

**Université Paris-Saclay – Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines**  
**Laboratoire de Recherche en Management LAREQUOI**

Dossier de recherche en vue de l'obtention du diplôme  
d'Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches

**Un savoir pour le management et sur le management à travers le temps :  
Pour une approche historique de la recherche en gestion**

**Partie II : Annexes**

Mémoire présenté et soutenu publiquement le Mercredi 06 septembre 2023 à Guyancourt

Par

**Adrien Jean-Guy PASSANT**

Professeur associé à ISTECH Business School, Paris

**JURY**

Examineur : Professeur Ludovic CAILLUET, EDHEC Business School, Paris	Rapporteur : Professeur Pierre LABARDIN, Université de La Rochelle
Examineur : Professeur Philippe HERMEL, Université de Versailles Saint- Quentin-en-Yvelines	Rapporteur : Professeur Nathalie RAULET-CROSET, Sorbonne Business School, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
Examineur : Professeur Dominique BARUEL-BENCHERQUI, ISTECH Business School, Paris	Rapporteur : Professeur Ludovic LALOUX, Université Polytechnique des Hauts-de- France, à Valenciennes

Garant : Professeur Christophe ASSENS,  
Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines



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## Annexe 1 – Mon curriculum vitae

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**Date de naissance :** 30.10.1987  
**Nationalité :** Française

### 1. RÉSUMÉ

- Affiliation actuelle**
- Professeur associé à ISTE Business School
  - Chercheur associé au laboratoire LAREQUOI de l'Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines
  - Chercheur associé dans la Chaire Réseaux et Innovations (Fondation de l'Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines)
  - Membre de l'Association Internationale de Management Stratégique (AIMS), de l'Association Française d'Histoire Économique (AFHE), et de l'Association d'Histoire du Management et des Organisations (AHMO)
  - Qualifié aux fonctions de Maître de Conférences en Sciences de Gestion n°20206343980
- Formation**
- Doctorat en Sciences de Gestion de l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
  - Master 2 en Management de ESCP Business School
  - Master 2 en Histoire de l'École Normale Supérieure de Lyon
- Principaux domaines de recherche**
- Critical organizational history
  - Évolution de l'éducation managériale/entrepreneuriale
  - Temps et temporalité en stratégie
- Articles publiés et implication au service de la communauté académique**
- 8 articles publiés dans des revues classées en gestion (dont 4 classés FNEGE 2)
  - Relecteur pour *Business History*, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, *Entreprises et Histoire*
  - Relecteur pour l'Association Internationale de Management Stratégique (AIMS)
  - Membre de l'Association pour l'Histoire du Management et des Organisations (AHMO)
- Domaines d'enseignement**
- Histoire des entreprises
  - Stratégie
  - Théorie des organisations
  - Méthodologie de la recherche
  - Publics : étudiants aux niveaux Bachelor, Master en Management (programme Grande École), Mastère Spécialisé

## 2. FORMATION

- 2018** • Doctorat en Sciences de Gestion, spécialisation en Stratégie  
Directeurs de thèse : Jean-Philippe Bouilloud et Anne Gratacap : "Survivre et Rebondir : Les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle sur la longue durée. Étude multi-scalaire d'une école de commerce bicentenaire : ESCP Europe" – Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris, France). **Thèse proposée par le jury pour le prix de thèse de la Chancellerie des Universités de Paris.**
- 2012** • Master 2 en Management, programme Grande École – ESCP Business School (Paris, France)
- 2011** • Master 2 en Histoire Contemporaine – École Normale Supérieure de Lyon (Lyon, France)  
• Diplôme d'Établissement de l'École Normale Supérieure de Lyon (Lyon, France)
- 2008** • Licence en Philosophie et Licence en Lettres Modernes – Université Paris 4 La Sorbonne (Paris, France)
- 2005-2008** • Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles – Lycée Lakanal (Sceaux, France)

## 3. EXPÉRIENCE

- 2022-...** • Professeur associé à ISTE Business School (Paris, France)  
• Chercheur associé au laboratoire LAREQUOI de l'Université de Versailles St-Quentin-en-Yvelines  
• Chercheur associé dans la Chaire Réseaux et Innovations (Fondation de l'Université de Versailles St-Quentin-en-Yvelines)
- 2020-2021** • Professeur visitant à la Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (Bruxelles, Belgique)
- 2018-2022** • Professeur assistant à EMLV Business School (La Défense, France)
- 2017-...** • Enseignant vacataire à EMLYON Business School (Paris, France) et à l'EM Normandie Business School (Paris, France)
- 2017-2019** • Enseignant vacataire à ESCP Business School (Paris, France)
- 2014-2018** • Enseignant vacataire à Novancia Business School (Paris, France)
- 2011-2018** • Consultant en Management à Abylsen Consulting (Sophia-Antipolis, France) puis à CGI Business Consulting (La Défense, France)
- 2012** • Chef de projet en marketing stratégique international chez L'Oréal (Paris, France)
- 2011** • Chargé de communication en mécénat chez Groupama (Paris, France)

## 4. COURS ENSEIGNÉS & RESPONSABILITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

### Actuellement

#### Cours au niveau Master

- Histoire des entreprises – 30 heures – en français et en anglais
- Histoire de la pensée managériale – 12 heures – en français
- Histoire de la publicité – 12 heures – en français
- Histoire du luxe – 12 heures – en français
- Théorie et sociologie des organisations – 30 heures – en français

### **Cours au niveau Bachelor**

- Fondamentaux du management – 18 heures – en français
- Business history – 12 heures – en français et en anglais
- Histoire de la peinture européenne de la Renaissance au dix-neuvième siècle – 21 heures – en français

### **Responsabilités administratives**

- Responsable du cours de Fondamentaux du Management (Bachelor 1)

### **Antérieurement**

#### **Cours au niveau Master / Mastère Spécialisé**

- Études de marché – 18 heures – en français
- Stratégie des organisations – 18 heures – en français
- Méthodologie de la recherche – 21 heures – en français

### **Responsabilités administratives**

- Responsable du cours de stratégie au niveau Master 2 (2018-2022).
- Tuteur de stage et d’alternance pour les élèves aux niveaux Master 1 et Master 2 (2018-2022).
- Responsable du double diplôme ingénieur/manager entre EMLV Business School et l’école ESILV – 400 étudiants par an sur les cinq années du programme Grande École (2018-2021).

## **5. DOMAINES DE RECHERCHE**

- Critical organizational history
- Évolution de l’éducation managériale/entrepreneuriale
- Temps et temporalité en stratégie

## **6. LANGUES ÉTRANGÈRES**

Français (langue maternelle), Anglais & Espagnol

## **7. PRODUCTIONS SCIENTIFIQUES**

### *ARTICLES ACADEMIQUES*

8. Passant, A.J.-G. (2022c). “Educating indigenous commercial executives. A business school in colonial context: The case of the Indochina Higher School of Commerce (1920–1932)”, *Business History* (ABS 4 journal – FNEGE 2 – HCÉRES A), pp.1-58.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2022.2052853>
7. Passant, A.J.-G. (2022b). “L’identité organisationnelle des écoles de commerce : Vers une redéfinition entrepreneuriale ? Une étude de cas longitudinale d’une école de commerce européenne. *Revue de l’Entrepreneuriat* (FNEGE 2 – HCÉRES A), Volume 21(1), pp.24-64.  
<https://doi.org/10.3917/entre1.pr.0012>
6. Passant, A.J.-G. (2022a). “Making European managers in business schools: A longitudinal case study on evolution, processes, and actors from the late 1960s onward”, *Enterprise & Society* (ABS 3 journal – CNRS 3 – FNEGE 3 – HCERES B), Volume 23(2), pp.478-511.

- <https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2020.65>
5. Passant, A.J.-G. (2020). “Les épiciers à la quête du Graal : Promouvoir le diplôme d’école de commerce comme sésame universitaire à la mode gréco-romaine”, *Entreprises et Histoire* (ABS 2 journal – CNRS 4 – FNEGE 4 – HCÉRES C), Volume 100(3), pp.144-146.  
<https://doi.org/10.3917/eh.100.0144>
  4. Passant, A.J.-G. (avec Arreola, F.) (2019). “Depuis quand apprend-on l’entrepreneuriat ? Une étude de cas historique dédiée à l’ESCP”, *Entreprendre et Innover* (FNEGE 4 – HCÉRES C), Volume 42-43(3), pp.146-158.  
<https://doi-org.devinci.idm.oclc.org/10.3917/entin.042.0146>
  3. Passant, A.J.-G. (2019). “The early emergence of European commercial education in the nineteenth century: Insights from higher engineering schools”, *Business History* (ABS 4 journal – CNRS 2 – FNEGE 2 – HCÉRES A), Volume 61(6), pp.1051-1082.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2018.1448063>
  2. Passant, A.J.-G. (2018). “Between filial piety and managerial opportunism: The strategic use of the history of a family business after the buyout by non-family purchasers”, *Entreprises et Histoire* (ABS 2 journal – CNRS 4 – FNEGE 4 – HCÉRES C), Volume 91(2), pp.62-81.  
<https://doi.org/10.3917/eh.091.0062>
  1. Passant, A.J.-G. (2016). “Issues in European business education in the mid-nineteenth century: A comparative perspective”, *Business History* (ABS 4 journal – CNRS 2 – FNEGE 2 – HCÉRES A), Volume 58(7), pp.1118-1145.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2016.1158251>

#### LIVRE, CHAPITRES DE LIVRE & COMPTE RENDU D’OUVRAGE

- Passant, A.J.-G. (à venir – 2023b). “Les écoles de commerce et leurs réseaux : Une approche historique”, *Les Cahiers de la chaire Réseaux & Innovations de l’Université de Versailles St-Quentin-en-Yvelines*.
- Passant, A.J.-G. (à venir – 2023a). “Ce que l’histoire peut apprendre aux élèves en management à travers un série télé : L’exemple de *Madmen*”, *Les Carnets de l’ISTEC*.
- Passant, A.J.-G. (2020). *À l’origine des écoles de commerce : ESCP Business School, la passion d’entreprendre*, L’Harmattan : Paris. ISBN : 978-2-343-18659-7.  
<https://www.editions-harmattan.fr/index.asp?navig=catalogue&obj=livre&no=66576>
- Passant, A.J.-G. (2020). “Book Review: Mathieu Floquet, Pierre Labardin and Yves Levant (editors) *L’histoire comme méthode pour comprendre le management. Mélanges en l’honneur du Professeur Marc Nikitin*”, *Organization Studies*, Volume 41(1), pp.145-148.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840619847114>

#### ARTICLES EN COURS (Documents disponibles sur demande)

- Passant, A.J.-G. (avec Magakian, J.-L.) “Former les managers par les arts ?” – En cours de finalisation de rédaction.
- Passant, A.J.-G. “From bookkeepers to entrepreneurs: Transformations in making managers from the late 1960s onwards at ESCP Europe”. En cours d’évaluation dans une revue ABS 4 – FNEGE 3 – HCÉRES B (*Business History Review*) – Révisions majeures demandées.
- Passant, A.J.-G. “Higher accounting education in colonial Vietnam under French imperialism: Lessons from the Hanoi Higher School of Commerce (1920–1932)”. Rejeté avec invitation à resoumettre dans une revue ABS 4\* – FNEGE 1 – HCÉRES A (*Accounting, Organizations and Society*). Date de resoumission : second semestre 2023.
- Passant, A.J.-G. “In search of the Creator. Inventing organizational founder’s myths to strengthen the legitimacy of business schools in the long run”. Soumis prochainement à une revue

ABS 4\* – FNEGE 2 – HCÉRES A (*Academy of Management Learning and Education*). Date de soumission : Avril 2022.

- Autres projets pouvant déboucher sur de futures publications :
  - “The Hunter's Evidence: Writing the history of long-term organizations from defective sources”. Phase de collecte des données.
  - “The Tightrope Walk: Anachronism as a crucial element for learning about the past of long-term organizations”. Phase d’analyse des données.
  - “The Ship of Theseus: Designing the identity of long-term organizations”. Phase de collecte des données.

#### *COMMUNICATIONS DANS DES COLLOQUES À COMITÉ DE SÉLECTION*

15. Passant, A.J.-G. (2023). “Former des entrepreneurs colonisés : Retour sur une expérience éducative oubliée de l’entre-deux-guerres en Indochine française”, **JHMO** (Journées d’Histoire du Management et des Organisations), Nantes, France.
14. Passant, A.J.-G. (2022). “Entrepreneurship education for colonized indigenous students: A forgotten educational experiment in colonial Vietnam under French rule in the interwar period”, **BHC** (Business History Conference), Mexico City, Mexique.
13. Passant, A.J.-G. (2021). “Criticize the Dead: The strategic use of a dean’s biography in a context of organizational identity transformation. The case of ESCP Business School (1898-1900)”, **WCBH** (World Congress of Business History), Nagoya, Japon.
12. Passant, A.J.-G. (2020). “The Role of Stakeholders Collaboration in Business Schools Survival: The case of ESCP Europe, the Oldest Business School in the World (1819-2019)”, **BHC** (Business History Conference), Charlotte, États-Unis.
11. Passant, A.J.-G. (2019). “Histories of Business Knowledge in French context”, **BHC** (Business History Conference), Cartagena de Indias, Colombie.
10. Passant, A.J.-G. (avec Arreola, F.) (2019). “From the training of accountants to that of entrepreneurs: The evolution of entrepreneurship training in business schools in France – The case of ESCP Europe”, International Conference on Entrepreneurship Education, Roanne, France.
9. Passant, A.J.-G. (avec Bouilloud, J.-P., et Gratacap, A.) (2018). “Governing the ungovernable by adapting the dynamic governance capability over a long period of time: The case of a two-century business school, ESCP Europe (1819-2017)”, **EGOS** (European Group for Organizational Studies), Tallinn, Estonie.
8. Passant, A.J.-G. (2018). “Exploiter des sources lacunaires pour écrire l’histoire d’une organisation : Réflexions autour du ‘paradigme indiciaire’ de Carlo Ginzburg”, **JHMO** (Journées d’Histoire du Management et des Organisations), Paris, France.
7. Passant, A.J.-G. (avec Bouilloud, J.-P., et Gratacap, A.) (2017). “The hidden side of management education: Uses of history in management education in the long period. The case of ESCP Europe”, **EGOS** (European Group for Organizational Studies), Copenhague, Danemark.
6. Passant, A.J.-G. (2017). “Blasts from the past: The strategic use of managerial biographies in a context of organizational identity transformation”, **ABH** (Association of Business Historians), Glasgow, Écosse.
5. Passant, A.J.-G. (avec Bouilloud, J.-P., et Gratacap, A.) (2017). “Le déploiement de la capacité dynamique de gouvernance en contexte de crise organisationnelle : Le cas ESCP Europe”, **AIMS** (Association Internationale de Management Stratégique), Lyon, France.



4. Passant, A.J.-G. (2017). "Between Filial piety and managerial opportunism: The strategic use of the history of a family business after the buyout by non-family purchasers", Family Business Conference, EDHEC, Lille, France.
3. Passant, A.J.-G. (avec Bouilloud, J.-P., et Gratacap, A.) (2017). "Comment une business school gère son ambidextrie en termes d'innovations d'exploitation et d'exploration : Une analyse par le concept de capacité dynamique d'innovation pédagogique", Abbé Grégoire Innovation Days, Paris, France.
2. Passant, A.J.-G. (2017). "Redesigning organizational identity thanks to biographical records: The life of Adolphe Blanqui, dean of business school", **JHMO** (Journées d'Histoire du Management et des Organisations), Paris, France.
1. Passant, A.J.-G. (2016). "Differentiation Strategies in Management Education in nineteenth-century Europe: Evidence from Higher Schools of Commerce", **ICABE** (International Conference on Applied Business & Economics), Nanterre, France.

## 8. SERVICE À LA PROFESSION

- 2022
- Discutant – Table ronde "Pandémie et management" – 7<sup>ème</sup> Journée Internationale du Marketing de la Santé, Paris, France, 29 Juin.
  - Contributeur au *Dictionnaire du Management*, coordonné par la Fondation Nationale pour l'Enseignement de la Gestion des Entreprises (FNEGE). Auteur de l'article "Qu'est-ce que la *business history* ?" <https://fnege-medias.fr/fnege-video/quest-ce-que-la-business-history/>
  - Coordinateur (conception et organisation) avec Christoph Viebig (Copenhagen Business School) – Session "Re-thinking the history of business education: Global and comparative perspectives on management education and the history of the business school" – Business History Conference, Mexico City, Mexique, 7-9 Avril.
- 2020-Présent
- Relecteur pour *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*.
- 2019
- Discutant – Table ronde "1819, une étape de l'histoire économique ?" – Congrès International d'Histoire des Entreprises, Paris, France, 12 Septembre.
  - Membre du comité de pilotage du Congrès International d'Histoire des Entreprises, Paris, France, 11-13 Septembre.
- 2018
- Discutant – Table ronde "Making Managers" – Congrès World Economic History Conference, Boston, États-Unis, 2 Août.
- 2017  
2017-Présent
- Discutant – Table ronde "Rethinking management and management history" – European Group for Organizational Studies, Copenhagen, Danemark, 6-7 Juillet.
  - Relecteur pour l'Association Internationale de Management Stratégique (AIMS).
  - Relecteur pour *Business History* et *Entreprises et Histoire*.

## 9. ENCADREMENT DE MÉMOIRES DE RECHERCHE

25. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Gian-Dale Capino (ISTEC Business School) : “Quel est l’impact des différences culturelles dans la mise en place d’une stratégie marketing dans le luxe ?”. Programme : Marketing digital. Mai 2023 (à venir).
24. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Laurine Djennadi (ISTEC Business School) : “Quel est l’impact des comportements des consommateurs sur les stratégies de contenu des marques dans le secteur des assurances ?”. Programme : Marketing digital. Mai 2023 (à venir).
25. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Nesrine Mahrez (ISTEC Business School) : “Dans quelle mesure les outils digitaux contribuent-ils à l’efficacité d’un service client dans le secteur bancaire ?”. Programme : Marketing digital. Mai 2023 (à venir).
24. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Kelliane Libar (ISTEC Business School) : “Quels sont les enjeux marketing des véhicules hybrides dans une économie de plus en plus décarbonée”. Programme : Marketing digital. Mai 2023 (à venir).
23. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Cheryl Gnaleh (ISTEC Business School) : “Dans quelle mesure les administrations publiques convertissent-elles leurs modes de fonctionnement axés sur l’usager pour adopter une approche axée sur le client ?”. Programme : Marketing digital. Mai 2023 (à venir).
22. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Lise Said (ISTEC Business School) : “Quel est l’impact de la digitalisation du parcours client sur l’image de marque dans l’agroalimentaire ?”. Programme : Marketing digital. Mai 2023 (à venir).
21. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Cassandra Alves (ISTEC Business School) : “Comment une entreprise du luxe doit-elle structurer sa stratégie de communication sur les réseaux sociaux pour se démarquer de ses concurrents ?”. Programme : Marketing digital. Mai 2023 (à venir).
20. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Nicolas Glerean (ISTEC Business School) : “Comment conduire le changement en entreprise au-delà des soft skills ?”. Programme : Marketing digital. Mai 2023 (à venir).
19. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Ymane Devigne (EMLV Business School) : “Dans quelle mesure l’expansion du digital a-t-elle été vecteur de changement pour la gestion des Ressources Humaines ?”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2022.
18. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Delphine Émile (EMLV Business School) : “Quelles sont les compétences requises pour opérationnaliser le SIRH ?”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2022.
17. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Élodie Tesson (EMLV Business School) : “Comment améliorer les performances commerciales grâce à l’accroissement de l’utilisation des outils de communication interne de l’entreprise ?”. Programme : Négociation et Management des Affaires. Juillet 2022.
16. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Miryame Zenasni (EMLV Business School) :

- “La méthode agile dans le secteur public : quelles spécificités, quels bénéfices et quelles limites par rapport aux entreprises privées ?”. Programme : Management des systèmes d’information et des data. Juillet 2022.
15. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Laëtitia Moreau (EMLV Business School) : “Dans quelle mesure la crise sanitaire a-t-elle impacté la culture en entreprise ?”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2022.
  14. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Adrien Motte (EMLV Business School) : “Quel est le rôle des prestataires de solutions SIRH dans ce contexte de crise sanitaire ?”. Programme : Négociation et Management des Affaires. Juillet 2022.
  13. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Léa Bertrand (EMLV Business School) : “Le bien-être au travail, véritable enjeu managérial dans le cadre du travail à distance”. Programme : Négociation et Management des Affaires. Juillet 2021.
  12. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Oriane Cabridain (EMLV Business School) : “Quels sont les risques et opportunités des tests de personnalité dans le process de recrutement RH ?”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2021.
  11. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Maxime de La Guéronnière (EMLV Business School) : “Les systèmes informatiques des ressources humaines (SIRH) dans les PME d’édition de logiciels”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2021.
  10. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Angéline Lopez (EMLV Business School) : “L’enjeu des relations intergénérationnelles dans les entreprises”. Programme : Négociation et Management des Affaires. Juillet 2021.
  9. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Clément Toullier (EMLV Business School) : “La mise en place du télétravail en entreprise et son impact sur la motivation des salariés”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2021.
  8. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Amel Zenati (EMLV Business School) : “Le transfert d’activité et son impact social : une étude de cas de l’usine de Choisy-le-Roi du Groupe Renault”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2021.
  7. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Océane Tonsart (EMLV Business School) : “Le développement durable dans le e-sport ? Le monde étudiant s’engage”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2020.
  6. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Ouassim Lallali (EMLV Business School) : “L’avenir de la fonction RH : entre obsolescence et renaissance”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2020.
  5. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Jérémy Thomais (EMLV Business School) : “La gamification des produits et la recherche de nouveaux clients dans le monde du e-sport”. Programme : Double diplôme ingénieur/manager en partenariat avec l’école ESILV. Juillet 2020.
  4. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Quentin Troubat (EMLV Business School) :

- “L’intelligence artificielle et la mobilité dans le e-sport”. Programme : Double diplôme ingénieur/manager en partenariat avec l’école ESILV. Juillet 2020.
3. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Manon Delrieux (EMLV Business School) : “Le cycle de vie des documents au sein d’une entreprise”. Programme : Double diplôme ingénieur/manager en partenariat avec l’école ESILV. Juillet 2020.
  2. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Anthony Sosson (EMLV Business School) : “La digitalisation dans le domaine du vestimentaire : Quel a été l’impact de la digitalisation dans l’industrie du prêt à porter ? ”. Programme : Double diplôme ingénieur/manager en partenariat avec l’école ESILV. Juillet 2020.
  1. Mémoire de Master 2 en Management par Julien Vuibout (EMLV Business School) : “Comment rendre le secteur bancaire attractif auprès des jeunes”. Programme : Digital RH. Juillet 2020.

## 10. RÉFÉRENCES

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## **Annexe 2 – Résumé de ma thèse de doctorat : *Survivre et Rebondir***

Le présent résumé propose une approche condensée de mon travail de thèse. Il est organisé comme suit. Après avoir rappelé l'actualité du sujet et la problématique (1), il indique le cadre conceptuel que j'ai emprunté (2) ainsi que la méthodologie que j'ai mise en œuvre pour répondre à ma problématique (3). Une synthèse du cheminement de réflexion poursuivi par ma thèse est ensuite proposée (4). Cette dernière est suivie par un bilan sur les apports de mon travail (5), puis par une évocation de ses limites et ouvertures possibles (6).

### **1. Actualité du sujet et problématique**

La pérennité des organisations est un sujet de réflexion pertinent pour les chercheurs en stratégie. Comprendre pourquoi et comment certaines organisations parviennent à assurer leur pérennité alors que tant d'autres sont amenées à disparaître permet d'expliquer leurs chances de survie ; ou, inversement, leurs risques de mortalité. Dans ce cadre, plusieurs chercheurs en stratégie ont vu dans la maîtrise des décisions stratégiques un processus permettant d'assurer la pérennité des organisations.

Parmi les différents formats de pérennité identifiés par la littérature – pérennité de contrôle, pérennité de direction, pérennité des activités, pérennité organisationnelle – j'ai fait le choix de m'intéresser à la pérennité organisationnelle, définie comme la capacité pour une organisation d'initier ou de traiter, au cours de son histoire, des évolutions externes ou internes tout en préservant l'essentiel de son identité (Mignon, 2001). Ce format de pérennité est encore peu étudié alors qu'il est ancré au cœur même des préoccupations des sciences de gestion dans la mesure où il peut être appréhendé comme un processus et donc être piloté. En outre, s'intéresser à la pérennité en termes organisationnels consiste à étudier l'enjeu même de toute pérennité, à savoir comment faire évoluer l'organisation tout en conservant un certain degré d'inertie, gage de continuité dans le temps (Bloch et Nabat, 2009).

Dans ce cadre, ma problématique générale s'articule autour de la question suivante : quels sont les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle dans la longue durée ? Celle-ci recouvre deux questionnements complémentaires : le premier, de nature descriptive, porte sur les formes que prennent ces processus au cours du temps et le second, de nature explicative, porte sur leurs dynamiques intrinsèques.

## **2. Cadre conceptuel de ma thèse**

J'ai inscrit ma réflexion dans la lignée des travaux de Mignon (1998 ; 2000 ; 2001 ; 2009) et de leurs continuateurs (Maurand-Valet, 2013 ; Amans, Mazars-Chapelon et Villesèque-Dubus, 2013 ; Eggrickx, 2013 ; Averseng, 2013 ; Chapellier et Dupuy, 2013 ; Naro et Travaillé, 2013 ; Lagarde et Macombe, 2013) car ils sont parmi les principaux à s'être intéressés à la pérennité organisationnelle d'un point de vue stratégique. Cependant, mon travail s'en démarque sur plusieurs points :

- D'abord, sur le plan analytique, j'ai élargi le cadre des analyses antérieures en adoptant une démarche multi-scalaire consistant à jouer sur les échelles d'analyse (macroscopiques, méso et microscopiques) mais aussi sur les échelles de temps (longues, moyennes et courte durées).
- Ensuite, sur le plan théorique, si je partage la vision selon laquelle la pérennité est bien présente « sur un continuum de théories allant d'une vision très déterministe – processus de sélection par le marché – à une vision très volontariste – processus de construction environnementale et organisationnelle – » (Mignon, 2001, p.173), j'ai jugé utile de compléter cette vision empruntée aux théories écologiques et de l'équilibre ponctué en l'élargissant à d'autres facteurs d'évolution que les seuls facteurs déterministes et intentionnels. En précision, j'ai cherché à inclure dans ma réflexion sur les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle les facteurs contingents (Danjou, 1987).
- Ensuite, sur le plan méthodologique, répondant à une ouverture esquissée par Mignon (2001, p.174) j'ai inclus dans mes réflexions sur les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle des cas d'organisations non-pérennes ; et ceci pour éviter d'ignorer le phénomène d'équifinalité bien identifié par la littérature (Bertalanffy, 1973).
- Enfin, j'ai adopté une approche volontairement historique des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle afin de mettre en lumière, non pas seulement les facteurs contemporains de pérennité, mais également les facteurs passés de pérennité pour l'organisation.

## **3. Méthodologie de ma thèse**

Pour répondre à ma problématique, mon travail a reposé sur une étude de cas qualitative et exploratoire. J'ai choisi de m'intéresser à un type particulier d'organisation qui, jusqu'à ce jour, n'avait encore jamais fait l'objet d'études en termes de pérennité organisationnelle : une école de commerce.

Jusqu'à aujourd'hui, en effet, les principales études en matière de pérennité organisationnelle se sont intéressées à des entreprises de grande taille et cotées en Bourse (Averseng, 2013 ; De Geus, 1997 ; Collins et Porras, 1996) ou à des entreprises familiales (Fernández-Roca, 2012 ; Ben Mahmoud Jouini et Mignon, 2009 ; Habbershon et Pistrui, 2002 ; Chrisman, Chua et Litz, 2003 ; 1992 ; Mignon, 1998 ; 2001) ; et notamment à des entreprises hénokiennes (Mignon, 2001). Quelques études ont élargi le champ d'investigation de la pérennité organisationnelle en s'intéressant à des exploitations agricoles (Macombe, 2009 ; De Bortoli et Palu, 2009) ou à des organisations du spectacle vivant (Amans, Mazars-Chapelon et Villesèque-Dubus, 2013). Aucune étude n'avait donc été effectuée sur les écoles de commerce.

Pourtant, en tant qu'établissements scolaires, les écoles de commerce entretiennent un rapport particulier avec le temps : elles forment aujourd'hui les acteurs du monde de demain – ainsi que les acteurs du monde actuel – et sont soumises à des phénomènes générationnels qui sont, par nature, longs et lents (Meyer, Ramirez, Frank et Schofer, 2007). Ensuite, plusieurs écoles de commerce en France font preuve d'une remarquable pérennité. Plusieurs écoles de commerce françaises ont atteint et même dépassé leur premier siècle d'existence, à l'instar de Montpellier Business School (fondée en 1897), d'Audencia Business School (ouverte en 1900) ou de l'EDHEC Business School (créée en 1906). Certaines écoles ont même dépassé les cent-vingt-cinq années d'existence comme HEC Paris (créée en 1881) voire avoisinent même les cent-cinquante ans d'âge comme EMLYON Business School (ouverte en 1872).

L'une des premières raisons qui m'a amené à retenir l'ESCP comme terrain de recherche tient aux spécificités de cet établissement. Son exceptionnelle longévité d'abord – deux siècles d'existence – permet une analyse de sa stratégie sur le long terme ; analyse d'autant plus intéressante à mener que la direction de cette école a su préserver sa longévité alors que les écoles de commerce fondées avant elle ou au même moment qu'elle dans les années 1820 ont toutes disparu depuis longtemps. Ensuite, l'ESCP a connu une trajectoire historique fort singulière. L'école de commerce privée fondée en 1819, devenue en 1830 une entreprise familiale sous le joug de la famille Blanqui, puis une école consulaire en 1869, est devenue progressivement une grande école de commerce et, depuis 1999, une « multinationale » de l'enseignement supérieur de la gestion avec des campus dans six pays d'Europe (Blanchard, 2015). Enfin, l'ESCP constituait un terrain de recherche relativement vierge d'investigations scientifiques de longue durée. En effet, contrairement à d'autres écoles de commerce centenaires, françaises ou étrangères, l'ESCP n'avait pas fait l'objet d'études scientifiques exhaustives ni de longue durée sur son passé. De ce fait, se pencher sur l'évolution de cette organisation dans une optique de compréhension des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle m'a semblé d'autant plus stimulant qu'il fallait d'abord reconstituer l'histoire de cette école sur un plan stratégique.

Une fois le terrain identifié, j'ai mis en œuvre une méthodologie de recherche recourant à l'histoire comme méthode et ce pour plusieurs raisons :

- D'abord, les préoccupations problématiques qui étaient les miennes m'ont imposé d'appréhender la durée et, donc, de faire appel à l'histoire qui est considérée comme la science du temps (Braudel, 1958 ; Zawadzki, 2002 ; Hartog, 2003 ; Offenstad, 2011). En outre, comme le souligne Mignon (2001, p.121) : « c'est bien en étudiant le passé de l'entreprise que l'on peut tenter de comprendre pourquoi elle est aujourd'hui encore en vie ». De ce fait, le choix de ma problématique rendait pertinent le recours à l'histoire qui est, par excellence, une science du temps.
- Ensuite, l'ampleur chronologique de la période étudiée m'a amené à travailler sur une quantité très volumineuse et très hétérogène de sources – archives, témoignages, monuments funéraires, etc. Pour les traiter, j'ai été conduit à utiliser certaines méthodes en vigueur chez les historiens telles que l'analyse des sources primaires ou encore les histoires de vie.
- Enfin, après la problématique et la collecte des données, mon terrain de recherche a rendu pertinent le recours à l'histoire. En choisissant pour objet d'étude l'une des plus anciennes écoles de commerce du monde, j'ai décidé de m'intéresser, pour partie, à l'histoire de ma discipline. Il m'a donc paru indispensable de me pencher sur l'évolution stratégique de l'une des plus anciennes écoles de commerce encore en activité tout en faisant intervenir l'histoire de ma discipline et de son enseignement.

Si ces raisons m'ont semblé justifier, pour mon sujet, le recours aux méthodes de l'histoire, ce faisant, ma démarche n'était pas inédite. Nombre de chercheurs en gestion avant moi avaient déjà utilisé les méthodes de l'histoire pour leurs travaux (pour une revue de littérature récente voir Béduneau-Wang, 2017 ; Zajtmann, 2014, Labardin, 2011 ; Miller et Lebreton-Miller, 2010 ; Lamendour, 2008 ; Morgana, 2005, etc.). Toutefois, si mon travail a porté sur la longue durée et a mobilisé, pour partie, les méthodes de l'historien, il ne s'agit pas d'une thèse en histoire dans la mesure où la nature des questions qu'il soulève relève clairement de la gestion (Nikitin, 1997).

Dans le détail, mon protocole de collecte des données a reposé sur une étude documentaire complétée par des entretiens individuels semi-directifs. L'étude documentaire s'est fondée sur le dépouillement de très nombreuses archives (voir pp.886-900 de ma thèse) ainsi que sur la lecture de la littérature scientifique et de la littérature de « vulgarisation » consacrée au passé de l'ESCP et des autres écoles de commerce en général. Une cinquantaine d'entretiens semi-directifs ont été conduits auprès d'une quarantaine d'interlocuteurs, principalement des dirigeants actuels ou passés de l'école, mais aussi auprès d'enseignants, de



personnels administratifs et d'élèves toujours à l'école ou ayant quitté celle-ci (voir pp.111-112 de ma thèse).

#### **4. Synthèse de ma thèse**

La collecte des données m'a permis de rédiger une monographie stratégique de l'évolution de l'ESCP de 1819 à nos jours (voir annexe 12 de ma thèse). Cette monographie ayant été élaborée, j'ai par la suite inscrit mon travail dans une logique multi-scalaire pour comprendre les mécanismes de pérennité stratégiques mis en œuvre par les dirigeants de cette école depuis le début du dix-neuvième siècle. J'ai d'abord mobilisé trois angles d'analyse : le secteur (macro), l'organisation (méso), les acteurs (micro). Ces trois angles d'analyse constituent les trois parties principales de ma thèse. Chacune de ces parties est introduite par une revue de littérature qui lui est propre et fait intervenir différentes échelles de temps – la longue durée, la moyenne durée et la courte durée. Avant de revenir dans le détail sur les principales étapes de ma réflexion, il convient de préciser ici que ma thèse a été rédigée au format par articles ; choix de rédaction admis en sciences de gestion. De ce fait, chacun des chapitres de la thèse constitue par lui-même un projet d'article ou de communication qui peut se lire de manière autonome : il est doté d'une introduction, d'une problématique, d'un développement et d'une conclusion qui lui sont propres. Le lecteur a, dès lors, la liberté de lire mon travail de manière linéaire – en abordant les chapitres dans leur ordre d'exposition – ou bien de manière aléatoire – en lisant les chapitres dans l'ordre qu'il lui plaira de suivre. Dans tous les cas, afin de faciliter la navigation du lecteur au sein de mon travail de thèse, j'ai proposé en annexe 1 (pp.580-585 de ma thèse), pour chaque chapitre, un résumé de quelques lignes sur son contenu.

**La première partie de la thèse** présente une cartographie longitudinale du secteur dans lequel l'école intervient depuis deux siècles. Cette analyse sectorielle sur la moyenne durée – vingt ans (chapitre 1) – et sur la longue durée – deux siècles (chapitre 2) – m'a permis de revisiter l'histoire de l'enseignement supérieur de la gestion en Europe et en France. Cette première partie m'a également permis d'utiliser une grille de lecture pertinente pour le chercheur désireux de comprendre les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle et rarement employée sur des durées aussi longues : la grille de lecture des « groupes stratégiques ». Cette première partie a montré que les transformations du secteur peuvent être déterminantes pour la pérennité des organisations qui y évoluent. Faute de s'adapter aux évolutions du secteur, de nombreux établissements d'enseignement commercial ont disparu depuis le dix-neuvième siècle. Ceux qui sont parvenus à assurer leur pérennité jusqu'à aujourd'hui ont su évoluer avec leur secteur. Par exemple, dans les années 1960, l'essor économique de la France, l'influence américaine sur les formations en gestion, mais aussi le renouvellement des contenus de l'enseignement ont conduit

la direction de l'ESCP à faire évoluer celle-ci. La création d'un corps professoral permanent puis la création d'une activité de formation continue en 1968-1969 ont ainsi permis à l'organisation de faire face à son nouvel environnement. Toutefois, comme je l'ai indiqué dans la conclusion de la première partie, l'angle sectoriel semble insuffisant à lui seul pour rendre compte des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle. En effet, ce n'est pas parce que des organisations ont su s'adapter aux évolutions du secteur qu'elles ont nécessairement perduré dans le temps (voir pp.234-241 de ma thèse).

**La deuxième partie de la thèse** a, de ce fait, opéré un changement du niveau d'analyse en s'intéressant, non plus au secteur, mais à l'organisation et plus particulièrement à ses ressources et à ses compétences. La grille de lecture de la *Resource based view* a été empruntée par les trois chapitres de cette partie qui proposent des perspectives d'analyse sur la longue durée – deux cents ans (chapitre 3) – et sur la moyenne durée – quinze ans (chapitre 4) et cinq ans (chapitre 5). Après avoir étudié la genèse et l'évolution d'une capacité sur la longue durée (chapitre 3), le fonctionnement de deux processus d'évolution a fait l'objet des deux chapitres suivants. Le chapitre 4 s'est intéressé au fonctionnement de la diversification du portefeuille de formations – processus interprété comme une capacité dynamique – mis en œuvre à l'école depuis les années 2000. Le chapitre 5, quant à lui, a cherché à comprendre le fonctionnement du processus de résolution de crise – processus interprété comme un processus d'improvisation – mis en œuvre à l'ESCP à l'occasion de la crise de gouvernance que l'école a traversée entre 2008 et 2013. Cette partie a montré que la détention de ressources et de compétences, mais surtout la capacité de l'organisation à les faire évoluer dans le temps, participent aux processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle. À ce titre, les évolutions déduites du contexte interne de l'organisation sont complémentaires aux évolutions déduites de son contexte externe (première partie de la thèse). Par exemple, au même titre que les transformations de l'environnement précédemment évoquées, l'évolution des conditions internes d'exercice de l'activité scolaire dans les années 1960 a incité la direction de l'ESCP à faire évoluer l'organisation de cette dernière. Plus précisément, les revendications de plus en plus insistantes des enseignants et des étudiants à jouer un rôle actif dans les activités de l'école ont conduit la direction de celle-ci à revoir sa gouvernance dans un sens plus participatif, comparativement à l'ancien modèle de gouvernance public et très centralisé qui avait prévalu jusque-là (chapitre 3 de ma thèse). Toutefois, la conclusion de cette deuxième partie a montré que l'angle d'analyse intra-organisationnel n'était pas non plus suffisant en lui-même – ni même complété par l'angle d'analyse sectoriel – pour rendre compte des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle. En effet, ce n'est pas parce qu'une organisation sait évoluer en fonction de ses conditions externes et internes d'exercice qu'elle est nécessairement apte à assurer sa pérennité.

Une condition additionnelle de soutien du corps social me semble devoir être intégrée dans la réflexion (voir pp.376-385 de ma thèse).

**La troisième partie de la thèse** s'est, dès lors, intéressée aux acteurs qui, dans l'organisation et en dehors de celle-ci, participent, en les favorisant ou non, aux processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle. Cette dernière partie, en dépassant le clivage « évolutions dictées par le contexte externe » (partie 1 de ma thèse) et « évolutions déduites du contexte interne » (partie 2 de ma thèse), a porté sur les acteurs humains appréhendés comme « soutiens » ou comme « fossoyeurs » des processus de pérennité organisationnelle. L'approche par les acteurs que j'ai menée dans cette partie – approche dite « actancielle » – s'intéresse à la manière dont la pérennité organisationnelle est liée pour partie aux structures sociales et à leurs acteurs. L'adjectif « actanciel » est volontairement emprunté à la narratologie : il désigne ce qui est relatif, non pas seulement aux acteurs, mais aux actants, c'est-à-dire aux personnages qui assument une fonction (d'adjuvant, d'opposant, etc.) dans le récit. Cet adjectif a donc été retenu car il permet de rendre compte en même temps de l'agir humain sur le plan objectif (parce que les acteurs humains sont des parties prenantes des processus de pérennité) et sur le plan narratif. En effet, l'organisation pérenne est aussi celle qui est racontée comme pérenne (Lorino, 2013). Cette partie s'est ainsi intéressée à certains acteurs particuliers : les parties prenantes en général (chapitre 6 de ma thèse), les anciens élèves et les dirigeants consulaires (chapitre 7 de ma thèse) et, enfin, les *leaders* (chapitre 8 de ma thèse).

De ce travail, je retire un certain nombre de contributions que je vais, à présent, passer en revue.

## **5. Contributions de ma thèse**

Mon travail de thèse présente trois contributions principales. La première est de nature théorique ; elle consiste en la proposition d'un cadre d'analyse pour comprendre les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle (5.1.). La deuxième contribution est de nature méthodologique ; elle montre l'intérêt qu'il y a pour le chercheur travaillant sur les problématiques de pérennité organisationnelle à jouer sur les échelles de temps pour renouveler son cadre de réflexion (5.2.). Enfin, la troisième contribution de mon travail de thèse est empirique ; elle consiste en la restitution de l'histoire de la plus ancienne école de commerce encore en activité au monde et des origines de son secteur (5.3.).

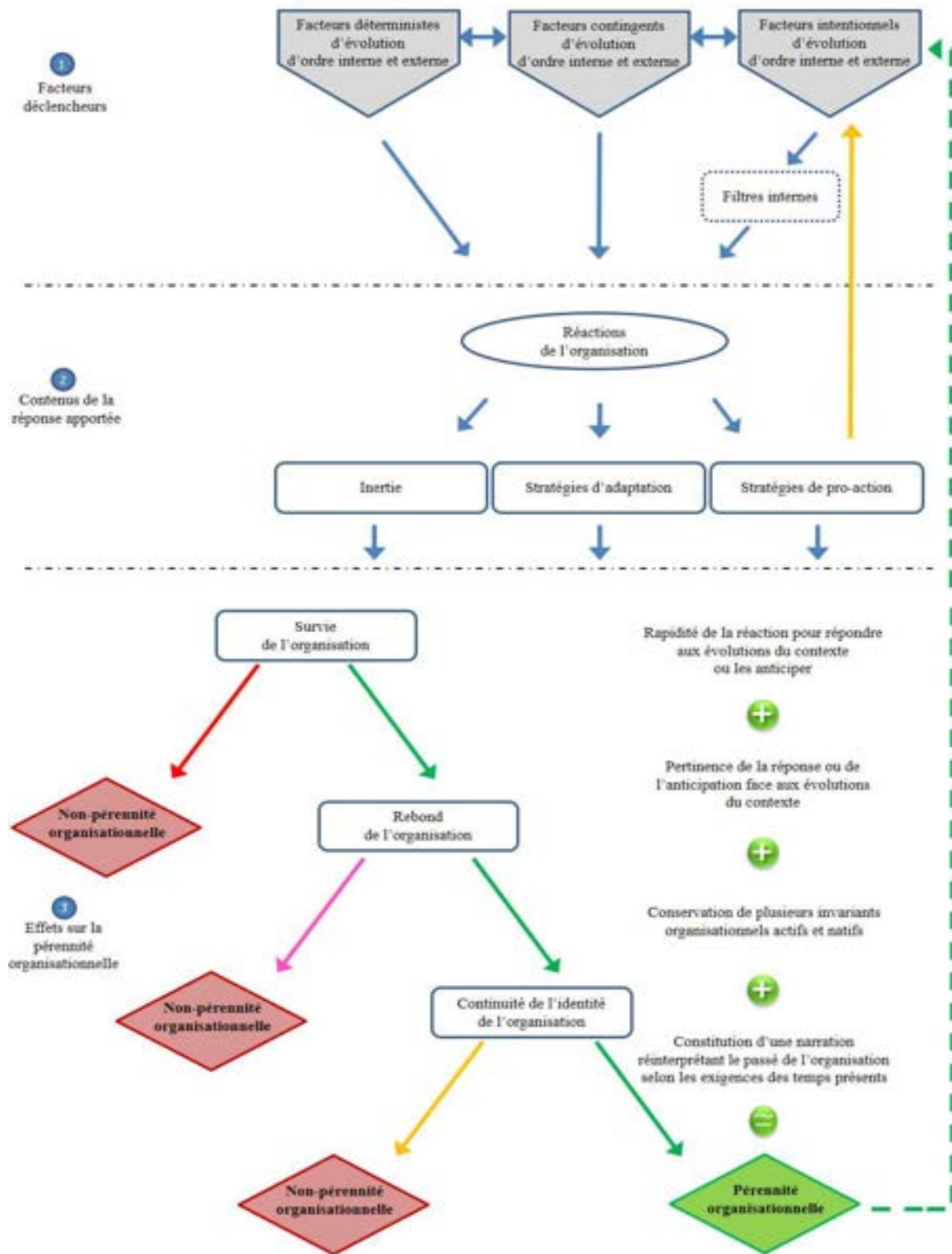


Figure 1 : Contribution théorique de ma thèse – Un cadre d’analyse pour comprendre les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle.

## 5.1. Contributions théoriques de la thèse

Ma réflexion sur les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle s'est structurée autour des trois principales étapes de ces processus que je détaille ci-dessous ; à savoir :

- les facteurs déclencheurs des processus de pérennité (5.1.1.),
- le contenu de ces processus (5.1.2.),
- leurs effets sur la pérennité de l'organisation considérée (5.1.3).

### *5.1.1. Les facteurs déclencheurs des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle*

Les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle résultent de la remise en cause de l'orientation stratégique de l'organisation sous la pression de plusieurs facteurs d'évolution. Ces facteurs d'évolution peuvent être regroupés selon leur nature. Dans la lignée des travaux de Mignon (1998 ; 2001), j'accorde aux facteurs déterministes et aux facteurs intentionnels un rôle important dans le déclenchement des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle. Cependant, je complète les analyses de Mignon en ajoutant à ces deux facteurs, des facteurs contingents d'évolution. Comment fonctionnent ces trois types de facteurs ?

Les facteurs déterministes désignent les forces historiques qui incitent l'organisation à évoluer. Ces facteurs ouvrent et ferment des options stratégiques à l'organisation (Mignon, 1998 ; 2001). Ils peuvent être externes ou internes à l'organisation. Par exemple, l'évolution du secteur de l'enseignement supérieur de la gestion est un facteur déterministe d'origine externe car il a orienté les évolutions de l'ESCP. Parallèlement, les ressources humaines, financières, immobilières, techniques, etc. dont dispose l'organisation à un moment donné constituent un facteur déterministe de son évolution mais, cette fois, d'origine interne. Ces ressources sont, en effet, en grande partie le fruit de l'exercice passé de son activité et le fruit de décisions prises antérieurement – embauche de personnels, investissements en matériels, en équipements, en bâtiments, achat de licences, etc. – et elles déterminent aussi sur la longue durée l'évolution de l'organisation dans la mesure où il n'est pas toujours rentable de désinvestir et où les avantages induits par des investissements anciens restent acquis pendant une durée plus ou moins longue. De fait, ces décisions engagent de façon déterministe l'avenir de l'organisation dans la mesure où elles réduisent sa mobilité stratégique. Cette influence externe ou interne des décisions du passé sur l'évolution de l'organisation renvoie aux dépendances de sentier. Par exemple, à l'ESCP, les investissements humains, financiers, partenariaux et matériels concédés pour l'ouverture du campus italien à Turin en 2004 ont rendu très difficilement envisageable la création, par la suite, d'un nouveau campus à Venise : les coûts de transfert – licenciement des personnels du campus de Turin, rupture du partenariat avec l'Université de Turin,

frais de publicité pour faire connaître le nouveau campus, etc. – auraient en effet rendu peu viable cette option stratégique (chapitre 5 de ma thèse).

L'évolution de l'organisation est, ensuite, déterminée par des facteurs intentionnels. Il s'agit des efforts déployés par les acteurs en vue d'atteindre des objectifs précis en opérant des choix qui ne sont pas induits par le passé de l'organisation. Ces facteurs peuvent également être d'origine externe ou interne à l'organisation. Par exemple, la décision du directeur Guillaume Gervais de transformer l'école en pensionnat obligatoire en 1856 trouve son origine dans une décision autonome du directeur ; décision guidée par son système de valeurs au sein duquel le pensionnat était perçu comme un symbole d'élitisme scolaire (voir p.774 de ma thèse). Conformément aux conclusions de Mignon (2001), sont uniquement mises en œuvre les initiatives intentionnelles conformes au contexte interne de l'organisation. Le contexte interne recouvre de nombreuses variables comme les axes stratégiques de l'organisation, mais aussi ses valeurs et son histoire (Durand, 2006 ; Mignon, 2001, p.165). Ainsi, la demande formulée dans les années 1890 par quelques anciens élèves de l'école d'y créer une section commerciale de « tannerie » (facteur intentionnel d'évolution d'origine externe) n'a pas été acceptée par la direction car, à l'époque, celle-ci estimait que la mission historique de l'école était de former des négociants généralistes et non des spécialistes. C'est donc au nom de l'histoire de l'école (filtre interne) que cette initiative stratégique n'a pas vu le jour (p.535).

Enfin, en complément des travaux de Mignon (1998 ; 2001) qui interprètent les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle comme découlant de forces exclusivement déterministes ou intentionnelles, j'ai pensé utile d'ajouter un troisième facteur d'évolution : les facteurs contingents. Il s'agit d'événements incertains, impondérables, et aléatoires entamant la capacité d'anticipation de l'organisation, tout en entachant la réplication des schémas d'interprétation habituels. Ces facteurs n'appartiennent pas aux contraintes ordinaires de fonctionnement de l'organisation. Ils s'imposent à elle et les acteurs de l'organisation n'ont pas de prise sur eux. Plusieurs exemples, empruntés à mon travail de thèse l'illustrent. Par exemple, les décès inopinés des dirigeants constituent un facteur contingent d'évolution de l'organisation, d'origine interne à celle-ci (p.241 de ma thèse). Les aléas de la conjoncture politique constituent également un facteur contingent d'évolution de l'organisation mais d'origine externe à celle-ci. Ils peuvent imposer l'arrêt de l'activité : la révolution parisienne de 1830 (pp.613-614 de ma thèse) comme la guerre franco-prussienne de 1870-1871 (pp.627-628 de ma thèse) ont ainsi imposé un arrêt de l'activité de l'ESCP. Si cet arrêt n'a finalement été que temporaire c'est parce que les aléas qui en ont été à l'origine n'ont pas perduré dans le temps, mais aussi parce que l'école disposait des ressources humaines, financières et immobilières suffisantes pour survivre à une interruption temporaire de son activité.

Ces trois facteurs d'évolution de l'organisation – déterministes, intentionnels, contingents – s'expriment simultanément et s'influencent mutuellement dans l'histoire de l'organisation ; d'où la double flèche bleue ↔ représentée sur la figure 1.

### 5.1.2. Le contenu des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle

L'exercice stratégique du décideur consiste à s'immiscer dans le jeu des forces d'évolution en choisissant une stratégie possible. Face à ces incitations au changement pour l'organisation, plusieurs processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle peuvent être observés (étape n°2 de la figure 1).

Le premier de ces processus est de nature réactive et peut être qualifié de « stratégie d'adaptation ». Il intervient quand le décideur adopte une stratégie parmi les options alternatives posées par les conditions immédiates de son activité. Les stratégies d'adaptation correspondent principalement à des changements incrémentaux. Il s'agit de processus adaptatifs continus d'interaction entre les différentes composantes de l'organisation (culture, identité, ressources, compétences, etc.) mais aussi avec les différentes composantes du couple organisation/environnement (positionnement concurrentiel, politiques partenariales, etc.). À ce titre, les processus d'apprentissage tiennent une place de choix dans les stratégies d'adaptation (Mignon, 2001, p.160). Par exemple, c'est la participation des enseignants-chercheurs de l'ESCP aux dispositifs d'encadrement et d'évaluation des thèses de doctorat à l'université, à partir des années 1980, qui a abouti à la constitution de connaissances et de compétences qui ont permis à l'école de lancer son propre Ph.D en 2003, puis de se faire habilitier à délivrer le diplôme national du doctorat en France en 2012 (chapitre 4 de ma thèse).

Le deuxième de ces processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle est de nature non-réactive et peut être qualifié de « stratégie de pro-action ». Dans ce cas, le décideur participe à la définition de sa marge de manœuvre stratégique et crée lui-même l'événement par sa démarche. À ce titre, les stratégies de pro-action relèvent directement des facteurs intentionnels d'évolution et c'est pourquoi le schéma relie directement la cellule « stratégie de pro-action » à la cellule « facteurs intentionnels d'évolution » (voir la flèche jaune ↑ sur la figure 1). Les stratégies de pro-action témoignent du fait que la direction de l'organisation détient l'initiative du changement – contrairement aux stratégies d'adaptation où c'est l'environnement qui incite l'organisation à changer.

Enfin, si la direction de l'organisation réagit aux facteurs d'évolution par un processus d'adaptation, et « pro-agit » également par un processus de construction d'elle-même et de son environnement, elle peut faire montre d'inertie à leur égard. À ce titre, l'inertie peut s'interpréter,

selon moi, comme un troisième processus stratégique de pérennité organisationnelle. Ainsi, face aux facteurs d'évolution précédemment mentionnés, la préservation de l'existant peut participer à la pérennité de l'organisation parce qu'elle joue un rôle de « garde-fou » pour freiner les initiatives stratégiques trop risquées. Pour autant, si les dirigeants doivent favoriser l'inertie, ils doivent prendre garde que cette dernière n'inhibe pas les transformations ni les ajustements indispensables à l'évolution de l'organisation. À ce titre, l'inertie est un processus ambivalent en termes de pérennité comme le montre mon étude. L'inertie peut, dans certains cas, apparaître sous la forme d'une crispation sur un état existant aux dépens d'une évolution qui pourrait être induite par le contexte ; et de ce fait provoquer la non-pérennité de l'organisation. Le cas de la division commerciale de l'École Polytechnique de Vienne (p.235 de ma thèse), en est l'illustration. Toutefois, l'inertie peut aussi contribuer à la pérennité organisationnelle en construisant l'apprentissage pour expérimenter de nouvelles voies (pp.540-547 de ma thèse).

De ce fait, les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle se donnent à voir comme une succession de périodes d'évolutions incrémentales – incarnées par des stratégies d'adaptation – alternant avec des périodes d'inertie et ponctuées de ruptures stratégiques – matérialisées par des stratégies de pro-action. Mon travail enrichit les conclusions de Mignon (2001) en montrant que les stratégies de pro-action et/ou d'adaptation correspondent à des tournants stratégiques s'exprimant à travers des bifurcations ; ce qui n'est pas le cas des processus d'inertie. En effet, selon Danjou (1987, p.19), les bifurcations sont « des points décisifs de discontinuité qui orientent de manière irréversible l'évolution de l'entreprise ». Ces bifurcations constituent des moments critiques au cours desquels se joue la pérennité organisationnelle. Cet élément n'avait pas été mis en avant dans les études produites à ce jour par la littérature sur la pérennité organisationnelle. Enfin, mon étude de cas montre bien que les principaux processus stratégiques de pérennité sont des processus historiques dans le sens où ils ont une histoire. Ils ne naissent pas ex nihilo mais toujours dans un contexte ; ensuite, ils ne demeurent pas figés mais évoluent au cours du temps ; enfin parfois, ils disparaissent (pp.546-547 de ma thèse).

### *5.1.3. Les effets des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle*

Les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle ci-dessus mentionnés peuvent parvenir à assurer la pérennité organisationnelle, mais ils peuvent également échouer à préserver cette dernière. À cet égard, force est de reconnaître qu'il n'y a pas de recette infaillible. S'il n'est donc pas possible de garantir avec certitude le succès des processus stratégiques de pérennité stratégique, il existe des conditions qui favorisent ce dernier. Quelles sont-elles ? La littérature en gestion a montré que la pérennité de l'organisation quel que soit son type – pérennité de direction, pérennité de contrôle,



pérennité des activités ou pérennité organisationnelle – implique que cette dernière soit en mesure non seulement de survivre mais aussi de rebondir face aux modifications de ses conditions d'exercice (Mignon, 2001, p.167). À ces deux conditions, il faut en rajouter une troisième qui est spécifique à la pérennité organisationnelle : la continuité de l'identité organisationnelle dans le temps. La combinaison de ces trois conditions aboutit, selon moi, à aux moins quatre scénarios (étape n°3 de la figure 1) :

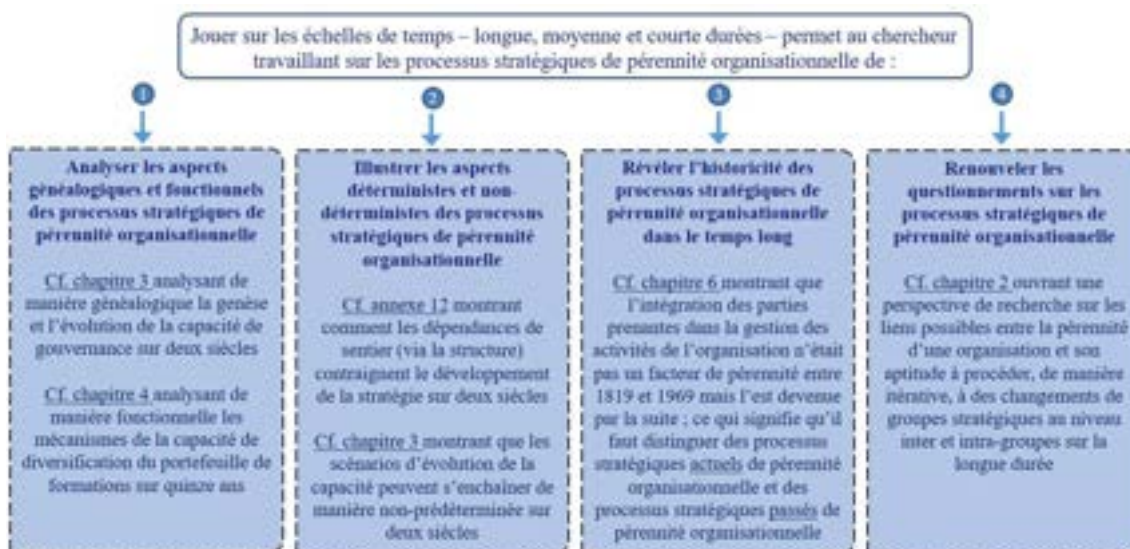
- Le premier scénario (en rouge sur la figure 1) est celui où les dirigeants ne parviennent à satisfaire aucune des trois conditions, provoquant de ce fait la disparition de leur organisation. Tel a été le cas, par exemple, de l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Mulhouse (p.549 de ma thèse).
- Le deuxième scénario (en rose sur la figure 1) correspond à la situation dans laquelle les dirigeants parviennent momentanément à assurer la survie de l'organisation mais ne sont pas en mesure de garantir le rebond stratégique, ni la continuité d'identité qui assureraient sa pérennité organisationnelle. Cette situation peut être illustrée avec le cas de l'Institut Supérieur de Commerce d'Anvers que j'ai présenté aux pages 382-383 de ma thèse.
- Le troisième scénario (en jaune sur la figure 1) correspond à la situation dans laquelle les dirigeants de l'organisation parviennent à assurer la survie et le rebond de l'organisation. Toutefois, faute de préservation de l'identité, la pérennité organisationnelle n'est pas assurée. Ce genre de situation est particulièrement observable à l'occasion de certains changements organisationnels comme les fusions, les changements de nom, ou les changements d'emplacement géographique, qui sont susceptibles de faire perdre son identité à l'organisation. L'histoire du Centre de Perfectionnement aux Affaires (CPA), école de commerce créée en 1929 et dispensant des programmes de formation continue avant d'être fusionnée en 1999 au Groupe HEC pour en devenir le programme « Executive MBA », en est une illustration (voir le chapitre 8 de ma thèse). S'il y a bien eu pérennité des activités, il n'y a pas eu pérennité organisationnelle pour cette école. En effet, dans la mesure où son repositionnement stratégique impliquait sa labellisation en tant que programme du Groupe HEC, l'identité de cette école n'a pas été préservée.
- Enfin, le quatrième scénario (en vert sur la figure 1) représente la situation dans laquelle les dirigeants de l'organisation parviennent à assurer cumulativement la survie de l'organisation, son rebond mais également la continuité de son identité. Cette situation est aujourd'hui incarnée par l'ESCP. Pour assurer la pérennité organisationnelle de l'école face aux facteurs d'évolution de nature déterministe, intentionnelle et contingente, les décideurs de

l'organisation ont mis en œuvre des processus stratégiques de pérennité sous la forme de stratégies d'adaptation ou de de stratégies de pro-action mais aussi, parfois, sous forme d'inertie. Ces processus doivent apporter aux trois facteurs d'évolution susmentionnés une réponse rapide et pertinente tout en préservant la continuité de l'identité de l'organisation dans le temps.

Toutefois, la pérennité organisationnelle qui est obtenue à l'issue de ce processus n'est jamais acquise. Ainsi, nombre d'organisations pérennes par le passé – comme l'Institut Supérieur de Commerce d'Anvers (1852-1968) ou HEC-Jeunes Filles (1916-1975) ont disparu faute d'avoir été en mesure de répondre aux facteurs d'évolution ou de les avoir anticipés. C'est pourquoi l'écusson « pérennité » qui figure sur la figure 1 ne peut se lire que comme un état provisoire qui sera remis en cause à la prochaine manifestation des facteurs d'évolution ; d'où la flèche ↑ qui relie l'étape 3 du schéma à l'étape 1.

## 5.2. Contributions méthodologiques – Jouer sur les échelles de temps pour renouveler le cadre de réflexion sur les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle

Sur le plan méthodologique, ma thèse illustre que jouer sur les échelles de temps est utile pour le chercheur désireux de comprendre le fonctionnement des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle (voir le schéma ci-dessous). Comme j'ai eu l'occasion de le signaler en fin d'introduction générale (voir p.34 de ma thèse), la majorité des travaux dédiés au changement organisationnel selon une perspective de pérennité organisationnelle (Mignon, 2009 ; Maurand-Valet, 2013 ; Amans, Mazars-Chapelon et Villesèque-Dubus, 2013 ; Eggrickx, 2013 ; Averseng, 2013 ; Chapellier et Dupuy, 2013 ; Naro et Travaillé, 2013 ; Lagarde et Macombe, 2013) ont paradoxalement peu mobilisé les approches historiques. Ces dernières sont pourtant heuristiques car elles ouvrent des perspectives d'analyse au chercheur qui joue sur les échelles de temps. En effet, le jeu sur les échelles de temps lui permet d'analyser les aspects généalogiques et fonctionnels de ces processus (5.2.1.), d'illustrer les aspects déterministes et non-déterministes de ces processus (5.2.2.), de révéler leur historicité (5.2.3.) et, enfin, de renouveler les questionnements sur ces processus (5.2.4.).



**Figure 2 : Contribution méthodologique de ma thèse – L'intérêt de jouer sur les échelles de temps pour réfléchir sur les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle.**

### 5.2.1. Analyser les aspects généalogiques et fonctionnels des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle

Selon qu'un processus de pérennité est étudié sur une durée plus ou moins longue, il ne permettra pas au chercheur en stratégie de s'intéresser aux mêmes mécanismes. La perspective multiséculaire m'a permis, par exemple, de m'intéresser à la capacité organisationnelle de gouvernance à l'ESCP dans une perspective généalogique : le chapitre 3 de ma thèse m'a permis de m'intéresser au cycle de vie de cette capacité – sa formation et ses évolutions selon différents schémas proposés par Helfat et Peteraf (2003).

De manière complémentaire, une perspective chronologique plus brève, comme celle que j'ai adoptée au chapitre 4 de ma thèse – en passant d'une étude sur deux siècles à une étude sur sept années –, m'a permis de m'intéresser à une capacité dynamique selon une perspective, non pas généalogique, mais fonctionnelle. En effet, en restreignant le cadre chronologique de l'étude j'ai pu apprécier plus finement les processus de fonctionnement de la capacité – comment elle identifie les opportunités et les menaces, comment elle les traite, comment elle modifie en conséquence les ressources organisationnelles. Ce degré de granularité ne m'aurait pas été accessible si j'avais conservé une approche d'analyse sur deux siècles.

### *5.2.2. Illustrer les aspects déterministes et non-déterministes des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle*

L'ampleur chronologique d'analyse permet d'illustrer concrètement comment les dépendances de sentier contraignent le développement de la stratégie au cours du temps. À ce titre, et conformément aux travaux de Chandler (1989a) et d'autres (Kipping et Cailluet, 2010), ma thèse illustre bien que la structure peut contraindre la stratégie dans la mesure où elle limite les mouvements stratégiques possibles. Durant la période 1905-1947, par exemple, la structure duale de l'école – qui était une école de commerce à la fois de niveau secondaire et de niveau dit « supérieur » – n'a pas permis à sa direction de construire une stratégie de focalisation comme HEC qui est parvenue à s'affirmer, avec le soutien de l'État qui lui reconnaît en 1923 un statut spécial, comme la meilleure école supérieure de commerce en France. En effet, les deux niveaux d'enseignement délivrés à l'ESCP à l'époque ont brouillé dans l'esprit du grand public le niveau d'instruction réel qui était dispensé à l'école ; et beaucoup se sont imaginés que celle-ci n'était plus une école supérieure de commerce (voir section 3 de l'annexe 12 de ma thèse). En dépit des tentatives de la direction de l'école pour mettre un terme à cette confusion – le renommage des deux cycles de l'école en 1941 – ce n'est qu'avec la suppression du cycle d'enseignement secondaire en juin 1949 que la direction de l'école a pu envisager de se lancer dans une stratégie susceptible de concurrencer celle de HEC (voir section 4 de l'annexe 12 de ma thèse). Ce faisant, c'est bien la nature déterministe – via les dépendances de sentier – des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle qui est mise en lumière.

De manière complémentaire, jouer sur les échelles de temps permet au chercheur travaillant sur les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle d'évaluer le caractère non-déterministe de ces processus. Par exemple, aborder le cycle de vie d'une capacité de l'organisation sur un horizon de deux siècles (chapitre 3 de ma thèse) plutôt que sur un horizon de trois ou sept années permet de constater la diversité des situations qui, en pratique, se présentent dans la vie de l'organisation. Mon chapitre 3 illustre ainsi qu'à une phase de maturité de la capacité peut succéder une nouvelle phase de développement ; ce qui remet en question la figuration « fléchée » du cycle de vie de la capacité proposée à ce jour (Helfat et Peteraf, 2003). De ce fait, il est quelque peu simplificateur de prédire que l'évolution d'une capacité s'organise en trois étapes successives de fondation, de développement et de maturité. Le caractère non-prédéterminé de la succession des étapes du cycle de vie de la capacité révèle, pour partie, la nature non-déterministe des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle.

### *5.2.3. Révéler l'historicité des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle*

Jouer sur les échelles de temps permet de révéler l'historicité des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle. Analyser comment la direction de l'ESCP a impliqué ses diverses parties prenantes dans la gestion de ses activités depuis le dix-neuvième siècle (chapitre 6 de ma thèse) m'a ainsi permis de constater que l'implication de toutes les parties prenantes dans la gestion des activités organisationnelles ne constitue pas un facteur intemporel de pérennité organisationnelle. En effet, pendant un siècle et demi (1819-1969), la direction de l'école n'a pas associé les enseignants, ni les élèves, ni même les diplômés à la gestion de ses activités : par exemple, la création des sections de spécialisation s'est effectuée à l'initiative de la seule direction de l'école qui n'a pas sollicité les avis des enseignants, ni des élèves, ni des diplômés. De même, les six changements de noms de l'école qui sont intervenus pendant cette période se sont toujours effectués sans consultation aucune des parties prenantes susmentionnées. Enfin, les premiers partenariats académiques conclus avec des établissements étrangers au début des années 1960 ont été menés par la seule direction de l'école sans véritable implication des parties prenantes susmentionnées... Ainsi, même si la direction de l'école n'a pas associé les enseignants, les élèves, ni les diplômés à la gestion des activités scolaires entre 1819 et 1969, l'école a pourtant perduré pendant toute cette période. Cela revient à constater que l'implication de toutes les parties prenantes dans la gestion des activités scolaires n'a pas été un facteur « historique » de pérennité organisationnelle.

En revanche, depuis le dernier tiers du vingtième siècle, ce phénomène semble bien constituer un facteur « contemporain » de pérennité organisationnelle. En effet, la capacité des dirigeants de l'école à inclure ses parties prenantes dans la gestion de ses activités depuis 1969 – notamment via les réformes de sa gouvernance (chapitre 3 de ma thèse) – lui a permis d'évoluer jusqu'à aujourd'hui et a donc contribué à sa pérennité. La mise en lumière de cette historicité des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle n'est cependant possible que par un jeu sur les échelles de temps. C'est l'un des apports méthodologiques de ma thèse à l'égard de la littérature en gestion consacrée à la pérennité qui cherche généralement davantage à comprendre comment l'organisation assure aujourd'hui sa pérennité, plutôt que comment elle est parvenue à l'assurer jusqu'ici (Maurand-Valet, 2013 ; Amans, Mazars-Chapelon et Villesèque-Dubus, 2013 ; Eggrickx, 2013 ; Averseng, 2013 ; Chapellier et Dupuy, 2013 ; Naro et Travaillé, 2013 ; Lagarde et Macombe, 2013 ; Mignon, 2001) ; position revenant à exclure la perspective historique de la réflexion sur le sujet.

#### *5.2.4. Renouveler les questionnements sur les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle.*

Enfin, jouer sur les échelles de temps permet de dévoiler des champs de questionnements potentiels auxquels le chercheur en stratégie n'aurait pas forcément songé en commençant son travail. Le chapitre 2 de ma thèse, en particulier, a révélé qu'en abordant le concept de « groupes stratégiques » selon une perspective multiséculaire il est possible de faire émerger des questions nouvelles liant le concept de « groupes stratégiques » à la problématique des processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle.

L'élargissement de l'horizon temporel d'études permet au chercheur de suivre les mouvements intra et intergroupes successifs de manière itérative (passage d'un établissement de formation d'un premier groupe stratégique à un deuxième, puis à un troisième, etc.). En suivant sur la longue durée plusieurs organisations, cet élargissement de l'horizon temporel permet d'identifier, comme je l'ai fait à la fin du chapitre 2, plusieurs types de trajectoires de pérennité au sein d'un secteur donné. Ce faisant, des questions nouvelles émergent précisément du fait de la logique longitudinale adoptée. Existe-t-il un lien entre la pérennité d'une organisation dans un secteur donné et sa capacité à procéder à des changements de groupes stratégiques de manière itérative ? Plus une organisation procéderait à des mouvements intra et intergroupes stratégiques au cours du temps, plus serait-elle susceptible d'assurer sa pérennité ? Inversement, moins elle changerait, moins serait-elle susceptible d'assurer sa pérennité ?

#### 5.3. Contributions empiriques – Restituer l'histoire de la plus ancienne école de commerce encore en activité au monde et réexaminer les origines de son secteur

Sur le plan empirique, ma réflexion m'a permis de faire émerger des faits qui avaient parfois été oubliés ou négligés et qui, remis en perspective, font sens pour constituer des connaissances critiques sur une histoire supposément connue. La contribution empirique de mon travail consiste ainsi principalement en la reconstitution de l'histoire de l'ESCP de manière continue depuis 1819.

Mon travail a également contribué à mieux éclairer l'histoire du secteur de l'enseignement supérieur de la gestion sur deux siècles. Au cours de mes recherches, j'ai tenté de restituer une vision stratégique et synthétique de ce secteur depuis le dix-neuvième siècle (chapitres 1 et 2). Cette vision manquait à ce jour dans la mesure où les auteurs ayant travaillé sur ce sujet de manière longitudinale avaient privilégié ou bien des perspectives chronologiques d'envergure plus restreinte ou bien des périmètres plus étroits. J'ai également exhumé un phénomène passionnant qui jusque-là avait largement été sous-étudié : celui des écoles polytechniques avec section commerciale (chapitres 1 et 2 de ma thèse). De ce fait, mes travaux ont contribué à la littérature sur l'histoire de l'enseignement

commercial en Europe en remettant à jour l'une de ses origines injustement oubliées : l'histoire de l'enseignement commercial au dix-neuvième siècle ne commence pas uniquement avec les écoles de commerce, ni avec les facultés de commerce, mais aussi avec les écoles polytechniques dotées de divisions commerciales. Ce travail de restitution empirique intéresse le chercheur désireux de comprendre les mécanismes de pérennité organisationnelle car il met en lumière un type d'organisations longtemps oubliées qui ont été, pour beaucoup, pérennes au dix-neuvième siècle et au début du vingtième siècle avant de disparaître. Si la concurrence des écoles de commerce constitue une hypothèse vraisemblable pour expliquer la disparition de ces divisions commerciales intégrées dans les écoles polytechniques, de futurs travaux sont à envisager pour identifier les autres facteurs de non-pérennité qui ont conduit à la fermeture de ces acteurs de l'enseignement commercial.

## **6. Limites de ma thèse et perspectives pour de futures recherches**

Ma thèse n'est qu'une étape d'un processus de recherche que j'espère avoir l'occasion de poursuivre. À cet égard, il s'agit d'un travail forcément incomplet et porteur de plusieurs limites. Ces dernières constituent autant de pistes de réflexion pour des recherches ultérieures.

L'une des principales consisterait à compléter mon approche de type organisationnel par une grille de lecture de type institutionnel. En effet, mon travail a emprunté une grille de lecture de type organisationnel exclusivement. Ce choix, qui a été justifié dans ma méthodologie (p.127 de ma thèse), m'a conduit à délaissier volontairement les perspectives institutionnaliste et néo-institutionnaliste. Ce type de lectures me semble devoir être envisagé pour de prochains travaux sur les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle. L'adoption de ces grilles de lecture mettrait davantage en lumière comment l'organisation, en tant qu'institution pérenne, crée puis transforme au cours du temps ses règles, ses normes et ses liens sociaux (Livian, 2008). Ces grilles pourraient se révéler d'autant plus pertinentes pour étudier le cas de l'ESCP que cette école fait partie des pionnières en Europe et que la littérature sur le sujet admet généralement que les créations d'organisations pionnières représentent de véritables projets d'institutionnalisation (Krauss, 2009). En outre, parce que l'institution est aussi un système symbolique générateur de mythes (Enriquez, 2003), l'adoption d'une grille de lecture (néo)-institutionnaliste permettrait de prolonger la réflexion en montrant comment la mémoire collective – s'exprimant par les mythes, les rites, les héros, les sagas – permet d'assurer la continuité de l'organisation/institution dans le temps long.

Enfin, la dernière perspective de recherche s'articule autour de la mort des organisations. Si cette problématique constitue le négatif – au sens photographique du terme – de la problématique

que j'ai cherché à étudier ici sous l'angle stratégique, il n'est cependant pas certain qu'il suffise d'inverser les éléments de réponse que j'ai proposés en conclusion pour répondre à la question des causes et des modalités de la mort des organisations. En effet, si la pérennité organisationnelle peut se concevoir comme un processus stratégique, c'est-à-dire comme un processus non-fortuit, pilotable, visant à « modifier les conditions d'insertion de la firme dans son environnement » (Lorino et Tarondeau, 2006, p.317), est-ce également le cas de la mort des organisations ? Je n'en suis, à titre personnel, pas certain dans la mesure où la mort des organisations me paraît devoir demeurer *a priori* étrangère au travail premier des stratèges : ces derniers ont pour vocation d'œuvrer au développement des organisations et non d'accompagner leur trépas, même si ce dernier peut être une conséquence directe de leur action comme de leur inaction. En d'autres termes, le stratège ne saurait être vu, fondamentalement, comme un liquidateur, amiable ou judiciaire. Toutefois, il ne s'agit que d'une position personnelle sur laquelle je suis prêt à être contredit. En outre, s'il est possible de répondre à la question de la mortalité des organisations en l'abordant de manière quantitative – combien d'organisations meurent chaque année ? – le rôle du chercheur en gestion est également de l'aborder en des termes plus qualitatifs – pourquoi et comment meurent les organisations ? De Geus (1997, p.244) évoque le « suicide de l'organisation » comme événement théoriquement possible mais, selon lui, empiriquement très rarement illustré. Bien qu'il ne fournisse aucun exemple de cette situation, certains décideurs parfois « torpillent », pour des raisons diverses, leur organisation, notamment dans le cas de la faillite volontaire ou dans le cas de la dissolution volontaire par les associés. Si cette situation peut, par anthropomorphisme, être qualifiée, comme le fait De Geus (1997), de « suicide » de l'organisation, pourquoi ne pas filer la métaphore en évoquant d'autres modalités de morts d'organisations (par vieillesse, par maladie, par accident, par assassinat, etc.) ? Pour explorer plus avant cette voie de recherche, je pense indispensable d'y associer des chercheurs issus d'autres sciences sociales que la gestion ; et notamment des anthropologues, des sociologues, des philosophes, des psychologues et, bien sûr, des historiens. Aborder la problématique de la mort des organisations de manière historique, c'est aussi se pencher sur le passé d'objets défunts à partir de documents d'archives qu'il faut savoir contextualiser pour mieux les interpréter.



## Annexe 3 – Mes publications mentionnées dans le tome principal

### 1. Passant, 2016 : *Issues in European business education in the mid-nineteenth century*

BUSINESS HISTORY, 2016  
VOL. 58, NO. 7, 1118–1145  
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## Issues in European business education in the mid-nineteenth century: a comparative perspective

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### ABSTRACT


This article explores the emergence of European business education in the mid-nineteenth century. Drawing on archival analysis the typological study which this article proposes, attempts to show that business education before 1870 seems to have been a geographically and institutionally broader expression than has been described up to now. It identifies four organisational models of business education and reveals that higher business education was not limited to the Higher Schools of Commerce alone. It concludes that the European states took, directly or not, an interest in business education well before the end of the nineteenth century.

