a French Grande École and member of the Conférence des Grandes Écoles, IÉSEG is one of the most prestigious higher education institutions in the country. It has also been awarded the triple crown of international accreditations: AACSB, AMBA, and EQUIS.

The school currently has 5,500 degree-seeking students at its two campuses, the historic campus in Lille and at Paris-La Défense, Europe's biggest business hub. Bachelor, Master of Science and Postgraduate Programs at IÉSEG are taught in English. IÉSEG collaborates closely with the largest institute of research in Europe, the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). Over 80% of IÉSEG's permanent, full-time faculty and 12% of its administrative staff is international, and the school has a network of more than 280 partner universities in 69 countries.

So, how did IÉSEG get to where it is today?

Twelve years after its creation, IÉSEG was officially recognized by the French Ministry of Higher Education in 1976 and in 1985 it obtained state recognition for its degrees. In 1990 IÉSEG became an institutional partner of a research center associated with the French National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS) and in 1997 the school was admitted to the closed circle of French higher education institutions that make up the Conférence des Grandes Ecoles. Five years later, in 2002, the Grande École programme, the school's flagship 5-year degree programme, was redesigned to make it compatible with the Bologna system. From this time, all courses of the Master in Management have been taught in English. The following year the school received the renewal of governmental accreditation of the degree, which also received the grade of Master. 2003 also saw the launch of the Master's of International Business. All teaching at the Master's level has been conducted in English since this time.

In 2004, the year of the school's 40th anniversary, IÉSEG put in place its International Advisory Board, a college of experts which guides the school in its choices relating to the programmes taught, research orientations, new activities to develop, relations with companies and, of course, internationalization. This same year, the school began its first twinning programme with Loyola College, Chennai, in India. The Indian students do the first two years of their bachelor's degree in Chennai, before coming to Lille to complete their studies. In 2004, IÉSEG had a total of 1,000 students on its Lille campus.

In 2008, IÉSEG opened its Paris campus at the Grande Arche of la Défense and the number of students reached 2,000. Two years later, in 2010, saw the creation of the Bachelor's in English and it became possible for students to do all 5 years of their studies in English.

IÉSEG obtained the prestigious EQUIS international accreditation in 2012 and the first compulsory intercultural communication course for students at the bachelor level was introduced. The AACSB accreditation came the following year and four new specialized masters were opened in 2014, the same year the school created its Center for Organizational Responsibility (ICOR).

In 2015, the school saw the renewal of its EQUIS accreditation and the launch of a Bachelor in International Business, 3 new MSc programmes and an Executive MBA. In 2016, IÉSEG received the AMBA accreditation for its MSc in International Business, International MBA and Executive MBA and put in place its People and Intercultural Competencies Pole (PCHI). 2017 saw the opening of the school's new, purpose-built premises at La Défense, in Paris and the creation of ICIE, IÉSEG Center of Intercultural Engagement and in 2018, the school obtained the renewal of its AACSB accreditation.

IÉSEG's currently has 5,500 students and this year welcomes 2,400 international students from over 100 countries. This academic year the school has some 1,200 students on academic exchange or internships abroad. As previously mentioned, over 80% of the permanent, full-time professors and 12% of the administrative staff are international and come from some 50 different countries.

So, IÉSEG can undoubtedly be ranked as an international school and has been increasingly recognized as such. Its ambition now is to go beyond this and become a truly intercultural school where Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) will become part of the DNA of all those involved in the life of the school.

### **The Deep-Visioning Process**

This ambition stems largely from the school's vision and mission which were redefined during a collective deep-visioning process that began in 2014. This 18-month long process involved all the stakeholders of the school from students and staff to alumni and corporate partners. During this period, information was gathered in four stages. Firstly, the perception of IÉSEG by its external stakeholders was examined, then a SWOT was carried out by internal stakeholders. This stage included an analysis of the perceived roots and values of the school. Thirdly, information was gathered about future trends in higher education and society at large. Finally, the process culminated in a 2-day residential seminar with some 300 participants during which the school's 2025 vision was co-elaborated. This was then presented to stakeholders from July 2015.

The vision is that by 2025, "IÉSEG will be *a unique international hub empowering changemakers for a better society.*"

The school's mission follows directly from this shared vision and is:

To educate managers to be inspiring, intercultural and ethical pioneers of change,

To create knowledge that nurtures innovative leaders,

To promote creative solutions for and with responsible organizations.

Finally, as part of this deep-visioning process, the school's values were redefined and are summarized in the acronym ARISE; which stands for Accomplishment, Responsibility, Integrity, Solidarity and Engagement.

