

**Navigating today's changing job market in VUCA times:
French business graduates' perceptions of the job market and of an
intrapreneurial-entrepreneurial approach to job search**

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the
degree of Doctor of Education by Patricia Théry-Hart

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Abstract

French business graduates' perceptions of the job market and of an intrapreneurial-entrepreneurial approach to job search in VUCA times

Business schools are challenged to train career orientated young graduates and provide them with the skills to find employment upon graduation. This research examines the transition of French business graduates from higher education into the labour market and their perceptions of today's complex and changing job market. It sought to investigate how they understand and manage their first job search and whether or not intrapreneurial-entrepreneurial competencies played a role in their job search, in a world where there is a definite focus on promoting an entrepreneurial mindset.

To identify the most important influencing factors within each domain, a review of the literature was conducted around job search strategies, job search skills, job search success, and job search attitudes and intentions. The concepts of intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship were also reviewed, not as an individual career path preference but in order to identify generic competencies or behaviour that could be applied to the job search process. This review identified those factors that are most relevant in the job search process in order to come up with a list of shared intrapreneurial and entrepreneurial competencies. To explore today's complexity and fast changing pace, the concept of 'VUCA' (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) times was also researched in the context of a changing job market. No previous studies were encountered that specifically addressed this issue through this angle.

This study was based on a qualitative approach in order to have a better understanding of the individual experiences. Interview schedules were run with a sample of 15 graduates from the 2011 to 2014 cohorts, which represented 1200 potential graduates. One-on-one, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were the primary method for data collection. Content and thematic analysis was the chosen approach to identify competencies and patterns. The data were organized into three main themes: perceived sources of success, perceived causes of difficulties and then classified based on the entrepreneurship competency approach as divided into knowledge, skills, behaviour and personality characteristics applied to the study the job-seeking process.

The results show that particular personality traits, behaviour, skills and knowledge in combined or differentiated ways are a definite advantage in finding a job. The findings include graduates' perceptions regarding the support received from educators in their transition into the workplace and offer advices in what could be done in assisting future graduates in this transition process. They acknowledged that an entrepreneurial mind-set, behaviour or certain competencies could be encouraged in the curriculum and applied to job search in order to become "entrepreneurs of their job searches". Findings also suggested that the VUCA world is considerably impacting the job market and that the VUCA prime framework could be a tool to implement to help young graduates face tomorrow's job market challenges.

The findings have relevant implications for both theory and higher education policy, as it provides new insights into the perceptions and programs that can be implemented at the starting point of a graduate' working life as well as support marketers in order to attract prospective students, to graduates in their job search, and to experts working with issues of employment.

Key Words: Young business graduates, French business schools, School-to-work transition, Alternative job search process, Intrapreneurial-entrepreneurial competencies, VUCA times, Higher education.

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“Nothing endures but change.” - Heraclitus, 500 BC

"Shoot for the Moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars." - Les Brown

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it." - Goethe

1-Introduction

1.1 Job Market and Young Graduates Unemployment

Employment realities are being reshaped. Change is inevitable and individuals are faced with completely “unknown unknowns” (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). The traditional view of the job search methods fails to capture the changing nature of today’s job market challenges. Indeed, in this age of global complexity in employment skills and uncertainty of employment trends, the question of employment and employability for business school graduates is crucial especially at a time when a guarantee of ongoing employment is no longer a given for the highly educated (Jackson, 2015). Continually evolving employment opportunities, employability skills and perspectives, for recent graduates, present major ongoing issues for all the players in the development and application of higher education principles and practices.

In February 2019, the youth unemployment rate in the EU28 stood at 14.6% and 16.1% in the euro area, compared with 15.7% and 17.7% respectively in February 2018. The lowest rates in February 2019 were observed in Germany (5.6%), the Czech Republic (6.0%) and the Netherlands (6.4%). The highest increases were recorded in Greece (39.5% in December 2018), Italy (32.8%) and Spain (32.4%). Youth unemployment in the European Union (EU) is measured through the transition of young adults from education to the labour market. The French unemployment rate was 20.1% for young college-educated French (Eurostat, 2019). The reported unemployment rate was lower for males (20.2%) than for women (18.3%) (Country economy, 2019). Hence, France can be considered to be in a system of underemployment specific to the risk society (Beck, 2011).

A report published by the Institute for the Future (ITFF) clearly predicted that “the United States and Europe no longer hold a monopoly on job creation, innovation, and political power” (2011, p.5). It stated that economies and relevant economic forces are shifting on a global basis. In a highly globally connected world, key drivers impacting the job market and employment are multiple and global in influence. New employment opportunities are now being created in ways that are hard, or even impossible, to predict. A large percentage of future employment opportunities have already been impacted by the development of the digital economy which has become mainstream and are expected to be further impacted by more disruptive technologies among which artificial intelligence, gamification, neuro-technology, blockchain, augmented reality and robotics. According to the *Putting a face behind the jobs at risk of automation* report from OECD (2018) “while only one in seven jobs may be lost to automation, many others will change significantly” (p.1).

The nature of the work environment is also changing. The job-for-life model is given way to medium and short-term employment (Boudreau, Jesuthasan & Creelman, 2015. Breen (1997) adds that employers in the globalized economy are less and less interested in long term commitments. France has a history of highly protected employees such as civil servants called “fonctionnaires” and long-term contracts referred as CDI (contrat à durée indéterminée). Nonetheless, the emergence of highly flexible job trends such as internships, short-terms contracts referred as CDD (contrat à durée déterminée), self-employment among which the “auto-entrepreneur status” or solo entrepreneur status introduced in 2009 (Blossfeld et al.,2008) is on the rise.

Globalization opened a global and multicultural marketplace that caused job losses resulting in greater insecurity since many types of jobs can now be easily off-shored. Thousands of jobs, particularly in manufacturing, have been eliminated in advanced economies either by automation or by relocation to newly industrialized countries. Countries like France are

therefore highly affected where the economy has shifted from the manufacturing to knowledge and information services (Van der Heijden et al., 2002). Worldwide platforms can be found that connect employers and freelancers or independent workers based on particular projects such as Freelancer.com.

In the current career literature, workers are accountable for their own skills in order to improve their employability (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom, 2005). This continually evolving situation of a changing world of work is clearly observed in the decline of traditional careers along with the emergence of multi-directional career paths (Hillage & Pollard, 1998).

In this context of a complex fast changing job market, it seems interesting to connect the job search process to the VUCA environment. VUCA is an acronym that has found its way into the business lexicon and the management literature and describes the environment in terms of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005; Boyles, 2012; Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). It was introduced by the U.S. military at the end of the Cold War when they were facing a global and diverse landscape that seemed increasingly ambiguous.

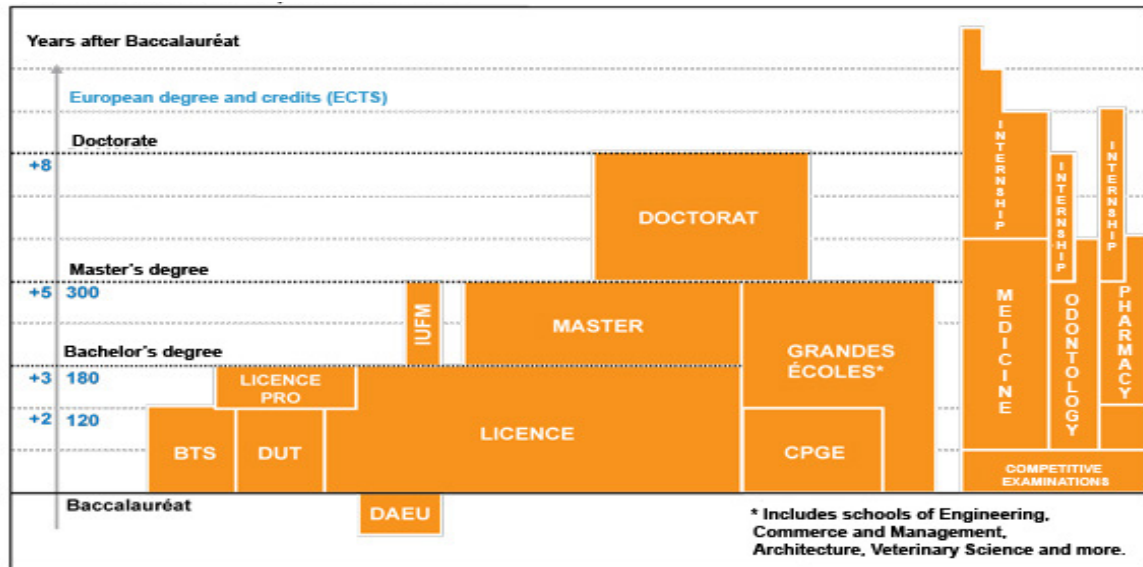
1.2 Overview of the French Higher Education System

An overview of the French higher education system is necessary to understand the context of this research which was done in a private business school representative of a small elite, belonging to the top of French education. The French higher education system is very selective (Convert, 2010). This hierarchy is primarily the result of an institutional history linked to the senior management jobs in companies that have enabled children from the upper classes to attend prestigious school or private schools (Bourdieu, 1989). Joan Acker (2009) refers to it as the "inequality regimes" that shape and segment the trajectories of French students from primary to graduate schools. Her research has allowed to identify school

mechanisms differentiated according to gender or social origin and deciding eviction at the undergraduate level (Blöss & Erlich, 2000), favouring or not a bachelor's degree at university (Brinbaum et al., 2018) or encouraging students to the competitive entrance examinations to the “Grandes Ecoles” (Blanchard et al., 2016). Her approach calls for questioning equal opportunities, merit, and the rationale for changes in selection policies (classification systems, development and implementation of selection criteria). This focus is outside the scope of this thesis but needs to be acknowledged, especially when “elite higher education is actually becoming more socially selective whereas the situation in the universities is stable and moving close to equality” (Duru-Bellat, 2006, p.120).

The most recent PISA survey run by OECD (2019) identified France as the one of the OECD countries where the link between socio-economic status and performance is strongest, with a difference of 107 points between students from privileged and underprivileged backgrounds. This difference is significantly higher than the average from other OECD countries (89 points). It highlights the fact that students, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, have lower career aspirations by lack of knowledge or because of their lower academic performance. The career goals of 15-year-old students as reported in the PISA survey also reflect strong gender stereotypes. Among the best performing students in mathematics or science, one boy out of three in France wants to work as an engineer or scientist by the age of 30, while only one girl out of six plans to work in this type of profession. For the ones who pursue higher education studies, there are five paths in France as indicated in the figure below. Motivated by their cultural background and career aspirations, high school students choose to either attend a vocational school (BTS), the university system (DUT, Licence), a private or semi-private schools (“Grandes Ecoles” encompassing business, architecture, engineer schools...) or a medical school. The one explored in this research belongs to the “*Grandes Ecoles*” group.

Figure 1: The French Higher Education System



Source: www.education.gouv.fr

Nonetheless, before describing the “Grandes Ecoles” path, a description of the higher education system is necessary. Universities in France receive financial aid from the state, they charge a nominal fee. A report from the year 2017 has revealed that the cost of study per year for a bachelor, master and PhD programs in French universities is €189, €259, and €393 respectively (Times Higher Education, 2019). These figures are much less compared to the tuition fees of private business schools which cost around €11000 per year multiply by five for a master degree. Only 15% of the students can afford to attend private schools (Sify, 2019). Private schools in France can be divided into two groups, the ones that are completely private and have no contract with the government and the other group involving schools that receive government funding. The schools belonging to the latter group remain partly under the control of the government and thus are bound by certain rules and regulations that prevent an exorbitant rise in tuition fees. Such private schools are comparatively more affordable for the middle class students unlike the entirely privately held schools. A private school with no government funding sets its own curriculum (Just Landed, 2019) but if it belongs to the *Grandes Écoles*, it does have to implement strict rules to ensure the quality of the program.

Most schools are recognised by the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation referred as “MESRI” (Ministère de l’enseignement supérieur, de la recherche et de l’innovation) through Visa or RNCP (National Directory of Professional Certifications) certifications. Since the privately held schools receive no government subsidies, tuition fees are high allowing mostly the privileged wealthier students to attend. Consequently, the students who choose business schools tend to come from middle or upper class backgrounds, even if the “Grandes Ecoles” in response to the very strong social reproduction of the French elite schools try to "diversify" their recruitment and have offered a number of "social opening" schemes over the last ten years (van Zanten, 2010).

The business school in this study belongs to the selective group named *Grandes Écoles*, similar to the American Ivy league schools or British Russel group. The *Grandes Écoles* encompass most of the top-rated French Business Schools and Engineering Schools, “they are highly selective, elite, and prestigious institutions” (van Zanten & Maxwell, 2015, p72). Within this category though, different statutes exist, such as public, private or semi-private schools. This group is made up of 37 business schools and ranking depends on their accreditations, programs, research faculty, and international status. The *Grandes Écoles* are organized and controlled outside the mainstream framework of the public universities system. It is a label given by the “Conférence des Grandes Écoles” (CGE) which is a French national association, created in 1973 providing representation, research and accreditation. The admission process for students to be accepted in a *Grande École* is very selective with competitive written and oral exams. For the top ones, special post-baccalaureate “preparatory classes” are offered in the best Paris high schools “lycées” to prepare for this competitive entrance examinations. For the other ones, the entrance examinations are still very selective but students do not need to attend “preparatory classes”.

As part of the very intense competition among the Business Schools within the *Grandes Écoles*, two criteria systematically emphasized are graduate employment and employability rate since business school missions are to produce ‘employable’ graduates. Students and parents alike expect clear evidence of a return on their investment (tuition), especially within the context of market turmoil and critical unemployment rates for young business graduates in France and throughout Europe (Unesdoc Digital Library, 1998). Business Schools are obliged to demonstrate positive results both for ranking purposes and, of course, for attracting new students (Hazelkorn, 2007). HEC Paris is ranked as the highest business school in France according to Financial Times Business School Rankings (2018) and QS World University Rankings (2019). The communication of their job placement ratios are based on categories such as graduates ‘workplace locations, salary range, entrepreneurial projects, job types, volunteering efforts, labels and company size.

A major differentiating factor for the “Grandes Écoles” Business Schools, besides tuition, is that these institutions offer specific and targeted student services as part of their programs, such as career development programs. This type of student-support service is not as fully developed in universities, which lack sufficient resources to create and develop such services. Furthermore, French Business Schools benefit from strong and pragmatic links with businesses and potential employers. Nonetheless, business school students are experiencing greater challenges in finding employment matching their expectations.

Aware of the economic significance of entrepreneurship, the French government has been encouraging entrepreneurial activity as a measure against unemployment. The European Commission and policymakers also have put an emphasis on promoting entrepreneurial spirit, and entrepreneurial mindsets among students (EC, 2013). Business schools have adapted their programs to recognize that such skills are highly important for graduates’ employment (Kozlinska, 2011). French Business Schools have focused on implementing ‘entrepreneurial

tracks’ and ‘entrepreneurial mentoring programs’ to support encourage entrepreneurial and enterprising mindsets and employability for their graduates (Klapper & Neergaard, 2012; Somers, Passerini, Parhankangas & Casal, 2014).

1.3 Objectives of the Thesis

The main objectives of this thesis include the following:

1. To investigate and identify the common perceptions of young graduates about their job search process.
2. To explore the competencies that are used by young graduates when looking for a job in the context of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) times.
3. To explore whether the entrepreneurial competency approach (knowledge, skills, behaviour and personality characteristics that refer to the personal qualities and attitudes) can be transferred to the study of the job-seeking process.
4. To evaluate whether or not intrapreneurial-entrepreneurial competencies could contribute to job search success and if so, how the curriculum could be enhanced to develop such competencies?

1.4 Context of this Study

The research context of this study took place in partnership with the Alumni Association of a French Business school whose mission is to train students to become “global managers”. It is a vocational-for-profit business school that transitioned over the years into a Business school ranked 19th out of 37 French Business schools and belonging to the “*Grandes Écoles*” group. In terms of students profiles, an average of 10% of the students were granted government scholarships, 10% declared having student loans and 20% were apprentices implying tuition fees being paid by their companies. Business Schools are not allowed to ask

for the socio-professional category of students' parents for most students have reached the age of majority. Still, one survey is run annually on an anonymous basis for the first year students by the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. No sensitive data regarding racial or ethnic origin is asked for regulation is very strict and the "Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés" (CNIL) or National Commission on Informatics and Liberty ensures that data privacy law is applied to the collection, storage, and use of personal data enforced by the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The data protection act article 9 on the prohibition in principle of the collection of special categories of data is as follows "*the processing of personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs or trade union membership, as well as the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning the sex life or sexual orientation of a natural person shall be prohibited*". Still, there are ways to identify such sensitive data regarding differentiated social selectivity by drawing up a list of potentially discriminating first names, areas or names of high schools, place of residence, identify government scholarship recipients or students' loans.

Most students attend the school immediately after high school and follow a 5-year program to obtain a Master Degree with a double specialisation track including international trade and another field such as marketing, finance, audit, supply chain management, marketing and entrepreneurship, allowing them a clear choice of a career path. All students have an above average functional-to-proficient level in two languages besides French. As part of the entry exam, they have to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam and a score equivalent to B1 aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is required. They take the exam at the end of their 4th year and 92% of them reach a C1 level, meaning they can communicate straightforward and complex ideas as appropriate. Similar

tests are required in their third language. They are well-trained and qualified to apply for entry-level jobs in their field of study. Additionally, field experiences are a major part of the school's five-year program. Each student has the opportunity to do three to four mandatory internships plus one or two semesters abroad. These experiences provide the students with the opportunity to acquire directly quite a few of the workplace skills employers are looking for, more specifically the "soft skills" that are also developed as part of the curriculum.

1.5 Rationale for the Study

The rationale for the present study is the need to understand the job search process of young business graduates in order to help them succeed in their post-graduation job searches. Business schools are challenged with managing the placement of young graduates since learning how best to help these young graduates is essential in building a strong and successful alumni network and a strong brand image for the school. The question of graduates' employment is of interest to the strategic planning committees of the institutions because of the heavy competition. Business schools' programs are evaluated across a wide range of criteria and official standards, such as 'graduate placement' and 'entrepreneurship' in rankings produced by organisations such as the Financial Times (Palin, 2014) or by accreditation agencies such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2017) or the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD, 2020). In addition, the study relates to the challenges facing Business Schools in meeting student and parent expectations. Business Schools must acknowledge the global job market, the differences between traditional ways of searching for jobs and today's job market. Understanding how these students see the world as they enter the workforce can help faculty and administrators provide appropriate learning opportunities and help institutions, employers and policy makers

create, modify and develop the necessary programs to adjust and adapt to a future that promises even more rapid development and demands.

There are contextual factors that need to be acknowledged such as social background and labour market (Rodrigues, Guest & Budjanovcanin, 2013) as well as gender, ethnicity, religion, age and disability that definitely affect any job search as reminded by Moreau and Leathwood (2006). Considering the school environment, the measures of cultural capital often associated with educational capital were not a focus since this research took place in a Business school (see section 2.3) and as the choice of the university or school attended impacts positively or negatively job opportunities (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006).

1.6 Research Significance and Originality

The originality of this study lies both in the identification of competencies business graduates indicated as relevant in their job search in today's complex, fast changing job market in VUCA times and the exploration of whether or not intrapreneurial or entrepreneurial competencies can contribute to a successful job search. The underlying goal is to help all French business graduates to become “entrepreneurs of their job searches” and eventually careers as opposed to entrepreneurship as a main career goal. It is also a topic explored from a different angle. Recent skills such as risk taking, flexibility, agility, innovativeness, and pro-activeness seem to be more important than ever in today's global markets but the job search literature does not study them under the perspective of intrapreneurial-entrepreneurial skills or behaviour. The closest concept, though applied to career ‘unusual’ moves, is ‘career entrepreneurship’ described by Korotov, Khapova and Arthur (2011) as “the identification of unexploited opportunities and making of career investments in order to obtain a higher objective (externally recognized) or subjective (internally gratifying) career reward” (p.128).

1.6 Place of the Researcher in this Study

The subject of this research was closely linked with my previous position as Director of Corporate Relations and Careers. One of my mission was to ensure that students and graduates developed the right skills in order to be competitive for employment opportunities. My experience led me to wonder how students and young graduates understood and navigated today's complex job market. How could we assist them to use the right job search strategies and encourage them to project themselves and move beyond traditional linear careers? Thousands of books and career sites exist that describe and examine how to look for a job. And yet, faced with their individual job searches, some graduates seemed at loss. As a practionner, I felt I had an insider understanding of the topic, though partial and subjective, and this research gave me the opportunity to examine whether or not my perceptions were accurate. The participants having graduated, I was not in a position of power any longer, at best I could provide them with advice if they asked for it.

The challenges faced by graduates were multiple. They felt that once they had graduated, they did not get the support or necessary assistance to face the job search. They felt left alone once outside the institution with or without parental guidance. They admitted being well prepared for their internship searches but not for their job search. However, they acknowledged that the stakes were not the same and therefore neither was the pressure. This college-to-work place transition, as pointed out, in the literature shows that it is best if business and colleges paired up their efforts to support this transition. At the school, I had designed and implemented a formal structured course over the five-year program to assist and prepare students in their internship search and their job searches.

Pathways and core modules were designed which focused on (1) discovery of jobs, (2) exploration of career opportunities and (3) preparation for a career in France and abroad. Each student had to build an individualized career plan based on an E-portfolio called "competency

passport”. It (1) described work experiences, home responsibilities activities, and hobbies, (2) translated experiences into abilities, competencies, attitudes, knowledge, skills and interests, (3) presented a career passport (experience report, or resume), and (4) was used for job applications and interviews. Delivery modes were mainly through courses, workshops, conferences, mentoring and assessment on one-to-one basis. It was also based on action learning. For instance, in 1st year, they had to start networking and meet professionals to ask them questions regarding their jobs, the skills and degree required.

See table 1.1 “Overview of the school career-mapping program” based on research from Kanfer, Wanberg & Kantrowitz, 2001; Hasluck, et al., 2008.

Table 1.1: Overview of the school career-mapping program (Hart, 2010)

Title	Modules / workshops
Academic Pathways	Choice of major Job presentations (by professionals)
Career Development Process	Career development plan Self-assessment: your interests, values, skills and talents (know yourself) Soft skills: professional know-how & hard skills Community service / volunteering / associations (skills building) Branding myself Uniqueness and differentiation Entrepreneurship My dream job
Internships, Jobs and Networking	Networking: companies & alumni Informational interviewing Career fairs / company presentations Market and company search Finding a job/internship
Resume and Career Writing (work and internships in France and abroad)	Resume guidelines Online resumes (key words) Action verbs Writing about your skills

	Sample resumes and CVs (French, English, Spanish and German) Cover letters (French, English, Spanish and German) Researching and answering jobs on internet (mock exercise)
Interviewing (work and internships in France and abroad)	Preparing for an interview (mock interviews) Some questions to ask an interviewer Sample questions asked by employers Telephone/ skype interviews Dress code for interviews and thank you note Negotiating salary and benefits
Experiential learning (reflection)	Translate projects into skills Translate internships into skills (Up to 15 months' internships) Translate semesters abroad into skills Interviewing professionals

Source: adapted from Kanfer, Wanberg & Kantrowitz, 2001; Hasluck, et al., 2008

However, the career mapping program lacked a few topics. Women issues and challenges such a negotiating salaries were not discussed. Career crossroads and evaluations were not explored nor building a digital reputation. In addition, areas such as the lack of professional expertise and how to thrive better in the workplace were not discussed either. Choices had to be made, mainly due to the financial cost of the overall program and the volume of hours allocated.

1.7 Overview of the Thesis

In the first chapter of this thesis, the introduction is provided to the topic that is studied in this research and the problem statement that is explored in this research. The next chapter provides an overview of the literature that is available in the field of education regarding employability, the job search competencies of young graduates. In the third chapter of this thesis, the methodology of research and the methods, which were used to collect the data, are all explained. In the next chapter, the results of data analysis are given. This chapter is one of the most important chapters of this thesis as it discusses the results that were found through

this study and also explains how these results can be linked to the information that is given in the second chapter of literature review. This helps in bringing the new and the previous information. The last chapter is the conclusion. This chapter has a complete summary of this thesis and also explains the practical implication and some important recommendations as well.

2-Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This thesis sits in the field of careers and employability, a field that has expanded over recent years and one which is increasingly well researched and where concepts that guide our work are more hotly debated and developing. The key concepts explored in this chapter are the job search process, VUCA times (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) and entrepreneurship. Even though it is not the focus on this research, it is introduced by a discussion on the impact of social capital in French Higher Education and more specifically within the perimeter of Business Schools which have a particular role in the French Higher Education landscape.

2.2 Graduate employment and employability

The aspect of graduates' employment refers to the rate of employment of the young graduates who are fresh in job search (Man, Lau & Snape, 2002).

The term employability can be defined as the capability of an individual to first find a suitable job and then retain that position while also being able to move between the different job positions and / or segments of the job market (Carree & Thurik, 2003; Song, Wanberg, Niu, & Xie, 2006). Other researchers have defined the term employability in terms of a set of factors which have an impact on the chances a person has to find a suitable job in the market (Mc Quaid & Lindsay, 2005; Latham & Budworth, 2006). In the French Labour Code, the development of employability is part of the missions of the public employment service. Périlleux (2005, p.301) describes it the "mobilization of individuals on their path to employment".