### KEYWORDS

Business history;  
management education;  
higher schools of commerce;  
apprenticeship schools;  
Europe

### Introduction

The emergence of business education in Europe from the mid-nineteenth century on, in its forms and content, remains overall, a relatively untouched topic. It is of course known that there were Higher Schools of Commerce, at the time: the Superior School of Commerce of Paris ('École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris'), the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp ('Institut Supérieur de Commerce à Anvers'), the Superior School of Commerce of Mulhouse ('École Supérieure de Commerce in Mulhouse') and the Superior School of Commerce of Venice ('Scuola Superiore di Commercio di Venezia') also gave rise to interesting studies and monographs. However, the scopes of this phenomenon, as well as its positioning in relation to other forms of business education at the time, remain largely unknown. Aside from the other schools mentioned above, were there other Higher Schools of Commerce in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century? Did they have a monopoly on higher business education? Might it not have been offered by other institutions? And, if so, which ones? What other forms of business education existed then, and what were their characteristics? This article seeks to address these questions. To answer them, it is essential to remind the reader of the context in which the main forms of European business education operated in the years 1850–1860.

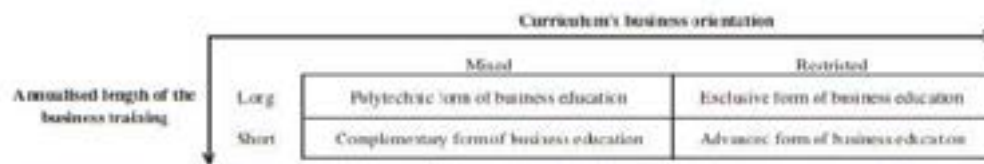
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The middle years of the nineteenth century marked Europe's opening to free trade. After the political upheavals of 1848, the early 1850s ushered in a period of economic growth lasting some 20 years, against a backdrop of geopolitical regrouping. These upheavals created new needs among companies in terms of professional recruiting: the economic boom saw a growing demand among economic stakeholders for staff with a high level of business and technical education.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the increased supply of business education must be associated with the increased supply of engineering education in those years: both of them constituted a common response of the industrialisation. Actually the emergence of new industries, such as combustion engines, electricity, shipbuilding, iron and steel industries, made necessary better technical and business instructions to produce experts, managers and salesmen.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, it must be noted that in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century business education was unequally available. This situation was caused by several factors, both material – unequal manifestation of the second wave of industrialisation among European states, the costs of creating business-education institutions,<sup>3</sup> the insufficiency or even lack of capable, qualified teachers, the sometimes high levels of failure among these institutions<sup>4</sup> – and psychological – most people of the time were not favourably disposed towards this education, which already stigmatised those who received it, who were considered 'grocers'. Business education came in contrasting forms, with very different levels of business instruction, students, targeted goals and resources from one institution to another.

Surprisingly, the spread of business education in Europe does not seem to have given rise to multidisciplinary, in-depth studies during the 1850s and the 1860s. Prior historical studies, much of which focused on the post-1870 period, had not specifically examined the diversity of institutional forms that characterised European business education in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is worth mentioning that two main streams of literature have paid attention to the history of business education in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, prior literature on the history of business education has produced interesting monographs about the early and mid-nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Yet neither have comparative publications been made nor categorisation of business education for this period been done. On the other hand, the second stream of literature has studied the development of higher business education – which is a specific type of business schooling – in a comparative and/or longitudinal perspective.<sup>6</sup> Yet these historical analyses have shown little interest in the mid-nineteenth century since they have focused primarily on the end of the century. Actually, this stream of literature has shown that the rise of this type of schooling – higher business education – was linked to the second industrial revolution and to structural changes in corporate organisations, such as the managerial revolution and the creation of management as a scientific discipline.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, business education at university level considerably developed from the 1880s in some European countries, such as Germany. This is why the period 1850–1870 is neglected by this stream of literature.

The few works that sought to address this topic from a European perspective for the middle of the nineteenth century all concluded that before 1870 the Higher Schools of Commerce apparently constituted a very marginal phenomenon, represented in only a few European states. Philippe Maffre's thesis on the history of higher business education in France in the nineteenth century merely alludes to the matter of the existence of higher business education in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Didier Musiedlak, on the other hand, studying how university-level economics instruction emerged and developed in Italy at the start of the twentieth century, using the case of Bocconi University, believed that the period



**Figure 1.** Forms of business education in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. Source: Author's elaboration.

prior to 1870 corresponded to the birth of higher business education in Europe. As he put it, before 1870 higher business education was an embryonic phenomenon, with a limited geographic range: 'The first [period] is characterised by a very limited movement, both in terms of the number of new institutions created and their geographic distribution. Only three countries were involved in Europe: France, Belgium and Italy.'<sup>9</sup> These conclusions follow the same line as earlier works: in 1971, Amelio Tagliaferri, examining how the Superior School of Commerce of Venice was created, also stated that only these three states established the basics of higher business education in Europe prior to 1870; the other countries had not yet organised that type of instruction.<sup>10</sup> These assertions were picked up by many researchers, historians and practitioners studying the history of business education during that period and beyond.<sup>11</sup> Among them, Lars Engwall and Vera Zamagni maintained that Higher Schools of Commerce in the mid-nineteenth century were a *de facto* idiosyncratic exception in these three countries; the rest of Europe did not really open up to this form of business education until the very end of the nineteenth century. In addition, according to them, higher business education at the time manifested itself solely in the form of the Higher Schools of Commerce.<sup>12</sup> In a list of the business schools existing in Europe for the period prior to 1870, the work only cites six schools.<sup>13</sup>

We believe all these conclusions, which have the advantage of having sketched out a first European genesis of business education in the nineteenth century, need to be revisited. The current research seeks to fill the gap in the literature by offering, in a comparative perspective, a categorisation of business education in Europe during the 1850s and the 1860s.

### Data and methodology

The article focuses on the period 1850 to 1870. Indeed, from a chronological point of view, the middle of the nineteenth century in Europe marks a turning point in terms of formal business teaching: even though business education has a long tradition in Europe and predated the industrial revolution, it was only in the years 1850–1860 that the first initiatives of schools of commerce at higher level developed.<sup>14</sup> In other words, business education underwent profound transformations to meet the needs of the industrial revolution by becoming more diversified and institutionalised in special curricula, whether they reached elementary, secondary or higher level. This period ended at the beginning of the 1870s when the geopolitical and economic context posed new challenges. On the one hand, the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) and the foundation of the German Empire induced the transformation of the existing ruling classes whose needs for business training had significantly evolved.<sup>15</sup> On the other, the financial crisis of 1873 triggered a major depression in Europe leading to changes in the existing national systems of business education, as in Austria.<sup>16</sup> All these

events questioned the prevailing way of conducting business and that is why, after 1870, business education in Europe was incentivised to adjust its goals and means to this new environment.

Archival data that support this research were collected from a range of different sources. All of them reflected the importance of professional and business education in Europe at a time when the industrialisation process was ongoing and global trade was flourishing. First, we examined published information provided by reports of jurors and catalogues of world exhibitions from the mid-nineteenth century which had a vested interest in the development of professional education: since the third world exhibition, which took place in London in 1862, every world exhibition proposed several sections dedicated to education and notably business education. The mid-nineteenth century was also a time when administrations in Europe established new and reformed existing national systems of education. This is why three exceptional documents were consulted: the scientific missions from surveys sponsored by the French Ministry of Trade and by the French Ministry of Public Instruction between 1863 and 1870.<sup>17,18</sup> These documents were produced by the French imperial government at a time when France sought to modernise its professional and business education, drawing on pedagogical models followed by its neighbours. Additional information was also taken, not only from the pedagogical dictionaries or encyclopedias but also by travelogues and reviews of scientific societies interested in business education at the time.<sup>19,20</sup> Finally, archival data from some business schools also provided details of the most useful to establish a comparative perspective, especially the archival data from the Superior School of Commerce of Paris.<sup>21</sup>

To approach the diversity of the multiple forms of business education in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century we decided to undertake a cross-national study. Most of the examples of the article are taken from France, Belgium, Austria and German states. Some other countries are mentioned, for example Italy, Spain, Portugal or Russia. This unbalance is a reflection of two main reasons. The first one is due by and large to the available sources – and especially the French surveys sponsored by the Ministry of Trade and by the Ministry of Public Instruction. The second reason is linked to the fact that in the mid-nineteenth century in Europe business education was developed to varying degrees depending on the country: in some hardly industrialised countries, such as Greece and Turkey, formal business teaching remained underdeveloped in those days.

The units of analysis which are compared in this article are neither countries nor business schools. Why have we excluded these units of analysis? Actually, the main European types of business education designated in this paper were not necessarily linked to any specific country: the majority of the different forms of business education existed in parallel in most countries all over Europe, to a greater or lesser extent. Moreover, business schools did not have a monopoly on business education: some educational institutions, such as artisans' guilds or societies for the advancement of science, were not business schools in the strictest sense of the word but they sometimes taught business courses. Noting that some institutions offered simultaneously different forms of business education, we decided to select a more appropriate unit of comparison which is business training. This latter is considered from a transnational perspective in terms of design, degree, entry requirements, syllabus, contents and diploma.

To compare the similarities and the differences between business training in European countries, this article proposes a typology of the main forms of European business education in the mid-nineteenth century. Our typology is different from the typology designed by the

historian Gérard Bodé. The latter, studying business education in France between 1800 and 1940, created a typology based on a specific unit of comparison – i.e. business schools – with a single criterion which is the commercial orientation of these institutions. Under this criterion, Gérard Bodé distinguishes three forms of business education: schools exclusively delivering business courses, technical schools delivering commercial and industrial courses and finally the general schools with business courses.<sup>22</sup> However, for our comparative research, this classification is not appropriate for two reasons. First, since it is exclusively dedicated to French schools, it excludes from the scope of analysis a lot of European institutions such as polytechnic schools which sometimes also provided business courses. Then, using Gérard Bodé's classification would lead to place in the same category very different institutions: the first category – schools exclusively delivering business instruction – brings together business schools welcoming young 'full-time' students and schools of apprentices which provided mostly evening, mid-day or Sunday business education. This is why our typology is based on two criteria: the business orientation of curricula offered by these educational institutions – either business schools or not – and the annualised length of the business training. The first variable is based on the curricula's level of business specialisation: it identifies those dedicated entirely to business education – and hence having a restricted business orientation – and those that offered it more occasionally – marked by a mixed business orientation. The annualised length of the business training is based on the annualised number of hours of strictly business instruction received by a student completing all of his schooling at the studied institution. The annualised length of the business training is in fact a continuous variable. However, to make it a discriminating factor, a threshold amounting to 1000 hours of annual business courses was set to classify these institutions. This threshold is not arbitrary: it marks a clear demarcation between educational institutions that provided the most common business education – secondary and higher business schools generally reached between 1000 and 1300 hours of business courses per year – whilst most other business trainers, like the apprentice business schools, rather provided a business education including between 500 and 750 hours over the year. Applying these criteria makes it possible to set up a matrix (see Figure 1) that reveals four forms of business education for Europe in the mid-nineteenth century that will be described below.

### **The exclusive form of business education: the schools providing only in-depth business education**

Even though numerous business schools were nominally 'academic' – such as the commercial academies of Vienna, Budapest, Graz, Prague, Gothenburg or Stockholm<sup>23</sup> – they cannot be considered as academic in the way this adjective is used today, since their programs did not study business as a science but rather as training. We classify them as 'exclusive' because they were exclusive both in terms of instruction – they were limited to business education only – but also in terms of scheduling – they were so time-consuming that they prevented students from carrying out another occupational activity. The exclusive business schools refer to a form of education devoted solely to advanced, meticulous and restricted study of a particular discipline, namely business courses. These educational institutions were specifically set up for business education, the expression of a position shared by their founders that the business professions could not operate improvisationally and had to be studied by themselves, using specific resources. Whether these schools were secondary or higher, all

of them were primarily intended to enable their students to perform essential business operations. At these institutions, business education was given during the day and over an extended period of between two and four years, devoted specifically to business and sometimes preceded by one or two years of preparatory courses. This form appears to have been widespread, especially in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Institutions of diverse origins***

Exclusive business schools were at the time primarily private in origin. Private individuals, finding the national business education systems to be inadequate or even non-existent, reacted by founding their business schools using their own funds, like the Superior School of Commerce of Paris founded in 1819 by merchants Legret and Brodard.<sup>25</sup> Even though we do not know in detail what these schools' budgets were, their financial resources are known to a greater or lesser extent. Since business education was considered as an investment to provide high-middle managers and experts for enterprises, the private sectors were very interested in financing it. Consequently, most of these schools were primarily initiated and/or financed by the local business associations, chambers of commerce and companies. For example, the Commercial Academy of Vienna, established in 1858, was financed by a committee of the association of merchants in Vienna but also by the leading institutions at the time, such as the National-Bank or Kredit-Anstalt für Handel und Gewerbe.<sup>26</sup> On top of that, some exclusive business schools were also privately endowed by a sponsor – for instance the Superior School of Commerce of Mulhouse was sponsored by Jacques Siegfried, a cotton merchant. In any case most of the support was done by the pupils themselves: in most of these institutions, tuition fees were high and scholarships were few. Due to these characteristics, most of these schools benefited from an independent and autonomous status.

If government intervention in supporting business education was secondary during this period, by comparison with the private sectors intervention and school fees, it was nevertheless an important factor in the emergence and development of these schools: some European states began to release, directly or otherwise, some funds for business education. For instance, the 12 full scholarships – 14,400 francs – the French government paid from 1853 to worthy students from the Superior School of Commerce of Paris were, as rightly noted by André Grelon, 'disguised subsidies' even more useful than the financial balance of the school was largely provided by the school fees.<sup>27</sup> In Italy, likewise, by Royal Decree of 6 August 1868, King Victor Emmanuel granted the Superior School of Commerce of Venice a subsidy of 10,000 lira, raised to 25,000 lira in 1872. On another level, the local governments were also engaged in the creation of business schools in towns, by providing scholarships, subsidies or locations, to meet their demands for bookkeepers, merchants and managers who were essential to develop their regions. Familiar with local needs in terms of business education, they were best equipped to determine whether it was appropriate or not to open such institutions. For instance, from 1868 to 1872, the Superior School of Commerce of Venice was mainly supported by the Province of Venice (40,000 lira) and the city of La Serenissima (10,000 lira) which also granted to the school the use of the Foscari Palace: at a time when seaborne trade was stimulated by the opening of the Suez Canal (1869) – which turned the Mediterranean into a privileged sea route towards the Orient – financing the school was perceived by Venetian local governments as an issue of economic development.

Some states, and particularly the Austrian, Belgian, German, and Italian governments, were already showing an interest in having their own respective business schools. This interest, beyond mere financial or moral support, was manifested legally. On the legal front, some governments granted professional advantages to the graduates of their national business schools, promoting their access to consular careers – as Belgium did for the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp, and as Italy did for the Superior School of Commerce of Venice – or giving them partial dispensation from military service. In Saxony, the 1866 Military Act allowed Higher Schools of Commerce to issue a certificate of fitness for one year of volunteer duty in the state's army, just like secondary institutions such as the middle-class secondary schools, and Germany's gymnasiums and 'Realschule.' In Saxony, this law also authorised the public commercial institutes of Leipzig ('Oeffentliche Handels-Lehranstalt zu Leipzig'), Chemnitz ('Oeffentliche Handels-Lehranstalt zu Chemnitz') and Dresden ('Oeffentliche Handels-Lehranstalt der Dresdner Kaufmannschaft') to issue the precious certificates. The same was true in Austria, where, since December 1868, the diploma issued by the Commercial and Nautical Academy of Trieste ('Reale Accademia di Commercio e Nautica Trieste') and the commercial academies of Prague ('Prager Handels-Akademie'), Vienna ('Wiener Handels-Akademie') and Graz ('Akademie für Handel in Graz') entitled the volunteer to one year in the Austro-Hungarian Army, but only for students who held a diploma from a middle school ('mittelschulen') before they began studying in these schools.

Finally, the state sometimes also participated directly in setting up its national business education system by opening its own business schools, like Austria which, in 1857, established and subsidised the Budapest Commercial Academy. Whilst such cases seem infrequent, they are nonetheless undeniable, revealing the growing awareness among government authorities of the need to train national business personnel.

### ***A select school population***

The resources of these business schools were most often limited, both in financial terms and in terms of pedagogical competence, so selecting the students to take the courses was a serious matter for the heads of these institutions. It was a crucial procedure, not just for candidates whose ability to benefit from a business education was assessed by the school administration, but also for the school that had to invest time and skills in training them. The lack of educators capable of teaching the commercial disciplines hampered the development of business schools at that time.<sup>28</sup>

Admission was therefore selective, based on criteria such as the applicant's age and abilities as evaluated by an entry exam or prior diplomas. A minimum age was most often set for admission to these schools, often accompanied by a maximum age. At the Public Commercial Institute of Leipzig, for example, the minimum age for admission was 14, whereas 16 was the maximum age for any new incoming students; this resulted in great age homogeneity among the students. This was also true at the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp, which students generally entered around the age of 18 to 20. Admission was also by exam, arranged by the school, after the student's initial training, as was the case for the Higher Schools of Commerce in Paris, Mulhouse, Antwerp, Leipzig, Venice and Vienna; this exam mainly evaluated the applicants' mastery of the language of instruction as well as foreign languages and arithmetic. Diploma-based admissions were possible for students holding higher domestic or foreign diplomas, for the Superior School of Commerce of Paris,

the baccalauréat or, for the Superior School of Commerce of Venice, a diploma issued by a technical institute<sup>29</sup> or an equivalent foreign diploma, for example. In Austria, the commercial academies of Vienna and Prague required an academic certificate issued by a 'Realschul' or 'gymnasium,' which in effect restricted access to these institutions to students who were at least 14- or 15-years-old.

However, the selectivity of these schools in terms of admissions needs to be put in perspective: in the absence of a diploma to exempt the applicant from taking the entrance exam, preparation of the exam was sometimes provided by the schools themselves in a preparatory course. For those schools using this system – such as the superior schools of commerce of Paris, Antwerp, Venice and the commercial academies of Vienna and Prague, admission did not include any exam or diploma requirements: when applying, the applicant merely needed to demonstrate his interest in and ability to take business education. The preparatory course proved indispensable for foreigners who did not speak the local language in which they would then receive their instruction. The preparatory course was not for foreigners only, however: whilst its purpose was primarily to bring students up to speed in fields supposedly covered by their elementary or secondary education, it was also to prepare them for the specific nature of business education, and particularly for courses in modern languages and bookkeeping. The preparatory course was a way for the school to test not just their abilities but also their determination to pursue a complete business education: by the ages of 14 to 16, most European students had completed their elementary education and reached the minimum legal age at which schooling was no longer mandatory. Their determination to pursue business education therefore had to be well considered and sufficiently unshakeable so that the student would not flinch when problems arose.

### ***An exhaustive education with variable specifics***

As business instruction was not yet defined as a state responsibility in those days, the design of business curricula – in terms of frame, contents and duration – was mainly a task for the commercial communities. These commercial communities were not a homogenous group. They ranged from individuals – master artisans, shopkeepers, merchants, industrialists, commercial teachers – through to associations – trade or maritime associations, chambers of commerce, etc. For instance, Jacques Siegfried, a French cotton merchant, who visited a lot of business schools in Europe and in the USA in the 1860s, learnt from foreign experiences and brought new insights to conceive the curriculum of the Superior School of Commerce of Mulhouse created and partially financed by him in 1866.<sup>30</sup> All of these communities were interested in promoting business education; that is why a strong, though not exclusive, emphasis was put on practical skills.

The instructional programme at these institutions was generally intensive: from 10 to 18 courses a week were given to the students, totalling from 25 to 40 hours of instruction per week. The educational content dispensed as common-core training was invariably organised around a body of required major disciplines, clearly shared among the exclusive business schools. These were, in order of their priority: modern languages, bookkeeping and the 'commodities composition' course. The importance attached to modern languages can be explained by the international environment in which merchants might eventually work. Bookkeeping, associated with accounting and arithmetic, also appeared among the cornerstone subjects in the curricula of the European business schools: because it could be used



Table 1. Illustrations of some Exclusive business curricula in Europe in the 1860s.

Courses in 1859-1870	Superior School of Commerce of Paris			Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp			Public Commercial Institute of Leipzig			
	First year		Second year	First year		Second year	First year		Second year	
	Hours per week	% of the total program	Hours per week	% of the total program	Hours per week	% of the total program	Hours per week	% of the total program	Hours per week	% of the total program
Commercial	0	0%	0	0%	18	47%	18	43%	0	0%
Technique										
Bookkeeping	4.5	13%	3	9%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Arithmetic	4.5	13%	2	6%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%
Mathematics	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%
Political Economy	0	0%	1.5	4%	2	5%	2	5%	2	6%
Commodities	1	3%	1.5	4%	3	8%	3	7%	1	3%
Composition										
Geography	2	6%	1.5	4%	2	5%	2	5%	2	6%
Commercial	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%	1	2%	2	6%
History										
Commercial	1	3%	2	6%	1	3%	3	7%	0	0%
Legislation										
Commercial	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Correspondence										
Commercial	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	13%
Science										
Partnership	2	6%	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%
French	1.5	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	13%
German	3	8%	3	9%	3	8%	3	7%	3	9%
English	4	11%	3	9%	3	8%	3	7%	4	13%
Spanish	3	8%	3	9%	3	8%	3	7%	0	0%
Italian	0	0%	0	0%	3	8%	3	7%	3	9%
Drawing	1.5	4%	1.5	4%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%
Technology / Mechanical	0	0%	3	9%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Technology										
Maritime	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
Construction										
and Equipments										
Daughtership	2.5	7%	2.5	7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Chemistry	1.5	4%	1.5	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Physics	1.5	4%	1.5	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Literature	1.5	4%	1.5	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	36	100%	34	100%	38	100%	42	100%	32	100%

Note: For the sake of clarity, the optional preparatory courses were not represented in this table.

Sources: Table 1 has been compiled from a variety of sources and should be interpreted with care: Baudouin, *Rapport sur l'état*, 215–224; Siegfried, *Les Ecoles*, 22–35; Morand, *Projet d'organisation*, 20–36; Author's elaboration.

to keep track to the successive transformations funds undergo and the transactions of any business or bank, it was a natural part of doing business. The objective of the 'commodities composition' course was to enable future merchants to become familiar with the nature, quality and composition of marketable products, raw materials and by-products they would speculate on one day, but also to identify counterfeit or damaged products they might come across.<sup>31</sup> For this purpose, a collection of samples of raw materials was generally installed in the business or technology collections that most exclusive business schools had, like those in Paris and Antwerp. This instruction grounded the business education in the material nature of the merchandise.

Alongside these core disciplines shared among the various business schools, there were courses that were less universal, such as the 'commercial technique' or the 'commercial history'. This situation can be explained first and foremost by the specific nature of local commerce that some schools sought to teach: the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp, located in one of Belgium's main ports, required its students to take two courses that were not offered in the other schools: 'comparative maritime law' as well as a course on 'maritime construction and shipbuilding' created by Royal Decree of 21 June 1858. The introduction of these special courses showed the requirements the authorities were encouraging in terms of the business education of their students: a merchant heading up an export business could not remain indifferent to the principles of law governing international relations at sea. Second, the diversity of goals other than professional pursued by the business schools also explains the variability among curricula. In those exclusive business schools offering an ostensibly higher education, some courses pursued goals more ideological than genuinely operational for future merchants. According to Philippe Maffre, commercial history was taught at some institutions to enhance the prestige of business careers whilst demonstrating to the students the historical importance that commerce and merchants have exercised since Antiquity.<sup>32</sup> Finally, some courses held a paradoxical place in the students' use of their time: some courses seemingly of undoubted value for commerce were, paradoxically, allotted only a few hours – or even virtually none – such as those in commercial geography and commercial legislation. This latter discipline was absent from the curricula of some institutions, like the Commercial Academy of Vienna,<sup>33</sup> whereas at others it was taught residually, only in the second year, as at the Public Commercial Institute of Leipzig (see Table 1), or in the two years of primary instruction but still with only a few allotted hours, as at the Superior School of Commerce of Stuttgart where legislation was taught one hour a week out of a weekly total of 37 hours of courses or at the Superior School of Commerce of Paris, where legislation was taught one hour a week in the first year and two hours a week in the second year: out of a weekly total of almost 35 hours of courses, legislation represented only 3% to 6% of the curriculum. This situation was undoubtedly less the result of a lack of interest on the part of the business-education institutions rather than the difficulty they experienced in recruiting competent, available instructors. Likewise, the 'commercial technique' course, as it was then offered in the exclusive business schools of Antwerp, Mulhouse, Prague and Venice, which was based on a simulated commercial venture,<sup>34</sup> was not taught at most business schools because of the difficulty they had recruiting professors able to teach such a course.<sup>35</sup>

In any case, the syllabus of the business schools was not static but could evolve. In this regard, the influence of the alumni over the evolution of the exclusive business schools must be mentioned. Even though the business schools' alumni associations were mainly established after 1870, it is worth noting that the alumni assumed an important role in this process.

From an individual and collective point of view, international contacts and networks developed by the alumni were important in the reform of the curricula of the schools: alumni usually made up part of the Development Board of business schools and contributed to the development and evolution of the school's programs, as at the Superior School of Commerce of Paris. Their influence was also significant in the expansion of business education in Europe. Actually, the alumni had the training and the depth of experience to be able to lead and manage efficiently new business schools or teach business courses. For instance, in the kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia in 1850, the School of Commerce of Nice was created and directed by Jean-Joseph Garnier, a French alumnus from the Superior School of Commerce of Paris who benefited from advice given to him by the director of the Superior School of Commerce of Paris.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in 1862, Othon Miller, a former student from the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp, was hired by the Business School of Odessa, in Russia, to teach commercial courses following the methodology of the Belgian school.<sup>37</sup>

### **The polytechnic form of business education: business departments added to technical-training institutions**

Similar to the institutions that adopted the exclusive form of business education insofar as they were also geared to regular students available to study during the day, these vocational institutions nonetheless stood apart from them. The adjective 'polytechnic' that we apply here, rather than pertaining to a nominally 'polytechnic' school, points to the very nature of the multidisciplinary instruction offered at them: a polytechnic education is based on various courses given with an eye towards their multiple technical applications. Whilst these training institutions were not exclusively dedicated to business, they nonetheless sometimes included business education within their curriculum. This approach was widespread at the time in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and in very limited instances in Russia.

#### ***Business departments added to multidisciplinary training institutions***

Unlike exclusive-type business education, which was presented in institutions originally established just for that, polytechnic-type business education was generally – although not always – added after the fact to the curricula of most technical institutions that existed before them.<sup>38</sup> That was the case with the Riga Polytechnic ('Die Polytechnischen Schule zu Riga') established in 1862 in Russia: originally the institution had only departments for training engineers, architects and farmers. The business department was not established there until 1868. This business instruction was unique for the time in being originally mainly public: the various states were in fact the creators not just of the main polytechnic institutes in Europe but also, consequently, of the business departments that were sometimes established in them over time.<sup>39</sup>

What can the reasons be for this inclusion after the fact? Whilst these reasons of national economics explain the birth of high-level business education, they do not explain its inclusion in the polytechnic institutes. Beyond mere administrative opportunism several reasons can be suggested. First, the creation of a new business-education option in these multidisciplinary institutions had pedagogical advantages. Of these, we may mention here bringing together students with similar educational needs and potentially destined to work later in the same economic environment. At times specifically business departments appeared at

certain maritime schools, in order to train students that would be called on to develop the port ecosystem right at the same institution. That was true for the Commercial and Nautical Academy of Trieste, founded in 1754 by Empress Maria Theresa, which was originally dedicated solely to nautical science, under the name of the 'Royal Navigation School'; before a business department was added to it in 1817. This institution had a broad goal: this polytechnic education was geared both to future sailors who needed to be familiar with the principal aspects of trade which they would be called on to use on a daily basis and to future merchants called on to conduct international transactions which, at a time when steam navigation brought major upheaval, would involve familiarity with, if not mastery of, shipping practices – managing maritime logs, calculating and paying customs duties, bills of health, etc. Beyond its pedagogical value, the polytechnic form also offered more financial advantages. Financially, adding a business department to a multidisciplinary school after the fact required a smaller investment than would be required to develop a business department from nothing. The latter offered the advantage of allowing a pooling of resources among the various departments: the facilities with their ancillary costs – rent, insurance, maintenance, heating, light – as well as school materials – sample collections, libraries, chemistry labs – even instructors were shared between business education and the other training offered. Finally, this pooling reduced the risk of the institution having to close by diversifying the types of training offered: whereas in an independent exclusive business school a drop in student numbers could lead to major financial problems for the institution, even causing it to close its doors, the risk was reduced for a polytechnic school with a business department: if tuition declined in one department, the institution was not forced to close its door but could cut back on one of its departments. Moreover, the inclusion of business departments in polytechnics was favoured because graduates of the Germanic polytechnics had mixed job opportunities: they could go to the public sector as well to the private industry.

### ***Higher business education***

Because of their inclusion in these high-level host structures – the polytechnic schools – the business departments benefited from their general characteristics.<sup>40</sup> They were first and foremost invariably geared towards students who were nearing the end of their technical training. The criteria for admission to the various business departments varied from one institution to another but remained very selective. In addition to criteria regarding age and diplomas, students usually had to sit an exam. In order to be admitted to the business department of the Stuttgart Polytechnic, students had to be at least 15-years-old and acquainted with decimal calculation, drawing, geography and French.<sup>41</sup> These conditions were similar for students who wanted to study in the business department of the Karlsruhe Polytechnic: the student had to prove that he had the knowledge, acquired in a middle-class secondary school ('höhere burger Schule'<sup>42</sup>), which increased the minimum age for applying to the school to 15. The entrance exam was sometimes so complicated that an entire year was devoted to preparing for it, at the school itself. This situation could be seen at the Riga Polytechnic, where the students, after a year of preparing for the entrance exam, could be admitted to the institution's business department.

The higher nature of the polytechnic-type of institutions was apparent in their organisation. Most of the Germanic polytechnic schools, founded on the model of the Vienna and

**Table 2.** Illustrations of some Polytechnic business curricula in Europe in the 1860s.

Courses in 1863-1864	Stuttgart Polytechnic Business department Single year		Karlsruhe Polytechnic Business department Single year		Munich Polytechnic Business depart- ment Single year	
	Hours per week	% of the total program	Hours per week	% of the total program	Hours per week	% of the total program
Bookkeeping	6	17%	2	6%	4	14%
Commercial and Political Arithmetic	4	11%	3	9%	4	14%
Political Economy	0	0%	0	0%	2	7%
Commercial Geography and Statistics	3	8%	3	9%	2	7%
Commercial History	0	0%	0	0%	1.5	5%
Commercial Correspondence	4	11%	3	9%	1.5	5%
Commodities Composition	0	0%	3	9%	2.5	9%
Commercial Technique	0	0%	5	15%	0	0%
German	2	6%	4	12%	0	0%
English	4	11%	3	9%	3	11%
French	4	11%	4	12%	3	11%
Italian	5	14%	0	0%	3	11%
Commercial Legislation / Introductory course on bills-of-ex- change legislation	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
Administrative Legislation	0	0%	0	0%	2	7%
Drawing	2	6%	2	6%	0	0%
Penmanship	0	0%	2	6%	0	0%
Catechism	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
Interdisciplinary courses	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable
Total	36	100%	34	100%	28.5	100%

Note: For the sake of clarity, and due to the 'Lernfreiheit' and variety of courses that were offered in these institutions, non-business courses (trigonometry, botany, zoology, fencing, etc.) are represented in the table under the line 'interdisciplinary courses'. Contrary to what may be inferred from a cursory reading of the table, the polytechnic-type of business education offered a curriculum with a mixed business orientation.

Source: France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement*, 307–313; 391–397; 437–447. Author's elaboration.

Karlsruhe polytechnics, in fact deliberately adopted an organisation similar to that of the universities in terms of the structure of their organisation: the various technical departments – business, maritime, agricultural, architectural, chemical, mechanical, forestry, mining, post, etc. – as at a university, constituted so many departments or faculties, pedagogically consistent but administratively dependent. Their disciplinary regime was rather loose: the freedom-to-study guarantee was unique feature of the Germanic polytechnic institutes.<sup>43</sup> The status of the professors was generally privileged: in Vienna, the instructors at the Polytechnic enjoyed university-professor status. Finally, whilst the configuration of some schools was in fact close to that of the universities,<sup>44</sup> university status was sometimes granted them by law: in 1865 the title of 'higher technical institute' ('Technische Hochschule') was bestowed by Grand Duke Frederick I to the Karlsruhe Polytechnic.

### A mixed and limited but intense business education

The curriculum of multidisciplinary business education seems to have involved fewer hours than did the other types of specialised instruction provided at these multidisciplinary schools. At the Stuttgart Polytechnic, students took five years of classes in the departments of architecture, civil engineering, and chemistry, whereas the business department required only two years of studies, including one preparatory year. The same was true for Bavaria where, at the Munich Polytechnic, the business department included only one year of studies whereas the departments dedicated to construction and mechanics required four. At the Karlsruhe Polytechnic, the business department required only one year of studies, without preparatory year, whereas the departments of architecture, civil engineering, forestry, mechanics and chemistry required between two and four years of studies. Whilst business students at the institutes enjoyed a relatively less dense curriculum than their fellow students in the other technical departments, they also seemed to enjoy fewer hours of classes than their fellows at the exclusive business schools. At the Munich, Karlsruhe and Stuttgart polytechnics, the length of the business training – one single year – was very short by comparison with the business training offered at the Commercial Academy of Vienna or at the Superior School of Commerce of Paris.

Not only was the business instruction brief, the content provided was also relatively narrow. Business instruction was generally based on some 10 different classes, mostly foreign languages and bookkeeping. This situation was primarily due to the relative freedom students were allowed in attending classes in their department. On behalf of 'Lernfreiheit' – the learning freedom of students in Germanic polytechnics as a result of which they should be able to take whatever courses they wanted, when and where they wanted<sup>45</sup> – students could, and usually did, follow interdisciplinary courses, i.e. courses not restricted to business courses. This is why students at the business department of the Stuttgart Polytechnic could attend trigonometry, descriptive geometry, and differential calculus whereas students at the business department of the Munich Polytechnic could attend botany or zoology. Likewise, some students could even study history of literature or fencing, as at the business department of the Zurich Industrial School. Since the polytechnic-type of business education was not restricted to business courses, the professors who taught in business departments were also more willing to keep their theoretical disquisitions within the limits of what was most directly useful for these departments.<sup>46</sup> At the Stuttgart Polytechnic, out of 36 hours of classes per week, languages may have accounted for up to 15 hours of class, which represented 42% of the curriculum, and six hours of bookkeeping, which represented 17% of the curriculum (see Table 2). For the business department of the Munich Polytechnic, these figures were approximately 33% for foreign languages and 14% for bookkeeping (see Table 2). Commercial legislation was not taught at the Munich and Karlsruhe polytechnics but was taught at Stuttgart Polytechnic though with fewer hours: one hour a week was devoted to an 'introductory course on bills-of-exchange legislation' which represented less than 3% of the curriculum. The relative narrowness of business teaching did not seem to have been compensated by students' prior studies: the preparatory year at the Munich and Karlsruhe polytechnics, and the years of instruction previously taken at Bavaria's Realgymnasiums or at the middle-class secondary schools in the Grand Duchy of Bade, did not include any specifically business-related instruction – such as bookkeeping, commodities composition, commercial correspondence or commercial legislation; these disciplines were taught only during the

short year of specialisation in business. But this circumstance should not be generalised: some institutions, like the Riga Polytechnic, extended the term of the business department to three years. In addition, although the total length of polytechnic business education was brief, it was nonetheless characterised by an undeniable intensity. With 35 hours of classes per week, the students in the business departments of these institutions had little free time. Calculating the number of hours of polytechnic business education annually puts these institutions on an almost equal footing with the exclusive business schools: a maximum of between 1200 and 1400 hours of business classes annually was provided.

### **The complementary form of business education: institutions offering an introductory business education**

Complementary by nature, auxiliary business education was not dispensed completely autonomously but was generally offered by schools providing general or vocational instruction, and also by other institutions such as educational associations responsible for providing mass education. Not all these institutions were necessarily at the primary level but may have been at the secondary level, such as colleges, lyceums or athenaeums.

#### ***An introductory business education***

The purpose of this instruction was not to train merchants but to introduce students to basic business know-how that would give them access to less skilled positions in bank offices, exchange houses, brokerages or small shopkeeping. Auxiliary business education prepared those students who wanted it for jobs, allowing them to immediately apply the basic business knowledge and skills conveyed in class. Consequently, the educational institutions in question could openly provide auxiliary business education with more limited hours and contents than that offered by the exclusive or polytechnic variety of schools.

The complementary form of business education was first and foremost accessory, dispensed according to a limited number of hours, because of the dual orientation – both general and specialised – of the curriculum offered to students. Because of the limited hours of instruction, which did not allow for in-depth teaching, as well as in some cases the young age of the students which kept them from engaging in complex business transactions, auxiliary business education was streamlined in terms of its content. The ‘commercial technique’ course which, because of the cross-disciplinary nature of the knowledge it drew upon, took time to practise was never included in the curricula for this type of education. Other courses, which seemed more ancillary for future merchants, such as commercial history or chemistry, were thus rarely taught. For access to the first jobs in small-scale commerce, only basic business instruction was offered: foreign languages, bookkeeping, commodities composition and penmanship or stenography, as in the Berlin Artisans’ Guild.<sup>47</sup>

Supplemental business education generally took the form of courses given sporadically, a few hours per week over several years. In Greece, since a Royal Decree of 1856, the Syra Gymnasium, quickly joined by the Patras Gymnasium in 1857 and the Corfu Gymnasium in 1865, provided its pupils with business education along with their general studies (see Table 3). Over the four years of study, this business education was structured as follows: in the first year, two hours a week were devoted to ‘basic concepts of trade and traffic’; in the second, three hours a week of commercial geography were offered; in the third, two hours of

Table 3. Illustrations of some Complementary business curricula in Europe in the 1850s.

	Athenaeum of Brussels Business department		Gymnasium of Syra Single department Business Department			
	First year	Second year	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year
	Hours per week	% of the total program	Hours per week	% of the total program	Hours per week	% of the total program
Courses about 1857						
Bookkeeping	2	6%	1	3%	0	0%
Commercial Geography	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%
Commercial History	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%
Commercial Legislation	2	6%	1	3%	0	0%
Basic concepts of trade and traffic	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Political Economy	0	0%	2	5%	0	0%
Arithmetic - Algebra - Geometry	0	0%	3	8%	3	9%
Ancient, medieval and modern History	0	0%	0	0%	3	9%
Natural History	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%
Belgian History	3	9%	3	8%	0	0%
Geography	3	9%	2	5%	0	0%
French	5	15%	6	16%	3	9%
English	3	9%	3	8%	0	0%
German	2	6%	2	5%	0	0%
Flemish	2	6%	2	5%	0	0%
Chemistry	4	12%	4	11%	0	0%
Physics	2	6%	0	0%	0	0%
Modern Greek	0	0%	0	0%	12	36%
Latin (optional)	0	0%	0	0%	4	12%
Catechism	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%
Drawing	1	3%	3	8%	0	0%
Astronomy	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%
Vocal Music	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%
Gymnastics	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%
Total	33	100%	37	100%	33	100%
			30.5	100%	32	100%

Source: Baudouin, *Rapport sur l'état*, 18–34; Chassotis, *L'Instruction publique*, 251–294. Author's elaboration.



bookkeeping; and in the final year, three hours a week were devoted to commercial legislation. These hours were modest compared to the 30 hours of general instruction given to the students. Consequently, business courses only represented between 10% and 15% at the most of the curriculum. The situation was identical in Turkey where the Pera Greek Lyceum, established in 1869, offered business courses for students wanting an introduction to business training. At other institutions, business classes were not distributed throughout the schooling but condensed into the last years of studies. At the business school of Moscow, established in 1804, the first four years were dedicated to general primary instruction – such as catechism, penmanship, arithmetic, Russian, drawing, algebra, history and geography – and to foreign languages – French and German. The fifth year offered the first business course, i.e. bookkeeping, and the sixth and seventh years included commercial statistics and commodities composition. In other institutions a business department was officially created in order to prove that business education deserved more than some courses given sporadically. It was the case, for instance, in Portugal where the Lyceum of Lisbon offered, from 1844 to 1869, a business department including two years of studies.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in Belgium, the royal athenaeums of Brussels, Arlon, Bruges, Hasselt, Namur and Tournai, included since 1850 a business department of two years (see Table 3). Regardless of the form taken by these models of business teaching – business courses offered through a business department or not – business instruction was auxiliary compared to the 30 hours of general instruction given to pupils and represented less than 15% of the total curriculum.

### ***Towards a popularisation of business education: the virtues of complementary business education***

One of the great advantages of complementary business education was that it promoted lower-cost business education opportunities for the public: it was less costly for the organisers behind this education to add on to existing institutions a few additional business courses, taught by special instructors, rather than to find the funds necessary to establish schools from scratch dedicated exclusively to business education. In the UK, this form of business education was highly prized at the time and was generally offered in the working-class schools associated with other institutions of higher or secondary education, like King's College or University College. Alongside the university instruction offered at their schools of theology, medicine, literature and the sciences, these two institutions offered open night classes between the hours of 6 p.m. and 9 p.m., from 1839 for University College and 1855 for King's College. These were public courses, open to all men without regard to age, educational qualifications or skills.<sup>49</sup> The existence of these business courses instituted at secondary institutions or universities indicates that, unlike one accepted and persistent theory, the English state developed institutionalised business education well before the 1880s to the 1890s.<sup>50</sup>

In addition, auxiliary business courses offered the additional advantage of making basic business education accessible to a large number of students and not just to those who completed their secondary education. In countries where general education was still underdeveloped, this argument cannot be ignored: the inclusion of business courses in the general educational course or in the curricula of educational associations was a compensatory solution to make up for the lack of exclusive or polytechnic business schools. Mass instruction therefore had the advantage of making business courses accessible to the general public,

regardless of any social considerations. In London, night classes at King's College were very well attended: in the mid-1860s; they were taken by 800 students, 'mainly the sons of merchants and shopkeepers, bank clerks, eager to bear the name "scholar";'<sup>51</sup> In Germany the audience attending complementary business education was also very large: the number of workers who had completed the courses of the Berlin Artisans' Guild between 1859 and 1867 was estimated at 60,000, without however can be determined among them by those who followed the commercial courses. At that time, during their apprenticeship German workers used to travel. Consequently, members of the Berlin Artisans' Guild were regularly renewed. Around 1867, the number of regular and permanent members of the guild was estimated at 3000 whilst the number of occasional listeners was estimated at 10,000.<sup>52</sup>

What means did these institutions use to popularise such an education? A policy of low or even free tuition to attract a large audience to the class, varied lecture topics to meet the public's diverse expectations, and sometimes assigned grades to encourage those in attendance to pay closer attention were employed. Pedagogically speaking, the introduction of these special courses within schools ensured them a certain level of instruction: when offered in a school, business education benefited from the coordination and grading of the studies. For families not planning to have their children continue their technical studies in higher institutions, the advantage offered by business classes given in ordinary schools was real: it was introductory training, certainly, but a quality one, guaranteed by the school. Some institutions, like the Berlin Artisans' Guild, had specialised libraries, opened at night and made their instruction coordinated and progressive with final exams, as if the business courses were given by real schools. Some institutions involved renowned teachers: in Paris, in the 1860s, the Polytechnic Association offered business conferences provided by contemporary qualified individuals, such as the French economists Joseph Garnier and Jean-Gustave Courcelle-Seneuil. Also, in Madrid, the Society for the advancement of Arts ('Fomento de las Artes'<sup>53</sup>) received in the 1860s prominent individuals such as Emilio Castelar, politician and professor at the University of Madrid, and mathematician Manuel Becerra. Similarly, the Berlin Artisans' Guild involved university professors, economists, statisticians, lawyers, traders, and manufacturers. The quality of education provided by the latter institution had also been recognised by the international jury of the 1867 World Expo which awarded it a gold medal. These interventions, performed by qualified individuals, undeniably helped the popularisation of business education in all sections of society. Next, psychologically, the inclusion of this instruction at times in secondary schools – gymnasiums, colleges, lyceums, and athe-naeums – satisfied the desires of the middle class to have its own prestigious instruction for those of its sons going into business. Finally, regardless its pedagogical and psychological advantages, this complementary-type of business education represented in some countries, such as Greece and Turkey, the higher level of business education at that time because the lack of elementary education and little financial support were an important impediment to the establishment of higher forms of business education, i.e. exclusive or polytechnic business education.

### **The format of advanced business education: advanced courses for an attuned public**

Unlike complementary business education, necessarily associated with a more general education, advanced business education was independent and was taught at institutions

dedicated to it. It is called 'advanced education' because it complemented the general or vocational instruction received after the fact, and not simultaneously, which made it final by completing the student's school training. The second reason that seems to us to justify the adjective 'advanced' is that this instruction theoretically complemented the empirical knowledge that the employed students acquired through their daily practice of commerce.

### ***Teaching adapted to student profiles***

Advanced education involved educational methods which, far from being cursory, were constructed and progressive. Because it was generally geared towards adults and apprentices exercising a professional activity, this instruction sought to adapt to the specific characteristics of its audience at several levels.

Class scheduling was adjusted: instruction was given according to the professional constraints of the apprentices, covering adapted time slots with classes rarely exceeding 20 hours a week. Some exclusive-type business schools occasionally opened departments for apprentices with courses featuring adapted hours for the business classes, like the exclusive business schools of Vienna, Hanover, Frankfurt or Leipzig. In the apprentice department of the Public Commercial Institute of Leipzig, two hours of instruction daily were broken down into two one-hour classes: the first from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. and the second from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. The apprentice department of the Business School of Hanover grouped together the two hours of daily instruction from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. Similarly, the apprentice department of the Commercial Academy in Vienna grouped together the two hours of daily instruction from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The same was true at the Spanish advanced-type business schools – such as the schools of Barcelona, Bilbao, Cadiz, Madrid, Malaga, Santander, Seville or Valencia<sup>54</sup> – which the royal decrees of 1850 organised so as to provide only night-time classes, from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. In all cases, instruction was given during slack hours whilst business was less active at the city's shop counters and when, consequently, businesses could do without their managers or clerks without too much inconvenience. Beyond the established hours, the school calendar at some schools was sometimes relaxed in order to welcome students all year long. In Paris, the Pigier Practical Business School ('École Pratique de Commerce et de Comptabilité'), created in 1850 by Gervais Pigier,<sup>55</sup> offered instruction accessible at any time of the year, with no exam required, to students between the ages of 13 and 25. Whether the students were employed or not, advanced business education synchronised its teaching activities with the time constraints of business.

Instruction was then streamlined in terms of content: advanced business education was not very substantial in terms of the diversity of what was taught. The extent of the courses taught rarely approached six or eight business courses (see Table 4). At the apprentice departments in the business schools of Leipzig and Frankfurt, courses were limited to modern languages, arithmetic, business correspondence, bookkeeping, commercial geography and penmanship. Unlike the exclusive business education given to regular students in the regular departments of these same schools, the apprentice programme left out certain subjects: they were not given courses in chemistry, physics or commercial product analysis. This exclusion can no doubt be explained by the fact that the apprentices, who were in contact with merchandise every day, were supposedly sufficiently educated in the material aspects of commerce. The low number of hours offered also justified the reduction in content taught.

**Table 4.** Illustrations of some Advanced business curricula in Europe in the 1860s.

Courses in 1863-1864	Public Commercial Institute of Leipzig Apprenticeship department:					Business School of Hanover Apprenticeship department:				
	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
	Hours per week	Hours per week	Hours per week	Hours per week	Hours per week	Hours per week	Hours per week	Hours per week	Hours per week	Hours per week
Arithmetic	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
Bookkeeping	3	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	0	0
Commercial Technique	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Geography	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Commercial Correspondence	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	1
Penmanship	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
German	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
French	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1
English	2	2	2	0	2	1	1	2	1	1
Total	10	10	10	9	10	11	10	10	11	10
	% of the total program	% of the total program	% of the total program	% of the total program	% of the total program	% of the total program	% of the total program	% of the total program	% of the total program	% of the total program
	20%	20%	20%	22%	20%	27%	20%	20%	22%	20%
	30%	20%	20%	0%	20%	18%	20%	0%	0%	21%
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	21%
	0%	10%	10%	11%	10%	9%	10%	10%	9%	11%
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%	0%	0%	18%	11%
	0%	0%	0%	22%	0%	9%	0%	27%	0%	5%
	10%	10%	10%	22%	10%	0%	10%	22%	10%	0%
	20%	20%	20%	22%	20%	5%	20%	22%	20%	11%
	20%	20%	20%	0%	20%	5%	20%	0%	5%	11%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

 Source: Baudoin, *Rapport sur l'état*, 213-218, France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement*, 48-49, Author's elaboration.

### ***Highly professionalised courses***

Unlike complementary education, which was conceived as simple introductory instruction for pupils or listeners who were not necessarily going into business, advanced education was addressed exclusively to students who wanted to have business careers or to boost their positions. As such, this instruction was presented as being highly professionalising. For instance, Gervais Pigier, a French director of an accounting firm, had occasion to deplore the lack of business and accounting knowledge of some of his employees. To remedy this situation, he opened in Paris a private business school offering a short but practical and skill-oriented training, focused on the accounting, sales and secretariat courses. This school, which he led from 1850 to 1870, developed considerably in the national level. The focus on professionalising their instruction, which was apparent in the names of some institutions – for instance the Business School of Madrid was named ‘Escuela profesional de Comercio’ and Pigier Business School in Paris was named ‘École Pratique de commerce et de comptabilité’ – was important for those schools. Indeed, it was not so much the diversity or exhaustiveness of the courses than their rapidly operational nature that made this instruction different. This pragmatic feature was important because advanced-form of business education was considered an investment for both students and privately firms: students sacrificed present earning for possible future higher earnings whilst firms giving training to their employees reduced their wage costs and increased their output.<sup>56</sup>

Because the students in these courses were often working during the day and had very limited free time, their expectations for the advanced business courses – especially the paid courses – led them to have demands regarding the content offered and the results they were entitled to expect from them. Advanced business education in fact sought to enable students to access business positions and to remain in them while pursuing their business education. In Paris, Pigier Practical Business School sought to meet this need for brief and professionalising business training. The condensed training at this institution enabled students to acquire skills in less than six months that they could use in the job market. In fact, bookkeepers, familiar with single-entry bookkeeping, attended this school to be trained in double-entry bookkeeping. Accountants also went there to be introduced to the special types of accounting they were not yet familiar with, such as accounting for the metallurgical industries, mechanical construction companies, collection houses or farming estates. Other students came to these institutions looking for a way to expand their range of professional know-how and skills by being introduced to business practices they were completely unfamiliar with, like the heads of companies being introduced to accounting so as to be able to check the books themselves.

For students not looking for a career in the various commercial or industrial companies or banks, teaching business was a career alternative that some advanced business schools prepared students for. The Business School of Madrid was not content to train employees for business: it also trained technical instructors whose diploma was recognised by the state as being higher. The preparation of these students followed, firstly, the same pattern as the training given to regular students: the first two years were devoted to the basic teachings – bookkeeping, foreign languages, statistics – whilst the third year integrated the teaching of Spanish commercial legislation and political economy. The fourth year was optional for students who looked for a career in the various commercial or industrial companies but obligatory for future commercial teachers. It offered commercial history courses and

international trade legislation courses that were not taught to apprentices during the first three years. Indeed, after the royal decree of 4 March 1866, business-education graduates of the Business School of Madrid were given access to certain positions in the Spanish civil service, just like university engineers and graduates, which constitutes a demonstration of the Spanish state's interest in and recognition of certain business-education graduates.

## Conclusion

After this overview, several conclusions seem unavoidable. A different picture of European business education in the mid-nineteenth century seems to emerge. This picture significantly qualifies the conclusions drawn to date on several key points. In the period 1850 to 1870, Europe was far from lacking business education, especially at higher levels of instruction (see Appendix). Whilst this instruction was still underdeveloped at the start of the century,<sup>57</sup> this was now widespread throughout the Continent. This business training was not all of the same type: four organisational models seemed to govern business education in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. Each of these models met particular needs and had advantages and drawbacks unique to it but which should be interpreted in the light of scholastic, economic and national contexts.

Pedagogically speaking, in the years 1850 to 1860 there were already manifest similarities among the European business-education institutions. Whilst some of these similarities were not specific to business education – like the general lack of co-education at the business schools<sup>58</sup> – other characteristics did however seem specific to it. Thus the basic composition of business education seemed invariably to have been organised around the study of foreign languages, bookkeeping and commodities composition. This trio of subjects truly formed the pedagogical common denominator for business education in the various European countries. This situation also points to the lack of a full consensus regarding the epistemological range that business education should cover and, consequently, regarding the difficulties of formulating it. The contours of the discipline were still fluid: whilst basic courses were invariably acknowledged to be the core of any business education, other subjects evolved around its edges with an unequal power of inclusion, for reasons specific to each discipline, such as chemistry, physics or commercial history.

Moreover, the assessment that in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century higher business education was a phenomenon limited to Higher Schools of Commerce alone – and just five or six of them – present in three 'Latin' countries only, seems to have had its day. The phenomenon was more widespread than studies to date seemed to indicate. In fact, higher business education was indeed offered not only by the Higher Schools of Commerce but also by the business departments of certain polytechnic institutions that were then scattered over part of Europe. In addition, the number of Higher Schools of Commerce, whilst certainly limited, seemed to have reached or exceeded some 10 schools: to the five schools already identified, we must also add the commercial academies of Vienna, Budapest, Graz and Prague, as well as the exclusive business schools of Leipzig, Frankfurt, Stuttgart and even Turin. These exclusive business schools in some cases emerged as early as the start of the nineteenth century in the three countries mentioned, but also, at the very least, in Austria and Germany; this made it not a 'Latin' but a truly European phenomenon.

Finally, as regards the origin of all these business-education options, although it is true that they were mainly the projects of the businessmen, chambers of commerce, wise

companies and municipalities that drove their rise, the role of the states must not be neglected. Of course the states were, overall, not very much involved in this drive or in guiding their nationwide business education. However, a discreet presence is not the same as a complete absence. The criticisms directed up to that time at the various states for their minimal or even non-existent involvement in formulating national business-education systems for the period, seem to need some qualification: the European states involved themselves more or less directly, depending on individual national contexts, in the emergence and development of their business education. Starting in the 1850s, the European states took an interest in business education indirectly, by granting benefits to students and graduates of this education, and directly, by establishing the first public business schools, and by introducing business departments in polytechnic institutes. These forms of state involvement seem to reveal that, contrary to what previous studies concluded,<sup>39</sup> the training of managerial staff in economic and commercial subjects was already viewed by some European states as a necessity, as early as the 1850s.

This European perspective on business education warrants a more in-depth study. It would benefit from being expanded to a comparative study with the business education options then available in the US.<sup>40</sup> This research would in future make it possible to shed light on the still unfairly misunderstood origins of business education in the main Western countries.

## Notes

1. Gstraunthaler, "The History," 12–13. Le More, « L'invention, » 443–472.
2. Grelon, "The Training"; Pombo Vejarano and Ramirez, "Technical Education," 3–21.
3. Musiedlak, « La création, » 625–662.
4. Efmertová, « L'évolution, » 36.
5. See for instance Berengo, *La fondazione*; Renouard, *Histoire de l'École*.
6. Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*.
7. Larsen, "The Masculine Foundation," 24–42.
8. Maffre, « Les origines. »
9. Translated by the author. See Musiedlak, « La création, » 625–662. See also Musiedlak, *Université privée*, 16.
10. Tagliaferri, « Profilo Storico, » 25.
11. See for instance, Fernández Aguado, "Historia de la Escuela," 32; Amdam, "The European Perspective," 343; Nishizawa, "Business Studies," 51; Ferricchio, "La diffusione," 25–32; Kaplan, "European Management," 529–534.
12. Engwall, and Zamagni. *Management Education*, 4–7.
13. More precisely Engwall and Zamagni cite the Superior School of Commerce of Paris, the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp, the Institut Supérieur de Commerce Saint-Ignace' in Antwerp, the Vienna Commercial Academy, the Superior School of Commerce of Mulhouse and the Superior School of Commerce of Venice. See Engwall, and Zamagni. *Management Education*, 5.
14. Engwall, and Zamagni. *Management Education*, 4.
15. Musiedlak, *Université privée*, 17–19.
16. Gstraunthaler, "The History," 17.
17. France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement*.
18. Baudoin, *Rapport sur l'état*; France, *Rapport à sa Majesté*.
19. Siegfried, *Les Écoles*.
20. *Le Bulletin*.
21. Archives départementales de Paris, cote I-274.34.

22. Bodé, « À la recherche, » 51.
23. Dumont and Jourdan, *Etude sur les Ecoles*.
24. Because of the disunion of Germany before 1871, there existed approximately 35 separated sovereign states. That's why the word 'Germany' is used in this paper not in its political sense – because Germany as a state officially born in 1871 – but in its cultural and economic sense, in the sense of 'Deutscher Zollverein' which then gathered some thirty member states.
25. This school still exists under the name 'ESCP Europe'.
26. Gstraunthaler, T. 'The History,' 14–15.
27. Grelon, « Ecoles de commerce, » 40.
28. For instance, in 1864, the director of the Superior School of Commerce of Paris complained to Minister of Commerce regarding his difficulties in recruiting business teachers.
29. These institutes were technical secondary schools with four years of study. They were created in 1859 by the 'Legge Casati' during the creation of the Kingdom of Italy in order to improve the Italian economy by supporting commercial and technical education.
30. Siegfried, *Les Écoles*.
31. James, *Education of Business Men*.
32. Maffre, « Les origines, » 523.
33. This absence is confirmed at least for the period 1863–1865.
34. During the course, all students were divided into groups, each representing a fictitious business house from the leading commercial places on the globe. Inside each business house, students were trained to become merchants capable of comprehending large business transactions. Numerous operations were given to them: students had to keep a complete account of the fluctuations of price in the various markets, carry on a correspondence relating to the operations of the house in foreign languages, keep books, and make inventories.
35. Grunzweig, *Histoire de l'Institut*, 35.
36. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École*, 72.
37. Léauté, *L'Enseignement*, 663.
38. Vienna Polytechnic ('Polytechnisches Institute Wien') appears to be a notable exception. At the time of its foundation in 1815, this school offered preparatory classes and two sections: one specifically commercial and one technical. Similarly, the Polytechnic of Prague ('Prag Polytechnisches Institute') opened in 1806, offered business instruction from the early nineteenth century. Efmertová, « L'évolution, » 40.
39. For instance, in Germany, the local government financed the establishment of Polytechnic schools in its own state. With respect to this point, Carlos Pombo Vejarano and María Teresa Ramírez state that 'Local governments were interested in investing in technical education because they need to develop their region. ... Therefore, it seems that the social rate of return was substantial to technical education, consequently technical education should be financed by local governments'. See Pombo Vejarano and Ramírez, "Technical Education," 11–12.
40. Capecchi, and Ruta, "European Polytechnic Schools," 13–21.
41. France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement*, 392–393.
42. The middle-class secondary schools were public schools for pupils, aged 10 at least, from elementary schools ('Volksschulen'). After five years of study pupils left the middle-class secondary school to work except when they went to a gymnasium or a real school ('Realschule').
43. Hein, « De l'École polytechnique, » 67–69.
44. *Ibid.*, 67–69.
45. Baudoin, *Rapport sur l'état*, 453.
46. France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement*, 29.
47. Chevalier, *Exposition Universelle*, 366–372.
48. The business department at the Lyceum of Lisbon was the successor of one of the first business schools in Europe. The Business School of Lisbon ('Aula de Comércio de Lisboa') was opened in 1759 and taught young boys after their primary education. See Gonçalves and Concelção Da Costa Marques, "Evolução do ensino," 201–220. See also Machado and Cardão, "A importância," 4–8. See also Costa, "O Ensino, 389–404". Rodrigues and Craig, 'English Mercantilist Influences'.
49. Vernon, *Universities and the State*, 65–67.



50. Maffre, « Les origines, » 240–241.
51. France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement*, 453.
52. Chevalier, *Exposition Universelle*, 371–372.
53. García Ruiz, "Apuntes para una historia," 140.
54. Arquero Montaña and Donoso, "Inicios de las enseñanzas".
55. Léautey, *L'Enseignement*, 266–284.
56. Pombo Vejarano and Ramírez, "Technical Education," 6.
57. Bodé, « À la recherche, » 46–47. See also, for the end of the eighteenth century, Hoock, "L'enseignement," 159–174. See also Julia, « L'éducation des négociants, » 221.
58. The lack of co-education was a common feature shared by the majority of European business schools at that time, with rare exceptions. In the USA, by contrast, business colleges were mixed even before the 1860s.
59. Musiedlak, « La création, » 634.
60. The creation of the 'Wharton School of Finance and Commerce' within the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia in 1881 marked a decisive step in the professionalisation of business education in the USA, as described by Alfred D. Chandler. However, there were historical antecedents: the 'schools of commerce' of the University of Louisiana, the University of Wisconsin and the 'Washington and Lee University' respectively opened their doors in 1851, 1852 and 1869. See Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, 466, and Chandler, *Scale and Scope*, 82.

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**Appendix.** Dates of the opening of some institutions offering business courses in Europe in the 1850s to the 1860s.

Polytechnic form of business education				Exclusive form of business education				
Country	City	Institution	Opening	Establishment of business courses	Country	City	Institution	Opening
Austria	Lemberg	Industrial and Commercial School	1865	1870	Austria	Bucapest	Commercial Academy	1857
	Trieste	Commercial and Nautical Academy	1744	1817		Graz	Commercial Academy	1861
	Germany	Karlsruhe	Polytechnic School	1825		Before 1861	Prague	Commercial Academy
Munich		Polytechnic School	1868	1868	Viena	Commercial Academy	1858	
Stuttgart		Polytechnic School	1829	Before 1860	Antwerp	Superior Institute of Commerce	1852	
Portugal	Lisbon	Industrial and Commercial Institute	1852	1869	Denmark	Copenhagen	Grüner Commercial Academy	1843
Russia	Riga	Polytechnic School	1862	1868	France	Mulhouse	Superior School of Commerce	1866
Switzerland	Zurich	Industrial School	1773	Before 1863	Paris	Paris	Superior School of Commerce	1819
Complementary form of business education					Germany	Gera	Superior School of Commerce	1849
Country	City	Institution	Opening	Establishment of business courses	Germany	Koenigsberg	Business School	1850
Belgium	Antwerp	'Jesuits' Commercial School	1852	1852	Leipzig	Public Commercial Institute	1831	
	Brussels	Royal Athenaeum	1777	1850	Osnabrück	International Business School	1838	
	England	London	King's College	1831	1856	Stuttgart	Superior School of Commerce	1854
London		University College	1828	1840	Amsterdam	Business School	1846	
France		Society for the advancement of Science	1808	1808	Venice	Superior School of Commerce	1868	
Germany	Paris	Polytechnic Association	1830	1830	Romania	Bucharest	Public Business School	1864
	Paris	Society for the advancement of Science	1848	1848	Galatz	Public Business School	1864	
	Berlin	Artisans' Guild	1843	1843	Sweden	Stockholm	Schantz Commercial Academy	1865
Greece	Offenbach	Business School	1850	1850	Gothenburg	Commercial Academy	1826	
	Syria	Gymnasium	1835	1856	Advanced form of business education			
	Holland	Enschede	Twentsche Business School	1864	1864	Country	City	Institution
Milan		Polytechnic School	1863	1866	Austria	Graz	Apprentice Business School	1867
Russia		Moscow	Practical Business Academy	1810	1810	Lemberg	Apprentice Business School	1865
Spain	Moscow	Business School	1804	1804	Salzburg	Apprentice Business School	1860	
	Odesa	Business School	1862	1862	Paris	Pigier Practical Business School	1850	
	Se-Petersburg	Business School	1772	1772	Germany	Freiberg	Business School	1849
Turkey	Madrid	Commercial Athenaeum	1867	1867	Spain	Barcelona	Business School	1850
	Pera	Greek Lyceum	1869	1869	Madrid	Business School	1828	

Note: Due to the large number of institutions that could have been mentioned, only the most frequently cited institutions in archival documents are included in this table. Source: Author's elaboration.

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# BETWEEN FILIAL PIETY AND MANAGERIAL OPPORTUNISM: THE STRATEGIC USE OF THE HISTORY OF A FAMILY BUSINESS AFTER THE BUYOUT BY NON-FAMILY PURCHASERS

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PRISM

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*À travers l'étude qualitative d'une école de commerce française qui fut une entreprise familiale pendant deux générations au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle - l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (aujourd'hui ESCP Europe) - cette étude démontre que l'entreprise familiale peut devenir, par l'écriture de son histoire, un lieu de confrontation émotionnelle. En effet, si les témoins de l'époque familiale ont utilisé l'histoire de l'entreprise pour préserver leur alma mater, ses nouveaux acquéreurs l'ont utilisée pour démontrer que, contrairement à leurs prédécesseurs, ils avaient réussi à accroître la prospérité de l'entreprise à un niveau jamais atteint auparavant. Les récits historiques de l'entreprise familiale peuvent donc servir à la fois d'indicateurs des tensions émotionnelles qui règnent dans l'entreprise et de leviers stratégiques pour façonner son avenir.<sup>1</sup>*

## INTRODUCTION

While management literature since the 1990s has shown interest in narratives<sup>2</sup>, the

research on family business, however, is more recent<sup>3</sup>. The first studies have shown that narratives can play three major roles. They can make sense of the past, legitimize the present and raise the aspirations which will be

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to pay tribute to Christopher Kobrak, an outstanding professor, whose guidance and support were critical to the preparation of earlier versions of the paper. The encouragements of Francis Démier were also helpful. The assistance of Valérie Baroteaux was particularly useful. The author would like to thank Jean-Philippe Bouilloud and Anne Gratacap from whom he received valuable advice. The author also wishes to thank Ludovic Cailluet, Rania Labaki and Fabian Bernhard for their detailed contributions and constructive criticism.

<sup>2</sup> D. A. Gioia and K. Chittipeddi, "Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation", *Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 12, 1991, n° 6, p. 433-448.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

converted into future actions and achievement<sup>4</sup>. That is why many authors have highlighted the importance of collectively shared narratives to enable the transmission of values between generations and to promote a sense of belonging to the organization<sup>5</sup>. Among these narratives, historical ones have a singular position as a means of conveying the moral principles that are typical of the story of entrepreneurs in family business<sup>6</sup>. Such uses of history may be considered "rhetorical" according to Roy Suddaby: "The construct of rhetorical history encourages researchers to analyze the important role of historical narrative in constructing mnemonic communities at various levels of organization"<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, managers use historical narratives to manage processes of organizational change<sup>8</sup>. Within family firms, historical narratives highlight the values represented by the family business by promoting the independence, the perseverance and the centrality of success<sup>9</sup>. They provide a legitimizing context for entrepreneurship and help to construct a dynamic system which strengthens the influence of the family on the firm over

time<sup>10</sup>. Actually, they reflect the processes by which the relations of powers between groups are created and maintained. They also act as a source of legitimacy for certain decisions and influence the sharing of decision-making power between the older and younger generations<sup>11</sup>. Family business succession narratives may also be used by successors to legitimate their succession<sup>12</sup>. As a consequence, historical narratives are considered to play a role of consolidation within family firms over time. They instill a common vision of family business history made of values, myths and stories which forge a distinctive culture. All these studies have been conducted on family firms in which intra-family succession has proven to be successful. Yet, selling out as an alternative to intra-family succession can be a viable option<sup>13</sup>. If historical narratives have proven to be useful for family members and non-family employees, however we lack an understanding of the potential usefulness of these narratives after the purchase of the family firm by a non-family buyer. What does happen to historical family business narratives when

<sup>4</sup> R. Garud, A. Kumaraswamy and P. Karnoe, "Path dependence or path creation?", *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 47, n° 4, 2010, p. 760-774; M. Bucheli and R. D. Wadhvani (eds), *Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> D. M. Huisman, "Telling a family culture: Storytelling, family identity, and cultural membership", *Interpersona*, vol. 8, n° 2, 2014, p. 144-158.

<sup>6</sup> J. Lambrecht, "Multigenerational transition in family businesses: A new explanatory model", *Family Business Review*, vol. 18, n° 4, 2005, p. 267-282.

<sup>7</sup> R. Suddaby, "Toward a Historical Consciousness: Following the Historic Turn in Management Thought", *M@n@gement*, vol. 19, n° 1, 2016, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> M. Maclean, C. Harvey, J. A. A. Sillince, B. D. Golant, "Living up to the past? Ideological sensemaking in organizational transition", *Organization*, vol. 21, n° 4, 2014, p. 543-567; S. Ybema, "Talk of change: Temporal contrasts and collective identities", *Organization Studies*, vol. 31, n° 4, 2010, p. 481-503.

<sup>9</sup> H. Ahl, "Sex business in the toy store: A narrative analysis of a teaching case", *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 22, n° 5, 2007, p. 673-693.

<sup>10</sup> M. McCollom, "Organizational Stories in a Family-Owned Business", *Family Business Review*, vol. 5, n° 1, 1992, p. 3-24.

<sup>11</sup> N. Kammerlander, C. Dessì, M. Bird, M. Floris and A. Murru, "The Impact of Shared Stories on Family Firm Innovation: A Multicase Study", *Family Business Review*, vol. 28, n° 4, 2015, p. 332-354; G. Schreyögg and J. Sydow, "Organizational path dependence: A process view", *Organization Studies*, vol. 32, n° 3, 2011, p. 321-335.

<sup>12</sup> E. Dalpiaz, P. Tracey and N. Phillips, "Succession Narratives in Family Business: The Case of Alessi", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, vol. 38, n° 6, 2014, p. 1375-1394.

<sup>13</sup> A. De Massis, J. H. Chua, J. J. Chrisman, "Factors preventing intra-family succession", *Family Business Review*, vol. 21, n° 2, 2008, p. 183-199.

the intra-family succession fails? Are they still relevant? If so, for whom? And in what ways? To answer these questions, this paper relies on a qualitative historical case-study approach. We will focus our attention on two historical narratives published on the history of the *École supérieure de commerce de Paris* (ESCP). One of them was written on behalf of the Alumni Association and the other on behalf of the Paris Chamber of Commerce in 1898. At the time the school was still known as the “Blanqui Business School”, even after its purchase by the Paris Chamber of Commerce in 1869 because it had been run for nearly forty years by the Blanqui family, between 1830 and 1869.

This paper adopts a business history approach thanks to the analysis of primary sources which were collected from the archives of different organizations – mainly ESCP Europe, Paris Departmental Archives and Paris Île-de-France Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry – and to their triangulation with historical monographs and scientific publications written on the life of Adolphe Blanqui and the history of the school.

After briefly recalling the history of the ESCP in the 19th century (1), we will show how these historical narratives reflected the deep emotional division which opposed the members of the Alumni Association to the members of the Paris Chamber of Commerce (2). Then we will analyse the strategic use of the history of the “Blanqui Business School” by them (3).

## 1. THE ESCP: A FAMILY BUSINESS THAT BECAME A CONSULAR SCHOOL

### 1.1. A private school beset by difficult early years: 1819-1830

In October 1819 Amédée Brodart and Germain Legret, two former silk merchants, founded the Special School of Commerce and Industry (“*École Spéciale de Commerce et d’Industrie*”). This private school, inspired by the writings of Vital Roux<sup>14</sup>, aimed at preparing for the business world young men who had completed their secondary education<sup>15</sup>. Applicants were expected to have enough scientific knowledge to become commercial agents for the industry and to be able to handle their own business affairs<sup>16</sup>. When the school was founded, there was no higher commercial education either in France or in any other European countries<sup>17</sup>. The school was supported by industrial circles and its development committee housed some of the most important French businessmen such as the bankers Jacques Laffitte and Jean-Charles Davillier and famous members of the Paris Chamber of Commerce or personalities such as the trader Vital Roux himself, the neo-classical economist Jean-Baptiste Say and the chemist Jean-Antoine Chaptal<sup>18</sup>. The beginnings of the school were promising: in 1825 it welcomed

<sup>14</sup> In his 1800 tract *De l’influence du gouvernement sur la prospérité du commerce* (Paris, Fayolle, 1800), Vital Roux suggested the establishment all over France of special schools of commerce devoted to the teaching of the commercial sciences.

<sup>15</sup> A. Grelon, « Écoles de commerce et formations d’ingénieurs avant 1914 », *Entreprises et Histoire*, n° 14-15, 1997, p. 29-45.

<sup>16</sup> F. Redlich, “Academic Education for Business: Its Development and the Contribution of Ignaz Jastrow (1856-1937) in Commemoration of the Hundredth Anniversary of Jastrow’s Birth”, *Business History Review*, vol. 31, n° 1, 1957, p. 35-91.

<sup>17</sup> A. J.-G. Passant, “Issues in European business education in the mid-nineteenth century: a comparative perspective”, *Business History*, vol. 58, n° 7, 2016, p. 1118-1145.

<sup>18</sup> C. Lemerrier, *Un si discret pouvoir. Aux origines de la Chambre de Commerce de Paris, 1803-1853*, Paris, La Découverte, 2003 ; F. Dénier, « La construction d’une identité libérale (1803-1848) », in Ch. Bouneau, E. Bussière,



118 pupils, 30% of whom were foreigners<sup>15</sup>. In 1822 the school was renamed "Special School of Commerce" ("École Spéciale de Commerce") because it exclusively offered courses to would-be traders and businessmen<sup>16</sup>. But changing its name did not only imply a more restrictive program. It also took into account the project of another innovative private school, dedicated to engineers for industry, which was founded in 1829 as the École centrale des Arts et Manufactures<sup>17</sup>. However, the school underwent financial and governance difficulties to such an extent that its founding directors, Germain Legret and Amédée Brodard, resigned in 1822 and 1824<sup>18</sup>. Their successors, Monnier des Taillades, who died four years later, and his substitute Louis Pelleport turned out to be unable to face the situation and to tackle the decline of the school<sup>19</sup>. In addition to those internal difficulties, the French Government regarded the school as an active place of political protest<sup>20</sup>. When

the Revolution of 1830 broke out, the school seemed to be about to close<sup>21</sup>.

## 1.2. The ESCP: A family business (1830-1869)

It was in this context that in 1830 Adolphe Blanqui (Figure 1), hitherto professor of political economy at the school since 1825, purchased the school with his own funds and took over its management<sup>22</sup>. He decided to move the school to a smaller and cheaper place than the prestigious Hôtel de Sully that the school had occupied since 1820. His growing reputation as a scholar attracted the attention of the French government which wanted to promote higher education<sup>23</sup>. At the time, Adolphe Blanqui – who was one of the first authors to write a "book in history of economic thought worthy of name"<sup>24</sup> – held a prestigious place

F. Démier et al. *La Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Paris (1803-2003): Histoire d'une institution*, Geneva, Librairie Droz, 2003, p. 31-84 ; J.-P. Niche, « Enseigner les affaires par 'des opérations de commerce simulées' », *Entreprises et Histoire*, n° 14-15, 1997, p. 137-140 ; A. Grelon, « Ecoles de commerce... », *art. cit.*, p. 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> École spéciale de commerce, *Règlement intérieur de l'établissement*, Paris, Librairie du Commerce, 1825, p. XIII ; Archives of the Paris Historical Library (Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris), 4-BRO-117512.

<sup>20</sup> A. Grelon, « Ecoles de commerce... », *art. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> F. Redlich, "Academic Education for Business...", *art. cit.* ; J. H. Weiss, *The Making of Technological Man. The Social Origins of French Engineering Education*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1982.

<sup>22</sup> P. de Fournas, « L'X, modèle des grandes écoles de commerce », *L'Expansion Management Review*, n° 127, 2007, p. 48-54.

<sup>23</sup> Ph. Maffre, « Les origines de l'enseignement commercial en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle », thèse de doctorat de 3<sup>e</sup> cycle d'histoire, Université Paris-I, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> C. Lemerçier, *Un si discret pouvoir...*, *op. cit.* ; A. Grelon, « Ecoles de commerce... », *art. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> G. Gervais, « Notice sur l'École Supérieure du Commerce », in *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel ou Recueil de dépositions faites en 1863 et 1864 devant la Commission de l'enseignement professionnel sous la présidence de son Exc. M. Béhic, ministre de l'Agriculture, du Commerce et des Travaux publics*, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1865, p. 575-688.

<sup>26</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1920)*, 3<sup>e</sup> ed., Paris, Au siège de l'Association des Anciens Élèves, 1920.

<sup>27</sup> He became professor of political economy at the National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts ("Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers") in 1832 and member of the Political and Moral Sciences Academy ("Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques") in 1837. He was also the older brother of Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881), a French socialist and political activist. As a consequence Adolphe Blanqui had to assert his intellectual position regarding economics by comparison with his younger brother. See F. Démier, « Adolphe Blanqui un économiste libéral face à la Révolution industrielle (1794-1854) », thèse de doctorat de 3<sup>e</sup> cycle d'histoire, Université Paris X-Nanterre, 1979.

