

# IEDC Faculty: Learning from the best



*A School with a View*

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Prof. Pierre Casse, Leadership Chair at the IEDC-Bled School of Management

## **“THE MORE YOU GO UP THE LADDER, THE MORE YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE POWER GAME”**

Formerly a senior World Bank Staff Development Officer, Professor Pierre Casse is Leadership Chair at the IEDC-Bled School of Management. An esteemed management educator Professor Casse's interest include intercultural dynamics, leadership, organizational development and change within the context of the global market place. Professor Casse teaches at the Moscow School of Management (Skolkovo-Russia), the IAE of the University of Aix-en-Provence, France, and the Kellogg School of Management (North Western University in Chicago-USA). He has consulted for many international companies and organizations including; Alcatel, GKN Corporation, Hoffman-La Roche, Nokia, ICL, Ernst & Young and Disney Consumer Products. He writes and published regularly, he has published more than 10 books. Above all, Prof. Casse is highly appreciated by students – mostly because of his energetic approach, managerial wisdom and rich understanding of multicultural environment.

By: Tonja Blatnik, Head of Corporate Communications, IEDC



**Your career is rich and diverse. From being a senior World Bank Staff Development Officer, to a consultant to multinational corporations, author of the books. Just in 23 years you had 4 jobs. What is the main advantage in changing roles versus being loyal to one or a very few functions?**

First I must acknowledge that for some people to move from one organization to another is both: challenging and enjoyable. The switch offers new experiences as well as new opportunities to learn and grow. It can also be painful (the need to adjust to new environments can be time consuming and taxing) and very frustrating (people inside the joining organization can be reluctant to welcome a new comer and resist any proposals to change anything).

It is then a question of personal drive. Some people like to change and manage a career from one place to another (my case) and others prefer to stay around for a straightforward and vertical career.

My experience in Africa (5 years as a sociologist) then 18 years with three international organizations (OECD, FAO and the World Bank) gave me a rich experience that I was able to tap and build on when I joined the academic community (after having got a PhD in Business Administration).

**How and when did you decide to be part of IEDC story?**

Frankly, what decided me to join was my contact and relationship with the IEDC President and Dean (Prof. Danica Purg). She impressed me with her stamina and great imagination. We met at the IMD in Lausanne, where I was a

full Professor and she wanted me to join the faculty as a visiting academic. My first reaction was to decline, but she is not the kind of a person who takes no for an answer. So she kept pushing and inviting me to come to Bled and see by myself the kind of business school she was inventing. So, one day I said yes! I visited the school "With a View". I met with a few program managers as well as students and got deeply impressed by:

- the entrepreneurial spirit of the entire Institution;
- the unique approach to training and education;
- the professionalism of the people in charge of the programs.

I realized there and then that the IEDC was a real jewel in business education, because:

- it is different from the other business schools (creativity is the key to all programs. It does use art in a powerful way as a way to reflect on leadership and management);
- it is not afraid of questioning old ideas and aims at being at the forefront of executive development (i.e. leadership education is in line with the requirement of the fast changing world that we are in at the beginning of this century);
- it combines concepts and practicalities in an effective way (new ideas and skills are presented and discussed in almost all programs).

**How do you define your success and the success of (your) students?**

What a great question! What is

success after all? My answer to that question is twofold. Firstly, my success is when the executives that I am working with are able to challenge their assumptions, assess their natural leadership abilities (in line with the requirements of the time) and decide on what they want to do so that they can indeed "perform and enjoy"! My main objective can be defined as follows: To give the "students" an opportunity to reflect on their natural strengths and build on them. I strongly believe that life is too short to be miserable and that everybody must decide one day or another if she (or he) wants to spend her life focusing on her weaknesses or activate her strengths. I am personally convinced that there is nothing more depressing that to reach the end of one's own life (and we all do) and acknowledge that the life we had was not what we wanted. Too late!