It is important to underline that the evolution of the economy, the productive system and employment have changed the concept of employability which now takes the form of an injunction addressed to the individuals to take charge of the construction and maintenance of their employability, presented above all as an individual property. This discourse on employability emphasizes that all the responsibility has been switched to the individual making him or her responsible regarding his or her skills in the context of a job search (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006) and that they have to adapt their skills to the needs of the company. In the Anglo-Saxon HR models, individuals' skills are key to success (Loufrani-Fedida et al., 2015, p. 17). In neo-liberal economies, individuals are accountable for their own employability, they have to manage one's life as capital. In France, Business Schools promote the acquisitions of skills in the training in order for the students to be performing rapidly in their transition to employment either through their choices of major (logistics, finance, marketing and so forth) or mandatory internships, apprenticeship or company projects.

2.3. Business School: managerial production or reproduction?

Before exploring the job seeking process, the particular context of French Business Schools must be put into perspective. Indeed, it seems crucial to understand the role of business schools in the preparation of the students to transition to employment. In fact, it is the mission and the purpose of business to prepare them for the employment market and train them to “manage their career”.¹ It seems important to analyze business schools' historical and social purpose taking into account the question of their key role into the production of a managerial habitus.

2.3.1. Defining reproduction

School and pedagogy have always been recognized as central social institutions et practices for a given society. As Durkheim (1922) affirmed “education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in advance in the child’s soul the essential similarities which is demanded by collective life” (p.48). In France, during the late 19th century and the first half 20th, the educative institution is considered as a republican mean for social ascension. Meritocratic, education empowers students to equalize the primary social conditions. However, during the second half 20th, Bourdieu and Passeron (1964; 1970) denounced the Durkheimian conception of education as a transmission of common values. According to them, education produces and legitimizes social inequalities.

The researchers demonstrated empirically that inequality in school is not just the result of inequality in the economic resources of families. Inequalities are produced inside and by the institution itself. Education is a space-time of reproduction and legitimation of the original social inequalities: this kind of inequality is added to initial social inequalities. They effectively deconstruct the Republican French myth. In fact, formal equality does not acknowledge individual features. That is why French educative institution cannot take into account real inequalities between students; it is "indifference to differences" (Bourdieu, 1966, p.336). Through various economic, cultural and symbolic obstacles (Bourdieu, 1979), the educational system selects its students by giving priority to those who will be able to adapt themselves and well-integrate the educational framework: the ‘inheritors’. For the latter, educational integration and socialization is natural, because they have been prepared and they had internalized the good habitus, resulted from their social conditions and their primary socialization. But social classes have different experiences of the educational framework and institutions. So for those who do not belong to the ‘inheritors’, "acquiring school culture

requires real acculturation" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970, p.37) and must produce a new habitus.

The educational system is, *per se*, an institution of socialization which produces, selects and ranks the students. Then, they are prepared to take their future place in the social organization and hierarchy. As institutional products, they tend to accept established social inequalities and to reproduce a specific social behaviour. Additionally, because of entry barriers (cultural and economic capital especially), the educational framework tends to reproduce the domination and legitimacy of a dominant minority.

This analysis proposed an alternative to the contemporary Marxist and Republican approaches. Yet, it has been criticized by others educational sociologists: Baudelot and Establet with *L'Ecole capitaliste en France* (1971) and Boudon's *L'Inégalité des chances* (1973). Both can be read as alternative and complementary analyses. The former challenge a unique and meritocratic vision of the educational system. They point out that, from primary school to higher education, it tends to reproduce capitalist relations of production. They distinguished two distinct schooling networks: a professional pathway that leads students to employees and the execution jobs, and a scholar pathway that directs students to university and the managerial and engineering professions. Boudon (1973) who was one of the most critical of the bourdieusian deterministic approach of education, underlines the importance of the student "reference group" in his strategic and educational choices.

2.3.2. *Issues of capital*

Social and educational reproduction is intimately linked to the bourdieusian concept of capital. The sociologist identifies four types of capital that rank and place the human being in a specific objective and social field:

- The cultural capital, i.e. ‘cultural goods inherited from various family educational actions’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970);
- The economic capital which refers to all financial and heritage resources;
- The social capital is defined as ‘all current or potential resources related to the possession of a sustainable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of inter-knowledge and inter-recognition’
- The symbolic capital ‘that is to say, capital—in whatever form—insofar as it is represented, i.e., apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted ‘cognitive capacity’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p.253).

The educational system, as a framework of socialization, produces graduates whose capital will be recognized in a dominant social field. This capital makes it possible to recognize and identify with a “*esprit de corps*” (Bourdieu, 1989). Because of these capitals, graduates are able to establish a dominant or dominated position in a social and professional field.

So how does it translate in business schools?

2.3.3. *Business school: becoming managers*

As described in section 1.2, business schools have a distinctiveness place in the French higher education field. Private and closer to the business world and communities, they are singular in the education field.

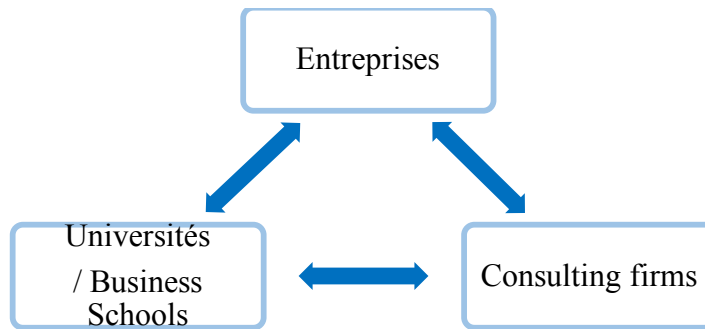
2.3.3. *Brief history of French Business School system*

French business schools appeared in the late 19th century. They proposed a new pedagogy at odds with the classical University program. They proposed, *a contrario*, a practical pedagogy: an attempt to build schools with a “*system of cultural values different from the one that dominated at the time*” (Maffre, 1986, p156).

This goal is easily explained by the socio-historical context of such institutions (Blanchard, 2012). By following the model developed by Siegfried (1870) in Mulhouse, the Business Schools supported an alternative educational model based on a practical commercial teaching compared to an academic and scientific teaching (Maffre, 1991). Launched by local business communities, these institutions created a pedagogy for their particular needs. The “merchant” and “chambre de commerce” (Chamber of Commerce) pushed for the creation of these new and commercial establishments to enable the future merchants to provide knowledge about business that cannot be acquired through practice such as ‘commercial accounting, trade style and laws’. It is therefore a question of reconciling commercial practices and knowledge by ‘defining a corpus of specific knowledge for economic and commercial professionals that empowered them to authorize and justify an access to positions of power in these fields’ (Blanchard, 2018, p 2012).

French business schools have been institutionalized as a mean and as an answer to the business community and field according to their needs: first, it was a merchants’ production, then during the 20th century, a production of managers. They are part of a triangulation (see table 2 below) between companies, consultants and teacher-researchers in management (Boussard, 2008): a managerial field. As a whole, they produce and legitimize business management knowledge and practices which are taught to students, who will be able to benefit from special educational devices. It creates a “conversion of habitus” (Abraham, 2007, p.52)

Figure 2: Triangulation of the management space (Boussard, 2008, p.231)



2.3.4. A recent social opening

Traditionally, Business Schools are institutions created by managers, for managers: they are an institution of reproduction. However, business schools have created schemes to welcome underprivileged students. In 2005, the “Conférence aux Grandes Écoles ” (CGE) created a working group targeting social access.² According to a social barometer led by the CGE in 2019:³

- 67% of business schools created social access schemes before and during their curriculum,
- 20% of the students receive scholarship grants,
- 24% are apprentices and do not pay their registration fees.

If all these elements do not allow a full social access in the business schools, they offer a first means to open their access by lowering the barriers of entry and their demand for cultural and economic capital.

Business Schools attract a part of the student population, historically excluded from managerial curriculum even if they still represent a very small percentage of all French students. However, the better integration of business school graduates (Calmand, Épiphanie &

² <https://www.cge.asso.fr/liste-actualites/louverture-sociale-dans-les-grandes-ecoles-un-engagement-fort-et-continu/>

³ <https://www.cge.asso.fr/themencode-pdf-viewer/?file=https://www.cge.asso.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Barom%C3%A8tre-Ouverture-web3.pdf>

Hallier, 2009) offers a desirable future for young French students. Today, they offer a real ‘attractiveness effect’ (Draelants, 2010).

2.3.5. *A managerial (re)production*

Bourdieu (1989) and Darmon (2013) highlighted how the capital acquired during years of intensive learning before an integration was part of the elitist curriculum of business schools, and more broadly of the “Grandes Ecoles”. It selects and sorts the future students by demanding special social and personal arrangements.

Then, through a pragmatic educational approach, business schools create an ‘identity conversion’. Abraham (2007), a former teacher at HEC Paris, highlights the identity gap created by an integration into a business school. Students must give up their ‘academic care’, specific to their former classes, for a new ‘managerial conscientiousness’ by ‘playing the manager’ as per the title of his book. Student associations are, for example, an integral part of the socialization and pedagogy of business schools: ‘Registration in an association is clearly mandatory and meets more or less the explicit requirement to remain always in group and to participate in the life of the school, in order to gradually internalize the relational qualities expected from a manager’ (Dejours, 2014, p.96).

By practices and socialization, business schools teach their students general dispositions corresponding to managerial criteria. Heirs of business school - as well as new students whose business school access has been recently opened – received from the school a panel of:

- cultural capital, through the courses and the acculturation to a managerial pedagogy,
- social capital through the creation of a “esprit de corps”,
- symbolic capital through social legitimacy and prestige in the business world,
- And by a future economic capital, the promise of an easier job seeking process and a well-paid job.

2.4 Defining the Job Search Process

There are various empirical research theories and models which explain the mechanisms of employment and employability predictors of success among the candidates (Van Hooft, Wanberg, & Van Hove, 2013). They are based on common measures of the job search among which are for instance the number of activities done for a job search (i.e., job search intensity), the time and effort that people spent on looking for a job (i.e., job search effort), the job search skills, the job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. Still, it is unclear which predictors are most effective and what combination works best. Saks (2005) was of the view that the knowledge of these models and frameworks is important for making predictions about the success rate of a candidate in terms of their success in the job market. The two main theories which can be essentially applied in this regards include the social cognitive theory and the theory of planned behaviour (Latham & Budworth, 2006). Both of these theories and their application for the job search will be discussed at a later stage in this literature review.

The process of job search can be explained as a method which is used for establishing a match between the job seeker and a suitable job opportunity. This process is divided into two phases. The first one is based on the collection of the relevant information in order to pursue a job position, to generate and evaluate the different job alternatives available and to select the best possible alternative out of the opportunities (Osman & Rahim, 2012). The second phase is the active search process. Dolot (2018) further explained this process in terms of the seeking and collecting the information approaches pertaining to the potential work opportunities. However, as supported by Wu (2016), the process of job search can be a difficult and time-consuming process. The job search process is seen as an intersection of three main complementary domains: an individual's job search practices and characteristics,

competencies and his global environment.

In this regards, as suggested by Johansen (2012), the success of a candidate in the job search process is not only dependent on the ability of a candidate to seek a suitable job, but also dependent on the various external factors such as a tight labour market or his personal environment or background. As further explained by Lau and Pang (2018), the amount of social capital an individual possess is critical. Social capital is defined as the potential or actual resources that are associated with the possession of a strong social circle. Social Capital as defined by Bourdieu is an individual property instead of being a collective one. Social capital facilitates exertion of power on any group of individuals, who intent to mobilise the resources (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu visualised social capital as actual or virtual resources that individuals acquire through the possession of “more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p. 119). He explained that networks are more beneficial when they are composed of more or less long - standing associations that are based on strong memberships of effective work groups or mutual recognition and acquaintances with the members of such groups. For instance, according to Fernandez, Castilla and Moore (2000) individuals who are referred to a position by current employees stand a higher chance of being hired. It definitely provides an essential advantage which can be clearly seen in the progress and rate of success of the young graduates to secure a suitable job in the market (Wanberg, Niu, Song & Xie, 2006, McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Networking is recognized as an effective job search method giving access to information, opportunities and higher salaries (Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001, Van Hoya, Van Hooft & Lievens, 2009; Wanberg, 2012,). Even though, the notion of social capital is central to online social networking research, it is important to note that networking can be learned through practice (de Janasz & Forret, 2008) especially since graduates may not be as skilful using social media for career development (Bridgstock, 2009) and job search. This evidence

suggests that access to social capital should provide confidence to engage in career self-management and to craft one's career both within and outside the boundaries of one's current organization.

In traditional terms, the methods of job search and associated resources have been categorized into two major groups which include the formal and informal approaches (Man, Lau & Snape, 2002). The formal approaches in this regards include sending job applications through the career pages on the company website, searching for open positions with the help of career services, sending job applications directly to the employer and visiting the employment offices. On the other hand, informal approaches include social networks, group memberships and other personal connections of the candidate. However, as suggested by Wu (2016), social media or social networking sites (SNSs) such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Xing are the latest tools which have proven to be highly efficient for the creation of business networks and for the identification of job openings at the local and international level (Chell, 2008; Mowbray et al, 2016).

2.4.1 The Successful Job Search

In this context success can be described as accomplishment of a particular aimed purpose. During their studies students have great objectives based on attainability of job to fulfil their career purpose. Studies have reviewed the success criteria for a successful job search and perceived that the first intuitive criteria of success in a job search are simply based on who has found a job. There are variations in this measure such as the perceived quality of the job and salary being offered (Saks, 2005). Osman et al. (2016) describe various factors determining the rate of success of a candidate including the candidate's job search behaviour, his/her self - efficacy and search skills. One or more factors in different combinations can come into play to predict the success and improve the chances of employability of a candidate.

In relation to this, Dolot (2018) was of the view that the success in job search of a person can be measured by looking at five main variables which include person-organization fit, person-job fit, the employment status, the job offers, and the performance of a candidate in the job interview (Mitchelmore, Rowley & Shiu, 2014). Considering the factors that may lead to success, graduates at different institutions are given special training for the identification of their skills so that they can be better evidenced when they receive a suitable work opportunity. Researchers have explained that such training and development opportunities are also an important element of success in the process of job search (Johansen, 2012). In accordance with these findings, it can also be said that when the young graduates do not have the necessary skills to search for the right job post and when the employer is not convinced by the candidate skills, the graduates are less likely to be selected and hired. Some other factors in the external work environment such as economic conditions and the environment of the labour market also need to be taken into account, when assessing the theory of job search (Shaffer & Zalewski, 2011, p. 70).

2.4.2 Job Search Predictors of Success

According to researchers in the job search field, there are some factors which can help in predicting the process success of the candidates in the job market. Such factors for the employability of a person include their demographic characteristics, years of previous experience, academic qualifications and their individual skills (Lau & Pang, 2018). Personal characteristics such as family support and access to resources influence the employment capability of an individual too (Stoof, 2005). In addition, some external factors such as mobility and demands of the labour market have a definite impact in this regards (Johansen, 2012). These major aspects including the individual factors, the personal characteristics and

the external market factors collectively determine the employability prospects of a young graduate (Mc Quaid and Lindsay, 2005; Latham & Budworth, 2006).

2.4.3 Job Search Behaviour

Job search behaviour can be defined as a self-regulatory goal directed at the process aiming to find a job for the individual. There has been a remarkable increase in the research work that is carried out to investigate the job search behaviour among the young graduates and how the employment outcomes of these graduates are changing with the passage of time (Kanfer, Wanberg and Kantrowitz, 2001). The literature that is available regarding the concept of job search is mostly based on the theory of Social Cognition as well as the theory of Planned Behaviour (Song, Wanberg, Niu, & Xie, 2006). The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) associates a positive attitude or intent to perform the behaviour as the best predictor of success. This theory is used by many researchers to make predictions about job search behaviours and the rate of success (Van Hooft, van der Flier, Taris, Born, & Blonk, 2004; Niu, Wanberg, Song, & Xie, 2006). The Social Cognitive theory is focused on setting clear goals in the first place which is one of the main predictors of job search success (Mitchellmore, Rowley & Shiu, 2014). Clarity of goals regarding the job search process is one of the main predictors and a major parameter of the intensity of job search (Brinckmann, 2008; Chell, 2008). The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is another model grounded in Bandura's (1991) social cognitive theory. It focuses on three main variables that are outcome expectations, self-efficacy, and the objectives regarding a specific career. As explained by this theory, there are five main job search behaviours which can be clearly pointed out. These behaviours include: job search efforts, the active intensity of search, preparatory intensity of search, the use of formal sources and the use of other informal means (Boyles, 2012). Both of these theories and frameworks have been used by various researchers to study the job search

intentions and the attitudes of the applicants in terms of the predictors of job search success (Hornsby, Kuratko & Zahra, 2002).

2.4.4 Job Search Self-Efficacy

According to Rose (1996), self-efficacy is considered to be a key psychological variable since an individual relies on his or her own aptitude to implement and organize an action to enrich their desired goals and outcomes. It has been described as individuals' beliefs or judgements about their capability of efficiently performing an action or behaviour that can have an influence on how they think, feel, motivate themselves, and how they behave (Wu, 2016). Bandura (1989) proposed four sources of self-efficacy that he demonstrated could be acquired or modified. These sources include 1) verbal persuasion (for example encouragement and guidance), vicarious learning (for example; modelling), accomplishment (for example; the skills, expertise gained through experiences), and a low level of emotional arousal (for example the feelings of anxiety when any task is to be performed) (Man, Lau & Snape, 2002). If an individual has a positive attitude, their search is more likely to be efficient and successful because they will take every necessary action to find a job such as looking for opportunities, contacting the potential employers or networking. The concept of self-efficacy in relation to the job search process therefore refers to the level of confidence of a person regarding how they will perform different job search behaviours (Boyles, 2012; Mitchelmore, Rowley & Shiu, 2014). So it basically impacts both the job search behaviours as well as the resultant outcomes.

2.4.5 Job-Search Intensity

The concept of *intensity* in terms of the job search process can be explained as the frequency with which the applicants involve themselves in the job search activities and

behaviours over a certain period of time (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Mckee - Ryan et al., 2005; Dolot, 2018). Such job search activities and behaviours may include the preparation of a resume or CV, a job application letter, or even contacting a career service group or an agency (Putnam, 2000). Song et al. (2006) described job search intensity as a function of motivation.

2.4.6 Job Search Clarity

According to the Social Cognitive Theory, the behaviour of individuals is guided by their goals which also keep them motivated to carry out these activities (Mitchelmore, Rowley & Shiu, 2014). In the field of job search, the employment goals and objectives of a person therefore help them to be involved in more targeted job search activities. The process of setting these goals for the job search process and the importance of clarity of these goals has also been supported by many scholars (Brinckmann, 2008; Chell, 2008; James, 2011).

In terms of the job search process, the goal clarity is considered a significant variable. While discussing the true meaning of this goal clarity, Johansen (2012) explained that it is the extent to which the seekers of employment are assured of their career objectives and have a clear opinion regarding their ideal type of profession, career path and the desired job. According to Sanghi (2016), the engagement of the early job seekers in career-oriented behaviours is likely to lead to an improvement in the job search clarity of the applicant.

2.4.7 Proactive Personal Approach

Proactive personality approach can be defined as a dispositional construct which is put forward for the identification of the differences between individuals in the degree to which they are likely to take part in order to create an impact on their surrounding environment (Yuan & Lo, 2018). In job search environment, graduates' behaviours can be either be classified as 'active' or 'passive' (Shaffer & Zalewski, 2011). The difference between these two types

depends on the level and the type of activities that the people engage in when they are looking out in the job market for some employment opportunities. The active graduates are more willing to develop targeted job search behaviours during the process of job search (Stoof, 2005). Proactive individuals actively look for opportunities to reach their goals and tend to demonstrate an energetic behaviour (Bateman & Crant, 1993), which helps in understanding how the process of job search is carried out according to Brown et al. (2006). As a result, a positive association has also been found between active job search behaviours and individuals with a proactive personality (Klein & Weaver, 2000; Van Hove et al, 2013).

Also, as explained by Lau and Pang (2018), people with a proactive personality can be expected to have better behaviours especially during a period of uncertainty that can be a stressful experience while facing refusals or silence from human resource managers for instance, hence provoking strong emotions (McKee- Ryan et al., 2005). In the opinion of Brown et al. (2006), such energetic behaviour allows an individual to fathom how the process of job search is carried out.

2.4.8 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem can be defined as the total amount of value that a person places in their own self and to which extent one approves of and likes oneself. The self-esteem of a person also shows the way they believe other people think about them along with the way they think about themselves (Boyles, 2012). A high level of self-esteem in individuals suggest that they tend to maintain a persistent attitude when they are faced with a difficult task or when they are performing any activity that they believe is important. In terms of the job search and its process, a high level of self-esteem will lead the person to demonstrate positive job search behaviours and be more optimistic regarding the results of their job search behaviours (Song et al., 2006; Mitchelmore, Rowley & Shiu, 2014).

Research has also shown that there is a positive relationship between the behaviours and attitudes regarding job search and the level of self-esteem of a job applicant (Audretsch, Carree & Thurik, 2001; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005).

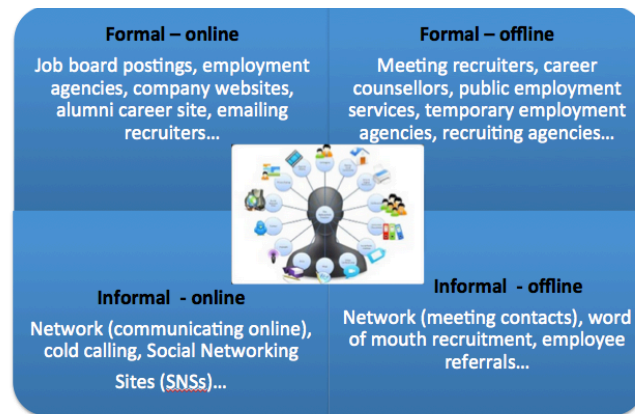
In the workplace, employees that have higher levels of self-esteem are more confident and deal in most effective ways with difficult challenges that may come up. In addition, such employees are also able to maintain a positive self-image even during failures which facilitates their work relationships as well (Bateman & Crant, 1993, Baldwin, Baccus & Fitzsimons, 2004).

2.5 Job Search Practices, Sources & Channels

The research has shown that an individual's knowledge and skills are one of the most important factors in success, performance and self-regulation (Klein & Weaver, 2000). Often, individuals that lack the knowledge or skills to have access to job leads experience troubles in the job search process that can result in the lack of a strong strategy to find a job (Manroop and Richardson, 2016). In the present time, the job search has become decentralized. Each industry or area recruits in a specific manner, as the needs and requirements of different job vacancies and openings are different.

In traditional terms, the job search is divided into 'formal' and 'informal' methods, which nowadays are subdivided into the 'off line' and the 'online' methods (Carree & Thurik, 2003). The formal methods may include the use of different career and employment groups or agencies or responding to the job advertisements that are posted in journals, newspapers and on the different online mediums. Kanfer, Wanberg and Kantrowitz, (2001) draw these ideas together as described in figure 3 below. Arguably, the job search process nowadays is multifaceted and the boundaries between those methods, whether 'formal' and 'informal' or 'off line' and 'online' are overlapping.

Figure 3: Overview of the formal and informal on line and offline networks



Source: Kanfer, Wanberg & Kantrowitz, 2001

2.5.1 Formal Channels of Job Search

Research is often based on a formal-informal classification of the channels of job search (Saks & Ashforth, 2000). The formal channels are associated with the formal intermediaries such as ascending direct applications to the employers, searching through employment agencies, company career services, job boards, job posting aggregators or job postings that are shared on mediums like LinkedIn and Twitter, applications through company career pages, attending career fairs or going to public employment services. In some cases, these channels of job search seem to be considered ineffective as compared to the informal channels that relies on personal connections, networks and the word-of-mouth referrals (Klein & Weaver, 2000; Mckee-Ryan et al., 2005). Word-of-mouth referrals wherein job seekers directly contact their network to let them know they are looking for a job or through referrals to obtain a job in a company where they have personal or professional contacts. Word of mouth serves as a potent form of source of information that is based upon the interpersonal communication. It benefits the job seekers by providing them information about jobs through internal recruitment sources (Van Hoyer and Lievens, 2000). A survey run in 28 countries

indicated that 26% to 83% of job seekers found their jobs through informal channels (Franzen & Hangartner, 2006).

2.5.2 Informal Channels of Job Search

Previous research work has shown that an informal channel of passing on information in the job search process is very effective in the labour markets (Audretsch, Carree & Thurik, 2001). The employers make use of different channels which can help them in the development of a large pool of candidates that can be considered for the later stages of the recruitment process. However, employers often rely on and use their own connections to reach and attract the relevant candidates (Audretsch, Carree & Thurik, 2001; Lau & Pang, 2018). Some companies recommend the use of this approach and provide their employees with large bonuses for providing a co-optation referral in case of open position in their company. Although these company referrals are effective, it has been demonstrated that referrals made through word of mouth are twice as effective as compared to the formal channels of contacting the employers directly (Osman, Shariff & Lajin, 2016). Several studies indicate that getting in touch with friends, relatives and acquaintances (personal contacts, word of mouth) is one of the most efficient methods of job search (Klein & Weaver, 2000; Saks, 2005; Van Hove et al, 2013).

Yakubovich (2005) focused on the role of personal contacts and he specifically observed that acquaintances, co-workers and associates referred as ‘weak ties’ provided more accurate information as compared to the family members and close friends who are referred to as ‘strong ties’ and consequently were better sources of job-related information. One of the reasons that was given for this finding is that acquaintances, co-workers and associates have access to different circles of acquaintances, friends and relatives that increase the chances of getting information regarding job opportunities. Yuan and Lo (2018) encourage students and

graduates to create a large network of weak ties on LinkedIn for instance as the start of an online professional network. Man et al., (2002) also suggested that students should develop and utilize their personal networks to be aware of opportunities and to secure a good position. One key point that is often highlighted for such job seekers is that the quality of the network of an individual is more important than the number of people that are a part of that network (Audretsch, Carree & Thurik, 2001).