<sup>28</sup> R. Arena, « Adolphe-Jérôme Blanqui 1798-1854. Un historien de l'économie aux préoccupations sociales », in Y. Breton et M. Lutfalla (eds), *L'économie politique en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Economica, 1991, p.176.

among French liberals<sup>29</sup>. As a result, in 1838, pupils were given governmental grants and, in 1851, the best ones received a medal offered by the French Ministry of Commerce. The following year, the degrees were signed by the Minister of Commerce and, in 1852, the school was renamed “Higher School of Commerce” of Paris (“École Supérieure de Commerce”), to formalise the high level of the school courses and qualifications<sup>30</sup>. In spite of the excellent reputation of the school, the Revolution of 1848 caused a drop in foreign pupils who had accounted for up to half of all applicants<sup>31</sup>. Moreover, Blanqui, who was experiencing more and more difficulties in managing and had to face health problems<sup>32</sup>, decided to ensure the transmission of the school to his partner Guillaume Gervais. When Blanqui died in January 1854, Gervais inherited an indebted enterprise<sup>33</sup>. He nonetheless ran it until he passed away in 1867 and at his death, Jane Blanqui – Adolphe’s daughter – inherited the school<sup>34</sup>. Two years later, the school was sold to the Paris Chamber of Commerce which was already interested in developing itself an elite school for businessmen<sup>35</sup>. That event put an end to the Blanqui family business.

Between 1830 and 1869 the ESCP was a family business. According to management literature, family enterprises “are those who have ownership and management control within a family unit, and concentrate in the hands of

Figure 1. Adolphe Blanqui in 1841.



Source : Ch. Philippon and L. Huer, *Galerie de la Presse, de la littérature et des beaux-arts*, 3<sup>e</sup> série, Auber, Paris, 1841. Archives of Museum of Castle of Compiègne (Musée National du château de Compiègne), C 53 049/57 photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Domaine de Compiègne) / image Compiègne.

<sup>29</sup> He became professor of political economy at the National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts (“Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers”) in 1832 and member of the Political and Moral Sciences Academy (“Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques”) in 1837. He was also the older brother of Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) a French socialist and political activist. As a consequence Adolphe Blanqui had to assert his intellectual position regarding economics by comparison with his younger brother. See F. Démier, « Adolphe Blanqui un économiste libéral face à la Révolution industrielle (1794-1854) », thèse de doctorat d’histoire de troisième cycle, université Paris-X Nanterre, 1979.

<sup>30</sup> P. de Fournas, « L’X, modèle des grandes écoles de commerce », *art. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> A. Grelon, « Écoles de commerce et formations d’ingénieurs avant 1914... », *art. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l’École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris (1820-1926)*, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> P. de Fournas, « L’X, modèle des grandes écoles de commerce », *art. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Archives départementales de Paris (later AD Paris), 1-274.34, letter from Jane Blansqa to the President of the Paris Chamber of Commerce, 15 January 1870.

<sup>35</sup> In 1863, the Paris Chamber of Commerce created a secondary school of commerce in Paris: the Commercial School (“École Commerciale”). See P. Fridenson, L. Paquy, « Du haut enseignement commercial à l’enseignement supérieur de gestion (XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles) », in P. Lenormand (ed.), *La Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie de Paris 1803-2003. II. Études thématiques*, Geneva, Librairie Droz, 2008, p. 207.

**Table 1. Family status and position in the family business of the Blanqui family members at the ESCP during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.**

Individuals	Position in the Blanqui family	Function within ESCP
<b>Adolphe Blanqui (1796-1854)</b>	Head of the household	Professor of Economic Policy at the school (1825-1853) Director and owner of the school (1830-1854)
<b>Julie Blanqui (1811-1854)</b>	Adolphe Blanqui's wife	Housekeeper of the school (1830-1869)
<b>Guillaume Gervais (1803-1867)</b>	Friend of Adolphe Blanqui Godfather and legal guardian of Jane Blanqui	Director and owner of the school (1854-1867)
<b>Jane Blanqui (1850-1911)</b>	Adolphe Blanqui's daughter	Owner of the school (1867-1869)
<b>Joseph Garnier (1813-1881)</b>	Adolphe Blanqui's brother-in-law	Student at the school (1820-1832) Director of studies at the school (1832-1836) Professor of Economic Policy at the school (1836-1880) Co-founder and honorary president of the Alumni Association (1872-1881)
<b>Hippolyte Maze (1829-1891)</b>	Adolphe Blanqui's son-in-law	Honorary president of the Blanqui Conference created by the Alumni Association (1883-1895) Honorary president president of the Alumni Association (1882-1891)

Sources: Adapted from F. Démiér, « Adolphe Blanqui, un économiste libéral face à la Révolution industrielle (1794-1854) », *op. cit.* ; A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris*, *op. cit.*

a single principal within the family unit, who is both the head of the household and the chief executive of the firm”<sup>36</sup>. The ESCP met these criteria. The school was, indeed, controlled by the Blanqui family for four decades, from 1830 to 1869. First, Adolphe Blanqui was both the owner and the director of the school for almost a quarter of a century. Moreover, when Gervais, who was one of Adolphe's friends<sup>37</sup>, became the godfather and then the legal guardian of his daughter – Jane Blanqui – at the beginning of the 1850s, he became a member of the Blanqui family in the broadest sense of the term. Finally, when Jane inherited the school in 1867, she became the last inheritor of the Blanqui family. However, as she was too young – she was only 17 years old – she decided to sell the school. In addition to these three leaders of the school,

the Blanqui family members held numerous positions over the years within the ESCP, as illustrated by Table 1.

For example, Julie Blanqui – Adolphe's wife – was the housekeeper of the school. She was responsible for supplying food and other necessities for pupils for forty years<sup>38</sup>. Joseph Garnier – Adolphe's brother-in-law – was the director of studies and professor of political economy at the ESCP for several decades (Figure 2). When the school was purchased by the Paris Chamber of Commerce, he co-founded in 1872 the Alumni Association and became its honorary president until his death. The scientific reputation of Joseph Garnier as an economist had a very positive impact on the school<sup>39</sup>. Finally, Hippolyte

<sup>36</sup> M. H. Lubatkin, R. Durand and Y. Ling, “The missing lens in family firm governance theory: A self-other typology of parental altruism”, *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 60, n° 10, 2007, p. 1022-1029.

<sup>37</sup> F. Démiér, « Adolphe Blanqui ... », *op. cit.*, p. 997.

<sup>38</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris (1820-1920)*, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Garnier was originating in the Nice area, like Adolphe Blanqui. In 1829 he enrolled at the ESCP. In 1841, he launched the *Journal des Économistes*, the first European journal dedicated to economics proper. Joseph Garnier became the first professor of economics at the National School of Bridges and Highways (“École des Ponts et

**Figure 2. Joseph Garnier in the 1870s.**

Source : A. Ranouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1920)*, Paris, Au siège de l'Association des Anciens Élèves, 1920, p. 45.

Maze – Adolphe's son-in-law – created in the 1880s the “Adolphe Blanqui Conference” which organized public communications on economics and industrial issues in the school. He also became honorary president of the Alumni Association until his death in 1891.

### 1.3. The ESCP: A consular school since 1869

As soon as the school was purchased by the Paris Chamber of Commerce, its buyers tried to show that it was no longer a family

business. The Paris Chamber of Commerce symbolically rejected the candidacy of Joseph Garnier – Adolphe's brother-in-law – who had applied for the post of director<sup>40</sup>. Instead, the Chamber of Commerce appointed Paul Schwaebler, a former teacher of the school, as director. As early as 1869, the school was utterly reorganized: the first year curriculum was transformed into a preparatory and optional year for pupils who had passed the baccalaureate and the business curriculum was developed while the school's facilities were renovated<sup>41</sup>. Even though the ESCP no longer belonged to Jane Blanqui, the school remained physically and morally in the hands of the Blanqui family until the 1880s. First of all, the Paris Chamber of Commerce rented the building where the Blanqui family still resided<sup>42</sup>. In addition, the majority of the school staff who had worked with Adolphe Blanqui was also taken over by the Chamber of Commerce. Morally then, the appellation “former Blanqui Business School” was still used by the Chamber of Commerce in its commercial leaflets and on the degrees that it delivered<sup>43</sup>. Over time, the links between the school and the Blanqui family weakened. In 1881, Joseph Garnier – Adolphe's brother-in-law – died and two years later, Julie Blanqui – Adolphe's widow – followed him. A few months after Julie's death, Jane Blanqui sold the mansion house occupied by the school in the Amelot street and transferred the lease to the new owner. Similarly, the recognition of the ESCP by the French government in 1890 marked the symbolic end of the Blanqui era. Firstly, the medals offered to reward the best pupils and instituted by Adolphe Blanqui in August 1849 were abolished in 1890 because

Chaussées”) in 1845. He became member of the Political and Moral Sciences Academy in 1873 and senator in the French parliament in 1876.

<sup>40</sup> AD Paris, 2ETP/1/A12, Minutes of meetings of the Paris Chamber of Commerce, meeting held on 24 February 1869, p. 218.

<sup>41</sup> Archives of ESCP Europe, Minutes of meetings of the Administrative Commission of the ESCP, 21 June 1869, p. 27-34.

<sup>42</sup> Archives of ESCP Europe, Minutes of meetings of the Administrative Commission of the ESCP, meeting held on 13 March 1869, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> AD Paris, I-274.34, Paris Chamber of Commerce, Presentation of the ESCP, 1890.

**Figure 3. The new premises of the ESCP, avenue de la République in 1898.**

Source: "Architecture – La nouvelle École supérieure de commerce à Paris";  
*Le Génie civil: Revue générale des industries françaises et étrangères*, n° 861, 10 décembre 1898, p.1,  
 Archives of the École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, 2012-302223.

they were regarded as the vestige of a bygone era<sup>44</sup>. Secondly, the name of the school was changed and replaced by "School accredited by the State and directed by the Chamber of Commerce"<sup>45</sup>. Finally, six years later, in 1896, the Chamber of Commerce decided that the school would leave the premises it had occupied for sixty years. The construction of a new Parisian building to house the ESCP – a building inaugurated at the end of 1898 (see Figure 3) – led to leave the mansion house in which Adolphe Blanqui had established the school in 1838 and where it had flourished alongside the Blanqui family for almost fifty years<sup>46</sup>. The relocation of the school in the

avenue de la République led to the disappearance of the symbols that had maintained the memory of the Blanqui era: the office of the director, commonly known for sixty years as "Blanqui office" in the Amelot street, was simply entitled director's office in the new premises<sup>47</sup>. With the disappearance of the last symbols of the Blanqui era, the ESCP became *de facto* a fully consular business school.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the history of the ESCP was very influenced by the Blanqui family. In 1898 the school had almost 80 years of existence, half of which was under the administration of the Blanqui family. Nonetheless, even after its purchase by the

<sup>44</sup> Archives of ESCP Europe, Minutes of meetings of the Administrative Commission of the ESCP, 13 June 1891, p. 173.

<sup>45</sup> Archives of ESCP Europe, Minutes of meetings of the Administrative Commission of the ESCP, 25 July 1890, p. 155.

<sup>46</sup> The Blanqui family settled in 1830 in the building where ESCP Europe was housed. The family did the same during the move of 1832, then during the move of 1838 which led the family to the mansion house of the street Amelot. The Blanqui family was originally tenant and subsequently became the owner of the mansion house.

<sup>47</sup> Archives de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de région Paris-Île-de-France, 535 W/1, Description of the new premises of the ESCP, 1898.

Chamber of Commerce in 1869, the school maintained many links with the Blanqui family. As a result, it is hardly surprising that the historical narratives dedicated to the ESCP and published in 1898 by the Alumni Association and the Paris Chamber of Commerce gave prominence to the Blanqui era. However, these two historical narratives diverge on what the life of the school was during the period 1830-1869.

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## 2. ONE STORY, TWO NARRATIVES

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### 2.1. Context of publication of the two historical narratives

The publication of the two historical narratives was officially motivated to celebrate the completion of the new premises of the ESCP in December 1898 by the French President, Félix Faure. It was indeed an opportunity for the Alumni Association and the Chamber of Commerce to communicate about the history of the ESCP. However, instead of publishing a common version of the history of the school, the Alumni Association and the Paris Chamber of Commerce decided to sponsor two distinct publications. What is their context?

At the end of the nineteenth century the French economic and political background has developed into something much different than it was during the Blanqui era. In the middle years of the nineteenth century, in France, free trade ideas gained more traction among thinkers and policy makers. The French government responded by reducing tariffs on coal, iron, and machinery<sup>48</sup>. In 1860, the Cobden-Chevalier commercial treaty was signed with Britain, reducing import tariffs between the two countries. This resulted in a significant industrial growth in France, which helped to advance the development of France's industrial revolution<sup>49</sup>. At the end of the 19th century this free trade period was over. Actually France experienced a severe economic depression in the 1880s and 1890s. The latter was due to a growing commercial deficit, to the consequences of the agricultural crisis, and to the reduction in the stimulus previously afforded by public works. The intensity of the depression rendered inevitable the ending of the experiment in free trade begun in the middle years of the 19th century<sup>50</sup>. Accordingly, France developed a system of defensive, protectionist policies, directed especially against foreign manufactured goods<sup>51</sup>. Moreover, on the political front, the involvement of the French State with French business schools had changed a lot between the Blanqui era and the late 19th century. Indeed, before 1889, the French State had no, or very little, involvement in the development of business schools<sup>52</sup>. It

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<sup>48</sup> C. P. Kindleberger, "The Rise of Free Trade in Western Europe, 1820-1875", *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 35, n° 1, 1975, p. 20-55 ; D. Todd, *L'identité économique de la France. Libre-échange et protectionnisme, 1814-1851*, Paris, Grasset, 2008.

<sup>49</sup> F. Dériet, *La France du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. 1814-1914*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2000, p. 267.

<sup>50</sup> M. S. Smith, *Tariff Reform in France. 1860-1900: The Politics of Economic Interest*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1980.

<sup>51</sup> M. Lévy-Leboyer and F. Bourguignon, *The French economy in the nineteenth century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and Paris, Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1990.

<sup>52</sup> M. Blanchard, *Les Écoles supérieures de commerce. Sociohistoire d'une entreprise éducative en France*, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2015, p. 42.

hardly provided some scholarships to pupils to pay for the tuition or registration costs<sup>53</sup>. In 1889, the military law enforced French government's control on business schools: in order to benefit from partial exemption from military service, French business schools had to be recognized by the State. This recognition implied that the government organized the schools' recruitment process, the length of their studies and their exams. Consequently, State recognition contributed to an increase in the number of enrolled pupils and to the founding of new business schools in France in the late 19th century<sup>54</sup>. As a result of these economic and political developments, it is not surprising that the authors of the two narratives published in 1898 on the history of the ESCP expressed how the school had changed in thirty years. Actually, the "Blanqui Business School" was a school where liberalism was taught by Adolphe Blanqui himself and by his brother-in-law, Joseph Garnier, at a time when the principles of liberalism were spreading<sup>55</sup>. Moreover, during the Blanqui era, the school was a family business struggling for survival at a time when State support was very low<sup>56</sup>. Even though Alfred Renouard and Paul Lacroix experienced the same historical context (marked by the protectionism of the French political class and by State involvement in commercial higher education), they differed in their perception of the history of the school during the Blanqui era. Such a situation reveals that their divergences on the history of the school did not exclusively originate from the context of publication in 1898 but from their personal perceptions. Between 1869 and 1898 the context has changed a lot and the links between the ESCP and the Blanqui family

members gradually weakened while the Paris Chamber of Commerce gained great experience in managing consular business schools. The transition from the family business school to the consular business school was successfully completed. Because transition processes impose a wide variety of significant changes for firms – traditional patterns of influences are redistributed and longstanding management structures must give way to new structures<sup>57</sup> – it usually causes emotional instability among organizational stakeholders<sup>58</sup>. Consequently, the historical divergences demonstrated by the two authors had an emotional rather than a political dimension. To understand it, it is necessary to know more about these authors. Alfred Renouard was an alumnus of the ESCP where he studied at the time when the school was still owned and run by the Blanqui family. As he had studied at the ESCP between 1868 and 1870, he belonged to the privileged witnesses who had seen the passing of the school from the Blanqui family to the Chamber of Commerce. The high quality of his work was underlined by the school on several occasions and Renouard was even rewarded in 1870. Particularly attached to the institution, Renouard was also the co-founder of the Alumni Association in 1872 and the former president of the latter between 1896 and 1898. It was during his tenure as President of the Alumni Association that the board officers commissioned him to undertake the writing of the historical monograph of the ESCP.

Paul Lacroix was both the secretary and librarian of the Paris Chamber of Commerce. His monograph was published in the *Bulletin de la Chambre de commerce de Paris*, a

<sup>53</sup> Ph. Maître, « Les origines de l'enseignement commercial en France... », *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>54</sup> M. Blanchard, "From 'Ecoles Supérieures de Commerce' to 'Management Schools': transformations and continuity in French business schools", *European Journal of Education*, vol. 44, n° 4, 2009, p. 585-604.

<sup>55</sup> I. Le Van-l'ermesie, *Le Juste ou le Riche. L'Enseignement de l'économie, 1815-1950*, Paris, CHEFF, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> C. Lemecier, *Un si discret pouvoir...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> R. H. Brockhaus, "Family Business Succession: Suggestions for Future Research", *Family Business Review*, vol. 17, n° 2, 2004, p. 165-177.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*

**Table 2. The historical discrepancies on the management of the Blanqui family at the head of the ESCP between 1830 and 1869 according to the Alumni Association and the Paris Chamber of Commerce.**

Discrepancies	Historical narrative written on behalf of the Alumni Association	Historical narrative written on behalf of the Alumni Association
<b>The arrival of Adolphe Blanqui at the head of the school</b>	Adolphe Blanqui decided to purchase the Parisian school driven by entrepreneurial spirit.	Adolphe Blanqui decided to purchase the Parisian School driven by duty.
<b>The financial management of the ESCP by the Blanqui family</b>	Tight management of the school despite the French revolutions in 1830 and 1848. • During times of crisis, the family leaders reduced the school expenditures. • In quieter periods, the family leaders built up considerable school reserves.	Unsuccessful management of the school: • Useless reduction of the school expenditures; • The school financial gaps were covered by the personal fortune of the family leaders.
<b>Transmissions of the family business by the Blanqui family</b>	Successful transmission of the family business: • Adolphe Blanqui transformed the school into a civil society in 1857 to facilitate its transmission; • Guillaume Gervais bequeathed the school to Jérome Blanqui in the 1860s. • Jérome Blanqui ensured the survival of the school by selling it to the Paris Chamber of Commerce in 1869.	Unsuccessful transmission of the family business: • Blanqui did not select the best potential successor. • Guillaume Gervais did not attempt to associate Jérome Blanqui with the management of the school. • Jérome Blanqui was not prepared to take over the business family and sold it to the Chamber of Commerce.
<b>The Blanqui family administration's record at the head of the ESCP of Paris</b>	Successful turnaround of the family business from 1830 to 1869: • The school organization remained stable over time; • The school experienced unprecedented and international prestige.	Inept handling of the school: • The efforts the family members made during times of crisis to protect the business did not succeed; • The school enjoyed and unrecanted international reputation thanks to the scientific reputation of Adolphe Blanqui.

Sources: Adapted from A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1898)*, Paris, Association des anciens élèves, 1898 ; P. Lacroix, « Notice historique sur l'École supérieure de commerce », *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce de Paris*, 1898.

weekly publication of the Paris Chamber. The monograph he produced thus came, institutionally, from the supervising body which was the owner of the school without being its founder. As shown below, the authors' institutional affiliation clearly influenced the writing of their narrative.

## 2.2. Two versions of the history of the school during the Blanqui era

While many aspects of the lives of the leaders of the Blanqui family were common to both versions – their humble origins, their social supporting network, etc. – others did not overlap and particularly those relating to

their activities as managers of the ESCP from 1830 to 1869. These two historical narratives reveal significant discrepancies on the management of the Blanqui family at the head of the school as shown in Table 2.

### 2.2.1. The arrival of Adolphe Blanqui at the head of the school

According to Renouard, Adolphe Blanqui was an entrepreneur and possessed entrepreneurial drive which would explain why he would have decided to purchase and run the school<sup>59</sup>. First, the school responded to an unfulfilled need in France and foreign countries. It had both a wide domestic and international clientele and was supported by a prestigious patronage committee. In

<sup>59</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1898)*, op. cit., p. 29-34.



Blanqui's views, the school offered a great development potential, particularly in a world where the principles of liberalism restrained governments from intruding into business. Indeed he wanted "to prevent an institution devoted to the dissemination of the principles of political economy to which he had devoted his life from closing its doors"<sup>60</sup>. Moreover, the circumstances were favorable to the acquisition of the school because the director Louis Pelleport was seeking someone to replace him. It was in this context that Adolphe Blanqui decided to buy the school "with his own money"<sup>61</sup> and to run it at his own risk. Indeed, the acquisition of the school was very risky for Adolphe Blanqui since he had no family inheritance, no supporting network and he was a young father preoccupied with the future of his children. However, Adolphe Blanqui had faith in his own abilities. On the other hand, according to Lacroix, Adolphe Blanqui decided to purchase the Parisian school more by duty than by entrepreneurial spirit. Indeed, he asserts Adolphe Blanqui would not have spontaneously proposed to take charge of a school undergoing a crisis<sup>62</sup>. According to Lacroix, both parents and pupils convinced Adolphe Blanqui to run the school so that it would not close. Lacroix asserts it would have taken him quite a long time to make up his mind because Blanqui thought he was quite responsible for the poor situation of the school<sup>63</sup>. Unlike Renouard, Lacroix reminds that prior to 1830 Adolphe Blanqui was the co-manager of the school since he was personally "supporting" Louis Pelleport in his work at the helm of the school<sup>64</sup>. Thus the purchase of the school and its management

could be seen as an evidence of Blanqui's sense of moral duty towards his pupils and their parents. As a consequence Blanqui's entrepreneurial qualities – his perception of opportunities, his appetite for risk – were not mentioned in this version.

### 2.2.2. *The financial management of the ESCP by the Blanqui family*

Renouard emphasizes the financial qualities of the Blanqui family. Despite the political and economic instability of the period, the Blanquis succeeded in making the school a prosperous enterprise. First, in spite of the economic critical time, they reduced the school's expenditures. Thus, in the early 1830s when Adolphe Blanqui saw the enrollment of the school declining because of the political revolution<sup>65</sup>, he moved it to the Neuve-Saint-Gilles street, in a less expensive district<sup>66</sup>. Similarly, after the revolution of 1848, in order to overcome the lack of financial resources Adolphe Blanqui transformed the school into a joint-stock company. He took 50% of the capital at his own expense and the rest was made available to the public in the form of shares. The subscription was completed in a few days, and – as Renouard pointed it out – without any publicity; which would have proven the extent of the social network built by Blanqui since 1830<sup>67</sup>. The successors of Blanqui stood at the head of the ESCP in a period marked by the return of calm on the socio-political front. They used the period to build up large financial reserves: Guillaume Gervais and Jane Blanqui thus transformed the school into a luxurious boarding school

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> P. Lacroix, « Notice historique sur l'École Supérieure de Commerce », *art. cit.*, p. 5-8.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> The 1830 Revolution overthrew the Bourbon monarchy that had ruled France for fifteen years.

<sup>66</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1898)*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

training the business elite. They decided to teach exclusively full-time pupils and boarders<sup>68</sup>. As a result, tuition fees increased of more than 25% over the period 1854-1869. Consequently, while “the school produced positive results [under the direction of Adolphe Blanqui], it produced quite naturally, under the skilled administration of [Guillaume Gervais], very fruitful results”<sup>69</sup>. The monograph written for the Chamber of Commerce is more skeptical about the financial management qualities of the Blanqui family. According to Lacroix, the reduction of the school expenditures initiated by Adolphe Blanqui in 1830 was useless. Despite three subsequent relocations in 1830, 1832 and 1838, the financial charges of the school were still described as “very high” in 1848 when the revolution broke out<sup>70</sup>. At that time, because of the decrease in the number of pupils, Adolphe Blanqui would have transformed the school into a hospice. According to Lacroix, Adolphe Blanqui, driven by his generosity and compassion, would have suffered personal financial losses<sup>71</sup>. The financial management of the ESCP by his successor Guillaume Gervais was not better. His choice of turning the school into a luxury boarding school would certainly have allowed him to increase the tuition fees but would have led to decrease the number of pupils since Parisian pupils could live with their parents. As a result the number of pupils only amounted to 60 pupils in the late 1860s whereas in the 1850s the ESCP trained more than one hundred pupils each year. To save money, Guillaume Gervais also stopped maintaining the premises of the school as soon as the end

of the 1850s. Subsequently when he died in 1867 Jane Blanqui inherited a school in such a poor financial situation that she was compelled to sell it to the Paris Chamber of Commerce.

### 2.2.3. *Transmission of the family business by the Blanqui family*

According to Renouard, the Blanqui family had made arrangements to be sure that the school could remain in the fold of the family. Indeed, Adolphe Blanqui prepared his succession in the early 1850s when his health weakened. He transformed the joint-stock company into a civil company in 1852 to facilitate its transmission, and then trained his friend Guillaume Gervais to be able to succeed him as a director<sup>72</sup>. Finally Adolphe Blanqui appointed Guillaume Gervais as godfather and legal guardian of his youngest daughter, Jane, born in 1850<sup>73</sup>. Thus, Guillaume Gervais became the sole owner-director of the ESCP and ran the school as “a man of unshakeable righteousness [and] uncompromising honesty”<sup>74</sup>. At the death of Gervais in December 1867, he bequeathed all his possessions – including the ESCP – to Jane Blanqui, aged 17<sup>75</sup>. Jane Blanqui entrusted Aimé Girard, who taught chemistry at the school, with the management of the family business: “the new director was able to enhance the reputation [of the school] to such an extent that the period during which he managed it was one of the most brilliant [in its history]”<sup>76</sup>. The ESCP could have remained the property of the Blanqui family for a long time, but Aimé

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42-43.

<sup>70</sup> P. Lacroix, « Notice historique sur l'École Supérieure de Commerce... », *art. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11-13.

<sup>72</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1898)*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Girard did not want to remain director<sup>77</sup>. Moreover, in 1868, the Paris Chamber of Commerce contacted Jane Blanqui to convince her that under its supervision the school would be more prosperous. As a consequence Jane Blanqui sold the school to the Chamber of Commerce at the beginning of 1869<sup>78</sup>.

According to Lacroix, the transfer of power to the ESCP during the Blanqui era did not occur in good conditions: “[Guillaume Gervais] career did not seem to have prepared him for these functions”<sup>79</sup>. Lacroix reminds the reader how Gervais was apart from the academic community when he became the director of the ESCP in 1854. Unlike Blanqui, he had neither received any specific formation in economics nor worked as a teacher in higher education<sup>80</sup>. As a matter of fact, Lacroix claims that Blanqui’s succession would not have been properly prepared, or at least that Gervais was not the appropriate man to succeed Blanqui. Then, Lacroix indicates that if Jane Blanqui had inherited the school from Gervais, he had never tried to associate her with its management. Indeed, when he died prematurely in 1867 Jane Blanqui had not been prepared to take over the business family, which would explain why she asked Girard, who was an experienced teacher, to run the school. Moreover, Jane Blanqui was about to marry Hippolyte Maze and she needed to build up a dowry. As she had not received a good-sized inheritance, she was looking for money. The proceeds of the sale of the “Blanqui Business School” amounted to 120 000 French francs and represented a form of dowry.

#### 2.2.4. *The Blanqui family administration’s record at the head of the ESCP*

Renouard gives a very positive assessment of the management of the Blanqui family. He describes the members of the family as gifted entrepreneurs as well as courageous managers and visionary leaders. To prove it, Renouard indicates that the organization Adolphe Blanqui had set up at the ESCP in 1830 had enjoyed an exceptional stability for over four decades<sup>81</sup>. His successors, Guillaume Gervais and Jane Blanqui, had no reform to implement and their task mainly consisted in carrying on the arrangements of the rules their predecessor had introduced<sup>82</sup>. And indeed, until its purchase by the Chamber of Commerce in 1869, the main features of the school remained unchanged excepting a few fairly minor technical adjustments – proliferation of courses and the transformation of the first year of study as optional training –, which both demonstrated its remarkable organization and explained its undeniable prestige during the Blanqui era<sup>83</sup>.

The assessment made by the Chamber of Commerce of Paris was much more critical. If Lacroix acknowledges that the ESCP survived mostly thanks to the courage and sacrifice of the family members, Blanqui and Gervais invested a great amount of their personal fortune in the school<sup>84</sup>. Moreover, even though some members of the family took part in the management of the business, the Blanquis were not described as role-model leaders. Though Adolphe Blanqui was a renowned

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>79</sup> P. Lacroix, « Notice historique sur l’École Supérieure de Commerce... », *art. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l’École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1898)*, *op. cit.*, p. 48-68.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42-63.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48-68.

<sup>84</sup> P. Lacroix, « Notice historique sur l’École supérieure de commerce... », *art. cit.*, p. 13-14.

scholar, he was a poor manager. For Lacroix while “Blanqui lacked Gervais’s managerial skills”<sup>85</sup>, Gervais lacked the scientific attributes to run a business school. Jane Blanqui did not have time enough to show what she was able to do. Lacroix, however, agrees with Renouard to admit that under the leadership of the Blanqui family, the school gained an unprecedented international standing because “most of the European, American and Asian schools sent their first-rate pupils to [the school] to become well-rounded traders”<sup>86</sup>. However, according to Lacroix, such high academic reputation of the school did not lie in the management of the Blanqui family, but in the scientific reputation of Adolphe Blanqui as an economist. “The fame [Adolphe Blanqui] had earned for himself in the world of economics had a very positive impact on the school”<sup>87</sup>.

Why were these two narratives of the history of the family business so different? Which one is right? Which one is wrong? When facing a great amount of dissonance over the theme of the qualities of the former family business leaders, the issue of truthfulness is not the most important. As Dawson and Hjorth noticed about the interpretation of family business narratives: “There is probably no ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ interpretation, simply different perceptions of the same acts, through distinct agency and purpose of the two main actors”<sup>88</sup>. Consequently, we are going to see how these historical narratives may serve both as indicators of the emotional tensions that run through the firm and as strategic levers for shaping the future of the firm.

### 3. AN EMOTIONAL ARENA FOR STRATEGIC CONFRONTATION: THE HISTORY OF THE BLANQUI SCHOOL AFTER THE BUYOUT

Both narratives reveal an emotional cleavage between two emotional behaviors: filial piety and managerial opportunism.

On one side, the members of the Alumni Association paid tribute to the Blanqui family, expressing filial piety. Filial piety is an emotional behavior requiring members of the younger generation to respect and take care of members of the older generation, to provide them with emotional and material support, and sometimes to fulfill ceremonial duties of generational worship<sup>89</sup>. Concretely, the aim of the monograph written for the members of the Alumni Association in 1898 was to commemorate Adolphe Blanqui on the one hundredth anniversary of his birth. Indeed at the time, most of the oldest members of the Alumni Association, who were at least sixty years old, had studied at the ESCP when Adolphe Blanqui was its owner-manager. Filial piety was thus the predominant feeling that dominated the writing of the history of the school by Renouard. By the way, in his conclusion, Renouard admitted he had a “filial duty to fulfil” towards the Blanqui family<sup>90</sup>.

On the other side, the Paris Chamber of Commerce showed managerial opportunism to interpret the history of the ESCP during the

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9; E. Léauté, *L'enseignement commercial et les écoles de commerce en France et dans le monde entier*, Paris, Librairie comptable et administrative et Guillaumin, 1886.

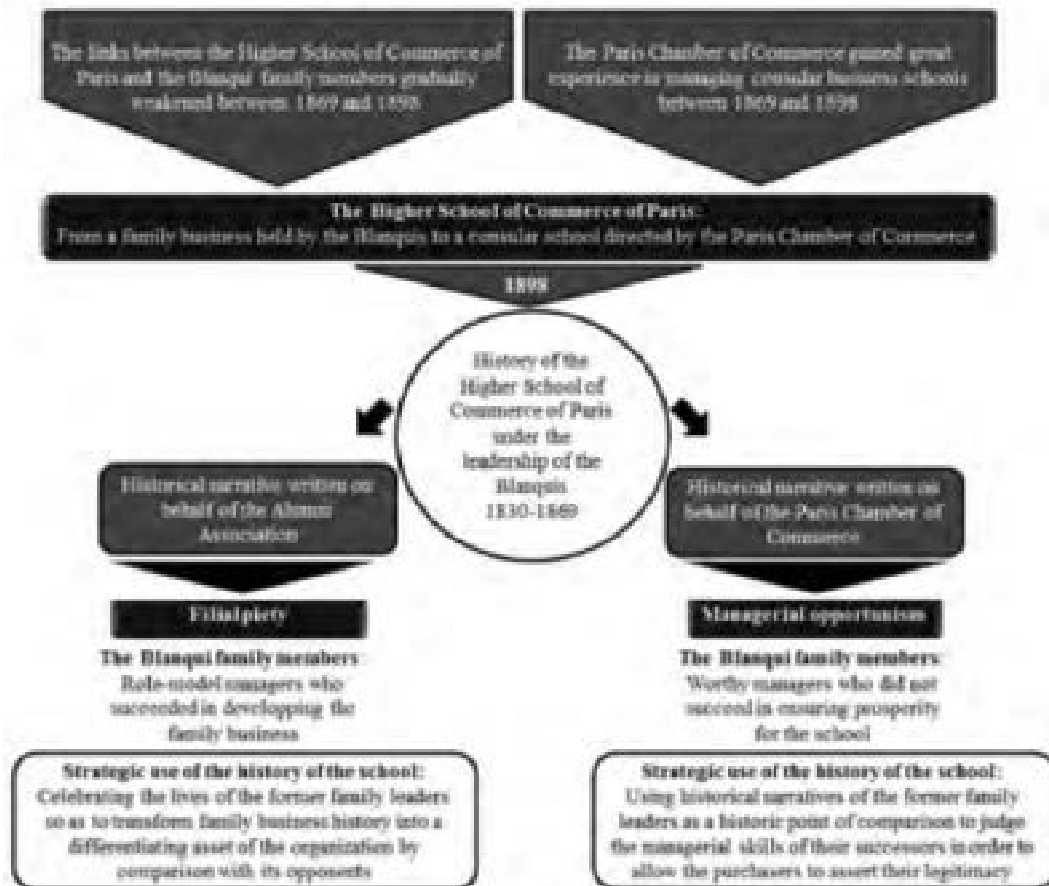
<sup>87</sup> P. Lacroix, « Notice historique sur l'École supérieure de commerce... », *art. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>88</sup> A. Dawson and D. Hjorth, “Advancing Family Business Research Through Narrative Analysis”, *Family Business Review*, vol. 25, n° 3, 2012, p. 349.

<sup>89</sup> W. W. Chen and C.-W. Wu, “Transmission of ideas about love: Filial piety, love attitudes, and romantic satisfaction”, *Personal Relationships*, vol. 4, n° 2, 2017, p. 440-448.

<sup>90</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1898)*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

Figure 4. The strategic use of family business history after the buyout by non-family purchasers at the ESCP in 1898.



Sources: A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1898)*, op. cit.; P. Lacroix, « Notice historique sur l'École Supérieure de Commerce », art. cit.

Blanqui era. Opportunism refers to self-interested behavior and usually occurs with guile<sup>91</sup>. Within organizations, managerial opportunism is typically perceived when one uses others' weaknesses for one's own benefit<sup>92</sup>. Indeed, managerial opportunism can generate negative emotions such as stress, fear, or anxiety<sup>93</sup>. According to Lacroix, if the Blancquis had

obvious intellectual and relational qualities they were not made of the right stuff to make the school grow and prosper. Accordingly time had come to turn the page on the family past of the ESCP in order to look to its future as a consular business school. These two emotional attitudes are shown in Figure 4, and are analyzed in the following paragraphs.

<sup>91</sup> O. E. Williamson, *Markets and hierarchies, analysis and antitrust implications: A study of the economics of internal organization*, New York, Free Press, 1975.

<sup>92</sup> M. Williams, "Building genuine trust through interpersonal emotion management, a threat regulation model of trust and collaboration across boundaries", *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 32, n° 2, 2007, p. 597.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 598.

### 3.1. Filial piety: Renouard's narrative

In the monograph written by Renouard, the past of the ESCP is used to preserve the *alma mater* of the alumni. It is worth mentioning that the monograph was written when the relationship between the ESCP and the Blanqui family had become very limited. The gradual disappearance of the witnesses and symbols of the Blanqui era created among the Alumni Association members a need to protect the memory of the Blanquis and to honor them with true filial piety. Actually, the monograph was written to demonstrate that the ESCP had an unrivalled legacy. When compared with other business schools, the ESCP had been run for four decades by an illustrious family, two of whose members – Adolphe Blanqui and Joseph Garnier – were renowned economists. Indeed, the Alumni felt invested of a filial mission: honoring the memory of such great scholars and perpetuating the memory of their achievements<sup>94</sup>. Moreover, regardless of their scientific qualities, all the members of the Blanqui family were gifted for management. First, Adolphe Blanqui succeeded in protecting the school from the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 and his successor Guillaume Gervais succeeded in resolving the poor financial situation of the school. Finally, Jane Blanqui ensured its survival by selling it to the Chamber of Commerce.

Despite the feeling of nostalgia which surrounded the commemoration, the monograph written by Renouard did not aim to describe the Blanqui era as the “golden age” of the school, but aimed at showing that all French business schools had been created on the same

model as the Parisian school. According to him, the pioneering role of the ESCP in the field of business education and its family business history represented strengths that set the school apart from its main opponents:

- First, as the school had been founded in 1819, it was considered by Renouard as the oldest business school in the world<sup>95</sup>. Moreover, all the other French business schools were founded more than fifty years later. For example, the Higher School of Commerce located in Mulhouse was founded in 1866 while other ones were only created in Rouen and Le Havre in 1871, in Lyon in 1872 and finally two other ones in Marseilles and Bordeaux in 1874. The School of Higher Commercial Studies at Paris (« École des Hautes Études Commerciales » known as “HEC”) only opened in 1881<sup>96</sup>. That is why Renouard asserted that compared with other business schools, the ESCP was the only one, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that could refer to its glorious past: “When compared with other French special schools offering a high level of business education, [the ESCP] is the only one that, strictly speaking, because of its numerous years of experience and the notoriety it had always enjoyed, really has a history”<sup>97</sup>.
- Second, the school set itself apart from its rivals – and particularly the “HEC” School – precisely because of its prestigious past. Unlike all other French business schools, the ESCP was the only one that had been run by a family whose name and qualities were internationally recognized, well before it was purchased by the Paris Chamber of Commerce. As a result, as Adolphe Blanqui was considered by the alumni as the “true creator of business

<sup>94</sup> W.-W. Chen and C.-W. Wu, “Transmission of ideas about love: ... », *art. cit.*

<sup>95</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1898)*, *op. cit.*, p. V ; L. Arena, « Les modèles nationaux d'enseignement de la gestion d'entreprise : forme de capitalisme et mode d'organisation », *Entreprises et Histoire*, n° 65, 2011, p. 6-10.

<sup>96</sup> P. Fridenson, L. Paquet, « Du haut enseignement commercial ... », *art. cit.*, p. 206-207.

<sup>97</sup> A. Renouard, *Histoire de l'École supérieure de commerce de Paris (1820-1898)*, *art. cit.*, p. V.

education in France”<sup>98</sup> – what made him a peculiarly modern hero in the field of education –, the family business history of the school could support its ambition to dominate business education at the time. Actually, even though the “HEC” School claimed to be the only business school at higher level in France<sup>99</sup>, it could not boast of a past as rich as that of the former “Blanqui Business School”, nor could it enjoy such an international reputation.

The historical narrative written by Renouard made sense of the past and raised the aspirations of the school, which fits the argument made by Garud, Kumaraswamy, and Karnøe<sup>100</sup>. This monograph aimed to ensure that the torch of remembrance would be passed to future generations, and that the values for which the Blanqui family fought – excellence, perseverance, success – would be safeguarded. Thanks to the historical narrative the Alumni Association transmitted the Blanqui family spirit between pupils’ generations<sup>101</sup>. This situation thus contributed to constitute the Alumni Association as the “mnemonic community”<sup>102</sup> of the ESCP.

### 3.2. Managerial opportunism: Lacroix’s narrative

Lacroix’s motivations and feelings were quite different when he began the writing of the monograph. The Paris Chamber of Commerce published its own version of the history of the

school in 1898, a few months after Parliament had passed an act reinforcing its powers<sup>103</sup>. After fourteen years of parliamentary debates, the French chambers of commerce could at last take a loan which had been hitherto impossible. This historical narrative was also published a few months before the opening of the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris where the Chamber exhibited its activities, and more especially its business studies curricula. The consular context in which the writing of the narrative occurred is important because at that time the last links between the ESCP and the Blanqui family were broken and all the Parisian consular business schools were encountering a growing success. Actually, in September 1898, the ESCP achieved its highest attendance record by hosting 190 pupils; whereas in 1869 they were only 65. At the same time the “HEC” School met its first success and welcomed 370 pupils<sup>104</sup> whereas the “Commercial School” hosted 435 pupils<sup>105</sup>. So the publication of Lacroix’s monograph in the Chamber’s weekly review could allow its members to highlight the active role of the Paris Chamber in the development of business education in France.

The monograph also allowed Lacroix to underline the achievement accomplished by the Paris Chamber of Commerce by comparison with the Blanquis. Actually Lacroix showed managerial opportunism<sup>106</sup>: he used the Blanqui family’s weaknesses – financial instability, narrowness of the enrolment base, unsuccessful transmission of the school – for

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>99</sup> P. Fridenson, L. Paquy, « Du haut enseignement commercial ... », *art. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>100</sup> R. Garud, A. Kumaraswamy, P. Karnøe, “Path-dependence or path creation...”, *art. cit.*

<sup>101</sup> D. M. Huisman, “Telling a family culture...”, *art. cit.*

<sup>102</sup> R. Suddaby, “Toward a Historical Consciousness: Following the Historic Turn...”, *art. cit.*

<sup>103</sup> The French Act of 9th April 1898 streamlined the organization of the French Chambers of Commerce. Ch. Bouneau *et al.*, *La Chambre de commerce et d’industrie de Paris... op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>104</sup> M. Meuleau, *HEC 100 : 1881-1981. Histoire d’une grande école*, Jouy-en-Josas, Groupe HEC, 1981, p. 20-42.

<sup>105</sup> Ch. Bouneau *et al.*, *La Chambre de commerce et d’industrie de Paris... op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>106</sup> M. Williams, “Building genuine trust through interpersonal emotion management: ...”, *art. cit.*

the Chamber's own benefit. While Lacroix recognized noteworthy qualities to the Blanqui family members, he suggested that the Paris Chamber of Commerce was the only one that had succeeded in increasing the prosperity of the school at a level that had never been achieved before. According to him, the ESCP was actually much more successful than under its previous family management because under the leadership of the Blancuis it had never experienced any financial stability and had lacked of an extensive supporting network. These drawbacks were due to a lack of management discipline visible in the financial instability of the school, but also to the strength of family ties (Adolphe Blanqui selected the godfather of her daughter to succeed him although he was not the best candidate; Guillaume Gervais transmitted the school to his godchild Jane who was not qualified to run the school). Thus the consular narrative confirms that, for non-family members, there exists a tendency to consider the family as an emotional system that could impede the functioning of the business<sup>107</sup>. That is why the Paris Chamber of Commerce criticized the Blanqui era of the school, even though it admitted that Adolphe Blanqui possessed personal skills.

By publishing an alternative history of the ESCP in 1898, Lacroix showed that the writing of the school's history was not the alumni's reserved domain. By writing the history of the ESCP under the Blanqui era, he demonstrated that the supervision of the school fell within the competence of the Paris Chamber of Commerce. As a matter of fact, in 1869 the Chamber had very little experience in managing business schools, but at the turn of the century it became very qualified to do so. As such, historical narrative can be considered a symbolic tool of management

as far as it can be used to express the goals of the consular organization as well as the culture of its members. In this respect, the strategic goal pursued by the Paris Chamber of Commerce was the transformation of the former "Blanqui Business School" into a consular business school.

Consequently, the Paris Chamber of Commerce used historical narratives to manage the process of organizational change, from a family firm held by the Blancuis to a consular business school held by the Paris Chamber of Commerce (see Figure 4), which fits the argument made by Maclean *et al.*<sup>108</sup> and Ybema<sup>109</sup>. It used family business narratives to legitimate its succession after the Blanqui era<sup>110</sup>.

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## CONCLUSION

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The aim of this paper was to examine the strategic use of the history of a former family business after the takeover by non-family purchasers. For that purpose, we have studied two historical narratives on the history of the ESCP published in 1898.

This research contributes to family business literature by advancing our understanding of the use of historical narratives after the takeover by non-family purchasers. The ESCP case is an illustration of how historical family business narratives reflect emotional cleavages surrounding family business history, particularly when the intra-family succession failed. Within this context, historical family business narratives perform strategic functions. More precisely two strategic approaches are thus put forward. The first approach consists in celebrating, through historical narratives,

<sup>107</sup> S. Dames, V. Zuiker, R. Kean and J. Arbutnot, "Predictors of Family Business Tensions and Goal Achievement", *Family Business Review*, vol. 12, n° 3, 1999, p. 241-252.

<sup>108</sup> M. Maclean, C. Harvey, J. A. A. Sillince and B. D. Golant, "Living up to the past?...", *art. cit.*

<sup>109</sup> S. Ybema, "Talk of change...", *art. cit.*

<sup>110</sup> E. Dulpiatz, P. Tracey and N. Phillips, "Succession Narratives in Family Business...", *art. cit.*



the lives of the former family leaders so as to transform family business history into a differentiating asset of the organization by comparison with its competitors. In the ESCP case, such approach was taken by the Alumni Association members. The second approach consists in using historical narratives of the former family leaders as a historic point of comparison to judge the managerial skills of their successors. The transfer of the ESCP to the Paris Chamber of Commerce perfectly illustrates the uses that can be made of family business history by its non-family purchasers. Indeed, it thus allowed the Paris Chamber of Commerce while celebrating the singularity of the former "Blanqui Business School" to establish its own legitimacy.

Our research also contributes to the further promotion of the use of narrative approaches in the field of family business research. Indeed, if the research in family business is dominated by quantitative methods, they cannot evaluate the influence of a family on the firm as well as on its organization and governance. Nonetheless, if the use of historical narratives can improve our knowledge of the transfer of family business to non-family owners, new research should be carried out. As this research is based on a single case study, the findings may not be generalized to other organizations. More comparative research, looking at the wide variety of non-family takeovers – employee buyout, takeover by governments, etc. –, is needed.



## The early emergence of European commercial education in the nineteenth century: Insights from higher engineering schools

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### ABSTRACT

The setting of European commercial education has traditionally been addressed with reference to higher schools of commerce and faculties of business. This has not taken into account empirical evidence showing that, historically, higher engineering schools also offered a mixed education in mercantile and technical subjects to students who wanted to devote themselves to business. However, this type of schooling has received little attention. This article investigates how commercial departments from higher engineering schools constituted an initial, yet ephemeral, public attempt to build an engineering model of commercial education that closely combined mercantile and technical instruction well before the twentieth century.

### KEYWORDS

Commercial education;  
higher engineering schools;  
polytechnic institutes;  
commercial departments;  
Europe

### Introduction

In Europe, the emergence of institutions for commercial education at the higher level has been a long-term process. The earliest steps toward an academic education for commercial endeavours began in the eighteenth century and continued until the twentieth century. Chairs were created in economics from the eighteenth century onwards, notably in the German cities of Frankfurt an der Oder (1727), Halle (1727) and Rinteln (1730), and in the Swedish universities of Uppsala (1741), Turku (1747) and Lund (1750),<sup>1</sup> yet none of these attempts to promote economics in university curricula had any long-lasting effects. It was only in the late nineteenth century that commercial education at the higher level began in Europe, with the bulk of its growth occurring towards the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> While the incorporation of commercial studies into higher education systems occurred in parallel on both sides of the Atlantic, the way it was implemented was significantly different. In the USA, schools of commerce were established as parts of universities, whereas in most European countries they were created outside the university system.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, from a pedagogical point of view, commercial education in the USA developed more out of economics than accountancy, contrary to most European countries.<sup>4</sup> It was also characterised

by the incorporation of liberal studies, whereas European commercial curricula were based almost exclusively on vocational, practice-based learning.<sup>5</sup>

At that time, the increased supply of both commercial and engineering education was a response to increasing industrialisation. The emergence of new industries in fields such as electricity, shipbuilding, iron, steel and the manufacture of combustion engines, required better technical and commercial instruction in order to produce technical and commercial experts, directors and salesmen.<sup>6</sup> In order to address the growing demand for well-educated engineers, higher education expanded into the field of engineering with the opening of higher engineering schools with names like 'technical institutes', 'schools of application for engineers' or 'polytechnic schools'.<sup>7</sup> The latter provided industrial training to civilian personnel for the emerging industrial society.<sup>8</sup> During the nineteenth century, European states designed a model for engineering training to cater for the growth in rail and road networks, hydraulic works, pipework, land registry and international seaports. While construction engineers were all that was needed when manufacturers were themselves artisans, the industrial revolution needed specialised engineers to run the new factories.<sup>9</sup> Higher engineering education was in fact perceived as an important factor in the emergence and development of the industrial world's production apparatus.<sup>10</sup> The aim of public authorities was to rescue higher technical education from the dominance of military engineers who were regularly required to undertake civil engineering tasks.<sup>11</sup> Higher technical schools trained civil engineers who were capable of understanding the world in the best interests not just of war but also of trade and the economy.<sup>12</sup> At the very beginning of the twentieth century, higher education was expanded into the field of trade, with the opening of faculties of business in order to address the growing demand for well-educated businessmen.

It is worth mentioning that before the rise of faculties of business, commercial education was already offered by schools of commerce in European countries. In reality, some of these were effectively secondary schools, despite their designation as 'higher', particularly in France and Germany.<sup>13</sup> Yet in the minds of the European promoters of commercial education, a dividing line gradually appeared between secondary and tertiary commercial education, particularly after 1880, although some earlier examples can be found, such as the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp (Institut Supérieur de Commerce à Anvers), and the Superior School of Commerce of Venice (Scuola Superiore di Commercio di Venezia).<sup>14</sup> Simply put, secondary education was devoted to the education of businessmen and accountants, whereas tertiary commercial education was aimed at teaching captains of industry and business leaders.<sup>15</sup> Students in tertiary commercial education institutions had, therefore, already completed their secondary education, and the curricula were intended to teach commercial skills for both routine trade and business innovation.<sup>16</sup>

Several researchers have shown that European managerial positions in the nineteenth century (and a considerable part of the twentieth century) were mainly filled by engineers and not by graduates from schools of commerce.<sup>17</sup> This pattern was prominent in Italy, Great Britain, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands.<sup>18</sup> This was due to the overwhelming importance of the technical aspect of businesses at the time.<sup>19</sup> Other scholars have shown that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century engineers can be regarded as the original prototypes for managers.<sup>20</sup> It would be interesting, therefore, to study the commercial sections that were implemented within higher engineering schools. In that context, it should be noted that a number of European governments began to develop higher engineering schools with commercial departments, borrowing extensively from the Austrian

model. The Prague Polytechnic (Prag Polytechnisches Institute) and the Vienna Polytechnic (Polytechnisches Institute Wien), created in 1806 and 1815 respectively, exerted considerable influence on the development of similar institutions, particularly in Germany, Russia, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Sweden.<sup>21</sup> Spain and Portugal also established higher engineering schools based on the French models represented by the Paris Polytechnic (École Polytechnique), which produced civil service engineers, and the Central School of Arts and Manufactures (École Centrale des Arts et Manufactures), which trained engineers for private industry; both were pioneers in higher technical education in Europe.<sup>22</sup> However, they adapted the French model to meet their specific needs, and opened commercial departments in their polytechnics.<sup>23</sup>

To date, few studies have dealt with these pioneering governmental efforts to establish commercial education in a European context throughout the nineteenth century. In his 1957 study, Redlich mentioned that commercial courses were temporarily taught during the nineteenth century at the institutes of technology of Braunschweig, Karlsruhe, Vienna and Riga but he did not provide details about this training.<sup>24</sup> Only a few investigations have addressed how commercial departments in higher engineering schools actually functioned. Some researchers, particularly Fauri, Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques, have shown that European commercial education initially developed in higher technical schools in the first part of the nineteenth century,<sup>25</sup> however, as they only focused on a single country, and did not cover the whole of the nineteenth century, they did not acknowledge the scope of this phenomenon.<sup>26</sup> In our view, this method of organising commercial training within higher engineering schools provides an interesting and under-studied model of commercial education. Although the schools differed across time and space, three common characteristics may be identified to define this model. First, from an organisational point of view, commercial education was offered by commercial sections within public higher engineering schools, not by independent educational institutions. Second, from a pedagogical point of view, the training offered by commercial sections was mixed, providing both commercial and engineering courses. Third, the training was intended for students who had completed their secondary education, i.e. students who had successfully graduated from the colleges, lyceums, athenaeums, gymnasiums, or other secondary schools. The minimum age for admission for new students was 16–17 throughout the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup>

The aim of this article is to analyse the early emergence, rise and decline of commercial departments within higher engineering schools in nineteenth-century Europe. Three research questions follow from this goal. Why and how were commercial sections created within higher engineering schools at the time? How did they evolve throughout the nineteenth century? Why did higher engineering schools finally abandon their commercial departments when they had previously promoted them?

The article is organised as follows. The first section analyses the reasons behind the creation of commercial sections within higher engineering schools in nineteenth-century Europe, and the way in which they were initially organised. The second section analyses how commercial sections within higher engineering schools evolved throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Following on from this, the third section considers why higher engineering schools ultimately abandoned these commercial departments. The final section provides a conclusion.

## Methodology and data

In order to identify higher engineering schools with commercial departments, we studied commercial training in the nineteenth century from a transnational perspective in terms of design, degree, syllabus, contents and qualifications. Hence our focus falls within the framework of 'commercial education' and not 'management education'. This is a significant semantic clarification. If the term 'management education' is commonly used as the equivalent of 'business' or 'commercial education', sometimes even among historians, it is worth mentioning that the notion of 'management education' did not exist in the nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup> At the time, the concept of 'commercial education' was used since the subject of management was not taught *per se* in Europe before the First World War.<sup>29</sup> A significant change in the content of commercial studies was made thanks to the dissemination of the works of Taylor and Fayol after the First World War, and even more so after the Second World War, when management began to be recognised both as a profession and as an academic discipline in its own right. It is therefore important to draw distinctions between 'commercial education' and 'management education'. Put simply, before the First World War, 'commercial education' was exclusively based on institutional subjects such as banking, insurance and industrial administration, and on functions such as accounting, legislation and personnel.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, 'management education', which appeared during the twentieth century, and in particular in the United States after the Second World War, embodies additional subjects dedicated to management *per se*, such as decision theory, leadership, systems analysis, group dynamics, purchasing issues and related topics.<sup>31</sup> Hence, given the period under consideration in this article, we will be dealing with 'commercial education'.

Which higher engineering schools are studied in this article? The population under consideration is composed of higher engineering schools which opened commercial sections in nineteenth-century Europe. Since national statistical data about the functioning of polytechnic commercial sections is sadly deficient, this study relies on data for individual schools. Our sampling methodology was based on three criteria. First of all, we selected educational institutions which had been identified from previous literature. Research published by Redlich, Leimanis, Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques identified some of the main higher engineering schools with commercial sections.<sup>32</sup> The second criterion to be applied was national representativeness. We selected educational institutions that could be termed as 'model schools' with regard to the shaping of their national higher technical education systems. To this end, we examined published information provided by jurors' reports and catalogues from world exhibitions from the mid-nineteenth century, which had a vested interest in the development of professional education. Since the third world exhibition, which took place in London in 1862, every world exhibition included several sections dedicated to education, particularly commercial and engineering education. Finally, some individual schools were chosen on the basis of their historical importance within the field of technical education in Europe. The Prague and Vienna polytechnics, for example, were important in northern Europe in the early nineteenth century, where the first higher technical schools to be established adopted them as their model.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in the second part of the nineteenth century various polytechnics were founded on the model of the Karlsruhe Polytechnic (Polytechnisches Schule Karlsruhe), particularly in Austria, Germany, Russia and Switzerland.<sup>34</sup> Our sampling methodology led us to identify 15 higher engineering schools located in several European countries. More precisely, the higher engineering schools chosen for the

study were the higher technical schools of Aachen, Karlsruhe, Lausanne, Lisbon, Madrid, Munich, Oporto, Prague, Riga, St Petersburg, Stuttgart, Trieste, Vienna and Zurich.<sup>35</sup> Other schools were candidates for inclusion in the study, such as the schools of application for engineers in Milan and Turin, and the Institute of Technology of Braunschweig, but, as we lacked precise information about them, they were not considered in this work. In fact, the aim of this article is not to provide a geographical overview of commercial departments in higher engineering schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but to enhance insight into their operation.

The article focuses on the entire nineteenth century. It begins in the early part of the century when the first industrial revolution was in its infancy, at a time when there were no higher institutions for commercial education in Europe. From this perspective, the opening in 1806 of the first higher engineering school with a commercial department in Austria (the Prague Polytechnic) constituted a first governmental response to meet firms' requirements for well-educated staff and, in particular, for businessmen. As the industrial revolution expanded the scope of application of commercial practices, the need to provide commercial education to would-be businessmen became more apparent, along with the need to provide higher engineering education.<sup>36</sup> The Prague Polytechnic was quickly imitated first by the central European states and, from the middle of the nineteenth century, by northern and southern Europe. The study ends after the First World War when the Riga Polytechnic (Polytechnisches Schule Riga), the last higher engineering school with a commercial department, closed its 51-year-old commercial section in 1919.

We decided to undertake a comparative study in order to address the emergence of early European commercial education within commercial sections in higher engineering schools. Locke, the initiator of this type of study on commercial education, showed that comparison is a useful analytical tool for examining how particular models of commercial education emerged and spread over time and space.<sup>37</sup> Archival data that supported this research were collected from a range of different sources. All of them reflected the importance of engineering and commercial education in Europe at a time when the industrialisation process was ongoing. Archival data from commercial education institutions provided useful information for establishing a comparative perspective, especially that from the St Petersburg Polytechnic (Polytechnisches Schule St-Petersburg) and from the Commercial and Nautical Academy of Trieste (Reale Accademia di Commercio e Nautica Trieste).<sup>38</sup> The nineteenth century was also a time when administrations in Western countries were comparing themselves to one another in order to reform existing national education systems. This is the reason why several contemporary comparative studies were consulted. The first were the scientific missions from surveys sponsored by the French Ministry of Trade between 1833 and 1865.<sup>39</sup> These documents were produced by the French government at a time when France was looking to modernise its technical and commercial education, drawing on pedagogical models used by its neighbours. The second were the reports published in the 1890s by the American Bankers Association, which had sent Professor Edmund James, then the director of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, to investigate the European institutions for the education of businessmen. The third were the reports from the British special sub-committee on commercial education which was appointed in the late 1890s to suggest plans for establishing educational institutions in London dedicated to commerce, based on what was being implemented abroad.<sup>40</sup> The fourth was a report on European commercial education commissioned in the early 1900s by the Senate of the University of

**Table 1.** Dates of the opening of commercial departments within the main higher engineering schools in nineteenth-century Europe.

Country	City	Institution	Opening of the school	Establishment of commercial departments
Austria	Prague	Polytechnic Institute	1806	1806
	Trieste	Commercial and Nautical Academy	1754	1817
Germany	Vienna	Polytechnic Institute	1815	1815
	Aachen	Institute of Technology	1870	1898
	Karlsruhe	Polytechnic School	1825	1832
	Munich	Polytechnic School	1868	1868
Portugal	Stuttgart	Polytechnic School	1829	1835
	Lisbon	Industrial and Commercial Institute	1852	1869
	Oporto	Industrial and Commercial Institute	1852	1886
Russia	Oporto	Royal Polytechnic Academy	1837	1837
	Riga	Polytechnic School	1862	1868
	St-Petersburg	Polytechnic Institute	1899	1900
Spain	Madrid	Royal Industrial Institute	1850	1850
Switzerland	Lausanne	Industrial School	1869	1869
	Zurich	Polytechnic Institute	1855	1901

Note: All the schools' names appearing in the table below are those of the schools when a commercial section was opened. Source: Author's elaboration.

Sydney.<sup>41</sup> The aim of such surveys was to improve the commercial educational systems of France, the USA, Great Britain and Australia, by observing the higher institutions for commercial education on the Continent. This literature enabled international comparisons of commercial education systems. Finally, official school histories and commemorative publications about higher engineering schools also provided meaningful insight.<sup>42</sup>

## The creation of the engineering model of commercial education within higher technical schools in nineteenth-century Europe

### *Public authorities: the first initiators of commercial education within higher engineering schools*

In nineteenth-century Europe, political and cultural circumstances engendered a belief in the efficacy of higher education as a means of economic advancement. At the time, there existed a universal consensus that the practices of industry would benefit from a more intimate association with science. A number of technical schools created in nineteenth-century Europe included chemical, physical, maritime, architectural, metallurgical, postal and agronomic engineering sections, as well as commercial sections, since they had to train civil servants as well as businessmen to assist in the development of the country's nascent industries. European monarchs and governments therefore implemented educational policies to advance their national economies.<sup>43</sup>

Table 1 provides an overview of the dates of the opening of commercial departments within higher engineering schools in nineteenth-century Europe. It shows that commercial sections were created throughout the nineteenth century, the first being within the Prague Polytechnic in 1806 and the last within the Zurich Polytechnic in 1901. All of these commercial sections were opened within higher technical schools. Some of these sections were opened

in long-established schools, such as the Commercial and Nautical Academy of Trieste which was founded in 1754 and opened a commercial section in 1817, whilst others were opened in more recently founded institutions such as the St Petersburg Polytechnic, which opened its commercial section in 1900, a year after it was established. Table 1 illustrates that the establishment of commercial sections within higher engineering schools took two overlapping forms. First, a commercial department could be created at the same time as the higher engineering school. In that case, the date of opening of the school coincided with the date on which the commercial department was established, as was the case in the Oporto Polytechnic Academy (*Academia Politécnica do Porto*), which opened in 1837 and offered commercial instruction from the start. Similarly, the Munich Polytechnic (*Polytechnisches Schule München*) offered four sections from its opening in 1868, one specifically mercantile and three technical. Second, commercial departments could be added to technical institutions already in existence, in which case the date of opening of the school was different from the date of establishment of a commercial department. That was the case with the Zurich Polytechnic established in 1855 in Switzerland. Originally the institution only had departments for training civil engineers, architects, chemists and agronomists, and the commercial department was not established there until 1901.

Higher engineering schools with commercial departments were exclusively public.<sup>44</sup> In fact, in some countries, the weakness of the private industrial sector forced the governments to play a crucial role in the modernisation of higher mercantile and technical education, as was the case in Russia and Portugal in the middle years of the nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup> State governments were engaged in the creation of commercial departments within higher engineering schools in towns and cities, generally in the country's commercial centres. They provided scholarships, subsidies or locations to meet the demands of businessmen who were determined to develop their countries. The same held true at the regional and municipal levels. Since they were familiar with local needs in terms of commercial education, regional and municipal authorities were best equipped to determine whether it was appropriate or not to open such institutions. For instance, the Riga Polytechnic was founded in 1862, after the Czar of Russia Alexander II approved its statutes, with the support of the Riga city council and Prince Suvorov, the Governor-General of the Baltic region. The parliamentary meeting of the landowners of Livonia allocated 2000 roubles annually for 12 years to the polytechnic institute, while the Governor-General of the Baltic region was appointed as its curator.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, from an economic standpoint, the rise of higher technical schools with commercial sections must be linked to the emerging industrial society, in step with the first and second industrial revolutions. For instance, in Austria in 1806, Franz Joseph Gerstener, with the support of Emperor Franz I, created the Prague Polytechnic, the first higher engineering school with a commercial department, in order to introduce new production processes and support the design of new machinery so that domestic industrial products could successfully compete in international markets.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in Spain, the first higher engineering school in the country, the Royal Industrial Institute of Madrid (*Real Instituto Industrial de Madrid*), was opened in 1850 with both a commercial and a technical department to address the industrialisation process that was under way in the country.<sup>48</sup>

Yet on its own this economic factor was not a determinant one. The development of higher engineering schools with commercial departments cannot be explained as a mere mechanical response to economic growth, but must also be associated with national policies. For instance, in some industrialised countries, such as Great Britain, the national scholastic context was not favourably disposed towards that type of schooling. Until the late nineteenth



century, the British educational system was not really interested in higher professional studies such as mercantile or engineering studies.<sup>49</sup> This example reveals that higher technical education was not only a supporting part of industrialisation and the bureaucratisation of corporate life during the nineteenth century, but also a political construct that surfaced in response to these processes.<sup>50</sup> Hence, the establishment of higher engineering schools with commercial departments required a centralised state, well-disposed towards technical and commercial education and wealthy enough to build and maintain this educational infrastructure. That is the reason why the first higher technical schools were opened by governments in countries such as Austria and Germany at the very beginning of the nineteenth century whereas, for Russia, the phenomenon did not arise until the second part of the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Bringing the engineering and business elite together***

As previously mentioned, until the late nineteenth century the distinction between secondary and tertiary education of future businessmen was not clear-cut. Under those circumstances the result was a lack of clarity for the higher engineering schools with commercial sections during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century in terms of possible goals: training merchants or training business leaders. This statement is not true for the higher engineering schools with commercial sections created at the turn of the twentieth century. Germany, for instance, established a commercial section at the Aachen Institute of Technology (Technische Hochschule Aachen) in 1898 in order to develop engineering students and train business leaders for commerce and industry.<sup>52</sup> It aimed to provide academic commercial training to serve the future heads of great mercantile and industrial concerns, as well as administrative officials.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, in 1900 Russia created a commercial section within the St Petersburg Polytechnic in order to train the Empire's future technical and commercial elite.<sup>54</sup>

Higher engineering schools were created throughout the nineteenth century to train civil engineers, directors of chemical works and plant managers, as well as civil servants and public administrators. In Russia, the Riga Polytechnic trained not only would-be traders but also prospective commercial teachers, state factory inspectors and tax inspectors.<sup>55</sup> Likewise, the Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Institute (Instituto Industrial e Comercial do Lisboa) and the Oporto Industrial and Commercial Institute (Instituto Industrial e Comercial do Porto) aimed to train men who were destined to become exporters, bankers and consuls, as well as executive officers in the postal administration, directors of Portuguese customs, and directors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>56</sup> Why did the founders of higher technical schools with commercial departments decide to have future engineers and future businessmen in the same educational institution?

In fact, the creation of a new commercial education option in these technical institutions had pedagogical advantages. The aim of such commercial schooling was to make the businessman 'a technically trained manufacturer, a scientific technologist'.<sup>57</sup> Commercial education mixed with higher engineering education was supposed to have a synergistic effect on industrial performance, since the new technology firms created by engineers often required the new mercantile techniques.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, commercial education and engineering education were considered as complementary training, since technology was an auxiliary science for prospective businessmen. For instance, an export director or factory director was expected to be trained in office duties as well as in knowledge of the quality of the products or machinery they were to sell, thus presuming the combination of both commercial and

technical types of knowledge. As a result, the study of commodities composition required knowledge of natural history, chemistry, physics or even mineralogy in order to prepare would-be businessmen to not only be able to discover adulterations in either raw materials or manufactured products, but also to ensure that their employees mastered these skills. Thanks to a technological background, businessmen in the chemical industry could study the range and quality of competitors' products in order to improve their own. Consequently, commercial education strengthened itself by becoming industrial.

Of these pedagogical advantages, we may also mention bringing together students with similar educational needs who were potentially destined to work in the same economic environment. Higher engineering schools taught students who shared a common professional destiny, since businessmen could not be entirely separated from engineers. In the nineteenth century, specific commercial departments were established at certain naval academies to train students who would be called on to develop the port ecosystem. The Commercial and Nautical Academy of Trieste was one such example, founded in 1754 by Empress Maria Theresa, and originally dedicated solely to nautical science, under the name of the Royal Navigation School, before a commercial department was added to it in 1817. This institution had broad goals, with education geared both to future sailors who needed to be familiar with the principal aspects of trade which they would be called on to use on a daily basis, and to future exporters called on to conduct international transactions which, at a time when steam navigation brought major upheaval, would involve familiarity with, if not mastery of, shipping practices such as managing maritime logs, calculating and paying customs duties and producing bills of health.<sup>59</sup> The complementarity between engineering and commercial training was also promoted by the sponsors of this interdisciplinary commercial education. Eduard Hollander, president of the Administrative Council of the Riga Polytechnic in Russia, noted that the inclusion of a commercial department in the polytechnic institute, and not the establishment of a separate academy of commerce, was a means of encouraging graduates of the polytechnic school (whether destined for technical or commercial careers) not to become competitors, but to work together for the sake of the fatherland. This was all the more important given that most local factories belonged to traders.<sup>60</sup> The opening of commercial departments in higher engineering schools was, therefore, a public response strategy for industrial and commercial development.

The introduction of commercial departments within higher engineering schools can also be explained on material grounds. The addition of a commercial department to an existing multidisciplinary school required a smaller investment than would be required for a commercial department built from scratch. Sometimes the number of commercial students was insufficient to create an independent academy of commerce. The percentage of students receiving commercial education could be very low compared to the total number of students. For instance, in 1860–1861 the commercial department of the Stuttgart Polytechnic (Polytechnische Schule Stuttgart) welcomed only 21 students out of a total of 270, comprising just 7.8% of the total number of students. In 1863–1864 the figures had risen to 53 out of 377, which represented 14% of the total number.<sup>61</sup>

The commercial department also offered the advantage of enabling resources to be pooled among the various departments. Facilities with their ancillary costs such as rent, insurance, maintenance, heating and light, as well as school resources such as sample collections, libraries and chemistry labs, could be shared. Even instructors were shared between commercial education and the other training that was offered. For instance, at the Vienna Polytechnic in the 1830s, the geography professor and the natural history professor, who

both held teaching positions in the engineering department, also taught, respectively, commercial history and commodities composition in the commercial department.<sup>62</sup> In addition to financial considerations, pooling also reduced the risk of the institution having to close by diversifying the types of training offered. Whereas in an independent school of commerce a drop in student numbers could lead to major financial problems for the institution, even causing it to close its doors, the risk was reduced for a higher engineering school with a commercial department. If numbers declined in one department, the institution could shut this department rather than close completely.<sup>63</sup> For instance, in Austria, when the commercial sections of the polytechnics of Vienna and Prague were shut down in the 1860s for lack of students, the institutions were able to remain open.<sup>64</sup>

### ***A mixed educational orientation based on engineering and commercial courses***

Pedagogically, the training offered in commercial departments in higher engineering institutes was mixed. The manifestation of this situation was twofold. In the first case, in commercial departments, students were obliged to attend commercial as well as some technical courses. For instance, at the Commercial and Nautical Academy of Trieste, one of the main seaports in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, cosmography and hydrography were mandatory courses for commercial students. As the school was committed to training would-be master mariners, future officers of shipyards and prospective directors of export companies, cosmography and hydrography were considered to be basic courses for all students, whether they were enrolled in commercial studies or not. The same held true for the commercial departments in the higher technical institutes in Lisbon and Oporto, where commercial students had to study metallurgy, hydraulics or mineralogy.<sup>65</sup>

Secondly, in other commercial departments students were allowed to attend technical courses. At the Prague, Vienna, Aachen, Karlsruhe, Munich, Stuttgart and Zurich polytechnics, this opportunity was so culturally entrenched that all students from commercial departments attended non-commercial courses.<sup>66</sup> This situation was primarily due to the relative freedom students were allowed in attending classes in their department. In the spirit of 'Lernfreiheit' (the freedom of learning in Germanic polytechnics which allowed students to take whatever courses they wanted, whenever and wherever they wanted) students could, and usually did, follow interdisciplinary courses, i.e. courses not restricted to commercial courses.<sup>67</sup> Thanks to such flexibility in instruction, commercial students were able to learn not only about commercial issues but also about technological developments. For example, students in the commercial departments of the Karlsruhe, Stuttgart and Munich polytechnics could attend classes in trigonometry, hydraulics and stereotomy, or botany and zoology. Since commercial training was associative (both mercantile and technical), professors who taught in commercial departments were also more willing to keep their theoretical discourse within the limits of what was most directly useful for these departments.<sup>68</sup>

Table 2 provides a comparative overview of the courses offered by commercial departments within four of the main higher engineering schools in the 1860s. Because of gaps in the archival data, only schools for which sufficient information was found are presented. The Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, Lisbon and Munich polytechnics can be considered as representative of higher engineering schools with commercial sections at that time. The Karlsruhe Polytechnic exerted considerable influence on the development of German-speaking polytechnics in Europe. Similarly, the Lisbon Polytechnic was emulated in Portugal.<sup>69</sup> Table 2 shows the high number of courses

**Table 2.** Comparative table of the courses offered by commercial departments within the Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, Lisbon, and Munich higher engineering schools in the 1860s.

Courses offered at commercial departments in the 1860s	Karlsruhe Polytechnic School	Stuttgart Polytechnic School	Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Institute	Munich Polytechnic School
<b>Commercial courses</b>				
Bookkeeping	X	X	X	X
Arithmetic	X	X	X	X
Political economy	—	—	X	X
Commercial geography	X	X	X	X
Commercial history	—	—	X	X
Commercial correspondence	X	X	X	X
Commodities composition	X	—	X	X
Commercial technique	X	—	X	—
Languages	X	X	X	X
Commercial legislation	—	X	X	—
Administrative legislation	—	—	—	X
Penmanship	X	—	X	—
<b>Engineering courses</b>				
Botany	X	X	X	X
Zoology	X	X	X	X
Mineralogy	X	X	X	X
Metalurgy	X	X	X	X
Trigonometry	X	X	—	X
Telegraphs	X	X	—	X
Hydraulics	X	X	X	X
Stereotomy	X	X	X	X
Building materials	X	X	—	X

Note: For the sake of clarity, and due to the variety of engineering courses that were offered by higher engineering schools, only the most frequently cited engineering courses in archival documents are included in the table.

Source: Dias Costa, Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne. France, Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel. Hoepke, Geschichte der Fridericiana. Author's elaboration.

available within the commercial sections. At the Karlsruhe and Munich polytechnics there were almost as many commercial courses as engineering courses. Some commercial courses were taught in all the schools surveyed, including bookkeeping, arithmetic, commercial geography, correspondence and foreign languages. Similarly, a number of engineering courses were taught at the Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, Lisbon and Munich polytechnics, such as mineralogy or hydraulics.

### **The evolution of the engineering model of commercial education throughout the nineteenth century**

In response to the changing environment, the original curricula of the higher engineering schools with commercial departments underwent extensive changes over time. More specifically, the engineering model of commercial education evolved in terms of curriculum content, study organisation and status.

#### ***Course proliferation in support of the development of trade and industry***

In the nineteenth century, the educational content dispensed as common-core training was invariably organised around a body of compulsory major commerce-related disciplines,

clearly shared among the higher engineering schools with commercial departments. These were, by order of priority, bookkeeping, political economy and the ‘commodities composition’ course.<sup>70</sup> Bookkeeping, when combined with political economy and arithmetic, was among the cornerstone subjects in the commercial curricula of higher technical schools because it could be used to keep track of successive transformations of funds, and the transactions of any business or bank. It was a natural part of doing trade. The objective of the ‘commodities composition’ course was to enable future businessmen to become familiar with the nature, quality and composition of marketable products, raw materials and by-products that they may be called on to speculate on in the future, as well as to identify any counterfeit or damaged products they might come across. Emphasis was also put on practical subjects such as commercial correspondence and even calligraphy.

It is worth mentioning that the commercial curriculum was further developed and gradually updated throughout the entire nineteenth century. The traditional commercial courses (bookkeeping, political economy and commodities composition) were maintained while an expanded set of new subjects was added to serve as the background for commercial training. Courses on colonial administration, commercial geography, economics, finance, foreign languages, legislation and statistics were introduced. Table 3 provides a comparative overview of the evolution of the number of courses offered by commercial departments within the Karlsruhe, Riga and Lisbon higher engineering schools in nineteenth-century Europe. For the sake of clarity, we have chosen to show the number of courses within the most

**Table 3.** Comparative table of the evolution of the number of commercial courses offered by commercial departments within the Karlsruhe, Riga, and Lisbon higher engineering schools in nineteenth-century Europe.

Commercial course-offered at commercial departments	Karlsruhe Polytechnic School		Riga Polytechnic School		Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Institute	
	1830	1865	1868	1900	1869	1900
Administrative legislation	–	–	–	1	–	1
Arithmetic	1	1	1	1	–	1
Bookkeeping	1	1	1	1	1	1
Calligraphy	1	1	1	1	1	1
Colonial administration	–	–	–	–	–	1
Commercial correspondence	1	1	1	1	1	1
Commercial geography	1	1	1	1	1	1
Commercial history	–	1	1	1	1	1
Commercial legislation	–	1	1	1	1	1
Commodities composition	1	1	1	1	1	1
Economics	–	–	–	1	–	–
Finance	–	–	–	1	–	1
Foreign languages	–	1	1	1	–	1
Political economy	1	1	1	1	–	1
Statistics	–	1	–	1	1	1
Total number of commercial courses	7	11	10	14	8	14

Sources: Dias Costa, Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne, France, Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel, Dumont and Jourdan, Étude sur les écoles de commerce, France, Exposition universelle internationale de 1900 à Paris, Hoepke, Geschichte der Friderikiana, Author's elaboration.

influential polytechnics in Europe at the time, i.e. the Karlsruhe Polytechnic for German-speaking countries, the Riga Polytechnic for Russia and the Lisbon Polytechnic for Portugal. As shown in Table 3, the instructional programme for the commercial department of the Karlsruhe Polytechnic rose from seven commercial courses per week in 1830 to 11 in 1865, not counting engineering courses. As this school served as a model for polytechnics in Germany, Russia and Switzerland, this trend had repercussions for the Stuttgart, Munich, Riga and Zurich polytechnics.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, at the Riga Polytechnic, the commercial department's instructional programme grew from 10 commercial courses in 1868 to 14 commercial courses per week in 1900. Table 3 also shows that in the commercial department of the Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Institute, the curriculum grew from eight commercial courses in 1869 to 14 in 1900.