And secondly, my students' success can be looked upon from three different perspectives: 1. The ability to discover in themselves something they had that they were not aware of; 2. To transfer the learning to real (personal and professional) life situations; and 3. To learn how to earn using their own resources.

**ABOUT PIERRE**

Prof. Paul Claudel, University of Aix-en-Provence, France:

"I've known Pierre Casse for quite a few years, I have seen him teach, I have listened to him talk, I have read many of his lines. The words that immediately come to my mind, if I want to qualify this exceptional personality are: provocative, innovative, surprising, challenging, and often funny.

## In what ways is the role of business schools/educations changing? What are the main trends?

The critical issue for all business school today is to design and implement educational program that can prepare people to play effective executive roles (public and private sectors) in a world in permanent transformation. The question is simply put in the following way: How do we prepare people for a world that we do not know anything about?

It seems to me that Business Schools today should focus on:

- How to adjust to ongoing changes without losing our balance and sanity
- How can leaders and managers challenge their assumptions, check the validity of the existing ones and even better invent the new ways to define business and organizational work
- How to be invent tomorrow today (decide what we want to see around and fight for it)

One critical dimension that Business Schools must explore is to design and run programs that present, analyse and situations from various perspectives (finance, marketing, leadership, strategies...) at the same time. The actual "Silo" approach of most institutions is wrong! Out there – in the real world- all the key dimensions that belong to the cursus of BS are isolated...

## Name three reasons why companies should invest in general employee talent development, also during periods of recession?

That's easy!

## MEET PIERRE

Finish the sentence:

My friends would describe me as ...

.... demanding.

The main difference between men and women leaders. ..

.... Men are promoted on the basis of their potential. Women on the basis of their achievements.

There's nothing better in life than ...

.... Perform and enjoy.

The most powerful lesson I have learned ...

.... Learning how to learn is key to survival.

I am inspired by ...

.... What I have in myself that I am not (yet) aware of.

1. Talents are key and no organization can survive in a fast changing environment if the key players (employees and workers) are not growing and adapting their mindsets and behaviors to the new environments in the making
2. To attract good talents organizations are going to have to offer opportunities to people to experience at work not just exciting jobs but also some kind of "mind expansion" situations
3. Business is in the process of being redefined in many parts of the world. Profitability is still key but another dimension has been promoted for a few years now and that is the social responsibility of the corporate world. It is around and it is not going to disappear. Organizations are going to become centers of social encounters and personal growths. This will hopefully counteract the anti-social impact of the new communication technologies

**What is your main advice to young managers, who have ambitions to climb the career ladder?**

One simple piece of advice: Never stop checking your professional options inside and outside your organization! Options provide freedom of the mind and life choices

## ABOUT PIERRE

IEDC Program Managers:

"Prof. Casse is being loved by participants because of his endless energy and ability to deeply connect with the audience and to adapt to all kind of circumstances."

**Would you agree that higher you are in the organizational hierarchy, lonelier you get?**

I disagree! The more you go up the ladder, the more you get involved in the power game and lose your ability to be objective!

My experience as a consultant with many organizations (in many industries), has convinced me that many top executives:

- Are not lonely at the top. They just meet with the same people over and over and become the prisoner of a "clique".

- Invest more attention and energy into the political game at the expense of sound business- corporate leadership.
- Lose their credibility by accumulating bonuses and other financial treats when those who are working very hard are penalized by the economic downturns.

## ABOUT PIERRE

Barbara Smolnikar, President of the Management Board, NLB Vita, življenjska zavarovalnica, d.d., Slovenia:

"I've met prof. Casse for the first time a year ago, when listening to one of his lectures about leadership. I was amazed how he immediately attracted the audience with his boundless energy, provocativeness and his open mind. He is definitely somebody who always meets your expectations, no matter how high they are and raises questions in your head. He doesn't let you »relax« on past good results, but forces you to think what you can do better, he gives ideas how to adopt your leadership behavior to new era and all this on examples from a real life. This is the most valuable."