These findings are connected and highlight the importance of social capital described by Lau and Pang (2018) as the goodwill that is available to a person or to a group and by Bourdieu (1986) as long-term networks more or less institutionalized. The source of this goodwill lies in the content as well as the structure of the social relations that the members have. Elaborating further, the effect of this bonding flows from the influence and information, as well as the strong links that these members have for each other (Song, et al., 2006). Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam (2000) referred to it as the “bonding capital” and the “bridging capital”. These findings also imply the use of networks in general and social networks more specifically.

The constitution of such an inter-knowledge and inter-recognition network and thus integration offers its holder a “multiplier effect” (Bourdieu, 1980) on other capitals (cultural, economic or symbolic). It influences any job search as graduates approach employment. For instance, middle-class families thanks to their social capital will help their children in securing internships in leading companies (Bathmaker, Ingram & Waller, 2013).

There is much research literature on networks and networking (Carree & Thurik, 2003; Shukla, 2009). Networks can be divided into informal networks, with fuzzy contours, or structured networks. The Social networking sites (SNSs) such as LinkedIn have a strong impact on the way that people form connections and develop professional associations with other people available on the same space (Yuan & Lo, 2018). These social networking sites (SNSs) also help in shaping the identities by promoting and presenting our skills and

experiences online, which makes the SSNs one of the most powerful tools (Klein & Weaver, 2000). They seem to have a crucial utility to job search. Obukhova and Lan (2013) observed that these means are even more important for the young job seeker graduates that do not have huge networks in the professional space, and are looking for jobs positions as soon as they graduate. In addition, a proactive behaviour and good self-esteem are required for networking (Lambert et al., 2006) as well as the use of good communication and interpersonal skills to be able to ask the network for advice, leads, and referrals (Carree & Thurik, 2003).

2.6 Job Search Skills

Skills necessary for a job search process are partly linked to the employability skills of an individual (Stoof, 2005) as seen in section 2.2. These skills are associated with the knowledge that the individual possess regarding the tools, rules and policies of the labour market. The presence of such skills and knowledge are important as it can help individuals to be better informed about their rights and allow them to work in a more effective manner and in a wider context. Interpersonal skills among applicants are also seen as one of the most important aspects and it is known to have a direct link with the employability skills of a job seeker (Song, et al., 2006). The applicant needs to possess all these necessary skills and they need to be demonstrated or made visible by the applicant to potential employers or recruiters (Brinckmann, 2008; Chell, 2008; James, 2011). Yet, they are only a part of the process and do not insure a successful job search.

Indeed, in a managerial field, the job seeker must not only understand the managerial requirement, but he must be able to appropriate it to distinguish himself. Bourdieu (1979) emphasizes the importance, in a given field, of what he calls the struggle for distinction. Each social field is crossed by strategic issues of distinction that transform very small differences into radical differences because these differences are hierarchized. To be recognized within a

field one must distinguish oneself. How is it possible today for a graduate to differentiate himself or herself in a complex environment?

2.7 VUCA Times

Employment realities are being reshaped. The traditional view of the job market fails to capture the fast changing nature of the job market of the present time, which is the reason that it is interesting to connect the job search with VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) times (Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005; Boyles, 2012). Beck (1992) brings a unique contribution by using risk as a lens to analyse the shifts in employment. According to him, ‘risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with the hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself’ (p.21) where “suddenly everything becomes uncertain” (Beck 1992, p.109). Uncertainty can be understood as the cause of worry, coupled with a feeling of negativity. Rose (1996) warns against the ‘responsibilization’ of young people and their families regarding their choices and taking risks. Indeed, in a neo liberal society, collective and social risks become individual ones. So for instance in such a society Rose (1998) explains that unemployment is considered to be the fault of the individual instead of a product of economic environment.

The new paradigm, with the advent of big technological and economic changes, shifts in the pace and nature of work, leads to changes in the business settings. It is so fast and dynamic that the students need to be prepared to make themselves employable and re-employable but also have to have the ability to be successful in their numerous job searches (Maran et al., 2016).

Researchers have predicted that in the times to come, employees will need to be prepared for radical new situations based on job market permanent insecurities. Work teams will be diverse with a combination of insiders and outsourcers (Osman et al., 2016). Layoffs and endless

effort will be required to keep job skills upgraded (Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005). Schmidt and Kunzmann, (2007) describe this evolution which will impact young graduates' numerous job searches, learning experiences and require adaptability (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Summary of the key shifts that influence how learning experiences are designed today

Past	Present / future
Information scarcity	Information abundance
Stable and predictable work	Changing and unknown work
Valued traits: intellect, diligence, obedience	Valued traits: initiative, creativity, passion
Work tied to location	Work freed of location, anytime, anywhere
First learn, then work	Work is learning, learning is work
Individual, skilled workers and orgs	Ubiquitously connected workers and organizations

Source: Schmidt & Kunzmann, 2007.

2.7.1 Defining VUCA Times

In the Zulu language, the acronym VUCA means “to wake up”. The acronym in full form is Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (Kaur & Bains, 2013). The volatility includes aspects like the magnitude, volume, speed, nature, and the change dynamics. The uncertainty and complexity are associated with the absence of predictability of the events and issues while on the other hand, the ambiguity relates to the lack of clarity regarding the reality of things and / or the presence of more than one meaning for a single concept (Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006).

The concept of VUCA times was first put forward by the Armed forces of the United States in the form of a diagnostic tool to carry out operations after the Cold War (Boyles, 2012). It illustrates that in an environment where there is a high level of change occurring at a very high

rate (volatility), the people must make efforts to constantly update and adapt their information (uncertainty). Clearly as expressed by Shaffer and Zalewski (2011, p. 85) “there is a need for the employees to become their own career brokers.”

2.7.2 Defining the Variables of VUCA Times

The variables of VUCA times can also be seen as the drivers of turbulence that affect our behaviour and require specific skills to be able to adapt as today’s skills grow obsolete. Among them, there are a few that are regularly listed such as adaptiveness which defines the ability of a person to adapt their approaches when they are facing a particular situation (Johansen, 2012). Agility is another variable which is based on the ability of a person to foresee the short-term and the mid-term changes that may occur (Sanghi, 2016). Companies in the present time can either choose to be stuck in their old ways or they can choose to accept the ‘new normal’ and make the required adaptations according to it with innovation, fresh thinking, new models and with agility.

For instance, Netflix can also be seen as a good example as it went from renting and shipping DVDs to becoming a complete content producer on their own (Osman, Shariff & Lajin, 2016). Another example which can be seen is of Free which totally disrupted the French market with low-cost telecommunication products (Schmidt & Kunzmann, 2007). No matter what, the old stability is a thing of the past. Career counsellors refer to it as the “chaos theory”, to make it more understandable for the students (Sanghi, 2016).

Elaborating further, **volatility** in the business environment is caused by the drivers of turbulence in the business sector of the present time and it covers factors such as global competition, trade liberalization, connectivity, disruptive innovation and digitization (Schmidt & Kunzmann, 2007). The products cycles have become very short nowadays and the skills required to either design or sell them for instance keep evolving. Furthermore, the knowledge-

driven economy has led to the facts becoming obsolete in a very rapid manner. What was once true is no longer exact. Change in the business is important and showing its importance. Sanghi (2016) has also said that change can be seen in the form of a new status quo.

Uncertainty is the result of this new paradigm. As explained by Johansen (2012), it has almost become impossible to predict outcomes or to make accurate predictions or projections. Companies have a difficult time forecasting their labour needs for instance because of some of the very basic economic uncertainties (Osman, et al., 2016). They are also looking for high speed and low cost working force (Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006).

Complexity may be the easiest variable to understand in the sense that it encompasses the other variables as a layer cake and causes ambiguity (Audretsch, Carree & Thurik, 2001; Schmidt & Kunzmann, 2007).

Ambiguity can be explained in the form of a lacking of clarity regarding the meaning of any situation or an event. As explained by Kaur and Bains (2013), ambiguity may also mean the lack of information about the how, what, where, when, who, and the why of a thing or an incident. The traditional methods cannot be applied to the new challenges. For instance, as the workplace changes so do the job titles and the titles that are familiar may become misleading in the future. This is because the jobs are evolving and there are incremental changes that are being made (Hornsby, Kuratko & Zahra, 2002). Although these incremental changes cannot be noticed every time they take place, but the cumulative effect of these changes is very strong and in the times to come, they will make it hard for the job descriptions to depict their initial content (Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005).

Based on the VUCA times concept, Johansen (2012) developed a framework adapted to leadership referred to as the VUCA Prime (see Table 2.2 below). This framework was developed for innovative leaders. It lists and describes the four skills and abilities mandatory for leaders to strive in such times which are Vision, Understanding, Clarity and Agility.

Table 2.2: The 4 in 4 Frame work for innovative leaders or “VUCA Prime”

VUCA Times	Description	VUCA Prime	Description
Volatility	Increasing rate of change	Vision	Have a clear direction and create a future
Uncertainty	Unclear about the present and future outcomes	Understanding	Stop, look, listen
Complexity	Multiplicity of key / decisions factors	Clarity	Make sense of the chaos
Ambiguity	Lack of clarity about the meaning of what is happening, they may not be a right answer	Agility	Learn, adapt and innovate

Source: Johansen, 2012

These skills apply to entrepreneurs’ environment who are coping with changing markets and competition in their daily tasks (Doheny, Nagali, & Weig, 2012, Honig & Martin, 2014). This radical transformation of capitalism was foreseen by researchers such as Facchini and Konning (2008) who describe this "new capitalism" as entrepreneurial rather than managerial.

2.8 Defining the Entrepreneurial Competency Approach

Given the complex fast changing global market, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship have been identified as major means for economic development. In previous studies, they are associated to major contribution to the job creation and economic growth (Schumpeter, 1934; Drucker, 1985; Carree & Thurik, 2003, Mukhtar & Redman, 2004). In present time, an increase in the tendency for policy makers and educators has been seen for promoting the entrepreneurial spirit among the young students especially because of their guidance in job creation as well as economic growth (Maran, et al., 2016).

Different studies have been put across in definitions of the terms entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, entrepreneur and intrapreneur. These terms are therefore highly debated

simply due to the fact that they bear multidimensional concepts (Mukhtar & Redman, 2004) as discussed in Section 2.5. There are different schools of thoughts and it can be examined through different lenses such as a mind-set, behaviour or set of competencies (Man, Lau & Snape, 2002). For the purpose of this study, the focus chosen is the Entrepreneurial Competency Approach as described below.

2.8.1 The Choice of the “Entrepreneurial Competency Approach”

In this research, the prime focus is not on the concept of entrepreneurship as a professional career path of an individual but rather to examine if entrepreneurial attributes can be transferable to the job search process. For the purpose of this study, the focus chosen was most specifically on the competence-based entrepreneurship that encompasses (1) knowledge, (2) skills, (3) behaviour and (4) the personality characteristics that are also referred to as the trait approach, which was developed by Mitchelmore and Rowley (2008).

There are some other approaches such as the entrepreneurial orientation which measures the entrepreneurial activities carried out by an individual (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). However, the entrepreneurial orientation (E.O) is limiting since it only encompasses three aspects: (1) innovativeness, (2) risk-taking and (3) pro-activeness. Similarly, Stoof (2005) offers a categorization of all these competencies classified into relevant activities or behaviour under 3 dimensions: 1) behavioural, 2) attitudinal, and 3) the managerial competencies but managerial competencies but the managerial competencies did not match with young graduates’ profiles and experience.

2.8.2 Defining Competency

The definition of *competency* is particularly challenging, with no unanimous agreement. As identified in the literature, there are many definitions of the competency of an individual

(Klein & Weaver, 2000; Mckee-Ryan et al.,2005). Competencies encompass clusters of abilities, knowledge, skills, interests of a person and behaviours. There are often interchanged with “skills” or “expertise”.

Out of all the possible definitions of this term, there are two main definitions that stand out: competency as behaviour which defines the underlying attributes or inputs of the individual and competency as a way to perform meaning the outputs or the results of the training for instance (Strebler et al., 1997). There are two schools of thought: the one that is preferred by the American school is based on Boyatzis (1982) who was of the view that competency is an underlying trait that is shown by an individual which that can lead to a superior and / or effective performance in the work environment. Research has further described that such a characteristic can be explained in the form of a skill, a trait, a motive, or a body of knowledge, or in the form of a social role or the self-image of a person (Putnam, 2000; Osman, Shariff & Lajin, 2016). On the other hand, there is the UK school which is more focused on a task a person should achieve in a particular setting (Kuratko, Ireland & Hornsby, 2001). Overall, a competency can be defined as the ability of the mobilized a set of internal (knowledge, skills, abilities) and external resources (documents, tools, network) in order to succeed in the complexity of a task.

2.8.3 Competence-Based View of Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship

In the literature review on entrepreneurial competency, Mitchelore and Rowley (2008) have stated that the term competency was made use of in education for describing the behaviours of trainee educators (p. 92). The impact that an entrepreneur has is seen by the competency approach from the perspective of a process or behavioural approach. The entrepreneurial competencies encompass personality traits, skills and knowledge. In the literature, this aspect of entrepreneurship is often linked to personality traits (which include

the personal characteristics) and the behavioural approach which focuses on both an active behaviour in terms of ‘doing’, but also in terms of ‘being’ (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Putnam, 2000; Brinckmann, 2008).

There are a few frameworks that can be used for the identification of the key features of an ‘Intrapreneur’. One such framework that is commonly used is called the Entrepreneurial Performance Index which is also sometimes referred to as the Intrapreneurial Assessment Measurement, that was created by Kuratko, Ireland and Hornsby (2001).

However, on the basis of the definition of this concept by Brinckmann (2008), it can be stated that the entrepreneurial competencies can be assessed as a specific group of competencies that an individual demonstrate which can result in long-term growth, survival, and new venture creation. All competencies are influenced by experience and training, social status and other demographic variables. Much of this capital lies in networks which are often based on people with similar characteristics. Only by joining the network will individuals be able to access resources, opportunities and expertise allowing a “mutual learning and boundary crossing” (Cope, Jack, & Rose, 2007, p. 214).

2.8.4 Defining Entrepreneurship

The main definition and understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship depends on the discipline and the research context. Most of the definitions that are given for this term are associated with an economic growth, increase in productivity, job creation, or the sources of opportunities such as the hidden market (Pofeldt, 2014). According to the OECD (1998) definition “Entrepreneurs are agents of change and growth in a market economy and they can act to accelerate the generation, dissemination and application of innovative ideas.... Entrepreneurs not only seek out and identify potentially profitable economic opportunities but are also willing to take risks to see if their hunches are right” (p. 11). It can be described as

the processes of finding, evaluating, and exploiting any of the opportunities that come their way and it is another determinant aspect for success (Shukla, 2009). James (2011) referred to this term as the method of identifying, developing and bringing a vision to life under risk and uncertainty. It is the phenomenon associated with entrepreneurial activity.

On the other hand, social psychologists are of the view that an entrepreneurial mindset is linked to a few main psychological traits and characteristics (Chell, 2008; James, 2011). Some of these traits and characteristics that are commonly linked to this concept are the locus of control, the tendency to take risks (Kaur & Bains, 2013), and the need for achievement among people (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Elaborating further, as explained by Pofeldt (2014), the competencies can also be seen as the behavioural approaches which can be seen and observed. person with an entrepreneurial mindset.

2.8.5 The Features and Competencies of a (Successful) Entrepreneur

The word ‘entrepreneur’ originates from the French verb ‘entreprendre’, which means “to start something new”. Entrepreneurs are individuals who perceive and exploit opportunities in order to launch a business (Hornsby, Kuratko & Zahra, 2002). Sahlman and Stevenson’s (1991) definition of entrepreneurs is that “entrepreneurs identify opportunities, assemble required resources, implement a practical action plan, and harvest the reward in a timely, flexible way.” (p.1). The entrepreneurs are often highly regarded by businesses because of their pursuit to grow economically and because of financial gains (Sharma & Chrisman, 1999; Shukla, 2009). Apart from this, the entrepreneurs are also high in their risk taking nature and the willingness to take new initiatives as well (Strebler, Robinson & Heron, 1997). The entrepreneurs demonstrate an entrepreneurial behaviour which is defined as an entrepreneurial mind, under the influence of which a person becomes willing to takes risk

(Osman, Shariff & Lajin, 2016), and gets involved in innovative behaviours (Shukla, 2009) and demonstrates proactiveness (Boyles, 2012) and creativity (Kaur & Bains, 2013).

The term ‘entrepreneurial’ is often used as an expression such as ‘entrepreneurial behaviour’ linked to the theory of planned behaviour. The entrepreneurs are said to possess specific characteristics, personality traits or dispositions to demonstrate an ‘entrepreneurial’ mind or drive. Researchers have either listed competencies or they have categorized them. The array is quite large ranging from 5 to 25 according to Good and Schulman (2000) as seen in Table 2.3. indicating that entrepreneurs are not the same and encouraging researchers to study the human capital variables that distinguish one entrepreneur from another depending on their research aim.

Table 2.3: Range of the calculated individual competencies listed by researchers

Number of competencies	Researchers
25	McClelland, 1987
23	Wu, 2016
15	Boyles, 2012 ; Shukla, 2009
13	McClelland, 1987
12	Man, et al, 2006
10	Brinckmann, 2008; Chell, 2008 ; James, 2011 ; Mitchelmore and Rowley, 2013; Pofeldt, 2014
7	Kaur & Bains, 2013
5	Rozell et al. 2011 ; Osman & Rahim, 2012 ; Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013

Source: adapted from Good & Schulman, 2000

McClelland (1987) came up with the most exhaustive list of twenty five entrepreneurial competencies which include: social skills, goal setting, technical knowledge, communication ability, persuasion and perseverance, assertiveness, problem solving, systematic planning, information seeking, creativity, innovation, drive and energy, risk-taking, the need for power and autonomy, the need for achievement, persistence, initiative, performance, self-esteem, locus of control, self-confidence, concern for high quality, tolerance for ambiguity, dealing

with failures and the ability to see and act on any opportunity that come their way.

Researchers have narrowed the list but the following competencies are consistently mentioned as key elements of entrepreneurial behaviour : opportunity, creativity and innovation (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013), taking initiative, overcoming obstacles, bearing uncertainty and ambiguity (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013), proactivism (Rozell et al. 2011), moderate risk-taking tendency (Brinckmann, 2008), the internal locus of control, and a higher level of need for achievement (Boyles, 2012), and risk are. Other researchers have organised the features and competencies of a successful entrepreneur by categories, domains or clusters (see Table 2.4) depending of their field of research.

Table 2.4: Categorisation of all key competencies classified

Researchers	Explained categories
Boyatzis, 1982	Entrepreneurial motives and traits
Sugars, 2014	Experience, education and other psychological factors
Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013	Attitudinal, behavioural and administrative competencies
Stoof, 2005	Categorization of competencies classified into relevant activities or behaviour under 3 domains: managerial, behavioural and attitudinal competencies.
Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006	Business focus, team-building skills, interpersonal skills and orientations towards results and achievements.
Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005	Characteristics such as motivation, knowledge, and capabilities/qualities.
Sugars, 2014	Managerial perspective, the mind-set off, self-employment, entrepreneurial investors, attitude of an owner or a leader, and true entrepreneur.
Good & Schulman, 2000	Characteristics such as relationship building, planning, personal power, and the spirit of achievement.
Sharma & Chrisman, 1999	Occupation - specific needs, management competencies, personal effectiveness, technical competencies, work and academic achievements.

Source: adapted from Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006

The entrepreneurial trait theory identified the attributes or skills of the entrepreneur which include: innovativeness, risk-taking, commitment, self-confidence, goal setting, decision making, opportunity recognition, creativity, and stress resistance (Maran, et al., 2016). Elaborating further, in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), entrepreneurs are described as possessing entrepreneurial capacities, which are defined as a mix of skills and motivation. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010) developed the ‘entrepreneurial mind-set’ that encourages creativity and innovation in terms of an important competency of the successful entrepreneurs.

2.8.6 Defining Intrapreneurship

The most conventional definition of intrapreneurship is to refer to an entrepreneurial employee behaviour or spirit within the boundary of a company (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013; Arafeh, 2016). According to Osman and Rahim (2012), intrapreneurship can be explained as a spirit of entrepreneurship that is shown within the boundaries of an organization. Pinchot (1985) was the first one to develop the concept of intra-corporate entrepreneur inspired by an article written by Norman Macrae in the year 1976, which was published in the Economist. In this article, the author had developed this concept which is in effect short for intra-corporate (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). He wrote that “intrapreneurs are the dreamers that act; the people that take up the responsibilities for generating innovation of any kind for the benefits of an organization; such people can also be seen as the inventors or creators however, they always remain the dreamers that try to figure out how to convert a simple idea to a profitable reality” (Pinchot, 1985, p. 10, as cited in Sharma & Chrisman, 1999). He labelled them as the ‘ideas generators’ and ‘initiators’ (Pinchot, 1985, p. 6).

Antonic and Hisrich (2001) have listed different terms and definitions for this concept such as ‘intrapreneuring’ (Pinchot, 1985), ‘corporate entrepreneurship’ (Chell, 2008; James, 2011),

‘corporate venturing’ (Boyles, 2012; Shukla, 2009) and ‘internal corporate entrepreneurship’ or ‘individual entrepreneurship’ (Rozell et al. 2011; Osman & Rahim, 2012). Similarly, to entrepreneurship, there are different kinds of perspectives on intrapreneurship. See Table 2.5 for intrapreneurship definitions classified by Antoncic & Hisrich, (2003). Stevenson and Jarillo (2010) defined intrapreneurship in the form of a process that is used by people within the organisation for the purpose of pursuing any opportunity with no regards to the amount of resources that they currently have a control over. Intrapreneurship is mostly studied through the angle of an organization and its implementation (Pinchot, 1985; Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010).

Table 2.5: Definitions of Intrapreneurship

Authors	Definitions
Antoncic and Hisrich (2003, p.23)	Intrapreneurship is defined as the “behavioural intentions that are emergent and the attitudes that are associated with the departures from the traditional methods of doing things in the workplace to newer and much more advanced methods”.
Pinchot (1985) in Sharma & Chrisman, 1999, p.17)	“Intrapreneurs are the dreamers that act; the people that take up the responsibilities for generating innovation of any kind for the benefits of an organization; such people can also be seen as the inventors or creators however; they always remain the dreamers that try to figure out how to convert a simple idea to a profitable reality”.
Stevenson and Jarillo (1990, P.21)	Intrapreneurship refers to “a process that is used by people within the organisation for the purpose of pursuing any opportunity with no regards to the amount of resources that they currently have a control over”.
Sharma & Chrisman, (1999, P.54)	Intrapreneurship is defined as the “initiative that are taken by any employee from below in a company for undertaking the new activities; it is an innovation that is made by subordinates with no one asking them to do it or without anyone expecting it from them or may be without an actual permission by the senior management”.

Source: adapted from Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003

According to Schmidt and Kunzmann (2007, p.12), intrapreneurship is crucial for companies' survival in today's globally competitive technological business environment. Many famous companies such as General Motors, 3M, Apple, Virgin, Nestlé in France with the Nespresso machines, are known to have fostered intrapreneurial behaviour or employ intrapreneurial strategies to innovate and be competitive (Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005). Google for instance encourages its employees to use more than twenty percent of their time for the completion of personal projects that may benefit the company eventually (Osman & Rahim, 2012). Michael Larrain, President of Activ Cos by L'Oréal explains how he focused on creating a culture of "intrapreneurialism" particularly through a program modelled on the TV entrepreneurial game "Shark Tank" (Hornsby, Kuratko & Zahra, 2002).

In the era of neoliberalism, neoliberals have defined individuality and citizenship based on economic values (Apple, 2006) where companies thrive and encourage their employees to gain economic power. Rose (1998) refers to this individualism encouraged by managerial consultants as the "imperatives of the enterprising self". But individualism is also defined as a cultural value in which individuals take care of themselves (Hofstede, 1980; Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2011).

2.8.7 The Features and Competencies of the (Successful) Intrapreneur

Intrapreneurs are considered to be the proactive individuals that are continuously in search of opportunities (Hornsby, Kuratko & Zahra, 2002). They are also referred to as 'change agent' within an organisation (Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006). They usually start a 'new' or 'innovative' idea or business. Previous studies have found several dimensions of intrapreneurial behaviour and competencies (Rozell et al. 2011; Osman & Rahim, 2012; Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013; Arafeh, 2016). The six most frequently listed behavioural dimensions are namely opportunity, proactiveness, innovativeness, risk taking, resource acquisition and

autonomy.

There are many frameworks that can be used for identifying the main features of an ‘intrapreneur’. Some of the most commonly used tools for this purpose include the Intrapreneurial Assessment Measurement or the Entrepreneurial Performance Index (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003; Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005). Both of these tools are reliable and have been used by many businesses and companies in different parts of the world (Stevenson & Jarillo, 2010; Osman & Rahim, 2012).

2.8.8 Sum up change of the similarities and differences between Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship

There are differences and similarities between entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs. From the theoretical point of view, the intrapreneur can be seen as a subordinate whereas on the other hand, the entrepreneur can be seen as a person that acts like a boss (Maran, et al., 2016). Tables 2.6 and 2.7 below show the main differences between them.