This proliferation of courses resulted from changes in the economic environment, as the needs of European governments in 1810 were not the same as those in either 1860 or 1895. The growing internationalisation of trade prompted higher technical schools with commercial departments to increase the time spent studying foreign languages, maritime law and international law. For instance, at a time when seaborne trade was stimulated by the opening of the Suez Canal (1867), which turned the Mediterranean into a primary sea route towards the Orient, the commercial section of the Commercial and Nautical Academy of Trieste was offering Turkish lessons.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, in Europe at this time there was a system of domestic-foreign commercial education under which commercial students acquired formal education and work experience abroad.<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, institutions offering commercial education had to teach international subjects such as modern languages and legislation in order to make their curricula more attractive. Most of the higher engineering schools with commercial departments in Austria, Germany, Russia, Switzerland and Portugal taught both domestic and foreign students.<sup>74</sup> For instance, in 1862 the commercial department in the Karlsruhe Polytechnic was already hosting five foreign students out of a total of 30.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, the specific demands of local or national commerce could also drive the proliferation of courses taught by higher engineering schools. For instance, the Riga Polytechnic, located in one of Russia's main ports, initially required its commercial students to take maritime law, which was not on offer in the other schools. The Riga traders had strengthened their trade and financial links with the rest of the world and, by the end of the century, the city had become the third largest industrial centre in the Russian Empire.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, by 1900 the scope of commercial subjects had been broadened by division into more specific disciplines, while four new subjects had also been introduced, namely finance, statistics, civil legislation and commercial geography.<sup>77</sup> The introduction of these courses reflected the type of training in commercial education that the authorities were encouraging. Since Riga had become a newly influential actor in world trade, a demand had arisen for leading businessmen trained in all commercial issues, not just maritime ones. Similarly, in the 1890s in Portugal, the commercial section at the Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Institute offered lessons dedicated to colonial administration and tropical hygiene. At the time, Portugal had just expanded its colonial empire in Africa by conquering Guinea-Bissau (1879). As the school taught future engineers and future businessmen in the fields of civil works, i.e. mining, mechanical and chemical engineering, as well as civil servants to work for the colonies, it had to provide colonial education.<sup>78</sup> The proliferation of courses was, therefore, a sign of up-to-date training and the attention devoted by higher engineering schools to the development of industry and trade.<sup>79</sup>

**Table 4.** Comparative table of duration of studies at the commercial departments within the Prague, Vienna, Trieste, Lisbon, and Riga higher engineering schools in Europe throughout the nineteenth century.

Duration of studies at the commercial departments of some higher engineering schools	in the 1830s	in the 1860s	in the 1880s	in the 1890s
Prague Polytechnic School	1 year	3 years	Not concerned	Not concerned
Vienna Polytechnic School	1 year	3 years	Not concerned	Not concerned
Trieste Commercial and Nautical Academy	2 years	3 years	3 years	3 years
Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Institute	Not concerned	1 year	3 years	5 years
Riga Polytechnic School	Not concerned	3 years	5 years	4 years

Note: For the sake of clarity, the table only takes into account commercial sections that have existed for more than thirty years. Due to a lack of archival data, the commercial departments from the Karlsruhe and Oporto polytechnics which have been existing for sixty years are not included in the table. The latter only takes into account the years of specialisation: the preparatory years, which could be optional depending on the school, are not included in the table.

Sources: Archivio di Stato di Trieste, Governo Marittimo. Atstaja et al., "The case of the Baltic region". Dias Costa, Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne. Dumont and Jourdan, *Étude sur les écoles de commerce*. Kurrer and Ramm, *The History of the Theory of Structures*. Author's elaboration.

### ***The lengthening of commercial studies***

The duration of commercial studies increased significantly during the nineteenth century. Table 4 provides a comparative overview of the duration of studies at the commercial departments within the Prague, Vienna, Trieste, Lisbon and Riga higher engineering schools in Europe throughout the nineteenth century. For the sake of clarity, the table only takes into account commercial sections that existed for more than 30 years. Due to a lack of archival data, the commercial sections in the Karlsruhe and Oporto polytechnics are not included in the table. As depicted in Table 4, in Prague and Vienna in the 1830s, commercial students at higher engineering schools with commercial departments completed their schooling within a single year, whereas it was two years in Trieste. In the last third of the nineteenth century, the duration of commercial studies increased to two or three years. This became the new standard. The majority of commercial departments established in higher engineering schools after 1870 extended the term of their commercial courses to at least three years. In Portugal, in the commercial department of the Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Institute, the length of studies was one year in 1869, then two years until 1886, and four years until 1898, when it was extended to five years.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, in Russia, an 1878 reform extended the duration of the commercial curriculum at the Riga Polytechnic from three to five years. Since the commercial curriculum was overloaded with new subjects, in reality it took six to eight years to finish, with the consequence that many Russian students got married during their studies. For this reason, the length of studies was finally reduced to four years in the 1890s, as per the German model.

More generally, the extension of the period of commercial education within higher technical schools was a consequence of three factors. First, higher engineering schools increased the number of years of study for commercial students in order to accommodate the proliferation of courses. Second, higher engineering schools aligned the effective duration of commercial studies with that of engineering studies. Originally, the curriculum of commercial departments was shorter than those offered by the technical departments at these engineering institutes. Table 5 provides a comparative overview of the duration of studies in the Karlsruhe, Lisbon, Munich, Stuttgart and Trieste higher engineering schools in Europe in the 1860s. Due to a lack of archival data, only schools for which sufficient information was found

**Table 5.** Comparative table of duration of studies within the Karlsruhe, Lisbon, Munich, Stuttgart, and Trieste higher engineering schools in Europe in the 1860s.

Duration of studies in the 1860s	Commercial department	Building department	Mechanical department	Chemical department	Civil Engineering department	Forestry department	Postal department	Maritime department
Karlsruhe Polytechnic School	1 year	4 years	2 years	2 years	3 years	2 years	1 year	–
Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Institute	1 year	–	–	–	3 years	–	–	–
Munich Polytechnic School	1 year	2 years	2 years	2 years	–	–	–	–
Stuttgart Polytechnic School	1 year	3 years	3 years	3 years	3 years	–	–	–
Trieste Commercial and Nautical Academy	2 years	2 years	–	–	–	–	–	3 years

Note: For the sake of clarity, the table only takes into account the years of specialisation; the preparatory years, which could be optional depending on the school, are not included in the table.

Sources: Dias Costa, Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne. Dumont and Jourdan, *Étude sur les écoles de commerce*. France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel*. Hoepke, *Geschichte der Fridericiana*. Author's elaboration.

are presented. As shown in Table 5, at the Stuttgart Polytechnic in the 1860s, students took two years of preparatory classes and then three years of specialist classes in the departments of architecture, civil engineering and chemistry, whereas the commercial department required only one year of specialist studies, and no preparatory classes. The same held true for the Munich Polytechnic, where the commercial curriculum included only one year of specialisation, and no preparatory classes, whereas the departments dedicated to construction and mechanics required two years of preparatory classes and two years of specialisation. At the Karlsruhe Polytechnic, the commercial department required only one year of specialisation whereas the departments of architecture, civil engineering, forestry, mechanics and chemistry required between two and four years. Such brevity was perceived as evidence that studying commerce was easier than studying applied sciences.<sup>82</sup> Hence, business could be perceived as less academically demanding compared to technical sciences, which called into question the very idea of 'commercial education' being comparable to 'higher engineering education'. Third, psychologically, the brevity of this commercial instruction did not satisfy the desires of the middle classes to have prestigious instruction for those sons going into business.<sup>83</sup> Consequently, in order to prove that commerce was also a noble discipline worthy of lengthy studies, the Prague, Vienna, Trieste, Lisbon and Riga higher engineering schools extended their commercial study programmes.<sup>84</sup> Syllabus expansion and the extension of the period of study in commercial departments had the desired effect of bringing higher engineering schools closer to the level of traditional universities. This in turn implied a status upgrade for the engineering model of commercial education, as discussed further below.



### ***Raising the academic prestige of the engineering model of commercial education***

Higher engineering schools with commercial departments gradually attempted to affirm their higher status. From an administrative point of view, while the configuration of some institutes was in fact close to that of the universities, especially in Russia and Portugal, higher engineering schools with commercial sections lacked prestige in society at large.<sup>85</sup> This was true in Germany where higher engineering schools were perceived as having a lower status than universities, even though they were not secondary schools.<sup>86</sup> For this reason, university status was sometimes granted to them by law. In 1865, after a great deal of negotiation, the title of 'higher technical institute' (Technische Hochschule) was bestowed on the Karlsruhe Polytechnic by Grand Duke Frederick I.<sup>87</sup> This is not an isolated case: in the late 1870s, most of the higher engineering schools in Germany became Technische Hochschulen.<sup>88</sup> Subsequently, responsibility for them was shifted from the Ministry of Commerce to that of Education, and efforts were made to appoint teachers with good scientific credentials.<sup>89</sup> For instance, in the 1860s, at the Stuttgart Polytechnic, supervisory authority was assumed by the Ministry of Education, which was in charge of all Württemberger universities. The senior teachers were subsequently given a status equal to that of university professors.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, in Russia some attributes of public authority were granted to the staff of such institutions. The St Petersburg Polytechnic was placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance, and its teachers, including those teaching in the commercial department, had to wear the uniform of the Ministry.<sup>91</sup>

From an academic point of view, in the second half of the nineteenth century higher engineering schools offered a new commercial course in commercial history, which pursued more ideological than genuinely operational goals for would-be businessmen, in order to raise the social prestige of their commercial students. According to Maffre, commercial history was taught to enhance the prestige of commercial careers whilst demonstrating to the students the historical importance that commerce and businessmen have exercised since antiquity.<sup>92</sup> The teaching of commercial history at higher engineering schools with commercial departments pursued ideological goals. It was taught to enhance the prestige of commercial education, which was not then highly regarded, as compared to education in the humanities, experimental science and engineering.<sup>93</sup> In other words, commercial history could enhance the status of would-be businessmen by showing them examples of successful businessmen from history and therefore helping them to realize that they were crucial to the prosperity of businesses. Such a course was also a means for higher engineering schools with commercial departments to underline the advanced level of their teaching and to enhance their academic stature.

It is worth mentioning that two higher engineering schools with commercial sections succeeded in issuing their commercial students with doctoral degrees. Although the German higher engineering schools had been unable to award doctorates (a privilege of the universities) for most of the nineteenth century, they were eventually granted the right to award them at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1898, the Aachen Institute of Technology, which included a commercial department, won the right to grant doctorates.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, the Zurich Polytechnic, in conjunction with the Faculty of Law and Economics at the University of Zurich, awarded its first 'Doctor Juris (Economici)' doctorates to its commercial students at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>95</sup> The prestige attached to the awarding of research degrees was important for the status of the higher engineering schools with commercial sections

and, consequently, for the status of the engineering model of commercial education. Even though we do not know precisely how many commercial students from Aachen and Zurich succeeded in earning such doctorates, the right to confer them entailed the formal recognition that these higher engineering schools were of equal status to universities.<sup>96</sup> In these two cases, commercial graduates could achieve parity with university graduates, who were traditionally designated as 'doctors'.

Finally, polytechnics with commercial sections succeeded in gaining professional advantages for their commercial students. Some students were granted greater access to consular or customs careers, as was the case for the higher engineering schools of Lisbon and Oporto. Others were given partial dispensation from military service.<sup>97</sup> From the 1860s onwards, the Kingdom of Württemberg allowed the Stuttgart Polytechnic to issue a certificate of fitness for just one year of volunteer duty in the state's army. The same held true in Austria-Hungary, where, from December 1868, the diploma issued by the higher engineering school of Trieste afforded the student one year of service in the Austro-Hungarian army. Similarly, in Russia the diploma issued by the Riga and the St Petersburg polytechnics permitted the volunteer to serve only one year in the Russian army.<sup>98</sup> In all cases, the students would otherwise have had to serve for three years. At the turn of the century, commercial graduates from Russian polytechnics also enjoyed the same rights and privileges as the state technical schools for entering government employment.<sup>99</sup> The privileges granted to graduates of higher engineering school commercial departments reveal the growing awareness among nineteenth-century governmental authorities of the need to promote commercial personnel.

**Table 6.** Dates of the closure of commercial departments within higher engineering schools between 1862 and 1919 in Europe.

Country	City	Institution	Closure of commercial departments	Transformation of commercial departments into independent educational institutions
Austria	Prague	Polytechnic Institute	1863	Not concerned
	Trieste	Commercial and Nautical Academy	1895	Not concerned
Germany	Vienna	Polytechnic Institute	1865	Not concerned
	Aachen	Institute of Technology	1908	Not concerned
	Karlsruhe	Polytechnic School	1885	Not concerned
	Munich	Polytechnic School	1877	Not concerned
	Stuttgart	Polytechnic School	1862	Not concerned
Portugal	Lisbon	Industrial and Commercial Institute	1911	Higher School of Commerce
	Oporto	Industrial and Commercial Institute	1918	Higher School of Commerce
	Oporto	Royal Polytechnic Academy	1897	Not concerned
Russia	Riga	Polytechnic School	1919	Faculty of business
	St Petersburg	Polytechnic Institute	1918	Faculty of business
Spain	Madrid	Royal Industrial Institute	1867	Not concerned
Switzerland	Lausanne	Industrial School	1901	Higher School of Commerce
	Zurich	Polytechnic Institute	1908	Not concerned

Note: All the schools' names appearing in the table below are those of the schools when a commercial section was opened. Sources: Table 6 has been compiled from a variety of sources: Archivio di Stato di Trieste, Governo Marittimo. France, Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel. France, Exposition universelle internationale de 1900 à Paris. Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques, "Evolução do ensino da contabilidade em Portugal"; Hoepfle, *Geschichte der Fridericiana*. Lechner, *Geschichte der Technischen Hochschule in Wien (1815-1940)*. Leimanis, "The Polytechnical Institute of Riga and its role in the development of Science"; Lomik, *Vznik, Vývoj a Současnost*. Pavón, "El Real Instituto Industrial de Madrid". Playfair, *Industrial Instruction on the Continent*. Author's elaboration.

### The demise of the engineering model of commercial education in Europe

Was the engineering model of commercial education successfully carried out? It must be noted that most commercial departments within higher engineering schools suffered from low attendance. Even if the averages recorded by archival data might hide large inter-annual variations, they provide useful information. For instance, there was an average of 20–30 students per year in the commercial departments of the German polytechnics in the 1860s, and an average of 50 students in the commercial department of the Industrial and Commercial Institute of Lisbon in the 1870s.<sup>100</sup> For the time the commercial department of the Riga Polytechnic existed, from 1868 to 1919, the average annual number of students was just under 30, which gives a total of 1500 students in just over 50 years.<sup>101</sup> At the Oporto Polytechnic, between 1840 and 1880, the average number of students per year was less than 13.<sup>102</sup> These figures contrast sharply with those of the main higher schools of commerce at the tertiary level during this period. From 1860 to 1880, an annual average of 103 students attended the Superior Institute of Commerce in Antwerp, and from 1868 to 1918, the Royal Superior School of Commerce of Venice had an annual average of 164 students.<sup>103</sup>

All commercial departments also had an ephemeral existence. As depicted in Table 6, most of them disbanded during the nineteenth century. Between 1862 and 1897, the higher engineering schools of Stuttgart, Prague, Vienna, Madrid, Munich, Karlsruhe, Trieste and Oporto closed their commercial departments. In 1901, the commercial department of the Lausanne Industrial School disbanded. The Aachen, Lisbon, Riga, St Petersburg and Zurich polytechnics followed suit a few years later. By the end of the First World War, all of them had disappeared. Table 6 also shows that the majority of commercial sections were not transformed into independent educational institutions. Some of them were, however, converted at the beginning of the twentieth century into higher schools of commerce, such as the commercial sections in the industrial and commercial institutes of Lisbon and Oporto, and others were transformed into faculties of business, like the commercial sections in the St Petersburg and Riga polytechnics.

What could be the reasons for such a situation? Some of the contemporaries of the engineering model of commercial education criticised this organisational form of mercantile education. As Professor Edmund James noted in his 1898 report on the education of businessmen in nineteenth-century Europe, 'The commercial courses in the technical schools ... did not succeed in obtaining the hoped-for influence in those circles whose interests they were intended to serve, nor could they correspond to the varied demands of the mercantile classes.'<sup>104</sup> Commercial sections within higher engineering schools probably disappeared because of an increasingly competitive environment. Due to the opening and proliferation of educational institutions specifically oriented towards commercial education, i.e. higher schools of commerce and faculties of business, competition in commercial education strengthened in Europe from the second half of the nineteenth century into the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>105</sup> Sometimes, the opening of a new higher school of commerce in a city where a higher engineering school with a commercial section was already established resulted in increased competition or even to the disappearance of the commercial section. It should be noted that the 50-year-old commercial section at the Vienna Polytechnic was closed in 1865, only a few years after the opening of the Vienna Commercial Academy in 1858.<sup>106</sup> Commercial sections within higher engineering schools have disappeared while higher schools of commerce and faculties of business have survived. Their disappearance

can be attributed to their weaknesses. In this section, we will look at the reasons why the engineering model of commercial education was ultimately unsuccessful.

### ***Commercial departments as dependent institutions within higher engineering schools***

From an administrative point of view, as commercial departments were mainly or totally controlled by the national, regional, or municipal governments, they were not independent institutions. Consequently, they were subject to the decisions taken by their supervisory authority. Due to their public origins, public intervention in supporting higher engineering schools with commercial sections was critically important during this period. For example, during the 1880s, the average annual subsidy paid by the Austro-Hungarian government to the higher engineering school of Trieste was 53,000 out of a total of 60,000 guilders, which was more than 88% of its overall annual expenditure.<sup>107</sup> Subsidies were an important factor in the emergence and development of these educational institutions, but had the disadvantage that higher engineering schools with commercial sections were heavily dependent on public authorities. Political and economic conditions therefore determined the development of commercial education in public institutions. In Spain in the 1860s, the economic crisis and political unrest justified the closure of the Royal Industrial Institute in 1867, a few months before the revolution erupted in 1868.<sup>108</sup> A similar situation arose in Portugal, where the downfall of the monarchy in 1910 enabled the Republicans in power to reorganise the higher educational system.<sup>109</sup> Under such circumstances, public authorities were little inclined to support the costly commercial sections they had implemented within their higher engineering schools.

Irrespective of political and economic crises, public authorities could take measures in support of national education policies without taking into account the interests of commercial departments. For instance, in 1896 the Russian Empire changed the Riga Polytechnic's statutes, as well as the language of tuition. German was replaced by Russian, which led to the exodus of teachers and students who came from German-speaking countries and were unable, or unwilling, to work in Russian.<sup>110</sup> This subordinate relationship could threaten not only the interests of commercial departments but also their existence. When public authorities considered that the commercial sections no longer met the requirements of the time, they were likely to reform or close them, and they did not have to account for their decisions. On 8 October 1897, for example, a Royal Decree was issued in Portugal to transform the Oporto Polytechnic Academy into a new polytechnic institute, without a commercial department.<sup>111</sup> The Oporto Polytechnic therefore closed its 60-year-old commercial section, which had trained several generations of businessmen, because the administration judged that such training had become unnecessary.<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, as most people in the nineteenth century were not favourably disposed towards commercial education and stigmatised those who received it (they were considered 'grocers'), commercial departments sometimes maintained tense relations with engineering departments.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, the development of commercial courses alongside technical courses in the same educational institution may have generated misunderstanding or even serious opposition among teachers and administrative staff, and thus imperilled the successful establishment of such commercial departments. As Holme stated in 1906, the introduction of commercial departments within higher engineering schools

is already showing that this coupling process is unsatisfactory. There is an impediment, somewhere, to the marriage of the true minds. One partner, perhaps, fails in duty, and the other is compromised; one grows and the other languishes; one manages more cleverly, and the other sinks in prestige.<sup>114</sup>

Consequently, the technical departments within higher engineering schools usually grew at the expense of the commercial section, leading to a weakening of the latter, as was the case in the Vienna and Prague polytechnics.<sup>115</sup> As stated by the British special sub-committee on commercial education in 1899, 'it is difficult to get a proper combination of sciences and business education [within the same educational institution]. The commercial institution requires a special council of its own, otherwise the probability is that the commercial side will suffer'.<sup>116</sup> At the Aachen Institute of Technology, for instance, the commercial department created in 1898 was given the title of 'Commercial University in connection with the Royal Technical University' in 1904, indicating increased independence.<sup>117</sup> Even so, the Aachen commercial section finally disbanded in 1908.<sup>118</sup>

Table 6 shows that the closure of commercial sections within higher engineering schools was sometimes followed by the opening of independent institutions for commercially oriented education. In 1901, the commercial department of the Industrial School of Lausanne was transformed into an independent entity which became the Higher School of Commerce of Lausanne (*École Supérieure de Commerce de Lausanne*). Similarly, in 1911 the commercial department of the Lisbon Industrial and Commercial Institute became an independent higher school of commerce, under the designation Higher Commercial Institute of Lisbon (*Instituto Superior de Comércio do Lisboa*). In 1918, the commercial department of the Oporto Industrial and Commercial Institute also became an independent school of commerce, under the designation Higher Commercial Institute of Oporto (*Instituto Superior de Comércio do Porto*).<sup>119</sup> A similar situation applied in Russia, where the commercial departments of the St Petersburg and Riga polytechnics were transformed into faculties of business, in 1918 and 1919 respectively.<sup>120</sup> The independence of these new educational institutions (schools of commerce or faculties of business) was a means for them to pursue growth and development, unconstrained by technical departments.

### ***An imperfect educational curriculum***

From a pedagogical point of view, the complementarity between commercial training and technical training had inherent limitations. As noted in 1856 by Karl Arenz, director of the Commercial Academy of Prague (*Prager Handels-Akademie*),

The union of technical and commercial courses leads ... to what is, from a pedagogical point of view, a wrong treatment of the students, and this is the moral ground which compels us to urge a separation of the commercial schools from the technical institutions, and an independent organisation of the former.<sup>121</sup>

The engineering model of commercial education had the disadvantage of being more theoretical than its technical counterpart. If future engineers could visit industrial buildings and facilities such as real bridges, real mines and real farms as part of their schooling, they could get a certain amount of practical experience in their chosen career. Prospective architects could make scale models, future pharmacists could produce medicines, and would-be manufacturers could produce cloth on a daily basis. For instance, at the Riga Polytechnic, students from the agricultural department were taught in a farm environment, working with practical

**Table 7.** Comparative table of commercial curricula between the Riga Polytechnic and the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp in 1885.

Courses in 1885	Riga Polytechnic School Commercial Department						Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp			
	First year		Second year		Third year		First year		Second year	
	Hours per week	% of the total	Hours per week	% of the total	Hours per week	% of the total	Hours per week	% of the total	Hours per week	% of the total
Model Office	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	12	33%	12	35%
Bookkeeping	2	8%	4	14%	4	20%	0	0%	0	0%
Arithmetic	4	15%	2	7%	0	0%	3	8%	3	9%
Political economy	5	19%	5	17%	3	15%	2	6%	0	0%
Commodities composition	0	0%	3	10%	3	15%	2	6%	2	6%
Commercial geography	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	8%	0	0%
Commercial history	1.5	6%	1.5	5%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%
Commercial and maritime legislation	0	0%	4	14%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%
Private and customs legislation	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	1	3%
Physics	3	12%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Chemistry	1.5	6%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%
Mechanics	0	0%	2	7%	2	10%	0	0%	0	0%
Introduction to Riga trade	0	0%	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%	0	0%
Maritime construction and equipment	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%
Languages	9	36%	8	27%	7	35%	12	33%	11	32%
Engineering courses	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	0	0%	0	0%
Total	26	100%	29.5	100%	20	100%	36	100%	34	100%

Source: Dumont and Jourdan, *Étude sur les écoles de commerce*, 154–158; 208–210. Grunzweig, *Histoire de l'Institut Supérieur de Commerce de l'État à Anvers*. Author's elaboration.

farming operations that enabled them to conduct experiments with fertilisers, and develop new varieties of seeds and methods of soil tilling, etc.<sup>122</sup> The reverse was not true for would-be businessmen. They could visit places of commerce on weekly or monthly excursions, but they could not study real accounts, real documents or real transactions on an everyday basis.<sup>123</sup> This training gap was outlined in 1906 by Holme when he visited the European schools dedicated to commercial education. He deprecated the engineering model of commercial education because it neglected

some purely commercial subjects that should be held indispensable, giving far too little time to others, and generally being quite over-theoretical ... This experiment threatens failure perhaps because it takes the form of a loose and multifarious outgrowth from a differently useful institution. The main lack is that of a more independent organisation with a single purpose. Adapted teaching is never the best.<sup>124</sup>

The lack of practice in commercial departments can be contrasted with higher schools of commerce at the tertiary level. From the mid-nineteenth century, the latter offered practical commercial courses called the 'office model'.<sup>125</sup> This was based on a simulated commercial

venture and was not taught in most higher engineering schools, whereas it was offered in the internationally renowned higher schools of commerce of Antwerp and Venice.<sup>128</sup> Table 7 provides a comparative overview of commercial curricula between the Riga Polytechnic and the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp in 1885. These educational institutions have been selected because they were considered to be among the most prestigious institutions for commercial education at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe.<sup>127</sup> Table 7 shows that, in 1885, the commercial department in the Riga Polytechnic offered a commercial curriculum that, in terms of diversity, was comparable to the mercantile courses in the curricula offered at the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp: both of them offered 11 commercial courses to their students. Moreover, modern languages may have represented up to one-third of study time in such institutions. In the commercial department of the Riga Polytechnic, language learning represented between 27% and 36% of study time, whereas these figures ranged from 32% to 33% at the Belgian school. Similarly, commercial history represented between 0% to 6% of the total curricula in both educational institutions. However, Table 7 also reveals that the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp offered a more practical curriculum to its commercial students than that of the Riga Polytechnic, since the 'office model' course accounted for 33% to 35% of study time at the Belgian school.

### ***The lack of job opportunities and social support networks for commercial graduates***

Theoretically, by the end of the nineteenth century graduates from higher engineering schools were supposed to hold leading positions in business and industry. However, in most cases it is difficult to know what became of commercial students after graduation. Playfair, in his *Industrial Instruction on the Continent*, wrote about the Vienna Polytechnic that 'notwithstanding the large number of students, the demand for them by industrial establishments is greater than can be readily supplied.'<sup>128</sup> As for the Karlsruhe Polytechnic, he noted that 'The formal certificates of the Special Technical schools are said to be in the highest estimation, and command immediate employment to the possessors.'<sup>129</sup> Because of the small number of commercial graduates, higher engineering schools rarely published annual employment reports about them, with the exception of the Riga Polytechnic. Numerous former students of this school set up new factories or found jobs in the growing industrial sectors both locally and outside the region. One of them, Zigfrīd Meierovics who studied trade from 1907 to 1911, became the first Minister of External Affairs in 1918 and later became Prime Minister of Latvia.<sup>130</sup> When they did not become entrepreneurs, graduates from the commercial section of the Riga Polytechnic often ended up as officers or administrative directors of an industrial concern.<sup>131</sup>

In any case, higher engineering schools with commercial departments could have experienced difficulties in placing their commercial graduates within companies and state administrations. The lack of job opportunities was discernible in the public sector where, except in Portugal and Russia, no special corps had been effectively established for commercial graduates, as opposed to civil engineers. As for the private sector, the local and national labour markets were not always mature enough to welcome commercial graduates from higher engineering schools. Higher technical education did not create either modern industries or businesses by itself; a demand for engineers and businessmen was also required.<sup>132</sup> For instance, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Spanish labour market was not yet

sufficiently balanced for the highly qualified graduates from the Madrid Royal Industrial Institute. Due to the scarcity of public and private jobs for businessmen and engineers at the time, the Royal Institute had few students. This led to its closure in 1867.<sup>133</sup>

Finally, most commercial departments within higher engineering schools disbanded well before the end of the nineteenth century for want of social networks. They offered commercial education at a time when the merchant and industrial bourgeoisie made its living through property ownership rather than through their labour on the open market. The strength of family networks should not be neglected. Businessmen with a father in business were more likely to take employment in an already-existing firm.<sup>134</sup> Sons and heirs could achieve positions thanks to their family and social relationships without requiring any great demonstration of talent.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, throughout business, the growing prominence of higher education graduates was viewed with suspicion by the skilled businessmen who had relied on experience. Consequently, businessmen continued to look for employees with a more modest educational background than the training provided by the engineering model of commercial education.<sup>136</sup> In other words, commercial education, diplomas and degrees could provide efficient access to lower- and mid-level business positions but not to the highest ones. This situation was particular to higher engineering schools with commercial departments because higher schools of commerce at the tertiary level established professional support networks very early on to give graduates a better chance of entering the highest positions in the business world. For the main higher schools of commerce, business sponsors and former students were brought together to form a support network. While higher schools of commerce at the tertiary level had set up development boards, valuation committees and employment committees consisting of businessmen, in order to contribute to the financing or growth of the schools' programmes and employment of their alumni, commercial departments of higher engineering schools did not succeed in permanently involving companies and individual sponsors in their day-to-day management.<sup>137</sup>

In addition, at the end of the nineteenth century the university spirit asserted itself in the establishment of student fraternities in higher schools of commerce. Former students from commercial departments did not, however, create alumni associations. The brevity of schooling in commercial departments (initially one or two years) may have prevented students from developing a sense of belonging to a commercial graduating class, which might explain the lack of identification of alumni with their alma mater. Beyond a mere sentimental attachment to the higher engineering schools, one can assume that the lack of community spirit had implications for the recognition of the social usefulness of the engineering model of commercial education. Since only a small proportion of commercial graduates from the same higher engineering school were active in trade, they could not constitute a unified and powerful pressure group to defend their interests. This is one of the main differences between commercial graduates from polytechnics and their technical counterparts. Unlike civil engineers who created associations of engineers, particularly in Austria, Germany and Portugal, graduates from commercial departments did not build a professional identity.<sup>138</sup> Consequently, their status was rather different from civil engineers, for whom official corps existed. As they did not succeed in building a well-grounded corpus of commercial knowledge in order to establish the scope of the professional field, and failed to show to the general public how technical businessmen could play an important role in a modern society, commercial graduates from higher engineering schools might have contributed, to a greater or lesser extent, to the demise of this original pattern of commercial education in Europe.



The disappearance of commercial departments from higher engineering schools in nineteenth-century Europe is testimony to the failure of the engineering model of commercial education that was based on the close association of mercantile and technical instruction for would-be businessmen and future engineers. This does not mean that commercial subjects were not taught to engineering students within higher technical schools. As a matter of fact, even though commercial sections were themselves disbanded, at the beginning of the twentieth century a number of lectures on political economy and industrial economics were introduced in higher engineering schools such as the Aachen Institute of Technology.<sup>139</sup> However, since these commercial lectures were aimed at broadening the curricula of future engineers, they were considered as additional courses and not as a common core of training.

## Conclusions

In Europe, higher engineering schools with commercial departments constituted the first generation of higher educational institutions devoted to commerce, well before the advent of both higher schools of commerce at the tertiary level and faculties of business. Some, like the Prague Polytechnic, emerged as early as the start of the nineteenth century, while others were not established until the 1900s, such as the St Petersburg Polytechnic.

The role of public authorities was fundamental to the establishment of the engineering model of commercial education. In response to the national need for well-educated engineers and businessmen, national, regional and municipal authorities supported higher engineering schools with commercial sections in a pioneering initiative which would eventually lead to the recognition of commercial education as an academic discipline. This phenomenon was part of a larger European movement for social respectability among businessmen. The establishment of higher engineering schools with commercial sections represented an important step, as it marked the point at which, for the first time, higher educational institutions managed to officially embrace commerce as an academic discipline worthy of educational credit. At the time, a belief that mercantile and industrial management would mutually benefit from higher education developed by engineering schools with commercial departments was fundamentally an act of faith.

From another perspective, the emergence of commercial education through higher engineering schools did not achieve the expected success in the nineteenth century. This article emphasised three factors that contributed to the changing fortunes of the engineering model of commercial education. First, the lack of administrative independence imperilled the successful development of commercial departments within higher engineering schools. Second, the limited complementarity between commercial training and technical training, and also the lack of commercial practice in the commercial departments, contributed to the demise of this type of schooling. Third, while the low demand for highly qualified businessmen with technical training created a lack of job opportunities, the weak development of professional networks (combined with a lack of cohesive organisations to further the social and economic interests of commercial graduates) contributed to the failure of this model of commercial education. Even though the engineering model of commercial education was not ultimately successful, it constituted a first educational attempt to build an outline of commercial training that closely combined mercantile and technical education. The study of scientific management came to the fore in the twentieth century, with works such as those

by Taylor and Fayol showing how useful such an educational combination can be. Scientific management was, however, taught in higher engineering schools in Europe before it was taught in business schools.<sup>140</sup>

Research into the emergence of higher engineering schools with commercial sections raises new questions. Further research will be necessary to better understand the dissemination of this educational model during the nineteenth century, not only throughout Europe but also in America. In the second part of the nineteenth century, in the USA, the Worcester Polytechnic Institute also educated future businessmen in close proximity with would-be engineers.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, in nineteenth-century Brazil the commercial department of the São Paulo Polytechnic offered the first higher commercial teaching curriculum in the state.<sup>142</sup> To our knowledge, these educational institutions have not yet undergone a comparative investigation. This could provide productive angles for further exploration of the history of commercial education in Western countries.

## Notes

1. Liedman, "Anders Berch"; Engwall, *Mercury meets Minerva*, 26.
2. Engwall, Kipping, and Üsdiken, "Public Science Systems," 328.
3. Engwall, Kipping, and Üsdiken, *Defining Management*, 41.
4. Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*, 155.
5. Engwall, Kipping, and Üsdiken, "Public Science Systems," 329–32.
6. Grelon, "The Training and Career Structures of Engineers"; Pombo and Ramirez, "Technical Education."
7. Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*.
8. Capecchi and Ruta, "European Polytechnic Schools."
9. Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*, 37.
10. Ahlström, *Engineers and Industrial Growth*.
11. The adjective 'technical' is used throughout the article in the sense of 'engineering,' where 'engineering' is defined as the science of making practical applications from the knowledge of pure sciences.
12. Minesso, "L'ingegnere dall'età Napoleonica al fascismo."
13. Redlich, "Academic Education for Business," 70; Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*, 133–4.
14. Redlich, "Academic Education for Business," 71, 77; Longobardi, "Higher Commercial Education in Italy"; Tagliaferri, "Profilo Storico di Ca'Foscari," 53–4.
15. Redlich, "Academic Education for Business," 77; Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*, 142.
16. Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*, 134.
17. Engwall, Kipping, and Üsdiken, "Public Science Systems," 327.
18. For Italy and Great Britain, see Fauri, "British and Italian Management Education." For Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, see Engwall, "The Making of the Viking Leaders." For the Netherlands, see De Man and Karsten, "Academic Management Education."
19. Engwall and Zamagni, *Management Education*, 6.
20. Khurana, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands*; Guillén, *Models of Management*; Jordan, *Machine-Age Ideology*.
21. Ahlström, *Engineers and Industrial Growth*, 96.
22. Capecchi and Ruta, "Strengths of Materials."
23. Diogo, "Portuguese Engineers, Public Works."
24. Redlich, "Academic Education for Business."
25. Fauri, "British and Italian Management Education"; Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques, "Evolução do ensino da contabilidade em Portugal."
26. Fauri, "British and Italian Management Education"; Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region"; Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques, "Evolução do ensino da contabilidade em Portugal."

27. Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region"; Järvesoo, "Agricultural Program," 247; Leimanis, "The Polytechnical Institute of Riga"; France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel*; Dumont and Jourdan, *Étude sur les écoles de commerce*.
28. See for instance Amdam, "Foreign Influence on the Education," 86–8; Fauri, "British and Italian Management Education," 45; Godelier, "Social Sciences and Management Sciences," 6–8; Sanderson, "French Influences."
29. Locke, "Business Education in Germany."
30. *Ibid.*, 236.
31. Locke, "Business Education in Germany," 236–240; Engwall, *Mercury meets Minerva*, 9–16.
32. Redlich, "Academic Education for Business"; Leimanis, "The Polytechnical Institute of Riga"; Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques, "Evolução do ensino da contabilidade em Portugal."
33. Ahlström, *Engineers and Industrial Growth*, 96.
34. Before the unification of Germany in 1871, there were approximately 35 separate German sovereign states. For this reason, the word 'Germany' is used in this article not in its political sense but in its cultural and economic context, in the sense of 'Deutscher Zollverein', which then consisted of some 35 member states. Schnabel, "Die Anfänge des technischen Hochschulwesens"; Schödler, *Die höheren technischen Schulen*.
35. In the nineteenth century two higher engineering schools with commercial sections were opened in Oporto: the Royal Polytechnic Academy and the Industrial and Commercial Institute.
36. Engwall and Zamagni, *Management Education*.
37. Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*.
38. *Izvestija, Peterburgskago politechničeskago Imperatora*; *Archivio di Stato di Trieste, Governo Marittimo*.
39. France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel*; Girardin, *De l'instruction intermédiaire*.
40. London County Council, *Report*.
41. Holme, *Aspects of Commercial Education in Europe*.
42. Dias Costa, *Instituto industrial et commercial de Lisbonne*; Hoepke, *Geschichte der Fridericiana*; Kurrer and Ramm, *History of the Theory of Structures*; Lechner, *Geschichte der Technischen Hochschule*, 75–195; Leimanis, "The Polytechnical Institute of Riga"; Lomič, *Vznik, Vyoja Současnost*; Pavón, "El Real Instituto Industrial de Madrid"; Grunzweig, *Histoire de l'Institut Supérieur de Commerce*.
43. Fox and Guagnini, *Education, Technology and Industrial Performance*, 70–84.
44. For instance, in Germany, local governments financed the establishment of polytechnic institutes in their own state. See Pombo and Ramirez, "Technical Education."
45. Diogo, "Portuguese Engineers, Public Works," 81–2.
46. Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region."
47. Lomič, *Vznik, Vyoja Současnost*.
48. Pavón, "El Real Instituto Industrial de Madrid."
49. Roderick and Stephens, *Education and Industry in the Nineteenth Century*; Buchanan, *The Engineers*.
50. Larsen, "The Masculine Foundation of Business Education."
51. Hoepke, *Geschichte der Fridericiana*.
52. Kähler, "Die Auflösung der Aachener Handelshochschule."
53. Holme, *Aspects of Commercial Education in Europe*, 77–8.
54. *Izvestija, Peterburgskago politechničeskago Imperatora*.
55. Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region," 669.
56. Dias Costa, *Instituto industrial et commercial de Lisbonne*, 43.
57. James, *Education of Business Men in Europe*, 39.
58. Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*, 29.
59. *Archivio di Stato di Trieste, Governo Marittimo*.
60. Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region."
61. France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel*, 399–400.
62. Girardin, *De l'instruction intermédiaire*, 265.
63. *Archivio di Stato di Trieste, Governo Marittimo*.
64. Lechner, *Geschichte der Technischen Hochschule*.

65. France, *Exposition universelle internationale*, 199.
66. Girardin, *De l'instruction intermédiaire*, 257–8.
67. Baudoin, *Rapport sur l'état actuel de l'enseignement*, 453.
68. France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel*, 29.
69. Dias Costa, *Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne*; France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel*; Hoepke, *Geschichte der Fridericiana*.
70. Dumont and Jourdan, *Étude sur les écoles de commerce*.
71. Schnabel, "Die Anfänge des technischen Hochschulwesens"; Ahlström, *Engineers and Industrial Growth*, 67.
72. The first ship passed through the Suez Canal in February 1867 even though it was not officially inaugurated until November 1869. De Lesseps, "The History of the Suez Canal." See also Archivio di Stato di Trieste, *Governo Marittimo*.
73. Amdam, "Foreign influence on the Education."
74. Dias Costa, *Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne*; France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel*; Holme, *Aspects of Commercial Education in Europe*; Léautey, *L'Enseignement commercial*; Lechner, *Geschichte der Technischen Hochschule*.
75. France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel*, 419, 437.
76. Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region."
77. *Ibid.*, 668.
78. Dias Costa, *Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne*, 91.
79. Capecchi and Ruta, "European Polytechnic Schools," 18.
80. Dias Costa, *Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne*.
81. Schnabel, "Die Anfänge des technischen Hochschulwesens."
82. *Izvestija, Peterburgskago politechničeskago Imperatora*.
83. *Ibid.*
84. Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region," 667–9; Dias Costa, *Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne*.
85. Locke, "Business Education in Germany," 238.
86. Hoepke, *Geschichte der Fridericiana*.
87. Locke, "Business Education in Germany," 238.
88. Capecchi and Ruta, "European Polytechnic Schools."
89. Schödler, *Die höheren technischen Schulen*.
90. *Izvestija, Peterburgskago politechničeskago Imperatora*.
91. Maffre, "Les origines de l'enseignement supérieur commercial."
92. A large number of people at the time thought that commerce could be learnt only 'on the job' and therefore considered that a formal commercial education was unnecessary. In the middle classes, many families wanted their children to acquire a classical education in the humanities rather than embark upon a commercial career. See Garnier, *De l'Enseignement industriel*, 53.
93. Kähler, "Die Auflösung der Aachener Handelshochschule"; Capecchi and Ruta, "European Polytechnic Schools."
94. Holme, *Aspects of Commercial Education in Europe*, 3–14.
95. Ahlström, *Engineers and Industrial Growth*, 56.
96. Dias Costa, *Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne*.
97. *Izvestija, Peterburgskago politechničeskago Imperatora*.
98. Leimanis, "The Polytechnical Institute of Riga."
99. For the German polytechnics, see France, *Enquête sur l'enseignement professionnel*, 307–13, 391–7, 437–47. For the Industrial and Commercial Institute of Lisbon, see Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques, "Evolução do ensino da contabilidade em Portugal," 201–20.
100. Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region," 669.
101. Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques, "O Porto e a instrução contabilística."
102. For the Superior Institute of Commerce of Antwerp, see Léautey, *L'Enseignement commercial*, 583. For the Superior School of Commerce of Venice, see Tagliaferrri, "Profilo Storico di Ca'Foscari," 53–4.
103. James, *Education of Business Men in Europe*, 2.

104. Redlich, "Academic Education for Business," 79; Engwall, Kipping, and Úsdiken, *Defining Management*, 41.
105. Gstraunthaler, "The History of the Austrian Commercial Colleges."
106. Dumont and Jourdan, *Étude sur les écoles de commerce*, 110.
107. Pavón, "El Real Instituto Industrial de Madrid."
108. Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques, "Evolução do ensino da contabilidade em Portugal."
109. Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region," 658.
110. Dias Costa, *Institut industriel et commercial de Lisbonne*.
111. Basto, *Memória Histórica da Academia Politécnica*.
112. Garnier, *De l'Enseignement industriel*, 53.
113. Holme, *Aspects of Commercial Education in Europe*, 67–8.
114. Lechner, *Geschichte der Technischen Hochschule*, 75–195; Lomič, *Vznik, Vývoj a Současnost*.
115. London County Council, *Report*, 12.
116. Kähler, "Die Auflösung der Aachener Handelshochschule"; Holme, *Aspects of Commercial Education in Europe*, 68.
117. Redlich, "Academic Education for Business," 54.
118. Gonçalves and Da Costa Marques, "Evolução do ensino da contabilidade em Portugal," 214.
119. Leimanis, "The Polytechnical Institute of Riga."
120. Cited in James, *Education of Businessmen in Europe*, 38.
121. Järvesoo, "Agricultural Program," 247.
122. *Ibid.*, 139.
123. Holme, *Aspects of Commercial Education in Europe*, 79–80.
124. During the course, all students were divided into groups, each representing a fictitious business house from leading places of commerce around the world. Inside each business house, students were trained to become merchants capable of comprehending large commercial transactions. Numerous operations were given to them and students had to keep a complete account of the fluctuations of price in the various markets, undertake correspondence relating to the operations of the house in a foreign language, keep books and make inventories. These exercises were a means for the practical application of the different theoretical courses.
125. James, *Education of Businessmen in Europe*, 173; Grunzweig, *Histoire de l'Institut Supérieur de Commerce*; Longobardi, "Higher Commercial Education in Italy"; Tagliaferri, "Profilo Storico di Ca' Foscari," 53–4.
126. Dumont and Jourdan, *Étude sur les écoles de commerce*; Atstaja et al., "The Case of the Baltic Region"; Järvesoo, "Agricultural Program," 247; Leimanis, "The Polytechnical Institute of Riga."
127. Playfair, *Industrial Instruction on the Continent*, 20.
128. *Ibid.*, 25.
129. Leimanis, "The Polytechnical Institute of Riga," 122.
130. *Album Academicum des Polytechnikums zu Riga*.
131. Ahlström, *Engineers and Industrial Growth*, 47.
132. Pavón, "El Real Instituto Industrial de Madrid."
133. Foreman-Peck, Boccaletti, and Nicholas, "Entrepreneurs and Business Performance."
134. Meuleau, "From Inheritors to Managers," 134.
135. Fox and Guagnini, *Education, Technology and Industrial Performance*, 77–88.
136. For instance, in 1875, the Superior School of Commerce of Venice established a committee of employment to help its graduates find positions. See James, *Education of Businessmen in Europe*, 193. In Germany, most of the higher schools of commerce in the nineteenth century were supported, managed and even examined by practical commercial men. See James, *Education of Businessmen in Europe*, 214.
137. The German engineering fraternity was founded in 1856 to raise the status of the technical profession. In Austria, the Society of Engineers and Architects in the Bohemian Crown lands was opened in 1866. See Locke, *The End of the Practical Man*, 33. See also Diogo, "Portuguese Engineers, Public Works," 75–6; Van Meer, "The Nation is Technological."
138. Kähler, "Die Auflösung der Aachener Handelshochschule."

139. Fauri, "British and Italian Management Education," 34–49; Godelier, "Social Sciences and Management Sciences."
140. Redlich, "Academic Education for Business," 89.
141. Martins, Silva, and Ricardino, "Escola Politécnica."

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# Depuis quand apprend-on l'entrepreneuriat ? Une étude de cas historique dédiée à l'ESCP

## When did we start studying entrepreneurship? A historical case study at the ESCP

> *Adrien Jean-Guy Passant*

> *Fernanda Arreola*

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### Résumé

Le présent article traite de l'histoire de l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat en école de commerce. S'appuyant sur une étude de cas consacrée à la plus ancienne école de commerce du monde – l'ESCP –, nous avons mobilisé une approche longitudinale afin de retracer l'évolution de la place de l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat dans cet établissement. Cet article montre comment, à l'ESCP, le déploiement de l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat est le fruit de la confluence entre des forces externes et internes ; à savoir, d'un côté, les pressions économiques et les pressions exercées par les anciens élèves et, de l'autre, les initiatives de la direction qui a façonné, pour l'école, un récit historique entrepreneurial dans le cadre des cent-soixante-quinze ans de l'établissement en 1994. Le projet de façonner une histoire partagée à la fois par la communauté ESCP et par les différentes parties prenantes a ainsi conduit à l'émergence d'un mythe portant sur la présence native, dans cette école, d'un enseignement en entrepreneuriat. Dans le cas de l'ESCP, ce mythe est construit sur la figure de l'économiste Jean-Baptiste Say. Notre étude met ainsi en perspective les réalités de l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat en école de commerce depuis le dix-neuvième siècle tout en mettant en exergue la puissance du mythe institutionnel et, en particulier, son pouvoir légitimateur ainsi que distinctif face aux concurrents.

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### Abstract

This article focuses on the history of entrepreneurship education in business schools in France. Based on a case study of the oldest business school in the world—the ESCP—, we develop a longitudinal historical review in order to trace the evolution of entrepreneurship education in this institution. Our article shows how the ESCP developed courses in entrepreneurship in response to internal and external forces: externally, following market and economic pressure, as well as pressure from alumni; and internally, due to the initiatives of the school management, which sought to find a theme for the school's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1994. The result was the creation of a shared vision of the school through a myth that emphasized the existence of an entrepreneurial orientation since its founding. In the case of the ESCP, this myth was based on the figure of the economist Jean-Baptiste Say. Our study therefore offers a novel perspective, not only by narrating the history of entrepreneurship education since the beginning of the nineteenth century, but also by showing the power of an institutional myth. In our case, the myth legitimates a message, provides a common vision for the school's ecosystem, and activates a system that consolidates an entrepreneurial academic offering seeking to develop the coherence of this message.

### Les points forts

- L'étude montre que, contrairement à une idée reçue, l'entrepreneuriat n'a été inclus dans les programmes d'enseignement de la plus ancienne école de commerce du monde, ESCP, que très récemment, à partir des années 1970.
- L'article identifie les raisons qui ont conduit à cette évolution, notamment les conditions économiques externes, véhiculées par les demandes des anciens élèves et, en interne, la communication de l'école lors de la célébration de son 175<sup>e</sup> anniversaire.
- Dans ce cadre, ESCP a développé un mythe construit sur la figure de l'économiste Jean-Baptiste Say ; ce qui a eu pour effet d'activer un double processus de légitimation entrepreneuriale et de génération d'une offre de formations en entrepreneuriat.

Les écoles de commerce mettent régulièrement en avant leurs formations en entrepreneuriat. Il s'agit d'une réponse éducative à la demande des étudiants, de plus en plus nombreux, désireux de poursuivre une carrière entrepreneuriale après l'école. Selon plusieurs enquêtes, en

France, un jeune sur deux souhaite ainsi créer son entreprise<sup>1</sup>. Encore plus révélateur : parmi les créateurs d'entreprises,

<sup>1</sup> Consulté le 14/10/2019 sur [https://etudiant.letigaro.fr/article/en-france-plus-d-un-jeune-sur-deux-souhaite-creeer-son-entreprise\\_df3e6fec-b040-11e8-b8f8-49fa0c24f70e/](https://etudiant.letigaro.fr/article/en-france-plus-d-un-jeune-sur-deux-souhaite-creeer-son-entreprise_df3e6fec-b040-11e8-b8f8-49fa0c24f70e/)

90 % ont moins de 30 ans et, pour 54 % d'entre eux, ils ont un niveau de formation de niveau Bac+5<sup>2</sup>.

Stimulées par ce besoin du marché, les écoles de commerce proposent des programmes dédiés à la formation des entrepreneurs. De fait, une grande partie d'entre elles affirment souvent que la formation des entrepreneurs a été, historiquement, au cœur de leurs préoccupations éducatives. Certaines écoles prétendent même former des entrepreneurs depuis le dix-neuvième siècle, comme le déclare, par exemple, la Wharton Business School<sup>3</sup>.

Force est de constater pourtant qu'il existe encore trop peu de recherches sur la réalité de ces allégations ainsi que sur l'importance donnée à l'orientation entrepreneuriale et à la formation des entrepreneurs dans les écoles de commerce. En outre, très rares sont encore les recherches qui adoptent une perspective historique pour identifier les forces et les acteurs qui jouent un rôle dans le développement de l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat dans l'offre de formation des écoles de commerce.

Nous saisissons ici cette opportunité en nous intéressant à l'évolution des programmes éducatifs en matière d'entrepreneuriat au sein d'une école de commerce sur la très longue durée. Pour ce faire, nous passons en revue l'histoire de la doyenne mondiale des écoles de commerce, l'école ESCP, ouverte en 1819. Cette école a été très influente lors de l'ouverture d'autres

écoles de commerce en France mais aussi dans d'autres pays<sup>4</sup>. L'histoire de cette école en fait un cas d'étude particulièrement éclairant car susceptible de nous livrer une perspective longitudinale sur l'émergence des formations en entrepreneuriat.

## L'ESCP : une aventure entrepreneuriale en elle-même !

L'École Spéciale de Commerce et d'Industrie (aujourd'hui dénommée ESCP) ouvre ses portes à Paris le 30 octobre 1819. Cet établissement est fondé par deux négociants, Germain Legret et Amédée Brodart (voir encadré).

### Les fondateurs

**Germain Legret** est né en 1752 en Seine-et-Marne. Il travaille pour l'armée française et devient négociant à la fin des années 1790. En 1798, il est initié à la franc-maçonnerie à Bruxelles à la Loge des « Amis Philanthropes ». Avec son collègue belge Van Acker, il ouvre une première école : l'Académie de Commerce de Paris en 1815 qui forme de jeunes garçons âgés de 11 ans révolus aux opérations du commerce. Toutefois, cette première école de commerce est éphémère et ferme ses portes au début de l'année 1818. Ce premier échec ne décourage pas Germain Legret qui ouvre une deuxième école de commerce parisienne dont l'existence est encore plus éphémère car elle ferme ses portes fin 1818. Ces échecs successifs ne le dissuadent pas de renouveler l'essai une troisième fois, quelques mois plus tard, avec un nouvel acolyte, Amédée Brodart.

2 Consulté le 14/10/2019 sur <http://www.emploi-parlons.net/pole-emploi.org/articles/la-creation-dentreprise-aujourd'hui/>

3 Consulté le 14/10/2019 sur <https://www.shortcoursesportal.com/universities/15797/the-wharton-school-of-the-university-of-pennsylvania.html>

4 Passant A. J. G. (2018), « Survivre et rebondir : Les processus stratégiques de pérennité organisationnelle sur la longue durée. Étude de cas multi-scalaire d'une école de commerce bicentenaire : ESCP Europe », Thèse de doctorat en sciences de gestion, Université de Paris Panthéon-Sorbonne.

**Amédée Brodart**, né en 1789, est entré à l'École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr en 1807. Il participe aux guerres napoléoniennes et, en particulier, aux guerres d'Espagne pendant les années 1809-1811. Blessé d'un coup de feu à Albufera en 1811, il est fait prisonnier par les Anglais. Sa blessure ne guérit pas et Amédée Brodart est amputé de la jambe droite, à 22 ans. Après treize mois de captivité, il rentre en France. Son amputation ne lui permet plus de livrer bataille et il est mis à la retraite. Napoléon I<sup>er</sup> le nomme chevalier de la Légion d'honneur en 1813. Après une carrière militaire brisée nette pour infirmité et une carrière administrative également interrompue de manière anticipée pour raisons politiques, il semble qu'Amédée Brodart se soit tourné vers le négoce du textile grâce auquel il aurait fait la connaissance de Germain Legret.

L'action de ces deux hommes est guidée par les conseils de Vital Roux, l'un des auteurs du Code de Commerce en 1807, qui est favorable à l'enseignement commercial en France. Le constat des fondateurs est le suivant : l'instruction commerciale est délaissée alors même que l'industrialisation du pays exige une main-d'œuvre qualifiée pour la servir. En effet, les quelques écoles de commerce qui existent alors en Europe sont ouvertes à de très jeunes garçons. Tel est le cas, par exemple, de l'École de Commerce de Saint-Petersbourg créée en 1772 ou de celle de Moscou, ouverte en 1804<sup>5</sup>. En outre, plusieurs écoles d'ingénieurs proposent aussi, depuis le début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, une formation commerciale dédiée aux élèves ayant achevé leur formation secondaire ; à l'instar de l'École Polytechnique de Prague depuis 1806 ou de l'École Polytechnique de Vienne depuis 1815. Cependant ces établissements offrent une formation commerciale qui,

5 Passant A. J. G. (2016), "Issues in European business education in the mid-nineteenth century: A comparative perspective", *Business History*, 58(7), p. 1118-1145.

quoique très dense, est brève puisqu'elle ne dépasse pas un an<sup>6</sup>.

De ce fait, Germain Legret et Amédée Brodart conçoivent le plan d'une école de commerce accueillant de jeunes gens ayant achevé leur scolarité secondaire et prêts à consacrer deux à trois années pleines à l'enseignement commercial, en compagnie d'élèves internationaux. Ils créent ainsi en 1819, sur leur fortune personnelle, l'École Spéciale de Commerce et d'Industrie dont l'intitulé révèle bien l'ambition : il s'agit de préparer les jeunes gens au commerce et à l'industrie – dans le secteur civil – à une époque où aucune formation de niveau supérieur n'existe encore dans ces domaines en France.

Les débuts de l'école sont modestes : Germain Legret héberge l'école à son domicile parisien, en octobre et novembre 1819. Elle s'installe officiellement le 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 1819 dans les locaux de l'Hôtel des Fermes où 60 élèves de sexe masculin suivent les cours. Dès l'année suivante, la nouvelle école emménage dans le prestigieux Hôtel de Sully, suffisamment vaste pour accueillir 250 élèves ; un niveau que l'établissement n'atteindra que 80 ans plus tard ! Manifestement, les fondateurs de l'école voient grand et espèrent que leur école va s'engager rapidement dans la voie de la croissance. Cette situation procède bien du fonctionnement mental des entrepreneurs qui agissent parfois avec des biais de perception (surestimation des bénéfices, sous-estimation des risques et du temps nécessaire pour développer l'activité)<sup>7</sup>.

6 Passant A. J. G. (2019), "The early emergence of European commercial education in the nineteenth century: Insights from higher engineering schools", *Business History*, 61(6), p. 1051-1082.

7 Verzat C. (2015), « Esprit d'entreprendre, es-tu là ? Mais de quoi parle-t-on ? », *Entreprendre et Innover*, 4(27), p. 81-92.

### › Une entreprise familiale gérée par des entrepreneurs (1830-1869)

En 1830, le destin de l'école croise celui d'un homme exceptionnel qui va lui imprimer une orientation académique déterminante pour son avenir : Adolphe Blanqui. Économiste, ce dernier est aussi un disciple de Jean-Baptiste Say. C'est par esprit d'entreprendre qu'Adolphe Blanqui décide d'acheter, puis de diriger l'école, à une époque où celle-ci était sur le point de fermer ses portes<sup>8</sup>. L'esprit d'entreprendre témoigne de la capacité à passer des idées aux actes, à prendre des risques et à saisir les occasions pour créer du changement<sup>9</sup>. L'école lui paraissait utile socialement car l'enseignement du commerce au niveau post-secondaire répondait à un besoin insatisfait à l'époque en France et dans bon nombre de pays étrangers. En outre, l'école s'était constituée une clientèle et un comité de patronage prestigieux : elle offrait, de ce fait, un fort potentiel de développement qu'il convenait d'exploiter.

En revanche, la situation financière de l'école oblige Adolphe Blanqui à mettre en œuvre une politique de réduction des coûts fixes, et il recrute certains des enseignants de l'école dans son réseau social immédiat et notamment parmi les élèves de l'école. Joseph Garnier, est ainsi le premier élève de l'école – promotion 1832 – à être embauché à la sortie de ses études pour travailler comme répétiteur puis enseignant. Finalement c'est en 1852, après avoir identifié son ami Guillaume Gervais comme potentiel successeur,

qu'Adolphe Blanqui transforme l'école en société civile et la rebaptise « École Supérieure de Commerce ».

Malade, il décède prématurément à l'âge de 55 ans, en janvier 1854. Il laisse une succession d'environ 60 000 francs mais chargée de plus de 180 000 francs de dettes. La direction de l'école est alors transférée à son ami Guillaume Gervais qui dissout la société civile et retransforme l'école en bien propre. Son décès en décembre 1867 ouvre une nouvelle période de crise pour l'école qui devient la propriété de Jane Blanqui, fille cadette d'Adolphe. Cette dernière est tout juste âgée de 17 ans : elle est mineure juridique et sans expérience aucune dans la gestion de l'entreprise. C'est pourquoi elle décide de négocier avec la Chambre de Commerce de Paris qui, le 18 février 1869, achète l'école. Officiellement, c'est donc la fin de l'entreprise familiale Blanqui. L'école devient un service consulaire dépourvu de personnalité juridique et ses directeurs deviennent des salariés de la Chambre qui les charge de mettre en œuvre les orientations stratégiques prises par ses élus. En perdant leur indépendance – qui constitue l'une des motivations majeures des entrepreneurs<sup>10</sup> – les acteurs de l'école ont perdu l'esprit d'entreprendre qui les avait animés depuis 1819. L'école devient alors une bureaucratie jusqu'à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

### L'enseignement en entrepreneuriat peu présent dans les écoles de commerce au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle

L'analyse des différentes sources révèle qu'il n'existe à l'école aucune tradition

8 Deslandes G. (2019), « European management teaching and research: Reflections on the life and work of A. Blanqui », *European Management Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2019.10.005>.

9 Verzat C. (2015), « 'Esprit d'entreprendre, es-tu là ?' Mais de quoi parle-t-on ? », *Entreprendre et Innover*, 4(27), p. 81-92.

10 Hernandez E., Marco L. (2006), *Entrepreneurs et décision de l'intention à l'acte*, ESKA.

continue d'enseignement entrepreneurial depuis 1819.

#### Méthodologie

Pour analyser l'histoire de l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat à l'ESCP nous avons consulté plus de 300 documents d'archives ont été étudiés couvrant la période 1819-2019 : programmes de cours de l'école, prospectus commerciaux, comptes rendus des audits menés par les représentants des différents ministères ainsi que les rapports d'accréditation EQUIS et AACSB. Ces archives ont été consultées à l'école ainsi qu'à la Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de région Paris - Île-de-France. Les sept anciens directeurs généraux de l'école encore en vie ainsi que son directeur actuel ont également été interrogés. Tous ces éléments collectés ont permis d'élaborer une chronologie de l'histoire de l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat à l'ESCP. Les entretiens, dont les échanges ont été triangulés avec les archives papiers, ont en outre permis d'accéder à la perception par ses dirigeants du positionnement entrepreneurial de l'école depuis les années 1970.

Pendant tout le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et la majeure partie du XX<sup>e</sup>, l'ESCP formait principalement des comptables et des négociants. Le cours d'« économie politique », considéré au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle comme le promoteur de l'enseignement entrepreneurial<sup>11</sup> est dispensé de manière discontinue par l'école. Absent du programme avant 1826, il est certes introduit à cette date et pris en charge par Adolphe Blanqui, mais il disparaît du catalogue des cours dans les années 1850 et 1860 avant de réapparaître timidement en 1870 avec un volume horaire restreint à une heure et demie par semaine, pour les élèves de

dernière année seulement. À partir des années 1880, ce cours entrepreneurial disparaît définitivement. Cette disparition s'explique par deux raisons.

La première tient au fait que l'économie politique était un enseignement qui faisait débat à l'époque. L'essor, au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, des théories communistes et socialistes a mené la direction de l'école à désinvestir le champ des enseignements trop théoriques. En outre, au niveau des mentalités, la figure de l'entrepreneur était loin d'être aussi socialement valorisée alors qu'elle ne l'est aujourd'hui : « Dès sa naissance, l'entrepreneuriat en industrie sera perçu en France comme un 'déclassement', par rapport aux situations sociales réputées 'mieux vues', telles que maître artisan, négociant, propriétaire foncier, voire ouvrier, etc. »<sup>12</sup>.

La seconde raison est politique, car le gouvernement impérial s'est montré hostile à l'enseignement de l'économie politique qui était généralement l'occasion pour le professeur de critiquer le pouvoir en place. Le caractère polémique de cet enseignement au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle ne concerne d'ailleurs pas que l'ESCP. À HEC Paris, cet enseignement a été institué dès l'ouverture de l'école en 1881 mais a été supprimé pour des raisons identiques dès 1883<sup>13</sup>.

En somme, pendant tout le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et la majeure partie du XX<sup>e</sup>, former des entrepreneurs n'entrait pas dans le périmètre d'action de l'ESCP. Culturellement, en effet, l'école était orientée sur les besoins du marché et, à l'époque, ce dernier ne

11 Maffre Ph. (1983), « Les origines de l'enseignement commercial supérieur en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle », Thèse de doctorat de troisième cycle en histoire, Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

12 Marchesnay M. (2008), « L'entrepreneur : Une histoire française », *Revue Française de Gestion*, 8(188-189), p. 77-95.

13 Meuleau M. (1982) *HEC 100 : 1881-1981. Histoire d'une Grande École*, Louv-la-laune, Groupe HEC.

valorisait pas la figure de l'entrepreneur<sup>14</sup>. En outre, en France, les créateurs d'entreprises étaient alors majoritairement formés dans les écoles d'ingénieurs et non dans les écoles de commerce qui avaient vocation à former les personnels puis les cadres des entreprises. Cette situation s'explique parce que l'entrepreneuriat était initialement axé sur la création de produits ou de services de nature industrielle et en lien avec des pratiques technologiques et non pas managériales.

### L'enseignement en entrepreneuriat effectif seulement à partir des années 1970

Ce n'est qu'à partir des années 1970 que la création d'entreprise s'impose en France comme une préoccupation publique de premier plan, contribuant puissamment au développement économique<sup>15</sup>. Si HEC Paris est l'une des premières écoles de commerce à créer, dès cette époque, un programme dédié à la formation des entrepreneurs – via la majeure « Entrepreneurs » ouverte en 1978 –, elle est rapidement suivie en 1984 par l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Lyon – via le « Centre des Entrepreneurs » – puis par l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Nantes qui lance à la fin des années 1980 une campagne de publicité sur le thème « notre métier : former des décideurs, des dirigeants et des entrepreneurs

capables de vivre des environnements complexes »<sup>16</sup>.

L'ESCP s'inscrit également dans ce mouvement après avoir recouvré en 1969 son autonomie stratégique vis-à-vis du Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale. Dès 1974, elle crée ainsi un cours optionnel accessible en deuxième et en troisième année de « Management et développement des organisations » axé sur la création d'entreprises. Ce cours a été demandé par les anciens élèves qui se sont alarmés en constatant que certaines écoles concurrentes instauraient des cours pour créer des entreprises. Le cours de « Management et développement des organisations » se transforme à la fin de la décennie en spécialisation à part entière, accessible uniquement en dernière année, mais il ne remporte pas un grand succès. Comme l'explique à l'époque un professeur de l'école : « [dans les années 1980], il n'était pas encore question de développement du marché, de golden boys ou de carrières en fusions-acquisitions. Les étudiants étaient tentés par la gestion publique, l'administration [...]. Mais ils ne sont ni créateurs ni repreneurs de société »<sup>17</sup>.

De fait, il faut attendre la crise économique des années 1990 pour que l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat prenne racine à l'école. Les étudiants, éprouvant davantage de difficultés pour être recrutés dans les grands groupes, ont commencé à envisager sérieusement de créer leurs propres entreprises. Ce n'est qu'en 1998 qu'est créé le premier programme entièrement voué à l'entrepreneuriat : le mastère

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14 Marchesnay M. (2008), « L'entrepreneur : Une histoire française », *Revue Française de Gestion*, 8(188-189), p. 77-95.

15 Chambard O. (2013), « La promotion de l'entrepreneuriat dans l'enseignement supérieur. Les enjeux d'une création lexicale », *Mots. Les langages du politique*, 302, p. 103-119.

16 Source : Publicité perue dans *L'Étudiant* en 1989 et dans la revue *Espace Prépas* en 1990.

17 Source : Interview d'Alain Chevalier, in Romon P. « Génération Pouvoir », *Challenges*, juin 1991, p. 82.



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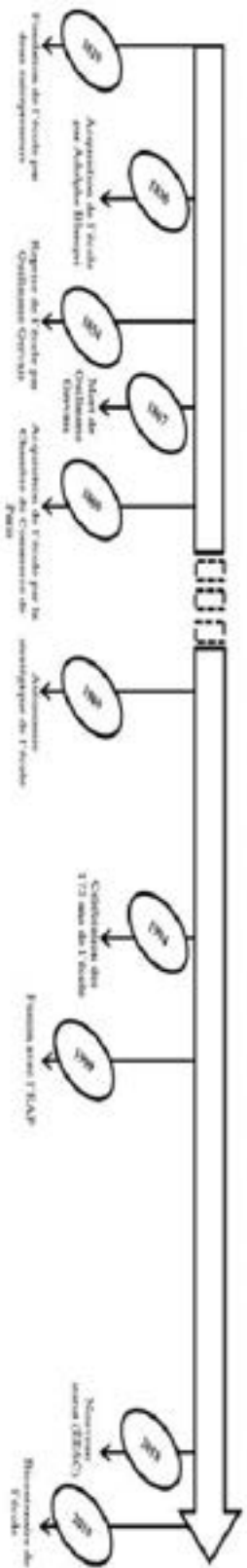
14 Marchesnay M. (2008), « L'entrepreneur : Une histoire française », *Revue Française de Gestion*, 8(188-189), p. 77-95.

15 Chambard O. (2013), « La promotion de l'entrepreneuriat dans l'enseignement supérieur. Les enjeux d'une création lexicale », *Mots. Les langages du politique*, 102, p. 103-119.

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17 Source : Interview d'Alain Chevalier, in Romon P. « Génération Pouvoir », *Challenges*, juin 1991, p. 82.

**Tableau 1 :** Evolution de la place de l'entrepreneuriat dans les activités, les ressources et la communication de l'ESCP de 1819 à 2019.



De 1819 aux années 1886		Des années 1890 à 2019	
<b>Enseignements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Association des élèves de l'école</li> <li>• Ouverture du cours de Jean-Baptiste Say au Collège de la rue de Valenciennes (1826)</li> <li>• Supplément du cours de Jean-Baptiste Say au Collège de la rue de Valenciennes (1827)</li> <li>• Introduction du cours d'économie politique (1830)</li> <li>• Supplément du cours d'économie politique (1833)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ouverture d'un cours dédié à la création d'entreprises (1874)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'un centre de recherches sur la création d'entreprises (1963)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'une chaire dédiée à l'entrepreneuriat (2007)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'un observatoire sur la création des entreprises sur le campus de Tournai (2008)</li> <li>• Ouverture de l'option NS « Innovation et entrepreneuriat » en économie (1998)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'un programme de formation sur l'entrepreneuriat (2004)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ouverture de l'option « Entrepreneuriat » sur les campus de Berlin et Madrid (2007)</li> <li>• Ouverture de l'option « Entrepreneurship and sustainable innovation » (2018)</li> </ul>
<b>Recherches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 professeur engagé dans l'enseignement de l'économie politique (1826-1853)</li> <li>• 1 professeur engagé dans l'enseignement de l'économie politique (1870-1883)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Première embauche d'un professeur dédié à l'entrepreneuriat (1974)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'un incubateur « association étudiante - incubateur » (2003)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'un programme de formation pour les étudiants à développer leurs projets « Blue Factory » d'entreprises (2009)</li> <li>• Signature de partenariats avec des écoles d'ingénieurs (École Centrale Paris et École des Ponts ParisTech) pour dispenser les cours en entrepreneuriat aux élèves de l'école (2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 34 professeurs engagés dans l'enseignement et la recherche en entrepreneuriat (2011)</li> </ul>
<b>Ressources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description de la mission de l'école comme devant former « une élite de négociants, commerçants et chefs de entreprises dans les brochures publicitaires de l'école (1819-1886)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Création de la « Fête annuelle de l'entrepreneur » (2009)</li> <li>• Création du « Festival de l'Entrepreneur » sur le campus de Paris (2013)</li> <li>• Renouveau de la chaire de l'entrepreneuriat en « Institut Jean-Baptiste Say » (2017)</li> <li>• Utilisation de la figure de Jean-Baptiste Say sur le logo du vice-chancelier de l'école (2018)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 34 professeurs engagés dans l'enseignement et la recherche en entrepreneuriat (2011)</li> </ul>
<b>Communications</b>			

spécialisé « Innover et Entreprendre » qui, à ce jour, compte plus de 500 diplômés et a abouti à la création de 71 start-up. Le premier incubateur de l'école (Yellow Factory) a, de même, été créé en 2003 tandis qu'une chaire dédiée à l'entrepreneuriat est créée en 2007 avec le soutien financier d'Ernst et Young. Enfin en 2017, deux options « entrepreneurship » sont ouvertes sur les campus de Berlin et de Madrid, parmi de nombreuses autres mesures impactant aussi bien les activités de l'école (enseignement et recherche) que ses ressources ou sa communication (voir le tableau 1 ci-dessus)

### Le mythe d'une école nativement tournée vers l'entrepreneuriat

L'émergence d'un mythe organisationnel faisant de l'ESCP une école « créée par et pour des entrepreneurs » depuis 1819 est relativement récente dans l'histoire de l'établissement : elle peut être datée de 1994, année de la célébration du 175<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de l'établissement. C'est à cette occasion que la direction de l'école a coordonné toute une campagne de communication célébrant une « École fondée par des entrepreneurs et pour des entrepreneurs »<sup>18</sup>. Ce mythe s'est rapidement diffusé par la suite, au point d'être très régulièrement mis en avant par l'école dans tous ses supports de communication institutionnelle. Comme l'affirme, par exemple, l'administration de l'école dans un communiqué de presse en 2013 : « De Jean-Baptiste Say à l'origine de l'école, qui a inventé et conceptualisé le terme

d'entrepreneur, à la chaire entrepreneuriat Ernst and Young et l'incubateur d'entreprise, ESCP Europe a toujours été précurseur et leader dans le domaine ». Avec le temps, cette allégation a acquis la valeur d'un avantage concurrentiel susceptible de différencier l'école de ses concurrentes.

#### ► Pourquoi un mythe autour de la figure de Jean-Baptiste Say ?

L'émergence du mythe organisationnel faisant de Jean-Baptiste Say le fondateur de l'école n'est pas anodine. Ce mythe apparaît à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle comme une réponse à une double injonction nécessitant le renouvellement de l'identité organisationnelle de l'ESCP. D'une part, l'administration de l'école était à la recherche d'une figure emblématique susceptible, à l'occasion de son 175<sup>e</sup> anniversaire, de décrire son histoire et d'accompagner son évolution vers l'avenir. De l'autre, les anciens élèves, constatant les évolutions des écoles concurrentes, étaient en attente de l'introduction par l'école de programmes de formation en entrepreneuriat.

Certes, les anciens élèves ne demandaient pas tant cette nouvelle orientation stratégique pour profiter eux-mêmes de cours en entrepreneuriat dispensés par leur ancienne école que pour renforcer la marque et la réputation de cette dernière. Veiller au maintien de la compétitivité de leur « *alma mater* » est, en effet, une tâche traditionnelle des associations d'anciens élèves. Car la bonne réputation de l'école est une assurance pour l'employabilité et la progression de carrière des diplômés. En outre, le soutien des anciens élèves est nécessaire au dynamisme de l'école : ce sont eux qui offrent, pour

18 De Chantérac-Lamielle V. (1994), « Le mot de la Fin », in S. Servan-Schreiber, *Les Épics de la République. ESCP - École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris - Itinéraire d'une Grande École, 1819-1994*, CPL, Paris, p. 159

partie, des opportunités professionnelles pour les étudiants (stages, recrutement, partages d'expériences), des sources de financements (personnelles ou via les entreprises qui les emploie) et enfin, un potentiel rayonnement médiatique par les postes prestigieux qu'ils peuvent occuper.

Pour satisfaire ces deux requêtes, la direction de l'école a retenu la figure de Jean-Baptiste Say, construisant ainsi un mythe organisationnel. Dans le domaine de l'enseignement supérieur, le mythe organisationnel a pour finalité de renforcer le sentiment d'adhésion que l'école génère (avec les anciens élèves notamment), de légitimer les valeurs sociales qu'elle représente et enfin, de fournir des rituels permettant de pérenniser, auprès de ses parties prenantes, le sentiment d'appartenance.<sup>19</sup>

Dans le même temps, les préparatifs du 175<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de l'école exigeaient l'élaboration d'un positionnement approprié aux exigences des temps présents mais aussi suffisamment distinctif pour être représentatif de l'identité fondamentale – passée, présente et future – de l'école. L'administration aurait sans doute pu s'inspirer de l'histoire même de l'école comme « aventure entrepreneuriale » ; sans pour autant faire intervenir une figure comme celle de Jean-Baptiste Say. Néanmoins, la mise en récit de l'histoire de l'école dans un sens entrepreneurial était confrontée à des difficultés d'ordre pratique : l'histoire de l'école était très imparfaitement connue à l'époque, et

il n'était pas certain que la grille de lecture entrepreneuriale puisse être utilisée en continu sur près de deux siècles pour décrire l'évolution de l'ESCP. Cela aurait impliqué également de revenir sur des moments de crise, d'échecs, et d'héritages familiaux douloureux. Autant de thématiques sensibles qu'il n'était pas aisé d'aborder dans le cadre d'un jubilé.

En revanche, la figure de Jean-Baptiste Say offrait des atouts indéniables pour construire le positionnement entrepreneurial de l'école. Soutien de l'école dès ses premières années, Jean-Baptiste Say avait joué un rôle certain dans sa croissance malgré un contexte historique difficile, même s'il est vrai qu'il ne fut pas son réel fondateur. Sa figure représentait bien les valeurs de l'école et notamment sa double orientation à la fois scientifique et entrepreneuriale (voir encadré). Enfin, recourir à la figure de Jean-Baptiste Say présentait l'avantage d'éviter une mise en récit de toute la genèse et évolution historique de l'école, avec ce que cet exercice aurait supposé de mise en lumière de périodes mal connues, troubles. De ce fait, Jean-Baptiste Say apparaît bien comme un exemple parfait de symbolisme organisationnel : il est appréhendé comme un dispositif narratif que les membres de l'organisation « utilisent pour révéler ou rendre compréhensibles les sentiments, les images et les valeurs inconscients et inhérents à l'organisation »<sup>20</sup>.

19 Kamens D. H. (1977), "Legitimizing Myths and Educational Organization: The Relationship Between Organizational Ideology and Formal Structure", *American Sociological Review*, 42(2), p. 208-219.

Passant, A. J. G. (2016), "Issues in European business education in the mid-nineteenth century: A comparative perspective", *Business History*, 58(7), p. 1118-1145.

