

CONCLUDING SESSION
Friday December 5th, 2008
Address to the UN Secretary General
Global Forum for Responsible Management Education

Mister Secretary General of the United Nations, Dear Georg, Dear Manuel, Dear colleagues,

On behalf of Europe, and also of Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative, another UN GC initiative, I want to give tribute to the present and past UN SG for their visionary decision to create and support the Global Compact movement. In 99, it was visionary; today it is just necessary, it belongs to the landscape. Thank you for that wisdom, for asking for businessman to become statesman, encouraging responsible business

In Europe because we share a limited physical space with high density of population, because we suffered so many wars, we never supposed that physical resources were unlimited. Civil society has always been a demanding actor to businesses, through politics organizing regulation. European Banks have not taken such systemic risk which created part of the present turmoil. So, one side of the medal, our European model integrates probably better some perspectives of responsible and sustainable business. But we have been lacking economic growth, suffering high unemployment due to generous medical services and excessive regulation. Our development model has been more sustainable, but slower, and we are now trying to accelerate growth through economic liberalization.

As Joe the plumber cannot understand that one trillion of his taxes will pay huge farewell package to bankers having earned already 100 times his own salary, there is an interesting convergence, between Europe, US and China asking for appropriate regulation, trying to build a “more harmonious society”, as says China’s President, places where the liberal economy creates sustainable wealth while building social justice.

This convergence creates new duties to business educators. But today we are facing an awful contradiction. While desiring to educate responsible business men and women, the business models of our Business Schools includes a never ending race to raise more money, to better pay our academics, to better advertise ourselves, to compete with one another. It is a prisoner’s dilemma system we are creating, imposing huge tuitions fees to our students graduating them with heavy debts and encouraging greeds among our own faculty. And journalists encourage this attitude by mainly using salaries and their growth as the yardstick to measure the success of Business Schools. Often our institutions have become slaves of rankings – just making media more profitable! Europe had resisted to these trends up to the late 90s. It is no more the case.

Are we now acting first as scholars and educators or in reality mainly marketing ourselves and pandering to the lowest common denominator?

These are probably some of the severe truths we are facing as business educators.

You can help us, Mister Secretary General, to regain public support to business education, mainly at the PhD level to cope with the huge demand for business educators, cutting off the intense speculation we are all suffering now. Numbers are high, in the order of a one to two billions of dollars investment in PhD scholarships spread out during the next 5 years. But to prepare responsible business leaders, a new public investment is necessary towards their future responsible educators. You can also help AACSB and EFMD to address the issue of rankings, which has become too a political question.

The harsh truth is we are, on average, no better nor worse than the business leaders we have educated. If a small proportion of the trillions invested to stabilize our economies are invested in our institutions, we will behave more as institutions of public service, less as producers of private goods = MBA degrees. As for other sectors, our own market needs some regulation. Accreditation international systems are key, but we need help of leaders, from business as from public service, and we must accept our broader mission.

If we want to educate business leaders for the common good, scholars have to readdress the purpose of the company itself, the yardsticks of their successes, of our students' successes, and of our own success. Educating wise, not greedy leaders **is** a matter of global public good.

The purpose of business must become again the creation of economic and social progress in a sustainable way: we must return to the XVIII century philosophers, compared to the unique paradigm of shareholder value. We need a deep review of the instrumental approaches we have been locked in. Let's open the windows and breathe fresh clean air into our global economic system through a new mission for management education.

The world, our students, our children, are asking us to do so.

Pierre Tapie
President, ESSEC Business School (Paris-Singapore)
Chairman of the Board, GRLI