Table 2.6: Entrepreneur versus intrapreneur

	Employee	Self-employed
Entrepreneurial	Intrapreneurs (can also be referred as corporate entrepreneurs)	The independent entrepreneurs

Source: Wennekers (2006)

Table 2.7: Different aspects of entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship

Entrepreneur	Intrapreneur
Self-employed & employer	Employee
Degree or qualifications not necessary	Degree or qualifications required
No salary, profit is the reward	Pay check & incentives
Bears all the risk	Does not bear the risk (as much, although it can affect his / her career)
Free to operate	Bound to operate within the organisational rules

Free to make decisions	Require the approval of a senior executive
Creation from start	Benefit from the internal structure to carry the project (Human Resource, finance, logistics, marketing...)

Source: Draganidis and Mentzas (2006)

Elaborating further, the entrepreneur is considered to be the risk taking, more aggressive and a more ambitious actor in the organization whereas on the other hand, the intrapreneur is often associated with a reformer facing moderate risk (Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005). They both know how to use networks, take advantage of the market and identify resources. The characteristics that appear consistently in the entrepreneurial research studies of the intrapreneur-entrepreneur's vital attributes for success include: wisdom, personality, abilities, skills, knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, mind-set, expertise (technical, social, and managerial), and the behavioural tendencies (Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006). See Table 2.8 for the comparison of characteristics between an entrepreneur and intrapreneur by Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge (2005).

Table 2.8: Characteristics for the comparison of entrepreneur and intrapreneur

Characteristics	Entrepreneur	Intrapreneur
Motivation	Self-motivated, arbitrary, goal-orientated, Free-minded.	Utilise corporate resources, self-motivated, free-minded, and react to the promotional rewards.
Needs for achievement	Drive to achieve and succeed	Need to achieve
Risk taking	High risk takers, have high expectations of success	Average risk takers, layoffs are not a big concern.
Action / enthusiastic	Favour micro-managing and allow very little interference of the subordinates	Understand and favour the empowerment of the subordinates with patience, reliability, integrity, and eagerness
Talented/ innovative	Good perspective and acquainted to business market.	Expert managers, creative have the ability of taking initiatives.

Courage and fate	Self-believe, confidence, optimistic nature and fearless,	Confident and strong self- image, ready to face challenges.
Decision	Determinate with activism	Compromised initiator with good persuasive patience
Position	Hard working process but bearable	Focus on freedom and are not in favour of the traditional hierarchies and statuses
Mistakes and failure	Take mistakes and failure as learning experience	Apply the “trial and error” strategies. Not worried about dealing with failure, uncertainty, and ambiguity.
Attitude to systems	Promote and adjusted to the systems quickly with a strong attitude which focuses on the customers	Dislike systems, make sure that their goals are not ignored
Style of problem- solving	Quit for building up a new venture	Work to come up with the best ways within the organization
Social networks	Transactional relationships	Transactional relationship in the hierarchies of the organization

Source: Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005, p.154-155

2.9 The Implications of the Job Search Process

As explained by Yuan and Lo (2018), the notion of *career* is evolving. The post-industrial workplace requires agility in order to compete in the marketplace signing an end to what are referred to as the traditional careers. Graduates from Business Schools will occupy many different types of jobs in the span of their lifetime and will face multiple job searches. The notion of a career as a set path, also called “career ladder” that leads to promotions in a same company or multiple companies, has become more or less obsolete (Lau & Pang, 2018). In terms of career, it has been described as the evolution of the “old contract” into a “new contract” associated to a new terminology: portfolio careers, protean careers, or boundaryless careers (Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006; Marrelli, Tondora & Hoge, 2005; Boyles, 2012; Kaur

& Bains, 2013). This indicates that employees have to adapt and be responsible for their own skills and their employability. The protean career orientation is associated with an “attitude of freedom, self-direction, and making choices based on one’s personal values (Briscoe & Hall, 2006, p.6) including a wide range of positive outcomes including proactivity (Porter, Woo, & Tak, 2016), career adaptability (Chan et al., 2015), psychological well-being (Briscoe, Henagan, Burton, & Murphy, 2012), effective coping with uncertainty (Baruch, 2014), and job, career and life satisfaction (De Vos & Soens, 2008).

However, it needs to be understood that the maintenance of employability of a person is not limited to up-scaling ones’ skills but also to the location and the successful application for jobs and the anticipation of the future goals for success (Kaur & Bains, 2013). Apart from this, it also involves the acquisition of the state-of-the-art skills and a need to continually learn from the work experiences over the lifetime (Shaffer & Zalewski, 2011, p. 70). Companies in the European countries and in the United States tend to outsource in their own country or abroad and hire contract workers, freelancers or temporary workers instead of investing in their employees (Schmidt & Kunzmann, 2007). All in all, it can therefore be concluded that the traditional way of looking for a job is not sustainable (Johansen, 2012; Osman & Rahim, 2012).

3-Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on all the methodological approaches of research that have been used to complete this study. The major approaches that have been discussed in this section are related to the collection of data, approaching the sample, conducting the data collection techniques, and the analysis of the collected data. Apart from mentioning the names of the approaches that were used, this chapter also includes a description of the reasons behind the choices of the methodology and the steps that were followed in this study.

3.2 Aim of the Research

The aim of the study is to identify and to assess the perceptions of French graduates, who have majored in general business administration, regarding the required competencies needed in their transition from their collegiate environment to the much more challenging practical work environment. It investigates their first job search in relation to their job-seeking behaviours as presented by researchers such as Kanfer, Wanberg and Kantrowitz (2001) or Zikic and Saks (2009). It is examined within the changing workplace environment and the global job market based on the VUCA framework (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity).

This study therefore ascertains the success of the job search process of the business graduates after the completion of their higher education. As a result, this study also tries to determine the entrepreneurial behaviour or the competencies of the business graduates in their job search process. The goal was to explore the idea that intrapreneurial-entrepreneurial competencies could contribute to the job search success and, furthermore, how the curriculum could be enhanced to make sure that such important competencies are encouraged among the students

before the completion of their graduation. Under the consideration of the fact that this study emphasizes the assessment of a topic from the point-of-view of the participants for developing a clearer understanding about the mentioned aspects, this study is based on a qualitative research endeavour.

3.3 Research Questions

The research questions that have been developed for this research study include the following;

1. What is the general perception of the young business graduates about the job market in a VUCA world?
2. What are the most relevant set of competencies that young business graduates feel are essential for a successful job search in today's global job market?
3. Do business graduates believe that they had an intrapreneurial-entrepreneurial approach to their job search?

3.4 Research Methodology

There are two main categories of research philosophies that include positivist and interpretivist paradigms (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). The scholars that are in support of the positivist paradigm are of the view that the reality can be understood and can be measured through the use of numbers and therefore, they are in support of the quantitative approach of research. However, on the other hand, the scholars that support the interpretivist approach are against this point-of-view (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). The interpretivists support the assumption that to understand the reality, detailed information from the closest observers is required to understand the topic though they recognize and address implications of their subjectivity.

For this case study exploring individual experiences, the philosophy of research which was followed was that of interpretivism. This approach to “get the ideas and feelings of those being interviewed or observed” (Layder, 1994 as cited in Chowdhury, p.434) fit best the purpose of this research based on the perceptions of young graduates regarding a situation they faced. The nature of reality, in this case looking for their first jobs, is subjective and personal as opposed to focusing on the use of numbers (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). Trying to understand the perceptions and the experiences of young graduates looking for a job was a complex task and therefore the use of a qualitative approach seemed to be the most appropriate as advised by Marshall and Rossman (1999) or Creswell and Plano Clark (2007). The rationale behind the choice of a qualitative research approach was to be able to describe and analyse the research questions through the detailed conversations that were conducted in the qualitative approach (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

For this study, these conversations were carried out in the form of semi-structured interviews with the young graduates. It gave the opportunity for the young graduates to discuss some topics in more detail or elaborate on questions if they wanted to. This method allows also the researcher to probe the interviewee to elaborate or to follow a new line of inquiry introduced by what the interviewee is saying. This also allowed the researcher to collect a large amount of data so that it could be used during the data analysis process for this research study. For the participants this approach seemed more suitable as it allowed the participants to express themselves in a more elaborative manner. It allowed the participants to share their thoughts and ideas as well as provide concrete examples from their own job experiences and the challenges that they experienced during the career transition phases.

During the process of data collection, it was observed that the young graduates were happy to share their stories and tell about their experiences of higher education, entry into the job market, their job search experience and the success and failures that they have experienced in

this regards. The sample method is described below in section 3.7. These young graduates were eager to share their advice with the new graduates on the basis of what they had learned so far in their career transition phase. The cooperation and willingness to share information among these young graduates made it easy to carry out the interview process and to probe for elaborations or clarifications as and when required during the interview process. They wanted to contribute in helping the school better achieve the support it could bring to the other students. In Business schools, there is often a strong feeling of community.

However, one aspect that could have made the collection of data difficult was to catch the actual perception of the participants and to find its true meaning and significance while listening to their answers. This challenge came up mainly because of the nature of this topic as it can be emotive for young graduates that have just set foot in the job market. This means that it may have made it difficult for them to share complete information about their job search process and especially the challenges and failures that they may have experienced on the way.

3.5 Conceptual operationalization of theoretical frameworks

The transition from school to work and looking for a job is a process that a large majority of young graduates have to undertake soon after the completion of their higher studies. This phase of transition is an extremely broad and a complicated multi-layered topic. This theoretical framework section of this research study therefore integrates three different and interconnected theoretical frameworks which are based mainly on the qualitative approach of research. It represents the “current version of the researcher’s map of the territory being investigated” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, as cited Leshem & Trafford, 2007, p.95).

The three main frameworks introduced in the literature review in relation to job search are discussed in this section include; 1) the theory of planned behaviour (see section 3.5.1 under job search behaviour), 2) the theory of entrepreneurial competencies (see section 3.5.2), and

3) the VUCA framework based on volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (see section 3.5.3). The choice of these three theories helped in building.

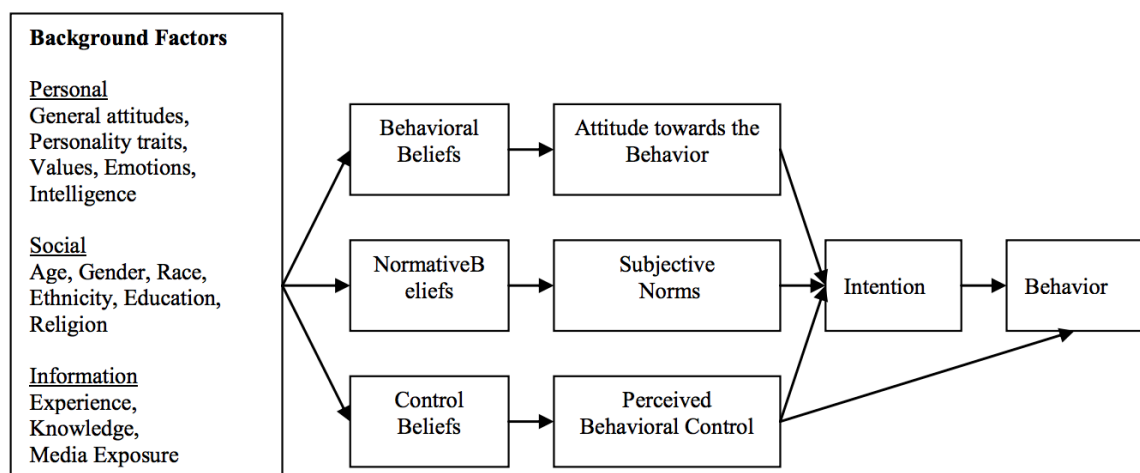
3.5.1 Conceptual operationalization of the Theory of Planned Behaviour

As reviewed in the literature section under the job search behaviour section, one of the most influential frameworks for understanding the concept of job search and its process is the social cognitive theory by Bandura (1991) divided into the theory of planned behaviour and the theory of self-regulation.

The self-regulation theory emphasizes that job seekers have a goal and make the relevant actions until their objective of getting a suitable job is accomplished which brings an end to the self-regulatory process.

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) helps in predicting the job search behaviours and success of a person (Ajzen, 1991, 2001; Armitage & Conner, 2001). The job search intention and attitudes have been known as the best predictors of the behaviour, where the intention refers to the extent to which a person is willing to make efforts for a certain task.

Figure 3.1: Theory of planned behaviour (TPB)



Source: Ajzen (2005), p. 135

The job search attitudes refer to the perceptions and beliefs about the possible outcomes of a certain behaviour, which can be either positive or negative (Terry, Hogg & White, 1999). The subjective norms also come into play in this regards, and are defined as normative belief. It is the pressure that a person may perceive from the social environment or the judgment of significant others to perform a certain kind of behaviour (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Also, as explained by Hardeman et al. (2002), the perceived control beliefs show the perceived extent of ease or difficulties that a person may experience when performing certain behaviour. The theory supports that competencies can be acquired and developed. It goes against the belief that entrepreneurs are born rather than made for instance.

Another reason why the theory of planned behaviour is specifically used for understanding the entrepreneurial behaviour is because of its close relevance to the regulatory variables such as job search clarity, job search intensity, and job search self-efficacy (Terry, Hogg & White, 1999). The clarity of goal is one of the main parameters for making predictions about the intensity of job search and resultantly the success of job search as well. The table below lists the different scales that allow to identify job search behaviours. The choice of some the interview questions was based on criteria in relation to job search behaviours.

Table 3.1: Measuring Job Search Behaviours

Measuring the Job Search Behaviours		
Scale / question	Description	What does it measure?
The Proactive Personality Scale	- Bateman & Crants 1993; - Seibert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001;	Entrepreneurial actions and other proactive behaviour of a persona and their personal dispositions towards such actions.
Job search self-efficacy	- Ellis & Taylor, 1983	The personal exploration efficacy, networking efficacy, interviewing efficacy, and job search efficacy
The Job Search Behaviour Scale	- Blau 1993, 1994 ; - Saks, 2006	The five main job search behaviours that have been listed by the researchers include;

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The formal sources (personal networks) 2. The informal sources (public employment services, ads, career office, contact employers) 3. The efforts made for job search 4. The intensity of active job search 5. The preparatory intensity for job search
The Theory of Planned Behaviour	- Developed by Ajzen (2002)	<p>The factors which shape the intentions and the actual actions of a person. Such factors mainly include;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perceived behavioural control, 2. Subjective norms, 3. The attitudes (one's own behaviours).
JSAI - (The Job Search Attitude Inventory)	- Developed by John Liptak (2006)	<p>The main five scales that are measured with this inventory include;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Optimistic vs. pessimistic, 2. Active vs. passive, 3. Self - help vs. help from others, 4. Involved vs. uninvolved, 5. Luck vs. planning.

The theory therefore provides an understanding of entrepreneurial behaviours as well as entrepreneurial competencies (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Francis, et al., 2004) which fits with this research.

3.5.2 Conceptual operationalization of The Theory of Entrepreneurial Competencies

The Theory of Entrepreneurial Competencies (Man, Lau & Chan, 2002; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010) focus on the competency approach from a process or behavioural perspective and not from the social or psychological dimension. As explained by Chell (2008), an individual is more capable of generating new, creative and innovative ideas if he / she has a certain set of traits or personality characteristics referring to personal qualities and attitudes. Such traits also make these people more risk-taking and allow them to come up with some new ventures from time to time. The major competencies which such entrepreneurial people are likely to possess include: foreseeability, perseverance, the ability to take risks, creativity, flexibility, perceptibility, enthusiasm, self-confidence, passion, responsibility and various

others (Chell, Haworth & Brearley, 1991).

The entrepreneurial theory explains that self-efficacy and need for achievement are two other areas which are highly important for a person to develop entrepreneurial competencies (Ardichvili, Cardozo & Ray, 2003). The theory of achievement - motivation described by David Mc Clelland further explains how the need for achievement drives a person to take up new ventures in order to feel personally satisfied, which also links it to the theory of motivation (Ardichvili, Cardozo & Ray, 2003; Chell, 2008).

Elaborating further, the locus of control also explains the kind of reactions that a person would have towards the success and failure that a graduate may experience during the job search process. People with the internal locus of control are more likely to take the responsibility rather than those with an external locus of control who tend to blame the external factors (Chell, Haworth & Brearley, 1991). For the young graduates, the development of a responsible approach along with the other important entrepreneurial competencies is therefore important as they have been found to be linked to higher success in job search and in the actual work performance as well (Ardichvili, Cardozo & Ray, 2003).

The table below helped design the interview questions.

Table 3.2: Measuring Entrepreneurial / Intrapreneurial Competencies

Measuring Entrepreneurial / Intrapreneurial Competencies		
Scale / question	Description	What does it measure?
The Theory of Entrepreneurial Competencies	- Man, Lau & Chan, 2002; - Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010	Value creation, entrepreneurial intentions, adaptability, risk-taking, strategic use and combination of the available resources and the present opportunities.
The Entrepreneurial Readiness Inventory (ERI)	- Developed by John Liptak, Ed.D. 2010	This inventory has a total of sixty items which are used for the measurement of the entrepreneurial readiness on the basis of the following six sub - scales; . The best use of the available resources,

		. Independence, . Motivation, . Perseverance, . The tolerance for risks, and . The vision of a person and its clarity.
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3.5.3 The VUCA Framework

The VUCA framework is another theoretical approach which can help define the competencies required in the job search process. The work environment of the present time has become very complex and there are frequent changes that can be seen in the business sector which is ultimately changing the skills and abilities required from the young graduates (Mack, et al., 2015). This high level of uncertainty and ambiguity has made it hard for anyone, individuals or businesses alike, to make predictions about the future. The young graduates also face the consequences of these factors as the length of their degree program takes around 4 to 5 years to complete, during which several aspects of their specialization tracks are likely to be altered completely leading them to face many challenges and complexities by the time they graduate (Hang, Chen & Yu, 2011; Schick, Hobson & Ibisch, 2017).

The young graduates should therefore have a clear vision and work on the development of the necessary skills that can help them in actively face the challenges that the dynamic environment of the present time might throw at them. With strong problem solving and critical reasoning skills, a graduate would be more capable of performing with agility in such a time (Hang, Chen & Yu, 2011). The desire of continuous learning can be of much help to the young graduates that are aiming to enter the job market (Mack, et al., 2015). Apart from this, the development of a new mind-set and the application of the entrepreneurial skills in the job search process can also be of benefit to these young applicants. The table below was a base for the design of the interview questions on the different skills as well as the 4 in 4 Framework for Innovative Leaders in section 2.6.2 (Table 2.8).

Table 3.3: Measuring VUCA Skills

Measuring VUCA Skills		
Scale / question	Description	What does it measure?
Adaptability	- Arthur & Bennett, 1995	Individual personality traits for flexibility and the ability to mould as per the needs of the situation (Motivation State)
Flexibility	- Arthur & Bennett, 1995	The willingness and the capability of a person to adjust in accordance to the changes in the environment.
Self-efficacy	- Torbion, 1982	Personal judgement, Self-belief about the abilities of carrying out a task and for accomplishing the goals.
Tolerance for ambiguity	- Suutari & Brewster, 2001	The level of comfort of a person with multiple demands, conflicting directions, unpredictability, and uncertainty.
Past experience	- Spreitzer , McCall, & Mahoney, 1997	Previously learned information through some practical experience.
Agility	- Man, Lau & Chan, 2002	To make the required amendments and changes as per the needs in a quick manner.

3.6 Interview Schedule

For this study, the structure of the semi-structured interview was prepared in English. The interviews were conducted both in English and in French. Most graduates as mentioned in the school description were either fluent or bilingual in English. They were given the choice to do the interview either in French or in English. The schedule of the interviews consisted of five main topics which were divided into questions. The list of these main areas is given below;

1. Individual factors including the qualification of the participant and their major subjects, demographic, cohort
2. The job search success and the challenges that they mainly experienced during the process
3. Job search practices and the main sources that they made use of during the process
4. The impact of curriculum or extra curriculum activities on their job search process

5. The perception of the participant about the job market and the entrepreneurial competencies

The semi-structured interviews were based on open-ended questions which allowed possible alternatives for open questions and suggestions. The use of such an approach for conducting the interviews allowed for the graduates to respond from their perspectives and share the details of their experiences. The questions were based on the literature review concepts and frameworks as explained in the section above. For instance, the interview questions used for the measurement of self-efficacy for job search were based on the work of Moynihan et al. (2003). In order to pinpoint proactivity, the questions were taken from the ten items given by Bateman and Crant (1993). The interview questions can be seen in the annexes.

All participants volunteered and had graduated when they were interviewed. There was no power conflict, at best I could provide them with advice if they asked for it. Furthermore, I had switch job at the time of the interviews to another institution in a different sector. Of course, the relation between the researcher and subject can be blurred. Still our motivations were complementary. My motivation to initiate this research was to fulfil a professional interest and help graduates in their job search and the participants wanted to share advice to help the future graduates.

3.7 Participants / Sample

The selection of participants was done with the agreement of the school Alumni Association and sent by mail to the last four cohorts having graduated between 2011 to 2014. The choice of the cohorts was based on the fact that their school-work transition was still fresh in their mind and that it would bring richer insights. The cohorts have an average of 400 students but the alumni association database did not have all the updated emails. The total

sample population was around 1300 alumni. An information mail was sent to all of them. The graduates who volunteered to participate were invited to complete the required ethical forms and return them by email before setting up the interviews. The objective of the interviews was to collect and gather information on their perceptions regarding their job search experiences, along with their thoughts on the job market and their remarks on the entrepreneurial aspect of their job search.

The sample included graduates from all field majors such as marketing, finance, audit, supply chain management, marketing and entrepreneurship. Most of them worked in different industries. In terms of alumni profile, out of the total sample, eleven graduates had been admitted through the national examination entrance test and had followed the standard 5-year curriculum. One of them was an international student. Four students had been admitted in 3rd year at a bachelor level among which 2 had chosen the apprenticeship track. At the time of the interviews, all graduates had one to four years work experience. Two of them were unemployed. Social factors such as ethnicity, religion, class and disability were not a criterion. No questions were asked regarding their parents' occupations, the high-schools they attended or their neighbourhood. Considering the cost of tuition fees, it can be assumed that the majority of students come from middle to upper class backgrounds. They had not student loans, except for one. The phrasal structures they used was in line with the school student's profiles. Within the sample, two had chosen the apprenticeship track implying free tuition fees since the companies paid their school tuition. Gender was easy to identify. The sample included 7 females and 8 males.

A total of 30 graduates volunteered within 2 days who were aged 22 to 26 years. The sample size based on 15 was provided in the proposal and validated. It seemed adequate in order to have in-depth interviews and achieve sufficient data collection thus lowering saturation (Morse, 2007). The choice made was to select the first 15 ones who were the most motivated

or interested in participating. The names used are not their actual names, they were hidden in order to keep the confidentiality.

One-on-one interviews were scheduled on Skype to make it more convenient for the participants. The interview sessions usually took place in the evening. The sessions were also recorded by a special app with the permission of each participant. During the interviews, the researcher also took some notes while also focusing on the exchange of information taking place during the interviews.

The tables 3.4 and 3.5 list the pseudonyms which were given to the graduates along with their basic information such as the cohort, their major subjects, their specialization track and the profile of the graduates.

Table 3.4: Participants sample description

Graduates Pseudonym	Major	Specialisation Track	Cohort
Sacha	International trade	Marketing	2014
Dominique	International trade	Marketing	2013
Teddy	International trade	Entrepreneurship	2011
Constantin	International trade	Marketing	2012
Gerard	International trade	Marketing	2014
Sonia	International trade	Finance	2014
Thierry	International trade	Audit	2011
Victor	International trade	Finance	2014
Jean	International trade	Supply Chain Management	2014
Eléonore	International trade	Finance	2012
Thomas	International trade	Marketing	2013
Marguerite	International trade	Audit	2014
Katherine	International trade	Marketing	2013
Fabien	International trade	Marketing	2013
Michelle	International trade	Entrepreneurship	2014

Table 3.5: Participants Identities

Young Graduates Identities		
Categories	Sub-categories	Graduate Frequency Occurrence
Specialization track	Marketing	7
	Finance / Audit	5
	Logistics / Supply Chain Management	1
	Entrepreneurship	2
Graduates profiles	Standard 5-year curriculum	11
	3 rd year admission	4
Extracurricular activities	Students association (BDE in French*) Only 5 actively engaged	12
	Enactus program** (both an association and an academic program)	3

* **Bureau des élèves (BDE)** in private schools. Independent student's association organizing student life, events, activities and sports.

** **Enactus**: social entrepreneurship program and worldwide competition

<https://enactus.org/>

3.8 Data Collection Methods

As stated in the previous sections, the qualitative approach was used in this research study and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. The qualitative interview approach allowed the collection of the personal and unique stories of the participants. I engaged them in telling their experiences which permitted to obtain rich insights to answer the research questions. Interviewing is a natural approach to the collection of data which helps in collecting data of a very high quality (Patton, 2002). It also allowed for immediate clarification of the ideas.

Each interview took between one to one and half hour. All interviews were conducted on Skype. They were auto recorded with the permission of the participants. After the interviews had been successfully conducted, each interview was verbatim transcribed. It took about 3 to 4 hours for each interview to be transcribed. They were emailed to the participants for validation. All transcripts were kept safe and were stored on a computer that was protected

with a strong password and a cloud storage space. All participants' names were voided in order to ensure their confidentiality and to protect their information.