20 Dandridge Th., Mitroff, I., Joyce W. (1980), "Organizational Symbolism: A Topic to Expand Organizational Analysis", *The Academy of Management Review*, 5(1), p. 77-82.

Passant, A. J. G. (2016), "Issues in European business education in the mid-nineteenth century: A comparative perspective", *Business History*, 58(7), p. 1118-1145.

#### Qui était Jean-Baptiste Say ?

Jean-Baptiste Say a été entrepreneur d'abord par ses écrits. Il a produit une théorie générale de l'entrepreneur de marché, théorie au sein de laquelle l'innovation tient une place centrale. Son œuvre maîtresse, le *Traité d'économie politique*, qui ne connut pas moins de six éditions entre 1803 et 1841, est considérée comme fondatrice de la théorie de l'entrepreneuriat dans la mesure où Say y démontre la nécessité – contrairement à Adam Smith et à David Ricardo – de distinguer l'entrepreneur du capitaliste. Originaire d'une famille de négociants et d'entrepreneurs, principalement orientés vers les activités bancaires, Say est lui-même devenu entrepreneur : il est à l'origine de la création de la revue *La Décade*, publication portant sur l'économie politique, mais aussi d'une imprimerie puis d'une filature de coton dans le Pas-de-Calais.

La mobilisation de la figure de Jean-Baptiste Say (voir l'image 1 ci-contre) est aussi bénéfique pour l'école dans la mesure où elle permet de donner une origine à l'esprit entrepreneurial des programmes de l'école. Le mythe se décline alors de manière multiple, par exemple par le renommage de l'un des principaux amphithéâtres de l'école en l'honneur de Jean-Baptiste Say en l'an 2000, par la création de nouveaux programmes, par l'investissement dans des chaires et des programmes de recherche, ainsi que par le renforcement de la pédagogie entrepreneuriale et les divers moyens d'accompagnement que sont les incubateurs ou les dispositifs de mentorat (voir le tableau 1).

Le mythe est profondément diffusé et ancré au sein de la communauté ESCP. Les sept directeurs et anciens directeurs qui ont administré l'école entre 1974 et aujourd'hui et que nous avons interrogés, ont ainsi spontanément désigné Jean-Baptiste Say comme le fondateur de

l'école. Une telle appropriation du mythe témoigne de ce que la figure de Jean-Baptiste Say comme promoteur de l'entrepreneuriat et père spirituel de l'école ESCP est bien perçue comme un trait différenciateur de l'école vis-à-vis de ses concurrents et accompagnée d'une direction stratégique en totale cohérence avec ce message.

**Image 1 :** Logo commémoratif créé en 2018 pour le bicentenaire de l'école<sup>21</sup>.



### De l'histoire d'une école entrepreneuriale au mythe organisationnel d'un entrepreneur fondateur de l'école

Cet article dispense des contributions d'ordre historique, entrepreneurial, ainsi que managérial. Au niveau de la genèse de l'école d'abord, notre recherche révèle que l'esprit d'entreprise a été à l'origine de la fondation de la doyenne mondiale des écoles de commerce. L'expérience entrepreneuriale des fondateurs de l'ESCP et de leurs successeurs a permis de créer un service éducatif sans précédents, apportant une solution inédite aux demandes de formation d'une société industrielle alors émergente. Leur expérience entrepreneuriale

<sup>21</sup> Source : Site Internet de l'école consulté le 3 septembre 2018 <https://www.escp.eu/>

les a amenés à coordonner intelligemment des ressources limitées ; ce qui leur a permis de faire grandir l'école puis de pérenniser son existence en la faisant racheter par une institution plus importante – la Chambre de Commerce de Paris.

Au niveau de l'offre de formations, notre étude montre que, contrairement à une idée reçue, l'entrepreneuriat n'a été inclus dans les programmes d'enseignement de l'école que très récemment, à partir des années 1970. Cette introduction tardive dans le cursus de l'école s'explique par le fait qu'en France, les entrepreneurs étaient formés plutôt dans les écoles d'ingénieurs ou « sur le tas ». Ensuite, certains facteurs externes comme le rôle des anciens élèves, les tendances du marché des écoles de commerce et le développement économique, ont rendu indispensable la création d'une formation en entrepreneuriat. À travers ces éléments, notre article éclaire donc l'institutionnalisation de l'enseignement de l'entrepreneuriat en France, remettant en cause l'idée reçue que, dès leurs débuts, les écoles de commerce étaient toutes orientées vers l'entrepreneuriat.

Enfin, l'un des apports les plus singuliers de notre travail porte sur l'exploration du processus de construction d'un mythe organisationnel dans une institution d'enseignement supérieur. L'élaboration de tels mythes permet aux organisations de se construire une identité qui les différencie de leurs concurrents. Le mythe organisationnel représente un levier puissant en termes de communication, de légitimité et de différenciation concurrentielle, comme le montrent par exemple les réactions spontanées des anciens dirigeants de l'école qui voient en Jean-Baptiste Say l'unique fondateur de l'école ESCP.

Notre étude montre également comment l'élaboration d'un mythe fondé sur l'histoire de l'école, et décrivant ses valeurs distinctives, est susceptible de mobiliser les acteurs de l'école et de son environnement. De ce fait, le mythe peut se lire comme un « discours vivant » qui engage l'organisation qui le met en œuvre et génère pour partie sa légitimité. Cette étude contribue ainsi à mieux mettre en évidence les usages des mythes historiques, comme l'avait précédemment étudié James March pour qui « la convergence des déclarations se fait plutôt à un niveau élémentaire, celui de la légitimation de certains composants du récit »<sup>22</sup>. Dans notre cas, le mythe de Jean-Baptiste Say comme fondateur de l'ESCP a été construit sur son image de représentant historique des études en entrepreneuriat. Sa riche personnalité de professeur, de chercheur et d'entrepreneur a ainsi permis à l'école d'investir logiquement le champ des programmes et des formations en entrepreneuriat ; activités qui maintiennent son discours entrepreneurial vivant et le nourrissent.

Ce processus de construction de mythes organisationnels existe dans d'autres types d'organisations. Par exemple, General Electric est aujourd'hui associée à l'une des figures emblématiques du management contemporain, Jack Welch, figure qui occulte l'identité du fondateur historique de General Electric : Thomas Edison.

Si aujourd'hui l'offre de formations en entrepreneuriat paraît « naturelle » au sein de toute école de commerce – au point même de paraître constitutive du projet de fondation des premières écoles –,

<sup>22</sup> Source : Site Internet consulté le 25 novembre 2019 <https://www.ecole.org/fr/seminaires/10-enseignement-de-la-gestion-gresup>

notre étude interroge sur la durabilité de ce sentiment pour l'avenir. Et si l'entrepreneuriat perdait de son pouvoir d'attractivité auprès de la société civile qui le valorise certes aujourd'hui mais le valorisera peut-être moins demain ? Comment les écoles de commerce pourront-elles alors se réinventer et, ce faisant, réinventer leur histoire pour l'aligner sur les nouvelles attentes de la société ?

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# CLIN D'ŒIL LES ÉPICIERS À LA QUÊTE DU GRAAL : PROMOUVOIR LE DIPLÔME D'ÉCOLE DE COMMERCE COMME SÉSAME UNIVERSITAIRE À LA MODE GRÉCO-ROMAINE

par **Adrien Jean-Guy PASSANT**

Léonard de Vinci Pôle universitaire, Research Center  
Paris La Défense

La France et l'Europe hébergent aujourd'hui les plus anciennes écoles de commerce du monde. La doyenne d'entre elles est à Paris : ESCP Business School. Elle a été fondée en 1819, sous le nom d'École spéciale de commerce et d'industrie, par deux entrepreneurs : Germain Legret et Amédée Brodat<sup>1</sup> puis dirigée à partir de 1830 par Adolphe Blanqui<sup>2</sup>. Acquise en 1869 par la Chambre de commerce de Paris, elle forme depuis plusieurs générations des cadres d'entreprise, des managers, des leaders et des entrepreneurs<sup>3</sup>.

Dans les années 1820, cette école évolue dans un environnement hostile et doit se faire

reconnaître comme établissement de formation de niveau supérieur. Comment y parvenir ? En délivrant un diplôme inspiré de l'Université et du monde classique ! Comme le souligne le directeur d'alors : « Nous voulons que les diplômes délivrés dans ces séances solennelles, et signés des honorables membres de notre conseil de perfectionnement, soient des titres réels, disputés, acquis au prix d'un long travail et de connaissances positives ; nous désirons que le commerce et l'industrie trouvent ici des sujets dignes de toute leur confiance, des hommes pratiques exercés d'avance au maniement des affaires »<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A. J.-G. Passant, *À l'origine des écoles de commerce : ESCP Business School, la passion d'entreprendre*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> A. J.-G. Passant, "Between filial piety and managerial opportunism: The strategic use of the history of a family business after the buyout by non-family purchasers", *Entreprises et Histoire*, n° 91, juin 2018, p. 62-81 ; G. Deslandes, "European management teaching and research: Reflections on the life and work of A. Blanqui", *European Management Journal*, vol. 38, n° 3, June 2020, p. 357-366.

<sup>3</sup> A. J.-G. Passant et F. Amico, « Depuis quand apprend-on l'entrepreneuriat ? Une étude de cas historique dédiée à l'ESCP », *Entreprendre & Innover*, n° 42-43, juillet-décembre 2019, p. 146-158.

<sup>4</sup> École spéciale de commerce. *Discours prononcés à la troisième séance du Conseil de perfectionnement de l'École spéciale de commerce*, Paris, Dondey-Dupré, 1827, p. 19.





**Premier diplôme remis par l'École spéciale de commerce on juillet 1825  
(reproduit avec l'aimable autorisation des descendants de Paul Lehideux)**

Le diplôme présenté ici a été remis à Paul Lehideux, futur banquier, tout juste âgé de 19 ans, à sa sortie de l'école. L'élégance du parchemin est volontairement recherchée. Passeport pour la réussite commerciale, il est pourvu des plus nobles attributs : le dieu Hermès, protecteur des voyageurs, des marchands et... des voleurs, le domine souverainement. Messager des dieux, Hermès est également le dieu des relations pacifiques. Son caducée, composé de deux serpents affrontés et séparés d'une baguette d'olivier, est représenté à deux reprises. À ces attributs s'ajoute le trident de Neptune accompagné d'une ancre marine dominant une frégate à l'arrière-plan. Placé sous le signe de la poésie, un cartouche en tête du diplôme cite le vers du poète français Antoine-Marin Lemierre : « le trident de Neptune est le sceptre du monde ». Sept cornes d'abondance, prodiguant fruits, fleurs et pièces d'or, laissent entrevoir les gains potentiels que le récipiendaire pourra retirer de sa formation

à l'école. Les angles du diplôme sont agrémentés de médaillons d'illustres figures du commerce international, notamment Christophe Colomb et Côme de Médicis. Au cœur du document, le nom de l'élève est accompagné des signatures des principaux représentants du commerce contemporain parisien. Parmi elles, celles de l'économiste Jean-Baptiste Say, de l'ingénieur Charles Dupin et du banquier Jacques Laffitte sont reconnaissables.

La remise du diplôme repose également sur une mise en scène soigneusement étudiée pour rehausser le prestige de la scolarité. Les élèves arborent l'épée, le bicorne, ainsi que l'habit bleu avec pantalon à bande blanche. Cet uniforme place les « épiciers » sur le même plan, symboliquement, que leurs homologues de l'École spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr, de l'École polytechnique, ou de l'École normale. Le parchemin est remis en séance solennelle dans la cour du prestigieux

Hôtel de Sully. La première remise, le 15 juillet 1825, regroupe ainsi 1 200 spectateurs<sup>5</sup>. L'ambition s'accroît au fil des années. En juillet 1826, ils sont 1 500 dont « l'élite des négociants de la capitale »<sup>6</sup>. En 1827, plus de 2 000 personnes assistent à la remise des diplômes dont « des pairs de France, des députés, des membres de l'Institut, l'élite des industriels, des négociants et des banquiers de la capitale, et plus de 500 dames »<sup>7</sup>. Les cérémonies sont accompagnées musicalement :

les mouvements des élèves s'effectuent au son du tambour.

Après être tombées en désuétude pendant pratiquement un siècle en raison de leurs coûts, ces cérémonies de prestige renaissent en 1990 : les traditions ont du bon quoiqu'elles soient remises au goût du jour. Les cérémonies contemporaines avec diplômes sur papier filigrané, en robe universitaire avec mortier, ne visent-elles pas aussi à signaler la visée élitiste de l'école ?

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<sup>5</sup> École spéciale de commerce, *Discours prononcé à la première séance du Conseil de perfectionnement de l'École spéciale de commerce*, Paris, Dondey-Dupré, 1825.

<sup>6</sup> Poux-Franklin, *Rapport au Conseil de perfectionnement de l'École spéciale de commerce*, Paris, Dondey-Dupré, 1826, p. IX.

<sup>7</sup> École spéciale de commerce, *Discours prononcés à la troisième séance...*, *op. cit.*

## Making European Managers in Business Schools: A Longitudinal Case Study on Evolution, Processes, and Actors from the Late 1960s Onward

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ADRIEN JEAN-GUY PASSANT\*

There have been calls in recent literature for researchers to open up the “black box” of business schools to explore their dynamics and behaviors in-depth for a context-sensitive understanding of their evolution. Drawing on the case of ESCP, a leading business school in France, this article shows how European business schools’ curricula have evolved since the late 1960s in response to a combination of powerful actors’ demands and the emergence of new processes in the educational domain. This article finds that while European business schools’ curricula reflect the influence of internal and external forces, they do not converge to a common type, because of the different markets

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and political and cultural contexts in which they operate. It also finds that business schools in Europe purposefully do not imitate those in United States.

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**Keywords:** Business schools; management education; history

## Introduction

Business education is over two centuries old in Europe. Although the first business schools were considered secondary schools and regarded with some disdain by universities, they gradually acquired university-level respectability during the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> The post-World War II period is usually portrayed as an era of growth and development for business schools in both Europe and North America, as recently shown by both Pettigrew and McLaren.<sup>2</sup>

The literature on the history of management education has largely centered on the rise of business schools rather than the history of their programs.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, numerous studies investigate business schools' institutionalization processes, particularly the mimetic and standardizing effects of rankings and accreditation on the development of these schools.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, much of the literature offers analytically relevant accounts of the rise of business schools, especially in the United States, after World War II.<sup>5</sup> These studies mostly chronicle patterns of development and raise challenges about the future of management education. Similar analytical and historical treatment of the development of business schools in postwar Europe remain rare, with a few exceptions.<sup>6</sup> However, some studies have focused on the effects of the Bologna process on European business schools.<sup>7</sup> In the same vein, some scholars have discussed the domination of U.S.-style managerial education in Europe since the second part of the twentieth century. They demonstrate that this has

1. Engwall and Zamagni, *Management Education*.

2. Pettigrew, "Building a Research Agenda"; McLaren, "Stop Blaming Gordon and Howell."

3. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*; Gourvish and Tiratsoo, *Missionaries and Managers*.

4. Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca, "Theorizing and Studying Institutional Work."

5. McDonald, *Golden Passport*; Pettigrew, "Building a Research Agenda"; Khurana and Pearce, "Business Education"; Khurana, *From Hired Aims to Hired Hands*.

6. Pettigrew, "Building a Research Agenda," 205; Fraguero and Michelini, "Leading Breakthrough Initiatives"; Starkey and Tiratsoo, *Business School and the Bottom Line*; Barsoux, *INSEAD*.

7. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

manifested in a wide range of reactions in European schools, from imitation to hybridization to resistance to outright rejection of the U.S. model.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the history of curricula within European business schools from the middle of the twentieth century remains a relatively untouched topic. Enders calls on researchers to open up the “black box” of business schools to explore their evolution in greater depth for a more context-sensitive understanding.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, temporal data are necessary to appreciate not just how these determinants were developed but also how they were sustained over time.<sup>10</sup> This is why some authors encourage longitudinal studies to understand the emergence of specific field studies within business schools’ curricula.<sup>11</sup>

This article focuses on the following research questions: Who are the key actors and what are the factors and processes in the evolution of European business school curricula? How do they interact to influence the dynamics of institutionalization? In exploring these questions, this study remedies three inadequacies in the current literature: (1) the scarcity of empirical studies on the evolution of business schools’ curricula in Europe from a processual perspective; (2) the lack of historical research dedicated to the rise of management, leadership, and entrepreneurship studies in their programs; and (3) scholars’ call for individual case studies on the institutionalization of business schools. My research investigates how a business school that was originally established for bookkeepers adapted its curricula to become a leading European management school. To analyze this evolution, I relied on a qualitative historical case study approach. Using a longitudinal analysis of the education systems at ESCP—a European business school with a rich empirical setting and a long tradition that dates back to the nineteenth century—I analyze the evolution of its curricula over time, especially from the late 1960s onward.

The article is organized as follows. The first section examines the case study’s details, sources, and methods. The second section analyzes ESCP’s curricula from the late 1960s onwards. The third section discusses the evolution, processes, and actors that influenced the evolution of ESCP’s curricula.

## Case, Sources, and Methods

### *Empirical Setting*

This research is based on a single case study devoted to ESCP for three reasons.

8. Engwall and Zarragni, *Management Education*.

9. Enders, “Academic Arms Race.”

10. Pettigrew, “Building a Research Agenda.”

11. Kailer, “Evaluation of Entrepreneurship Education.”

First, ESCP is an elite French business school that tops global rankings in the *Financial Times*, and in other listings. The school is neither part of an American institution nor located within a larger university in Europe. Thus, as a French *grande école*, ESCP offers organizational specificities comparable with American stand-alone business school.<sup>12</sup> More specifically, it is a consular business school owned by the Paris Chamber of Commerce (PCC), which has a say in the school's budget and advises on its activities and programs. The ESCP is selective in which students it accepts based on entrance examinations.<sup>13</sup> These characteristics make ESCP a rich example of the evolution of a leading business school outside of prestigious American universities.

Second, the study illustrates how French business schools have experienced increased institutional complexity in the higher education system since the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> Like most French business schools, ESCP launched management, leadership, and entrepreneurship studies in the 1960s and 1970s;<sup>15</sup> from the 1990s onward, it has enhanced its international profile with standards that do not match its historical identity.

Third, ESCP is unique in that it has long held elite status in France, along with HEC Paris and ESSEC.<sup>16</sup> In 1974, ESCP was the first to launch a course dedicated to entrepreneurship; ESSEC and HEC Paris followed suit in 1976 and 1978, respectively. Since the 1980s, ESCP has offered more disciplines than HEC Paris and ESSEC, particularly in entrepreneurship and management studies.<sup>17</sup> Finally, ESCP is the first business school in France to have established pioneering training—such as computer coding courses (1968), the Specialized Master's degree (1986), and the part-time MBA (1993)—and practices that later became widespread in most business schools in France—such as personality interviews during recruitment tests (1970), integration in parallel admission (1970), alternate learning (1995), and the validation of skills acquired experience (2006). Clearly, ESCP is an innovative business school in France.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Data Sources and Analysis*

To explore the evolution of a business school's curricula, I draw on institutional field theories, which depict higher education institutions

12. Kodeih and Greenwood, "Responding to Institutional Complexity."

13. Kumar and Usunier, "Management Education."

14. Kodeih and Greenwood, "Responding to Institutional Complexity."

15. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*.

16. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

17. Takagi and De Carlo, "Ephemeral National Model," 46–53.

18. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

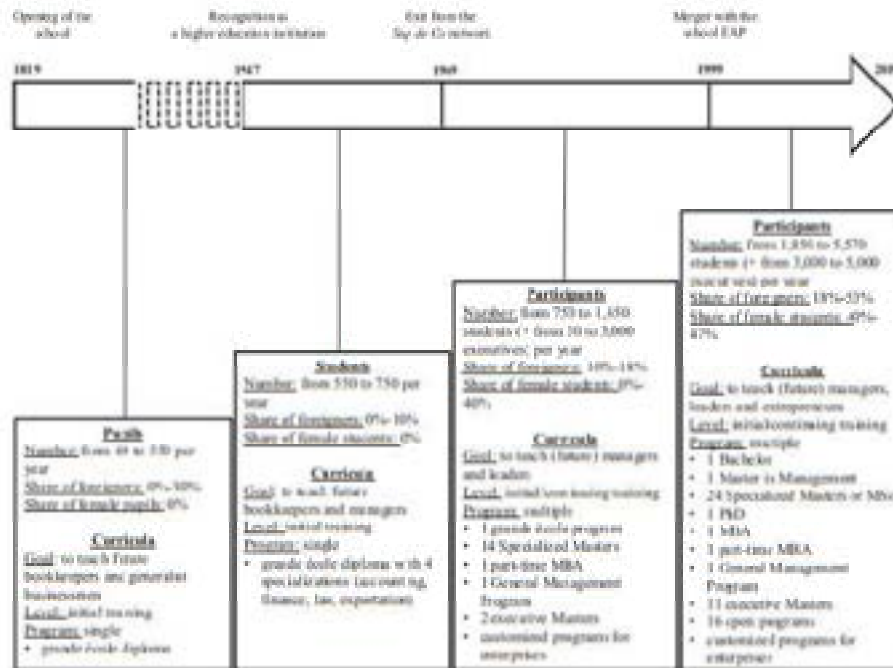


Figure 1 Timeline of ESCP, 1819 to 2019.

Author's own elaboration.

as working with other organizations—suppliers, consumers, regulatory agencies, and competitors<sup>19</sup>—within a common institutional framework. The field uses regulations, cognitive belief systems, and normative rules that provide social structure, stability, and meaning to social life.<sup>20</sup> Following Pettigrew, this case study is longitudinal so that all processes are contextually embedded and revealed through temporal analysis.<sup>21</sup>

This research adopted a business history approach by analyzing primary sources that were collected from the archives of ESCP, the Paris Departmental Archives, and the PCC. I studied the minutes of meetings held by the administrative commission—the school's main management body—as well as the training syllabi and self-evaluation reports written for international accreditations. I also collected primary data through interviews with school administrators to investigate the incentives that led to new educational programs. These sources were triangulated with historical monographs and scientific publications written on the history of ESCP. I began my longitudinal analysis by undertaking periodization based on an exhaustive chronology of ESCP training, especially from the late 1960s to the present (Figure 1).

19. DiMaggio and Powell, "Iron-Cage Revisited," 65.

20. Enders, "Academic Arms Race."

21. Pettigrew, "Context and Action in the Transformation of the Firm."

The article starts in the late 1960s because that is when programs began to diversify.<sup>22</sup> It then identifies the factors, actors, and processes that initiated the transformations through to the present. My classification of vectors of change is based on previous work that has shown the relevance of specific factors affecting the evolution of business schools' curricula, such as the needs of the economy, business requirements, and government decisions;<sup>23</sup> the influence of U.S. business education;<sup>24</sup> as well as parents' and students' expectations and accreditation processes.<sup>25</sup>

I distinguish two specific periods in the history of ESCP. Period 1 (1969–1999) was initiated by governmental decisions that led the school to diversify its training. Period 2 (1999–present) was initiated by the school's drive toward autonomy and continues from rising pressures related to international rankings, accreditation processes, and competition from other schools. These changes are clear in the school's development of a wide ranging curricula.

### The Evolution of ESCP's Curricula: From Bookkeeping to Management, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship Studies

This section first provides a brief overview of the context in which ESCP first evolved. The two following subsections present an in-depth analysis of how, beginning in the late 1960s, the school shifted its strategy to train (future) specialist managers, leaders, and entrepreneurs.

#### *French Business Schools: From Secondary Schools Teaching Future Bookkeepers and Businessmen to Higher Education Institutions*

Business schools in France were created in the nineteenth century on the model of grandes écoles, especially engineering schools.<sup>26</sup> However, they were not recognized by the French government as institutions of higher education.<sup>27</sup> Business schools were considered second-choice options by students who preferred law, medicine, or

22. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

23. Kodeih and Greenwood, "Responding to Institutional Complexity"; Locke, *Management and Higher Education Since 1940*; Engwall, *Mercury Meets Minerva*.

24. Cooke and Kumar, "US Philanthropy"; Gemelli, "American Influence"; Engwall, Kipping, and Üsdiken, "Public Science Systems"; McGlade, "Big Push."

25. Takagi and De Carlo "Ephemeral National Model."

26. Passant, "Between Filial Piety"; Passant, "Early Emergence of European Commercial Education"; Maffre, "Les Origines."

27. Passant, "Issues in European Business Education."



engineering studies.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the schools taught younger students educational disciplines regarded as useful for companies because public opinion, and sometimes businesses, did not look favorably on managers and entrepreneurs at the time.<sup>29</sup> Thus, French business schools promoted the roles of bookkeepers and businesspeople.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, at the end of the nineteenth century, the majority of their graduates worked in accountancy, budgeting, and other financial services.<sup>31</sup>

After World War II, management and leadership started to be perceived as legitimate subjects, and this trend affected business schools' evolution. In France, a decree passed on December 3, 1947, officially recognized most of the French business schools as institutions of higher education. The French government created the network of *Sup de Co* (French business schools), in which business schools were subject to common regulations in terms of curricula, recruiting methods, and graduation requirements.<sup>32</sup> During this time, the United States provided France with significant technical assistance to strengthen its economy.<sup>33</sup> The United States' influence in the economic sphere extended to teaching when it sent consultants and teachers to France to spread its vision of management education.<sup>34</sup>

The case of ESCP reflects these historical evolutions. From its creation in 1819 to 1947, ESCP was a secondary school teaching future bookkeepers and businessmen. In 1947 it became an institution of higher education and sought to prepare its students to occupy higher positions in business communities. The new managerial orientation of the school's training is illustrated in the fact that at the start of the 1960s, ESCP added new subjects—human resources, statistical control, and organizational psychosociology—into its programs.

*First Period (1969–1999): ESCP, a Tertiary Business School Teaching Specialist Managers and Leaders*

In the late 1960s and 1970s, the number of independently owned businesses in France decreased, while the number of multinational companies increased. Before the 1960s, the French economy leaned on its colonial empire, but after the independence of its last colonies, France turned to its European neighbors, which were emphasizing the

28. Engwall, Kipping, and Ösdiken, *Defining Management*; Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*.

29. Engwall, *Mercury Meets Minerva: Business Studies and Higher Education*.

30. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

31. Maffro, "Les Origines."

32. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*.

33. Gourvish and Tiratsoo, *Missionaries and Managers*.

34. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*.

importance of a common European market. The Fondation Nationale pour l'Enseignement de la Gestion des Entreprises (National Foundation for Education in Business Administration; FNEGE) opened in France in 1968 to support the introduction of management education, and between 1969 and 1973 it sent approximately three hundred young people to U.S. and Canadian universities to be trained in management. These students returned to France to spread the management education they had learned in North America.<sup>35</sup>

At the end of the 1960s, the director of ESCP,<sup>36</sup> Jean Vigier—who graduated from the *Centre de préparation aux affaires* (Business Training Center), which was directly inspired by the Harvard Business School<sup>37</sup>—observed that ESCP's programs were inadequate to meet companies' new demands and international competition. Indeed, as he pointed out: "The graduates of ESCP are a perfectly standardized product (same social class, same culture, same aspirations, same training) which constitutes a weakness compared to the current diversity of firms' demands."<sup>38</sup> In spring 1968, Vigier visited seven American business schools—Harvard University, Wharton School of Business, Columbia University, New York University, University of Chicago, Northwestern University, and the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor—to see how first-class U.S. business schools were run and what was included in their teaching programs.<sup>39</sup> Upon his return, he broadened ESCP's participant target population in 1969 by negotiating ESCP's autonomy from the state and the *Sup de Co* network.<sup>40</sup> After that, the school organized its own entrance and exit exams. Moreover, as part of the FNEGE program, a few ESCP graduates were sent to the United States in the late 1960s to learn new management teaching methods and practices. In Vigier's words, the modernization of the school aimed at "putting more emphasis on 'management techniques' to promote the preparation of managers and leaders and not bookkeepers."<sup>41</sup> From 1969 to 1999, ESCP broadened its student population, resulting in the diversification of its curricula in two ways.

First, gender diversification became a goal for the dean of ESCP. Most *grandes écoles* were reserved for young men. The situation changed when the *École polytechnique*—the most prestigious French engineering school—removed gender restrictions in the early 1970s,

35. Chessel and Pavis, *Le Technocrate* 123.

36. In the 1960s the term "director" was used, whereas today "dean" is preferred. Hereafter, dean will be used no matter the time period under analysis.

37. Barsoux, *INSEAD*.

38. ESCP, *Rapport d'audit interne*, 1969, ESCP Archives.

39. MinMeet, April 3, 1968, ESCP Archives.

40. Fridenson and Paquy, "Du Haut Enseignement Commercial."

41. MinMeet, April 3, 1968; ESCP Archives.

Table 1 Evolutions of the school enrollment and budget, 1969–2019

School year starting	1969	1999	2019
Number of students (initial education)	748	2,536	5,573
Number of foreign students (initial education)	7	1,157	2,952
Percentage of foreign students (initial education)	0.94%	45.60%	53%
Number of participants (executive education)	50	3,028	5,041
Number of graduates	251	1,136	2,106
Number of tenured professors	3	129	156
Annual budget (millions EUR)	1.5	38	102
Self-financing ratio	37%	73%	89%

Author's elaboration.

although different entrance exams were used. At that time, French business schools still imitated engineering schools, particularly the most prestigious ones. This would align ESCP with the best business schools in the world, which already were coed, including Wharton Business School (since 1954), Harvard Business School (since 1963), and INSEAD (since 1967).<sup>42</sup> Officially, however, coeducation was introduced to respond to the opening up of liberal professions and senior executives in France in the 1970s. Accordingly, ESCP moved to a common entrance exam for both men and women in 1973, with the latter representing 32 percent of the incoming class in 1974 and 45 percent in 1979.

Second, the school developed executive education to meet the expectations of executives needing to update or improve their management knowledge. Vigier noticed that this was heavily taught in U.S. business schools. However, he decided to limit this topic because he wanted to maintain the tradition of *grandes écoles* teaching young students who had no professional experience rather than established executives. Thus, in 1968, the executive education division included a very small number of students. However, the situation changed rapidly when in 1971 a French law was passed requiring companies with more than ten employees to devote 0.8 percent of their gross payroll to training their workers.<sup>43</sup> The PCC, owner of ESCP, seized this opportunity to create closer relationships with businesses. The number of people enrolled in executive education rose from about fifty in 1968 to more than seven hundred in 1976, and to more than three thousand in 1999 (Table 1). In the 1990s, the school also created a corporate relations service to form high added-value partnerships with companies to enrich course content and develop studies and research. This tightened the bonds between ESCP and its alumni network, which became the

42. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

43. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*, 110.

school's supporters within their companies and contributed financially to the growth of ESCP. Indeed, in 1993, the school launched the first part-time MBA in France. As former dean De-Chantérac-Lamielle (1989–1999) acknowledged, “Delivering an MBA was a vital issue for the visibility of the school abroad. Even if this program was taught in French, the school could pretend to deliver an MBA like all the competing schools.”<sup>44</sup> A full-time MBA was launched in 2017 to prepare students to be future leaders of international business.

Along with adding the curricula for executive education, the school also expanded its specializations of management and leadership studies for initial education (Table 2). In the late 1970s, ESCP joined the *Conférence des grandes écoles* (CGÉ), which is an association of higher education institutions created in 1973 to promote the influence of its members. The CGÉ is the guarantor of the *grande école* label, and membership is subject to an evaluation process by current members.<sup>45</sup> As an accreditation body, the CGÉ is particularly important because it allows *grandes écoles* to offer Specialized Master's degrees. These are professional programs in management, targeting applicants who already possess a diploma from a *grande école* or university, and who want to receive a top-level professional specialization in management. Specialized Master's degrees are trademarks of the CGÉ. They allow *grandes écoles*, including ESCP, to teach management students with training traditionally reserved for engineers, biologists, publishers, and political scientists.<sup>46</sup> In 1986, ESCP became the first business school in France to launch this new Specialized Master's program in auditing and consulting. It was followed by programs in marketing and communication (1989), tourism management (1990), medical management (1990,) and fashion industry management (1993) (Table 2). The success of these programs led the school to multiply them rapidly; for example, ESCP offered eight Specialized Master's degrees in 1986 and fourteen in 1998. This growth was imitated by other French business schools.

The new leadership curricula were designed to support participants in their personal development. Starting in the 1990s, managers who sought greater career opportunities needed to improve their employability;<sup>47</sup> earning a degree became a major route to do that. Today, the MBA is the main model, but other specialized training programs also have their place, such as the Executive Specialized Master degree. Moreover, on the French market, credit for both work and life

44. Interview with De-Chantérac-Lamielle, dean of ESCP (1989–1999), Paris, January 29, 2018.

45. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*.

46. Interview with Perrin, dean of ESCP (1979–1989), Paris, January 16, 2018.

47. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

Table 2. Evolution of ESCP's curricula in management and leadership education

From the late 1960s to the present	
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of the Specialized Master in Auditing and Consulting (1986)</li> <li>• Opening of the Specialized Master in Medical Management (1990)</li> <li>• Opening of the Specialized Master in Tourism Management (1990)</li> <li>• Opening of the Specialized Master in Marketing and Communication (1989)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of a five-day seminar dedicated to Purchasing Leadership (1996)</li> <li>• Opening of 3 five-day seminars dedicated to Marketing, Finance and Communication Leadership (1996)</li> <li>• Creation of a three-year option for Public Management (1997)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of the Specialized Master in Executive Management (2006)</li> <li>• ESCP offers the validation of skills acquired experience (2006)</li> <li>• Opening of the European Executive MBA (2003)</li> <li>• Opening of two Executive-Specialized Masters in Finance and Communication Management (2004)</li> <li>• Opening of the Specialized Master in Management of Cultural and Artistic Activities (2007)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of a five-day seminar for the forty directors of the Société Générale bank (2011)</li> <li>• Opening of the Specialized Master in Hospital Management (2011)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of the part-time MBA (1993)</li> </ul>

(Continued)

Table 2 (Continued)

From the late 1960s to the present	
<b>Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of a research center for Management Processes (1982)</li> <li>• Organization of the 9th FCOOS colloquium dedicated to the Production of Management Knowledge (1993)</li> <li>• Purchase of the <i>Journal of Euro-Asian Management</i> (1997)</li> <li>• First professor in leadership (1986)</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the junior enterprise with the assistance of the school dean (1969)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of a research center for International Human Resources Management (2000)</li> <li>• Opening of a research center for Public Management (2006)</li> <li>• Opening of a research chair dedicated to Intercultural Management (2017)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization of the annual French Human Resources Management Association (2000)</li> <li>• Opening of a research chair dedicated to Leadership (2002)</li> <li>• The school's Specialized Master's programs generate about 7% of ESCP annual budget (in the 1980s); 9% (in the 1990s); and 11% (in the 2000s)</li> <li>• The school's MBA program generates about 3% of ESCP annual budget (in the 1990s); and 7% (in the 2000s)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships with <i>Ca' Foscari University in Venice</i> for the Specialized Master in Management of Cultural and Artistic Activities (2007)</li> <li>• Partnerships with <i>Institut Français de la mode</i> (French Fashion School) in Paris for the MSc, International Fashion &amp; Luxury Management (2018)</li> </ul>

Table 2 (Continued)

from the late 1960s to the present	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 teachers involved in leadership teaching and research (2018)</li> <li>• The Graduate Business Leadership Awards are bestowed at ESCP (2019)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a new mission statement to celebrate the merger of the school with EAP; the school's first mission is to train the future directors of European companies (1999)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a new motto to celebrate the opening of the school for the leaders of tomorrow (1993)</li> </ul>
<b>Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a new motto to celebrate the opening of the first executive education program: An efficient business school for active managers (1968)</li> </ul>

Author's own elaboration.

experiences has real commercial value as well as economic and societal utility. That is why, since the turn of the twentieth century, ESCP has offered senior executives an Executive Officer diploma based only on their experience.

In addition to these changes, starting in the late 1960s, ESCP implemented a research policy, created research centers or chairs dedicated to management and leadership, and organized international management colloquiums (Table 2). This diversification was possible because the school acquired new resources, both intangible—with the recruitment of management and leadership professors and the establishment of partnerships with other universities—and tangible—with the creation of financially contributing programs, such as the MBA and the Specialized Masters (Table 2). As a result, the school's organizational communications have gradually evolved since the late 1960s, highlighting the training of active managers and leaders (Table 2).

This change in the school curricula was also evident in the extracurricular activities of students. After 1969, the school administration encouraged involvement in student associations because this was seen as effective preparation for management jobs. Sports, which were previously optional, became mandatory in the 1970s. The practice of sports was no longer seen as only necessary to prepare male students for military service, which had been true until World War II. Now sports prepared all students to join the elite class by knowing how to fence, golf, ski, or ride horses.<sup>48</sup> Sports, according to the directors of the time, developed managerial skills. As De-Chantérac-Lamielle wrote: "The practice of sports gives students the physiological means to fight against stress and teaches them team spirit but also competition that should animate their future careers as a manager or leader."<sup>49</sup>

*Second Period (1999–present): Internationalization and Diversification of ESCP's Curricula in Entrepreneurship Education*

From the late 1990s onward, French business schools have been expected to enhance their international profiles in accordance with standards (e.g., international accreditations and rankings, theoretical research published in academic peer-reviewed journals) that do not match the historical identity of grandes écoles.<sup>50</sup> That is why they transformed their grande école programs into a Master in Management program, as done at the HEC Paris (1999), or a junior MBA program, as at ESSEC (2000). The term "junior MBA" differentiates the ESSEC MBA

48. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

49. ESCP, *Rapport d'autoévaluation EQUIS*, 1997, 1892/W/38, Paris Chamber of Commerce (PCC) Archives.

50. Kodeih and Greenwood, "Responding to Institutional Complexity."



from the MBAs offered by U.S. business schools: the junior MBA is intended for students younger (18–23 years old) and with less professional experience (between one and two years) than their American counterparts. Grandes écoles have also opened up their students' recruitment processes, introduced new programs, developed existing ones, and recruited research-oriented faculty members who have more international experience.<sup>51</sup>

In 1999, to increase the school's international exposure, the PCC merged ESCP with another consular business school, EAP. In 1973 the PCC founded EAP, a multicountry grande école whose mission is to provide an innovative European complement to the other business schools. Since the merger, ESCP has operated campuses in Paris, London, Madrid, Berlin, Turin, and Warsaw. To bring the school closer to the European standard of "bachelor's-master's-doctorate" training, ESCP has undertaken several measures. First, in 2003 it transformed its grande école program into a Master in Management. Second, in that same year, the school launched a doctoral program. As former dean Scaringella (1999–2006) acknowledged: "Thanks to the Ph.D., the school has been able to form leading partnerships with foreign universities. This program also allowed it to 'bypass' the French universities for the training of future teachers-researchers in management."<sup>52</sup> Finally, in 2015 the school launched a bachelor's degree in management program. Indeed, between 2003 and 2015, ESCP has built a complete portfolio of courses aligned with the European training standard. As stated by the current academic director: "This range of programs is complementary: we train operational leaders through the Bachelor in Management, strategic leaders through the Master in Management and MBA, and specialists through MS [Master] and MSc [Master of Science]."<sup>53</sup> As a result, the school now educates an increasing number of international managers. As shown in Table 1, the percentage of foreign students enrolled increased from 0.94 percent in 1969 to 53 percent in 2018. The school also made great efforts to transform its name into an internationally known brand, changing its name from ESCP-EAP to ESCP Europe in 2009. In November 2019, ESCP Europe was renamed once again ESCP because including "Europe" was considered too restrictive for the school's international ambitions.

Moreover, entrepreneurship has become a priority in the European Union. In 2000 the European Union agreed that entrepreneurship should be regarded as a basic skill necessary to increase the EU gross

51. Kodeih and Greenwood, "Responding to Institutional Complexity."

52. Interview with Scaringella, dean of ESCP (1999–2006), Paris, March 22, 2018.

53. Press release, September 8, 2016, ESCP Archives.

domestic product by 3 percent before 2007, making the economy one of the most competitive knowledge-based economies in the world.<sup>54</sup> With this change, ESCP moved its curricula toward entrepreneurship education.<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that until the 1970s, entrepreneurship was not taught at ESCP, and teachers had no apparent interest in how organizations actually came into existence. They focused on preparing their students for careers in well-established companies, whether in the manufacturing, banking, transportation, consumer products, or public sectors. Even so, in 1974 the school administration created an optional management and development of organizations course focused on business creation. This was transformed at the end of the decade into a specialization in its own right, but with mixed results because students wanted to become managers or leaders rather than take on the risks of starting their own businesses.<sup>56</sup>

As shown in Table 3, starting in the 1990s, entrepreneurship training and entrepreneurial resources increased because school management realized that students were unlikely to become managers in the ways envisaged in the 1970s and 1980s. As former dean Scaringella stated:

Because job markets are increasingly precarious, a lot of graduates will not experience the continuity of employment or career profession available to their predecessors. Accordingly, the school should not continue to promote exclusively management or leadership studies. Because students are more likely to manage no one or be managed by another, management and leadership studies should be supplemented with additional programs devoted to entrepreneurship.<sup>57</sup>

Accordingly, the Specialized Master Innovation and Entrepreneurship was created (and is still available). With changes in attitudes in the business sector and the academic world toward entrepreneurs, as well as with the economic difficulties caused by the 2008–2009 financial crisis, this trend has accelerated over the past decade. That is why a chair dedicated to entrepreneurship was created in 2007, and two new entrepreneurship options were launched on the Berlin and Madrid campuses in 2017 (Table 3). Finally, in 2018 the school launched another program devoted to entrepreneurship: the Master of Science in Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Innovation (Table 3). So, in a way, students at ESCP became interested in entrepreneurship because traditional career paths—to be hired as a manager or a leader in big

54. The Lisbon Treaty, §25, Lisbon European Council, March 23 and 24, 2000. Presidency Conclusions; [http://www.europa.eu/summits/list\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu/summits/list_en.htm).

55. Passant and Arreola, “Depuis quand apprend-on l’Entrepreneuriat?”

56. MinMest, 1974–1984, ESCP Archives.

57. Interview with Scaringella.

Table 3 Evolution of ESCP's curricula toward entrepreneurship education, 1974 to 2018

<b>Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a Starting a Business training course (1974)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a third-year option for entrepreneurship (1981)</li> <li>• Opening of a research center for entrepreneurship (1983)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of the Specialized Master Innovation and Entrepreneurship (1998)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of a four-day seminar dedicated to entrepreneurship (2004)</li> <li>• Opening of a research chair dedicated to entrepreneurship_ (2007)</li> <li>• Creation of a permanent monitoring agency on entrepreneurship in Europe (2008)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a third-year option for entrepreneurship (2017)</li> <li>• Publication of the French business survey indicator on entrepreneurship (2009)</li> <li>• Partnerships with 2 engineering schools to provide entrepreneurial training courses (2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of the MSc in Entrepreneurship and sustainable Innovation (2018)</li> </ul>
<b>Research</b>						
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First professorship in entrepreneurship (1974)</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a student association called Incube Inside, helping ESCP students to develop their business activities_ (2009)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships with 2 engineering schools to provide entrepreneurial training courses (2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-4 teachers involved in entrepreneurship teaching and research (2011)</li> </ul>
<b>Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a new motto to commemorate the 173th anniversary of the school: ESCP, a business school created by entrepreneurs, for entrepreneurs (1994)</li> <li>• French economist Jean-Baptiste Say is introduced as the "creator of ESCP" on the school first website (1997)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renaming of the school most prestigious amphitheater in honor of "Jean-Baptiste Say, the first economist who conceptualized entrepreneurship" (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship award attributed each year to the best business creation projects developed by a student (2005)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of the Annual Entrepreneur's Day (2009)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renaming of the Entrepreneurship Chair in Jean-Baptiste Say Institute (2017)</li> </ul>
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of the Best French Business Plan award (2008)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of the Entrepreneurship Festival_ (2013)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Jean-Baptiste Say's figure on the school's bicentennial logo (2018)</li> </ul>

Author's own elaboration.

companies—had become more difficult.<sup>58</sup> To support the entrepreneurial orientation of its curriculum and its research policy, ESCP relied on new resources: the recruitment of entrepreneurship professors (whose number grew from one in 1974 to thirty-four in 2011), the opening of an incubator (2003), as well as the establishment of partnerships with engineering schools geared toward entrepreneurship (2006). As a result, the organizational communications of ESCP reflect the growing weight of entrepreneurship in the school: many events have been set up—festivals, awards—while, symbolically, the figure of Jean-Baptiste Say, the neoclassical economist whose work on entrepreneurship is famous, is increasingly associated with ESCP (Table 3).

To sum up, from 1969 to 2019, ESCP diversified its curricula toward specialist management, leadership, and entrepreneurship studies. These changes forced the school to increase the number of permanent professors fifty-two times from 1969 to 2019; during the same period, the school budget increased sixty-eight times, and the school self-financing increased by 140 percent. The self-financing ratio represents the portion of financing requirements that can be met by cash flows from the school's operating activities. In parallel, the number of students increased seven times (see Table 1). The increase was related to demographics: the number of students as a whole in France increased ninefold between 1960 (310,000 students) and 2018 (2.7 million students). However, there was also a political reason for this situation: the French state pursued a voluntarist policy in the 1960s and 1970s to increase the number of students because, at the time, the development of higher education was considered necessary for economic growth.<sup>59</sup> Finally, an economic reason must be mentioned here: the increase in the number of students was a response to the growing demands of managers, leaders, and entrepreneurs. Managers represented 4 percent of the working population in France in 1969, 9 percent in 1984, 12 percent in 1993, 14 percent in 2003, and 18 percent in 2018. This continuous increase represents the creation of tens of thousands of jobs per year.<sup>60</sup> ESCP took advantage of this situation by increasing the numbers of its students and training courses.

### Discussion: The Driving Forces behind the Evolution of a Business School's Curricula

Now that I have unveiled the history of ESCP, it is necessary to discuss in-depth the factors leading to the growth of this business school's

58. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

59. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*, 73.

60. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

curricula. Six categories of actors and as many processes have been identified, as shown in *Figure 2* and analyzed in the following subsections.

### *Corporate Influence on the School Curricula*

My case confirms that French business schools, like ESCP, were connected to certain professional fields and, thus, designed their curricula with the interests of businesspeople in mind. Firm participation in the school curricula is thus reflected in the creation of professionally oriented programs and educational tools (see *Figure 2*).

ESCP, like other French business schools, created new programs in collaboration with companies. Corporations needed their executives to develop new skills, and executive education could aid corporations to transform themselves by training cross-sections of their managers. This paved the way for the creation of tailor-made programs.<sup>61</sup> For instance, at the request of the alumni and firms, the administration adapted its curricula. In 1989 ESCP created “year off” internships to allow students to interrupt their schooling for one year to work in a company, and it created special tracks for students with apprenticeship contracts that alternate training with job placements. To guarantee that programs meet both customer requirements and academic standards of the school, company-specific programs select the requests for proposal that are in line with the school’s academic standards. For instance, at ESCP, an academic committee was created in 2008 for the executive MBA program. The participants are the dean, the director of the program, professors in charge of main courses, student representatives, graduate representatives, and contacts at partner firms. The main objective of this committee is to contribute to the evolution of the executive MBA program by adapting its content and design to the expectations of the corporate world and to the new trends in management. Participants systematically fill in evaluations at the end of each session. Once a year, they decide the elective courses list with the professors in charge of the core courses.

Firm participants directly inspired the educational tools. For example, the ESCP’s trading room opened in 1997 thanks to the school’s financial and skills partnership with Reuters, the world leader in real-time information. The objective in creating this life-size trading room was to “allow students to put themselves in the same working conditions as a trader so that they would be more operational the day they enter a real trading room.”<sup>62</sup>

61. Barsoux, *INSEAD*, 115.

62. ESCP, *Rapport d’autoévaluation EQUIS*, 1997, 1892/W/38, PCC Archives.

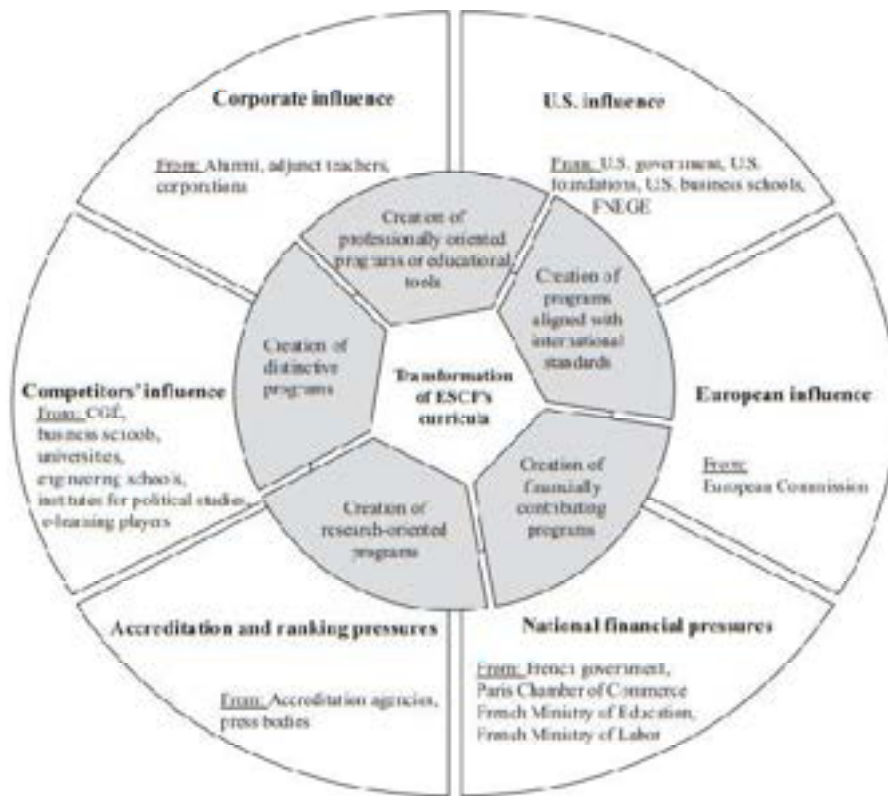


Figure 2 Transformation of ESCP's curricula.

Author's own elaboration.

This case study shows that the managerial orientation of the school's programs is a consequence of the spread of managerialism in every sector of the modern economy. In the nonprofit sector, managerialism has become a by-word for both effectiveness and efficiency.<sup>63</sup> Thus, one of the core concerns of ESCP is the training of managers at all levels and for both the private and public sectors. In this context, business schools like ESCP must ensure that their pedagogical contents and skill development programs meet the needs of the market and firms.<sup>64</sup> They also should build political legitimacy by reorienting their missions toward social service. Indeed, business schools face intense political pressures to demonstrate their ability to increase the number of startups, create new employment opportunities, and contribute to firms' growth and internationalization.<sup>65</sup>

63. McKiernan and Wilson, "Global Mimicry."

64. Starkov and Tiratsoo, *Business School and the Bottom Line*.

65. Radu Lefebvre and Redien-Collet, "Achieving Legitimacy."

### U.S. Influence on School Curricula

My case confirms that, after the World War II, the United States had a significant influence on European business schools as this country was considered the most advanced society in the West.<sup>66</sup> Since the 1960s, ESCP progressively adopted some international standards (see Figure 2), and more particularly U.S. standards in terms of core values (e.g., the case method, theoretical research published in academic peer-reviewed journals); recruitment faculty (e.g., international professors with doctorates); and program portfolio (e.g., executive programs, full-time and part-time MBA programs).

As noted earlier, at ESCP, the case method and executive programs were launched by Vigier after he visited seven U.S. business schools in 1968, and that he graduated from *Centre de préparation aux affaires*, which was inspired by Harvard Business School (HBS). Other U.S. standards were introduced by Scaringella, who also studied at HBS in the 1970s, thanks to the FNEGE. These international standards were retained by his successors, many of whom were familiar with the American-style management training, since a former dean (Koch, 2014) obtained his MBA at INSEAD, and the current dean (Bournois, since 2014) completed his MBA at Aston University. In this regard, the ESCP case confirms that, following the Americanization of management education, business schools tend to adopt similar programs, processes, and structures.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, my findings suggest that for ESCP, the U.S. influence occurred not directly by U.S. foundations but by intermediary French organizations (e.g., FNEGE) or individual actors who were trained in the United States or by American standards, such as the MBA (e.g., Vigier, Scaringella, Koch, and Bournois).<sup>68</sup> It is significant to note that before the arrival of Scaringella in 1999, ESCP had never been headed by a director holding a management degree. The majority of those who led the school between 1819 and 1999 had degrees in law or economics, or even in history, but not in management.<sup>69</sup>

However, this case confirms previous studies about the limitations of the U.S. influence. Gemelli points out that while America was indeed instrumental, there was also hybridization of and resistance to U.S. methods.<sup>70</sup> For example, in the 1970s, ESCP adopted some elements of the American model of management education, such as the

66. Cooke and Kumar, "US Philanthropy"; Engwell, "Anatomy of Management Education."

67. Kodeih and Greenwood, "Responding to Institutional Complexity."

68. Cooke and Kumar, "US Philanthropy"; McGlade, "Big Push."

69. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

70. Gemelli, "From Imitation to Competitive Cooperation."

case method and executive education. It also rejected two main features of the U.S. model: teaching entirely in English, moving into a modern campus (in this case, to the outskirts of the capital) with all the services necessary for teaching, research, sports, and leisure. Gemelli also points out that some elements of the U.S. model were adopted but in the local context. This refers particularly to the school's first MBA, which was launched in 1993 as a part-time program. Compared with U.S. standards, it had a shorter timeframe (that is, one year), students had less professional experience (between one and two years), and more than 80 percent of classes were taught in French.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, this MBA was not a simple duplication of the American MBA, but a French MBA adapted to its environment. This example illustrates the selective appropriations of American methods rather than a process of mechanical imitation. Indeed, at ESCP, the MBA has not become the flagship product of the school; rather, that remains the Master in Management. In 2018, the latter represented 3,074 students out of 5,573 (55 percent) and almost 800 graduates out of 2,100 (38 percent).

My findings confirm that, given the difference in scale, available resources, and cultural environment, the U.S. influence did not lead to an undisputed predominance of the university-based graduate business school model.<sup>72</sup> The ESCP, like most business schools worldwide, responded to the forces of globalization,<sup>73</sup> and not exclusively to U.S. standards. ESCP did so by (1) merging with national competitors (e.g., with EAP in 1999); (2) by investing in campus locations in foreign countries (e.g., in London and Turin in 2004; in Warsaw in 2015); and (3) by forging partnerships with foreign business schools (e.g., with HEC Montréal in 2018). At ESCP, Americanization did not result in a "carbon copy" transfer. Empirically, and following Gemelli, I find the concept of Americanization should be replaced by that of hybridization, which implies a process of translation from one context to another, not a mechanical transfer.<sup>74</sup>

### *The European Influence on the School Curricula*

With the independence of the last French colonies in the 1960s, the French economy looked to its neighboring countries, which emphasized the importance of a common European market. At the same time, the growth of Europe as a major economic bloc (customs duties in the Common Market were abolished in 1968) created a demand for people trained in management with an understanding of languages and

71. Gemelli, "From Imitation to Competitive Cooperation."

72. Engwall, Kipping, and Üsdiken, "Public Science Systems."

73. Hommel and Thomas, "Research on Business Schools," 23.

74. Gemelli, "From Imitation to Competitive Cooperation."



countries other than their own. The euphoria following the establishment of the Single European Market in 1992 boosted the need for cross-border managers and intensified demands for linguistic and cultural training.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, in 1998, the Bologna process initiated a movement to bring European higher education institutions closer to the bachelor's-master's-doctorate standard (see Figure 2). This resulted in the standardization of the educational system at European universities and the harmonization of study in terms of curricula, syllabi, and course credits.

ESCP gradually incorporated this Europeanization; for example, it introduced the study of European regulations into the school curriculum for accounting and law as early as the 1970s. In the early 1980s, it created finance and marketing courses related to the European market. In 1989 ESCP divided its school year into semesters rather than terms to make the school compatible with partner universities in Europe. It increased the number of its European partner universities from approximately ten in the 1970s to around twenty in the 1980s and to roughly thirty in the 1990s. A powerful event for ESCP was the fall of the iron curtain in the early 1990s, and it took advantage of the opening up of the former countries of the communist bloc to offer management training adapted to the specifics of these former socialist countries.<sup>76</sup> Following the Bologna process, ESCP implemented a doctoral program in 2003 and a bachelor program in 2015. This led ESCP to develop, alongside its French Specialized Masters, more European master's programs, such as the Master of Science for Executive Education. This made the school portfolio's not only readable but also comparable across the continent. ESCP continued to evolve its training to meet European expectations. It realized that management education could attract non-French students, which is why it remodeled its grande école program as a Master in Management in 2003, created a European seminar in 2009, and opened new campuses in London, Turin, and Warsaw. Other Elite European business schools like ESCP—INSEAD, London Business School, International Institute for Management Development, and HEC Paris—now also offer approaches to global management education that respect European traditions, such as action learning, practice engaged research, customized executive education, and a focus on international activities.<sup>77</sup>

The ESCP case study confirms that the Europeanization of higher education created institutional pressure on business schools.<sup>78</sup> In this

75. Barsoux, *INSEAD*.

76. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

77. Hommel and Thomas, "Research on Business Schools," 8.

78. Engwall, Kipping, and Üsdiken, "Public Science Systems."

sense, my work somewhat agrees with Kaplan, who found that the Europeanization of business schools started in the late 1990s with the EQUIS accreditation, which enabled the "(re) emancipation from the domination of U.S.-style business schools."<sup>79</sup> However, my study shows that Europeanization was accomplished much earlier—in the 1970s. ESCP, because of its cultural and geographical proximity to the European market, counterbalanced the influence of the American model with the specificities of its market. European authorities also encouraged certain teaching disciplines. For instance, numerous official EU documents called for both fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among its citizens and for creating business and economic growth.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, ESCP, like many business schools, increased the number of its entrepreneurship programs. The case of ESCP confirms that the Europeanization of business education was not a passing fashion but a logical response to growing competitiveness in France and Europe.<sup>81</sup> This economic argument must be supplemented by a cultural one. Indeed, Kaplan shows that the Europeanization of business schools in Europe was both an economic response to the construction in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century and the translation of a cultural singularity that business schools on the continent have expressed since the nineteenth century.<sup>82</sup> As Kaplan points out, European business schools have historical peculiarities compared with their counterparts in the United States, such that, since the nineteenth century, European management has taken a cross-cultural, societal management approach based on interdisciplinary principles. These particularities are illustrated in the case of ESCP, as Kaplan notes: the school's curriculum is based on cross-cultural education (e.g., students of all programs pursue their studies in a minimum of two countries); the school requires meeting societal objectives (e.g., professors are asked to integrate these into each of their courses); and the school promotes interdisciplinarity. It accomplishes that last through its humanities and liberal arts programs while encouraging double degrees with partner universities specialized in areas other than management.<sup>83</sup>

#### *National Financial Pressure*

Since the late 1960s, ESCP's financial needs have dramatically increased, including to build a permanent faculty body; to carry out

79. Kaplan. "European Management," 531.

80. The Lisbon Treaty, §26.

81. Kodeih and Greenwood, "Responding to Institutional Complexity."

82. Kaplan. "European Management"; Kaplan, "Towards a Theory of European Business Culture."

83. Kaplan. "Towards a Theory of European Business Culture."

international research; and to create language laboratories, printing services, computer rooms, digital libraries, and business incubators. Meanwhile, the PCC's monetary contributions to ESCP have gradually decreased. The latter accounted for 75 percent of the school's budget in 1960, 35 percent in 1996, and only 11 percent in 2018. According to Dean Bournois, the PCC's contribution will represent 0 percent of the school's budget in 2022.<sup>84</sup>

That is why ESCP created customized programs that financially contribute to its budget (see Figure 2), such as the customized programs for enterprises. The school also has created more than fifteen chairs since 2003. Each chair receives funding from companies, ranging from a few hundred thousand to a few million euros, and each chair is held by a professor who guides the department's objectives and follows guidelines for creating new courses. For example, the Deloitte chair, created in 2018, is dedicated to circular economy and sustainable business models. It culminated in the launch of a course in circular economy taught in the Master in Management, in the International Sustainability Management MSc, in the executive MDA, and in several different MSc programs.<sup>85</sup> To date, all programs—except the Master in Management—cover all their own production costs plus generate a profit that contributes to the school's general overhead. Bournois says that in the near future, ESCP should launch a Doctorate in Business Administration to diversify its sources of revenue and increase its competitiveness.<sup>86</sup>

Indeed, the ESCP case study confirms previous research that financial pressures influence business schools' curricula.<sup>87</sup> It follows a generalization of the findings of Hommel and Thomas: French consular business schools, like business schools embedded in public universities, are facing trickle-down effects resulting from fiscally constrained governments deregulating higher education systems.<sup>88</sup> First, this situation results in the switch from subsidized to tuition-fee-based management education. ESCP has multiplied its resources by accepting donations, creating programs that contribute financially, signing various research contracts with private firms, and increasing tuition fees. Second, this situation leads to greater prioritization of entrepreneurial initiatives, like the establishment of new chairs funded by private firms.

84. Interview with Bournois, dean of ESCP (2014–today), Paris, September 25, 2018.

85. ESCP website, <https://www.escpeurope.eu/circular-economy/sustainable-business-models-chair>.

86. Interview with Bournois.

87. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*.

88. Hommel and Thomas, "Research on Business Schools," 22.

ESCP is also a reminder that financial pressures do not necessarily imply the wholesale remodeling of school curricula. Other funding solutions have been found, but they do not affect the school curricula. For example, in 2005, the ESCP Alumni Association launched a foundation and conducted fundraising campaigns. From 1960 to 2018, like other French business schools, ESCP has dramatically increased its tuition fees. Over that period, ESCP increased them fivefold, and in 2018 tuition fees represented 75 percent of the school's budget.<sup>89</sup> Finally, in 2014, the French government created a new legal status for ESCP and some other *Établissement d'enseignement supérieur consulaire* (French consular schools), which encourages private investors to buy shares in business schools to make them completely self-financed. This status confers on the consular schools a legal personality and an operating flexibility like that of public limited companies, although they are nonprofit organizations. As a result, the schools can use programs' earnings and fundraising to pursue their educational plans.

#### *Accreditation and Ranking Pressures*

This case also demonstrates how the spread of accreditation and ranking processes influenced the pedagogical design and quality of courses.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, the quest for accreditation forced ESCP to redesign its programs to be more integrated. For instance, in 2002, there were six programs in the ESCP MBA portfolio: the full-time MBA in Paris, the Executive MBA in Paris with a Casablanca track, the Executive MBA in Madrid, the Central European MBA in Berlin, and the Global MBA operated in partnership with Purdue University in America. These programs were developed between ESCP and EAP. However, they varied greatly in nature and size, and were small in terms of enrollment. This was a problem because these MBA programs ranked poorly compared with international benchmarks, and thus it was a priority to overhaul this portfolio. In 2003, the European Executive MBA was launched with the same curriculum as the Paris Executive MBA, but it was delivered in English. The Madrid Executive MBA and the Casablanca track were eventually ended, and ESCP withdrew from the Global MBA. In 2006, the school combined the Paris Executive MBA, the European Executive MBA, and the full-time MBA into a single program with different core course tracks offered in Paris, London, and Turin. The school's Executive MBA progressed from thirty-seventh place in 2005 to twenty-second in October 2007 in the *Financial Times*; in 2017, it ranked in the tenth spot.

89. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*.

90. Hedmo, "Rule-making."

Accreditation and ranking processes also influenced increased management research in the ESCP agenda (see Figure 2). Before the 1990s, ESCP did not take rankings and accreditations seriously. When the latter became a sign of program quality for prospective students, corporate recruiters, and other stakeholders,<sup>91</sup> ESCP moved to become a more research-based school and to produce its own knowledge specifically for management practitioners.<sup>92</sup> This trend is true for all business schools because “research provides a direct competitive advantage in supplying leading-edge content for the faculty to dispense. It also works indirectly as a way of attracting outstanding people and maintaining the brand.”<sup>93</sup> As a result, a criterion for hiring and promoting management professors is publication in academic journals.<sup>94</sup> However, the growing importance of research in teachers’ agendas as well as the associated financial costs are controversial.<sup>95</sup>

My case also reveals the administrators of business schools have a challenge to not only to be part of the labeling process of the accreditation agencies but also to be included in the evaluation processes of competitive business schools. For instance, in 2008, for the first time, a former ESCP dean—Morand (2006–2012)—was part of the peer review team of European Foundation for Management Development for the attribution of the label EQUIS for another French business school.<sup>96</sup> This allowed ESCP to contribute to the development of standards in its market. Because of this, ESCP is now an active player in the accreditation process. My case, following McKiernan and Wilson, shows that ESCP deans understood that its rankings and accreditations would lead to its elite status internationally.<sup>97</sup> They did this in a manner that preserved its status as a *grande école*. That is why, even though ESCP is accredited and ranked among the best business schools in the world, it will not replace its status of a French *grande école* with the globalized status of an international “business school.” It should be noted that *grandes écoles* are not the opposite of international business schools, as Kadeih and Greenwood claim, but that they are complementary.<sup>98</sup>

91. Takagi and De Carlo, “Ephemeral National Model.”

92. Engwall, Kipping, and Ösdiken, “Public Science Systems,” 341.

93. Barsoux, *INSEAD*, 140.

94. Crainer and Dearlove, *Gravy Training*.

95. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*.

96. EQUIS, Euromed, Report of the Peer Review Team, June 2008, ESCP Archives.

97. McKiernan and Wilson, “Global Mimicry.”

98. Kadeih and Greenwood, “Responding to Institutional Complexity.”

### *Competitors' Influence*

Since the end of the 1960s, ESCP has faced a tougher academic environment. Some U.S. business schools have internationalized and new competitors have sprung up in Europe, particularly Business Administration Institutes and management faculties in France. Additionally, engineering schools became serious competitors to business schools,<sup>99</sup> and institutes for political studies started to train future leaders of the public and private sectors. Now, e-learning programs compete directly with in-person business schools for executive education. In terms of training, these e-programs can respond flexibly, and generally at a lower cost, to the changing expectations of companies. Executive education competition is also fierce from programs run in-house by human resource teams and by consultancies; and, of course, from other European business schools, including HEC Paris, ESSEC, London Business School, ESADE, and Instituto de Empresa.

ESCP needed to distinguish itself nationally and internationally from all of these competitors, and it did so by creating differentiated programs (see Figure 2). As noted above, in 1993, ESCP created the first part-time MBA in France, and in 2018, it launched the first academic training in Europe to address LGBT+ specific issues. Most competing schools also started to distinguish their programs beginning in the 2000s. ESSEC in Paris launched a "global MBA with a major in luxury brand management" to profit from Paris' famous fashion industry, and its business school in Marseille launched an Executive Maritime MBA to enhance its port establishment. Likewise, Toulouse Business School launched an Aerospace MBA in 2000 and a Specialized Master in Air Transport Management in 2002 because of its proximity to the established airline industry in the region. Therefore, despite a high similarity among French business schools' curricula, some regional divergence remains.<sup>100</sup>

This case study confirms that competition does not exclude cooperation. French business schools work together to recruit the brightest students; for example, in 1990, ESCP, HEC Paris, and ESSEC created a common exam system that is still used today.<sup>101</sup> ESCP also worked with foreign business schools to launch joint programs; in 2018, it signed an agreement with HEC Montréal to allow students from the two institutions to earn a dual master's degree.

In summary, the curricula of a business school like ESCP does not evolve in a vacuum; rather, it occurs through numerous influences. For

99. Passant, *À l'Origine des Écoles de Commerce*.

100. Takagi and De Carlo, "Ephemeral National Model."

101. Blanchard, *Les Écoles Supérieures de Commerce*.

example, the trend of including management, leadership, and entrepreneurship in school training is based on key internal and external factors, actors, and processes, and the latter are closely linked and reinforce each other. Financial pressures created the need for corporate relationships so business schools can generate income. Across Europe, national evaluation systems have linked academic performances of educational institutions to percentages of public funding, and the increasing costs of rankings and lowered amounts of public funding have bolstered these relationships.<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion

This article makes an empirical contribution to understanding the institutional development of European business schools. In the case of ESCP, the lack of legitimacy in the nineteenth century led it to focus on teaching occupations that were important economically and socially, so it concentrated on educating younger pupils to be book-keepers or generalist or specialized businessmen. However, starting in 1969, ESCP diversified its teaching portfolio to include leaders, managers, and entrepreneurs. This occurred because these three groups were more and more considered the driving forces of economic growth.

This article also contributes to business history by showing how the expectations of the wider society and the internal constraints of ESCP (e.g., state supervision, budgetary contributions from the PCC) influenced what it taught, and it shows what caused ESCP's curricula to evolve from the late 1960s to the present. More precisely, it suggests that six factors (see Figure 2) provoked changes in its human and structural resources and in its teaching and research curricula. These elements contributed to the transformation of ESCP, which evolved from a vocational school—that is, preparing students for specific trades related to business and accounting—to a ranked professional school—that is, helping students develop the skills and acumen transferable to any type of organization. Internal changes included hiring more experienced professors and connecting with alumni, and external forces included building relationships with corporations and private foundations, and working with accreditation agents or press bodies. There is no sharp distinction between these external and internal forces. For instance, the school deans (internal actors) participate in evaluation committees within accreditation agencies (external actors). Moreover, external forces do not necessarily directly affect the school's curricula:

102. Engwall, Kipping, and Üsdiken, "Public Science Systems," 339–340; Tiratsoo, "'Americanization' of Management Education in Britain."

intermediate actors might be necessary. For instance, in the 1970s the FNEGE offered U.S. foundations and business schools the chance to influence decisions made at ESCP.

Finally, like Pettigrew, my findings confirm that global trends and political, economic, cultural, and institutional pressures at the level of nation-states led to the convergence of European business schools, which nonetheless maintain their own diverse local patterns.<sup>103</sup> Similar to Gemelli, this study finds how, in the face of the Americanization of management education in the second part of the twentieth century, ESCP chose selective imitation; that is, it translated American patterns into its own institutional *grande école* culture.<sup>104</sup> Its curricula adapted only certain American influences while it rejected others in order to maintain its national characteristics. ESCP does not aim to replace its French status of *grande école* with the globalized status of international business school because, and as pointed out above, the two logics are complementary.

This article provides exciting new directions for the study of business schools. First, the organization of curricula vary depending on factors such as institutional traditions, academic culture, and internal resources.<sup>105</sup> Thus, more comparative and longitudinal research examining the variety of training within business schools is needed. It would be interesting to research the development of business schools in particular countries that, like Germany, have resisted foreign models.<sup>106</sup> It would be equally important to study countries that were previously colonized by Western powers and which, after independence, drew inspiration from foreign models or developed their own models. Second, future research should carry out large sample studies to identify similar or different patterns of development for business schools' curricula. It would be worthwhile to study the modes of operation of business schools developed outside the West, in contexts where prevailing socioeconomic paradigms differ from those in Europe or North America. The case of business schools in China, which were opened in an ideological climate strongly imbued with communism but are now starting to seek Western accreditations such as EQUIS, AACSB and AMBA, would be a significant subject of in-depth research. The internationalization of the curricula of business schools in the West is based on more than just American and European influences.<sup>107</sup> Third,

103. Pettigrew, "Building a Research Agenda," 299.

104. Gemelli, "American Influence"; Gemelli, "From Imitation to Competitive Cooperation."

105. Larsen, "Cultures of Content."

106. Engwall and Zamagni, *Management Education: Locke, Management and Higher Education since 1940*.

107. Hunter, "Occidental Colonization of the Mind."



research is needed on how certain religions or philosophies—such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Islam—as well as certain Asian authors—such as Sun Tzu—have impacted the teachings of business schools in the West.<sup>108</sup> These influences are insufficiently known, particularly regarding their characteristics, actors, and evolution. Therefore, I suggest studying more precisely how non-Western factors are embodied in the curricula of Western business schools, which actors are involved, and whether and how these influences affect the transplantation, adaptation, or resistance phenomena.

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The organizational identity of business schools:  
Toward an entrepreneurial redefinition?  
A longitudinal case study of a European business school

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Un nombre croissant d'écoles de commerce redéfinissent leur identité organisationnelle dans un sens entrepreneurial. Quelles sont les causes et les conséquences de cette transformation ? Cet article présente une étude de cas longitudinale consacrée à l'évolution de l'identité organisationnelle d'une école de commerce européenne des années 1970 jusqu'à ce jour. Il montre que les processus de transformation de l'identité organisationnelle selon une perspective entrepreneuriale constituent des construits historiques relevant parfois de stratégies émergentes. Notre étude révèle dans quelle mesure ces processus de transformation peuvent contribuer discursivement et factuellement à l'orientation entrepreneuriale de ce genre d'écoles.

— *Mots clés* : Éducation et pédagogie entrepreneuriale, identité organisationnelle, histoire, école de commerce, entrepreneurialisme

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**A** growing number of business schools are redefining their organizational identity in an entrepreneurial sense. What are the causes and consequences of this transformation? This article presents a longitudinal case study of the evolution of the organizational identity of a European business school from the 1970s onward. It shows that the processes of transforming organizational identity through an entrepreneurial perspective are historical constructs sometimes arising from emerging strategies. Our study reveals the extent to which these transformation processes contribute discursively and factually to the entrepreneurial orientation of this kind of school.

— *Keywords:* entrepreneurship education and pedagogy, organizational identity, history, business school, entrepreneurialism

## Introduction

Dans leur récente étude réalisée auprès de trois-mille universités réparties dans une cinquantaine de pays, Sieger, Fueglistaller, Zellweger et Braun (2018) constatent que 9% des étudiants reconnaissent avoir l'intention de devenir entrepreneurs directement à l'issue de leurs études, tandis que 35% d'entre eux envisagent de le devenir dans les cinq ans qui suivent leur sortie du système universitaire. Selon ces auteurs, la tendance de ces statistiques est à la stabilité depuis 2013. Les ambitions entrepreneuriales de ces étudiants sont d'ailleurs soutenues par les écoles de commerce et universités qui, à travers le monde, enseignent aujourd'hui l'entrepreneuriat à tous les niveaux et au sein de différents cadres institutionnels (Valerio, Parton et Robb, 2014 ; Choi et Markham, 2019). À ce titre, l'entrepreneuriat constitue désormais un axe de formation incontournable des programmes des établissements d'enseignement supérieur (Rehn, Erännback, Carsrud et Lindahl, 2013 ; Princeton Review, 2013).

Historiquement, pourtant, former des entrepreneurs – ou, à tout le moins, enseigner des compétences entrepreneuriales – ne faisait pas partie de la mission des établissements d'enseignement supérieur, et notamment des écoles de commerce quand celles-ci ont ouvert leurs portes au dix-neuvième siècle ou au début du vingtième siècle. Ces dernières ont progressivement intégré ce nouvel axe de formation à partir de la fin du vingtième siècle en mettant en œuvre des voies de promotion de l'entrepreneuriat en leurs murs (Centobelli, Cerchione, Esposito et Kashav, 2019), à l'instar de la Stanford University aux États-Unis (Etzkowitz, Germain-Alamartine, Keel, Kumar, Smith et Albats, 2019), de l'Université de Warwick en Angleterre ou encore de l'Université de Twente aux Pays-Bas (Clark, 2001 ; Volkmann, 2004).

Toutefois, cette trajectoire historique est rarement reconnue par les principales intéressées. Nombre d'écoles de commerce prétendent ainsi sur leur site Internet que la formation des entrepreneurs a été au cœur de leurs préoccupations éducatives depuis leur ouverture (Passant et Arreola, 2019). La littérature a montré que la diversification entrepreneuriale constitue une réponse relativement récente de ces établissements à la demande des étudiants, des entreprises mais aussi des pouvoirs publics désireux que l'esprit d'entreprise soit promu comme comportement désirable et réalisable (Kjefsten, Fayolle, Guerrero, Mian,

Urbano et Wright, 2013). Stimulées par ces attentes, un nombre croissant d'écoles de commerce à travers le monde font de l'entrepreneuriat un attribut attractif de leur offre éducative, au même titre que l'innovation ou le digital, tandis que quelques-unes en ont même fait l'un des principaux moteurs de leur différenciation stratégique. À ce jour, l'Université Bocconi en Italie, l'Instituto de Empresa en Espagne ou EMLYON Business School en France accordent ainsi une place centrale à l'entrepreneuriat dans leur formation (Redien-Collot et Vidal, 2011). Certains établissements ont même, de leur côté, fait de l'entrepreneuriat le fondement de leur identité organisationnelle comme le Babson College aux États-Unis (Choi et Markham, 2019) ou l'Université Laval au Canada (Menzies, 2009).

Si nombre d'études récentes mettent l'accent sur la transformation entrepreneuriale des écoles de commerce au niveau opérationnel, via les évolutions opérées en termes d'enseignements, de transferts de technologies ou de collaborations avec leurs parties prenantes (Klotz et Wright, 2019), aucune recherche n'a encore été effectuée pour comprendre quand, comment et pourquoi certaines écoles ont également transformé leur identité organisationnelle dans un sens entrepreneurial ; et avec quelles conséquences, potentiellement, sur leur organisation. En fait, l'aspect identitaire de la transformation entrepreneuriale des écoles de commerce semble avoir été négligé par la littérature. Pourtant, le sujet n'est pas neutre dans la mesure où, dans un contexte d'intervention devenu hyperconcurrentiel (Fayolle, Lamine, Mian et Phan, 2020), la construction d'une identité organisationnelle entrepreneuriale pourrait permettre à ces écoles de renforcer leur légitimité et leur notoriété (McKiernan et Wilson, 2014). En outre, comme l'ont récemment souligné plusieurs chercheurs (Amdam, 2019 ; Lubinski et Wadhvani, 2019), rares sont encore les études qui adoptent une perspective historique pour identifier les forces et les acteurs qui jouent un rôle dans la transformation entrepreneuriale de ces établissements ; que celle-ci s'exprime aux niveaux opérationnel ou identitaire.