Here, we will focus on the first mission, *to educate managers to be inspiring, intercultural and ethical pioneers of change.*

### **Ethics and CSR**

The intercultural and the ethical aspects of education and management have long been major concerns at IÉSEG. This can be seen in the school's active involvement in projects such as the writing of a white paper published in 2000 « Internationalisation at Home – A Position Paper » (Crowther et al., 2000), the development of its extensive network of international partner universities, the creation of the first twinning programmes and the International Advisory Board in 2004 and the introduction of a compulsory intercultural module for the bachelor students in 2012. It is also seen in the emphasis placed on teaching business ethics at the school. Courses focusing on business ethics and later CSR have been taught at the school for over a decade and IÉSEG Center for Organizational Responsibility (ICOR) was established in 2014.

However, the deep-visioning process underlined even more the importance of these aspects in the strategy and ethos of the school and increased the scale and number of the people and projects involved.

IÉSEG is strongly committed to being an ethical, socially responsible, and sustainable organization. The school recognizes the importance of encouraging an environment that promotes effective learning and that provides the tools and competences that empower the students and staff to become responsible changemakers for a better society. IÉSEG 's values, mission, and vision reflect this motivation to inspire change.

IÉSEG believes that CSR, like cultural intelligence, must be embedded in the DNA of the organization and must be integrated transversally in everything the school does: in the classroom, in its research, in its culture, and in its operations.

IÉSEG aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills to be responsible actors in society. Integrating CSR into the students' learning experience is thus essential. To do this, the school's strategy is based on the 6 U.N. Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). Throughout their time at school, students are exposed to different CSR, sustainability, and ethics problematics in different management fields and different contexts. As part of IÉSEG's strategy, the plan is to steadily increase the number of courses that include a CSR dimension.

Furthermore, students have a hands-on approach to CSR issues via the 2<sup>nd</sup>-year solidarity project and the 3<sup>rd</sup>-year CSR Consulting Project. This allows them to have a real-life experience of what social responsibility means for companies and the challenges they face in integrating these issues into their strategy and their day-to-day operations.

Since social responsibility can only be achieved through a collaborative process, IÉSEG works closely with its stakeholders in order to co-construct a common CSR strategy. The participation of students, faculty, staff, alumni, companies, and others is essential in order to succeed. The school aims to be a proactive member in the community and be a catalyst in the development of a responsible and sustainable economic and social environment. IÉSEG is convinced that active engagement and strong collaboration are the best ways to address the social and environmental challenges of today and tomorrow and the school is thus committed to a number of initiatives and partnerships at a local, regional, and international level.

IÉSEG is a member of PRME which aims to transform business and management education, research and thought leadership globally, while promoting awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals, and developing the responsible business leaders of tomorrow. The school has also signed the “Charte de la Diversité”, the French diversity charter, the first of its kind in Europe, which commits signatories to raising awareness about diversity among staff involved in the recruitment processes, and to dedicating a chapter in the organization’s annual report on the concrete diversity measures undertaken.

IÉSEG aims to be a source of inspiration and a proactive player in the development of a responsible and sustainable economic and social environment by constructively playing its role as a catalyst for the progress of sound business communities, as a forum for debate, and as a source of diffusion of creative knowledge and solutions. To meet this ambition, the school created a center of excellence, IÉSEG Centre for Organizational Responsibility (ICOR) in 2014. The two central missions of this integrated, cross- departmental academic center are to constitute a coordination center for all initiatives around social responsibility and sustainability and to represent a constructive platform for the proposal and development of refined actions and innovative initiatives linked to social responsibility and sustainability. In collaboration with its stakeholders. ICOR inspires and supports the school’s determination and ambition to contribute to the development of a prosperous, fair and sustainable society by creating and spreading conceptual knowledge and practice-oriented tools in the fields of social responsibility, sustainability and business and society relationships.

Each year, IÉSEG and ICOR organize a competition to recognize the best Master’s thesis by an IÉSEG student in the fields of organizational ethics, social responsibility and sustainability. For the fourth edition of the prize, a panel of academic experts recently evaluated 16 theses in order to select the best three. A committee of professionals then elected the winner among the finalists. This year, the first prize was awarded to a student for a thesis entitled “Relationships between social intrapreneurship, people’s motivations and company attraction and retention”. The ICOR award presentation took place during a conference/debate on the topic of “inspiring and implementing a sustainable transition” in the context of the IÉSEGCSR Day.

As further evidence of its commitment to ethics, responsibility and sustainability, IÉSEG hired a CSR manager in 2017 whose job is to coordinate the CSR and Sustainability Steering Committee at the school. Created in 2016 and composed of different members of the IÉSEG community, the Committee meets on a quarterly basis with the following 4 objectives:

- Fostering improved social and environmental performance at the School
- Contributing to further instill a culture of social responsibility and sustainable planning and mindset
- Vetting emerging initiatives to assess whether they adhere to the overall Vision and strategic orientation of the School
- Serving as a liaison between all stakeholders on matters linked to social responsibility and sustainability issues and initiatives.