3.9 Strategies for Data Analysis

I was very attentive not to intrude during the interviews because the quality of the information gathered by doing interviews with the participants depends mainly on the approaches of the interviewer (Patton, 2002). I chose to take an inductive approach to start the interviews as the questions were based on personal experiences but I also used a deductive approach which “works from the ‘top down’, from a theory to hypotheses to data to add to or contradict the theory” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.23) based on the VUCA Prime framework. This helped the identification of the similarities and differences as the transcriptions took place. It also helped in understanding the “emergent insights” for data analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 449). All transcriptions were read several times in order to pinpoint topics and perceptions of the participants. It enabled me to identify the patterns and trends in the information that could have gone unnoticed and might not have become as clear immediately during the inductive analysis that was conducted initially (Patton, 2002, p. 458). The data collection of this study included interview questions which generated three main topics: (1) the perception of the labour market upon graduation, (2) the perception of the sources of success in a successful job search and (3) the difficulties associated with the lack of success in finding a suitable job (for example, the perceived effectiveness of job search methods, tools, and the channels conducive to finding a job). The categories in the data were then pinpointed (Silverman, 2006). The use of this approach then helped me in further highlighting the similarities and differences to generate new insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A choice was made to only study data, classified by graduate occurrence, that was ranked 5

and above since they were the most popular and recurrent items in the data (as shown in the tables below).

For this purpose, I did not make use of a specific software but chose both an excel-based approach and a software called Xmind8 for the mind mapping approach. Using a thematic analysis approach, sub-categories were listed, ranked by graduate frequency occurrences and then grouped into categories such as personal network (family, friends and colleagues), school reputation (rankings), curriculum impact and so forth.

As explained by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79), the technique of thematic analysis is an effective method which is used for the identification, analysis and the reporting of the trends, patterns and the themes within the data. The use of this method therefore helped the researcher in the data analysis as it allowed a more organized analysis. It was specifically important for this study since it includes a very large and inter-related array of topics.

The tables below (theme 1, theme 2 and theme 3) show the main categories and sub-categories along with the frequency with which they appeared for the graduates.

Table 3.6: Perception of jobs and job market

Theme 1		
Perception of job and job market		
Categories	Sub-categories	Graduate Frequency Occurrence
Job attractiveness	International scope	9
	Sector / industry	2
	Job type	3
	Company size	1
	Salary	1
	Employer branding	2
“Ideal job”	Gained success in the search process by getting hired for their ideal job	3
	Could not manage to get hired for their ideal job	11
	No “ideal job” as a goal	2

Awareness of job search upon graduation	Difficult as expected	9
	Lucky	2
	Very difficult	2
	Went “with the flow”	2

Table 3.7: Perceived sources of success in a successful job search

Theme 2		
Perceived sources of success in a successful job search		
Understanding internal and external environment factors that impact young job seekers		
Categories	Sub-categories	Graduate Frequency Occurrence
External context		
Impact of curriculum	Pitching practice (Entrepreneurial & English classes)	7
	Career development plan	5
	Practice of foreign languages (4hours /week)	5
	Guest speakers	5
	Midterm reviews	3
	Previous experience : apprenticeship / internships	2
	Semesters abroad	1
Impact of extra-curricular activities	Enactus (social entrepreneurship program)	2
	Student associations (BDE -Bureau Des Élèves)	2
Knowledge of Labour market	International versus the French labour market	5
	Niche jobs	3
	Highly valued added sectors	2
Impact of Network	Face to face meeting (Personal & external personalized ties)	11
	Personal network (as a support group)	8
	External personalized ties and networks	8
Internal Factors		
Personal characteristics /Attitudinal Competencies / Behavioural Competencies	Proactivity	13
	Self-confidence & self-efficacy	8
	Curiosity	6
	Modesty	5
	Initiative	5
	Open-mindedness	5
	Self-knowledge : skills, values, and interests	4

	Tolerance for risks	3
	Dealing with failure	2
Choices	Choice of country (be aware of cultural job market differences and work papers requirements)	9
	Choice of specialization track	7
	Choice of industry (high valued added sectors)	4
	Choice of job (niche)	3
	Choice of company size (small, medium, large)	1
Habits / intensity	Sustained rigor / perseverance	8
	Regular schedule	7
	Level of motivation	7
Focus-orientated	Established job search goals	5
	Build unique career identities	5
	Knowledge of valued added sectors	4
	Knowledge of different occupations	3
	Job clarity	3
Job search skills	Networking	11
	Ability to pitch	10
	Personal branding / self-branding	7
	Ability to plan and organize	7
	Ability to communicate in English	6
	Internet research skills	5
	Identify with what makes one "special" or "different" from the others on the job market	5
	Targeting the right people	5

Table 3.8: Perceived causes of difficulties in a successful job search process

Theme 3		
Perceived causes of difficulties in a successful job search process		
Understanding internal and external environment factors which impact young job seekers		
Categories	Sub-categories	Graduate Frequency Occurrence
External Factors		
Institution	School reputation and its ranking	1
	Teachers and the quality of their teaching	2
Impact of curriculum	No "real" transition school / job search	6
Labour Market	Unemployment and economic crises	5
	Paper work required for international markets (such as work visas)	5
French Companies	HR : Narrow-minded "Label"	8
	HR: No responses	7
	Lack of experience	6
	Gender or age discrimination (in some specific industries such as Banking)	2
Network	Limited network	4
	No support group / loneliness	4
Financial Burden	Economic concern because of student loans	2
Internal Factors		
Personal characteristics /Attitudinal & Behavioural competencies	Fear of failure / doubt	6
	Lack of self - esteem	3
	Lack of flexibility (for instance, excessive focus on one specific area)	4
Habits / Intensity	Lack of real motivation for the job search process	1
	Lack of regular routine	4
	Passive attitude	2
Lack of choice making	Major/track specialisation	3
	Career - orientation	
Lack of job skills	Ability to communicate in English	5

	Limited knowledge of job search research skills	4
Lack of focus	No Job clarity	7
	No knowledge of occupations	7
	No established job search goals	6
	Limited knowledge of valued added sectors	6
	Limited knowledge of companies	8

A secondary phase was to create a concept map allowed me to connect the meaningful patterns to the existing knowledge so that new knowledge could be created by organizing it (Novak, 1993). The concept map was designed in line with the chosen theoretical constructs and based on the research literature and previous studies. It was divided into three main themes related to job search approaches which were based on the literature of previous studies from the field of entrepreneurship and job search. These three main themes included (1) context, (2) job search tools and (3) the entrepreneurial competency approach as seen in the figures below 3.2 to 3.5.

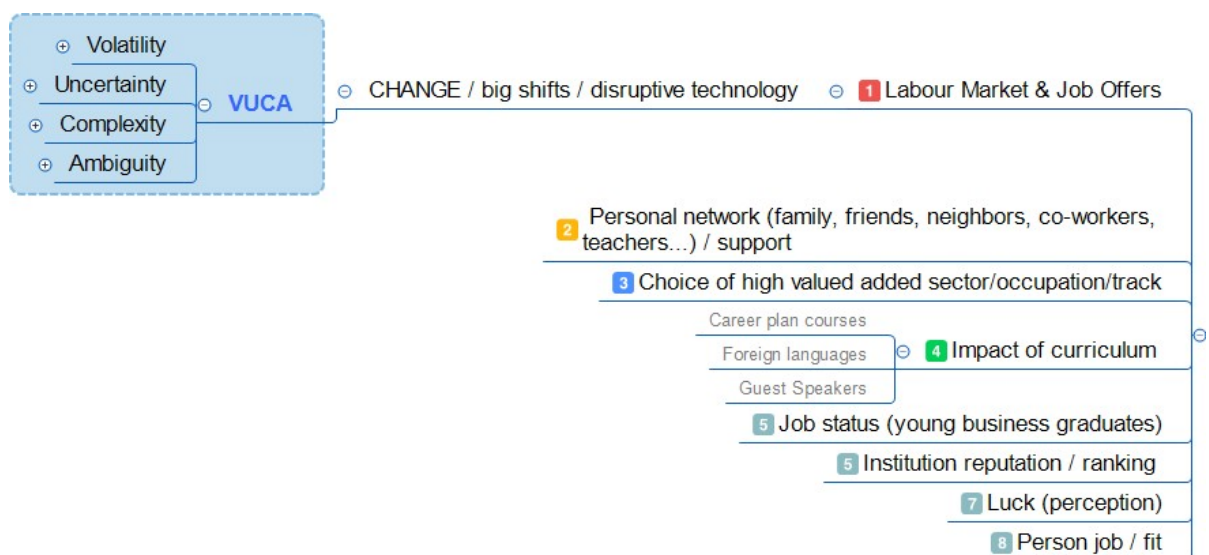


Figure 3.2: Context / environmental variables

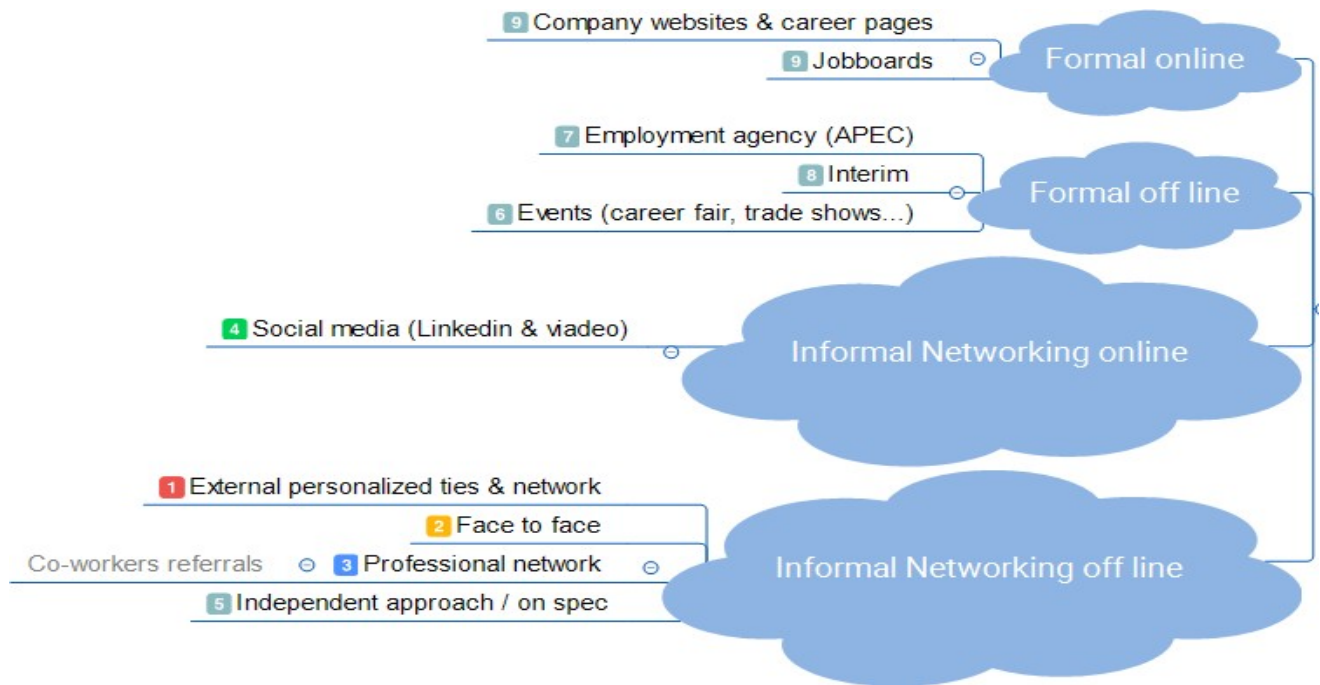


Figure 3.3: Tools, channels and sources

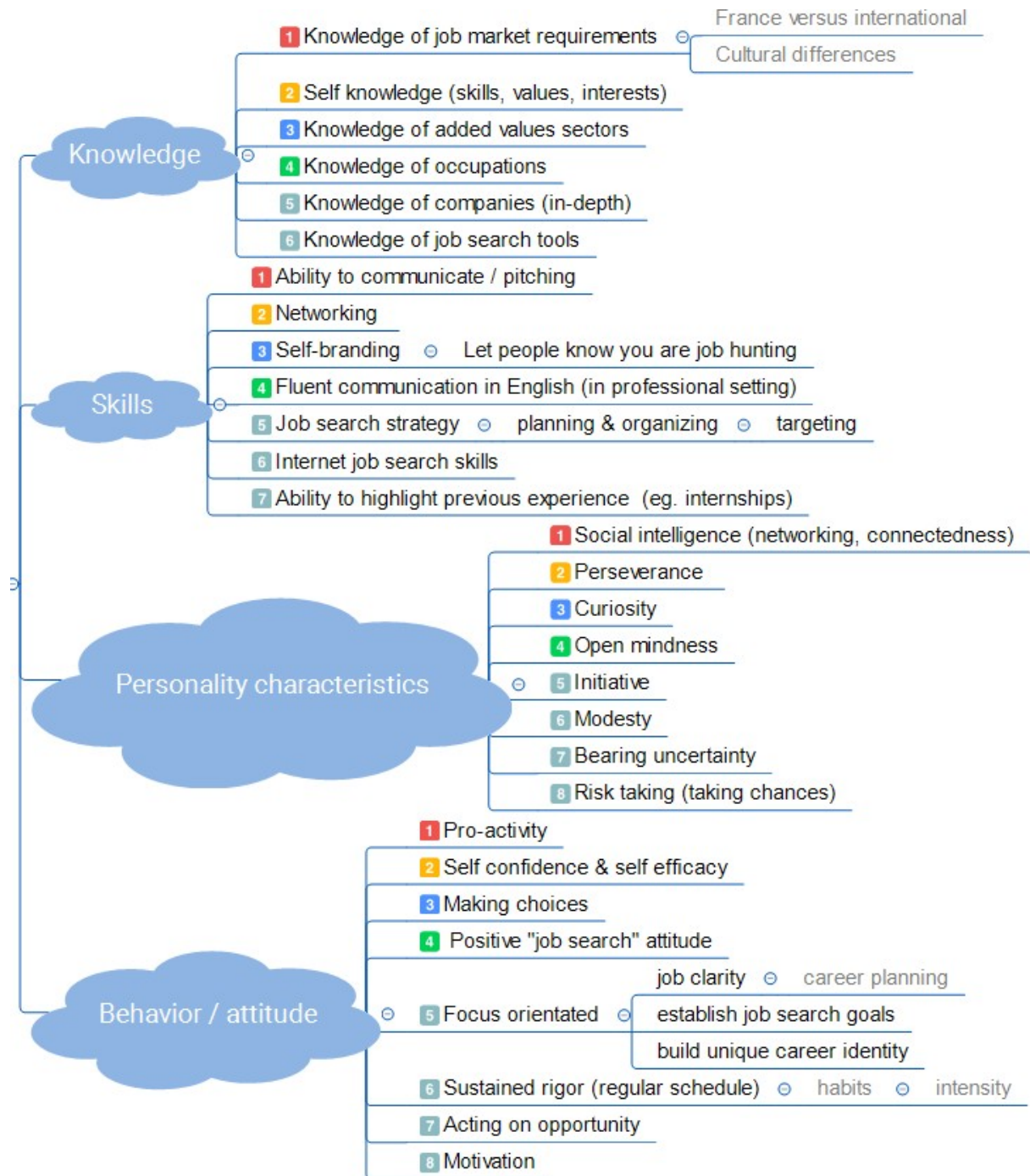


Figure 3.4: Entrepreneurial competency approach

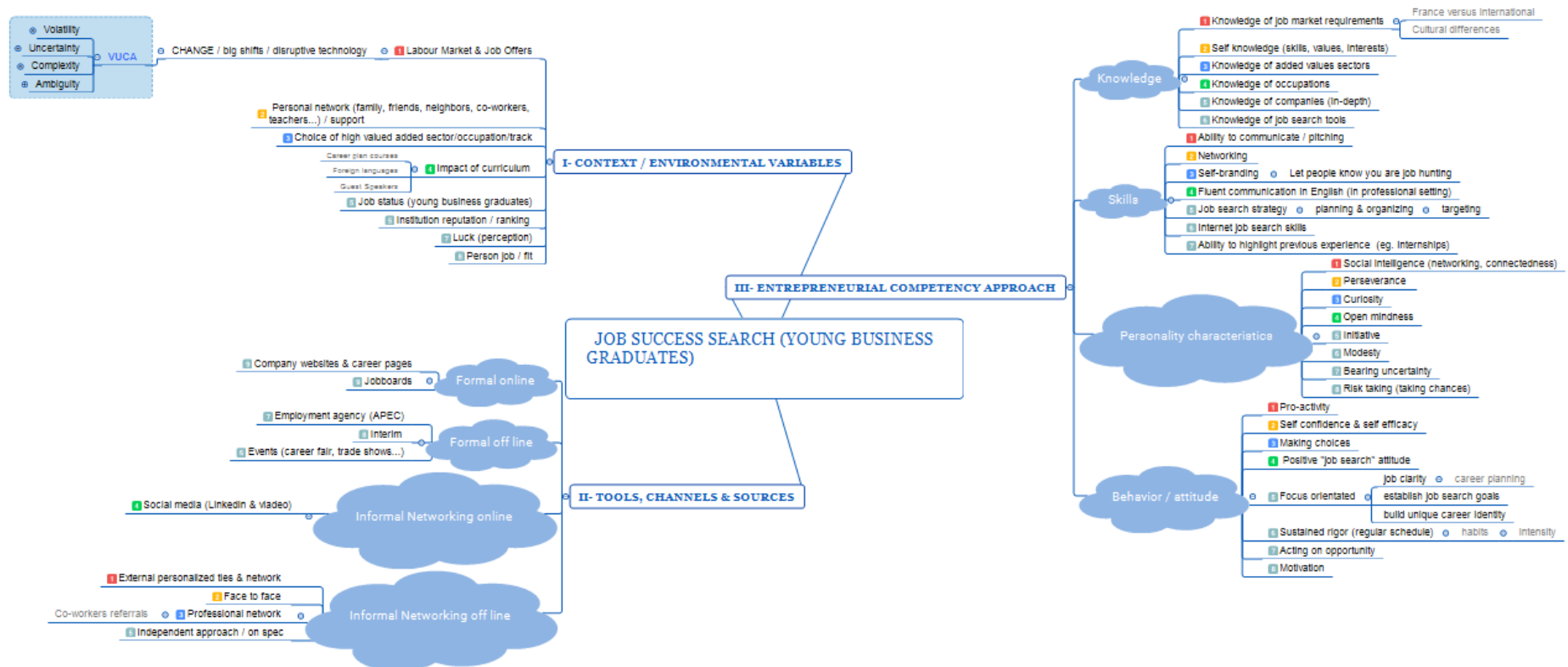


Figure 3.5: overall concept map based on the entrepreneurial competency approach

3.10 Research Limitations

The choice of qualitative approach of research has its limitations such as the role and involvement of the researcher cannot be denied. In this case, my practical knowledge of this topic or the “researcher’s connoisseurship” could result in biases since I assessed and interpreted the perceptions of the graduates on the basis of my own past experiences and personal history (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001). However, as it was suggested by some researchers, the use of certain strategies such as no choice of sampling, semi-structured interview questions, redundancy of some questions helped in making sure that biases were limited in order to improve the quality of the results (Sterne, Egger & Moher, 2008; Polit & Beck, 2010).

Elaborating further, this qualitative research focuses on the perceptions of the participants and perceptions are not facts even though they seem as valid and realistic to the participants and therefore need to be considered with care for a research study. Therefore, the role of the researcher as an expert in this case could be seen as both, a limitation and an opportunity for this study to provide a new knowledge or avenues to explore (Polit & Beck, 2010).

It would be difficult to generalize the setting to other settings such as universities for instance. The results are associated with a specific target that are French Business School graduates with a master degree.

To limit the scope of this study, the social capital factor was not taken into account either but it could be added since it is important to consider the role of family and social factors in job search.

For the future research agenda, it could be extended to a broader and more heterogeneous sample that would be more representative of the French graduates in terms of institutions and fields of study.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Respecting the privacy of the participants of any research is a part of ethical standards (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Ethical scrutiny and approval was provided by the University of Liverpool ethics committee (see Appendix). Each participant was informed that his or her information would be kept

confidential and anonymous. They were asked to sign an informed consent form. The design and the approaches used in this study were also approved by the university tutor. Security of the data was insured by making several copies on several disks which were all protected by a strong password. All recordings of the data were transcribed on an excel sheet which was also protected by a strong password. Each transcript of the interview was sent to each participant to review their interviews in order to avoid any misinterpretations or for them to provide clarifications if there was a need.

3.12 Reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity can be explained as the systematic attention of the researcher to the development of knowledge from research (D’cruz, Gillingham & Melendez, 2007). Under this concept, the researcher focuses on each and every stage of the process to make sure that biases and the skewness of the data is avoided to get results of a high quality (Taylor & White, 2001). The researcher is required to be very mindful of the angle and the view point that he / she chooses to assess the data to make sure that no irrelevant or judgemental angles are used (Sheppard, Newstead, Di Caccavo & Ryan, 2000).

My approach may be considered neo-liberal since I work in a Business School. I am aware that education in France stems from two different historical lineages which I experienced and respond to different sets of concerns since I have a university background both as a student and a teaching assistant in France, England and the United States. The power of neoliberal trends, especially for Business Schools are part of an education market often described as the commodification or marketization of education, delivering a professional-driven curriculum, and encouraging a Darwinist mode of competition (Apple, 2006; Ball, 2012; Giroux, 2014). This trend is the outcome of globalization and capitalistic competition. As described in the section 2.3, business schools’ students are trained to be realistic and pragmatic and the curriculum is based on real real-life practical experiences. They make the choice of Business Schools studies in order to either fulfil their career aspirations or to have better job opportunities. This question of choice is a central theme of neo liberal education. Some researchers argue that they become commodities for the market’s needs (Apple, 2006; Giroux, 2014). Others such as Davies and Bansel

(2007, p.251) state that “a particular feature of neoliberal subjects is that their desires, hopes, ideals and fears have been shaped in such a way that they desire to be morally worthy, responsible individuals, who, as successful entrepreneurs, can produce the best for themselves and their families”.

It is imperative to be aware of this trends and I kept them in mind while conducting the interviews. I tried to be very careful of all the possible biases and tried to remain neutral when trying to explore the behaviour, perspectives, perceptions, and experiences of the participants. I was cautious of the feelings and thought processes so that any personal feeling or judgement could not cause an impact on the interpretation of the participant’s perceptions as explained through their interview responses. The verbatim transcripts of the participants were read multiple times to get the actual meaning, and clarifications were asked for if they were required. The use of the graduate pseudonyms also helped in this regards as the personal identification of a respondent can influence the interpretation of the verbatim at a later point. In addition, to be further reassured, comparisons across the participants verbatim were also made so that the wider contextual meaning of certain aspects could be learned. This method also helped in finding the themes and categories and the exceptions in the collected data set.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis describing the perceptions of French Business School graduates regarding the challenges to successfully entering the job market in France and abroad. Another area assessed in this section includes the competencies that these young business graduates should have in order to get successful results in the job search process. The analysis further examines the job search channels that the recent business school graduates believe are necessary in order to succeed in their job search. Finally, the analysis assesses whether these young business graduates utilize specific entrepreneurial competencies in order to evaluate whether these particular competencies are a key component of the job search success.

This chapter is divided into an aggregate of three complementary themes: the job search context, the job search's tools, and the entrepreneurial competency approach as a wider concept, which is subdivided into knowledge, job search behaviour, skills and attitudes referred as characteristics or traits as outlined in the concept map.

4.2 Exploring the Context

The two most significant topics in job search literature are the competency approach and the job search tools. However, the job search's approaches and methods that are used in the present time cannot be analysed without taking into account the external environment factors that greatly affect the success and failure of the job search process. Within the context of this thesis, eight subcategories were identified in the concept map which include: the labour market, the complexity of the job market, job offers, person-job fit, job status (young graduates), personal network (family, friends and colleagues), school reputation (rankings) and the impact of curriculum.

Based on the information which was obtained from the interviews, the majority of young business graduates recognised that they were aware that the job search would be difficult but that they had not

grasped regarding the range and depth of the difficulty ahead. Among the 15 young graduates, nine indicated that they knew it would be difficult no matter what.

“I think you do not realize the complexity awaiting you, you think it is going to happen . . .”
Sacha

Two of them were aware that it would be difficult but they perceived themselves as ‘lucky’ which is a very interesting point. Indeed, this notion of ‘luck’ also referred as ‘chance events’ defined as “factors that have the unique qualities of being unpredictable and unplanned for” (Rice, 2014, p. 446) plays a significantly influence in job search or career planning. Being able to go and look for the right information might have been part of the process event though it was probably unconscious. Shane (2003) points out that opportunity is often linked to knowledge and the ability to seek for information. The notion of chance is also described in the chaos theory of careers (Bright & Pryor, 2005). Two of them did not expect it to be as difficult and the last ones had not really given much thought to the matter. There was no significant gap in the perception based on gender differences.

4.2.1 Perceptions Regarding the Labour Market Right after Graduation in Vuca Times

The survey results of this study indicate that a majority of the young business graduates were aware of the labour market shifts that can have an impact on the job market and the complexity of the job search process. They recognised that there were some serious unemployment crisis and under-employment difficulties for the young people. They felt that it was more difficult to be hired and that there is a rise in temporary agency work, dependent self-employment, internships and temporary short-term contracts. All of these approaches make it harder for these young graduates to obtain a long-term contract, which is commonly referred to as a “CDI” (contrat à durée indéterminé) in the French job market. These graduates also indicated that they were aware that their initial wages were lower than those that similar graduates used to receive a few years back and that they were maybe ‘underemployed’. However, the results show that almost all of them were more interested in the long-term contracts that

were much more common for the previous generation. Only three of the graduates were considering to eventually become consultants.

Leonard and Swap (2005) observe that most humans love predictability since we are creatures of habits. Habits are defined by Latour (2013, p.265) as “patrons saint of laid-out routes, pathways, and trails”. However, the job market of the present time is challenging and uncertain as expressed in VUCA times (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous). Young graduates need the capability to navigate in a world of rapid and continuous change that is no longer predictable. When discussing the concept of a VUCA world and explaining what it implies, the responses of the graduates varied based on different factors.