Dans ce contexte, le présent article vise à répondre à la problématique suivante : quelles sont les causes et les conséquences de la transformation entrepreneuriale de l'identité organisationnelle des écoles de commerce ? Il s'agit de comprendre quelles sont les conditions d'émergence d'une telle transformation identitaire au cours du temps, puis d'en analyser les implications pratiques au sein des écoles elles-mêmes. En précision, il convient d'identifier les facteurs qui contribuent à la construction puis aux évolutions de l'identité organisationnelle entrepreneuriale des écoles de commerce ainsi que les influences qu'une telle identité peut exercer sur leurs activités voire sur leurs modes de fonctionnement.

Pour traiter cette problématique, cet article s'appuie sur une approche qualitative reposant sur une étude de cas historique et longitudinale. Concrètement, nous analysons l'élaboration puis l'évolution de l'identité entrepreneuriale d'une école de commerce européenne, à savoir ESCP Business School (ESCP BS) depuis les années 1970. L'article est organisé comme suit. La première section présente la littérature sur la place accrue de l'entrepreneuriat dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur, et en particulier dans les écoles de commerce, ainsi que les enjeux identitaires qui pèsent actuellement sur ces dernières. La deuxième section expose notre méthodologie de recherche en justifiant le cas retenu puis en détaillant les sources exploitées ainsi que leurs modalités d'analyse. La troisième section analyse l'évolution entrepreneuriale de ESCP BS sur les plans éducatif et identitaire des années 1970 à 2020. La dernière section est consacrée à une discussion de nos résultats.

## 1. Revue de littérature : identité entrepreneuriale et écoles de commerce

La présente revue de littérature revient d'abord sur les principales étapes historiques qui ont favorisé l'introduction puis l'essor des formations en entrepreneuriat dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur et en particulier dans les écoles de commerce (1.1.). Elle détaille ensuite comment ces dernières, sur le plan fonctionnel, sont devenues progressivement plus entrepreneuriales (1.2.). Enfin, l'aspect identitaire de ce phénomène est abordé (1.3.).

### 1.1. Genèse et essor de l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur

À ce jour, la littérature a montré que, jusqu'au milieu du vingtième siècle inclusivement, l'entrepreneuriat n'était pas enseigné dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur : les universités promouvaient alors leurs missions traditionnelles de formation et de recherche (Schmitt, 2005 ; Kandt et Volkmann, 2006). L'enseignement en entrepreneuriat semble être apparu pour la première fois en Amérique du Nord. Il aurait été initialement introduit à la Harvard Business School en 1947 (Katz, 2003 ; Volkmann, 2004) avant de se diffuser progressivement aux États-Unis à partir des années 1970 (Vesper, 1982 ; Slaughter et Leslie, 1997). L'enseignement en entrepreneuriat y était d'abord dispensé sous la forme de cours insérés dans les programmes MBA, avant de faire l'objet de programmes dédiés. Aux États-Unis, c'est la University of Southern California qui, la première, a lancé en 1971 un MBA en entrepreneuriat (Kuratko, 2005). Les États-Unis ne sont cependant pas les seuls pionniers de cet enseignement : c'est également au Canada que sont apparues les toutes premières formations universitaires en entrepreneuriat, dès les années 1960, avant qu'elles ne se multiplient à partir des années 1970 et 1980 (Menzies, 2009). En Europe, la littérature a identifié le Royaume-Uni et les Pays-Bas comme les pionniers de l'introduction de l'entrepreneuriat comme discipline académique au sein des établissements d'enseignement supérieur, rapidement suivis par la Belgique et l'Allemagne (Kandt et Volkmann, 2006).

En France, ce sont les années 1970 qui, sur fond d'extinction des « Trente Glorieuses » et d'augmentation du chômage, voient les premiers établissements d'enseignement supérieur – et particulièrement les écoles de commerce – s'ouvrir à l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat (Fayolle, 2000). Comme le rappelle Verzat (2014a et 2014b), les deux chocs pétroliers de 1973 et de 1979 ont joué un rôle essentiel dans le développement des formations en entrepreneuriat parce qu'ils ont introduit dans la pensée économique un changement de paradigme favorable à l'esprit d'entreprendre. En effet, par leur ampleur, par leur durée et par leur imprévisibilité, les crises économiques de l'après-choc pétrolier ont appelé à la mise en place d'un nouveau mode de gestion susceptible de renouveler l'appareil de production pour réamorcer la croissance (Le Van-Lemesle, 1988). En cela, les crises économiques ont constitué un terrain fertile pour l'émergence de l'entrepreneuriat comme phénomène éducatif et social.

Dans la France des années 1970, toutefois, l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat n'émerge que dans quelques écoles pionnières – à ESCP BS, à HEC Paris, à l'ESSEC en formation initiale (Takagi et De Carlo, 2003 ; Passant, 2018b et 2020) ainsi qu'à l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Nice en formation continue (Albert, Bernasconi et Boucard, 1993). Cet enseignement y est amorcé par quelques individus novateurs (Verzat, 2014b :



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16). Comme le souligne Chambard (2013), à cette époque, les formations en entrepreneuriat sont relativement confidentielles car constituées au croisement des sciences de gestion – alors récemment reconnues comme constituant une discipline universitaire propre – et de politiques économiques inédites en matière d'incitation à la création d'entreprises. Ce n'est qu'à partir des années 1980, et surtout des années 1990, que ce type d'enseignement se généralise, quoique très progressivement, à un plus grand nombre d'écoles de commerce ainsi qu'à quelques écoles d'ingénieurs puis à quelques universités en France (Fayolle, 2000 : 84-87). À la fin des années 1990, l'entrepreneuriat s'érige en priorité de développement pour les pouvoirs publics français comme pour l'Union Européenne. De ce fait, en France, l'intérêt des établissements d'enseignement supérieur pour l'entrepreneuriat s'est fortement renforcé depuis lors, comme en témoigne la création de dispositifs dédiés sur certains campus universitaires – Maisons de l'Entrepreneuriat, PEPITE, PEE – avec le soutien du Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche (Verzat, 2014b ; Albertini, Faciani et Lameta, 2018).

En même temps, sur le plan des représentations sociales, la perception des carrières entrepreneuriales par les étudiants a été fortement réhabilitée par rapport à ce qu'elle était avant les années 1990 (Boissin, Chollet et Emin, 2008 ; Véron, 2011). Ce phénomène témoigne d'une évolution culturelle revalorisant graduellement la place de l'entrepreneur dans la société parallèlement à une prise de conscience politique du rôle que les établissements d'enseignement supérieur doivent exercer pour développer ce type d'enseignement (Fayolle, 1999). Aujourd'hui, en France, toutes les écoles de commerce proposant des formations en entrepreneuriat ; même si le modèle d'école intégralement vouée à l'enseignement de l'entrepreneuriat, incarné de 2004 à 2010 par Advancia Business School, ne s'est pas pérennié pour le moment (Redien-Collot et Vical, 2011)<sup>1</sup>. Le contexte de l'introduction puis de l'essor des formations en entrepreneuriat dans les écoles de commerce ayant été rappelé, il convient d'aborder comment ces dernières sont devenues progressivement plus entrepreneuriales (1.2.).

## 1.2. L'institutionnalisation du développement entrepreneurial des écoles de commerce

L'orientation entrepreneuriale des établissements d'enseignement supérieur a émergé au début des années 1980 (Schaeffer, 2019), initialement comme un concept novateur, avant de s'établir progressivement, depuis les années 2000, comme une norme que nombre d'institutions – particulièrement dans le domaine de la gestion mais pas seulement – tentent de suivre (Klofsten, Fayolle, Guerrero, Mian, Urbano et Wright, 2019 ; Etzkowitz, Germain-Alamartne, Keel, Kumar, Smith et Albats, 2019). Dans ces conditions, la formation des étudiants ainsi que la publication de recherches comme livrables traditionnels des établissements d'enseignement supérieur ont été complétées d'une troisième mission consistant à favoriser la création d'entreprises et l'animation des écosystèmes entrepreneuriaux (BPI, 2021 : 25). Du fait de cette troisième mission, les actions des établissements d'enseignement supérieur en faveur de l'entrepreneuriat se traduisent sous plusieurs formes

1. Cette école appartenait à la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de région Paris-Île-de-France, déjà en charge de HEC Paris, de l'ESSEC et de ESCP BS. En 2016, dans un contexte concurrentiel et budgétaire très tendu, la Chambre a décidé d'abandonner le modèle original incarné par Advancia Business School pour consacrer davantage de ressources aux trois autres écoles (Passant, 2019b : 651).

que sont la sensibilisation, la formation, la recherche et le conseil (Verstraete, 2000) auxquels peut être ajouté l'accompagnement de projets entrepreneuriaux (Dia, 2011). Ce dernier aspect se manifeste généralement par le soutien universitaire au transfert de technologies et aux start-ups, ou le développement d'incubateurs et de parcs scientifiques (Share, 2004 ; Link et Scott, 2005 ; Balconi, Brusoni et Orsenigo, 2010 ; Albertini, Fabiani et Lameta, 2018).

Dans le cadre de ces diverses opérations, Bronstein et Reihlen (2014) ont révélé l'existence de différents « profils entrepreneuriaux » adoptés par les universités et les écoles de commerce. Ainsi, certains établissements promeuvent le développement de l'innovation pour les entreprises, comme la Copenhagen Business School, d'autres davantage l'implémentation de recherches académiques en entrepreneuriat, comme la Stanford University ; tandis que d'autres établissements, telle l'Université de Waterloo, se consacrant surtout à développer des expertises techniques pour le marché du travail au niveau régional, ou bien pour des secteurs d'activités spécifiques, comme le propose la Twente University (Bronstein et Reihlen, 2014).

En plus d'assurer nombre d'activités d'enseignement, de recherche et d'accompagnement en faveur de l'entrepreneuriat, un nombre croissant d'établissements d'enseignement supérieur tendent à fonctionner de manière entrepreneuriale, que ce soit par la coordination amovible de leurs activités, par leurs régimes de gouvernance (Guerrero, Toledano et Urbano, 2011) ou encore par la construction de capacités dynamiques entrepreneuriales (Herrera, Guerrero et Urbano, 2018). Plus précisément, le fonctionnement plus entrepreneurial des universités et des écoles de commerce implique trois évolutions. La première est la professionnalisation des personnels en charge de ce fonctionnement – recrutement des enseignants, des chercheurs et des personnels administratifs, valorisation dans leur carrière des activités dédiées à l'entrepreneuriat, fidélisation de ces personnels sur ces fonctions (BPI, 2021 : 97-101). Si ces personnels assurent le fonctionnement entrepreneurial de l'établissement, ils doivent pour ce faire disposer de mentalités et de comportements entrepreneuriaux (Leih et Tæce, 2016 ; Fini, Rasmussen, Siegel et Wiklund, 2018). La deuxième évolution induite par l'orientation plus entrepreneuriale des universités et des écoles de commerce est la promotion, au sein de ces établissements, de modes de fonctionnement plus stratégiques, permettant de développer efficacement des liens avec leur environnement économique (Schaeffer, 2019). Cet enjeu implique l'instauration d'un style de management entrepreneurial (Guerrero, Urbano, Fayolle, Klofsten et Man, 2016 : 556) avec une culture de l'innovation mettant en avant les aspects positifs de l'entrepreneuriat pour déclencher, collectivement, un effet d'entraînement auprès des parties prenantes (BPI, 2021 : 202). Ce fonctionnement entrepreneurial s'institutionnalise ainsi de manière culturelle par le développement d'attitudes favorables à l'entrepreneuriat chez les étudiants comme chez les professeurs (Lihán, Urbano et Guerrero, 2011), grâce à la valorisation institutionnelle de modèles entrepreneuriaux par ces établissements (Venkataraman, 2004), ainsi que grâce à la construction par eux d'un système de récompenses pour agir en « entrepreneurs universitaires » (Landry, Amara et Rherrand, 2006). Dans ce contexte, se met en place une nouvelle culture organisationnelle centrée sur l'entrepreneuriat au point que certaines universités ou écoles de commerce revendiquent haut et fort leur contribution financière en matière de droits de propriété intellectuelle développés par leurs propres entrepreneurs (Zukn, 2012). Enfin, la troisième évolution induite par le fonctionnement plus entrepreneurial des universités et des écoles de commerce est l'instauration de nouveaux modèles économiques pour permettre à ces établissements d'investir dans des ressources humaines, physiques et techniques nécessaires à leur fonctionnement (Centobelli, Cerchione, Esposito et Kashav, 2019 ;

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BPI, 2021 : 203). Cette évolution économique implique pour elles de collaborer sur le temps long avec les entreprises privées, avec les administrations régionales ou locales, voire même avec leurs anciens étudiants (Gjerding, Wilderom, Cameron, Taylor et Scheunert, 2006) mais pas uniquement pour parvenir à l'équilibre budgétaire en diminuant le poids des charges d'exploitation mais pour intégrer la mission entrepreneuriale comme objectif stratégique à part entière (BPI, 2021 : 203).

Ce nouveau mode de fonctionnement plus entrepreneurial des établissements de formation n'est toutefois pas sans soulever des débats au sein de leurs communautés. Selon Schaeffer (2019), plusieurs débats se sont ainsi cristallisés parmi les communautés académiques, les acteurs industriels et les décideurs politiques quant aux implications résultant de cette transformation entrepreneuriale. Le premier débat porte sur le risque de faire dévier les établissements d'enseignement supérieur de leur finalité extra-économique en les réduisant à de simples producteurs de connaissances scientifiques utiles aux seules activités d'innovation (Gjerding, Wilderom, Cameron, Taylor et Scheunert, 2006 : 99 ; Schaeffer, 2019 : 91). Le deuxième débat porte sur le risque d'entrave à la libre circulation des connaissances au nom de la volonté de préserver la brevetabilité de certaines inventions (Murray et Stern, 2007 ; Schaeffer, 2019). Ensuite, l'impact de cette transformation entrepreneuriale sur le plan de charge des enseignants-chercheurs est également débattu, notamment pour ce qui concerne le risque pesant sur ces derniers d'être détournés de leurs activités d'enseignement et de recherche au profit d'activités managériales ou administratives en lien avec l'entrepreneuriat (Geuna, Salter, Stenmueller et Hoffman, 2004). Enfin, sur le plan culturel, la promotion de la mission entrepreneuriale peut présenter des difficultés d'implémentation dans certains établissements parfois idéologiquement indifférents voire hostiles à ce genre de démarche (Le Pontois, 2019 ; BPI, 2021 : 202).

Même si l'évolution entrepreneuriale des établissements d'enseignement supérieur fait parfois débat, elle est dans tous les cas déjà en partie amorcée et se traduit dans leurs activités d'enseignement, de recherche et d'accompagnement ou dans leurs modes de fonctionnement en matière de coordination de leurs activités, de régimes de gouvernance ou de modes de financement. Cette évolution est telle que sont apparus de nouveaux vocables tels que « université entrepreneuriale », « capitalisme académique », ou « entrepreneuriat académique », qui révèlent collectivement l'ampleur du cheminement accompli depuis les années 1970 (Dia, 2011). Les établissements d'enseignement supérieur peuvent ainsi être qualifiés d'« entrepreneuriaux » dans la mesure où ils cultivent l'esprit d'entreprendre en leur sein et incitent leurs personnels et parties prenantes à la prise de risque, voire même à l'exploitation à but lucratif de l'innovation (Clark, 1998). Dans ces conditions, ces établissements sont perçus comme des laboratoires pour l'entrepreneuriat (Van der Sijde, Ridder, Blaauw et Diensberg, 2008) assurant le transfert de technologie – par brevetage – ou par création de spin-offs et de start-ups – tout en formant de futurs entrepreneurs (Audretsch, 2012). L'accomplissement de cette mission entrepreneuriale implique que ces établissements deviennent plus entrepreneuriaux ; ce qui nécessite non seulement un changement organisationnel mais aussi une adaptation de leur culture (Rothaeme, Agung et Jiang, 2007). Selon Zukin (2012) cette situation traduirait un véritable changement de paradigme par lequel les établissements d'enseignement supérieur auraient abandonné leur statut traditionnel de « tours d'ivoire » au profit de celui de « plateformes entrepreneuriales ». Ce mouvement semble d'autant plus suivi par les universités et les écoles de commerce qu'avec la concurrence croissante sévissant au sein de l'enseignement supérieur de la gestion, de même qu'avec les pressions sur les ressources à leur disposition que ce soit en France ou

à l'étranger (Passant, 2018b), ces acteurs doivent prouver davantage que par le passé leur valeur ajoutée vis-à-vis de la société dans son ensemble (Gjerding, Wilderom, Cameron, Taylor et Scheunert, 2006 ; Gibb et Hannon, 2006). Cette situation explique donc leur intérêt croissant pour l'entrepreneuriat perçu comme une voie de rétablissement économique en même temps qu'un levier de régénération (Germain et Jacquemin, 2017). À présent, que l'aspect opérationnel de la transformation entrepreneuriale des écoles de commerce a été détaillé, il convient d'en aborder la dimension identitaire (1.3.).

### 1.3. L'identité organisationnelle des écoles de commerce : vers une redéfinition entrepreneuriale ?

L'identité organisationnelle (IO) renvoie aux caractéristiques des organisations que leurs membres considèrent comme centrales, distinctives et durables (Albert et Whetten, 1985). La centralité chez Albert et Whetten (1985) renvoie aux attributs identitaires profondément enracinés et partagés par les membres de l'organisation comme sa mission, le profil de ses clients ou usagers, ou ses pays d'implantation. La distinctivité renvoie, quant à elle, à l'ensemble des traits identitaires qui revêtent un caractère à la fois singularisant et valorisé par l'environnement dans lequel évolue l'organisation. Enfin, la durabilité renvoie à la persistance des attributs identitaires dans le temps. Cette persistance est le fruit de mécanismes de répétition comme la diffusion de récits historiques et l'affichage des attributs dans les locaux ou sur les documents de travail. Comme le rappellent Brown, Dacin, Pratt et Whetten (2006), l'IO ne doit pas être confondue avec l'image de l'organisation – c'est-à-dire les associations mentales que les membres de l'organisation souhaitent éveiller auprès des parties prenantes – ni avec sa réputation – c'est-à-dire les associations mentales que nourrissent les parties prenantes quant à l'organisation. En d'autres termes, l'IO (comment les membres de l'organisation la perçoivent), l'image de l'organisation (comment ses membres souhaitent qu'elle soit perçue par ses parties prenantes), et la réputation (comment ses parties prenantes la perçoivent) reflètent de manière complémentaire ce qu'est l'organisation (Brown, Dacin, Pratt et Whetten, 2006 : 102). Si ces concepts renvoient à des associations mentales – cognitives et émotionnelles – de ce qu'est l'organisation (Scott et Lane, 2000), ils se différencient entre eux de deux façons. D'abord, l'IO et l'image émanent d'acteurs internes à l'organisation alors que la réputation émane d'acteurs externes à celle-ci (Price et Gioia, 2008). Ensuite, l'IO et de la réputation renvoient à des associations mentales qui sont perçues plus ou moins spontanément alors que l'image est toujours construite délibérément. Dans les faits, ces concepts se trouvent liés : l'IO ressentie par les membres de l'organisation façonne directement l'image qu'ils souhaitent donner de cette dernière ; image qui, perçue différemment selon les parties prenantes, peut engendrer des réputations diverses (Price et Gioia, 2008).

Ashforth, Rogers et Corley (2011 : 1145) avancent que la construction de l'IO passe par sa diffusion auprès des différents niveaux de l'organisation. Cette diffusion s'appuie sur des mécanismes de convergence – ou facilitateurs – mais est entravée par des mécanismes d'obstruction – ou freins – qui peuvent aboutir à la formation d'IO concurrentes. Selon Ashforth, Rogers et Corley (2011 : 1148), ces mécanismes sont facilitateurs ou obstruc-teurs par nature. Concrètement, selon ces auteurs, les discours tels que les récits historiques constituent par nature des facilitateurs de diffusion identitaire, conformément à de précédentes études ayant mis en lumière le pouvoir de la narration et des métaphores dans la création de l'IO (Czarniawska, 1997 ; Vaara, Tienari et Sääntti, 2003 ; Brown, Dacin, Pratt

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et Whetten, 2006). De même, le manque de clarté opérationnelle des attributs identitaires quand ils sont formulés de manière trop abstraite par la direction entrave par nature la diffusion de l'IO en générant des divergences de perceptions entre les différents niveaux de l'organisation (Ashforth, Rogers et Corley, 2011 : 1151).

L'IO des établissements d'enseignement supérieur est considérée par la littérature comme un facteur de légitimité et de notoriété leur permettant de refléter leurs impacts sur leur environnement mais aussi sur la société en général (Van Damme, 2001). Dans le domaine de l'enseignement de la gestion en particulier, les établissements de formation sont supposés exercer une influence sur leur environnement social et économique par la diffusion d'idées au moyen de la recherche académique (Crainer et Dearlove, 2001). Dans ce cadre, l'IO de ces établissements se doit de véhiculer un message qualitatif sur leurs enseignements, leurs pédagoges ainsi que sur leurs recherches dans une perspective d'amélioration de leur positionnement concurrentiel (Radu-Lefebvre et Redien-Collot, 2012). Elsbach et Kramer (1996) ont montré parmi les premiers que, depuis les années 1990, les écoles de commerce redéfinissent ponctuellement leur IO en fonction des dissonances qu'elles perçoivent entre leurs prétentions – ce qu'elles disent qu'elles sont – et leur réputation – la manière dont elles sont perçues par leurs parties prenantes – telle qu'elle est véhiculée par les classements nationaux et internationaux.

Depuis la fin des années 2000, les écoles de commerce traversent une période de fortes perturbations identitaires en raison, notamment, de la crise économique de 2008 qu'elles sont accusées de ne pas avoir anticipée ou qu'elles auraient contribué à provoquer en promouvant des valeurs contestables auprès de leurs publics (Alaoutsijärvi, Juusola et Siltaoja, 2015 ; McDonald, 2017). En outre, les évolutions du marché du travail ont rendu obsolètes les garanties qu'offraient jusqu'alors la plupart des écoles de commerce en matière de sécurité du travail et de carrières longues au sein d'une même entreprise (Fendt et Bursau, 2010 ; McDonald, 2017). Enfin, la remise en question de l'IO des écoles de commerce est favorisée depuis la fin des années 2000 par l'apparition, aux côtés des universités proposant des formations en entrepreneuriat depuis les années 1980-1990 (Fayolle, 2000 : 84-87), de nouveaux concurrents dans ce secteur. En effet, les écoles d'ingénieurs (Fayolle, Lamine, Mian et Phen, 2020), les instituts d'études politiques, les acteurs du e-learning mais aussi les cabinets de conseil proposent aussi depuis la fin des années 2000 des formations en entrepreneuriat (Passant, 2018a : 211-213). Plusieurs critères permettent néanmoins de les différencier. Le premier est l'égale reconnaissance de la formation délivrée qui n'est pas nécessairement sanctionnée par un diplôme visé ou certifié par l'État. Les suivants sont la diversité des perspectives professionnelles ou salariales offertes après le suivi de la formation ainsi que l'intensité de la vie associative qui peut être appréhendée comme champ d'expérimentation par les étudiants entrepreneurs (Verzat, Dubard Barbosa, Foliard et Tavakoli, 2019). Ensuite, la qualité du réseau des anciens élèves différencie fortement ces diverses formations alors qu'il s'agit d'un important levier relationnel permettant aux étudiants entrepreneurs de bénéficier de l'expérience de leurs aînés. Enfin, en raison de ces disparités dans l'offre de formations en entrepreneuriat, mais également en raison des différents rattachements institutionnels des acteurs de formation, le prix de ces dernières est loin d'être équivalent (Passant, 2018b : 211-213).

Dans ce contexte, la redéfinition de l'IO de ces écoles s'imposerait avec d'autant plus de force que, selon certains auteurs (McKiernan et Wilson, 2014), se multiplient les remises en cause de l'un des piliers de leur raison d'être ; à savoir le management comme

horizon indépassable de la formation gestionnaire. Selon Harney (2007), la formation au management ne pourrait plus être présentée par les écoles de commerce comme leur principale mission au motif que de plus en plus de leurs diplômés ne seront pas managers : ils seront « managés » ou bien compétamment indépendants dans leur future vie professionnelle. En outre, comme l'estime cet auteur, de plus en plus connaîtront des carrières multiples, au sein d'entreprises existantes ou qu'ils créeront eux-mêmes. En cela former des entrepreneurs, c'est-à-dire non pas seulement de futurs créateurs ou repreneurs d'entreprises mais des individus dotés de qualités entrepreneuriales, s'imposerait désormais comme un élément déterminant de la mission des écoles de commerce et donc de leur IO. À ce titre, l'entrepreneuriat semble un fondement identitaire d'autant plus pertinent à promouvoir par les écoles de commerce qu'à ce jour l'esprit d'entreprendre est avantagement perçu comme une solution à la crise économique et socio-environnementale qui affecte les sociétés contemporaines (Fayolle, Verzat et Wapshott, 2016). Dans ces conditions, McKiernan et Wilson (2014) avancent que les écoles de commerce sont appelées à se défaire de l'orientation managériale qui avait été leur raison d'être principale ou exclusive pendant tout le vingtième siècle afin de refonder leur positionnement sur d'autres standards comme la promotion de l'entrepreneuriat. Cette position est toutefois nuancée par certains travaux (Pettigrew, Cornuel et Hommel, 2014; Blanchard, 2015) pour lesquels l'évolution entrepreneuriale des écoles de commerce n'implique pas nécessairement qu'elles négligent les formations en management. À ce titre, comme le rappelle Blanchard (2015), l'évolution entrepreneuriale des écoles de commerce françaises s'inscrit dans le fil d'évolutions plus larges et non-exclusives comme l'internationalisation des études commerciales, l'instauration des études en RSE, ou la transformation digitale. Dans tous les cas, dans les faits, plusieurs écoles de commerce se sont dotées d'une IO entrepreneuriale, telles l'INSEAD (Passant, 2018b) ou la Copenhagen Business School (Jacobson et Ravn Sørensen, 2017).

La littérature, à ce jour, a donc montré comment les écoles de commerce sont progressivement devenues plus entrepreneuriales sur le plan opérationnel par le déploiement en leur sein de dispositifs entrepreneuriaux. En revanche, l'aspect identitaire de ce phénomène semble avoir été encore peu étudié. Si les écoles de commerce proposent désormais des activités de formations, de recherches, et d'accompagnement en faveur de l'entrepreneuriat et tendent même à fonctionner davantage de manière entrepreneuriale, elles promeuvent aussi parfois l'entrepreneuriat comme un trait distinctif, non pas seulement de ce qu'elles font ou de la manière dont elles fonctionnent, mais de ce qu'elles sont fondamentalement. En d'autres termes c'est le processus de transformation de leur IO dans un sens entrepreneurial qu'il convient d'examiner par une étude de cas dont nous allons détailler la méthodologie.

## 2. Le cadre méthodologique de l'étude

La présente section expose d'abord les justifications qui ont conduit à mener une étude de cas qualitative et longitudinale consacrée à l'école ESCP BS (2.1.). Elle détaille ensuite les sources exploitées (2.2.) ainsi que leurs méthodes de traitement puis d'analyse (2.3.).

### 2.1. Cadre empirique

La présente recherche repose sur une étude de cas qualitative afin d'étudier les causes et les conséquences de la transformation entrepreneuriale de l'IO des écoles de

commerce. La recherche qualitative est appropriée pour les recherches sur des sujets qui sont encore peu compris (Glaser et Strauss, 1967) et où la dynamique temporelle constitue le principal centre d'attention (Rasche et Chia, 2009). Notre étude de cas est longitudinale car, selon Pettigrew (2012), la perspective dans le temps long permet de mieux rendre compte du déploiement des processus organisationnels – ici des processus identitaires. Selon Eisenhardt et Graebner (2007), le choix d'une seule étude de cas est préconisé lors de l'exploration de phénomènes nouveaux appréhendés sur une base longitudinale. La présente étude est un cas extrême au sens où l'entend Yin (2017) et rend compte des dynamiques identitaires à l'œuvre au sein d'une école de commerce valorisant l'entrepreneuriat.

L'école de commerce européenne ESCP BS a été retenue pour trois raisons cumulatives. D'abord, pour son positionnement éducatif actuel : ESCP BS est une école qui a fait de l'entrepreneuriat un axe fort de son développement (Passant, 2018b et 2020). Comme le révèle la récente étude Forbes (Manceau, 2020), parmi les écoles de commerce françaises, ESCP BS fait partie de celles qui se consacrent le plus à l'entrepreneuriat, notamment pour ce qui concerne le nombre de programmes de formation en entrepreneuriat, la proportion d'anciens élèves devenus entrepreneurs, le nombre d'entreprises incubées par an, les levées de fonds réalisées par les start-ups de l'école ainsi que les montants versés par son club de *business angels* à destination des projets d'étudiants entrepreneurs. Ensuite, ESCP BS a été retenue pour son antériorité historique : cet établissement fait partie des premières écoles de commerce en France à avoir proposé une formation en entrepreneuriat dès les années 1970 (Takagi et De Carlo, 2003 : 48 ; Albert, Bernasconi et Boucard, 1999), soit avec près d'une décennie d'avance sur la majorité des autres écoles de commerce (Fayolle, 2000). Enfin, cette école a été retenue pour son IO singulière. ESCP BS est, en effet, la seule école au monde qui prétend avoir été (co)fondée par l'une des figures emblématiques de l'entrepreneuriat : l'économiste et entrepreneur Jean-Baptiste Say (Passant et Arreola, 2019). De ce fait, il s'agit d'une école entretenant un rapport singulier, non pas uniquement avec les dispositifs entrepreneuriaux en termes d'activités ou de modes de fonctionnement, mais avec l'identité entrepreneuriale. La singularité de ce rapport tient à ce qu'il est incarné par une figure qui est l'archétype même de l'entrepreneur ; et c'est ce qui distingue l'école d'autres établissements fortement tournés vers l'entrepreneuriat depuis le dernier tiers du vingtième siècle.

## 2.2. Collecte des données

Notre recherche repose sur une méthodologie à caractère historique pour deux raisons. D'abord, il s'agit de retracer le déploiement d'un processus dans le temps long, à savoir ici la construction par une école de commerce d'une IO entrepreneuriale. Cet objectif de recherche impose d'appréhender la durée et donc de faire appel à l'histoire qui est considérée comme la science du temps (Offenstad, 2011). Ensuite, la méthodologie historique est d'autant plus pertinente pour notre étude que la littérature a rappelé que l'histoire constitue une ressource stratégique utilisée par les organisations pour construire leur IO (Kroezen et Heugens, 2012 ; Cailluet, Gorge et Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2018). Bien que plusieurs auteurs aient démontré tout le bénéfice qui peut découler de l'usage de la méthodologie historique dans les études en entrepreneuriat (Foster, Coraiola, Succaby, Kroezen et Chandler, 2017 ; Lubinski et Wadhvani, 2019), cette dernière demeure encore minoritaire dans ce domaine. Ce genre de méthodologie n'est pourtant pas nouveau dans le champ des études en entrepreneuriat : dès l'immédiat-après-guerre, Schumpeter (1947 : 153) avait avancé que les recherches à caractère historique étaient essentielles pour les

études empiriques et théoriques en entrepreneuriat. Si les difficultés d'une telle méthodologie sont connues, ses avantages pour les chercheurs en entrepreneuriat ont été récemment rappelés par Wachwani, Kirsch, Welter, Gartner et Jones (2020) au sein du numéro spécial que le *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* a consacré aux approches historiques. Dans la même veine, Toms, Wilson et Wright (2020) ont récemment montré à quel point les études de cas à caractère historique sont pertinentes pour les chercheurs en entrepreneuriat dans la mesure où elles retracent l'évolution de variables qui ne peuvent être perçues puis comprises que dans la durée. Notre recherche s'inscrit dans ce courant méthodologique et, comme le suggèrent Eisenhardt et Graebner (2007), repose sur une collecte de données provenant de différents types de sources pour minimiser le risque de rationalisation rétrospective. En précision (voir Tableau 1), notre recherche repose sur la collecte de données combinant le dépouillement de très nombreuses archives, une étude documentaire, et la conduite d'entretiens individuels semi-directifs.

Les archives exploitées comprennent, tout d'abord, des communications internes destinées aux membres de l'organisation parce que ces sources sont considérées comme privilégiées pour les études sur les thématiques d'IO (Anteby et Molnár, 2012), notamment parce qu'elles reflètent l'évolution des discours managériaux (Cailluet, Gorge et Özçağlar-Tououze, 2018). Comme l'expose le Tableau 1, nous avons analysé en détail les rapports de la commission administrative de ESCP BS – le principal organe de gouvernance de l'école –, les syllabus et les discours prononcés par les directeurs généraux de l'école des années 1970 à 2020. Comme suggéré par Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas et Van de Ven (2013), dans les études de cas longitudinales, la taille de l'échantillon désigne le nombre d'observations temporelles. Nous nous sommes ainsi particulièrement concentrés, comme le détaille le Tableau 1, sur 423 rapports de la commission administrative et 31 discours prononcés par les directeurs généraux de l'école de 1970 à 2020 ainsi que sur tous les syllabus produits sur la période. Ces séries archivistiques offrent l'avantage d'être réparties de manière relativement uniforme dans le temps. Deuxièmement, les archives que nous avons compulsées pour cette étude comprennent également les supports de communication externe pour analyser la façon dont ESCP BS a présenté son IO à ses diverses parties prenantes. Ces archives comprennent des bulletins d'information, des prospectus, des brochures, des avis de recrutement et des rapports d'autoévaluation rédigés pour les agences chargées d'accréditer l'école ou certains de ses programmes (MBA, Masters Spécialisés, Master in Management). De même, tous les *Yearbooks* de la chaire « Entrepreneuriat » depuis son lancement en 2007 ont été consultés. Troisièmement, les sites Internet des organisations ayant été reconnus comme l'une des sources contemporaines privilégiées par elles pour communiquer leur IO (Ortel et Thommes, 2018) nous avons exploité le site Internet de ESCP BS depuis sa création en 1997 ainsi que le compte Twitter de la direction générale de l'école. La plupart des archives ont été consultées aux archives de ESCP BS, et aux archives de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de région Paris-Île-de-France (CCIP). Nous avons aussi collecté des données sur la couverture par les médias des 150<sup>e</sup>, 175<sup>e</sup> et 200<sup>e</sup> anniversaires de l'école en 1970, en 1994, puis en 2019 en utilisant les archives de l'Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA).

En complément de cette exploitation archivistique, nous avons mené une étude documentaire pour mieux comprendre le contexte et donner un sens aux principales évolutions étudiées. Comme le montre le Tableau 1, nous avons ainsi consulté les ouvrages rédigés sur l'histoire récente de l'école ainsi que près de 380 articles issus des principaux périodiques de la presse éducative depuis les années 1970, à savoir *Le Monde de l'Éducation* et



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*L'Étudiant*, ainsi que des principaux organes de presse pour les cadres, à savoir *Le Point*, *Challenges*, et *L'Express*, en relevant tous les articles mentionnant l'école. Comme le détaille le Tableau 1, une partie de ces sources ont été consultées physiquement à la Bibliothèque Nationale de France tandis qu'une partie des documents numérisés ont pu être consultés grâce à la base de données Lexis Nexis qui couvre la presse française. Cet ensemble de données a été utilisé pour analyser la manière dont l'école a, au cours du temps, présenté son IO à ses parties prenantes.

Enfin, ces éléments archivistiques et documentaires ont été complétés par 21 entretiens individuels semi-structurés conduits auprès des membres de la direction générale de l'école mais aussi de la direction de la communication de celle-ci ainsi qu'avec plusieurs membres du corps enseignant. Plus précisément, comme l'indique le Tableau 1, l'actuel directeur général de ESCP BS et ses sept prédécesseurs qui ont dirigé l'école depuis les années 1970 ont été interrogés, de même que l'actuel directeur de l'enseignement à la CCIP, ainsi que ses deux prédécesseurs encore en vie. Ont également été rencontrés quatre anciens directeurs de la communication. Compte tenu de leur position hiérarchique privilégiée, ces différents acteurs ont été de puissants contributeurs au travail identitaire de l'école auprès de ses diverses parties prenantes. Ces individus devaient, en effet, représenter l'école tout en ayant un accès privilégié à divers canaux de communication. Enfin, six enseignants de l'école – actuels ou retraités – ont été rencontrés (voir Tableau 1). Le guide d'entretien a été structuré en trois parties. La première concernait ESCP BS et son histoire. La deuxième portait sur la place de l'entrepreneuriat dans les dispositifs de formations, de recherches, d'accompagnements et de communications de l'école. Enfin, la troisième partie était dédiée à l'IO de l'école. Il s'agissait d'amener les enquêtés à se prononcer sur ce qui caractérise l'IO de ESCP BS, notamment vis-à-vis de ses concurrentes. Le but de cette dernière partie du guide d'entretien était de faire ressortir les attributs identitaires de l'école tels qu'ils sont affichés et perçus par les parties prenantes de l'école. Les entretiens ont duré en moyenne entre 1 et 2 heures et se sont déroulés sur le campus de Paris de l'établissement entre décembre 2017 et novembre 2019. Tous les entretiens ont été retranscrits. Les personnes interrogées ont été également invitées à fournir du matériel supplémentaire tels que des syllabus, des comptes rendus de réunions ou des extraits de revues de presse. L'anonymat, demandé par plusieurs des enquêtés, a été respecté et les propos mentionnés dans cet article ne seront pas nommément attribués ; sauf exceptions autorisées par les intéressés.

### 2.3 Traitement et analyse des données

La variété de nos sources – archives, documents, entretiens – a favorisé la triangulation et a permis de construire un ensemble robuste de données (Kipping, Wadhvani et Bucheli, 2014). Une telle variété a permis aussi une plus grande réflexivité et une analyse critique des sources. Plus précisément, comme le détaille la dernière colonne du Tableau 1, nous avons utilisé ces sources pour (a) établir le contexte historique au sein duquel l'école a évolué, (b) évaluer la place de l'entrepreneuriat dans les activités, les modes de fonctionnement et l'IO de l'école, (c) saisir les étapes du processus d'élaboration de l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école, (d) identifier les messages véhiculés au travers de cette IO, puis (e) saisir l'interprétation de plusieurs acteurs organisationnels sur la façon dont l'IO de l'école a évolué dans un sens entrepreneurial depuis les années 1970. Concrètement, notre étude s'est engagée dans une analyse de contenu portant sur les données récoltées en utilisant les techniques de codage développées par les partisans de la *grounded theory* (Glaser et Strauss, 1967 ; Locke, 2001 ; Myers, 2009). Pour ce faire, deux étapes séquentielles se sont suivies.

Tableau 1. Les différents types de sources consultées et leur utilisation dans la présente recherche

Sources	Localisations	Codes	Détails	Utilisation dans l'analyse
Archives	Archives de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de région Paris-Ile-de-France	AC	Dépouillement de 423 rapports de la commission administrative, 31 discours des directeurs généraux de l'école, extraits des correspondances des directeurs de la communication de l'école, plans stratégiques, rapports annuels, lettres aux membres des divers conseils de direction, notes consultatives, rapports internes, supports de communication, analyses commerciales, publicités et brochures (1974-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Établir le contexte historique au sein duquel l'école a évolué</li> <li>Évaluer la place de l'entrepreneuriat dans les activités, les modes de fonctionnement et l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école</li> <li>Identifier les messages véhiculés au travers de l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école</li> </ul>
	Archives de ESCP BS	AE	Dépouillement de 503 procès-verbaux des comités de direction, bulletins d'information, prospectus et rapports d'évaluation reçus pour les accréditations EQUIS et AMBA, communiqués de presse, interviews publiées dans les médias, Yearbooks de la chaire « Entrepreneuriat » (1974-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Évaluer la place de l'entrepreneuriat dans les activités, les modes de fonctionnement et l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école</li> <li>Saisir les étapes du processus d'élaboration de l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école</li> </ul>
	Archives de l'Institut National de l'Audiotvisuel	NA	Dépouillement des supports de couverture médiatique des 150 <sup>e</sup> , 175 <sup>e</sup> et 200 <sup>e</sup> anniversaires de l'école, émissions de télévision, émissions radiophoniques (1970-2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Établir le contexte historique au sein duquel l'école a évolué</li> <li>Saisir les étapes du processus d'élaboration de l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école</li> <li>Identifier les messages véhiculés au travers de l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école</li> </ul>
	Site Internet de ESCP BS	WE	Dépouillement des rapports internes, syllabus et descriptions des activités scolaires (1997-2020), compte Twitter de la direction générale de l'école (2014-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Évaluer la place de l'entrepreneuriat dans les activités, les modes de fonctionnement et l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école</li> <li>Identifier les messages véhiculés au travers de l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école</li> </ul>

article en prépublication

Sources	Localisations	Codes	Détails	Utilisation dans l'analyse
<b>Documents</b>	Bibliothèque Nationale de France Lexis Nexis	BNF	Étude de 373 articles de presse : <i>Le Monde de l'Éducation</i> (1974-2008) ; <i>L'Express</i> (1974-2020) ; <i>L'Étudiant</i> (1972-2020) ; <i>Le Point</i> (1972-2020) ; <i>Challenges</i> (1982-2020) Étude de travaux sur l'histoire récente de l'école (Servan-Schreiber, 1994 ; Fridenson et Paquy, 2008 ; Passant, 2018b, 2020 et 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Établir le contexte historique au sein duquel l'école a évolué</li> </ul>
<b>Interviews</b>	Paris	IE	Réalisation de 21 entretiens individuels semi-structurés avec le directeur général de l'école, ses 7 prédécesseurs, 3 directeurs en charge de l'éducation à la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de région Paris-Ile-de-France, 4 anciens directeurs de la communication, 6 enseignants de l'école (actuels ou retraités)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Saisir l'interprétation des enquêtés sur la façon dont la place de l'entrepreneuriat a évolué à l'école et aussi sur la façon dont l'IO de l'école a évolué dans un sens entrepreneurial</li> </ul>

La première étape de notre analyse, suivant les préconisations de Yin (2017), a consisté à mettre au point une description chronologique de l'évolution de la place de l'entrepreneuriat à ESCP BS et de l'évolution de l'IO de cette dernière de 1970 à 2020. Cette analyse nous a permis d'établir une chronologie des principaux changements survenus à l'école concernant ces deux items mais aussi des évolutions de son environnement en termes de contexte économique, d'agenda politique, de situation concurrentielle ou d'attentes des parties prenantes.

La seconde étape a consisté à procéder à un codage inductif des données collectées (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton et Corley, 2013) suivant un processus itératif de déplacement entre les données et notre cadre de réflexion (Langley et Abdallah, 2011) consacré au processus de transformation de l'IO en école de commerce. Plus précisément, nous avons procédé à un premier codage descriptif des données puis à un deuxième codage plus conceptuel, suivant en cela l'approche d'autres chercheurs ayant travaillé sur les processus identitaires (Corley et Gioia, 2004 ; Pratt, Rockmann et Kaufmann, 2006 ; Koceih et Greenwood, 2014 ; Oertel et Thommes, 2018). Concrètement, le premier codage a commencé par la lecture et la relecture de nos prises de notes aux archives, de nos synthèses de documents et des retranscriptions des entretiens. Notre objectif a consisté à procéder à un codage ciblé en adoptant des mots ou des phrases issus des termes apparaissant dans les archives, documents ou entretiens et ce afin de trier et de synthétiser les données (Charmaz, 2002 : 321).

Le deuxième codage – de nature conceptuelle et non plus descriptive – nous a permis d'affiner puis de regrouper les codes de premier ordre en des catégories plus larges ou thèmes de second ordre (Locke, 2001). Comme cela est pratiqué dans cette forme de recherche (Wodak, 2004), cette étape a reposé sur un dialogue entre les données et la littérature ; et plus particulièrement sur les principales étapes de l'histoire des formations en entrepreneuriat dans les écoles de commerce, la transformation croissante de ces dernières en organisations plus entrepreneuriales ainsi que les évolutions sur leur IO.

L'étape finale de l'analyse a permis de synthétiser les thèmes majeurs précédemment identifiés à la précédente étape en quatre dimensions agrégées qui sont (a) le contexte dans lequel s'est inscrit la transformation de l'IO de l'école, (b) le contenu des messages véhiculés par l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école, (c) les moyens de la diffusion de cette IO, (d) les implications organisationnelles découlant de l'implémentation de cette IO.

### 3. Résultats : l'IO entrepreneuriale de ESCP BS depuis les années 1970

Fondée en 1819 par deux négociants, Germain Legret et Amécée Brodart, l'école ESCP BS est initialement une école de commerce privée, devenue en 1930 une entreprise familiale sous la direction de l'économiste Adolphe Blanqui (Passant, 2018a ; Passant et Areola, 2019 ; Deslandes, 2020). En 1869, l'école est rachetée par la CCIP, devenant ainsi un service consulaire. Reconnue par l'État en 1890, ESCP BS est érigée au rang d'établissement d'enseignement supérieur en 1947, rejoignant le réseau des écoles de commerce « Sup de Co » (Passant, 2020 : 124). L'environnement dans lequel évolue l'établissement est alors très fortement régulé au niveau national : c'est l'État qui, par arrêtés ministériels, fixe la durée des études, organise le concours d'entrée, établit le contenu des cours, leurs volumes

horaires ainsi que la durée des épreuves d'examen et leurs coefficients. En conséquence, jusqu'à la fin des années 1960, l'école ne dispose d'aucune possibilité d'initiative en matière pédagogique (Passant, 2018b). ESCP BS recouvre toutefois en 1969 son autonomie stratégique vis-à-vis du Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale en quittant le réseau des écoles de commerce « Sup de Co ». De ce fait, elle peut, dès la rentrée de septembre 1969, construire elle-même son offre de formations. Dans ces conditions, c'est à partir des années 1970 que ESCP BS diversifie son programme de formations dans un sens entrepreneurial. Nous allons revenir sur le contexte qui a favorisé cette émergence (3.1.), puis sur la diversification des activités entrepreneuriales proposées par l'école (3.2.). À partir de là, nous montrerons comment s'est construite l'IO entrepreneuriale de ESCP BS (3.3.).

### 3.1. Un contexte propice à l'orientation entrepreneuriale de l'école

C'est en 1974 que ESCP BS diversifie son programme de formations dans un sens entrepreneurial en créant un cours optionnel accessible en deuxième année de « Management et développement des organisations » axé sur la création d'entreprises. Le contexte économique est alors favorable à cette diversification. En effet, c'est à partir des années 1970 que la création d'entreprises s'impose progressivement en France comme une préoccupation publique de premier plan contribuant puissamment au développement du pays (Chambard, 2013). À cette époque, ESCP BS n'est cependant pas la seule école de commerce en France à diversifier son programme vers l'entrepreneuriat (Fayolle, 1990 ; Blanchard, 2015). En effet, l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Nice ouvre en 1974 un programme de formation continue en entrepreneuriat (Albert, Bernasconi et Boucand, 1999) tandis que HEC Paris lance en 1978 un programme dédié à la formation des entrepreneurs – via la majeure « Entrepreneurs ».

Toutefois, le contexte économique est insuffisant pour expliquer à lui seul le lancement d'une offre de formations en entrepreneuriat à ESCP BS dès 1974. La diversification vers l'entrepreneuriat obéit aussi à des considérations d'ordre interne. Plus précisément, le cours de « Management et développement des organisations » a été demandé dès l'automne 1970 par les anciens élèves qui se sont alarmés en constatant que plusieurs écoles concurrentes diversifiaient leur offre de formations vers la préparation à la création d'entreprises, et notamment l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Lyon qui avait lancé un centre d'application et de recherches économiques en lien avec l'entrepreneuriat dès 1969 (Chessel et Pavis, 2001 : 178). Le directeur de ESCP BS à cette époque, Jean Vigier, a cédé de corner une suite favorable à cette requête qui lui paraissait d'autant plus légitime que les sept prestigieuses écoles de commerce qu'il avait visitées aux États-Unis au printemps 1968 offraient également des cours pour préparer leurs étudiants à la création d'entreprises (AE, procès-verbal du comité de direction, 9 octobre 1968). Comme il le notifie dans une note interne de 1970 (AE, procès-verbal du comité de direction, 30 septembre 1970) :

« À présent que l'ESCP est libre de concevoir et d'organiser son programme de formations, il faut veiller à rattraper le retard que l'école a pris vis-à-vis des écoles concurrentes et notamment des *business schools* américaines. [...] La Harvard Business School et la Wharton Business School proposent depuis plus de quinze ans des cours destinés aux étudiants qui souhaitent créer leur propre entreprise. Si la majorité de nos étudiants ont, bien sûr et par nature, vocation à rejoindre les grandes entreprises françaises et étrangères, il faudrait aussi offrir des cours à ceux qui veulent créer leur propre

entreprise. Il serait préjudiciable qu'ils partent pour ce faire aux États-Unis alors que nous pouvons leur offrir, nous aussi, une formation appropriée pour fonder leur entreprise -.

Cette note rappelle à quel point les considérations d'ordre concurrentiel – ne pas laisser l'école se faire distancer dans la diversification de son offre de formations – mais aussi positionnel – montrer que l'école est alignée sur l'offre de formations des plus prestigieuses *business schools* – ont présidé à la décision de la direction d'engager l'école sur la voie des formations en entrepreneuriat. Cet extrait indique également que, initialement, ce champ de formations avait été conçu pour rester relativement confidentiel : il n'avait pas du tout vocation à s'adresser à une proportion significative des étudiants mais à quelques-uns seulement. Cette diversification faisait aussi écho aux souhaits de la direction de l'école de ne plus former majoritairement des comptables mais aussi des managers, des dirigeants et des créateurs d'entreprises (Passant, 2021). Si la création du cours de « Management et développement des organisations » est alors considérée comme une voie de diversification à emprunter, elle ne constitue pas pour autant une priorité. De fait, elle ne sera effective que quatre ans plus tard. Le départ à la retraite de Jean Vigier en 1971 puis l'agenda perturbé de l'école – son projet de fusion torpillé avec HEC-Jeunes filles en 1972 puis la difficile généralisation de la mixité en 1973 (Passant, 2020 : 151-160) – ont conduit au report de ce projet à l'année 1974 : année où il est mis en œuvre par un jeune diplômé de l'école, Patrick Sérincourt (promotion 1970).

### 3.2. La diversification entrepreneuriale des activités de l'école des années 1970 à 2020

À ESCP BS, la diversification entrepreneuriale de l'école s'opère sur plusieurs décennies, comme le détaille le Tableau 2 qui expose les principaux jalons qui ont conduit l'école à faire de l'entrepreneuriat un axe fort de ses programmes de formations, de recherches, d'accompagnement et de communication.

Sur le plan pédagogique, si l'entrepreneuriat est introduit à ESCP BS en 1974 par l'intermédiaire du cours optionnel de deuxième année en « Management et développement des organisations », cette spécialisation ne rencontre pas un grand succès initialement. Ce cours se transforme en 1981 en spécialisation à part entière, accessible uniquement en troisième année, mais il reste suivi par un nombre très restreint d'étudiants – une dizaine par an sur une promotion de plus de 250 – soit 4% de la promotion.

Cette situation ne surprend ni ne déçoit la direction générale de l'école aux yeux de laquelle « la création d'entreprises, par nature, concerne un profil très spécifique et réduit des élèves » (AE, procès-verbal du comité de direction, 21 janvier 1982). Les années 1980 ne voient pas de changements en la matière : la création d'entreprises n'est pas considérée comme une voie professionnelle séduisante pour les élèves de ESCP BS. Comme l'explique quelques années plus tard un professeur de l'école : « les jeunes diplômés de l'ESCP ne sont guère des aventuriers. [Dans les années 1980], il n'était pas encore question de développement du marché, de *golden boys* ou de carrières en fusions-acquisitions. Les étudiants étaient tentés par la gestion publique, l'administration [...]. Mais ils ne sont ni créateurs ni repreneurs de sociétés » (BNF, *Challenges*, juin 1991 : 82). En dépit de cette situation, la direction et les enseignants font le choix de conserver ce cours qui « entre bien dans la mission de l'école qui est de former les acteurs du monde économique d'aujourd'hui et

de demain, même si la création d'entreprises peine encore, pour des raisons culturelles, à s'imposer dans l'esprit de nos étudiants » (AE, procès-verbal du comité de direction, 30 septembre 1987).

De fait, il faut attendre la crise économique des années 1990 et plus particulièrement la récession économique de 1993 – la première traversée par la France depuis 1975 – pour que l'enseignement en entrepreneuriat prenne véritablement racine à ESCP BS. Les étudiants de celle-ci éprouvant davantage de difficultés que leurs prédécesseurs pour être recrutés dans les grands groupes ont commencé à envisager sérieusement de créer leurs propres entreprises (Passant, 2021). Cette situation n'est pas spécifiquement constatée à ESCP BS mais est relevée à l'époque par les acteurs politiques dont le Président de la République, François Mitterrand, qui déclare alors que « la crise a le mérite de redonner ses lettres de noblesse à la fonction de l'entrepreneur » (Boutillier et Uzunidis, 1999 : 55). C'est dans ce contexte que la direction de l'école fait le choix d'étoffer son offre de formations en la matière, comme le montre le Tableau 2. Si le cours de spécialisation en entrepreneuriat en troisième année du programme Grande école est maintenu dans les années 1990, il est complété en 1995 par un cours électif de 18 heures en « Entrepreneuriat » accessible en deuxième année, puis en 1996 par un autre cours électif de même durée en « Reprise et acquisition d'entreprises » accessible en troisième année (voir Tableau 2). L'année 1998 marque un vrai tournant avec l'ouverture d'un premier programme diplômant de 400 heures d'enseignements sur un an intégralement voué à l'entrepreneuriat : le Mastère Spécialisé « Innover et Entreprendre ». Ensuite, après les enseignements de spécialisation et les enseignements diplômants, apparaissent dans les années 2010 les enseignements de sensibilisation qui, sous la forme de conférences et de cours ponctuels animés par des entrepreneurs, initient les étudiants à la création d'entreprises. Dans ce cadre sont développés une dizaine de cours électifs sur l'entrepreneuriat (voir Tableau 2), comprenant entre 15 et 30 heures de cours chacun sur des aspects différents comme le révèlent leurs intitulés (« création d'entreprises et *business plan* », « conseiller des chefs d'entreprise de PME », « reprise d'entreprise », « finance entrepreneuriale », etc.).

Ces différents formats d'intervention – de spécialisation, de sensibilisation, diplômant ou non – se cumulent aujourd'hui, que ce soit en format initial, continue ou spécialisée, et s'étendent sur tous les campus de l'école. En effet, depuis 2017, deux options « Entrepreneurship » ont été ouvertes sur les campus de Berlin et de Madrid de l'école. Comme l'expose le Tableau 2, à ce jour, l'entrepreneuriat représente trois programmes intégralement dédiés à la création d'entreprises – à savoir le Mastère Spécialisé « Innover et Entreprendre » (12 mois de formation à temps complet), le MSc « Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Innovation » (12 mois de formation à temps complet), et l'executive Master in « Digital Innovation & Entrepreneurship Leadership » (15 mois de formation à temps partiel). En outre, les principaux programmes de l'école – Bachelor, programme Grande école, MBA, executive MBA, formation continue – offrent tous au minimum une spécialisation en entrepreneuriat. À titre d'exemple, le programme Grande école comprend une filière de spécialisation en entrepreneuriat d'une durée d'un semestre consacré à différents aspects de l'entrepreneuriat suivant le campus d'études ; à savoir la dimension digitale sur le campus de Berlin, l'innovation sociale à Madrid, la croissance à Londres et la phase d'émergence à Paris. Au total, en 2019, plus de 1 200 étudiants – soit près de 25% des effectifs en formation à ESCP BS – ont suivi un enseignement en entrepreneuriat au cours de leur scolarité. En moyenne, depuis 2016, 24% des étudiants diplômés de l'école deviennent entrepreneurs dans les cinq

années qui suivent la remise de leur diplôme. Ces derniers ont immatriculé plus de 121 nouvelles entreprises depuis 2016, dont plus de la moitié hors de France (IE, direction générale, novembre 2019).

À côté de ces dispositifs pédagogiques, comme le montre le Tableau 2, la recherche en entrepreneuriat est également introduite à l'école dès 1983 avec l'ouverture d'un centre de recherches sur la création d'entreprises. Toutefois, le caractère éphémère de ce centre, qui disparaît à peine trois ans après sa naissance à la suite de la démission de son directeur parti rejoindre une entreprise privée, ne permet pas à la recherche en entrepreneuriat de s'enraciner vraiment à ESCP BS ; ce qui intervient au cours des années 2000. C'est en effet en 2007 qu'une chaire dédiée à l'entrepreneuriat est lancée avec le soutien financier d'Ernst & Young (voir Tableau 2). Cette dernière permet, pour la première fois, la mobilisation d'enseignants et chercheurs issus des différents départements de l'école autour de projets de formalisation ces méthodes d'enseignements et de définition d'axes de recherches dédiés à l'entrepreneuriat. La chaire « Entrepreneuriat » regroupe en 2020 près de 40 chercheurs et experts internationaux. Elle a introduit un renouveau culturel au sein de l'école : grâce à elle, pour la première fois, des enseignants-chercheurs se sont sentis institutionnellement chargés de développer l'entrepreneuriat *per se* alors qu'auparavant la discipline était défendue, occasionnellement, par des professeurs d'autres disciplines (stratégie, marketing, ressources humaines). Par l'intermédiaire de la chaire « Entrepreneuriat », les mesures de sensibilisation à l'entrepreneuriat – publication de parcours d'entrepreneurs, organisation de conférences et de tables-rondes sur l'entrepreneuriat – ont donc pris racine à ESCP BS. D'autres mesures peuvent être évoquées comme la publication d'études nationales ou européennes en lien avec l'entrepreneuriat, ou la production depuis 2008 d'un « Baromètre des Entrepreneurs France » (voir Tableau 2).

Si les mesures pédagogiques puis scientifiques se sont donc progressivement diversifiées pour promouvoir l'entrepreneuriat à l'école depuis 1974, il en va de même de mesures plus expérimentales. En effet, comme l'expose le Tableau 2, l'accompagnement des étudiants porteurs de projets de création d'entreprises s'est matérialisé pour la première fois à ESCP BS au début des années 2000 (voir Tableau 2). Le premier incubateur de l'école (« Yellow Factory ») a ainsi ouvert en 2003 pour les entreprises récemment créées tandis que le second (« Blue Factory ») a été lancé en 2009 à destination des porteurs de projets. Il s'agit d'apporter aux étudiants des conseils, « des ressources ou tout support de nature matérielle, intellectuelle ou psychologique, facilitant le développement de leurs projets entrepreneuriaux » (AE, procès-verbal du comité de direction, 5 juillet 2010). Pour inciter les apprenants en formation initiale ou continue à développer leurs aptitudes entrepreneuriales, plusieurs concours et prix ont été institués (voir Tableau 2) comme le « Prix Innover et Entreprendre » depuis 2005 ou le « Prix du meilleur *Business Plan* de France » depuis 2008. De manière similaire, un club de *business angels* a été créé en 1999. Entre 2017 et 2019 ce club a permis à une partie des 420 entreprises incubées à l'école de lever plus de 200 millions d'euros (IE, direction générale, novembre 2019).

Enfin, de manière significative, la direction de l'école se plaît à souligner dans ses communications que l'évolution entrepreneuriale ne serait pas seulement pédagogique, scientifique ou expérimentale. Elle serait aussi organisationnelle : depuis les années 2000, la direction appelle les enseignants de ESCP BS à davantage faire preuve d'esprit d'entreprendre, notamment en adoptant une pédagogie par projets, en restant à l'écoute du marché ou en le sollicitant pour anticiper ses besoins de formation ou pour collecter des fonds



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(Passant, 2018b). De leur côté, les élèves sont incités à s'investir dans des projets de nature entrepreneuriale au cours de leur scolarité (Bureau et Fendt, 2012 ; Bureau et Komporozos-Athanasidou, 2017) qui est présentée comme « un investissement visant à améliorer la valeur de leur capital entrepreneurial » (AE, Rapport d'autoévaluation EQUIS, 2014 : 21). De même, aux yeux de la direction, le récent changement de statut de l'école participerait de sa transformation entrepreneuriale : en devenant en janvier 2018 un Établissement d'Enseignement Supérieur Consulaire à but non lucratif (ÉESC), ESCP BS s'est engagée dans un processus d'autonomisation juridique et financière ayant notamment pour implication l'ouverture de son capital à des actionnaires autres que la seule CCIP. De ce fait, la Chambre parisienne laisse désormais à ESCP BS une plus grande autonomie de gestion : l'école établit un bilan financier propre, recrute directement ses personnels, peut recourir plus facilement à l'emprunt, faire appel à des financeurs, et gérer avec une plus grande flexibilité que par le passé la composition de ses instances dirigeantes (Passant, 2018b : 432). En réalité, ces évolutions ne sont pas spécifiques à l'entrepreneuriat et constituent les symptômes d'un processus de privatisation de ESCP BS ; processus d'ailleurs partagé par nombre d'écoles de commerce à travers le monde (Pettigrew, Cornuel, et Hommel, 2014). Toutefois, de manière significative, ces évolutions sont présentées par la direction de l'école comme le reflet d'une transformation entrepreneuriale. Toutes ces évolutions permettent en effet à l'école de se revendiquer comme se rattachant au modèle de l'« université entrepreneuriale », qui se matérialiserait par son orientation tournée vers l'esprit d'entreprendre, par le renforcement de son autonomie administrative et financière, mais aussi par ses interactions accrues avec son environnement au moyen de sa recherche et de ses enseignements. En s'attribuant un fonctionnement qualifié d'entrepreneurial, la direction de l'école cherche à aligner ESCP BS sur les standards internationaux des plus prestigieuses écoles de commerce désormais perçues comme des plateformes entrepreneuriales plutôt que comme des lieux de production et de diffusion du savoir (Zukin, 2012 ; Koceli et Greenwood, 2014).

### 3.3. La construction par l'école d'une IO entrepreneuriale autour de trois messages clés

Parallèlement à ces évolutions, la direction de ESCP BS a entrepris de renouveler l'IO de l'école dans un sens entrepreneurial autour de trois messages complémentaires développés successivement.

Le premier message est celui suivant lequel l'école aurait été fondée par Jean-Baptiste Say en 1819 ; brevet de paternité faisant d'elle « une école fondée par des entrepreneurs et pour des entrepreneurs » (Servan-Schreiber, 1994 : 159). Ce message est formulé pour la première fois en 1994, à l'occasion de la célébration des 175 ans de l'école. Cet événement, comme le révèlent les discours de la direction de l'époque, est vu comme une réponse à la crise économique des années 1990. En 1993, en effet, la France traverse une période de récession économique, avec un recul annuel du PIB d'environ 1 % de sorte que l'école cherche à rassurer ses parties prenantes sur sa capacité à y faire face. À l'époque, la promotion de ce message permet donc de répondre, au niveau interne, aux préoccupations de la direction générale qui cherche une nouvelle image à promouvoir dans le cadre de la célébration des 175 ans de l'école et, au niveau externe, aux préoccupations de l'environnement économique (Passant et Arreola, 2019). Cette ascendance entrepreneuriale s'est rapidement diffusée par la suite sur tous les supports de présentation de l'école. Comme l'illustre la dernière ligne du Tableau 2, cette allégation est affichée sur le premier site Internet

de l'école dès décembre 1997 (WE, 1997), puis est très régulièrement mise en avant par l'école dans ses communications lors du lancement de nouveaux programmes ou d'événements comme les baptêmes de promotions. Ainsi, en 1998 dans son premier rapport d'autoévaluation EQUIS, la direction générale écrit que l'école a été « fondée par un entrepreneur visionnaire, Jean-Baptiste Say » (AE, Rapport d'autoévaluation EQUIS, 1998 : 16). De même, comme l'affirme l'administration de l'école dans ses communiqués de presse entre 2012 et 2018 : « De Jean-Baptiste Say, à l'origine de l'école qui a inventé et conceptualisé le terme d'entrepreneur, à la chaire «Entrepreneuriat» Ernst & Young et l'incubateur d'entreprise, ESCP Europe a toujours été précurseur et leader dans le domaine » (AE, Communiqués de presse, 2012-2018).

Ensuite, le deuxième message mis en avant par la direction de l'école pour fonder son IO entrepreneuriale est celui suivant lequel ESCP BS serait un établissement pionnier, et plus particulièrement la première école de commerce ouverte au monde. Ce message est apparu à partir de 2009, à l'occasion de la campagne de communication organisée par la direction pour faire connaître la nouvelle dénomination de l'école qui, après avoir été connue pendant dix ans sous le nom « ESCP-EAP », a fait le choix d'un positionnement européen clairement assumé en devenant « ESCP Europe ». Auparavant, la direction de l'école, depuis le début du vingtième siècle, présentait régulièrement celle-ci comme l'une des plus anciennes écoles de commerce d'Europe voire du monde, mais en tout cas jamais comme la première (Passant, 2018b : 698-702). À l'occasion de ce changement de nom, l'école lance un slogan en anglais « ESCP Europe, The World's First Business School » qu'elle conserve de manière pérenne sur la quasi-totalité de ses supports de communication depuis 2009. Le site Internet de l'école mentionne ainsi tantôt que l'école est « la toute première école de commerce au monde (créée en 1819) »<sup>2</sup>, tantôt qu'elle « est la première et la plus ancienne école de commerce au monde »<sup>3</sup>. Ces allégations sont d'ailleurs reproduites dans les communiqués de presse, rapports d'autoévaluation et autres supports de communication de l'école qui, mêlant français et anglais, célèbrent à travers l'école « la première *Business School* au monde fondée en 1819 » (AE, Communiqués de presse, 2009-2019). Ce message est également promu par certains enseignants de l'école dans des publications à caractère scientifique (Fendt et Bureau, 2010 : 92 ; Kaplan, 2014 : 530 ; Kaplan, 2018 : 114 ; Deslandes, 2020) ; ce qui atteste bien du degré de diffusion de ce message parmi les acteurs organisationnels. Comme en témoigne le directeur de la communication : « ESCP a été la première école de commerce ouverte au monde. Par définition, être les premiers sur un marché, c'est avoir été entrepreneur. Cet état d'esprit est donc ancré dans les gènes de l'école » (JE, Direction de la communication, novembre 2019). Cette prétendue antériorité mondiale est interprétée comme un signe du caractère avant-gardiste de l'esprit entrepreneurial qui animerait l'école depuis sa fondation. Cet avant-gardisme est d'ailleurs illustré dans les supports de communication de l'école par d'autres aspects de son histoire, comme la précocité de son internationalisation dès les années 1820 ou l'instauration des *business games* dès le tout début du dix-neuvième siècle (Kaplan, 2014 : 533).

Enfin, le troisième message mis en avant par la direction de l'école pour fonder son IO entrepreneuriale est celui suivant lequel ESCP BS jouirait d'une prédisposition naturelle à l'innovation qui en ferait une « start-up éducative » depuis 1819. Ce message est apparu

2. Site consulté le 9 juin 2020 : <http://www.espeurope.eu/fr/escp-europe/chiffres-des-et-gouvernance-escp-europe/presentation-ces-chiffres-des-escp-europe-business-school/>

3. Site consulté le 9 juin 2020 : <http://www.espeurope.eu/fr/escp-europe/histoire-de-escp-europe-business-school/>

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pour la première fois en 2013 dans le cadre de la célébration des 40 ans du modèle européen multi-campus de l'école. Cette prédisposition est alors présentée par la direction comme fondée sur la culture de l'établissement qui expérimenterait pour élaborer des formations ou des recherches offrant le plus de valeur pour son environnement social et économique. Comme le signale l'un des anciens directeurs de l'enseignement de la CCIP, « l'école est une start-up éducative car depuis toujours elle invente de nouveaux *business models* plutôt que d'optimiser un *business model* déjà éprouvé par les écoles concurrentes. Relisez son histoire : le *business model* des années 1820 n'a rien à voir avec celui implémenté par Blanqui dans les années 1830-1850, ni même avec celui que la CCIP a implémenté après 1869... D'ailleurs depuis un siècle et demi, son *business model* est en évolution permanente. [...] L'EAP<sup>4</sup> était une start-up inédite en 1973 et nous avons pérennisé et élargi son modèle en la fusionnant à l'ESCP en 1999... Maintenant, avec la réduction, et bientôt la suppression pure et simple, de la subvention consulaire, l'école doit trouver un nouveau *business model* et donc innover, comme elle l'a toujours fait. C'est ça, l'esprit start-up » (IE, CCIP, mai 2018). Il convient de préciser ici que l'année 2013 coïncide aussi avec la révision de la politique budgétaire de la CCIP. À cette occasion, cette dernière a fait savoir à la direction générale de ESCP BS que le montant de la subvention consulaire allait être amené à décroître très fortement dans les années à venir et que, par conséquent, l'école devait trouver par elle-même de nouvelles sources de financement. Comme l'ont confirmé ces récents travaux (Passant, 2018b et 2020), la dotation budgétaire de la CCIP qui représentait encore 35 % du budget de l'école en 2000, en représentait seulement 14% en 2013, puis 10 % en 2018 et devrait être nulle à compter de 2022.

L'IO entrepreneuriale de ESCP BS s'est donc progressivement constituée depuis 1994 autour de trois messages clés – ses conditions de fondation (« une école fondée par des entrepreneurs et pour des entrepreneurs »), son antériorité mondiale (« la première *Business School* au monde fondée en 1819 »), et sa prédisposition naturelle à l'innovation (« une start-up éducative »). Un tweet du directeur général de l'école de septembre 2018 condense d'ailleurs ces trois messages identitaires. En réponse à l'affirmation du Président de la République, Emmanuel Macron, suivant laquelle « Entrepreneur est un mot français », le directeur général de ESCP BS a répondu « Tout à fait : le terme fut popularisé et le concept théorisé par Jean-Baptiste Say, lui-même co-fondateur d'une start-up nommée @ESCPeurope il y a... 199 ans » (WE, 2018).

Le contexte a cependant amené certains messages à être reformulés par l'école. Depuis les années 2010, plusieurs chercheurs ont rappelé que Jean-Baptiste Say n'était pas le fondateur ni même le co-fondateur de ESCP BS en 1819 (Friderson et Paquy, 2008 ; Uzunidis, 2015), mais seulement un soutien ayant participé à la consolidation de l'école entre 1825 et 1832 en rejoignant son conseil de perfectionnement (Passant, 2018b : 703-707). Dans ces conditions, la paternité de l'école ne pouvant plus être attribuée à Jean-Baptiste Say, la direction a entrepris de valoriser autrement les liens entre ce personnage historique et ESCP BS en présentant parfois Jean-Baptiste Say comme son co-fondateur, en association avec d'autres figures des années 1820 comme le négociant Vital Roux, le banquier Jacques Laffitte ou le député Casmir Perier. Le site Internet de ESCP BS témoigne de cette situation de relative imprécision sur la paternité de l'établissement : sur certaines pages internet Say

4. En 1999, ESCP BS a fusionné avec une autre école de commerce de la CCIP, l'EAP. Cette école, créée en 1973, détenait plusieurs campus en Europe (Passant, 2020 : 178-182).

est présenté comme le co-fondateur de l'école<sup>5</sup> tandis que d'autres pages du site avancent que ce sont Germain Legret et Amédée Brocard qui en sont les co-fondateurs<sup>6</sup>. Même si Say n'est plus inmanquablement présenté comme LE fondateur de l'école, son portrait a pourtant été inclus sur le logo du bicentenaire de l'école en 2019 alors qu'il a finalement été retiré du timbre commémoratif créé pour l'occasion bien que sa présence y ait été initialement envisagée (IE, Direction générale, mai 2018).

L'influence des publications à caractère historique ne doit cependant pas être surestimée dans la reformulation des messages véhiculant l'IO entrepreneuriale de ESCP BS. En effet, les deux autres messages sur lesquels l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école est fondée ont également été partiellement démentis par de récentes recherches sans que cela n'entraîne leur reformulation : ESCP BS n'est pas la « première *Business School* créée au monde » car plusieurs devancières ont été identifiées (Touzot, 2016 ; Passant, 2016 et 2019) tandis qu'elle ne saurait pas non plus être considérée comme une « start-up éducative » de manière ininterrompue depuis 1819 en raison de son statut de bureaucratie consulaire pendant plus d'un siècle (Servan-Schreiber, 1994 ; Passant, 2018b et 2020). Dans ces conditions, l'écriture voire la réécriture ces messages identitaires ne sont pas nécessairement de simples réactions aux seuls discours scientifiques auxquels il s'agirait de se conformer. D'autres facteurs d'influence entrent également en jeu. Parmi eux, il faut distinguer l'influence de l'environnement social et politique de l'école avec notamment le souhait exprimé par le gouvernement français depuis 2015 – et renouvelé depuis à plusieurs reprises – que la France s'érige en « start-up nation », c'est-à-dire en une nation capable de procurer des géants de l'économie numérique et de l'intelligence artificielle (Lacorne, 2019). Un autre facteur d'influence est plus spécifique aux évolutions de l'entrepreneuriat comme discipline. Comme l'explique l'un des dirigeants de l'école « si la figure de Jean-Baptiste Say est fondamentale dans la construction de l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école, il ne faut pas oublier que l'entrepreneuriat n'est pas une aventure solitaire ou individuelle. C'est aussi l'aventure d'un collectif. L'entrepreneur n'est pas seul et il doit savoir fédérer autour de son projet. C'est pourquoi [la direction générale] présente maintenant Say davantage comme le co-fondateur de l'école plutôt que comme LE fondateur unique de celle-ci. Say a su mobiliser les grands hommes du *business* de l'époque pour que l'école survive. Il ne faut pas l'oublier » (IE, Direction générale, mai 2018). En ce sens, les discours sur l'entrepreneuriat et leur évolution – d'un processus centré sur l'individu à un processus collectif – influencent aussi l'élaboration des messages que la direction de l'école promeut pour alimenter son IO entrepreneuriale.

#### 4. Discussion

Si ESCP BS forme à l'entrepreneuriat depuis 1974, la transformation vingt ans plus tard de son IO dans un sens entrepreneurial révèle qu'il convient de distinguer d'une part l'entrepreneuriat comme pratique éducative et d'autre part l'entrepreneuriat comme discours organisationnel. Notre étude présente deux aspects significatifs de la transformation entrepreneuriale de l'IO en école de commerce : le rôle ambivalent que peuvent tenir les discours historiques dans la construction de cette IO (4.1.) ainsi que ses implications pratiques en termes d'organisation (4.2.).