One final example of IÉSEG’s commitment to CSR can be seen through its activities with ENACTUS. Made up of an international community of student, academic and business leaders, ENACTUS is committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives and shape a better more sustainable world. Guided by academic advisors and business experts, the student leaders of ENACTUS create and implement community empowerment projects around the globe. With over 130 students involved, The ENACTUS team at IÉSEG aims to improve the lives of those in need by developing viable, autonomous and sustainable entrepreneurship projects.

## Cultural Intelligence

The very international and intercultural dimension that IÉSEG has acquired through its network of partner universities around the world and its recruitment of international faculty and administrative staff is a relatively recent phenomenon. It has come with the overall, sustained growth and development the school has undergone, especially in the last decade or so. A few figures illustrate this. The total number of students at the school increased from 1,000 in 2004-2005 to 2,000 in 2008-2009 and the total currently stands at 5,500. In terms of international students, the school welcomed 32 in 2002-2003, 602 in 2012-2013 and 2,400 in 2018-2019, an increase of 720% in just over 15 years.

This new situation is a challenge that the school's vision and mission compels it to take up if it is to become a unique international hub where everyone can thrive and a truly intercultural school.

It has long been known that it is not enough to bring people from different cultures together to ensure the development of real intercultural competence and sensitivity. To do this, a strategic and holistic approach is needed, based on some collectively understood concepts and tools. IÉSEG has opted to use the 4Rs of Fons Trompenaars as a general framework. The first R involves recognizing what culture is and what constitute cultural differences. The second R involves developing respect for these differences. The third R involves learning to reconcile the differences and finally, the fourth R involves realizing and rooting these reconciliations on a daily basis in the way people communicate, work and relate to each other. IÉSEG has also adopted the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) approach as described by David Thomas and his colleagues and hopes that, like CSR, CQ will become part of the DNA of the school and everyone involved in it.

Cultural intelligence is made up of three elements. Firstly, cultural knowledge about how cultures vary and how these differences influence the interactions between people. Secondly, cultural competence and being capable of interacting with discernment drawing on empathy, flexibility and tolerance of uncertainty in order to make the interactions positive and productive. Finally, metacognition, the process by which the individual selects the appropriate knowledge and skills to use in a given situation.

Cultural intelligence involves the capacity to generate culturally appropriate behaviour using the appropriate knowledge and skills depending on the specific situation and the culture(s) of the people involved. It is not specific to a particular culture, but focuses rather on the general capacity of individuals to effectively interact in culturally diverse situations. This is particularly important given the very diverse environment at IÉSEG and its extensive international network.

IÉSEG aims to foster the development of cultural intelligence based on its plan of intercultural skills training. The plan has been implemented at all levels of the school, in Bachelor's, in Master's and for the faculty and administrative staff and involves a number of compulsory components.

By means of its different training projects, IÉSEG aims at providing all of the community, students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff, with an intercultural toolbox that will allow them to interact in a culturally appropriate way with all cultures, whether they be at IÉSEG or elsewhere in the world. The approach is culture-general rather than culture-specific and is long-term to allow every member of the community to attain an evolving "savoir-faire" and "savoir-être" in relation to their specific needs.

The Cultural Diversity Passport was introduced in IÉSEG in 2014-2015 for the Bachelor's programme. This involves a compulsory "Understanding Cultural Diversity" module in Year 1 and an International PEER Exchange activity in Year 2. The objective of the passport is to allow students to develop their knowledge about their own culture and the culture of others, improve their level of cultural competence and also refine their

metacognition. The International PEER Exchange activity obliges every bachelor student at IÉSEG to interact with someone who is culturally different in some significant ways.

The PEER model consists of four interconnected and interrelated phases which are preparation, engagement, evaluation, and reflection. Each student is required to meet their peer at least 3 times during the semester in a self-reflective, intentional process focused on understanding patterns of difference and commonality between people with potentially different perceptions, values and practices.

The first of these meetings is a social meeting to get to know each other and focuses largely on cultural knowledge, the second meeting involves sharing some kind of cultural activity and focuses on cultural skills the final meeting involves the French student and their peer reflecting together about their interactions. The final meeting focuses more on metacognition. Of course, the hope is that many of the students will meet their peers a lot more than three times over the semester.

In order to validate their Cultural Diversity Passport, the students must post a short video about each of the meetings. Students can gain extra points towards their passport by participating in other school projects and activities with an intercultural dimension.