Clearly, the choice of industry or type of job impacted the search differently. Four graduates were confident in finding a job, no matter whether it was volatile, uncertain, complex or ambiguous. They felt that their difficulties were more related to the industry, the type of job or just luck. One, for instance, was working in the digital economy.

“Not the industry in which I evolve, it is rather certain unless someone cuts off the internet cables!” Constantin

Personal characteristics related to career goal or job clarity were connected with success as highlighted in the literature review. Three graduates, the ones who had definite goals in mind and had been particularly pro-active, were able to translate into their particular job markets the notion of VUCA times. For instance, Teddy who knew what his career goal stated:

“I did not find the job search process or the overall job market complex or ambiguous since I knew what I was looking for and I had done research on job evolution in terms of my job.” Teddy

Six of the graduates explained that they had faced some difficulty in managing doubts and in persevering towards the goals that they had set. They found it difficult to cope up with the job uncertainty. In addition, these graduates showed that they were not comfortable with the unknown areas of the job search process especially in terms of the time and outcomes of their job search process.

“Uncertain, okay, because I do not think that there is only one job market.... Still, I could not prevent myself from thinking that when I did a search or when I responded to an offer that I had few chances of getting an answer because I imagined that the companies received so many letters and CVs. It is so very uncertain and you cannot predict the outcomes.” Fabien

They associated volatility, as opposed to stability, with the change of pace of the job market, especially in the digital industry as well as the development of Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation that will impact many industries and jobs such as Human Resources and Finance for easily automated tasks (Gupta & Srivastava, 2013).

“In all trades but especially in the digital professions, there are hundreds of jobs that are related to the media and digital industry; it is all changing very rapidly.” Constantin

“Many jobs are bound to disappear with the development of robots and automation - so one has to be aware that a career chosen now may not be the right choice anymore in the years to come.” Jean

The high level of complexity of the factors influencing the job market makes it difficult to plan; however, a successful plan includes the ability to adapt to the environment. Indeed, planning for the job search process in the present time is not the same linear process that it was a few years back. Recent graduates cannot be as static and linear as their parents could be when looking for a job. Half of the recent graduates did not limit themselves and did indeed expand their searches out of their comfort zones. Still, only two of them were able to discover new opportunities.

“Yes, it is frustrating to accept that after five years of study, considering the job market currently, we may have no work, or we will be offered a short - term contract or an internship, whereas our parents had companies waiting for them after they had completed a similar degree.” Gerard

“Complex, yes, because with the NICTs, it is not easy to keep updated and as a result, harnessing the available resources and ‘figuring out’ can be challenging. The shift to the digital side has complicated the search for a certain fringe for the job seekers, which is quite obvious when you

visit the unemployment agency. On the positive side, it helps to have certain homogeneity of the job postings and the job boards.” Thierry

The concept of ambiguity was the most difficult element for the young graduates to define since it can refer to multiple interpretations of a same situation. They indicated that most job descriptions were clear. All of these young graduates had access to the same data and information through Internet. For the most part, they did not find the descriptions ambiguous, although the job recruitment process in some companies could be complicated and can be unclear as well in some cases.

“Ambiguous, less and less. Job postings follow the same nomenclature with the same titles for the same functions, which tend to become homogenized for multinationals. However, it is different in the case of SME’s where versatility is necessary.” Jean

“I do not think that it's ambiguous except for the recruitment process.” Sacha

All graduates agreed that they had to be flexible and fast in order to react to job opportunities that had come their way. In this regards, three winning strategies could be observed that were either isolated or combined: (1) pro-active planning, (2) “alternative plan B or C” or (3) re-aligning the goals according to the available opportunities.

4.2.2 The Importance of Personal Networks

The results of data analysis show that the personal network such as a support group, friends, colleagues or family was perceived as very important by most graduates. Support was defined as either emotional or professional. Three mains network circles were quoted: (1) family, friends, parents’ friends; (2), ex-co-workers (during internships) and past employers; (3) teachers and school career services.

“To facilitate my research, I called on the network. Having an entrepreneurial mind-set and approach, I did not hesitate to approach people and to call them, taking on opportunities and networking . . .” Constantin

“It would have been very difficult without the support of my family and some of my close friends.”
Catherine

These testimonies point out the importance of primary social capital, namely, a prior socialization to the school integration. It remains a privileged means of finding an internship and potentially obtain a job. They felt that employability depended on this personal and family network. Networks are considered a valuable resource and are at the origin successful interactions (Jack & Anderson, 2002). Business schools must thus provide students a multiple source of capital to be employable.

4.2.3 The Impact of Curriculum on the Job Search Process

The young graduates in this study regularly emphasized the impact of the curriculum on a few specific topics. Two of the young graduates considered that they were successful, thanks to their second master degree done in schools ranked as “Ivy League Colleges” in France. When applying for a competitive job, the mention of the Ivy League College’s name on the resume will be better considered as compared to a ‘second-league’ school. The actual school’s reputation was not declared a significant element in obtaining a job. The main categories, which were highlighted, included foreign language courses, career development courses in French and English, midterm review and entrepreneurship courses for the ones who had selected this track. Clearly, communication skills in English, Entrepreneurship courses and Career Development courses were identified as the principal factors for success in the job search process.

“Yes, because we were well-trained, we had career development courses, and we had the elements of knowledge. It was then up to the students to step back, analysing what they wanted to do. . .” *Teddy*

It is surprising to note that extracurricular activities and internships were hardly mentioned considering that each student spent an average of fifteen months completing internships in France or abroad over a period of five years. It could be that these advantages were taken for granted.

On the other hand, the practice of professional foreign languages was determinant according to them. French students are often considered to be bad at foreign languages. This business school being known for its international dimension offered four hours weekly of English courses, as well as four hours of coursework in Spanish or German. This was considered a definite advantage for students who could practise and become fluent in professional settings.

“I will give you an example: in my company in France, we are more than three hundred employees of which there are maybe twenty only who speak fluent professional English. Even if we believe that English is spoken by everybody in the present time, at the professional level, it is a rare and highly valued skill.” Sonia

“English-language ability is not an option; even job postings that are shared in the job market of France are in English.” Victor

Therefore, this suggests that in this study, the impact of the content and activities of the language program was definitely highlighted. It provided students with self-confidence. Pitching and oral presentations were described as the two most valued language exercises, which can have many useful results for the job search process.

They also emphasised the importance of professional interventions and pragmatic teaching. They felt that professional guests who shared their expertise and experiences were especially effective in communicating their own success and pitfalls which helped them expand their visions of the workplace and enhance their individual careers.

“We stood out from the others because of all the knowledge we acquired from experts. It was a competitive advantage for us as compared to the others.” Jean

The graduates also emphasized that teachers, who have a strong influence on students, should present a realistic view of potential career choices and that they should offer alternative options within the curriculum regarding jobs and career orientation. This is important as it can better prepare students to

think out of the box in terms of less obvious transitions than the traditional core pathways that are linked to a specific discipline.

Another plebiscite point was the mandatory career development course students had to take during the five-year academic program (see table 1.1). Career and professional counsellors assisted students in the reflection and implementation of a career plan. The program was inspired by the Behavioural Learning Theory (Jarvis, Holford & Griffin, 2003; Nehaniv & Dautenhahn, 2007) that claims that a successful job search is based on a set of behaviours that need to be encouraged by career counsellors through immediate and relevant feedback.

During their first year, each student interviewed two working professionals in order to start exploring jobs, industries and professional. Students also practiced mock interviews to prepare for their first year internship interviews. They identified their individual skills and interests and learnt to provide relevant, concrete examples in order to persuade the potential employers of their professional skills. They practiced on actual internship descriptions (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). Students then drafted resumes and cover letters (in French, in English, and often as well as in a third language). They also had to start working on their network and identify all contacts, professional and personal, that could potentially help them in the future.

During the second year of the program, students completed a six-month internship program. They also participated in a large school-sponsored job fair. Students learnt how to incorporate social media into the process of their job search and consider the use of personal videos when they are applying for different jobs. For this purpose, they were given a special project, which required them to do a job video in English based on their career aspiration. In third year, all students studied abroad for a semester. In fourth and fifth years, they took career assessment tests, applied for internships through the school-sponsored career fair, attended school-sponsored interviewing workshops with the alumni, participated in business games, and attended the midterm review workshop.

The “midterm review” was the last workshop before graduating from the school in order to prepare them to enter the job market. It was organised one month before the end of their last year internship and was

mandatory. The small groups were heterogeneous, all tracks mixed on purpose, in order for them to compare and discover different professional environments depending on the company size, industry or occupation. This midterm review workshop was designed in the form of a collaborative setting. It was a place where students could voice their questions or concerns in a direct way and it also provided them with a chance to share their workplace experiences and their job search situations or actions. The goal of this project was to bring awareness to the future job search of young graduates and to make them aware of the different jobs and industry requirement. In addition, another aim of this workshop was to allow the students to benefit from each other's network and alert them on the latest market trends by presenting them with a job market analysis. The midterm review workshop had a most powerful effect on the young graduates who suddenly became aware of the job market as explained below:

“Thanks to the midterm review workshop and even though it was depressing, especially for the marketing students, since the placement statistic from the previous year were not the best, mainly because of the economic crisis. But at the same time, it boosted me to plan and organize my job search, be proactive and not be scattered all over the place, and not think like it was just going to happen by itself.” Gérard

“The midterm review workshop was great but it came too late . . . we should have been made aware of the labour market numbers much earlier during our studies.” Fabien

“I started school in the third year. One selling point of the school was that it guaranteed a professional integration more effective than if I had studied at a university. I was not naïve; I knew the difficulty of the job market. Still, we had very useful and interesting professional career development courses. The only criticism was that we had very little notions of the market before choosing our internships. If they had come a bit earlier, it would have allowed me to think twice before choosing my last internship especially since we know that it will impact our first job search.” Constantin

Some students considered this midterm review workshop to be a ‘dream crusher’ and yet realized that it had to be done. They suggested that being aware of job market statistics as early as the third year would have been the most helpful as well as developing an ‘action plan’ during their last year.

4.3 Job-Search Methods, Tools and Channels

Job search methods, tools, and channels are perceived as critical for success. In this regards and as described in section 4.2.2. The importance of networks was emphasised. Students claimed that their personal (friends and relations) and professional networks (such as ex co-workers, internship supervisor) were the most effective ways to find jobs and emphasised the quality of these contacts. Networks provide access to information and allow “mutual learning and boundary crossing” (Cope, Jack, & Rose, 2007, p. 214).

There is a complementarity between a primary social capital and a secondary one, built by and with the business school. The students who are more successful by integrating the labour market of a VUCA world are those who have such complementarity and know how to use it.

Social networking was described as a tool to get information and advice, as well as a source that provided accurate information on the different job opportunities, companies or recruitment process. Each graduate also emphasized that social networking was no replacement for a face to face meetings both formal or informal.

“To meet people in a face to face manner is what works best, introduce oneself and pitch on my skills and experiences ...” Elise

In order to make the most out of these tools, they advised a two steps strategy: first, collecting information, and then, meeting people face to face to further discuss and explore more about the opportunities or other relevant facts of the job market.

4.3.1 The Use of Informal Network Off - Line

The use of the different informal network off-line was considered the most effective way to identify opportunities and to get a job. Such a network typically encompassed face-to-face meetings and external personalised ties in a professional network as well as an independent approach. In this regards, a large number of the graduates highlighted the importance of face-to-face meetings. Only three of the

graduates mentioned that they use cold calling for their job search or dropped their resumes at companies' reception desk.

The acquired social capital (primary and secondary) is not sufficient to meet today's labour market requirements or to build an effective employability. The latter must be continuously perpetuated and developed by the students. In the economic field, the new graduate must know how to have a strategic behaviour of himself (Honneth, 2000) such as being entrepreneurial.

4.3.2 Online Networking tools

The importance of the Internet use seemed major but its usefulness seemed limited. The graduates perceived the use of the Internet and social media as mainly a facilitating factor or tool. Company career websites and job boards were definitely referred to as 'useless' or not relevant except niche job boards such as "Dice.com" which specialised in the employment and job openings for the technology industry. Even though social media is considered as an informal media, it is used both, as a formal and/or an informal way to reach people in the job market. LinkedIn is considered useful in order to collect information, gain references or display a list of acquired skills.

"Online network for me is just a way of meeting people and networking. A cultural difference, for instance, is that in France networking is complicated, whereas in the United States, it is a normal practice. In France networking is often based on friendships only." Teddy

"I used the digital networks for the identification of the type of job and the skills attached to this specific job. Digital networks are useful to gather information and cross - referencing, but not much else." Victor

"When I first looked for a job, I answered job offers on LinkedIn. But I learned that unfortunately, the average response is 300 to 500 resumes per job offer, quite depressing! I do not see how we can stand out and how the human resource professionals have the time to cope with more than five hundred resumes! The APEC (French official government employment agency) gave us the numbers; there is an average of 112 responses per job offer for the field of marketing in Paris and its suburbs. And that is far too many to stand a chance . . ." Catherine

However, the results of the data show that they considered these contacts as “only connections” which did not mean those contacts were willing to actively help in getting a job.

The one-on-one approach seemed the most significant but graduates concurred in saying that all of these channels need to be combined in order to lead to an efficient and a successful job search and that managing a multi - channel job search campaign can appear like a full time job for the young graduates.

4.4 The Entrepreneurial Competency Approach

The competency approach below is sub-divided into (1) knowledge, (2) skills, (3) personal characteristics and (4) behaviour and is based on the “entrepreneurial competency approach”, as recommended by the review of literature and lay out in the concept map (Figure 3.5).

4.4.1 Knowledge

Knowledge can be described as an expertise or skills acquired by an individual through experience and education (Jarvis, Holford & Griffin, 2003; Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). When the graduates discussed knowledge, they referred to it specifically as knowledge of the job market, of the sectors, occupations, companies and the job search tools as well as self-knowledge.

“I knew from my internships that the digital sector was a place where it was easy to find jobs, I just needed to figure out what specific occupation I wanted to specialise in.”

Constantin

The results of this study show that clearly, knowledge of the added value sectors, occupations, companies or job search tools is a predictor of success. Within the broad definition of knowledge, two types of knowledge were described: one that is acquired through experience and education (curricula, internships, experts’ talks, company visits) and the other one that is acquired through personal curiosity and research.

“I remember visiting one the warehouse of a company which was organised by the corporate office and our supply chain management teacher and I knew that it is what I should do after my graduation.” Jean

As students, they had to perform a variety of career exploration activities among which personal professional searches on their potential careers was important. These exploration activities required that the students look into all the related and relevant information on the specific industry and / or sector in which they wanted to continue working and make a career. There was no difference found between gender as one could have foreseen (Ackerman, Bowen, Beier & Kanfer, 2001).

4.4.2.1 Self - Knowledge

Self-knowledge was regularly mentioned as a very important element to make the right choices and succeed in the job search process. Self-exploration or self-knowledge allows to develop insights and the identify one’s strengths and interests and to target career goal (Singh, 2006). Behavioral research establish a connection between the most effective people and those who understand themselves. Some had deep sense of self-understanding. Some were encouraged to work through deduction of what they liked or disliked

“I knew I could not work in a large company with several levels of hierarchy. It was not for me at all!” Sacha

“I am a people-person so working behind a desk was not for me. I had to find a job where I could meet people.” Catherine

Whereas others said that exploring personal values and interests in relation to a potential career was extremely difficult. They did not feel at ease, found the exercise stressful or did not see the point of it at the time this work was requested from them. It could have been related to anxiety or lack of self-esteem (Singh, 2006).

4.4.2.2 Cultural Differences

In terms of recruitment process, the cultural differences were cited numerous times describing the contrasts between the French and the international market. They felt the HR recruitment teams to be more open and efficient in Anglo-Saxon countries whereas in France, employers have a listing of schools' names and will not hire outside of this list.

“In the United States, recruiters will ask you what your skills are and what you can do for the company; whereas in France you will be asked what degrees you have and which school you graduated from” Marguerite

“In France, when you contact people from the Human Resource departments to see if your candidature is interesting, it is seen as annoying to the person; whereas, in Canada, the HR will see you as motivated.” Victor

Differences exist but they are based on cultural differences, processes, practices, laws, and expectations. For instance, in the US, the employer can terminate the contract at any time with no legal statutory notice period so it makes it easier and faster to hire a person.

4.4.2 Six main Skills

Six skills were identified regularly by the graduates as useful in their job search: (1) the ability to pitch both in French and English, (2) the ability to network, (3) the ability to do personal branding, (4) the ability to speak fluent and professional English, (5) the ability to project and plan for the job search process and (6) the knowledge of job search tools. These skills can be found in the entrepreneurial competency approach.

The ability to pitch came first and was mentioned by all the graduates. It was always mentioned in relation to the career plan both delivered in French and in English. Graduates had to work on a pitch elevator and were able to meet any potential employers and introduce themselves in a very effective and a brief way, both in French and in English.

“You have to sell yourself, fast. You only have one chance to make a good impression, and

people are busy” Dominique

In today’s world, building a professionally diverse network is considered definite advantage since such a network can help greatly in getting recommendations to explore career avenues regarding an industry or a job, or even a company. Young graduates normally started networking in the first year of studies when they interviewed professionals. Students were not allowed to use contacts from family and friends (even though some did) but were encouraged to share contacts among themselves in order to meet potential interviewees. They were trained to effectively network with professionals in their field of interest but also to extend their circles.

“Because we did many internships in different countries, we learnt to adapt to social situations and networks; to interact with students or co-workers from different backgrounds and to use these skills to persuade and build networks.” Elise

Clarysse, Wright and Mustar (2009, p. 492) define networking as "the actions of an individual which carried out to contact acquaintances, friends, and others to whom the job seeker has been directed for getting advice, leads, or other information about a suitable job". They were train to understand that the goal of networking was not to look for immediate returns but rather to extend your network for the future. Being able to network and to let people know you are looking for a job, present yourself the best way possible and managing your image online were described as essential skills.

“Presentation of your skills and experiences, as well as letting people know you are looking for a job is very important. You have to make a good impression right away; people are busy and you may not have the opportunity to meet them two or three times; you have to know how to sell yourself quickly.” Marguerite

They were aware that HR people could ‘Google’ them in order to research for more details about them.

“Meet as many people as possible; define two experiences in relation to the job you apply for; and find the right "intermediaries" to achieve your goal.” Michelle

Branding oneself is an important element of job search strategy. It starts with the resume and can be taken to the social media, or the way one dresses up for an interview. It is the way potential employers will perceive the candidate. Self-branding or ‘self marketization’ (Ivancheva & Lynch, 2015, p.9) can be seen as the effect of a neoliberal regime of governmentality but business schools’ commitments are to give all the tools, tips and technics necessary for graduates to be successful in their job search. The young graduate will have to make a positive impression and present a number of skills, attributes, differentiate himself/herself from the other applicants in order to match the job opening and be selected. According to Arruda (2003, p. 58) “Like a corporation, you need to differentiate yourself and build demand in your target markets. Personal branding is about understanding your unique combination of attributes – strengths, skills, values, and passions – and using those to differentiate yourself and guide your career decisions”. Graduates felt their fluency in English differentiate them from the other potential candidates that come from the other French schools.

“Whether to find a job in France or abroad, English was our best advantage compare to the other French students.” Fabien

Self-knowledge as described in 4.4.2.1 plays an important part in this process because they need to know their strong and weak points, be articulate, be aware of the image they convey and tell a story. Establishing priorities and systematic planning, as well as the application of employment strategies, were seen as complementary for the job search process. They were also directly linked to action plans for job searches.

“Planning and managing priorities made the difference between my first job search and my second during which I followed a much more systematic approach with a close examination about the type of industry, the structure, the location and the ambiance of a particular company.”
Van

Internet research skills and knowledge of job search tools are complementary to each other. Being able to identify all the sources of information related to a job search and navigate the digital world was quoted as one of the major criteria of success.

“Be able to cross-reference information and to reformulate it in order to find a relevant reference is very important. Develop competences of investigation in order to sort out the complexity of Internet.” Fabien

“Maximize the ability to collect and analyse information in order to take advantage of it in your job - search, and eventually your job.” Dominique

Graduates all had access to the same information and data. What appeared to make the difference is the ability to know where to look, use it in an effective way and persevere.

4.4.3 Personal Characteristics

4.4.3.1 Social Intelligence

Networking was noted as the second most important factor in locating job opportunities. Since networking requires social intelligence, the ones who understood that it was a regular activity and a priority, even before graduating, had more opportunities.

“You have to meet people, it is important; a person will open his network which will give you leads if he knows you. Online is not as easy. You have to go for coffee, go to lunches with them; it creates stronger links than by email or online. The digital is a prerequisite, it is a very powerful tool, and it allows to meet and get to know people that you may have never have known . . . but they will not help, if they don't know you.” Teddy

Social intelligence is defined as the awareness and adaptation to others and social situations (Kobe et al. 2001). Goleman's (2006) definition divides social intelligence into two main categories: social awareness and social facility.

4.4.3.2 Perseverance

Perseverance and sustained rigour go together (Andersen & Chen, 2002). Not giving up, no matter what, was a major advice from the graduates.

“I used LinkedIn to contact alumni or experts in the fields which interested me, but it is not easy because they can be reluctant to accept you into their networks. One needs to persevere.” Thomas

“Be determined, never give up, be perseverant, do not discourage oneself . . . people in companies are busy, they have 4000 mails to read almost every single day; you have to keep following up, very much like a sales person . . . do not hesitate.” Jean

4.4.3.3 Curiosity

Curiosity was indicated as a major element to explore career orientation and be open to new paths. Still, graduates admitted that while being at school, it was difficult for them to be curious unless it was through mandatory projects. Curiosity can be linked to open-mindedness and agility.

“Being curious is essential from the beginning . . . exploring jobs, discovering new sectors and not limiting oneself to the already known.” Thierry

The challenge is to find ways to encourage students to explore and be curious in order to improve the odds of identifying a field of opportunities or finding a job. Apprenticeship is one of them.

4.4.3.4 Open -Mindedness

Regarding open-mindedness, there seemed to be two opposite approaches. First, those who were focused-orientated and gave a lot of importance to what they were looking for and did not give up or changed path, while at the same time, being flexible in the way to reach their goal. They demonstrated perseverance and self-efficacy. On the other hand, those who had no definite plans or choices but were open to opportunities even if they did not match their goals precisely.

“Do not limit yourself to any geographical limits if you wish to find a job that you like. To decide that you will search only where you live without considering moving, nationally or internationally, is to put up a very large barrier to a successful job search.” Dominique

“Clearly, being resourceful and be open-minded go together nowadays because you do not find a job by responding to job offers. You need to contact companies you may not even know, to get in touch with alumni from your school, and to tap into hidden markets. For example, I took a job in a bank even though it was not my first choice. I decided I would do the job rather than doing nothing

and take advantage of the situation until I found another job. To my surprise, I loved the banking sector!” Fabien

When asked about advice graduates would give to future graduates, being open-minded and acting on opportunities were two definite criteria.

“Do not close any doors, be open to all potential opportunities, meet as many people as possible, do not close doors, stay open to anything and be ready to attack on all fronts.” Elise

4.4.3.5 Initiative

Taking the initiative seems to be another important characteristic since it is essential in being open to newly discovered paths; hence, it is related to being open-minded and taking risks.

“I believe that using the employment crisis as an excuse for not finding work is not a valid argument. Even if it is not easy, there is always a way to take risks and to give oneself the means to succeed. One must spontaneously knock on doors, propose alternatives and stand out from other candidates.” Teddy

This discourse was not shared among all graduates. It echoes the concept of ‘risk society’ (Beck, 1992, Giddens, 1998) where each individual is in charge of making its own decisions according to risk and opportunities which is quite stressful. This consideration identifies the notion of ‘risk taking’ (choices) rather than being ‘at risk’ (uncertainties).

4.4.3.6 Modesty

Young graduates in their job search, especially when networking often referred to, unpretentiousness and humility, as being important factors.

“A sense of humility and modesty are necessary. Nowadays, when I search for my team members, I meet so many young graduates that are too self-confident because they graduated from a well-known school. On the other hand, I see others with such a lack of self – confidence . . . there needs to be a balance.” Dominique

4.4.4 Job Search Behaviour

As seen in the literature review, there are many behaviour and variables which can be examined in job search research.

4.4.4.1 Pro-activity

Thirteen graduates declared proactivity as a major factor for success and yet only six graduates demonstrated pro-active behaviour by taking initiatives and being focus - orientated. Proactivity can be associated with the other positive dimensions which mainly include persistence and curiosity.

4.4.4.2 Making the Right Choices

Very much like self-knowledge, making choices in terms of career was considered a very difficult step for the young graduates, not because of fear but rather because it implied narrowing the options. They felt that by making a choice, they would not keep all their options open and that they may miss some opportunities. Therefore, planning seemed difficult and taking action even more so. Six graduates had looked to align their future work with their career goals, interests or passion.

4.4.4.3 Academic Majors and Occupation choices

The results of the interview analysis show that five students had made their choices very consciously based on either career opportunities or jobs-creating sectors. They had done their career exploration homework and had clear career goals or aspirations.

“Hmm . . . even if audit was not my first choice, I knew it would be positive because it would show the HR person that I was rigorous, I knew budgets, the concepts of profitability, and numbers . . . it certainly allowed me to stand out from other profiles that were purely marketing or sales.” Thierry

Through the business school curriculum, internships, real life projects, students build a managerial identity recognized in the business world. The managerial courses offer the students a recognized cultural

capital in the field. The ability to project oneself by building a specific identity and by choosing a track early on were considered to be two clear and positive factors in a job search.