5. Site consulté le 9 juin 2020 : <https://www.escp.europa.eu/events/jean-baptiste-say-entrepreneurship-festival-10th-edition>

6. Site consulté le 9 juin 2020 : <https://www.escp.europa.eu/news/germain-legret-1752-1836-and-amedee-brocard-1789-1873-schools-first-deans>

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Tableau 2. La diversification entrepreneuriale des activités à ESCP BS depuis les années 1970

	Principaux dispositifs de formation, de recherche, d'accompagnement et de communication en entrepreneuriat à ESCP BS					
<b>Formation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ouverture d'une option dédiée à la création d'entreprises en 2<sup>ème</sup> année du programme Grande école (1974)</li> <li>• Première embauche d'un professeur en entrepreneuriat (1974)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'une option «Entrepreneuriat» en 3<sup>ème</sup> année du programme Grande école (1981)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ouverture d'une mineure (18 heures) «Entrepreneuriat» en 2<sup>ème</sup> année du programme Grande école (1995)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'une mineure (18 heures) «Reprise et acquisition d'entreprises» en 3<sup>ème</sup> année du programme Grande école (1996)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ouverture du Master Spécialisé «Entreprendre» (1998)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'une majeure (102 heures) «Innovater et Entreprendre» en 3<sup>ème</sup> année du programme Grande école, en partenariat avec le Center for Entrepreneurial Studies du Babson College (1998)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'un programme sur-mesure en formation continue pour développer l'entrepreneuriat (4 cours), en partenariat avec le Center for Entrepreneurial Studies du Babson College (1998)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'un programme en formation continue en entrepreneuriat (26 jours) «Start-up 2000» (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ouverture d'un séminaire en formation continue sur l'entrepreneuriat (2004)</li> <li>• Ouverture de l'European executive MBA in Entrepreneurship (2009)</li> <li>• Signature de partenariats avec des écoles d'ingénieurs (Ecole Centrale Paris et Ecole des Ponts Paristech) pour donner des cours d'entrepreneuriat aux élèves de l'école (2010)</li> <li>• 34 professeurs engagés dans l'enseignement d'entrepreneuriat (2011)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ouverture de l'executive Master in «Digital Innovation &amp; Entrepreneurship Leadership» sur les campus de Berlin et Paris (2016)</li> <li>• Ouverture de l'option «Entrepreneuriat» sur les campus de Berlin et Madrid (2017)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ouverture du MSc in «Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Innovation» (2018)</li> <li>• Introduction du cours «Entrepreneuriat» et Intrapreneurship au sein de l'executive MBA (2018)</li> </ul>

Principaux dispositifs de formation, de recherche, d'accompagnement et de communication en entrepreneuriat à ESCP BS	
<b>Recherche</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ouverture à l'école d'un centre de recherches sur la création d'entreprises (1983)</li> <li>• Participation de l'école, avec HEC Paris, Advancia et l'ESIEE, à la codirection de la chaire transversale de recherche en Entrepreneuriat de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris (2006)</li> <li>• Ouverture à l'école d'une chaire «Entrepreneuriat» avec le soutien d'Ernst &amp; Young (2007)</li> <li>• Participation de l'école, avec HEC Paris, Advancia et l'ESIEE, à la codirection de la chaire transversale de recherche en Entrepreneuriat de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris (2006)</li> <li>• Ouverture à l'école d'une chaire «Entrepreneuriat» avec le soutien d'Ernst &amp; Young (2007)</li> <li>• Création d'un «Observatoire européen sur la création des entreprises» sur le campus de Turin (2008)</li> <li>• Publication annuelle du «Baromètre des Entrepreneurs France» (2008)</li> </ul>
<b>Accompagnement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Création de l'association étudiante «ACCEDE» aidant les chômeurs à développer leurs projets d'entreprises (1987)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'un incubateur «Yellow Factory» (2003)</li> <li>• Création du Prix «Innovat et Entreprendre» remis annuellement aux meilleurs projets de création d'entreprises élaborés par un étudiant de l'école (2005)</li> <li>• Ouverture d'un pré-incubateur «Blue Factory» (2009)</li> <li>• Création du «Collège Paris Factory» proposant des cours du soir à des auto-entrepreneurs ou à des dirigeants de PME (2009)</li> <li>• Création de «Made in ESCP» événement annuel durant la rencontre d'entrepreneurs étudiants ou diplômés de l'école avec des business angels (2010)</li> <li>• Création de l'association étudiante «Incube» aidant les étudiants à développer leurs projets d'entreprises (2006)</li> <li>• Création du «Prix de la meilleure école entrepreneuriale de France» (2008)</li> <li>• Création du «Prix du meilleur business plan de France» (2008)</li> </ul>

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<p>Principaux dispositifs de formation, de recherche, d'accompagnement et de communication en entrepreneuriat à ESCP BS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Création des 175 ans de l'école au four du slogan «ESCP, école fondée par des entrepreneurs et pour des entrepreneurs» (1994)</li> <li>• Mention de Jean-Baptiste Say comme «créateur de l'école» sur le premier site internet de l'école (1997)</li> <li>• Lancement de la première édition du forum «Entreprendre et Innover», en partenariat avec le CNAM (1997)</li> <li>• Désignation d'un alumnus entrepreneur, Pierre Sissmann (fondateur de Cybercapital, une structure d'investissements dans internet), comme parrain de la promotion entrante du programme Grande école (1997)</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Création par les alumni du «Club des Entrepreneurs» (1989)</li> <li>• Renommage de l'amphithéâtre 2 du campus de Paris en amphithéâtre «Jean-Baptiste Say» (2000)</li> <li>• Désignation d'un alumnus entrepreneur, Marc Reeb (fondateur de Netcrawling, spécialiste de la pige publicitaire sur internet), comme parrain de la promotion entrante du programme Grande école (2000)</li> <li>• Lancement par le «Club des Entrepreneurs» de la première édition de la «Nuit de la Création», soirée annuelle de networking dédiée aux entrepreneurs (2003)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Création de la «Fête annuelle de l'Entrepreneur» (2009)</li> <li>• Création du «Festival de l'Entrepreneuriat» sur le campus de Paris (2013)</li> <li>• Renommage de la chaire «Entrepreneuriat» en «Institut Jean-Baptiste Say» (2017)</li> <li>• Célébration des 200 ans de l'école avec la figure de Jean-Baptiste Say sur le logo du bicentenaire (2019)</li> </ul>
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#### 4.1 La construction de l'IO entrepreneuriale en école de commerce : les discours historiques comme facilitateurs ou freins identitaires

L'IO entrepreneuriale s'inscrit dans un processus d'« entrepreneurialisme » c'est-à-dire de production de discours entrepreneuriaux (Germain et Jacquemin, 2017). À ESCP BS, la construction de l'IO dans un sens entrepreneurial s'est opérée par le biais de discours mobilisant le passé de l'école. Notre étude confirme les travaux de la littérature (Czarniawska, 1997 ; Vaara, Tienari et Säänti, 2003 ; Brown, Dacin, Pratt et Whetten, 2000) suivant lesquels ces discours identitaires s'expriment de manière narrative ou métaphorique. Les discours narratifs racontent une histoire, comme l'illustrent les deux premiers messages identitaires de notre étude qui exposent les conditions entrepreneuriales de fondation de l'école et sa prétendue antériorité mondiale. Les discours métaphoriques, quant à eux, comparent implicitement l'organisation à une autre entité pour s'en accaparer certains traits distinctifs (Vaara, Tienari et Säänti, 2003 : 421). Dans notre cas, le troisième message véhiculé par l'IO entrepreneuriale de ESCP BS relève bien du discours métaphorique car si le terme de « start-up éducative » peut valablement être appliqué pour qualifier le statut de l'école dans les années 1820, sa valeur aujourd'hui ne peut plus être que métaphorique. En effet, à ce jour, par son âge, sa taille et ses modes de fonctionnement, ESCP BS n'a plus rien d'une start-up. L'utilisation répétée de ce vocable par la direction et sa diffusion auprès des parties prenantes de l'école révèlent l'attachement des acteurs organisationnels à cette période fondatrice de l'histoire scolaire tout en témoignant de leur volonté de faire perdurer symboliquement un état d'esprit pionnier que l'école a originellement incarné. En cela, notre cas confirme les travaux de Vaara, Tienari et Säänti (2003) selon lesquels la construction de l'IO sur la base de métaphores est d'autant plus acceptée par les acteurs organisationnels que la métaphore retenue fait référence à l'histoire de l'organisation (Vaara, Tienari et Säänti, 2003 : 446).

Toutefois, notre cas révèle que le contenu de ces discours est parfois imprécis ; ce qui peut entraver la diffusion d'une IO entrepreneuriale homogène au sein de l'école et au-delà. À ce titre, notre travail nuance de manière substantielle les propos de plusieurs auteurs (Ashforth, Rogers et Corley, 2011 ; Horton, Bayerl et Jacobs, 2014) suivant lesquels les discours historiques seraient par nature des mécanismes facilitateurs de diffusion identitaire. En effet, les libellés des trois messages identitaires diffusés par la direction de ESCP BS sont porteurs d'ambiguïtés. Concrètement, ces dernières se manifestent sous la forme d'incertitudes ou d'inexactitudes factuelles comme l'illustrent les deux premiers messages. En effet, le message « une école fondée par des entrepreneurs et pour des entrepreneurs » repose sur une imprécision factuelle qui se traduit par la diffusion de plusieurs versions de l'identité réelle des fondateurs de l'école mettant en avant tantôt Jean-Baptiste Say comme fondateur unique ou co-fondateur aux côtés d'autres personnalités, tantôt Germain Legret et Amédée Brodart comme seuls fondateurs. De même, le deuxième message suivant lequel l'école serait « la première Business School au monde fondée en 1819 » est inexact sur le plan des faits. Puisque plusieurs écoles de commerce antérieures à ESCP BS ont été identifiées par des travaux de recherche – d'ailleurs connus de certains membres de l'école qui en font mention dans leurs publications (voir par exemple Deslandes, 2020 : 358) ou les présentent parfois (voir Passant, 2020 : 207-210) – ce message, toujours véhiculé comme s'il s'agissait d'une vérité historique, mériterait d'être requalifié de mythe organisationnel et donc d'être recontextualisé et reformulé – avec des guillemets ou une *base fine* explicative par exemple. L'ambiguïté se manifeste, enfin, sous la forme d'imprécisions interprétatives comme l'illustre le troisième message identitaire « une start-up éducative ». En fonction de l'éclairage



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historique retenu, ce message peut alternativement être lu de manière littérale – car l'école était bien une start-up éducative au début des années 1820 – ou bien de manière métaphorique – car ESCP BS ne peut plus être assimilée aujourd'hui comme telle. Dans ces conditions, à ESCP BS, les discours historiques véhiculent une IO entrepreneuriale qui peut être lue de plusieurs façons ; ce qui constitue un risque pour sa cohérence telle qu'elle est perçue par les différentes parties prenantes de l'école. Concrètement, ce risque d'incohérence peut engendrer une situation de « cacophonie » chez les parties prenantes entre les différentes versions de l'IO car certaines peuvent adhérer plus volontiers à une version qu'à une autre (Ashforth, Rogers et Corley, 2011 : 1152) tandis qu'une certaine suspicion peut naître quant à l'authenticité des messages identitaires promus dans les communications institutionnelles s'il s'avère que certains d'entre eux véhiculent une vision erronée du passé de l'organisation (Felix, 2020).

En cela notre travail contrebalance donc les travaux d'Ashforth, Rogers et Corley (2011) en montrant que ce n'est pas tant la nature des mécanismes de diffusion identitaire que leurs usages qui doivent être pris en considération pour déterminer s'ils promeuvent ou entravent la diffusion de l'IO. L'avantage de cette approche est qu'en révélant la nature ambivalente des discours historiques en matière de construction de l'IO, elle permet d'en envisager la pilotabilité par les acteurs organisationnels. En effet si, dans un contexte donné, les discours historiques peuvent se révéler facilitateurs ou obstrueurs dans la diffusion de l'IO alors il appartient aux acteurs organisationnels d'en reformuler autrement les messages ou les interprétations. Comme l'illustre notre cas, dans les années 1990, l'IO entrepreneuriale de ESCP BS a ainsi d'abord été érigée autour de Jean-Baptiste Say, appréhendé comme une figure héroïque d'entrepreneur fondateur de l'école. À cette époque, l'entrepreneur était socialement perçu comme un héros, un pionnier voire un conquérant solitaire (Gomez et Korine, 2009). Cette vision individualiste de l'entrepreneur a toutefois été socialement amendée avec l'essor, à partir des années 2010, de discours revalorisant le rôle des collectifs – équipes entrepreneuriales, réseaux sociaux d'entrepreneurs, espaces entrepreneuriaux – dans les processus entrepreneuriaux (Germain et Jacquemin, 2017). C'est pourquoi, dans le cas de ESCP BS, la première version de l'IO de 1994 présentant Say comme un héros isolé, fondateur solitaire de « la première *Business School* au monde fondée en 1819 », a graduellement été remplacée, à partir de 2013, par celle d'« une start-up éducative » créée par un collectif d'entrepreneurs dont Say faisait partie parmi d'autres, devenant de ce fait non plus un entrepreneur héroïque mais un entrepreneur socialisé en adéquation avec la nouvelle perception sociale du phénomène entrepreneurial. En cela, l'IO entrepreneuriale constitue le support d'un discours historique modulable par lequel l'école se met en scène comme une émanation de l'acte d'entreprendre – ESCP BS vue comme l'œuvre novatrice d'entrepreneurs pionniers –, mais aussi comme une école entreprenante capable de se mettre en projet pour répondre aux attentes de son environnement (Brockling, 2016).

#### 4.2. Les implications de l'IO entrepreneuriale en école de commerce : l'éthos entrepreneurial comme filtre d'interprétation de la trajectoire passée et actuelle de l'école

Notre étude confirme les travaux de la littérature suivant lesquels l'histoire constitue un réservoir exploitable pour construire l'IO (Kroezen et Heugens, 2012 ; Cailluet, Gorge et Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2018 ; Oertel et Thommes, 2018). Elle enrichit toutefois ces travaux en rappelant une condition d'importance : l'histoire n'étant pas appréhendable telle quelle, une

grille de lecture s'interpose nécessairement entre l'histoire de l'organisation et les acteurs qui la mobilisent (Offenstad, 2011). À ESCP BS, cette grille de lecture est véhiculée par l'IO qui filtre l'histoire de l'organisation. Notre cas détaille ainsi le rôle de filtre interne exercé par l'IO entrepreneuriale entre d'une part les principaux facteurs de transformation entrepreneuriale et d'autre part les ressources de l'organisation qui sont reconfigurées pour y faire face.

Ce filtrage se manifeste d'abord par la réécriture du passé de l'école afin de l'aligner sur les enjeux stratégiques contemporains qu'elle rencontre. Ainsi, à ESCP BS, lorsque le contexte économique et concurrentiel dans lequel évoluait l'école de même que son agenda commémoratif (la célébration des 175 ans de l'école) ont rendu opportune la révision de son IO la direction a opéré celle-ci dans un sens entrepreneurial en sélectionnant les éléments de son histoire les plus à même d'incarner ce nouveau positionnement. Cette IO a alors agi comme un filtre interne par lequel la direction a « tamisé » l'histoire organisationnelle en vertu de l'esprit d'entreprendre que l'école prétendait incarner. Cette réécriture a ainsi permis à l'école de se prévaloir d'un (co)fondateur qui n'était pas le sien (Jean-Baptiste Say, conformément au premier message de l'IO entrepreneuriale) mais aussi de caractéristiques entrepreneuriales qui n'étaient pas fondées historiquement (le statut de « première *Business School* créée au monde » d'après le deuxième message de l'IO entrepreneuriale) ou qui l'étaient mais alors pour des périodes plus restreintes que ce qui avait été avancé par l'organisation (le passé de « start-up éducative » selon le troisième message de l'IO entrepreneuriale).

Le rôle de filtre exercé par l'IO entrepreneuriale ne se manifeste pas seulement par la réécriture du passé organisationnel : il se traduit aussi par une relecture de l'actualité de l'école. Dans notre cas, cette relecture est opérée pour aligner ESCP BS sur un standard organisationnel socialement valorisé depuis le début des années 2000 : celui de la start-up innovante (Lacorne, 2019). Concrètement, cette relecture impacte les activités de l'école et ses modes de fonctionnement. Ainsi, il est significatif de relever que ESCP BS a d'abord entrepris de refonder son IO dès 1994 avant de réorganiser en profondeur, plusieurs années plus tard, son offre de formations, de recherches et d'accompagnement en faveur de l'entrepreneuriat. Concrètement, ce n'est qu'à partir de l'ouverture du Master Spécialisé « Innover et Entreprendre » en 1998 qu'un virage entrepreneurial s'est réellement amorcé dans le cursus de l'école avant que l'inflexion décisive en matière de recherches ne soit impulsée par l'ouverture de la chaire « Entrepreneuriat » en 2007. Ensuite, avec la diffusion en interne des discours entrepreneuriaux, la direction générale de l'école a commencé à mobiliser ses élèves et ses enseignants autour de nouvelles dynamiques d'apprentissage perçues comme favorables à l'esprit d'entreprendre, comme les classes inversées ou la « dérive situationniste » (Bureau et Fendt, 2012 ; Bureau et Komporozos-Athanasidou, 2017). De nouvelles dynamiques de fonctionnement ont été impulsées : ESCP BS attend désormais de ses personnels la mise en place d'activités de prospection et d'innovation ainsi que de modes de collaboration témoignant de l'esprit d'entreprendre qu'elle cherche à incarner. De même, les élèves sont, quels que soient leurs programmes de rattachement, invités à faire preuve d'esprit d'entreprendre au sein de l'école voire même au-delà. En ce sens, la construction d'une IO entrepreneuriale a amené la direction générale à opter pour une grille de lecture entrepreneuriale de sa propre organisation. Cette situation révèle ainsi que la production de discours entrepreneuriaux découlant de la nouvelle IO de l'école joue bien un rôle structurant dans le renouvellement de ses cursus, de ses recherches, de ses pédagogies, mais également de ses ressources.

Le rôle de filtre exercé par l'IO entrepreneuriale – qu'il se manifeste par la réécriture du passé de l'école selon une perspective entrepreneuriale ou par l'adoption d'une grille de

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lecture entrepreneuriale des activités actuelles de l'école – répond à la volonté des acteurs de l'école de mieux asseoir sa crédibilité entrepreneuriale. À ce jour, l'environnement social valorise désormais l'entrepreneuriat après l'avoir longtemps ignoré voire méprisé (Vérin, 2011). Dans ce cadre, présenter l'école comme l'œuvre pionnière d'entrepreneurs rassemblés en 1819 pour ouvrir la « première *Business School* créée au monde » puis comme une « start-up éducative » formant des générations d'entrepreneurs depuis deux siècles est une manœuvre discursive permettant d'affirmer la légitimité de l'école de commerce comme lieu d'incarnation de l'éthos entrepreneurial. Cette légitimité ne s'inscrit pas seulement dans l'histoire de l'organisation : elle s'incarne aujourd'hui par des discours et des pratiques (des dispositifs d'enseignement, de recherche et d'accompagnement) plus entrepreneuriaux. Ces éléments construisent l'IO entrepreneuriale de ESCP BS autour de la figure de l'école entreprenante plutôt qu'autour de la seule figure de son entrepreneur fondateur. Ce faisant, l'école s'entrepren, c'est-à-dire se repositionne discursivement et factuellement comme étant entrepreneuriale par son fonctionnement plutôt que par le seul récit de sa création.

## Conclusion

Le présent article a cherché à comprendre quelles sont les causes et les conséquences de la transformation entrepreneuriale de l'identité organisationnelle des écoles de commerce. Pour étudier cette problématique, une étude de cas historique et longitudinale a été consacrée à l'élaboration puis à l'évolution de l'IO entrepreneuriale de l'école de commerce européenne ESCP BS des années 1970 jusqu'à ce jour. Notre étude apporte plusieurs contributions distinctes.

Sur le plan empirique, notre travail contribue à la littérature sur l'histoire de l'entrepreneuriat et de son enseignement en proposant une étude de cas sur l'émergence puis le développement de l'entrepreneuriat au sein d'une école de commerce. Cette étude révèle d'abord que l'engagement de l'école ESCP BS dans le domaine de l'entrepreneuriat, puis la construction par elle d'une IO entrepreneuriale, ne sont pas nés d'une analyse stratégique préalable mais ont relevé plutôt d'un processus stratégique émergent. À ce titre, les discours produits par certaines écoles de commerce sur leur orientation entrepreneuriale préexistantement « ancrée dans leurs gènes » méritent d'être recontextualisés historiquement. Ensuite, notre étude montre que les processus opérationnels et identitaires de transformation entrepreneuriale ne coïncident pas nécessairement dans le temps. En effet, l'évolution entrepreneuriale de ESCP BS s'est amorcée au niveau pédagogique au début des années 1970, alors que ce n'est qu'à partir des années 1990, dans un contexte nouveau, que cette évolution s'est traduite au niveau de son IO entraînant la réorganisation de son offre de formations, de recherches et d'accompagnement en faveur de l'entrepreneuriat. C'est dire que les processus de transformation entrepreneuriale n'obéissent pas nécessairement aux mêmes logiques, suivant qu'ils s'expriment sur les plans opérationnel ou identitaire.

Sur le plan théorique, notre étude met en lumière un processus organisationnel encore peu étudié : la construction par certaines écoles de commerce d'une IO entrepreneuriale. Ce sujet est particulièrement déterminant pour elles car la construction d'une IO entrepreneuriale peut représenter un élément de réponse aux contraintes actuelles d'hyper-concurrence sectorielle mais aussi de remise en cause de leur légitimité. Concrètement, la transformation de l'IO dans un sens entrepreneurial suppose de mobiliser des discours exploitant l'histoire de l'organisation. Notre étude contribue à la littérature sur les processus de construction de

l'IO en confirmant de précédents travaux suivant lesquels les discours identitaires s'expriment par des narrations ou des métaphores (Czarniawska, 1997 ; Vaara, Tienari et Sääntti, 2003 ; Brown, Dacin, Pratt et Whetten, 2006) qui sont d'autant mieux acceptées par les acteurs organisationnels qu'elles font référence à l'histoire de l'organisation (Vaara, Tienari et Sääntti, 2003). Notre cas nuance cependant de manière substantielle les propos d'Ashforth, Rogers et Corley (2011) en révélant que les discours historiques ne facilitent pas pour autant automatiquement la diffusion de l'IO. Ils peuvent en effet présenter en eux des germes d'obstruction. Ces derniers se manifestent par des imprécisions factuelles ou interprétatives qui sont potentiellement génératrices de discordances identitaires dans l'organisation et au-delà. En cela, notre cas révèle comment l'IO entrepreneuriale exerce un rôle de filtre entre, d'un côté, les exigences de l'environnement et, de l'autre, les activités ou modes de fonctionnement de l'organisation. Concrètement, la transformation de l'IO de l'école dans un sens entrepreneurial incite ses acteurs à investir dans des ressources, des processus et des symboles nécessaires pour incarner l'esprit d'entreprendre. Cette incarnation, médiatisée par la réécriture de l'histoire de l'école et l'adoption d'une grille de lecture entrepreneuriale de ses activités actuelles, permet de constituer un discours de preuves sans lequel l'IO entrepreneuriale risquerait de se réduire à une « coquille » vide de sens et de contenu aux yeux des parties prenantes. De ce fait, notre étude enrichit la littérature sur la mobilisation de l'histoire pour construire l'IO (Kroezen et Heugens, 2012 ; Caillet, Gorge et Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2018 ; Certel et Thommes, 2018). Cet enrichissement repose sur l'analyse du rôle que jouent les filtres d'interprétation – l'éthos entrepreneurial dans notre cas – dans la sélection puis la promotion de certains discours ou certaines pratiques selon leur degré d'alignement avec les enjeux identitaires de l'organisation.

À ce titre, notre étude détaille comment l'IO entrepreneuriale peut être instrumentalisée par les dirigeants d'écoles de commerce pour légitimer certains itinéraires de développement pour leur organisation. L'une des implications pratiques de la présente étude est ainsi d'inviter les dirigeants d'écoles de commerce à développer leur sensibilité quant à l'IO de ces établissements. La réalisation d'« audits historiques » sur le passé de ces écoles pourrait permettre de recenser les éléments de preuves permettant d'illustrer, de justifier, ou de remodeler le positionnement actuel ou projeté de leur IO. C'est rappeler que le travail de recension et de valorisation de l'histoire organisationnelle présente bien un intérêt opérationnel pour les dirigeants désireux de doter leur école d'une IO entrepreneuriale. Par exemple, à la lumière de récents travaux (Passant, 2020 : 34-35 ; 64-68), il est apparu que plusieurs directeurs, professeurs et diplômés de ESCP BS ont ouvert des écoles de commerce en France ou à l'étranger après avoir fréquenté l'école. Cette situation peut s'interpréter selon une grille de lecture entrepreneuriale comme révélatrice de processus d'essaimage ou d'intrapreneuriat. Si la mise à jour récente de ce passé n'a, pour le moment, pas encore fait l'objet d'une quelconque promotion communicationnelle par la direction de l'école, il n'est pas exclu qu'à l'avenir celle-ci ne s'approprie ces éléments d'histoire, comme elle l'a d'ailleurs fait au cours des trente dernières années, pour forger un nouveau message consolidant son IO entrepreneuriale. De ce fait, notre travail ouvre la voie à de futures études analysant l'employabilité managériale de l'histoire et donc l'intérêt des études historiques pour construire l'IO entrepreneuriale des écoles de commerce.

Notre contribution à la compréhension des mécanismes d'IO entrepreneuriale en école de commerce mériterait d'être complétée de futurs travaux. D'abord, notre étude de cas est principalement fondée sur des sources reflétant les interprétations de la direction de l'école. Ce choix méthodologique a été justifié par le rôle central que la littérature

attribue habituellement aux dirigeants dans le façonnement de l'IO. Nous reconnaissons toutefois que cette approche mériterait d'être enrichie par la prise en compte d'autres parties prenantes – étudiants, entreprises, agences d'accréditation, acteurs politiques, etc. – qui, même si elles ne pilotent pas la construction de l'IO, en perçoivent néanmoins les messages et peuvent les interpréter autrement que ce qui peut être initialement envisagé. En effet, en école de commerce, inscrire l'esprit d'entreprendre comme centre de gravité de l'IO rend cette dimension en principe opposable aux parties prenantes qui pourraient s'en prévaloir pour demander des comptes à la direction de l'école. En cela, notre étude appelle de futures recherches qui pourraient s'intéresser aux réactions et, en particulier, aux degrés d'adhésion, de résistance, de réappropriation ou même d'incrédulité, des publics externes ou internes face aux messages que certaines écoles de commerce véhiculent pour se doter d'une IO entrepreneuriale. Ensuite, le caractère qualitatif de notre étude nous a permis de comprendre les mécanismes d'élaboration de l'IO entrepreneuriale dans une école de commerce mais pas d'en mesurer pour autant tous les effets. C'est pourquoi, il conviendrait de mener une étude quantitative et comparative pour évaluer si la mise en place d'une IO entrepreneuriale se traduit auprès des étudiants par un taux d'intention de création d'entreprises supérieur à celui d'autres écoles de commerce n'ayant pas construit d'IO entrepreneuriale. Enfin, il serait utile, selon une perspective comparative également, de comprendre comment, pourquoi et avec quels résultats, d'autres écoles de commerce, dans différents contextes régionaux ou nationaux, se sont dotées d'une IO entrepreneuriale comme ESCP BS ou, au contraire, ont fait le choix de conserver une identité plus généraliste ou bien alors spécialisée dans d'autres domaines en dépit de l'orientation entrepreneuriale croissante de leurs activités.

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## Educating indigenous commercial executives. A business school in colonial context: The case of the Indochina Higher School of Commerce (1920–1932)

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### ABSTRACT

Research has traditionally addressed higher commercial education in the setting of Western countries, which does not consider empirical evidence that historically some higher education institutions devoted to commercial education were also founded in the colonies. Drawing on archival analysis, this article details the case of the Indochina Higher School of Commerce, founded in 1920, which was officially the first commercial school at the tertiary level in Vietnam in colonial times. Although this school was formed to contribute to the formation of a new type of 'indigenous elite', as the colonial administration referred to them, its development was hampered by the contradictions of French colonial policy. Despite its brief existence, the analysis of the Indochina Higher School of Commerce adds a significant layer to the literature concerning the global history of commercial education at higher level.

### KEYWORDS

Business school; colonies; metropolises; indigenous; Indochina

### Introduction

Research has traditionally addressed higher commercial education in the setting of higher schools of commerce, faculties of business and higher engineering schools (Passant, 2019). A first stream of literature has particularly focussed on the genesis of higher commercial education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Western countries (Amdam, 2008; Engwall et al., 2010, 2016; Engwall & Zamagni, 1998; Gourvish & Tiratsoo, 1998; Kipping et al., 2004; Locke, 1984, 1985, 1989; Passant, 2016), or Japan (Ikema et al., 2000; Nishizawa, 1998, 2011; Ohtsuki, 2017). A second stream of literature addresses business schools in third-world or postcolonial regions after the Second World War, such as Brazil, India or African countries (Alcadipani, 2010; Alcadipani & Caldas, 2012; Kumar, 2019; Nkomo, 2011, 2015, 2018; Wanderley et al., 2021). Similarly, postcolonial studies have shown that during the post-Second World War era, the Americanisation of management education in previously colonised third-world countries was driven by neo-colonial logics (Frenkel & Shenhav, 2003; Prasad et al., 2016).

However, there has been no research which contributes to understanding how tertiary-level commercial education emerged in the colonies in colonial times. Although some authors have discussed the history of the first secondary-level commercial schools in colonial

Brazil (Araújo et al., 2017; Chaves, 2009; Ricardino, 2001; Rodrigues et al., 2011, 2012; Rodrigues & Sangster, 2013; Silva, 2005), these studies do not focus on commercial education at higher level in the colonies specifically.

This type of teaching was not an immediate priority for the colonisers. Indeed, colonial administrations were generally confronted with common challenges (e.g. epidemics, planning of the conquered territories, elementary education of the local populations), which necessitated the development of higher education in medicine, engineering, and teacher training (Charton & Michel, 2017). Thus, initially, colonial rulers opened higher education institutions to educate physicians, engineers, interpreters, and administrators (Zollmann, 2020).

Commercial education was not taught in the first colonial higher education institutions because such education was not considered a priority at the time. Indeed, the colonial administration initially did not recognise higher-level commercial education at all, considering that it was based almost exclusively on vocational, practice-based learning (Engwall et al., 2010; Engwall & Zamagni, 1998; Fauri, 1998). However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, a system of higher commercial education was emerging in European countries (Meyer, 1998; Passant, 2019). Locke (1984, p. 136) observed a 'veritable explosion in commercial education' at tertiary level at the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly in France, Germany, and Great Britain. However, this observation was made only for the metropolitan territories, without considering that these countries were also imperial powers at the time. In other words, it is the division between the European metropolises, seen as 'centers', and their colonies, seen as 'peripheries', according to Shils and Polanyi *Festschrift Committee* (1961), that these works seem to ignore. Historical evidence shows that commercial education was not limited to metropolitan areas, but also spread to certain European colonies. After colonies were conquered, they were meant to develop into future sources of national wealth for the colonisers, and thus higher education was generally designed to contribute to an improved, economically viable future for those territories (Zollmann, 2020). Questions of colonial education for future business and economic actors became paramount to the entire colonial project and the settlement schemes that served to justify associated public expenses (Kozakowski, 2020; Scalvedi, 2020).

In France, the first higher commercial schools opened in the nineteenth century and offered colonial education to their students – i.e. students living in France and aiming to work in the colonies (Blanchard, 2015; Passant, 2020a). However, schools to educate French or native students living in the colonies and aiming to undertake a commercial career were still necessary. To this end, three higher commercial schools opened in the French colonies: two by African private founders in Algiers (1900) and Carthage (1942), and another by the French colonial administration in Southeast Asia in Hanoi (1920) (Hoàng Van, 2017; Le Xuan, 2018; Nguyễn, 2013). To date, few studies have addressed these pioneering efforts to establish tertiary commercial education in the colonies. Although the Higher School of Commerce of Algiers is briefly mentioned by some business historians (Blanchard, 2015, p. 44; Locke, 1984, p. 133), they give no details about its history, and the Higher School of Commerce of Carthage and the Indochina Higher School of Commerce have never been studied.

These schools provide a potentially interesting and understudied model of higher commercial education during colonial times and could represent a significant step forward in our understanding of the genesis of higher commercial education in non-Western countries. Thus, this study examines this unrecognised part of the narrative of the development of commercial education in colonised countries from the beginning of the twentieth century.

This story is not just about adopting a Western standard of higher commercial education; it also addresses its adaptation to different cultural habitats and economic needs and its confluence with domestic and cultural thought. Accordingly, the aim of this article is to analyse the emergence of higher commercial education in a colony during the colonial era, through the case of a higher commercial school at the beginning of the twentieth century. To do so, we argue herein that the focus on the Indochina Higher School of Commerce (IHSC) is significant. Although this school has received no attention in the history of commercial education, it represents an unprecedented case in the history of French colonisation for three reasons: it was (1) the first commercial school opened by the French colonial administration in the French colonial empire, (2) the first higher commercial school to have officially university rank from its opening, and (3) the first to be intended primarily for colonial natives rather than French expatriates. Four research questions follow from this goal: (1) Why was a higher commercial school such as IHSC established in this colony in 1920? (2) How did this school function in the colonial context? (3) How did IHSC position itself in relation to the French higher commercial schools at the time? (4) Why did this school close its doors in 1932?

This study responds to three calls for additional research. First, it seeks to redress the scant attention the literature has given to the development of colonial higher education within the context and processes of imperialism (Singaravélou, 2009). Second, we respond to Warner's (2017) call for informative contributions regarding the historical development of higher commercial education in Southeast Asia in colonial times. Third, we answer Passant's (2022b) and Wanderley et al. (2021) calls to analyse the role of higher commercial schools in the context of empire by giving prominence to subaltern voices heretofore silent in the higher commercial education literature.

The remainder of article is organised as follows. The second section examines the case and details the sources. The third section analyses the reasons behind the creation of IHSC. The fourth section examines how the school was organised, and the fifth analyzes how the school gradually came to be partially aligned with French higher commercial schools. The sixth section considers why the colonial administration ultimately closed IHSC in 1932. The final section closes with conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for future research.

## Data and sources

Herein, the term 'Indochina' designates the former province of the colonial empire that France conquered and then administered in Southeast Asia between 1858 and 1945. 'French Indochina' should not be confused with the term 'British Indochina', sometimes used to designate Burma between 1824 and 1948. In colonial times, French Indochina referred to five territories: Cochinchina, a French colony since 1858 with its capital, Saigon; Cambodia, a French protectorate since 1863 with its capital, Phnom Penh; Annam, a French protectorate since 1884 with its capital, Hué; Tonkin, a French semiprotectorate since 1884 with its capital, Hanoi; and Laos, a French protectorate since 1893 with its capital, Vientiane. In the 1920s, these territories covered 710,000 km<sup>2</sup> for 20 million inhabitants, more than 95% of it rural.<sup>1</sup> Of this population, only 25,000 were French expatriates, three-quarters of them polarised in the urban centres of Hanoi, Saigon, and Cholon (Aubert-Nguyen & Espagne, 2015). Indochina was an exploitation colony: superimposed on an indigenous economy based on subsistence agriculture and crafts, the colonial economy produced raw materials such as rice, rubber, coal, and minerals and imported French manufactured goods (Brocheux, 2009).

Indeed, according to the logic inherited from the 'Colonial Pact', taxation and customs barriers in Indochina protected French imports and the monopolies of French companies on certain commodities such as alcohol, salt, and opium.<sup>2</sup> Under these conditions, local industry in Indochina was kept underdeveloped, so as not to compete with French companies. We use the term 'indigenous' to designate colonial native populations and distinguish them from French settlers.

Archival data that support this research were collected from a variety of sources. As France possesses the largest volume of archives in the world on colonial Indochina (Gazquez, 2015), we consulted French archives first, particularly the National Archives of Overseas in Aix-en-Provence and the National Archives in Paris. Other important sources were the Libraries of the Institute of East Asia in Lyon and Paris. In addition, we used the Vietnamese archives, which preserve part of the archives of the colonial Indochinese government. These archives proved valuable because IHSC depended on this administration. In Vietnam, we consulted Centre II of Archives in Ho Chi Minh City and Centre III of Archives in Hanoi, as well as those of the General Library of Sciences of Ho Chi Minh City.

We have focussed in particular on the decrees and rulings published to define the organisation of higher education schools in Indochina in the *Official Bulletin of French Indochina*. We also consulted director reports of the Indochinese higher education schools, grant letters, minutes of council meetings of the colonial Indochinese government, and evaluation reports of French teachers. These records have enabled us to reconstruct how IHSC worked at the time. Finally, we studied the staff and correspondence with the colonial administration, newspapers, and letters from personalities in the teaching world of the time, published in Vietnam and France, which revealed contemporaries' perceptions of this school and its teaching.

## **The justifications for the creation of IHSC**

### ***The opening of the Indochinese University in Hanoi (1907–1917)***

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the French colonial administration in Indochina had opted for a policy of promoting 'useful' studies, mainly technical and of short duration, to train local populations. Thus, the first higher education institution was created in Hanoi in 1902 – namely, the School of Medicine (Legrandjacques, 2017, p. 44). Then, to form a loyal and efficient 'indigenous elite', the governor of Indochina, Paul Beau, decided to open an Indochinese university (Legrandjacques, 2017). He saw this establishment as a means of improving the French influence in Southeast Asia, particularly with the native students but also outside the colony. He also sought to combat the dissemination of nationalist ideas among indigenous youth (Singaravélou, 2009). Opening this university was a means to deter native and Chinese students from completing their studies in modern universities in Japan, as part of the 1905 Đông Du movement (Le Jariel, 2009).<sup>3</sup> Under these conditions, the first Indochinese university was inaugurated on November 10, 1907, in Hanoi, the administrative capital of Indochina. It consisted of three higher schools – law and administration, humanities, and science. However, this university closed its doors after a year of operation for political reasons: in France and in the colony, colonial circles feared that this initiative could form a future 'indigenous elite' capable of emancipating itself from French tutelage (Le Xuan, 2018). That said, these fears did not prevent the creation of the School of Public Works in 1913 (Legrandjacques, 2017, p. 44).



The context following the First World War, however, put reopening a university back on the agenda. After the war, France faced multiple difficulties: 1,4 million French people had been killed, and 253,000 had disappeared while its industrial production had collapsed. Recovery of the country became urgent. One of the most important measures was strengthening the exploitation of settlements, especially in Indochina. To do so in cooperation with the indigenous populations, colonists requested educational development measures. In response, the governor of Indochina, Albert Sarraut, reopened the Indochinese University in 1917. As Hoàng Văn (2017, p. 83) points out, the reopening of this university was seen as 'a duty of justice towards the faithful colonial populations who spared neither their blood nor their money [during the war]'.

In addition to these economic and moral justifications, the Indochinese University was reopened for three political objectives. The first was to contribute to the influence of French culture in Southeast Asia to compete with the Chinese culture that had been predominant there for centuries (Hoàng Văn, 2017). Establishing this French influence in Southeast Asian higher education was also important for the colonial government, because at the beginning of the twentieth century the influence of British, Japanese, and American imperialism was already present in Indochina (Legrandjacques, 2017). The second political objective of the Indochinese University was to form indigenous students educated in the French tradition who could replace the mandarins – the indigenous Indochinese elite (Le Xuan, 2018, p. 72). This new 'indigenous elite', as the colonial administration referred to them, were to be trained in French culture so that they could collaborate in France's colonial policy.<sup>4</sup> The third objective was to encourage indigenous students to stay in Indochina because it was not uncommon for them, aiming to benefit from Western sciences (notably medicine and engineering), to leave for training in Japan or in Europe. The French colonial administration feared that during these trips, native students would frequent anti-colonialist circles. To keep them in a relationship of dependence and loyalty vis-à-vis French colonial rulers and within the sphere of French influence, the governor of Indochina therefore reopened a university in Hanoi (Le Xuan, 2018, pp. 56–57). In this context, the aim of the Indochinese University was to educate not scientists but practitioners – that is, executives, auxiliary agents, technicians, and qualified workers who would be used for colonial exploitation in medicine, agriculture, public works, law, and education.

In fact, several higher schools were created within the Indochinese University to promote this educational policy. In 1917, the University consisted of the School of Medicine, the School of Public Works, the Veterinary School, the Law School, and the School of Pedagogy.<sup>5</sup> The Indochina Higher School of Commerce (*Trường Thương Mại Đông Dương* in Vietnamese; *École Supérieure de Commerce de l'Indochine* in French) opened in 1920 on the premises of the Indochinese University (see Picture). The founders of IHSC – that is to say French colonial administrators working in the colonial Indochinese government<sup>6</sup> – decided to create this school in the tradition of the French higher commercial schools because, in their minds, this school should 'eventually become part of the family of French higher schools of commerce'.<sup>7</sup> Like all other academic units within the Indochinese University, IHSC was a 'higher school' and not a 'faculty', because, legally, the Indochinese University was not recognised by the French government at the time as a university on par with the universities of France; in other words, the Indochinese University did not have a legal authority.<sup>8</sup>



Overview of IHSC in Hanoi in the 1920s. Source: FNA.

### ***Circumstances of the IHSC opening***

Although IHSC opened its doors in November 1920, Indochinese trading circles had anticipated it for several years. At the start of the twentieth century, Indochina had no formal commercial education – no courses in accountancy, finance, commercial law, or the study of commodities in traditional indigenous schools or even in French schools established in the colony. Therefore, the Hanoi and Saigon chambers of commerce requested the opening of a higher commercial school in Indochina to educate executives and traders for local businesses. These chambers, unlike their counterparts in France, did not have the financial means to open such a school themselves. Accordingly, they requested the help of the colonial administration; however, the latter did not consider it a priority.<sup>9</sup>

After the war, however, colonial administrators decided to counterbalance Japan's educational influence in Southeast Asia in commercial higher education. The trigger for this decision was the transformation in 1920 of Tokyo Higher Commercial School to Tokyo University of Commerce (Nishizawa, 1998). As the principal of the Indochinese University stated: 'the Japanese commercial challenge requires that we seek out to educate the best businessmen throughout East Asia on the French model. It will help spread French influence in this part of the world and prevent Indochinese indigenous from leaving the colony to settle to Japan.'<sup>10</sup> Indeed, due to the industrial growth after the Sino-Japanese war and the First World War, economic prosperity had enabled the Japanese government to expand higher education to promote trade and industry (Ohtsuki, 2017). Consequently, the beginning of the twentieth century saw the rapid development of higher commercial education in Japan: the number of higher commercial schools rose to 15 in the first half of the 1920s, and the number of Japanese and foreign applicants to those schools increased dramatically.

In this context, the colonial Indochinese government viewed opening a higher commercial school as a means of training indigenous business students capable of competing with the Japanese in Asia. Therefore, French colonial administrators reasoned, IHSC should primarily operate as a school of the colony rather than as a French school. Indeed, it was opened by the colonial Indochinese government – and not by the Paris government – and it was dedicated primarily to students living in Indochina (whether French, indigenous, or foreign to the colonial territory) and wanting to work in this colonial territory.

By integrating into the University, IHSC enjoyed several advantages over French higher commercial schools. First, the inclusion of a higher school of commerce into the University – and not the establishment of a separate commercial school – was a means of encouraging graduates of the Indochinese University – whether or not destined for commercial careers – not to become competitors, but to carry out common work for the sake of colonial Indochina. This was even more important given that most local factories in Indochina belonged to French traders. As the governor underlined in his speech announcing the opening of the school in 1920, its inclusion in the University was expected to create ‘bonds of camaraderie which will help a lot in the future for the unity of students’ action.’<sup>11</sup>

Beyond its pedagogical value, the creation of a school of commerce within the Indochinese University also offered more financial advantages. Adding a school of commerce to a multidisciplinary university after the fact required a smaller investment than would be required to develop a commercial school from nothing. Initially, the number of commercial students was not sufficient reason to create an independent higher commercial school. For instance, in 1920–1921, IHSC welcomed only 39 students out of a total of 516 students at the Indochinese University. The inclusion of a higher school of commerce into the University also offered the advantage of allowing a pooling of resources among the various schools (e.g. facilities with their ancillary costs – rent, insurance, maintenance, heating, lighting). In 1920–1921, during its first year of existence, the students of IHSC attended their courses on the premises of the School of Medicine, while waiting for their classrooms to be permanently fitted out. Likewise, although IHSC was provided with its own school equipment – typing installation with nine machines, libraries of commercial works, showcases of colonial goods – it shared with the other higher schools the university campus, sports grounds, refectories, infirmary, and educational spaces such as the chemistry and physics laboratories.<sup>12</sup> Even teachers were shared between commercial education and the other training offered. For instance, the teacher of French and the teacher of colonial hygiene, who both held a teaching position at the School of Agriculture and Forestry and School of Public Works, also taught at IHSC. Likewise, a Law School teacher taught the commercial and maritime legislation course to commercial students before the school recruited its own law teacher.

The opening of IHSC, with its university status, was an unprecedented event in the French empire. Indeed, historically, until the middle of the twentieth century, French higher commercial schools had been created as private independent schools (Engwall et al., 2010; Passant, 2018). Moreover, in the 1920s only one tertiary-level commercial school operated in colonial territory: the Higher School of Commerce of Algiers, opened in 1900. However, it was a private school, and even if it was recognised by the state, it was not recognised by the French colonial administration as a higher education establishment (Blanchard, 2015). The Higher School of Commerce of Algiers was intended to train the French commercial students of Algerian territory but not the natives. In this context, IHSC was the second higher-level commercial school opened in colonial territory, but it was the first to be opened by

the French colonial administration as well as the first to have officially university rank and to be intended primarily for the natives rather than the French.

### *The founding goals of IHSC*

As a higher education institution, IHSC aligned its mission with that of the Indochinese University, which was to contribute to the training of a new 'indigenous elite'.<sup>13</sup> Concretely, it aimed at 'forming an indigenous elite called upon to participate in the direction of the political, economic and social life of the colony'.<sup>14</sup> In fact, at the beginning of the 1920s the small size of the French population forced colonial companies to recruit indigenous people trained to occupy the positions of plant managers, bankers, merchants, accounting officers and commercial employees fluent in French. The term 'participate' should be noted: it reveals that, in the minds of the French colonial rulers, it was not a question of training the natives who would ensure economic development but who would only contribute to it under the leadership of the French colonisers.

According to the 2 November 1920 decree that officially created IHSC, the mission of the school was to 'give the general and special education necessary to young people wishing to follow a commercial career in Indochina', to train 'not commercial secretaries, but commercial executives, intended to become collaborators for the heads of large French houses and to become themselves heads of houses after being trained during a long internship in large firms'.<sup>15</sup> Here again, the terms of the colonial administration reveal that the future 'indigenous elite' that IHSC was expected to form was not supposed to be independent, at least initially, from the French colonisers; it was to provide collaborators to existing French business leaders. In other words, according to the colonial Indochinese government, IHSC's mission was not to train business leaders because substantial experience in trading was deemed necessary to achieve this.<sup>16</sup> In this context, IHSC promised to 'efficiently educate the commercial elite of Indochina' to increase its economic productivity and ties to France in this strategy of enhancement.<sup>17</sup> The decree organising the school also provided for the presidents of the Hanoi, Haiphong and Saigon chambers of commerce to sit on IHSC's improvement board so that the school could maintain proximity with commercial circles.<sup>18</sup> The originality of IHSC was that this improvement board was created and maintained by the colonial administration, which considered the participation of colonial trade representatives necessary to develop the school. In contrast, French higher commercial schools removed improvement boards in 1889–1890, when the French state began to recognise these schools. The French government maintained that business representatives should not be involved in the running of higher commercial schools: recognition by the state was sufficient to guarantee the quality of their training and their adequacy to meet the needs of business communities (Passant, 2020a, p. 87). In this context, in the eyes of the French higher commercial schools' principals, maintaining the influence of trade representatives on improvement boards risked undermining the academic legitimacy that these schools were beginning to acquire from their recognition by the French government (Passant, 2020a, p. 87).

The 2 November 1920 decree specified that graduates who did not find a place in private companies or in banks would be offered positions in the economic services of the colonial administration, meaning that, in parallel with the objective of training executives and employees for private companies, IHSC also officially aimed to train civil servants intended

to work in financial services, customs and management services, public services posts and telegraphs, or the general treasury. The opening of these administrative opportunities was presented, in the internal reports of the school principal, as a temporary device only set up in the first years of IHSC to attract native students, in whose eyes the civil service was a prestigious professional path.<sup>19</sup> Under these conditions, IHSC's mission was broader than that of the French higher commercial schools, which exclusively prepared their students to work in the private sector (Passant, 2020a).

In terms of the school audience, IHSC aimed to focus on students from its place of establishment – that is, the Indochinese students – even though the colonial administration desired IHSC to attract foreign students to the colonial territory. As such, this regionalisation of student recruitment did not constitute an element of adaptation to the local context, considering French higher commercial schools at the time were also intended to target mainly students living in their region. Although indigenous students were IHSC's main target, the colonial administration also believed that French students might benefit from following its teachings. As underlined by the colonial administration, 'the education provided at the school, without neglecting the major economic principles which are found in all countries, is oriented towards the study of topics concerning trade in the Far East and, more particularly, that of Indochina. The young French people who are destined for commercial careers could therefore acquire in this establishment a training which would be most useful to them and the heads of the commercial and banking houses of our colony would find in them valuable collaborators.'<sup>20</sup>

### **How IHSC worked: a specific model adapted to the colonial context**

Considering the peculiarities of the colonial context, it is questionable whether IHSC provided the same education system as French higher commercial schools. Actually, IHSC was not created as a replication of French higher commercial schools. Rather, because of its university status, colonial environment, and predominantly indigenous students, the colonial administration conceived it as a higher commercial school of a new kind, with its own pattern in terms of recruitment criteria and methods, students, teachers, function, and curriculum.

#### ***Recruitment criteria and methods adapted to the Indochinese context***

IHSC's recruitment criteria differed greatly from those for higher commercial schools in France. As Table 1 shows, students and auditors<sup>21</sup> admitted to IHSC had to have a minimum age of 19 years – then 20 years in 1924 – and a maximum age of 24 years. Compared with French higher commercial schools, which imposed an admission age of between 15 and 17 years, IHSC's was significantly higher. The reason was due to the specificities of education in Indochina. Admission to IHSC required a longer school duration than what was then in place in France. Indeed, Indochinese students had to complete more examinations than did their French counterparts to continue to successive levels of schooling. It took 13 years of schooling for indigenous students to complete their elementary and secondary studies to enter a university-attached school like IHSC, whereas their French counterparts in France and the colony completed their elementary and secondary education after 10 years.

In addition, IHSC differed from French higher commercial schools in its recruitment of both men and women from its inception. In France, higher commercial schools were intended

Table 1. Comparison of recruitment conditions at HSC, Indochinese University schools and French higher commercial schools from 1920 to 1932.

Schools of the Indochinese University	Minimum age to enter the school	Presence of female students	Application file with a certificate of good behaviour and morals	Percentage of baccalaureate holders in incoming promotions	Competitive entrance examination		Preparatory class
					Created in 1922 for candidates without a secondary diploma	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	
HSC	19–20 years	Yes since 1922	Yes	0%	Created in 1922 for candidates without a secondary diploma	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	No
School of Medicine	19–20 years	Yes since 1905	Yes	30%–80%	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	No
School of Public Works	19–20 years	Yes since 1922	Yes	0%–10%	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	No
Veterinary School	19–20 years	Yes since 1917	Yes	0%–6%	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	No
Law School	19–20 years	Yes since 1924	Yes	2%–18%	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	No
School of Pedagogy	19–20 years	Yes since 1921	Yes	7%–50%	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	No
School of Agriculture and Forestry	16–20 years	Yes since 1924	Yes	0%	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	Created in 1926 for non-baccalaureate candidates	No
School of Fine Arts	20 years	Yes since 1926	Yes	0%–20%	Created in 1925 for non-baccalaureate candidates	Created in 1925 for non-baccalaureate candidates	No
French higher commercial schools	16 years	No	No	17%–33%	Created in 1926 for all candidates	Created in 1926 for all candidates	Yes since 1929
HEC	17 years	No	No	84%–94%	Created in 1922 for all candidates	Created in 1922 for all candidates	Yes since 1920
HSC of Havre	15–17 years	No	No	2%–5%	No	No	No
HSC of Lyon	15–17 years	No	No	2%–12%	No	No	No
HSC of Marseille	15–17 years	Yes since 1919	No	0%–4%	No	No	No
HSC of Bordeaux	15–17 years	Yes since 1914	No	0%–7%	No	No	No
HSC of Nantes	15–17 years	Yes since 1915	No	0%–5%	No	No	No
HSC of Toulouse	15–17 years	Yes since 1915	No	0%–2%	No	No	No

Note: HSC means higher school of commerce.

Sources: Report of the general government of Indochina, 1920–1921, 145–158; 1921–1922, 34–50; 1922–1923, 48–67; 1923–1924, 63–79; 1924–1925, 58–73; 1925–1926, 473–503; 1926–1927, 498–536; 1927–1928, 391–414; 1928–1929, 344–383; 1929–1930, 341–381; 1930–1931, 649–666; 1931–1932, 134–141. National Archives of Vietnam. Inspection of French higher schools of commerce, 1920–1925, French National Archives Blanchard (2015, pp. 44–50); Moulou (1981, pp. 45–51); Passant (2020a, pp. 97–111).

exclusively for men because they prepared students for professions occupied only by men at the time – traders, bankers, accountants, entrepreneurs, and so on (Blanchard, 2015, p. 40; Larsen, 2005, pp. 36–37). They began accepting female students decades later for primarily financial reasons: the French higher commercial schools in the provinces (which were less reputable than those in Paris) became coeducational during the First World War because many potential male students had left to defend the country, such that some schools no longer had enough students to train and risked closing their doors permanently (Larsen, 2005). Recruiting female students therefore temporarily enabled them to cope with a lack of funding sources. These schools trained female students to be secretaries and sales clerks in businesses that were disorganised due to the absence of their male employees who had gone to war. After the First World War, these schools remained coeducational, but their female students did not have access to the same careers as their male peers (Blanchard, 2015, p. 113).<sup>22</sup> In contrast, IHSC was coeducational from its opening and the reason was not financial. Rather, it was coeducational for primarily political reasons: the coeducation of this higher education establishment made it possible to illustrate the ‘progressivism’ of the French colonisers. Indeed, coeducation aimed at ‘increasing the prestige of France and its progressive image in the face of local customs that were unfavourable to the education of women.’<sup>23</sup> In the Indochinese cultural context in that era, women were typically educated within the family and rarely had formal schooling (Le Xuan, 2018, p. 28). Therefore, the intention of the colonial administration was to make coeducation a differentiating element not only of IHSC (because all the schools of the Indochinese University were coeducational, as Table 1 shows) but of the educational policy of the French colonisers in Indochina.

At the same time, coeducation also achieved an economic objective: the colonial administration considered that female students should be educated so they could ‘be brought to support their husband or to take their place after their death to run a business.’<sup>24</sup> As shown in Table 1, this situation was similar to that of other Indochinese University schools, which also admitted female students as early as the 1920s because the colonial Indochinese government believed that some women deserved access to higher education in the colony. This measure aimed to allow women to engage in professions requiring high-level training – such as midwifery and teaching. However, IHSC’s results were disappointing: in its 12-year existence, the school trained only 22 women.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to differing from French higher commercial schools in terms of recruitment criteria, IHSC’s recruitment methods were also adapted to the Indochinese context. The school could not offer a single recruitment route (admission on qualifications or by competitive examination), like the French higher commercial schools did, because these schools recruited students with mostly the same educational profile (i.e. French students had all received primary and secondary training in French for the same duration, based on the same programs). On the contrary, IHSC candidates, depending on their status and province of residence, had not received elementary and secondary education of the same duration (hence their age differences), they had not all learned the same language during the first four years, and their curricula was not based on the same course programs.<sup>26</sup> Under these conditions, IHSC adapted its admission pathways to these candidates’ characteristics by simultaneously offering three admission paths: (1) on qualifications, (2) on competition, and (3) on recommendation of consulates.

Admission on qualifications was open to applicants wishing to become students or auditors. It required that French or native candidates hold secondary school diplomas (i.e. the

French baccalaureate or the local baccalaureate), a secondary education certificate, a higher certificate, an elementary certificate, or a complementary end-of-studies diploma. Holding the baccalaureate was not mandatory for applicants to IHSC. Indeed, holding the baccalaureate was not compulsory for any of the Indochinese University schools, nor any French higher commercial schools at the time. Under these conditions, baccalaureate students represented only a minority of students entering the Indochinese University schools: at the beginning of the 1920s, they represented less than 4% of the University's enrolment (Le Xuan, 2018, p. 77). However, over the years, a gap appeared between some schools. As shown in Table 1, the most prestigious and therefore the most selective schools – namely the School of Medicine, the Law School, and the School of Pedagogy – received the highest proportions of baccalaureate students from the University, while the less prestigious schools – namely IHSC, the School of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Veterinary School – received hardly any during the period 1920–1932.<sup>27</sup> The application file included several documents, including a certificate of good behaviour and morals approved by the colonial administration. This file was checked by the Indochinese security service, which investigated applicants' families, their loyalty, and their political opinions. The purpose of this application file – which did not exist in French higher commercial schools as shown in Table 1 – was to deny access to the school to students who could be potential political agitators. In reality, between 1920 and 1932, few students (4%) – mostly French – entered IHSC on qualifications because few candidates had high school diplomas.

Admission by competitive examination, provided for in the 2 November 1920 decree, was introduced in 1922 for applicants who did not have the necessary diplomas to be automatically admitted to IHSC.<sup>28</sup> The competition was based on written eliminatory tests followed by oral tests. In fact, during its 12-year history, 90% of the IHSC's students – mostly indigenous – entered it by competitive examination. This situation distinguished IHSC strongly from its counterparts in France, where no competitive examinations existed, except in the most prestigious schools – namely, the *École des Hautes Études Commerciales* (School of Higher Commercial Studies at Paris, known as HEC) and the *École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris* (Higher School of Commerce of Paris, known as ESCP) as shown in Table 1.<sup>29</sup> Another distinguishing feature was not so much the precocity of the introduction of the entrance examination as its level of difficulty for local candidates. Indeed, at IHSC, only 10% of the candidates who entered the competition were admitted,<sup>30</sup> whereas in France, at HEC and ESCP, between 50% and 70% of the candidates who entered the competition were admitted (Meuleau, 1992; Passant, 2020a). Paradoxically, however, even though most students at IHSC were recruited through a competitive exam – a device that, in French culture, marked a sign of attachment to the *grandes écoles* – this exam was not an indicator of the selectivity of the school nor of the excellence of its training. Indeed, the student recruitment at IHSC was not selective, as is evident from the competition tests, which were few in number and not very demanding compared with those set up at the same time at HEC and ESCP.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, even though the level of competition was not very demanding, most of the candidates did not demonstrate enough command of the French language. Under these conditions, unlike HEC and ESCP, the introduction of the competitive examination at IHSC did not meet prestige requirements at all, but only recruitment requirements. Because of lack of funds, IHSC created no preparatory class that would have allowed candidates to prepare for the entrance examination. As shown in Table 1, this situation contrasted with that of HEC and ESCP, which had created preparatory classes in the 1920s open to all students, whether they were



baccalaureate students or not. Even though 90% of the IHSC's students entered it by competitive examination, it never became compulsory so as not to discourage students with secondary education degrees.

Finally, admission by recommendation from the consulates was reserved for foreign students (i.e. Chinese, Siamese and Japanese). French consulates established abroad drew up these recommendation files and sent them to the IHSC principal. These files attested that the candidates spoke French correctly, were interested in commerce, and had received a sufficient level of training to be considered for higher education. The objective of this special admission procedure was to encourage foreign students to study at IHSC without discouraging them by asking them to prepare for a competitive examination, while verifying the quality of applications through the consultancies' recommendations. Between 1920 and 1932, about 6% of students entered IHSC by this route.<sup>32</sup> Although relatively few students took this last route of admission, this feature was nonetheless unique and distinguished IHSC from its French counterparts: foreign students applying to French higher commercial schools had to take the competitive entrance examination under the same conditions as French candidates to join HEC and ESCP, or were required to have secondary level diplomas to enter the other French higher commercial schools on qualifications, because the procedure for admission through consulates did not exist in French higher commercial schools (Passant, 2020a, p. 111). This third admission route also differentiated IHSC from other schools of the Indochinese University, which all recruited their students according to admission on qualifications for baccalaureate holders and admission by compulsory entrance examination for the other candidates, as shown in Table 1. The colonial administration made this decision because IHSC was less attractive than the other schools. Unlike the schools of medicine, public works, veterinary studies, law, pedagogy and agriculture and forestry, IHSC did not guarantee jobs in the colonial administration, which was a deterrent for indigenous students, whose culture at the time strongly valued administrative careers.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Methods to attract and supervise indigenous students***

The colonial administration implemented several solutions to make IHSC more attractive to indigenous students. Because most students had meagre financial resources, the IHSC administration set up scholarships that covered all tuition fees. Most students who entered the school through the competitive examination were awarded a scholarship (see Table 2). Moreover, depending on the limitations of their resources, some students also received at least a monthly pension of 80–100 francs during the first two years of study. In the third year, the monthly pension was 200 francs for all scholarship holders.<sup>34</sup> These amounts were relatively high; at the time, the average salary of an indigenous civil servant was 250–500 francs per month. The needier students were fed and housed at the expense of the administration. All scholarship students were entitled to one free return trip each year to their home province, provided it was in Indochina. They were also exempt, during their stay at school, from personal tax.<sup>35</sup> However, unlike their comrades from other schools of the Indochinese University, who were obliged to serve the colonial administration for ten years after their release – failing which they had to reimburse the cost of the pension they had received – IHSC scholarship holders could benefit from the pension without commitment to service administration. Owing to these scholarships, education was free for approximately 51%–90% of IHSC students like their University comrades during their entire stay at school – much different from

**Table 2.** Comparison of students' characteristics at IHSC, Indochinese University schools and French higher commercial schools from 1920 to 1932.

		Percentage of scholarship students (minimum–maximum)	Percentage of boarding students (minimum–maximum)
Schools of the Indochinese University	IHSC	51%–90%	60%–95%
	School of Medicine	73%–96%	80%–98%
	School of Public Works	61%–86%	74%–95%
	Veterinary School	88%–99%	90%–96%
	Law School	80%–90%	84%–90%
	School of Pedagogy	39%–68%	74%–85%
	School of Agriculture and Forestry	87%–91%	90%–96%
	School of Fine Arts	54%–70%	56%–70%
French higher commercial schools	ESCP	6%–7%	12%–26%
	HEC	4%–14%	30%–52%
	HSC of Havre	<10%	6%–17%
	HSC of Lyon	4%–7%	5%–14%
	HSC of Marseille	1%–7%	4%–12%
	HSC of Bordeaux	4%–14%	0%
	HSC of Nantes	<10%	0%
	HSC of Toulouse	3%–9%	15%–35%

Note: HSC means higher school of commerce.

Sources: 'Report of the general government of Indochina', 1920–1921, 147–158; 1921–1922, 35–50; 1922–1923, 45–67; 1923–1924, 60–79; 1924–1925, 68–79; 1925–1926, 473–503; 1926–1927, 498–539; 1927–1928, 389–414; 1928–1929, 345–382; 1929–1930, 349–381; 1930–1931, 649–660; 1931–1932, 134–141. National Archives of Vietnam, 'Inspection of French higher schools of commerce', 1920–1929. French National Archives. Blanchard (2015, pp. 44–50); Meuleau (1981, pp. 36–39; pp. 135–137); Passant (2020a, pp. 97–111).

IHSC's counterparts in France where less than 14% of students were scholarship holders (see Table 2); most of these students paid for their tuition because French higher commercial schools were private (Meuleau, 1981, pp. 133–136). These measures enabled IHSC to attract applicants who would not otherwise have had the means to continue their higher education.

In addition to making IHSC more attractive to indigenous students, the colonial administration also sought to better monitor them by opening a university residence. Actually, the normal disciplinary regime at IHSC was boarding. The large number of students who were not Tonkinese made it necessary to move most students to Hanoi, capital of Tonkin and seat of the Indochinese University. The French colonisers considered Hanoi natives' living conditions particularly poor: the University administration noted in its reports that the cleanliness of their houses was unsatisfactory and that the tranquillity necessary for study was impossible there. As the colonial administration pointed out, 'it suffices to imagine these students in their family or in their boarding house, with for any installation a camp bed or a few chairs, often no tables, constantly disturbed in their work by the inhabitants of the home, street noises, winter without fire, summer without ventilation'.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the colonial administration considered that Hanoi's boarding houses had insufficient food: 'the natives do not eat enough to be able to provide the considerable and continuous effort required of them in higher education'.<sup>37</sup> Finally, on moral grounds, colonial administrators considered it necessary to supervise the indigenous youth confronted with the temptations of Hanoi, as they wrote: 'there is interest, in all respects, not to abandon to the dangers of the big city many young people who came to Hanoi from all over Indochina to pursue often painful studies there for several years'.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, boarding students lived on a campus, with a library, near classrooms but isolated from the noise of the street. Officially, the aim of the university residence was to socialise the students and establish social networks. In this residence, boarders were also held to compulsory study hours, supervised by monitors. This arrangement suited colonial administrators, so they could keep an eye on students' activities, especially in a city as dynamic as Hanoi, to ensure that they were spending their time in study and not in leisure or political activities. Finally, in addition to hygienic, nutritional, and study conditions essential for the education of students, the boarding system also allowed the colonial administration to force students to practice French in their everyday relationships. Students were required to speak French during their lessons as well as during their activities at the university residence, in accordance with the political objectives that governed the creation of the Indochinese University – namely, to form an 'indigenous elite' in the French way with the aim of replacing the indigenous Indochinese elite, as well as to mitigate the influence of Chinese culture, which had been predominant in Indochina for centuries.

As shown in Table 2, between 1920 and 1932, each year between 60% and 95% of the IHSC students were boarders, a significant proportion, though slightly lower than in the other schools of the Indochinese University, where, the proportion of boarders had never fallen below 66%. The colonial administration noted that this lower proportion of IHSC boarding students was due to the proportion of IHSC students who were involved in their parents' family business and had to work after their school days. Living at the university residence therefore prevented them from helping their parents.<sup>39</sup> In addition, in the latter part of the 1920s, a significant portion of IHSC's students were civil servants and already had a home and a family life that made it inopportune to board at the University.

**Table 3.** Comparison of teachers' status at IHSC, Indochinese University schools and French higher commercial schools from 1920 to 1932.

		Number of permanent teachers (minimum–maximum)	Number of lecturers (minimum–maximum)
Schools of the Indochinese University	IHSC	0–1	14–28
	School of Medicine	3–8	22–25
	School of Public Works	0–3	11–23
	Veterinary School	0–2	5–7
	Law School	0–3	20–25
	School of Pedagogy	2–8	15–19
	School of Agriculture and Forestry	0–3	15–17
	School of Fine Arts	0–2	3–8
French higher commercial schools	ESCP	0	55–71
	HEC	0	55–63
	HSC of Havre	0	10–14
	HSC of Lyon	0	17–20
	HSC of Marseille	0	9–42
	HSC of Bordeaux	0	29–34
	HSC of Nantes	0	15–18
	HSC of Toulouse	0	16–22

Note: HSC means higher school of commerce.

Sources: 'Report of the general government of Indochina', 1921–1922, 34; 1922–1923, 47–48; 1923–1924, 59–60; 1924–1925, 53–59; 1925–1926, 473–503; 1926–1927, 498–539; 1927–1928, 385–414; 1928–1929, 351–382; 1929–1930, 344–381; 1930–1931, 648–660; 1931–1932, 134–141. National Archives of Vietnam. 'Inspection of French higher schools of commerce, 1920–1929. French National Archives. Blanchard (2015, pp. 44–50); Meuleau (1981, pp. 81–86); Pasant (2020a, pp. 97–111).

If the proportion of boarders at IHSC was slightly lower than in the other Indochinese University schools, it was, in contrast, very clearly higher than that of the French higher commercial schools, as shown in Table 2. This situation can be explained by the fact that most of these schools – except for the higher schools of commerce of Bordeaux and Nantes, which did not have the means to open a boarding school – were attended by students who lived in the immediate vicinity of the school. Only students from French regions other than the region where the school was located, or non-French students, were boarders in French higher commercial schools (Passant, 2020a).

### ***Temporary and non-prestigious teachers***

Two categories of teachers taught at the Indochinese University: permanent teachers (*professeurs titulaires*) and lecturers (*chargés de cours*). Permanent teachers were state employees nominated by the Ministry of Public Instruction, which was part of the French government settled in Paris, whereas lecturers were contractual teachers nominated by the colonial Indochinese government settled in Hanoi. Overall, recruiting teachers was difficult for the Indochinese University – and therefore for IHSC – because prestigious teachers – that is to say permanent teachers – were reluctant to leave France to settle in Indochina (Hoàng Văn, 2017). Indeed, in the early 1920s, the Indochinese University had only seven permanent teachers for approximately 150 lecturers and 400 students. While almost all the Indochinese University schools experienced this shortage of permanent teachers initially, a gap gradually widened between the more attractive and the less attractive schools. Thus, as shown in Table 3, the shortage of permanent teachers remained very pronounced throughout the period 1920–1932 for IHSC and the other less prestigious schools – namely the School of Agriculture and Forestry and the Veterinary School. These three schools never had more than one, two or three permanent teachers, while the School of Medicine and the School of Pedagogy had been able to hire up to three times more.

Although some other schools of the Indochinese University also experienced difficulties in recruiting permanent teachers, it was even more difficult for IHSC because, at the time, commercial education was not yet institutionalised in France and its colonies (Passant, 2020a). As shown in Table 3, there were no permanent teachers in French higher commercial schools; most were professionals (e.g. accountants, bankers, exporters) or high school language teachers or law teachers teaching in law faculties (Passant, 2020a). In addition, in France and Indochina people did not socially value commercial education at that time, and this image deficit was especially clear in the recruitment of IHSC teachers: while the School of Medicine and the Law School were able to recruit permanent teachers, magistrates, lawyers and administrators of the senior civil service, IHSC mainly recruited only teachers without prestige – that is, lecturers – who were civil servants from the colonial services (e.g. postal and telegraph inspectors, customs clerks) or trade employees (e.g. bankers, exporters, manufacturers). This image deficit was officially sanctioned by the salary scales: lecturers working at IHSC were paid 60 francs an hour while their colleagues in the School of Medicine and the Law School received 80 francs an hour.<sup>46</sup>

Under these conditions, teaching at IHSC was unattractive for competent teachers. Faced with an insufficient number of teachers, the school's teaching staff was therefore almost exclusively made up of lecturers exercising another professional activity. As shown

in Table 3, in its 12 years of existence, IHSC employed 14–28 lecturers per year and only one permanent teacher (in commercial law). This situation had several drawbacks. As the colonial administration underscored in 1925, ‘the lecturers have professional obligations which only allow them to devote a reduced time to school.’<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, these teachers were not always effective; some had never even taught. On several occasions, IHSC students even complained to the administration to ask for better teachers.<sup>42</sup>

At the Indochinese University during the period under study (1920–1932), the permanent teachers were all French men, whereas lecturers were both French and indigenous, men and women (Le Xuan, 2018, p. 214).<sup>43</sup> At IHSC, the only permanent teacher was a French man while all the lecturers were French men except two indigenous men and two French women who were in charge of typewriting and shorthand courses. In addition, the principal of IHSC was a graduate of a French higher commercial school (e.g. the Higher School of Commerce of Montpellier), as were three other lecturers (one was a graduate of the Higher School of Commerce of Marseille, another was a graduate from the Higher School of Commerce of Dijon while the third was an HEC graduate).<sup>44</sup>

#### *A curriculum partially adapted to the Indochinese context*

The school year began on 1 October and ended on 15 June. The school curriculum was adapted to the Indochinese context in three aspects.

First, the curriculum was initially organised in two training cycles. The first cycle included two years of schooling in Hanoi, devoted to theoretical courses. These two years allowed

**Table 4.** Comparison of schooling conditions at IHSC, the schools of the Indochinese University and the French higher commercial schools from 1920 to 1932.

		Duration of studies	Hours of instruction per week	Separate colonial section within the school	Compulsory end of study internship
Schools of the Indochinese University	IHSC	2–3 years	19–20 hours	No	Yes
	School of Medicine	2–5 years	17–23 hours	No	Yes
	School of Public Works	2–4 years	18–28 hours	No	Yes
	Veterinary School	4 years	17–21 hours	No	Yes
	Law School	3 years	12–14 hours	No	No
	School of Pedagogy	3 years	17–21 hours	No	No
	School of Agriculture and Forestry	3–4 years	12–25 hours	No	Yes
	School of Fine Arts	5 years	37–45 hours	No	No
French higher commercial schools	ESCP	2 years	25–40 hours	Yes since 1913	No
	HEC	2 years	25–40 hours	Yes since 1905	No
	HSC of Havre	2 years	26–37 hours	No	No
	HSC of Lyon	2 years	29–38 hours	Yes since 1895	No
	HSC of Marseille	2 years	28–41 hours	Yes since 1900	No
	HSC of Bordeaux	2 years	32–37 hours	Yes since 1902	No
	HSC of Nantes	2 years	26–38 hours	Yes since 1902	No
	HSC of Toulouse	2 years	27–36 hours	No	No

Note: HSC means higher school of commerce.

Sources: ‘Report of the general government of Indochina, 1920–1921, 146–158; 1921–1922, 36–50; 1922–1923, 45–67; 1923–1924, 58–79; 1924–1925, 57–79; 1925–1926, 473–503; 1926–1927, 498–539; 1927–1928, 392–414; 1928–1929, 344–382; 1929–1930, 341–381; 1930–1931, 649–660; 1931–1932, 134–141. National Archives of Vietnam. Inspection of French higher schools of commerce, 1920–1929. French National Archives. Blanchard (2015, pp. 44–50); Meuleau (1981, pp. 36–39); Passart (2020a, pp. 97–111). General government of Indochina. *General regulations for higher education*, 1920, 136–137; 1925, 587–661, NAF, M5115(4).

the best students to obtain the *diplôme de fin d'études* ('final diploma') at the end of their schooling. The best of these graduates could then enter the second cycle of training, which consisted of a third year of study, initially held in Saigon. This port city, administrative capital of Cochinchina, was chosen because of its status as Indochina's first commercial city. As a result, IHSC had initially two campuses, 1,700 km apart, and located in two administrative capitals of the colony. At the end of the third year of training, the best students could obtain the school's *diplôme d'études supérieures* ('diploma of higher studies'). This mode of operation set IHSC apart from the other schools of the Indochinese University. As shown in Table 4, the duration of studies at IHSC – two or three years – was the shortest of all the schools in the Indochinese University; generally, the duration was between three and five years. This was because the colonial administration viewed commercial careers as requiring less education than medical, veterinary, technical, legal, educational, agricultural, or artistic careers. At the same time, the operation of IHSC set apart the school from its French counterparts. In France, the schools were single-campus, and the schooling was organised on one cycle only, of two years rather than three, as shown in Table 4.<sup>45</sup> IHSC's peculiarities were due to the specificities of the students it served. As mentioned previously (see endnote n°26), at the educational level, indigenous students did not benefit from the same level of elementary and secondary education as their French counterparts; thus, the duration of their schooling was extended by one year to strengthen their French language and calculation capacities.

Second, the instructional program at IHSC was not very intensive: students attended 9–15 courses a week, totalling 19–20 hours of instruction per week, compared with French higher commercial schools' students, who at the time attended 10–18 courses a week (Passant, 2020a), totalling 25–41 hours of instruction per week, as shown in Table 4. The justifications for the reduced hours were that colonial administrators at the time claimed that the reduction in the use of time – compared with French higher commercial schools – was an adaptation to the mentalities and needs of indigenous students as they perceived them. Indeed, they maintained that the hot and humid climate of Indochina was 'debilitating' – that is, unsuitable for too many hours of lessons – and that most students were not used to making extensive academic effort. Therefore, principals of IHSC reduced the curriculum, eliminating business ethics and industrial design courses because they had been deemed 'superfluous'. Other courses typically taught in France – advertising, psychology, and physics – were eliminated because IHSC failed to recruit competent teachers.<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, the colonial administration presented the reduced number of course hours at IHSC as a necessity to adapt teaching to climatic conditions (which allegedly prevented a higher number of course hours) and to the habits of the indigenous students (allegedly less used to studying than their comrades in France). These arguments were undoubtedly fallacious because other schools of the Indochinese University, particularly the School of Public Works and the School of Fine Arts, required a significantly higher number of course hours than that of IHSC (see Table 4). In contrast, other schools such as the School of Medicine and the Law School offered an hourly volume of courses equivalent to what existed at IHSC and even to what existed at the time at French university faculties of medicine and law (Le Xuan, 2018, p. 218; 235–246). Similarly, in the 1920s, in Franco-indigenous secondary schools, the minimum number of hours of weekly lessons fluctuated between 20 hours and 25 hours, which corresponded exactly to the hourly volume of French secondary schools located in Indochina or France.<sup>47</sup> In summary, the reduction in course hours at IHSC was not necessarily instituted to adapt to the local context, as the colonial administration claimed, but rather was undoubtedly

**Table 5.** Commercial curricula at IHSC.

Courses in 1922–1923	First year		Second year		Third year	
	Hours per week	% of the total	Hours per week	% of the total	Hours per week	% of the total
Commercial correspondence	1	5%	0	0%	2	10%
Post office	1	5%	1	5%	0	0%
Customs	1	5%	1	5%	2	10%
Mathematics	2	10%	0	0%	0	0%
Finance	1	5%	1	5%	2	10%
Bookkeeping	2	10%	2	10%	6	30%
French	1	5%	0	0%	0	0%
English	2	10%	2	10%	2	10%
Chinese	2	10%	2	10%	0	0%
Commercial history	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%
Commercial geography	1	5%	1	5%	0	0%
Chemistry	1	5%	1	5%	0	0%
Commodities composition	1	5%	2	10%	2	10%
Commercial, maritime and colonial legislation	1	5%	1	5%	0	0%
Maritime construction and equipment	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%
Colonial hygiene	1	5%	0	0%	0	0%
Typewriting	2	10%	1	5%	1	5%
Shorthand	0	0%	1	5%	1	5%
Commercial conferences	0	0%	1	5%	2	10%
Total	20	100%	19	100%	20	100%

Source: General government of Indochina, *General regulations for higher education, 1922, 9–37*. National Archives of Vietnam, M5115(4).

aimed at dealing with the school's difficulties linked to teacher recruitment. Moreover, all the lecturers had a job in addition to their teaching load; which made it difficult to schedule class times, as the IHSC principal noted.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, by reducing the number of class hours, the colonial administration likely sought to facilitate the scheduling of classes at IHSC.

Third, IHSC provided courses specific to the colonial context, such as the comparative history of colonisation, colonial hygiene, and colonial administrative law. Likewise, the commodity studies courses addressed the conditions of production and export of major Indochinese commodities such as rice and rubber. Lectures were given on 'commercial relations between Indochina, France and the countries of the Far East' or on 'negotiation in business with China' because the school's goal was to train students in the main forms of colonial trade as practiced in Indochina.<sup>49</sup> As shown in Table 4, most French higher commercial schools at the time had colonial sections created around 1900 – notably HEC, ESCP, and the higher schools of commerce of Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux, and Nantes. The aim of these sections was to prepare students for various commercial functions in all French colonies, though only for private companies.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, at IHSC, training was geared towards both private companies and the administration, although the focus was limited to Indochina exclusively.

Other than the aforementioned adaptations, the curriculum at IHSC was almost directly copied from French higher commercial schools. It was based on a combination of theoretical and practical courses with handling of commercial products, simulations of commercial operations. Courses such as the study of commodities, law, accounting and languages received the largest share of the teaching time, as in the French higher commercial schools. As shown in Table 5, the educational content dispensed as common-core training was

organised around a body of required major disciplines shared among the French higher commercial schools at the time, in order of priority: bookkeeping, modern languages, and the 'commodities composition' course. Bookkeeping, associated with mathematics and finance, appeared among the cornerstone subjects in the curricula of IHSC – 15%–40% of the timetable each year – because it could be used to keep track to the successive transformations funds undergo and the transactions of any business or bank, it was a natural part of doing business. The importance attached to modern languages can be explained by the international environment in which Indochinese businesspeople might eventually work: Chinese and English were compulsory, accounting for about 20% of the timetable during the first two years of study. The objective of the commodities composition course – between 5% and 10% of the timetable – was to enable that future businesspeople would become familiar with the nature, quality, and composition of marketable products, raw materials and by-products they would speculate on one day, as well as identify counterfeit or damaged products. To prevent commercial instruction from being too theoretical, the school required students to practice typewriting and shorthand – 10% of the timetable each year.