All bachelor students at IÉSEG, whether they arrive at the school in year 1, 2 or 3, must validate the Cultural Diversity Passport and a version of this called the Cultural Diversity Awareness Badge is now offered as an option to international exchange students. Like the Passport, the Badge involves a compulsory course and the PEER activity and aims at developing cultural intelligence and intercultural sensitivity. In 2018-2019, 930 students were involved in the Cultural Diversity Passport. They produced a total of over 2,700 short videos based on the meetings they had. Over 600 students participated in the 33 multicultural projects that were offered.

The “Dealing Daily With Diversity” 2-day staff training is the first of three levels of training aimed at all levels of the permanent staff, both academic and administrative. This training is compulsory whilst two further levels are optional. IÉSEG aims to provide all the staff with the tools needed to better understand cultural diversity in everyday life and help them embrace these differences. The rationale behind the courses is that to support our students in developing culturally intelligent behavior, we also need to provide the necessary role models to help them achieve this. To date, over 60% of the permanent staff have completed the first, compulsory training module and 14% are currently involved in the second, voluntary course.

At the master’s level, students currently have the possibility of increasing their skills by validating the Cultural Diversity Certificate. This certificate is optional and consists of different components. Firstly, there is a compulsory common core module called “Managing Cultural Diversity”. Next, students select 4 additional modules selected from a catalogue of some 30 modules identified as explicitly dealing with the themes of diversity and intercultural communication. The certificate involves the validation of a final Master’s dissertation or a final internship with a theme which is again explicitly related to diversity or intercultural communication. Finally, each student registered for the certificate completes two IDI profiles (Intercultural Development Inventory), one at the start of the programme, which allows them to draw up an individual intercultural development plan and one at the end of the programme which allows them to evaluate the effectiveness of their plan. The first student to validate the Cultural Diversity Certificate graduated in 2018.

Through these different courses and training modules, it is hoped that students and staff will be able to constitute an intercultural, “working together” toolbox with some shared concepts, skills and references. These include the 4Rs model of Fons Trompenaars, the cultural intelligence model of David Thomas, Bjorn Ekelund’s Diversity Icebreaker profile, LaRay Barna’s stumbling blocks model to name but a few. For the staff training in level 2

and at the master's level we are increasingly using Philippe Rosinski's Cultural Orientations Framework assessment as a developmental tool.

One final example of the importance accorded to cultural intelligence and intercultural sensitivity is IÉSEG Center of Intercultural Engagement. ICIE is one of IÉSEG's centers of excellence. Founded in 2017, ICIE brings together academics, instructors and staff from different departments who wish to collaborate and exchange practices regarding intercultural dynamics in business and the development of intercultural competence. ICIE's activities aim to support the school's strategy in contributing to the development of an outstanding intercultural student learning experience and hosting a fully international and intercultural community.

IÉSEG aims to be one of the leading business schools in the world in terms of true intercultural learning, teaching and research, by investing in the development of cultural intelligence (CQ) intercultural competences among students and staff and fostering research engagement and diffusion in this area.

ICIE, encourages and supports research-related initiatives focused on intercultural engagement by pursuing research questions related to the cultural differences and dynamics across and within countries, as well as in and outside multinational corporations, using a myriad tools and methodologies. Through this, the Center strives to offer solutions to complex managerial problems, which will only gain in importance as markets further increase in cultural complexity. Towards this end, our multidisciplinary team mostly develops research activities across five broad axes.

ICIE provides a touchpoint for companies that want to improve their inter/cross-cultural competences. By carrying out cutting-edge research, proposing executive education and tailor-made training courses and providing companies with a forum in which to explore the challenges of living and working in an increasingly diversified society, ICIE aims to be an important team player for its corporate partners.

## Conclusion

IÉSEG is by no means the only school of management to focus on questions of ethics, CSR and intercultural competence. However, we do believe that the deep-visioning process that enabled the collective elaboration of the vision, mission and values of the school and the holistic approach that we take to CSR and the development of cultural intelligence does make the school somewhat unique. We strongly believe in equipping future managers with critical thinking and analytical skills and basing education on a global and comprehensive approach of the world in sociological, economical and managerial dimensions combined with training in intercultural management, and decision-making tools. In our opinion, this combination is key to educating changemakers who will not be followers but will have the capacity to be pioneers and to initiate change in socially responsible, ethical and culturally sensitive ways.

The vision and mission are ambitious and will not be easy to attain. We need to systematically monitor and evaluate how we are progressing in relation to our different objectives. This will be challenging and raise many questions at different levels. One question that has already surfaced is that of the correlation between individual cultural intelligence and organizational cultural intelligence. Does developing CQ at the individual level necessarily result in the emergence of a culturally intelligence organization? A similar question could be posed in relation to management ethics.

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