4.4.4.4 Positive Attitude

The theory of planned behaviour suggests that when attitude is positive, the chances of getting a job are higher (van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992). Young graduates stated that having a positive state of mind and the ‘right attitude’ was significant to get a job.

“Some of my friends were negative, negative vibes all the time, you could feel it and I kept telling them to cheer up and be positive because no one will hire someone who does not smile and it is not the attitude to have” Elise

4.4.4.5 Job Clarity

It was very interesting to note that graduates did not really think in terms of a ‘dream job’ but rather in terms of an ‘ideal job’ that was focused on their personal or professional goals or job attractiveness. They did not believe they could achieve their dream job. They were pragmatic. Two graduates admitted settling for what they considered ‘okay’ jobs. They seemed to have limited themselves mainly because of the lack of financial resources. Another reason was that they did not want to take a risk in their job search process.

“In my case, it was a bit different because I was looking for a job in a specific town in the United States, and I wanted to climb the professional ladder fast, a fast track professional move. So, I looked to work in consulting since after a ten-year experience in consulting, you can obtain much higher and better job in the industry.” Teddy

“My ideal job? I did not ask myself the question in such a way; it just kind of happened . . . I was doing my apprenticeship in the digital sector and I liked it and made sense to keep on working in this sector.” Constantin

“I chose the audit track but it was not what I wanted to do. I wanted to work outside Europe, specifically not with the French, have a better life. I got a job through the alumni network before graduating. It was not my dream job but I had a job, and it was in a country that I wanted to discover, so it was a done deal for me.” Thierry

The luck factor was also brought up by two of the graduates who explained how they were convinced by either being at the right place at the right time or meeting the right people.

4.4.4.6 Job Search Goals

The social cognitive theory focuses on the importance of setting goals in life (Kanfer, Wanberg & Kantrowitz, 2001; Carree & Thurik, 2008). Graduates confirmed that having goals was a strong driver of success and motivation and it helped them in their job search process. They were the same as the ones who had done career exploration, chosen an occupation or a track for specific reasons such as career advancement and financial outcomes.

“Method, organization and rigor are complementary, a methodical approach, what industry, what type of job, which city; it allows to reduce the funnel and to focus on what's important and what actually matters.” Thomas

4.4.4.7 Sustained Rigor

Sustained rigour very much like perseverance was quoted by many of the graduates. Looking for a job is a difficult process, almost three-quarters of the graduates felt lonely at one point. Establishing a regular routine and a search plan is helpful in this context to keep a track of the process.

“I kept asking my friends for support, but they felt very much like me so I stopped asking them. Looking for a job requires continuous rigor; you cannot get up at 11 in the morning after partying all night. It is all about maintaining a rigor, which is difficult to stick by since there is no one to rap your knuckles to keep on task. You have to be autonomous and self-disciplined. Looking for a job is a job in itself.” Gérard

4.4.4.8 Daily Routine

Seven of the graduates emphasized that creating and maintaining a daily routine was essential for successfully finding employment. Important tactics in this regards include spending a few hours daily, or regularly, looking for a job, tracking progress by doing company follow up, contacting people in their networks, scheduling meetings, and maintaining a quality time to spend with family and friends in order to avoid feeling isolated and overwhelmed.

“I think it is an individual process but you need to have a strong support system and you need to meet people at career fairs, conferences, workshops to see that you are not alone; psychologically it helps to compare with others and with the market and also helps in gathering more information.” Marguerite

Habits are well-established behaviour patterns and are quite difficult to change as reviewed and developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett (2002, as cited in Andersen & Chen, 2002, p. 856) who wrote, “When in conflict with habits, goals by themselves have limited capacity to break habits, except when alterations occur in the cues that trigger these habits.”

4.4.4.9 Self-Efficacy

Seven of the graduates were confident and strongly believed that they would reach their goals and expected positive outcomes. They had goals and they were committed to reach them even if they suffered setbacks. They bet on themselves and their talent and skills.

“I felt deep inside that it would work.” Michelle

“I was told very rapidly while finishing my last year internship that I would be hired. No matter what, I felt confident. It may be my state of mind. I could not go on vacations without having a job. During our five years at the school, we used to adapt and switch every six months; going on semesters abroad, doing internships, being in classes. I told myself right away that I have to get on with a job; it was an obligation that I imposed on myself.” Jean

Self-confidence is related to the concept of self-efficacy. It is defined as one’s confidence in performing

tasks that are important in the job search process (Good & Schulman, 2000). On the other hand, a young graduate may possess all the necessary skills for a job but if he/ she doubt his / her capacity to perform, or succeed, he will likely fail. Only a couple of graduates demonstrated a very low self-esteem or self-confidence in their abilities to make the right choices in order to be successful.

4.4.4.10 Motivation

For young graduates, motivation was often associated with a specific goal in mind within the context of determination and perseverance. The motivations ranged from a liking for a job or an industry, to a specific area or town often associated with family and friends, or to a definite choice in terms of career goals or a love story. It helped them create their perspective.

“...I sent more than 60 emails resulting in over 40 negative responses, 18 without responses but it does not mean that I gave up. One must be determined, even obstinate, since following the ‘polite and correct’ manner can be ineffective. I understand now that a polite ‘aggressiveness’ and sustained determination helps in approaching decision-makers directly. In the end, jobs rarely fall out of the sky.” Sacha

Motivation is both intrinsic and extrinsic (Wood & Bandura, 1989). All the graduates engaged in their job searches because they were looking forward to finding a job. For two of them, on the other hand, the motivation was driven mainly by the financial burden of paying back their student loan.

4.5 Difficulties associated with finding a job

Some of the graduates expressed the difficulty in partitioning the fears and frustrations associated with job search. The feeling of uncertainty was very strong among them.

“What happens if I do not find a job within five months? It is the void. . .” Gérard

Five out of 15 graduates expressed regrets. The main reasons were related to personal characteristics such as a lack of organization in the search, not asking oneself the right questions, lack of self-confidence or not having followed the ‘sector of their dream’ because of financial strain.

“I had selected positions that I felt matched my skills or my internships; maybe I should have dug more, looked for positions outside my experience.” Thomas

All the above statements reflect the factors emphasized by the young graduates in succeeding in a job search. The perceived difficulties were varied but not surprising. However, there were also other relevant factors that affected their job search. The most salient ones are described below.

4.5.1 Financial Strain

One of the main reason students choose to do a Business School in France instead of a university is to get a well-paid job. They expect a return on investment; they can behave as consumers in light of heavy loans that they must pay back. This common situation suggests that student loan debt can make graduates more risk-averse.

“I had to convert my financial investment, school’s tuition, into a performance objective, a question of financial autonomy, a strong urge to work. Though it was not a choice. It made me use my very limited time to explore the alternative tracks.” Fabien

This financial strain affects job search self-efficacy and, hence, job search outcome as discussed in the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) which is extended from Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and specifically to career development (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) as introduced in the literature review.

4.5.2 Loneliness

A period of job search can be highly stressful for young graduates. Some confirmed that they felt lonely and depressed because of the financial threat, the lack of structure, and/or the unknown aspects.

Graduates admitted that they felt left alone and not always prepared to switch from the protected school setting to the real world.

“It takes a lot of time, from morning to evening; it's frustrating, doing listings, responding to job offers, making spontaneous applications, adapting the CV; it feels like being in the middle of the ocean (lost), all alone. I was lucky it did not last long.” Dominique

Feeling supported by family and friends is also seen as critical for a successful job search (Benz & Frey, 2008).

4.5.3 Age and Lack of Experience

Four young graduates, either quoted age or lack of experience as an issue. One was a female student applying in a masculine and selective industry. She was aware of the challenge but she demonstrated strong self-efficacy and perseverance.

“My biggest handicap was my age. It is a cliché but in private banking, we imagine men with grey hair rather than young woman. I'm not saying that it's discrimination, but my young age was a handicap maybe, because private banking tends to hire lawyers and that are older when they go through recruitment.” Sonia

Gender in all cases was not visualised as an impediment towards career progression by the female graduates (Tomlinson, 2004), except in this particular sector. It raises the question of the lack of awareness of discourse of individualisation.

4.5.4 Lack of Self-Efficacy

Only a couple of young graduates expressed a lack of self-efficacy. This conviction of personal inadequacy was a bit surprising but is often contingent with a lack of self-esteem.

“Even if we did internships every year and that we had guest speakers, I did not feel like I was armed to work.” Dominique

When considering the case of recent graduates, the high level of self-esteem and self-efficacy is also associated with a high rate of success in the job search and they are also more likely to get a number of job offers and accept the one that suit their skills in the best manner (Osman, Shariff & Lajin, 2016).

4.5.5 French HR Systems

To echo section 4.4.1.1 Cultural differences, negative feedback was made regarding the French HR recruiters considered short-sighted and risk-averse.

“It’s very French not to look at CVs if there is not enough experience.” Thierry

The responsibility of the individual by his lack of self-esteem or results as argued by Picower (2011) is clearly stated as opposed to the society’s inequities. Lipman (2011) talks about neoliberalism and the institutionalization of oppression, still Business schools have a commitment to help their students and the career staff is always very involved and dedicated to support the students.

4.6 Conclusion of the Results

The young graduates described the personality traits, skills and job strategies they considered ‘significant’ to succeed in their job search.

“I would say that one needs to have a clear strategy, be proactive, be determined, and seek out the information. However, finally it all goes back to human relationships, your networks, and your social intelligence. The employment search is all very frustrating and it shows that the job market is complex, especially to obtain a job interview. But afterwards, everything usually runs smoothly . . . at least this applies to my case and that is what I observed around me.” Teddy

The entrepreneurial-competency approach as illustrated above suggests that the aspects such as knowledge, skills, personality characteristics and behaviour, as perceived by the young graduates, are conducive to finding a job. When asked if they considered that they have an entrepreneurial approach in their job search, only five answered positively.

“In a way, yes, I conducted my research very much in the manner that I would have used to start my own company.” Thierry

“I consider that, by nature, I followed an entrepreneurial approach in my job search since I saw no other choice.” Sonia

“However, in the end, I now consider myself an “intrapreneur” because I had to learn how to pitch, convince potential employers and develop relationships in order to get a job. It is very similar to what I do in my daily professional life.” Michelle

These elements prove the internalization of such an entrepreneurial approach by the student in the job research. They have an entrepreneurial habitus, adapted for a VUCA world.

5. Discussion

In a VUCA world, students have to embrace disruption and take advantage of digital tools and networks. They have to make choices, adapt quickly and create opportunities. The analysis showed that some graduates searched for jobs in effective and pro-active ways while others searched less effectively. Three key themes emerged from this study and two main recommendations

Three key themes emerged from this study according to young business graduates in finding a job:

1. Preparing graduates in dealing with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity in an increasingly competitive reality of the current job market market in Vuca times.
2. Developing a digital mind-set and leveraging job search tools and channels conducive to a successful job search.
3. Identifying salient entrepreneurial skills, behaviours and personality traits that are conducive to finding a job.

Recommendations for practionners

1. Developing and nurturing skills and behaviours that could be helpful for young job seekers based on the VUCA Prime framework.
2. Creating an ‘self-entrepreneurial learning career ecosystem’ to facilitate school-to-work transitions through both, curricula, projects and career services.

5.1. Preparing graduates in dealing with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA)

It has been acknowledged that, besides their competencies, young graduates job search process depends on contextual factors. If employment opportunities are limited or if recruiters and employers are “short-sighted” as reported by graduates, the job search will be difficult to conduct. In the results of the study, the graduates indicated that the French HR only selected graduates from specific schools according to their ranking before making an assessment of the other potential candidates’ competencies. In today’s job market scenario, VUCA is neither voluntary nor avoidable and graduates are confronted

by a job market where there is constant change with technology emergent and skills unknowns, dealing with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

The competencies that seemed to be most valuable and effective as quoted by the graduates when asked about VUCA times are classified based on the 4 in 4 Framework for innovative leaders or “VUCA Prime” (Johansen, 2012). See Table 2.2.

Vision / volatility: Job clarity, clear intent and decision-making

The question that is addressed is: *how much do graduates know about a situation and how can they act upon it and adapt in the right manner to adjust the needs of the situation?* Vision requires cultivating certain personality traits such a curiosity or open-mindedness. In this regards, open-minded means that no matter how knowledgeable someone becomes, he/she must be willing to keep on learning. This idea is best illustrated by Dolmans and Schmidt (2000) who argue that learning should be an active process of constructing knowledge. It would imply that students need to investigate new directions and recognize opportunities. According to Shane (2003), opportunity is linked to knowledge and the ability to seek for information and to form new social ties. It is the ability of constructing new methods of addressing the needs in a timely manner (Kanter, 1988, p. 152 as cited in De Jong & Wennekers, 2008, p. 19). It can also be mistaken for ‘luck’ (Leonard & Swap, 2005). The ones who achieve success in their search according to their goals were focus-orientated with high job clarity, allowing them to build unique career identities during their graduate studies. Lin and Huang (2008) found that people that have a career goal are more likely to increase their self-efficacy and clarity for job search. The increase of these aspects then help in predicting the intentions and behaviours for job search. This shows that having a purpose and giving meaning is a strong motivational key factor.

In today’s global job market, with emergent technology and skills unknown, young graduates have to accept uncertainty and risk and still make a choice or take a decision based on information or data that may will change rapidly. Still, they all acknowledged that it is difficult for a young student to recognize trends and project oneself in five-year time. All graduates stated that making choices was difficult but

eventually it made all the difference: choice of specialization track, of industry (high valued added sectors), of job (niche), of company (small, medium, large), of country (job market recruitment differences), with different expectations such as the status (employee, consultant, entrepreneur), the work - life balance or the salary range. It does require identifying the available options and evaluating the alternative options.

Understanding / uncertainty: Knowledge and awareness

The question that is asked is: *how do graduates update their knowledge and how do they collect and interpret weak signals?* Knowledge allows the leveraging of the right data and helps identify the right channels. It allows to have a clear intent and to make informed choices. Acquiring knowledge as a career exploration activity seems to be a definite advantage in today's job search process (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). Knowledge is acquired by processing experiences like studying a field of interest at school or learning from the internship experiences. It is a process that can be encouraged by teachers and structured within career development courses to help students understand tomorrow's job market demands and recognise opportunities.

In addition, as seen earlier a greater self-knowledge (knowing oneself) seemed to enable students to better pinpoint one's skills and interests and facilitate a much better sense of what steps to take next. Encouraging students identifying their interests or goals could be a starting point and then investigate accordingly. The exploration of one's personality seemed to enable students question their clarity regarding their preferences allowing them to find a purpose or meaning in them and can be associated with the concept of positive self (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003). The greater the sense of meaning and the more ownership we feel in our lives. Story telling can be a way to facilitate a reflective process as described McMahon, Patton and Watson (2014, p.151) and play a more active role in constructing their future identities and career stories. The process can be the same but the outcomes will be different which results in the increase in knowledge (De Jong & Wennekers, 2008). Another factor which can be determinant is the influence of the social and family background individuals receive which

help them to acquire “knowledge, representations, and attitudes towards work” (Cohen-Scali, 2003, p. 239)

Data and information analysis is another critical skill in order to evaluate a context or a topic. It can help to see the bigger picture and identify trends. The sources of information have to be identified and they should be reliable. The right information is key when looking for a job or choosing a career path. Graduates need to make informed decisions about their future. However, what makes it even more difficult is that they have to understand that those choices may need to be changed with time or that they may have to be realigned because of the various external variables.

Clarity /complexity: Networking and social intelligence

The question that is raised is: *how do graduates make sense of this complexity and identify the experts or individuals in their network to make decisions?* The study shows that the notion of complexity was not considered as a hindrance as much as the concepts of volatility and ambiguity were. This study supports the importance of network thinking and professional networking in terms of positive outcomes. As seen in the findings, expert and professional interventions were on the top list of the graduates when they were asked about the perceived causes of success. They all mentioned that the feedbacks and advices of the professionals were important as they helped to access the hidden job markets. According to the young business graduates, social intelligence is another key to finding a job. However, it was found that while many graduates are competent in the use of social networking in their personal lives, they might not be as confident when using these networks for the purpose of career development (Alle & Van der Velden, 2001).

Agility/ ambiguity: Adaptability and flexibility

The underlying question is: *how do graduates interpret the signs and make sense of the new patterns and paradoxes?* In order to face ambiguity, being able to effectively adapt to a variety of situations is mandatory for students nowadays. They have to be able to integrate new ideas and information and

comply with all changes even if it affects their first choice. They have to learn to keep their options open which is difficult to grasp when you are an 18-year-old student. Still, it seems that students have to display openness and experiment with new ideas to determine their future pathways.

A lead to explore would be to they encourage them cultivate an entrepreneurial mind-set. They need to identify and address opportunities for their career paths. They actually have to consider creating opportunities rather than just considering the ones that are already available. In addition, these graduates have to monitor and align regularly with the job market demands and trends. It implies that they will have to learn, update and expand their knowledge and skills all their life because of the increased rate of change. Such need for change and constant learning would also be required to maintain their own employability.

5.2 Developing a Digital Mind-Set and Leveraging the Job Search Tools and Channels

The use of internet and more accurately social media by young job seekers seems different from what is stated in many theoretical and empirical studies of job-search. They saw it as a tool, an efficient road map to network, contact people or do research but not as a means to get a job. They all emphasised that it did not, in any case come as a replacement for face-to-face relationships. To them, face-to-face networking methods seemed far more efficient because of a stronger connection.

In this regards, the graduates' responses indicated that they had an overall knowledge of social media but not specific enough to be efficient. They felt that they did not identify the relevant networks and that it came too late in their curriculum. Some of the participants also stated that they were not aware of the specific use of certain tools and did not know how to contact and properly address the professionals.

The overall main key point, which can be taken from the literature review related to the topic of social networks, was that the nature and quality of social media matters a lot especially in the sense that it allows to access information that may be difficult to gather otherwise. Furthermore, as described in the literature review, the quality of one's network is determinant to be effective as well. There it seems that it is important to introduce social intelligence in the career development plans.

The study also emphasises the importance of formally introducing the students to valuable professional or job related platforms, such as LinkedIn and teach them on how to use them effectively. Being able to meet professionals and guest speakers can help them network with older people and meet useful mentors who can open doors and help fast track careers. Hogarth and Hasluck (2008, p.124) figured that the use of personal contacts and the word of mouth were amongst the top 5 methods of job-search in terms of the frequency of use and the perceived usefulness. It seems that teaching them to effectively and systematically build their network after career fairs, on campus networking, expert presentations, internships can help them develop authentic and reciprocal connections.

It is therefore important to help them in building their digital reputation in order to be seen as “professional” on social media. They should also be advised on how to communicate efficiently in writing and orally with their social networks. They have to be trained to speak professionally, delivering quick presentations of themselves (such as the pitch elevator on skype) and display confidence while being ‘modest’ as per the graduates’ advices. They also have to actively listen to others and adjust to their comments as well as communicating effectively in a foreign language when required, understanding the cultural differences.

5.3 Identifying the Salient Entrepreneurial Skills, Behaviour and Personality Traits

This study shows that knowledge, skills, behaviour and personality characteristics (personal qualities and attitudes) as listed in the entrepreneurial competency approach (see Figure 3.5) can be transferred to the job-seeking process. It indicates that a number of entrepreneurial attributes that are frequently quoted in entrepreneurship research seemed to be useful in finding a job according to the graduates as listed in the column “job search skills” in Table 5.1 below adapted from the early stage entrepreneurship activities by Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano and Urbano (2011). The most successful graduates showed an entrepreneurial behaviour in their job search process and demonstrated entrepreneurial attributes similar to the necessary competencies in a VUCA world, both genders alike.

Table 5.1: Comparison between the early stage entrepreneurship activities and behavioural aspects to job search adapted by Hart (2019)

Early stage: Entrepreneurship	Job search skills
Activities	Activities
Opportunity perception	Career exploration, purpose, hidden market and knowledge, opportunity seeking or created
Designing the new product or concept	Resume, branding oneself , communication
Exploring the market: identifying the primary target audience	Soft networking, goal setting, job search tools,
Resources acquisition (money)	Financial constraints possible (eg bank loan)
Organising the new business	Organising & planning: the creation of routines and support group
Entrepreneurial behavioural aspects	Job search behavioural aspects
Creativity	To differentiate oneself
Taking initiative	Pro-activeness
Overcoming obstacles	Focused orientated
Getting the job done	Discipline and perseverance
Bearing uncertainty and risk	Positive attitude towards limited risk

Source: Adapted from Thornton, Ribeiro - Soriano and Urbano (2011).

The development of skills in this model is focused on interconnected skills such as communication skills which can be used to build relationships. These skills show the capability of building and maintaining networks at a personal and the professional level. Networks provide entrepreneurs with accurate sources of information and an introduction to the new market opportunities (Jarvis, Holford & Griffin, 2003), network defined as the “relationships or alliances that are developed by a person or the alliances or relationships that a person seeks to create with the other people” (Carson et al, 1995, p.200). Presentation skills are also important for young graduates as they allow them to pitch themselves in a better manner. In terms of personality traits exhibiting perseverance, resilience and self-confidence which are also attributes of successful entrepreneurs were considered important as they allow them to maintain the search and the goals even under stress and uncertainty. Graduates underlined that it was important to

keep trying, even when they felt down and were tempted to quit. No matter what are the obstacles or setbacks, the entrepreneur adapts and changes (Wright, Robbie & Ennew, 1997). Graduates who benefited from a personal, family and friends, emotional support network were also found to be able to manage to balance their search times with other activities and had less stress as well. Another two characteristics described by graduates were being persistence and

In terms of the behaviours and attitudes, the ability to make clear goals was found to be important as well as the ability to take initiatives. As per Benz and Frey (2008), initiatives refer to the ability of a person to behave like a self-starter and to meet the challenges to achieve the objectives that are of a higher level. Such people develop and display confidence in their own capabilities despite the obstacles or setbacks.

However, a number of competencies did not match. For instance, innovation, creativity and taking risk were hardly mentioned. For most graduates, looking for a job was not associated with risk-taking except the one under pressure, who had the obligation to reimburse his loan. They were concerned in the face of uncertainty and were looking for stability even if it meant accepting the first job offer. Finding a job was not an option. Whereas, as most of them could experiment, they took their time and were ready to take limited risks. Innovation was not associated either with their job search, they considered it a specific skill of entrepreneurship.

5.4 Developing and nurturing skills, behaviors and personality traits that could be helpful for young job seekers in VUCA times

Graduates lacked “critical” feedback. The notion of critical in the context of the group being defined as ‘key’ or ‘necessary’ (Appleby, 1998) in the concept of critical friends. Johansen (2007) developed a framework of leadership called the VUCA prime. It was created as a tool for leaders so that a strong focus is maintained on building a Vision, getting more Understanding and Clarity and to be more Agile in response to our fast-paced world. This framework can be transferred to the job market search. Graduates

need to be aware, understand and embrace the new mechanisms that are required to run a successful job search.

Volatility becomes *vision* and vision helps in seeing the bigger picture so that the right decisions can be made. We need to encourage graduates have a purpose, a clear intend and yet be flexible.

Uncertainty on the other hand, can be then transformed into *understanding* and knowledge. Graduates need to be taught how to research thoroughly the different sectors and jobs that they wish to apply for long before graduating. They need to identify future trends and match their desires to those new job opportunities.

Clarity in their goals setting can help fight *complexity*. It will not prevent chaos but they can learn to make sense of it, set up clear goals and priorities in the tasks to achieve them and come up with alternative paths if necessary. We need to familiarise them and help them understand the recruitment process, specific to the company or sector that they are applying for. Lack of clarity can generate anxiety so it is important to help them become agile.

Agility is the counterpart of *ambiguity*. We need to encourage them to be curious and rely on networks to provide them with the necessary help and information. They need to ask questions and make connections. They should have the right skills to be able to use their network to look for the right information or to have access to the hidden market. Of course, they need to adapt as they go along and be aware that the “try and fail” process is not a failure but an opportunity to grow. Being self-confident allows to focus on successful outcomes no matter what.

The framework below was adapted to job search process and propose competencies that could be targeted in order to support students in their future job search process.

Table 5.2: The VUCA framework and the job search competencies adapted by Hart (2019)

VUCA	Volatility	Uncertainty	Complexity	Ambiguity
Description	Increasing rate of change	Unclear about the present and futures outcomes You do not know enough to make the right decision	Multiplicity and interconnection of dynamic factors are required before making a decision	Lack of clarity about the meaning of what is happening By nature creates tension
VUCA Frame	V1. Vision	V2. Understanding	V3. Clarity	V4. Agility
Description	Have a clear direction & create a future	Stop, look & listen	Make sense of chaos	Network over hierarchy
Proposed VUCA Job search competencies	Have a clear intent, purpose (self-knowledge, interests)	Research thoroughly (observe, collect, interpret and share information) / knowledge	Understand job market & job search channels	Make connections & use networks
	Recognize opportunities	Look for weak market signals	Relies on the expertise of others	Bring a new perspective
	Make a choice	Analyse	Step back, develop a critical comprehensive plan	Be flexible
	Accept change		Reframe job strategies	Try, fail and learn
	Keep the right attitude or mind-set		Prioritize Options	Learn from others
			A - Z scenario planning and backup plan (short - term plans)	Innovate, think out of the box

Source: adapted from Bob Johansen (2007). VUCA Prime framework

5.5 Creating a Self-Entrepreneurial Career ecosystem for School-to-work Transitions

Nowadays, a college degree in France, is the basic credential to apply for a job in businesses. It may not land the ideal job, but it will be a definite plus compared to others with no degree. Under the consideration of the high rate of unemployment that can be seen in many parts of the world (and as it has been discussed in the introduction chapter), the researchers and practitioners on the international

level are interested in designing the right interventions, in order to help the young graduates in their job search process (Jarvis, Holford & Griffin, 2003; Nehaniv & Dautenhahn, 2007; Thornton, Ribeiro - Soriano & Urbano, 2011).

These findings provide a baseline for curriculum deficiencies or improvement. As a practitioner, once the competencies have been identified (see section 5.1.4), the answer lies in leveraging and creating a culture of entrepreneurial job search and mind-set. The goal is to help students make informed decisions and assist them in making choices for the school-to-work transitions and their careers. The tools and means have to be defined and supported as a part of the curriculum. Researchers argue that the emergence and development of competencies is dependent on the environment of an individual but can be developed through education and career (Brownell et al., 2006).

Most graduates acknowledged the need for systematic support. Some expected challenges but not so much stress and as a result, they experienced strong emotional rollercoaster. They felt that once they had graduated, they did not get the support or necessary assistance to face the job search. They felt left ‘alone’ once outside the institution with or without parental guidance. They admitted being well prepared for their internship search but not for their job search. However, they acknowledged that the stakes were not the same and therefore neither was the pressure. This college-to-work place transition, as pointed out, in the literature shows that it is best if business and colleges paired up their efforts to support this transition. At the school, I designed and implemented a formal structured course over the five-year program (See table 1.1 “Overview of the Business school career-mapping program”) to assist and prepare students in their internship search first and then their job searches.

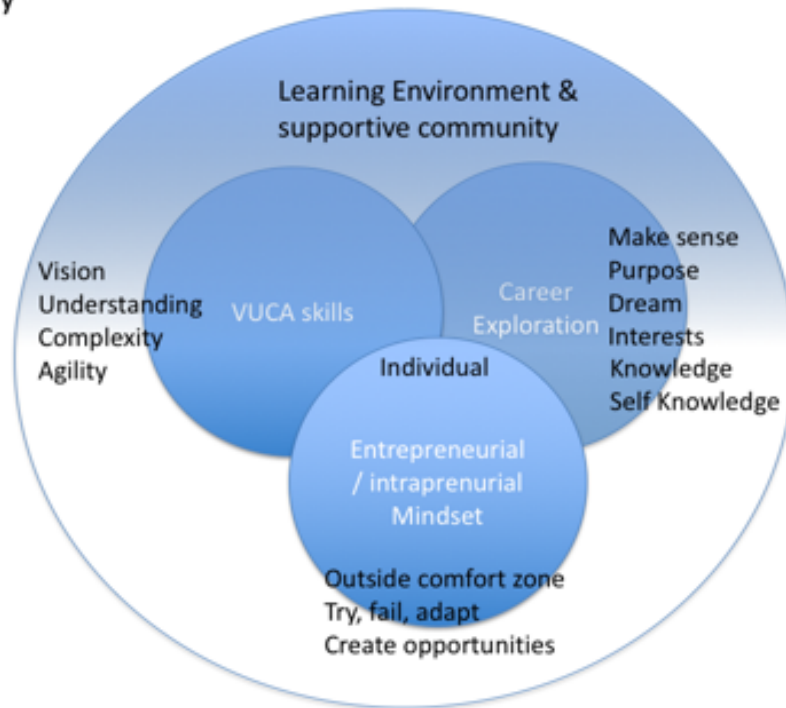
The perceptions and recommendations of the young graduates about the career development plan program were very rich. They, on specific dimensions, recognised the success of the program but all parts of the program were not judged useful or adequate. Graduates recommended modifications in the curricula to increase the opportunity to benefit from testimonials and to interact with professionals or experts regarding their jobs and missions. The midterms reviews described under ‘career development plan’ in the findings section were perceived as either very useful or “scary” because it made them face

the challenges that may be there ahead of them in the job market. Participants indicated that they lacked information on the job market for instance. It appears that the career programs require heavy financial resources and are often unscalable. To be efficient, the job search process requires to create a balance between the online networking activities and the other face to face activities which are used for job search. Furthermore, it needs to be taught through experiential learning (Wenger, 2009). Students need to take responsibilities for their own learning and to learn by doing, because some dimensions such as meeting professionals cannot be taught in the classroom settings. This concept of learning is best illustrated by Wenger's (2009) learning theory which consists of four dimensions: learning as doing; learning as experiencing; learning as becoming; and learning as belonging. Designing a master class on the different topics associated with career development and based on entrepreneurial behaviour could be an alternative track to investigate. Preparing the students on the subject of career agility and flexibility within the delivery of career development activities seems a pathway to explore. In addition, schools have to take into account these new ways that have a transformational effect on students' behaviour in order to provide a program on demand. The master class is one tool among others.

'A self-entrepreneurial career learning ecosystem' (See figure 5.5) could be designed as a growing process to help the students create a career map and an action canvas. The goal would be to help students develop an entrepreneurial mind-set for their career. Ideally, a learning ecosystem could be developed that would more flexible and offers cross-disciplinary activities instead of silos. In this regards, two options can be discussed; either all the curriculum is designed to help students embrace an entrepreneurial mind-set regarding their future employment as discussed in this study or a specific program could be designed for career services but in line with the curriculum so that the students understand the end goals and are aware of employment pathways because they will have to face many challenges in their future as 'real world' is very complex.

Figure 5 : Proposed “self-entrepreneurial career ecosystem” (Hart, 2019)

Career ecosystem program : “self-entrepreneurial action career journey”



Vander Ark (2010) described the nature of the world we live in as being connected, contested, complex, and competitive. It is as transformation for the institutions as it is for the students in the present time. Students need to have an entrepreneur /intrapreneur attitude or mindset that they can apply to their job search and career and be aware that may have to create their own place in the professional world as well as opportunities. It is very similar to what is advocated in the boundaryless career concept, according to which, the students must have a knowledge of the right strategies, which can be used for the management of their employability and careers across different positions and companies instead of simply relying on the career ladders that exist within a single organization / company (Clarysse, Wright & Mustar, 2009). The concept of protean career can also be brought since it refers to adaptability and flexibility of a person that provides him / her with the skills for adjusting to the changing environment (Chan et al., 2015). It is defined as social networking and information seeking (Gubler et al., 2014). Such changes are usually made by reinventing or reshaping oneself as per the demands of the external environment which focuses

on individuality and competition. Nowadays, employees are encouraged to feel like they are self-employed even in those cases when they are hired under another company (Lin & Huang, 2008).

The choice to introduce the career learning ecosystem as a ‘self-entrepreneurial career journey’ or ‘self-entrepreneurial action career journey’ may help students better understand the tools and the strategies that are necessary to succeed in a job search and above all to take ownership of their careers and the process. It can encourage a constructivist perspective (Patton & McMahon, 2016).

6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Completing a five-year master degree program is usually a great time for students and their families. They are excited to join the professional world and to find a great job matching their degree. They have expectations, among which are to be successful in their job search and later on in their career. It is of course a *school-to-work place* transition that most expect to be quite smooth and easy with regard to their degree.

The topic of this research study show that they are characteristic elements of a ‘new spirit of capitalism’ (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999) in which the project becomes the central activity within companies and society. In a ‘connectionist logic’ the ‘great man’ of the city becomes the entrepreneur: the one who is able to respond to the contemporary, injunctions of adaptation, innovation, creativity and change. Being a manager is not enough. For a distinction in the economic field (Bourdieu, 1997), one needs entrepreneurial skills and behavior, in other words getting an entrepreneurial habitus. There is a definite need to train students to acquire a mindset that is open to entrepreneurial action and to develop their network in order to meet succeed in their job search and their career aspirations in VUCA times. Furthermore, it demonstrates that business school contribute to the social and cultural capital of their students, it is a place of production: it creates new managers-entrepreneurs.

6.2 Limitations of the research

In this study, the origins and social conditions of the graduates were not a focus since French business schools are part of a reproduction system and that by definition to be recruited in a business school is to distinguish oneself (Bourdieu, 1979). However, as Abraham (2007) points out “the problem of the “conversion” of identities, of habitus, does not arise in the same terms for students” (p.48). Indeed, the place of the business school as an institution of reproduction of a managerial population can be questioned. Is the construction of an entrepreneurial habitus differentiated according to social class? Complementary work, with a statistical methodology would make it possible to highlight correlations and causalities between social conditions and the construction of such habitus. Such a study would provide an opportunity to understand and identify the social factors of identity conversion and the limits of our employability-centered approach associated to meritocracy and funding inequities.

One bias that needs to be addressed is my positionality as a researcher. Positionality “reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given research study” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013 p.71). It takes into account our “personal characteristics, such as gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, personal experiences, linguistic tradition, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical, political and ideological stances, and emotional responses to participant” (Berger, 2015, p. 220) and is always situation and context-dependent. Indeed, my role and professional background in private education influenced the choice of my theoretical approach. The same data analysed through another stance might have chosen different frameworks and bring different outcomes and results (Rowe, 2014). Nonetheless, is quite impossible to be neutral as we all bring our perspectives, experience and assumptions to our analysis and interpretations.

6.3 Contribution to knowledge

We live in an era of neoliberalism where the role of the individual is key in his/her development. We can acknowledge this system, whether we agree or not, and be aware that as practitioners in this field, training our students to be performant in a competitive market is the best tactic (Ball, 2012) as long

as it matches their aspirations. In this type of environment, research indicates that the individuals need to both “make an enterprise of...[themselves]” and be performant (Apple, 2006, p. 63).

Institutions cannot have a uniform and stereotypical labour market approach any longer and see students in universalistic terms. They need to experiment new ways in their role to play in the phase of school-to-work transitions. The research supports the view that the use of entrepreneurial skills applied to students’ job search is useful, especially for those who had a specific purpose or job aspiration. Fostering a “self-entrepreneurial career ecosystem program” based on multi-stakeholder engagement approach, career services and teachers together could provide an effective learning environment. The choice of a ‘career paths’ can be considered overwhelming in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous future. The choices students make can have a critical impact on their future career and yet no one can predict the future which is very anxiety inducing for the students (Beck, 1992). Therefore, it seems more relevant to talk about career intentions, career paths, and career agility instead of ‘career plans’.

In addition, the exploration and the analysis of entrepreneurial approach to students’ job search partly confirms the importance of the construction of an entrepreneurial habitus and its correlation with a VUCA world. It can help students understand that a job search is a multilevel process that begins with an individual who must engage actively in a series of steps within a journey which consists itself of a set of conditions and opportunities. Bourdieu (1979) emphasizes the importance, in a given field, of what he calls the struggle for distinction.

All these elements point out that academic and professional skills delivered by business schools are not enough. They are certainly necessary prerequisites, because a job search would become difficult without these skills. But the employability for business school students requires adapting to the contemporary VUCA world. The elements acquired before or during the school curriculum are no longer sufficient. The hypothesis that we expressed in the literature part seems to be confirmed: students must acquire a managerial habitus, but they must acquire hard and soft entrepreneurial skills, for being the “great man” of the new spirit of capitalism.

6.4 Recommendations for future studies

The research that was carried out regarding these concepts often extends to multi-level analysis. This present research could lead to additional studies on a larger scale based on the results of this study and be expanded to engineering schools and universities. Conventional thinking about the job search process to be thought over to adjust to the actual global job market and be aligned with the market needs in terms of labour supply to offer students the best job opportunities. Building an adapted, entrepreneurial path in Business School could be an option so that students would respond to market, one can ask if the opposite could be true? How does or should the market adapt to new generations (Y/Z generation works, millennials) and more generally to a demand for a global meaning? David Graeber's (2013) article on the phenomenon of bullshit jobs raised the question of a market creating unnecessary or even harmful jobs, but this is another debate.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: The Main Questions Included in the Interview Schedule

Demographics

1. What is your gender: Male / Female
2. How old are you?

School background

1. What is the year of your graduation from your school?
2. What was your specialization track during your studies?
3. Did you take part in the social entrepreneurship program such as the SIFE / ENACTUS program?
4. Did you belong to any of the student associations at your school?

After graduation

Perception of the “ideal job” versus “a” job

5. Right after graduation, did you have an “ideal job” in mind? What made that job an ideal one for you? (Prompt: job title, industry, environment, job clarity, job description...)
6. Were you confident that you would be able to obtain your “ideal job” (self - efficacy + curriculum)? Why or why not? ‘Or’ Did you think that you had the right skills and profile to be selected for your ideal job?

The perception of job market, search process, competencies and sources

7. What were some of the main challenges that you faced in the process of finding a job in France or in the international job market?
8. Were you aware that a global job search could be complex and a competitive process? Or Did you anticipate possible future challenges in finding a job in France or in the international job market?
9. Were you confident that you could obtain a job in France or in the international job market (questions regarding a person’s self-efficacy)
10. What did you consider was your main advantages compared to the other students in the job market? (e.g.: university versus business schools)
11. Did you have a planned job search strategy? (Prompt: unusual or different?)
12. Did you feel you adjusted your job search strategy to match the international or the French market demands (Flexibility / adaptability)
13. What job strategy worked best for you? (Prompts regarding the sources of a job: social media, direct employer contact, informing personal contacts (relative / friend / acquaintance), informing professional contacts, specific career courses, company

programs (such as traineeship programs), publishing one's CV on an international career website, improving one's CV, contacting the Human Resource professionals / expert through some professional network, being active on the social networking platforms, searching for job opportunities on the companies' websites and other relevant pages, Other: please specify)

14. Was networking useful and if so, what type of networking did you use for the job search process?
15. Did you have a back-up plan in case of a failure in your job search process? Did you have any alternative plans? (questions regarding a person's proactivity)
16. Did you check the accuracy of your job search knowledge and applied it to the upcoming job opportunities (questions regarding the collection and the interpretation of the relevant information)?
17. Were you aware of the legal and economic systems of the countries that you targeted in your job search process (questions regarding the resources devoted by the person: volatility and complexity)
18. How much time did you devote on a daily or a weekly basis to look for jobs or how many
19. interview calls did you manage to get? (questions regarding the job search intensity and the job search efforts made by the person)
20. Now that you have a job, how would you define job search success? (Prompt: Informal sources (public employment services, Ads, career office, contact employers...), formal sources (personal networks), other questions regarding the active job search intensity, the preparatory job search intensity, and the job search efforts made by the person)
21. How did you manage stress, if any, that you might have experienced while looking for a job? (questions regarding the tolerance to stress of a person)

The impact of curriculum or extra - curriculum activities on the job search process

1. Would you say that the curriculum provided you with the right competencies or skills for your job search? Could you give any examples to show how it supported your job search process?
2. Did your studies provide you with an understanding of the specific job search competencies that are required to find a job in France or on the international job market?
3. Outside of the curriculum, would you say that you acquired the right competencies for your job search? Could you give any examples to show how it supported your job search process?

Advice

1. With the knowledge that you have gained through your experience, what is your opinion about the top job search competencies that are required to succeed in the complex world of the present time?
2. Finally, what kind of advice would you give to the young business graduates that are going to make their first attempts for job search?

The entrepreneurial approach/competencies

1. As per your opinion and belief, which of the following competencies given in the list

below, are best to achieve success in the job search process? (This list is based on an adapted model of the “Entrepreneurial Competency variables and VUCA framework”)

Attitudinal Competency	Behavioural Competency	VUCA Competency	Specific Job Search Competency
A1. Self - confidence	B1. Initiative	V1. Vision	J1. Information - seeking
A2. Self - esteem	B2. Acting on opportunity	V2. Understanding	J2. Systematic planning
A3. Dealing with failures	B3. Persistence	V3. Clarity	J3. Problem-solving
A4. Tolerance for ambiguity	B4. Need for achievement	V4. Agility	J4. Persuasion
A5. Performance	B5. Risk-taking		J5. Goal setting and perseverance
A6. Locus of control	B6. Drive and energy		J6. Communication skills
	B7. Innovation		J7. Technical knowledge
	B8. Creativity		J8. Social skills

Source: adapted from Man, Lau & Chan, 2002 & framework, 2007

Appendix 2: University of Liverpool Ethical Approval



Dear Patricia

I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.

Sub-Committee:	EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)
Review type:	Expedited
PI:	
School:	Lifelong Learning
Title:	
First Reviewer:	Prof. Morag A. Gray
Second Reviewer:	Kathleen Kelm
Other members of the Committee	Dr. Ewan Dow, Dr. Marco Ferreira, Dr. Peter Kahn, Dr. Janis McIntyre;

Date of Approval: 5th February 2015

The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1	Mandatory	M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.
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This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc>.

Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).

Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval. □

Kind regards,

Morag Gray

Chair, EdD. VPREC

Appendix 3: ESCE Alumni Approval



Authorisation Letter

I, Patricia Hart, am enrolled in the Doctor of Education (EdD) Programme at the University of Liverpool in partnership with Laureate Education.

I entered the programme in order to develop doctoral-level depth of knowledge and research skills across areas in higher education such as higher education management, innovative approaches to educational leadership, decision making, as well as ethics, social responsibility, and social change. As an EdD student I am required, as part of this programme, to undertake a research thesis to reflect on a critical aspect of today's higher education environment.

In the context of my research in the EdD programme, I wish to investigate, whether ESCE graduates, in the changing twenty-first-century workplace and global job market, possess intrapreneurial or entrepreneurial competencies and if those competencies can be a predictor of job search success.

I have included with this letter a Participant Information Sheet which outlines in greater detail the nature of my research project.

I have prepared a message for the person in charge of the alumni association to send out on my behalf to alumni cohorts 2009 to 2014, and I hereby request authorisation to contact them through your services in order to ask them to volunteer for my research.

I appreciate the opportunity to engage in a research with the Alumni Association and will be happy to share with you the findings of my research, once completed.

Please contact me and/or the Research Participant Advocate at the University of Liverpool with any question or concern you may have.

My contact details are:

Patricia Hart

ESCE, 10 rue Sextius Michel 75015 Paris

Tel. +33 06 08 83 30 35

patricia.thery-hart@online.liverpool.ac.uk

The contact details of the Research Participant Advocate at the University of Liverpool are:

001-612-312-1210 (USA number)

Email address liverpool@ethics@ohcampus.com

Title of the Research Project:

Navigating today's changing job market: the impact of French business graduates' entrepreneurial-intrapreneurial competencies on their job search success and the role of higher education

Researcher: Patricia Hart

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the Participant Information Sheet dated October 2014 or the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I hereby grant permission to the researcher for all relevant data access, facility use, and use of personnel time for research purposes.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, participants in the research can at any time ask for access to the information provided and can also request the destruction of that information if they wish.
4. I understand that information on the organisation will be anonymised, will be maintained as proprietary information, and will be kept in confidentiality.

Sincerely,

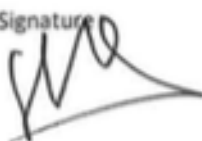
Name and position of Person granting permission:

Mrs Virginie Seguéla
President of ESCE Alumni Association
10, rue Sextius Michel
75015 Paris - France

Date

21/10/15

Signature

**Researcher's name:**

Patricia Hart

Date

Signature

Appendix 4: ESCE Alumni letter sent with request to the graduates

Dear alumni,

We are excited to invite you to participate in a research study about job search process and entrepreneurial/intrapreneurial competencies. The objective of this research is to better understand your thoughts regarding job search process and success and identify the competencies that you think are necessary in today's changing job market.

This research will be undertaken by Patricia Hart as part of the doctoral program in education that she is following with the University of Liverpool. She will be carrying out the research as part of her doctorate in Higher Education with the University of Liverpool.

This research will focus on the 2009-2014 cohorts. The ESCE Alumni Association has granted Patricia Hart the authorisation to undertake the research and supports the initiative that aims at improving the career services and counselling provided to the students and graduates.

Before deciding whether you wish to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask Patricia Hart if you would like more information or if there is anything you do not understand.

After reading the information, if you wish to participate, please contact Patricia Hart directly at the following address patricia.thery-hart@online.liverpool.ac.uk who will send you a "participant consent form" in order to take part in this study.

We are looking forward to hearing back from you.

Virginie Seguéla
President of the ESCE Alumni Association



Appendix 5: ESCE approval



Research Project Title

Defining the graduate attributes per specialization track and designing accordingly a new framework for the Career Development Plan

Researcher: Patricia HART

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the Participant Information Sheet dated August 30th, 2013 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I hereby grant permission to the researcher for all relevant data access, facility use, and use of personnel time for research purposes. ☐
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information provided and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish. ☐
4. I understand that information on the organisation will be anonymised, will be maintained as proprietary information, and will be kept in confidentiality. Additionally, I understand that no results of the research will be made publically available without my specific approval. ☐

Jean Audouard  August 30th, 2013 _____

Name of Person taking consent

Date

30/08/2013

Signature

Participant Name

Date

Signature





Participant Information Sheet Guidelines

Research Project Title

Navigating today's changing job market: the impact of French business graduates' entrepreneurial-intrapreneurial competencies on their job search success and the role of higher education.

Invitation

You are being invited to participate in a research project through the ESCE Alumni Association. Before deciding whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything you do not understand.

Purpose of the research

Today's job market is changing and older industrialized countries such as France where the economy is shifting from manufacturing to information and knowledge services are particularly impacted. The average youth unemployment rate in the EU currently stands at 23.5% with a nearly 12% unemployment rate in France (Eurostat, 2014). Moreover, today's job search has become decentralized; job seekers must look job posting aggregators, job postings on company job or careers pages, job postings on LinkedIn and Twitter and many other sources. It gets even more complicated when the job search is focused on finding employment abroad.

In this age of complexity and uncertainty in terms of employment trends, the question of employability is a central issue to most higher education institutions' strategic planning committees, in France and abroad. In many institutions, balancing educational purposes and employment is a major endeavour.

One of the missions of the Corporate Relations and Career Development Department is to ensure that ESCE graduates are equipped with an appropriate range of skills for the workplace making them competitive and to provide graduates with directions and opportunities for employment.

The purpose of this study is to investigate, whether ESCE graduates, in the changing twenty-first-century workplace and global job market, possess intrapreneurial or entrepreneurial competencies and if those competencies can be a predictor of job search success. First, I will be looking into developing an understanding of the graduates' labour market perception.

Intrapreneurial/ entrepreneurial competencies and job search success will be approached from the standpoint of the graduates. Eventually, the question is what competencies win the job, if any? How can higher education institutions encourage postgraduates' students in thinking in terms of intrapreneurship or entrepreneurship regarding their job search in order to gain employability?

Participation in the research and methodology

You have been invited to take part in this study as ESCE Alumni from the 2011 to 2014 cohorts. The request and information on this study has been sent to you by the person in charge of the Alumni Association, the information is also available through their online platform KIT (Keep in Touch). The sampling will be composed of 15 to 20 graduates.

I will be using a qualitative approach (personal interview), which seems more appropriate to understanding perceptions and explore thoughts and allows for a richer interaction.

The interviews will be conducted in English or in French through semi-structured individual interviews. I will run the interviews personally either by Skype or in person whenever possible. In both cases, interviews will be carried out in private settings and privacy will be ensured.

Interviews will not last more than one hour. Participants will be able to take a break anytime and if they experience any discomfort, the interview can be resumed on another occasion if necessary. Participants will be able to refuse to answer any questions or decide to terminate the interview earlier, without incurring any disadvantage or penalty. The interviews are scheduled for February or March 2015.

All interviews will be recorded and each participant will be asked to check the record of his/her own interview to avoid any mistake in the transcription process.

The risks of taking part in this research have been assessed as 'minimal' and as such are no greater than those encountered in everyday life.

Confidentiality of the research process:

The ESCE Alumni Association has granted me the authorisation to undertake the research as part of my Doctorate in Education with the University of Liverpool. All data gathered through the interviews will be anonymised and coded in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The data will be kept on a password protected computer and also saved on a password protected external hard drive. Paper copies of any documentation will be kept in a lockable filing cabinet that only the researcher has access to. The results of the research will be made available to the participants and may lead to future publications.

Your participation is totally voluntary and even if you begin participation, you are free to withdraw anytime without explanation or penalty. Potential participants will be able to contact

me to ask for additional information if necessary. You will have two weeks to confirm your participation.

Complaint procedure

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by using my contact details and I will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to me with, then you should contact my thesis supervisor, Hazel Brown at hazel.brown@online.liverpool.ac.uk or the Research Governance Officer at liverpooethics@ohecampus.com. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

Contact Details for any further questions:

My contact details are:

Patricia Hart

ESCE, 10 rue Sextius Michel 75015 Paris Tel. +33 06 08 83 30 35

patricia.thery-hart@online.liverpool.ac.uk

The contact details of the Research Participant Advocate at the University of Liverpool are:
001-612-312-1210 (USA number)

Email address liverpooethics@ohecampus.com

Please keep/print a copy of the Participant Information Sheet for your reference. Please contact me and/or the Research Participant Advocate at the University of Liverpool with any question or concerns you may have.

Please note that there is no reward, gift or reimbursement on offer for taking part in this research.

Participant

Information

Sheet v3

January 2015

Appendix 7: Participant Consent Form



Committee on Research Ethics

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of the research project:

“Navigating today’s changing job market: the impact of French business graduates’ entrepreneurial-intrapreneurial competencies on their job search success and the role of higher education.”

Researcher: Patricia Théry Hart

**Please
initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated October 2014 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. My participation will not entail any risk of academic impact on my studies.

3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name		Signature
Name of Person taking consent		Signature
Researcher		Signature

Principal Investigator:

Patricia Hart

ESCE, 10 rue Sextius Michel 75015 Paris

Sextius Michel 75015 Paris Tel. +33 06 08 83 30 35

08 83 30 35

Student Researcher:

Patricia Hart

ESCE, 10 rue

Tel. +33 06

patricia.thery-hart@online.liverpool.ac.uk