In terms of pedagogy, and in accordance with French higher commercial schools' practice at the time, factory visits and commercial conference lectures constituted a compulsory learning stage not only to complete the courses in a concrete way but also to allow students to build up their professional networks (Passant, 2020a). As a consequence, IHSC students also took excursions to become acquainted with local trade and industry and followed commercial conference lectures given by business world personalities such as the director of the Bank of Indochina. As the colonial administration pointed out, these conferences 'constitute a valuable addition to the education provided by the school and enable it to keep in constant contact with the Hanoi Chamber of Commerce; contact which is essential and without which the placement of graduates cannot be assured under good conditions'.<sup>51</sup> Finally, during their third year of training, the students underwent mostly hands-on training with lectures given by businesspeople on current topics, handling of commercial products, simulations of business operations, and a compulsory three-month internship carried out in the most important firms of the colony. This end-of-study internship resulted in the drafting of a report, which teachers then evaluated. This was a unique feature of IHSC in that sense that, as Table 4 shows, French higher commercial schools required no end-of-study internship. This situation was explained at the time by the colonial administration on behalf of the cultural specificities of the indigenous students. Indeed, the third year of studies was organised around the practice of business rather than theoretical lessons, aiming to 'remind students that obtaining the school *diplôme d'études supérieures* should not be an end in itself, but should encourage them to find commercial employment within the colony'.<sup>52</sup> According to colonial administrators, the mentalities of Indochinese natives were strongly imbued with the values of the mandarinat, which favoured theoretical studies over practical studies as well as public administration work rather than within private companies.

### **IHSC: a school gradually and partially aligned with French higher commercial schools**

If IHSC was designed to fit to the Indochinese context, the colonial administration also sought to gradually align it with the French higher commercial school model without completely succeeding in doing so. How did this situation manifest itself?



**Table 6.** Student enrolments by academic year at IHSC from 1920 to 1932.

Academic year	First year			Second year			Third year	Total
	Commercial section	Post and telegraph section	Radiotelegraph section	Commercial section	Post and telegraph section	Radiotelegraph section	Commercial section	
1920–1921	39	NC	NC	0	NC	NC	0	39
1921–1922	25	NC	NC	25	NC	NC	0	50
1922–1923	30	NC	NC	18	NC	NC	13	61
1923–1924	19	NC	NC	19	NC	NC	12	50
1924–1925	22	NC	NC	15	NC	NC	19	56
1925–1926	13	17	NC	9	0	NC	9	48
1926–1927	10	6	4	10	16	0	4	50
1927–1928	16	12	4	13	6	4	3	58
1928–1929	12	6	3	12	9	4	8	54
1929–1930	13	6	3	7	7	3	11	50
1930–1931	7	6	6	6	6	3	10	44
1931–1932	25	0	0	7	6	5	6	49
Total	231	53	20	141	50	19	95	609

Note: NC means not concerned.

Sources: 'Report of the general government of Indochina, 1920–1921, 158; 1921–1922, 50; 1922–1923, 48, 64–65; 1923–1924, 61; 1924–1925, 66; 1925–1926, 501–502; 1926–1927, 517–522; 1927–1928, 405–408; 1928–1929, 345, 367–369; 1929–1930, 372–375; 1930–1931, 657–658; 1931–1932, 135–140. National Archives of Vietnam.

### ***Specialisation sections opened to diversify professional opportunities for students***

The first IHSC graduates turned mainly to further education or administrative jobs. During the period 1920–1924, of the 77 graduates of IHSC – 57 graduates after two years of schooling and 20 graduates after three years of schooling – only 13 graduates (17%) joined private companies, while 45 (58%) continued their studies and 19 (25%) joined the colonial administration as native executives, mainly in the customs or post services and telegraphs. Under these conditions, IHSC seemed to have lost its original intention, which was to prepare collaborators for heads of private companies in Indochina. This situation alarmed not only the colonial administration but also the Hanoi, Haiphong and Saigon chambers of commerce, which had supported IHSC from its inception. In response, the school regulations were amended by decree dated 30 September 1922 to state that no administrative employment was guaranteed, as in the past, to IHSC graduates.<sup>53</sup>

This shift in positioning aligned the school's goal more closely with that of French higher commercial schools. The consequences of this reduction in professional opportunities were evident as soon as the 1923 school year began, when the number of applications for admission into the first year plummeted. As shown in Table 6, only 19 students were admitted in 1923–1924, compared with 30 in 1922–1923, 25 in 1921–1922, and 39 in 1920–1921. Candidates clearly preferred to enter other schools of the Indochinese University that gave them access to administrative positions. In addition, in 1924–1925, budgetary restrictions were imposed on IHSC such that it was forced to review its organisation and even abandon some of the characteristics that strongly differentiated it from its French counterparts. Most importantly, the number of scholarships awarded was reduced, and although the needier students were still exempt from tuition fees and were still provided with board and lodging at administrative expense, all monthly pensions were abolished. The students from more prosperous backgrounds even had to pay a tuition fee of 80 francs per month. Auditors also had to pay for their schooling, whereas previously it was free for them. Thus, although the number of IHSC scholarship recipients remained high after these measures (more than 51%), the number of

students declined. As shown in Table 6, from the start of the 1924–1925 school year, the number of students admitted to the first year fell each year, from 22 in 1924–1925 to 7 in 1930–1931.<sup>54</sup>

To strengthen IHSC's attractiveness, in 1925 and again in 1926, colonial administrators created specialisation sections, leading to its reorganisation into three sections. The first, called the 'commercial section', corresponded to the previous three-year course. In 2 April 1925, a post and telegraph section was created by decree of the governor of Indochina to recruit native executives for the colonial post and telegraph administration, whose European personnel had become insufficient in number. This section was intended to train only civil servants during two years of schooling, and admission was available by qualifications or competitive examination. Candidates for this section could be either students with secondary school diplomas or telegraph officials already serving in the postal and telegraph administration. During their first year, the students of this section were reunited with the students of the commercial section with whom they followed all the courses. In the second year, however, they were isolated to take courses in electricity, telegraph devices, and line studies. Most of the 48 students who graduated from this section became post office receivers or clerks and headed post offices, a function which until then had been reserved for the French or Europeans.<sup>55</sup> Likewise, in 7 April 1926, a radiotelegraph section was opened at IHSC to train, also in two years, officials of the radiotelegraph service of Indochina. Students were recruited under the same conditions as their counterparts in the post and telegraph section. After a first year of general studies in which the students were admitted with the other two sections of IHSC, the students in this section took separate classes in the second year. At the end of their schooling, they could apply for the post of native chiefs of post in the colonial administration, more particularly, Indochinese wireless stations. To encourage civil servants to apply for this section, a decree of 15 April 1927 allowed civil servants to keep their salaries and allowances for family expenses during their schooling.

These specialised sections compensated for the drop in the number of first-year students. Indeed, as the students in the two new sections were mostly civil servants already in place, the economic restrictive measures – the reduction in the number of scholarships and their amounts – did not affect them. As shown in Table 6, thanks to these new sections, the total enrolment was thus maintained at around 50 students per year. These new sections also allowed IHSC to align itself with the model of French higher commercial schools, which also had specialisation sections.<sup>56</sup> However, the specialisation sections at IHSC were adapted to the Indochinese context with regard to their creation process and their administrative specialisation themes. Indeed, because IHSC was a school created by the colonial Indochinese government and depended on Indochinese public funds, the influence of the colonial Indochinese government in the organisation of the school was considerable. Therefore, the specialisation sections created in 1925 and 1926 were not designed to meet the recruitment needs of local private companies but rather to meet the recruitment needs of the Indochinese colonial administration. This situation contrasted sharply with the French higher commercial schools, where specialisation sections were created by private actors (e.g. chambers of commerce, merchant associations, individual patrons) to meet the needs of local private businesses (Passant, 2020a). Indeed, in France, because the higher commercial schools had been created by traders or their representatives and they depended mainly on the tuition fees paid by students recruited from nearby locales, these schools adapted their courses to their economic environment by offering specialisation sections linked to regional economic

activities – such as the maritime section at the Higher School of Commerce of Marseille or the textile section at the Higher School of Commerce of Lyon (Blanchard, 2015, pp. 43–47). Under these conditions, the specialisation sections gave IHSC the appearance of a French higher commercial school, but their creation process and administrative specialisation themes belied this resemblance.

### ***IHSC training promoted on the model of the most prestigious French higher commercial schools***

The number of students to be trained annually at IHSC was capped by the Indochinese administration, a policy aimed to guarantee the quality of the diploma. This Malthusian policy was then a characteristic of the most prestigious higher commercial schools in France (e.g. HEC and ESCP), which aimed to imitate French *grandes écoles* and more specifically engineering schools by granting diplomas to a small number of students (Meuleau, 1981, p. 46; Passant, 2020a, p. 98, 2020b, 2022a). Another reason the Indochinese reports mentioned was IHSC's political rather than prestigious nature: the capping of the number of students made it possible to limit the number of graduates who could not find work and thereby increase the ranks of indigenous degraded from their social class – that is, natives trained in the French way and who, not finding their place in the colony, could potentially start to question colonial domination (Legrandjacques, 2017). These people were suspected of joining the communists and separatists at the time and thereby threatening public order.<sup>57</sup> Under these conditions, the maximum number of students to be admitted to the commercial section was gradually reduced, from 30 students until 1922, then to 25 students for 1923, then to 20 for subsequent years. Likewise, the maximum number of students to be admitted to the post and telegraph section, and the radiotelegraph section was kept low – between 4 and 12 per year.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned justifications for deliberately restricting the number of students at IHSC, the administration also did so to show that admission to IHSC did not automatically guarantee the granting of the *diplôme de fin d'études* or the *diplôme d'études supérieures* because the latter should remain the prerogative of the best students. Indeed, in 1925, access to the third year of studies – which led to the award of the *diplôme d'études supérieures* for the best students – was reserved for students who had completed their second year of studies with an overall average of 13/20 or above; before then, an average of 10/20 had been sufficient.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, in 1929, the colonial administration restricted the number of graduates from the school: IHSC no longer issued the *diplôme de fin d'études* to students who completed their first two years of schooling and only awarded one diploma – the *diplôme d'études supérieures* – after the third year of study. The colonial administration reasoned that having two diplomas was detrimental to the value attached to the school curricula: in the minds of the heads of the trading houses of our colony, a confusion from which the former students having obtained the *diplôme de fin d'études* benefitted, to the detriment of their comrades holding the *diplôme d'études supérieures*, and which is likely to lower the value of this last title.<sup>60</sup> This measure thus brought IHSC closer to French higher commercial schools, all of which only issued a single diploma that was all the more valued as it was only awarded to a small number of students (Passant, 2020a). These measures appeared to have borne fruit in three ways.

First, several IHSC graduates could continue their commercial studies in France. Promising students, with letters of recommendation from the school principal, were sent to French

higher commercial schools – a privilege reserved for outstanding students. As such, those who entered a higher commercial school in France were celebrated in the colonial press as examples of France's civilising work. Thus, between 1920 and 1932, an IHSC graduate entered the Higher School of Commerce of Bordeaux (1923), one ESCP (in 1929), and three HEC (in 1928, 1929, and 1930). Only sons of wealthy families – those from business circles, or from the mandarins rich enough to cover the costs of travel and accommodation in France – experienced this kind of trajectory.

Second, legally, from 1925, IHSC graduates could open and run private schools up to high school. This privilege was also granted to the other schools of the Indochinese University, which indicates that, in the mind of the colonial administration, IHSC graduates were in principle of the same level as their comrades in other schools. During the interwar period, approximately 10 IHSC graduates opened private schools, mainly commercial schools.<sup>61</sup>

Third, on the military ground, an advantage was granted to graduates of IHSC in 1925 on the pretext that they were 'part of the economic elite of the colony'.<sup>62</sup> The 23 June 1925 decree exempted all former IHSC students from military service, which was not previously the case.<sup>63</sup> This decree officially placed the school on the same level as that of French higher commercial schools. However, this exemption was conditional: it was granted definitively only after justification by those concerned that they had served for at least five years in private companies in the colony. This measure was intended to encourage IHSC graduates to find work in the private sector.

As the colonial administration underlined in 1929, all these reforms meant that IHSC 'can be considered today as a true technical higher education establishment in the same way as the higher commercial schools in France'.<sup>64</sup> Colonial administrators made this statement before the International Colonial Exhibition in Paris in 1931, at which the Indochinese University was to be presented, as they sought to convince their stakeholders that, after nine years of practice, IHSC had finally achieved the initial objective that its initiators had set for its opening: that this school would 'eventually become part of the family of French higher schools of commerce'.<sup>65</sup> However, this judgement cannot be taken at face value because IHSC had a different status: it was a public school of university rank, which meant that the colonial government of Indochina had a significant role in the financing and organisation of the school. In addition, its goals were broader than those of French schools: as the specialisation sections showed, IHSC trained executives and employees for private companies and administrative positions in colonial Indochina. Furthermore, the measures to reduce the number of students and graduates showed IHSC's partly political objectives, whereas these measures were meant only to convey prestige for the French higher commercial schools. Moreover, these measures were not enough to grant IHSC graduates complete exemption from military service, as was the case for the French higher commercial schools. In addition, as the following section details, IHSC presented idiosyncrasies which made it difficult to assimilate to French higher commercial schools.

### ***Preservation of idiosyncrasy***

Although IHSC had gradually and partially aligned with the model of French higher commercial schools in the 1920s, the school retained an idiosyncratic character that made it fundamentally different from French higher commercial schools in two aspects.

Table 7. IHSC student enrolments by nationality from 1920 to 1932.

Academic year	Tonkinese		Cochinchinese		Annamese		Cambodians		French		Chinese		Japanese		Siamese		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1920-1921	30	77%	2	5%	6	15%	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	39
1921-1922	31	62%	8	16%	6	12%	1	2%	2	4%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	50
1922-1923	22	36%	20	33%	6	10%	2	3%	1	2%	10	16%	0	0%	0	0%	61
1923-1924	12	24%	23	46%	6	12%	3	6%	3	6%	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%	50
1924-1925	12	21%	21	38%	9	16%	3	5%	9	16%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	56
1925-1926	14	29%	20	42%	9	19%	2	4%	1	2%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	48
1926-1927	32	64%	7	14%	9	18%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50
1927-1928	42	72%	2	3%	10	17%	0	0%	1	2%	2	3%	1	2%	0	0%	58
1928-1929	36	67%	0	0%	12	22%	0	0%	1	2%	4	7%	1	2%	0	0%	54
1929-1930	34	68%	4	8%	6	12%	0	0%	0	0%	5	10%	1	2%	0	0%	50
1930-1931	25	57%	4	9%	6	14%	0	0%	6	14%	2	5%	0	0%	1	2%	44
1931-1932	27	55%	5	10%	11	22%	0	0%	0	0%	5	10%	0	0%	1	2%	49
Total	317	52%	116	19%	96	16%	14	2%	24	4%	37	6%	3	NS	2	NS	609

Notes: NS means no significant. The table represents the total number of enrolments recorded at the school during its history. This number should not be confused with the total number of students. The same student could be registered one, two, or three times in the school registers depending on whether (s)he was studying one, two, or three years at the school. As a result, in its 12 years of existence, 304 students studied at the school, and a total of 609 enrolments were registered at IHSC.

Sources: Report of the general government of Indochina, 1920-1921, 158; 1921-1922, 50, 1922-1923, 48, 64-65; 1923-1924, 61; 1924-1925, 68; 1925-1926, 501-502; 1926-1927, 517-522; 1927-1928, 405-408; 1928-1929, 345, 367-369; 1929-1930, 372-375; 1930-1931, 657-658; 1931-1932, 139-140. National Archives of Vietnam.

First, IHSC enjoyed a far greater reach than that of its French counterparts. In the 1920s, most French schools recruited their students from their region within a 200-kilometer radius and rarely beyond (Passant, 2020a). Only HEC and ESCP had a national influence that enabled them to recruit students from all over France and sometimes even from abroad. In contrast, IHSC had a much larger recruitment pool, spreading over most of Indochina, a territory larger than that of France. As shown in Table 7, the majority of IHSC students were not French, but overwhelmingly indigenous – Tonkinese, Cochinchinese, Annamese, and Cambodians. This situation reflected the demographic reality of Indochina: in the 1920s, the French made up only a small proportion of Indochina's population, as mentioned previously. Moreover, it was a consequence of the educational disparities in Indochina: the French, when they had the means, mainly sent their children to study in France. It is therefore not surprising that the proportion of French among IHSC students was extremely low – around 4% of the total number of enrolments. Table 7 further shows that, among Indochinese natives, Tonkinese and Cochinchinese made up the majority of IHSC attendees – respectively around 52% and 19% of the total number of enrolments. In contrast, few Annamese and Cambodians were on the school benches, and no Laotian ever took a course. This situation was similar to other Indochinese University schools: in the 1920s, 50% of students at the Indochinese University were from Tonkin, 25% from Cochinchina, 13% from Annam, 4% from Cambodia, and 1% from Laos (Le Xuan, 2018). This situation reflected the demographic disparities in Indochina: Annam, Cambodia, and Laos were less populated than Tonkin and Cochinchina. In addition, the Buddhist heritage in education led Cambodian and Laotian students to turn more to other countries, such as Siam. Finally, the rurality of most of the Indochinese regions and the lack of will of the French colonisers to develop infrastructures, in particular in Laos, explain why the south and west of Indochina were less represented than their counterparts of Tonkin and Cochinchina who lived near Hanoi. IHSC also proved a magnet for some students from China, who made up approximately 6% of the total number of enrolments, as shown in Table 7. Their presence at IHSC should be compared with their presence in other schools of the Indochinese University, in which they represented 6% of the school population on average over the same time period. Most of them came from the southern provinces of China and immigrated to Indochina (Le Xuan, 2018). The high proportion of Chinese students also reflected the place of the Chinese in the Indochinese economy: in the 1920s, there were 356,000 Chinese living in Indochina, out of a population of 20 million; especially in Cochinchina, Tonkin, and Cambodia, where they worked mainly in trade.

In the second part of the 1920s, the school population diversified in terms of nationalities. In 1927, the first Japanese student was admitted to IHSC as a regular student and completed three years of study. The colonial administration was flattered by this situation and attributed it to the quality of its teaching, which 'it can be said is far superior to that of other similar institutions established in the Far East, both in Japan and in China. There is therefore every interest in the existence of our school being known among our neighbours, and the issuance of its diploma to young people of foreign nationality will constitute, for this purpose, the best propaganda.'<sup>66</sup> The diversification of students' nationalities thus revived the dream of the founders of higher education in Indochina, which was, initially, to promote France in Southeast Asia. The colonial administration's satisfaction with the school's growing national diversity also harkens back to the fact that one of the objectives of the founders of IHSC was to provide the colony with executives commensurate with its economic development while

making Indochina a showcase for the colonising work of France in Southeast Asia (Hoàng Van, 2015, p. 158).

However, in reality IHSC student body internationalisation was rather limited. Indeed, in 12 years, the school trained 304 students, including 18 Chinese students but only 1 Japanese and 1 Siamese student. These statistics indicate that the colonial administration's goal of making IHSC an attractive higher commercial school for students beyond the borders of the colony, particularly Southeast Asia, was not achieved. The archives do not provide an explanation for this situation, and only hypotheses can be formulated. The first is the lack of publicity of IHSC at the international level: while 'propaganda' operations – as the colonial administration phrased them – were organised among male pupils of colonial secondary schools to inform them about IHSC,<sup>67</sup> no equivalent operation was carried out for foreign students. The second hypothesis concerns the difficult legal, material and financial conditions of international travel at the time, which may have deterred foreign applicants. The third hypothesis is undoubtedly the obligation to speak French to attend school. Finally, there may also have been commercial education institutions in other Southeast Asian countries that were perhaps more attractive or more easily accessible to foreign students than IHSC.

The second characteristic that made IHSC different from French higher commercial schools was its role in the development of commercial education in Indochina. As the first university-level commercial school in this colony, IHSC encouraged the opening of other lower-ranking commercial schools. Shortly after the opening of IHSC, individuals and local chambers of commerce created private commercial schools to supplement IHSC's offerings. Indeed, to prepare students for the IHSC entrance examination – which included tests in mathematics, geography, economics, and English – and to enable students who failed to retake it successfully (recall that approximately 90% of the IHSC entrance exam candidates failed), commercial training establishments sprang up in Indochina. Some took the form of evening classes, intended for adults who worked during the day and wanted to train in the evening, such as the Commercial School opened by the Saigon Chamber of Commerce in 1921. Other courses took the form of daytime lessons for school-age students, such as the three commercial schools created in Saigon in 1921, 1928, and 1930; two in Giadinh in 1922 and 1929; one in Haiphong in 1925; and one in Cholon in 1924. Moreover, existing schools opened commercial sections; for example, in September 1925, the Hanoi upper primary school for boys created a commercial section to ensure the recruitment of IHSC students or, in the event of their failure in the IHSC competition, the recruitment of students to banks and local businesses.<sup>68</sup> In 1927, similar commercial courses were established at Petrus Trương Vĩnh Ký High School in Saigon. In this sense, IHSC was a pioneer and paved the way for commercial education in Indochina.

However, the institutional positioning of IHSC was ambiguous. Although it was officially of university rank – and therefore the most prestigious of all commercial schools in Indochina – France still perceived it as lower level. The fact that several graduates of the school continued their education in French higher commercial schools indicates that IHSC undoubtedly delivered the highest commercial education that existed at the time in Indochina, but not in France. In addition, the fact that IHSC graduates had to pass the entrance examination for HEC and ESCP reveals that, in France, the IHSC *diplôme d'études supérieures* was not perceived as a higher education diploma, but only as a secondary education diploma.

### Reasons for IHSC closure

In September 1932, IHSC permanently closed its doors, a decision not of the French government but of the colonial Indochinese government. Why?

#### *An unfavourable economic situation for maintaining IHSC*

Cost savings were a key reason the colonial administration closed the school. The 1929 crisis had affected IHSC on two levels.

First, the economic crisis dried up funding for the colonial administration, which was no longer able to maintain all the schools of the Indochinese University. At the start of 1931, the rice and rubber plantations, essential sectors of the colonial economy, entered crisis. The Great Depression caused the collapse of rice and rubber prices, which in turn caused a financial downturn in the colony in both 1931 and 1934 (Brocheux, 2009). As a result, unemployment and poverty exploded in Indochina in 1931. The colonial government had to increase expenditure on maintaining public order due to peasant revolts and the disbursement of relief funds for small native landowners. Under these conditions, the colonial budget quickly fell into deficit, forcing the colonial government to reduce its spending. The members of the colonial Indochinese government, accused by the Ministry of Colonies in Paris of mismanagement and bloated salary costs (Bezançon, 2002, p. 237), reduced the University's expenses by dismissals, a reduction in the number of scholarships granted to students, and discontinuation of educational experiments deemed too costly.<sup>69</sup> IHSC was so concerned by this situation that, in the autumn of 1931, the colonial administration decided to stop recruiting students for the post and telegraph section, and the radiotelegraph section: only the 11 second-year students present at IHSC completed their education to obtain their diploma. This enabled the colonial administration to save on scholarship amounts. In the context of the economic and budgetary crisis then raging, the intentions of the colonial administrators were to save IHSC by operating it at a lower cost. Despite this background, IHSC still trained 49 students in 1931–1932 (i.e. 10% more than the previous year and as much as in 1929–1930, the last year before the economic crisis). In 1931–1932, this number was still lower than that of the School of Medicine (246), the School of Public Works (84), and the School of Fine Arts (67) but it was clearly higher than the student enrolment in the School of Agriculture and Forestry (45), the Law School (39), the Veterinary School (33), and the School of Pedagogy (21).

Second, the Great Depression impacted IHSC by reducing the opportunities for the school's graduates. Local businesses in difficulty could no longer recruit the school's graduates. During summer 1931, only a third of the *diplôme d'études supérieures* holders managed to be hired in the private companies of the colony; in contrast, IHSC graduates between 1924 and 1930 were two to three times more numerous. This not only affected students seeking employment in the private sector; it also affected those from the post and telegraph section, and the radiotelegraph section. In fact, a moratorium on administrative recruitments was put in place in Indochina from August 1931 for a period of four years; thus, putting out of work several graduates of the post and telegraph section, and the radiotelegraph section.<sup>70</sup> However, these savings measures were insufficient. In summer 1932, the colonial Indochinese government decided to close the schools that were most fragile or less flattering to the



**Table 8.** Professional opportunities for graduates from IHSC.

Graduating year	Graduates working in the private sector	Graduates working as civil servants	Graduates still studying at IHSC	Graduates still studying in another school	Total
<i>Diplômes de fin d'études (after two years of study)</i>					
Commercial section					
1922	0	7	13	0	20
1923	0	5	12	1	18
1924	0	0	19	0	19
1925	7	0	5	0	12
1926	1	0	6	0	7
1927	0	0	6	0	6
1928	3	0	10	0	13
Total (a)	11	12	71	1	95
<i>Diplômes de fin d'études (after two years of study)</i>					
Post and telegraph section					
1927	0	16	0	0	16
1928	0	6	0	0	6
1929	0	7	0	0	7
1930	0	7	0	0	7
1931	0	6	0	0	6
1932	0	6	0	0	6
Total (b)	0	48	0	0	48
<i>Diplômes de fin d'études (after two years of study)</i>					
Radiotelegraph section					
1928	0	4	0	0	4
1929	0	4	0	0	4
1930	0	3	0	0	3
1931	0	2	0	0	2
1932	0	5	0	0	5
Total (c)	0	18	0	0	18
<i>Diplômes d'études supérieures (after three years of study)</i>					
Commercial section					
1923	6	7	0	0	13
1924	7	0	0	0	7
1925	8	0	0	0	8
1926	5	0	0	0	5
1927	4	0	0	0	4
1928	2	0	0	1	3
1929	7	0	0	1	8
1930	7	0	0	1	8
1931	3	5	0	0	8
1932	6	0	0	0	6
Total (d)	55	12	0	3	70
Total (a + b + c + d)	66	90	71	4	231

Sources: Report of the general government of Indochina, 1920–1921, 158; 1921–1922, 50; 1922–1923, 50; 1923–1924, 73–79; 1924–1925, 70; 1925–1926, 501–502; 1926–1927, 517–522; 1927–1928, 405–408; 1928–1929, 367–369; 1929–1930, 346, 372–375; 1930–1931, 657–658; 1931–1932, 139–140. National Archives of Vietnam.

Indochinese University's reputation. IHSC was the first to be closed, followed by the School of Agriculture and Forestry (1934), the School of Pedagogy (1935), the Veterinary School (1935) and the School of Public Works (1935). These school closures thus allowed the Indochinese University to come closer to the model of French universities that taught medicine, law, and applied sciences (Le Xuan, 2018).<sup>71</sup>

### ***Indochinese commercial circles did not value the school***

The colonial administration decided to close IHSC not only because it was too expensive to maintain in a difficult budgetary context but also because it had not been able to find the audience for which it was initially opened. In 1929, the colonial administration noted that since its founding, IHSC was 'not in great favour with either European merchants established in Indochina, or with native school students; the first questioning the value of the diploma issued by the school, the second showing some reluctance to follow an education that does not lead to administrative careers.'<sup>72</sup> Our statistics support this observation (see Table 8). Created to train commercial executives and employees for private companies and the public sector, IHSC instead trained a large proportion of civil servants. From 1920 to 1932, 304 students studied at IHSC resulting in a total of 609 enrolments (the same student could be registered one, two, or three times in the school registers depending on whether (s)he was studying one, two, or three years at IHSC). Of these, 231 graduated, with 161 obtaining the *diplôme de fin d'études* and 70 the *diplôme d'études supérieures*. As Table 8 shows, among the 231 IHSC graduated students, 90 (39%) went into administration and only 66 (28%) went into the private sector. In addition, another 75 graduates (33%) preferred to continue their studies rather than enter the labour market. This situation was due to the mistrust that companies and students showed towards the school.<sup>73</sup> This situation may seem paradoxical, as IHSC had the support of the Hanoi, Haiphong and Saigon chambers of commerce from its inception. However, those institutions were not completely representative of all traders in Indochina: they represented only the interests of French traders and not native traders, and they mainly represented the interests of large companies such as banks and export companies. Small local businesses were therefore not necessarily well represented by these chambers of commerce (Brocheux, 2009). Indeed, a lot of recruiters were reluctant to recruit graduates from IHSC. According to the colonial administration, some traders remained hostile to formalised commercial education. For them, commercial education was more of a hands-on learning experience in the family business, and commercial education for students in a higher school ran the risk of training young people to be 'more knowledgeable than the bosses with whom they would work and potentially presumptuous.'<sup>74</sup> This kind of negative reaction was not specific to IHSC but was shared by most French higher commercial schools in their early stages (Blanchard, 2015, p. 40; Passant, 2020a, p. 17).

Moreover, IHSC students contributed to this situation by favouring administrative careers over private sector careers. Their choice was due, first, to cultural reasons. Many indigenous students felt the IHSC diploma should automatically entitle them to a place in the French administration, as was the case in other Indochinese University schools (except the School of Fine Arts). The colonial administration had to repeatedly remind students that the IHSC diploma 'never gives rise to the automatic granting of a job. This being contrary to the indigenous mentality, there is good reason to insist to make it understood, yet we will never succeed except imperfectly.'<sup>75</sup> However, indigenous people's quest for a diploma was motivated less for cultural reasons than for social order concerns: they sought social recognition in a colonial society that had marginalised them. In the racist context of the time, obtaining a university qualification was considered part of a social emancipation process (Charton, 2017). Under these conditions, many students entered IHSC more to obtain a degree than to make a commercial career.

Finally, for those graduates who did enter the private sector, IHSC did not grant them very brilliant professional positions. Although the details of IHSC graduates' private company

positions and salaries are not precisely known, in 1924, a journalist who investigated the subject declared that they were not up to the elitist image that IHSC wanted to give of its training: 'the placement of students leaving the school is made difficult by the parsimony of traders who offer them the same salaries as the first "scribbler"'.<sup>76</sup> Although we cannot verify whether this judgement can be generalised for all graduates of the school or for the period after 1924, we can assess that, unlike most schools within the Indochinese University, IHSC did not really educate members of the 'indigenous elite' in its field of specialisation (commerce). Indeed, as Le Xuan (2018) prosopographic research shows, the School of Medicine trained famous Vietnamese researchers and physicians, several remarkable Vietnamese professors graduated from the School of Pedagogy, and the Law School educated several generations of magistrates. Likewise, the School of Fine Arts was the origin of the first generation of modern Vietnamese artists and architects. In contrast, the few graduates of IHSC whose names passed on to posterity owed their fame less to their professional careers than to their political commitments.

### *A school suspected of being a hotbed of political unrest*

A third reason the colonial administration closed IHSC was because it was suspected of being a revolutionary hotbed that could radicalise some of its students. This political activism differentiated IHSC from most other Indochinese University schools. According to Le Xuan (2018), the number of students who politically challenged French colonial rule during their studies was very small during the 1920s and early 1930s, for two reasons. First, the colonial administration required a certificate of good behaviour and morals from all candidates for entry and used this requirement to oust politically engaged students. Second, internal regulations of the Indochinese University enforced severe disciplinary sanctions for students who campaigned politically during their studies (e.g. temporary deprivation of outings, suspension of study grants for one to three months, definitive expulsion from the University). Under these conditions, students generally tended to wait until they had finished their studies to challenge the colonial yoke.

However, a few rare students engaged in anti-colonialist, independence, or communist political activity during their schooling. These students were mostly IHSC students, sometimes accompanied by a few students from the Law School and the School of Pedagogy. No political activism is known for students from the School of Medicine, the Veterinary School, the School of Public Works, the School of Agriculture and Forestry, or the School of Fine Arts (Le Xuan, 2018, pp. 270–287). The fact that the protesting students were educated more at IHSC than in the other schools of the Indochinese University shows that this school was particularly unsuccessful in achieving the political goal given to it by the colonial administration when it opened: to educate in the French style a docile 'indigenous elite' ready to collaborate with French colonisers in their policies. Concretely, several IHSC students took an active part in the political unrest that shook Indochina in the late 1920s and early 1930s, motivated by three main subjects of discontent that created a tenacious resentment against the French colonisers.

First, several Indochinese native graduates resented that their requests to be naturalised French were rejected. This contradicted, in their words, the school's proclamations that they would form an 'indigenous elite'. Despite their university degrees, they therefore remained French 'subjects' or 'protégés' but not 'citizens', which meant that they could not access the

same careers as their French counterparts. Colonial administration denied IHSC graduates access to careers in France, whether in the private or administrative sector, for fear that they would frequent anti-colonial or independentist circles.

Second, several IHSC graduates complained to the Ministry of Public Instruction about the 'lamentable meanness' of the colonial Indochinese government, which only granted exemptions from military service to IHSC graduates on condition that they had worked at least five years in the Indochinese private sector. They considered this condition unfair because other Indochinese University graduates (e.g. pharmacists, lawyers, veterinarians, engineers) were not subject to it.

Third, their last grievance concerned the professional restrictions imposed on them. Indeed, several students complained about the colonial administration prohibiting administrative careers in the commercial section, while these careers were encouraged for students in the post and telegraph section, and the radiotelegraph section. This meant that the school's degree did not provide the same rights for all students. As Deputy Chairman of the Colonies Committee Senator Mario Roustan pointed out:

Graduates quickly brandished their diplomas, as soon as they left, asking for places in the administration. 'I took exams [they say], so I have an absolute right to be a civil servant. I have a certificate on fine paper, so I have a Mandarin degree, so you have to open the door for me to this elite with administrative stripes'. If we oppose these claims, we make discontented, embittered, often rebellious. It is reported among the nationalist leaders of the former students of the school that they were not housed as civil servants despite their diploma, and who are convinced that they are the victims of a cruel iniquity.<sup>77</sup>

Note that at the time, indigenous people's quest for university qualification was a means of emancipation to question the principles of colonial domination based on the inequality of status between colonised and colonisers (Bezançon, 2002). This quest paved the way for professional claims. As soon as the IHSC indigenous graduates had a priori access to the same qualifications as the French in the colony or France, they began to question their political subordination (i.e. rejection of requests for naturalization), military obligations (i.e. increased conditions for granting exemptions from military service), and professional limitations (i.e. closure of careers in France). The colonial administration's inflexibility contributed to the radicalisation of some students to the point of compromising the sustainability of the school, which was a colonial institution.

Concretely, how did this radicalisation manifest itself? Several IHSC students helped found political organisations to force colonial administration reforms in favour of greater equality with the other Indochinese University schools and French training institutions (*Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội*, 2006). Their egalitarian demands quickly escalated to demands for independence. In 1925, three IHSC students created and led the anti-colonial organisation 'Vietnamese Corps for Righteousness' (*Việt Nam nghĩa đoàn*); this organisation became the 'Revolutionary party of the new Vietnam' (*Tân Việt Cách mệnh Đảng*) in 1928 – one of the three nuclei of the Indochinese Communist Party born in 1930. Similarly, on 25 December 1927, an IHSC student, Nguyễn Thái Học, participated in the creation of the 'Vietnamese nationalist party' (*Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng*) with the help of two Indochinese University comrades. On 10 February 1930, this party launched the Yen Bai insurgency in the northern provinces of Indochina, which resulted in severe repression from the colonial administration.<sup>78</sup> Nguyễn Thái Học

was captured in February 1930 and sentenced to death. On 17 June 1930 he stepped onto the scaffold at Yen Bay with twelve of his comrades shouting *Viet Nam Van Tuê! Viet Nam Van Tuê!* ('Long live Vietnam! Long live Vietnam!'). This execution was a severe blow to IHSC. For the colonial administration, it gave a deplorable image of the school to private companies, at a time when the school was still struggling to establish its reputation. In addition, the administration feared that this execution would lead to the radicalisation of other IHSC or University students who considered Nguyễn Thái Học a martyr of the nationalist cause.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, in 1930, several demonstrations broke out in the university residence where the majority of the IHSC students lived: five leaders were definitively expelled from the Indochinese University for 'collective manifestation and serious indiscipline',<sup>80</sup> although administrative reports provide no details on the students' identity or even their claims or alleged abuses. In any case, it is likely that IHSC students witnessed at least some political unrest in the school setting during this period. This turbulent climate did not encourage the colonial administration to save IHSC when it was threatened with closure.

Even after the school closed in 1932, several former students were instrumental in defending the independence of Indochina. Indeed, the Association of IHSC Former Students, created in 1934, served as the basis for the creation of the General Association of Students of the Indochinese University, which organised several actions to fight against colonial oppression (Hémery, 1975). Likewise, two other former students from IHSC became prominent political actors in the independence of Indochina: Trường Chinh, who became secretary general of the Vietnamese Communist Party from 1941 to 1956, and Dương Bạch Mai, who became delegate of Ho Chi Minh in France in the 1940s and 1950s.

## Discussion and conclusion

The history of Indochina Higher School of Commerce sheds new light on the history of commercial schools. Indeed, it reveals that at the beginning of the twentieth century, higher commercial education was not limited to the Western countries but was also offered in some of their colonies. Moreover, it develops a nascent understanding of the genesis of higher commercial education in previously colonised countries, and more precisely in Southeast Asia – an area not addressed in the business history literature to date.

### *IHSC: a pioneering and unique higher commercial school in colonial Indochina*

IHSC was an important player in the development of higher commercial education at the beginning of the twentieth century on two levels.

First, IHSC was a pioneering player in the development of higher commercial education in Southeast Asia. Indeed, in the traditional educational systems that existed at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian territories, no schools existed to train traders or business executives. Traditional Confucian or Buddhist education ignored commercial studies, such that commercial training occurred only on the job or through transmission from generation to generation (Le Xuan, 2018). As such, IHSC was the first higher commercial school opened in these territories to deliver this education. This school, despite its brief existence, sought to develop its influence by disseminating a model

of commercial education partially inspired from French higher commercial schools, not only throughout the colony but also beyond its borders.

Second, this school developed a model of higher commercial education unprecedented in the 1920s: the French colonial administration opened and ran it following a process of both imitation and deviation by comparison with French higher commercial schools. Initially, this school was designed to 'eventually become part of the family of French higher schools of commerce'.<sup>81</sup> To this end, the school borrowed several aspects of French higher schools of commerce, such as the student recruitment policy (favouring local students while accepting a few foreigners), course programs centred on bookkeeping, modern languages and the 'commodities composition' and the pedagogy which was intended to be theoretical and practical – hence the factory excursions and commercial conference readings. Likewise, in accordance with the Malthusian policy that prevailed in the French higher commercial schools at that time, IHSC voluntarily restricted the number of graduates holding the *diplôme d'études supérieures*.

However, IHSC was not a carbon copy of French higher commercial schools; it adapted the French higher commercial schools' model in three aspects. First, in the institutional sense, IHSC enjoyed a status that had never been granted to any French or colonial commercial school before: the French colonial administration opened it with university status. In contrast, its French counterparts were of private origin and were not yet recognised by the state as higher education institutions. As a result of this institutional attachment, the colonial Indochinese government had a predominant role in not only financing the school but also the organisation of its courses and the creation of its specialisation sections. Second, IHSC's goals differed from French higher commercial schools in two ways: (1) whereas French higher commercial schools aimed to train mainly executives and employees for the private sector, IHSC also trained executives and employees for administration positions in colonial Indochina; and (2) from its inception, its goal was to train mainly indigenous students, both male and female, in contrast to the French higher commercial schools, which became coeducational several decades after their opening. At IHSC, coeducation had not been implemented to fill the school benches – as was the case for most French commercial schools at the time – but to fulfil a political objective by illustrating the 'progressivism' of the French colonisers and an economic objective by training women capable of running their business in the colony with or without their husbands. Third, in the organisational sense, IHSC used three routes to determine admission, in contrast to French higher commercial schools, which admitted students exclusively on the basis of competitive entrance exams (for HEC and ESCP) or qualifications (for other French higher commercial schools). Moreover, at IHSC, the competitive entrance examination did not meet prestige requirements at all but was mainly aimed at recruiting only candidates with a minimum educational level and sufficient command of the French language. Finally, the school evolution was scrutinised by an improvement board with representatives of the local businesses whereas these boards had all been abolished by the French higher commercial schools thirty years earlier. Two other features of IHSC's initial organisation were unique for the time: its two campuses, corresponding to economic and administrative capitals, and the obligation to carry out a three month internship at the end of the third year, a feature that did not yet exist in French higher commercial schools.

Despite its strong originality, IHSC closed its doors due to its multiple contradictions. First, the school enjoyed a contradictory status: it was officially of university rank, but its diplomas were only recognised in the colony as being of a higher level. As a result, IHSC ranked lower

than French universities and even all French higher commercial schools, even though these were institutions that were not recognised as superior by the state. As a result, the IHSC *diplôme d'études supérieures* did not completely exempt from military service, in contrast to French higher commercial schools. Second, IHSC's official mission was contradictory: it was opened to train executives and employees for the private sector, but to increase its attractiveness in the eyes of indigenous candidates, it had to promise to guarantee administrative employment to its graduates who did not find private sector employment. This situation compromised the initial mission of the school, so colonial administrators abolished the guarantee of administrative employment in 1923. However, the fall in the number of students ultimately led the colonial Indochinese government to create, first, the post and telegraph section and, then, the radiotelegraph section to train civil servants, which was paradoxical for a school that claimed to open opportunities other than civil service to members of the 'indigenous elite'. Third, the school's ambitions were at odds with the conservatism of the French colonial administration: IHSC claimed to form an 'indigenous elite', but without giving them an overly emancipatory education which could have harmed the French colonisers – hence the political, professional and military constraints imposed on indigenous students at school. By this kind of educational exclusion, IHSC helped guarantee the economic and social hegemony of the French colonial rulers who were reluctant to share their privileges with the natives. The frustrations generated by this situation fed a discontent, which became politicised in the form of political or revolutionary parties sometimes linked to communism. Indeed, IHSC was a mirror of the fundamental contradictions of French colonisation in Indochina: it testified to the official will of the colonial administrators to implement the 'civilising mission' of France and the real fear of seeing the latter arming the colonised peoples intellectually (Nguyễn, 2013). Contrary to its initial purpose, IHSC therefore became a hotbed of political contestation, where opposition to the colonial yoke and aspiration for independence formed. The educated indigenous students within its walls participated in the development of a group conscience that fuelled the struggles for independence. Indeed, the school played a political role, which, although it precipitated its closure, was far from having been insignificant in that it constituted, for some students, a space of claim and ultimately of emancipation.

### ***IHSC: an historical example of colonisation of commercial education***

This study furthers ongoing research on decolonising the curriculum in business schools (Nkomo, 2018) by investigating an historical example of colonisation of commercial education. It contributes to knowledge in two major ways.

First, this investigation marks a significant stage in our growing understanding of the under-analysed role of Western countries in the emergence of higher commercial education in non-Western countries during colonial times. Indeed, to date the literature has mainly studied the lingering effect of colonialism for business education in formerly colonised regions in the post-independence period (Nkomo, 2011, 2018) and not during the colonial era. Moreover, this research not only contributes to our knowledge about the formation of employees and executives in the global South during the colonial era (Alcadipani & Caldas, 2012); it also leads to a more nuanced perception of the general development of commercial schools worldwide. Indeed, the story of IHSC is about the early diffusion of higher commercial education: it is basically the narrative of the influence of a concept for how to develop business employees

and executives in the colonies. This examination of IHSC enriches previous work identifying the French and German models of commercial education that spread internationally at the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe (Amdam, 2008; Engwall et al., 1998; Kipping et al., 2004; Locke, 1984, 1985, 1989; McGlade, 1998) and Japan (Nishizawa, 1998, 2011; Ohtsuki, 2017). More precisely, our article complements the work of Kipping et al. (2004, p. 100) on the influence of French higher commercial schools in Spain and Turkey in the second part of the nineteenth century by showing that this influence also manifested itself in Southeast Asia at the beginning of the twentieth century. The case of IHSC demonstrates that the French influence was not only reflected in imitation processes, by which some foreign countries borrowed extensively from the French model of higher commercial schools (Kipping et al., 2004); it was also based on the voluntarism of French colonial administration, which sought to implant a model of commercial education far beyond French borders. As such, this research reveals a French effort to introduce commercial education in Southeast Asia as part of its colonial mission. In this sense, our case enriches Amdam's (2008, p. 582) conclusions, according to which higher commercial education emerged in industrialised countries, by showing that colonial expansion contributed to the emergence of a form of commercial higher education in a country as weakly industrialised as colonial Vietnam.

Second, this paper contributes to the literature by historically illuminating two of the current challenges of globalising business education around the world (Pettigrew et al., 2014). The first is the challenge of overcoming stereotypical colonial assumptions concerning management practices in formerly colonised countries, which involves a decolonisation mindset (Nkomo, 2018, p. 268). Indeed, as Nkomo (2011, 2018) illustrates, Western countries' perceptions of the managerial practices and needs of the countries in the global South are partially erroneous. In our case, the suitability of the commercial training offered at IHSC to indigenous students was judged by policy makers who had a truncated perception of indigenous reality. First, their perception was influenced by the French colonisers' racist prejudices, according to which indigenous students would not have been accustomed to providing an intellectual effort on a par with that of French students – which they further maintained was aggravated by the debilitating climate of the colony – and would have been unwilling to become businesspeople because of a cultural atavism that overvalued civil service as a professional path. Second, French colonisers' perceptions were biased by imperialist considerations, whereby indigenous students were expected to contribute to the colonial economy without questioning the supremacy of the French colonisers. As a result, this paper shows that the match between the training offered by business schools and their environment is not based exclusively on objective elements (e.g. local economy structure, local students' educational level) but also has a subjective dimension that reflects the political and social issues pursued by the promoters of commercial education (Nkomo, 2011, 2015).

The second challenge of the globalisation of business education our paper illuminates is that faced today by business schools – particularly in non-Western regions (Nkomo, 2018, p. 267) – of whether they should adapt to the local context or follow a U.S. business teaching model. In this context, our case demonstrates that the success of a business school – that is, its survival and its development – depends above all on its ability to gain acceptance in its local environment rather than embody a model of business education imported from elsewhere (Kipping et al., 2004). Indeed, our article shows that IHSC's closure was partly the result of the many difficulties this school faced in gaining acceptance from its stakeholders



living in the Indochinese context. These difficulties were manifested by, among other things, the reluctance of certain indigenous students to join the school, the mistrust of certain local recruiters to hire graduates, the reluctance of instructors to teach at the school and the colonial administration's concerns about the radicalisation of some students. This situation echoes current issues of business schools in non-Western countries confronted with the need to offer global training but at the same time adapt to local needs and conditions (Nkomo, 2018, p. 269). As the literature shows (Amdam, 2008; Pettigrew et al., 2014), despite the seeming worldwide convergence of today's business schools to common models of business education embodied by programs like the MBA, similar teaching methods, common accreditation and ranking procedures (Passant, 2022a, 2022b), there is also a need to recognise the widely different market, political and cultural contexts in which business schools daily operate. Among the many solutions proposed by the literature (Nkomo, 2018) to allow business schools to take root successfully in their place of establishment, this paper suggests an additional option (one that IHSC did not take advantage of): to rely on the capacities of integration of their graduates into the professional networks necessary for them to become accepted as members of the local business elite. Once the students have joined these networks and then reached positions of responsibility in the business world, they can then recruit other graduates from their alma mater, which may generate a cycle of regular and growing recruitments to ensure the growth and prestige of their school. Historically, this strategy was successfully implemented by the most prestigious French business schools in the twentieth century to dethrone the influence of engineering school graduates at the head of large French companies (Amdam, 2008; Blanchard, 2015). Considering many business schools today face these two issues, this historical study of IHSC can shed light on overcoming these challenges.

### ***Suggestions for future research***

This study paves the way for three types of research that would allow a better understanding of the genesis of higher commercial education in and for the colonies.

First, it would be relevant to study the history of colonial sections that existed in the higher commercial schools at the beginning of the twentieth century in France (Passant, 2020a, p. 99). Understanding why and by whom these sections were created, for which students, with which teachers, based on which course programs, as well as how they evolved and why they disappeared would allow us to understand whether there was a specificity of the colonial commercial education depending on whether the latter was provided in the metropolises or in their colonies.

Second, future researchers should investigate whether the IHSC history had a lasting effect in the sense that other higher commercial schools in Southeast Asia were influenced by the French model. Indeed, it would be useful to use a postcolonial approach (Alcadipani, 2017, p. 536) to evaluate the importance of the colonial experience represented by the IHSC and its persisting aftermath.

Third, it would be worthwhile to examine whether other higher commercial education institutions were also opened in the colonies by colonising powers other than France (e.g. Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands). The cases of colonising European countries offering higher commercial education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

could be interesting as such. For example, it would be relevant to study Great Britain and Italy's colonies, Israel and Somalia, respectively, where the governments established higher education institutions devoted to commercial education during the colonial period (Dawson, 1964; Frenkel & Shenhav, 2003). This type of study would shed light on the formation of commercial elites not only in the Western countries and in their colonies but also in peripheral territories, and in so doing, would illuminate whether these formations were similar, complementary, or even divergent.

## Notes

1. *Les Statistiques de la population indochinoise*, 1928, 12. French National Archives (FNA).
2. The 'Colonial Pact' referred to the trade regime put in place in the eighteenth century to reserve a monopoly of trade for France with its colonies. This exclusive regime was abolished in 1861 but survived in other forms.
3. The objective of the Đông Zu underground movement was to create a revolutionary organisation abroad, made up of young people to receive education in Japan in preparation for the national liberation uprising against the colonisers (Le Xuan, 2018, p. 84).
4. 'Report of the general government of Indochina' (RGGI), 1920–1921, 158, National Archives of Vietnam (NAV), GGI/R104163.
5. During the period studied (1920–1932), the Indochinese University consisted of the School of Medicine (created in 1902), the School of Public Works (created in 1913), the Veterinary School (opened in 1917), the Law School (opened in 1917), the School of Pedagogy (opened in 1917), the School of Agriculture and Forestry (opened in 1918), the Indochina Higher School of Commerce (opened in 1920) and the School of Fine Arts (opened 1924). Two other schools were created within the Indochinese University in the 1920s: the School of Applied Sciences in 1922 and the School of Literature in 1923. However, these two schools are not considered in this study because almost no details on their functioning are available. In addition, the first school was merged with the School of Public Works in 1928 while the second closed its doors after one year of operation.
6. The seat of the colonial Indochinese government was in Hanoi – as opposed to the French government based in Paris – although the French government had partial influence over the colonial Indochinese government through the Minister of the Colonies. The latter was the hierarchical superior of the governor of Indochina. The governor of Indochina thus worked under the Minister of the Colonies' authority, although he had a certain autonomy. Indeed, although he represented the French government in Indochina and was therefore responsible for the promulgation and execution of French laws and decrees, he was also the representative of the inhabitants of the colony and as such took responsibility for legislation concerning the colonial territory without having to submit them for the Minister of Colonies' prior approval, as was the case for the creation of the Indochinese University and the various higher schools it comprised (Mossy, *Principles of general administration of Indochina*, 1926, 23–32; 165–177, FNA).
7. The school did not retain the designation 'School of Higher Commercial Studies of Indochina' because at that time this title was reserved for HEC in Paris, which claimed to be superior to all the others. As a result, the name 'School of Higher Commercial Studies of Indochina' would have been 'pretentious for a newly created colonial school and even useless due to the absence of other commercial schools that could compete with it in Indochina' (RGGI, 1920–1921, 156, NAV, GGI/R104163).
8. Legally, French universities and their academic units (called 'faculties') had administrative and financial autonomy to perform all acts necessary for their operation (e.g. contract bank loans, recruit staff, acquire or rent premises and equipment, take legal action, sign partnership agreements with other universities, issue national diplomas). For the period studied (1920–1932), the Indochinese University had no such legal authority. As a result, this university and its academic units (called 'higher schools') could not themselves carry out the day-to-day manage-

ment operations autonomously; all important administrative and financial decisions concerning IHSC were taken by the colonial Indochinese government because this institution had legal authority. The only decisions that the IHSC and Indochinese University principals could take were, respectively, of an educational nature (e.g. development of the course program, preparation of timetables, selection of students for the transition to the next year) and disciplinary (e.g. decisions of the sanctions to be applied to students or teachers in the event of a breach of their obligations); even this authority was conditioned on these acts being previously validated by the colonial government of Indochina. General government of Indochina, *General regulations for higher education*, 1929, 2080–2082, NAV, M5115(4). After the closure of IHSC in 1932 the situation changed. Indeed, from 1934, the Indochinese University obtained legal authority. As a result, the University of Paris began sending around ten permanent teachers each year to the Indochinese University to give lectures and chair end-of-study exams or thesis juries (Hoàng Yan, 2017, p. 162). Under these conditions, a difference emerged between the different academic units of the Indochinese University. The most prestigious became ‘faculties’ with the right to issue licenses and doctorates recognised in the colony and in France. Thus, the School of Medicine and the School of Law became the ‘Faculty of Medicine’ and the ‘Faculty of Law’ in 1941. In contrast, the other academic units of the Indochinese University remained ‘higher schools’ and never became ‘faculties’ (Le Xuan, 2018, p. 181).

9. ‘RGGI’, 1916–1917, 112, NAV, GGI/R104163.
10. ‘Note from the school administration’, 1919–1920, 5, NAV, GGI/R104165.
11. ‘Speech delivered by the governor of Cochinchina’, September 1920, 4, FNA.
12. ‘Reports to the Government Council (RGC)’, 1927–1928, 387, FNA.
13. At the time, the colonial administration used the term ‘elite’ to designate indigenous students at the Indochinese University because only a tiny minority of indigenous students pursued their higher education in Indochina (Le Xuan, 2018, p. 79). They were said to belong to the ‘indigenous elite’, insofar as they had access to the highest level of education available in the colony. This article does not use the word ‘elite’ to qualify IHSC students for two reasons. First, factually, IHSC students had a lower academic level than their peers who attended some of the Indochinese University schools. Indeed, the best students – that is, those who held the baccalaureate – who entered this university overwhelmingly joined the most prestigious schools (the School of Medicine, the Law School and the School of Pedagogy; Le Xuan, 2018). Under these conditions, the other schools, including IHSC, welcomed fewer brilliant students, as evidenced by their low or even no proportion of baccalaureate holders (see Table 1). Second, in principle, as Smith (1972, p. 459) underlines in his article on the natives living in Indochina during the colonial period, even though an elite can be defined in various terms, it may be argued that no society subject to foreign domination could have an elite because the topmost positions were reserved for the colonial rulers themselves. Indigenous people – even the most educationally advantaged – were prepared to accept both French culture and a subordinate position in the running of the colony, which effectively excluded them from the colonial elite. From this point of view, IHSC students did not qualify as ‘elite’, as they were not allowed to rise into prominent positions. Accordingly, the term ‘elite’ is not used herein, except when it is used by contemporaries to refer to IHSC students (in this case, the term is in quotation marks).
14. ‘RGGI’, 1920–1921, 158, NAV, GGI/R104163.
15. ‘RGC’, 1922–1923, 65, FNA.
16. *Mossy, Principles of general administration of Indochina*, 1926, 175, FNA.
17. ‘Note from the school administration’, 1920–1921, 3, NAV, GGI/R104104.
18. ‘RGGI’, 1920–1921, 158, NAV, GGI/R104163. At IHSC, the president of this improvement board was the French principal of the school. The council included two members of the Hanoi, Haiphong and Saigon chambers of commerce as well as three of the school’s most senior teachers, all of whom could be French or indigenous. This council met at least once a year and issued recommendations for the school’s curriculum, which the IHSC principal then submitted for approval to the governor of Indochina. General government of Indochina, *General regulations for higher education*, 1922, 1–6, NAV, M5115(4).
19. ‘RGGI’, 1923–1924, 79, NAV, GGI/R104163.

20. 'RGC', 1926–1927, 518–519, FNA.
21. Students could apply for the school's diploma, while auditors could not obtain a diploma.
22. In contrast, the most prestigious French higher commercial schools (e.g. HEC, ESCP) believed that coeducation risked devaluing their training (Passant, 2020a, p. 144). They did not become coeducational until the early 1970s to imitate the *grandes écoles*, and in particular the engineering schools (e.g. the *École Polytechnique* in Paris; Passant, 2020a, p. 147, 2022b).
23. 'Note from the school administration', 1920–1921, 3, NAV, GGI/R104165.
24. 'Note from the school administration', 1920–1921, 3, NAV, GGI/R104165. However, this economic objective was less important than the political objective in the colonial administration's eyes. This is why the colonial administrators never sought to increase the number of female students. Indeed, they could have made the existence of IHSC better known to female students of secondary schools in the colony, similar to the 'propaganda' operation carried out with boys in secondary schools. 'RGC', 1924–1925, 90, FNA.
25. Of these 22 graduated women, at least 6 were French and the rest were indigenous. The archives are not more precise. 'RGGI', 1930–1931, 649, NAV, GGI/R104163.
26. In fact, in Indochina, although schooling was compulsory for all pupils from 7 years of age, the modalities of schooling varied in terms of the length at the primary and secondary levels, the languages of instruction, and the curricula. Thus, French pupils studied in French schools in the colony where the duration of schooling was 7 years for elementary education and 3 years for secondary education. Their education was in French and followed the teaching programs of France. Under these conditions, French pupils in the colony could complete their secondary education at the age of 17 years to receive the French baccalaureate. In contrast, the indigenous pupils studied in the Franco-indigenous schools created by the French colonisers specifically for them. The duration of schooling was 10 years for elementary education and 3 years for secondary education. Their education was provided in the mother tongue – Vietnamese, Rhade, Laotian or Khmer – during the first four years of school, then in French, which explains the longer duration of their schooling than that of their French comrades. Many repeated their fifth year of schooling – which corresponded to their first year of teaching in French – because they experienced great difficulties to take classes that were not taught in their mother tongue (Le Xuan, 2018, pp. 66–67). To take account of this linguistic difficulty, the colonial administration therefore extended the length of schooling for indigenous pupils in the 1920s. In addition, the curriculum was different from that of French pupils in that the literature, history, geography and modern languages classes were more devoted to the particularities of the Indochinese peninsula. Under these conditions, the majority of indigenous pupils in the colony dropped out of school after four years of schooling and only a minority completed their secondary education around the age of 18–20 years. Likewise, foreign students at IHSC (Chinese, Siamese and Japanese) had been educated in their countries of origin and instructed in the national language with the national programs, which did not correspond to the French ones. 'RGC', 1924–1925, 96, FNA.
27. 'RGGI', 1929–1930, 345, NAV, GGI/R201197.
28. Between 1920 and 1922, students who did not have diplomas were admitted by examination.
29. These schools still exist as HEC Paris and ESCP Business School. They implemented mandatory competitive entrance examinations in 1922 and 1926, respectively, to enhance the prestige of their education by aligning it with the model of French *grandes écoles* and more specifically engineering schools (Meuleau, 1981, p. 52) and thereby increase the level of recruitment of their students, as these schools had begun to collect enough applications to be selective (Passant, 2020a, pp. 105–106).
30. 'RGC', 1922–1923, 63, FNA.
31. The competitive entrance exams to IHSC contrasted sharply with those of HEC and ESCP, which selected their students with a good general knowledge and a solid foundation in the subjects necessary for business. In the 1920s, the entrance exams to HEC and ESCP covered seven written and four oral tests in mathematics, French, modern languages, physics, chemistry, history and geography – that is, the main subjects of the baccalaureate (Meuleau, 1981, p. 47). In contrast, for IHSC, the entrance exams covered only four written tests: one in math-

- ematics, two in French, and one in physics, chemistry or botany. No written test in history or geography was required, whereas in French culture these subjects were considered indicators of the selectivity of the tests insofar as they required candidates to have a good general knowledge of culture (Passant, 2020a). The first written test of the competition, one of the main determinants, was a dictation in French, a school exercise usually popular in primary education classes. Moreover, initially, five oral tests were also implemented for the competitive entrance exam to IHSC: one in mathematics, one in French, one in history, one in geography and one in physics, chemistry or botany. These oral tests were abolished in July 1926 for budgetary reasons. General government of Indochina, *General regulations for higher education*, 1922, 2–3. NAV, M5115(4).
32. 'RGC', 1923–1924, 62, FNA.
  33. The School of Fine Arts trained students mainly for the private sector.
  34. Galembert, *Indochinese administrations and public services*, 1924, 552, FNA.
  35. The personal tax was a lump sum tax owed by all indigenous men in the name of pacification and access to 'civilization' granted to them by the French colonisers.
  36. 'RGC', 1923–1924, 66, FNA.
  37. 'RGC', 1923–1924, 66, FNA.
  38. 'RGC', 1927–1928, 387, FNA.
  39. 'RGGI', 1930–1931, 658, NAV, GGI/R104163.
  40. General government of Indochina, *General regulations for higher education*, 1919, 136, NAV, M5115(4).
  41. 'RGC', 1923–1924, 60, FNA.
  42. 'Note from the school administration', 1925–1926, 7; 1927–1928, 3; 1928–1929, 2, NAV, GGI/R104165.
  43. Permanent indigenous teachers were appointed at the end of the 1930s at the Indochinese University – after the closure of IHSC.
  44. French Indochina, *General Directory of French Indochina*, 1924, 109–110, FNA.
  45. HEC increased its length of schooling to three years in 1939, and all other French higher commercial schools, including ESCP, did so in 1947 (Meuleau, 1981, p. 33; Passant, 2020a, p. 122).
  46. 'RGGI', 1923–1924, 60, NAV, GGI/R104218.
  47. 'RGC', 1926–1927, 488, FNA.
  48. 'Note from the school administration', 1925–1926, 7, NAV, GGI/R104165.
  49. General government of Indochina, *General regulations for higher education*, 1922, 34, NAV, M5115(4).
  50. To the best of our knowledge, it is not possible to know whether the content of colonial courses taught at IHSC were similar to those of the colonial sections of the French higher commercial schools because no research on this topic exists to date. Indeed, the literature only mentions that colonial sections sometimes existed in French schools but does not provide any details on their history or functioning (Passant, 2020a, p. 99).
  51. 'RGC', 1920–1921, 520, FNA.
  52. 'RGGI', 1922–1923, 65, NAV, GGI/R104163.
  53. However, this regulatory change did not take immediate effect, since in 1923, 12 of 31 IHSC graduates were appointed civil servants after leaving IHSC. Indeed, because they had entered the school before the regulatory amendment of September 1922, it was not enforceable against them, and they were able to enjoy a provision subsequently refused to some of their successors.
  54. Similarly, in August 1925 for budgetary reasons, the Saigon campus was closed, and the third year of study was repatriated to Hanoi, where the first two years took place. This measure was intended to put an end to the high costs of maintaining two campuses and to several dysfunctions identified by the colonial administration – namely, the difficulty of maintaining a single direction on two distant sites of more than 1,700 km and the impossibility of ensuring discipline in Saigon, where there was no university residence for boarder students. 'RGGI', 1924–1925, 61, NAV, GGI/R104163.
  55. 'RGC', 1929–1930, 373, FNA.

56. The higher commercial schools, in France, also had at the time specialization sections dedicated to consular, professorial, colonial, banking, public transport, mechanics, and tourism studies (Passant, 2020a, p. 103).
57. 'Note from the school administration', 1928–1929, 3, NAV, GGI/R104165.
58. *Les Annales coloniales*, 24 September 1927, 3, FNA.
59. 'RGC', 1925–1926, 502, FNA.
60. 'RGC', 1927–1928, 406, FNA.
61. General government of Indochina, *Sovereigns and notabilities of Indochina*, 1943, 11–67, FNA.
62. General government of Indochina, *General regulations for higher education*, 1925, 12, NAV, M5115(4).
63. Until 1925, an IHSC diploma exempted from military service graduates who became civil servants and who worked for the colonial administration for ten years, the same as all other Indochinese University graduates. Graduates who entered the private sector did not benefit from this exemption: when they were indigenous, they were required to perform three (until 1923) or four (after 1923) years of military, whereas for French citizen graduates, military service was reduced to 18 months. Military service was at the time an institution of assimilation into French culture, which is why military service was longer for the natives than for the French. This situation placed IHSC in an unfavorable position compared with French higher commercial schools, where the diploma exempted graduates from military service. This situation also had the drawback of diverting students from jobs in private companies to encourage them to serve in the administration.
64. 'RGC', 1928–1929, 368, FNA.
65. 'RGGI', 1920–1921, 156, NAV, GGI/R104163.
66. 'RGC', 1926–1927, 519, FNA.
67. 'RGC', 1924–1925, 93, FNA.
68. *L'Echo annamite*, 5 August 1925, 3, FNA.
69. 'RGC', 1931–1932, 137, FNA.
70. 'RGC', 1931–1932, 139, FNA.
71. Under these conditions, in 1935, the Indochinese University just hosted three schools: the School of Medicine, the Law School, and the School of Fine Arts. Two peculiarities, however, continued to differentiate the Indochinese University from French universities. First, the human sciences (e.g. literature, philosophy, history) were not taught in the Indochinese University, and second, artistic education was taught at the Indochinese University but not in French universities because this type of education was offered outside the university system in *grandes écoles*, namely, the French schools of fine arts.
72. 'RGC', 1928–1929, 368, FNA.
73. *L'Echo annamite*, 25 October 1924, 1, FNA.
74. 'RGC', 1928–1929, 368, FNA.
75. General government of Indochina, *Council of French economic and financial interests in Tonkin*, 1933, 46, FNA.
76. *L'Echo annamite*, 13 June 1924, 1, FNA.
77. *Les Annales coloniales*, 8 November 1930, 1, FNA.
78. On 9–10 February 1930, 40 skirmishers from the garrison of the Yen Bay fortress were secretly won over to the nationalist cause and, supported by some 60 insurgents, mutinied by killing the French officers and seizing the facilities. A few hours later, the revolt was crushed.
79. 'Note from the school administration', 1929–1930, 5, NAV, GGI/R104165.
80. 'RGGI', 1929–1930, 347, NAV, GGI/R201197.
81. 'RGGI', 1920–1921, 156, NAV, GGI/R104163.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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## **Annexe 4 – Mes communications mentionnées dans le tome principal**

### 1. Passant, Bouilloud et Gratacap (2017) : *The hidden side of management education*<sup>1</sup>

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#### **The hidden side of management education: Uses of history in management education in the long period. The case of ESCP Europe**

##### **Abstract**

In the eyes of managers history has often shared an ambivalent image. Yet, there is clear evidence that management education is a field in which resorting to history may assume various forms. Within this framework, recent research has paid attention to the various benefits offered by history for management education. By doing so this research has given the impression that history was merely an auxiliary discipline to management education. While justified, these works keep promoting a compartmentalized view of management and historical disciplines. Yet when observing the practices of management education in the long run, one realizes that management education necessarily feeds on knowledge of history. This means that history is not just an auxiliary element but a constituent element for management education. It is therefore important to examine more closely what contributions history can make for management education: what are the functions and challenges of history for management teachers and students?

Through a longitudinal analysis of the education systems that prevail at ESCP Europe, the oldest business school still in existence today, this paper endeavors to analyze the different functions of using history in management education in the long run: didactic function (creating knowledge), pedagogic function (disseminating such knowledge), propaedeutic function (training through practice). These three functions are deployed in a threefold challenge of modeling, exemplification and ultimately empowerment of students who are to become managers capable of coping with the corporate world. It is thus possible to see how, over a period of two centuries, history has pervaded and still keep pervading management education from which it is inseparable.

**Keywords:** management education, history, pedagogy

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<sup>1</sup> Communication présentée en juillet 2017 au colloque European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) à Copenhague, Danemark.

## Introduction

Previous research on the use of history within management education has been conducted in a contemporary perspective: none of these studies have shed light on the contributions of history for management education in a longitudinal perspective. Moreover the contributions of history have been treated as adjunct benefits, and not as leading tools for management education. In other words, all these studies have paid attention to how history can be used as an auxiliary element to management education that it complements, and not as a core element which constitutes management education. Yet if history can offer add-on courses for management academics and their students, we lack a clear understanding of how history can contribute to the teaching and study of management disciplines.

Following the 'historic turn' which has demonstrated that management science could fruitfully include the study of the past (Üsdiken & Kieser, 2004), the purpose of this paper is twofold. First it seeks to contribute to the further promotion of the use of historical and longitudinal approaches in the field of management studies. Second this paper aims at exploring the contributions of history within management education. This research contributes to advance our understanding of the functions and challenges of history in management education. The ESCP Europe case is an illustration of how history performs in the long run three functions – didactic, pedagogic and propaedeutic – that corresponds to specific educational challenges – modeling, exemplification, and empowerment. By doing so the paper links with the sub-theme 44 of the Colloquium – rethinking History, rethinking Business Schools – by illustrating how the role of history has evolved in one of the oldest business schools in Europe since the nineteenth century.

Accordingly, a qualitative, unique historical case-study approach was employed. This paper adopts a business history approach by analyzing historical primary sources and triangulating data. Data were collected from the archives of different organizations – ESCP Europe, Paris Chamber of Commerce, Parisian departmental archives. Further insights were also drawn from historical monographies and from scientific publications.

The first section of this paper focuses on the characteristics that have shaped and are still shaping the relations between management education and knowledge of history. The second one, drawing on Meirieu's (2013) distinction between the different educational endeavors, distinguishes three functions and challenges that knowledge of history can fulfill in training managers. Lastly, the third section reviews, through the case of ESCP Europe, the

various functions and challenges that underlie the knowledge of history in the learning relations that bind management science, management educators and their students.

## **1. Theoretical background: the relations between management education and knowledge of history**

### ***1.1. History: the cornerstone of management education?***

In management, numerous objects and concepts *de facto* incorporate history in their field of study. Such notions as unstable environments, changing trends in competition, learning processes, decision-making, risk management, strategic planning cycles, product life cycles, asset impairment or punctuated equilibrium undoubtedly rely on knowledge of the past (Tushman & Anderson, 1986; Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2003; Shenhav, 2003; Romanelli & Tushman, 1994; Schultz & Hernes, 2013).

Among all management courses that explicitly draw upon history, management-training programs generally rely on sources that are specifically dedicated to “business history”. The objective of business history is multifaceted: the scope of teaching in the field ranges from the history of business firms to capitalism and financial crises (Friedman & Jones, 2012). Chandler’s research work greatly contributed to institutionalizing business history in management education (McCraw, 1999). The success of *Strategy and Structure* is essentially due to the fact that it was the first study that focused on the changing strategy and structure of American industrial enterprise over a long period of time – from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Chandler, 1962). Whenever history is used by management education, it is approached as ‘problematized content’, geared to topics and issues that are of special interest to managers (Raff, 2009).

Numerous researchers explored the relationship between management and history, showing the usefulness of the past for managers (Foster et al., 2011; Anteby & Molnar 2013; Hansen, 2012; Kroeze and Keulen, 2013; Mordhorst, 2014; Suddaby et al., 2010; Üsdiken & Kieser, 2004; Kipping et al., 2014; Rowlinson et al., 2014). A detour into the past could thus foster the temporal distanciation that enables managers to avoid the crushing effect produced by time and contexts (Booth et al., 2006). The temporal decompartmentalization brought about by the study of the past then shows to managers that it has been possible to solve identical management problems thanks to practical means that significantly differed over

time. Analyzing the past can thus help to put in perspective the passing fads and hypes that generally distort the perception of organizational phenomena (Chandler, 1962, 1977; Laamanen & al., 2016). At the end of the day, the past could help management in three fields: entertainment, comprehension and problem solving (Edwards, 1979), although knowledge of the past is perceived as a particular approach to problems rather than an instant solution (Wren, 1987). Accordingly, as described by the 'historic turn', management science can fruitfully include the past (Üsdiken & Kieser, 2004; Smith, 2007).

### ***1.2. Restraints for the study of history within management education***

Calls for more history in management education have become numerous (Cummings & Bridgman, 2011; Madansky, 2008; Smith, 2007; Van Fleet & Wren, 2005) but they have been relatively ignored (Rowlinson, Hassard, & Decker, 2014). It is true that the teaching and the study of history within management curricula experience various difficulties.

First of all management academics are usually ill-prepared to teach history or do not feel competent to do so (Smith, 2007). Historically, management education has endeavored to find an epistemological model that did not pertain to history, while turning to natural sciences as an alternative source of inspiration (Chandler, 1962, 1977; Bouilloud & Lécuyer, 1994; Locke, 1984; Taylor, 1911). The quest for laws that might govern the business behavior of organizations was conducted at the expense of an approach based on social and human sciences in which history played a crucial role (Bouilloud, 1995). In other words, the scientific knowledge that was accepted over a long period of time by management education was devised on the model of inventions, thus breaking away from past theories. The physics-oriented approach used by some of the leading management theoreticians may be accounted for by the fact that, historically, management theories were often developed by engineers or economists (Maffre, 1983; Locke, 1984; Fourmas, 2007). The former held an epistemological conception of knowledge that stemmed from the model of natural sciences, as was the case of Taylor. As regards the influence of economists, it remained quite strong particularly in the wake of World War II, a period in which mathematical modeling prevailed because of the development of data processing, notably in management control. Other alternative models, like the one developed by Casson, which was based on Euclidean geometry (Casson, 1934), endeavored to turn management into a science predicated on the pursuit of universal and long-lasting truths and consequently hardly inclined to pay attention to the knowledge of the past.

In other words, the scientific knowledge that was accepted over a long period of time by management and management education was devised on the model of inventions, thus breaking away from past theories. Accordingly, practitioners, educators and researchers were essentially interested either in the present or the future, not in the past. Accordingly, educators and researchers were essentially interested either in the present or the future, not in the past.

Second, history generally appears at a crossroads between the liberal arts and professional education. For that reason, history may be viewed as a “luxury course” that has little relevance for would-be managers (Smith, 2007). Much in the same way as, for contemporary physicists, the physics of former times is a litany of erratic findings, for modern-day managers, old management practices and theories are generally “consigned to oblivion in the life of organizations” (Bouilloud, 1995: 38). Consequently, over a long period of time, management education conveyed in and of itself such distrust towards history. Therefore individuals involved in the sphere of management education frequently tend to mistake “history for obsolescence” (Bouilloud, 1995).

Finally little value is placed on history by management educators who work in environments where the interpretations of accreditation bodies tend to exclude history from management curricula (Smith, 2007). Indeed the teaching and study of history in business schools result neglected. Van Fleet and Wren (2005) even have shown that the prevalence of history at the doctoral and undergraduate levels has decreased in business schools between 1983 and 2003.

Following the “historic turn” that promoted historical research as a subfield of organization studies, numerous authors have demonstrated that history has the potential to add value to management education. Among them Van Fleet and Wren (2005) but also Smith (2007) have shown how history instruction could add utility. Accordingly history instruction could increase our judgment of management professions, provide a communal identity or contribute to the moral good of management students (Smith, 2007). A better understanding of history would encourage management students to think more creatively about what management could be (Cummings & Bridgman, 2011). Others benefits have been described, like learning the lessons of past mistakes (Thomson, 2001; Smith, 2007) or providing baselines for evaluating the extent of change in management over time (Thomson, 2001; Van Fleet & Wren, 2005; Jones & Khanna, 2006; Smith, 2007). In response to such difficulties and opportunities leveled at history some scholars attempted to bridge the gap, but their achievements yet need to be consolidated (Seiffert & Godelier, 2008).

## **2. Three functions and challenges that knowledge of history can fulfill in training managers**

What are the functions and challenges of history for management teachers and students? To answer this question, we draw on Meirieu's (2013) distinction between the different educational endeavors which are at stake in schools. A school is not only a center for disseminating knowledge on a unilateral basis – from teachers to students –, it is also, on a multilateral basis, a place where knowledge converges, interacts and is debated. Within a school – whether be a business school or a faculty of business – three key components cross each other: at the minimum one educator, one student and knowledge that binds them. These elements constantly interact.

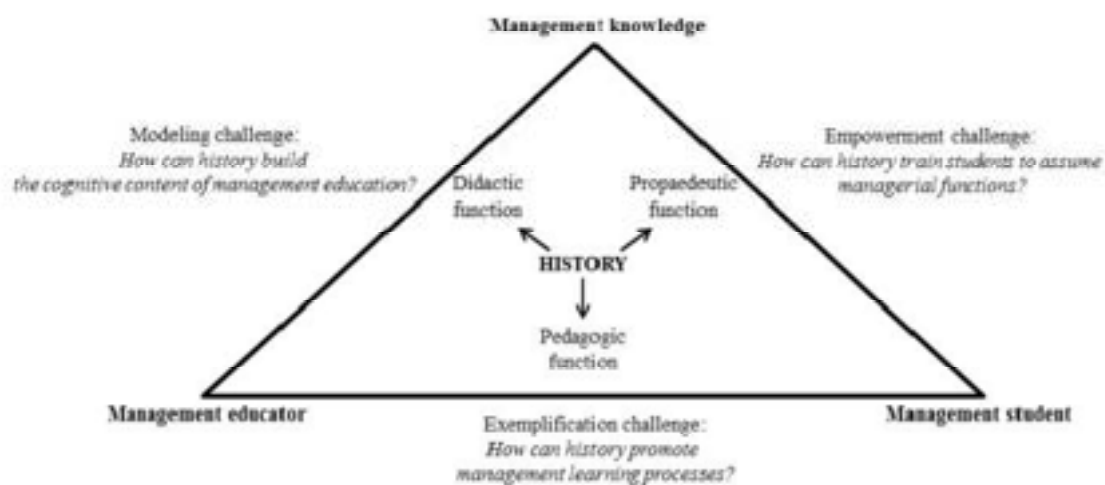
Meirieu (2013) created a conceptual tool – the “pedagogic triangle” – to understand educational endeavors by concentrating on the mutual relations of their different components. Each side of the triangle illustrates a specific relation: the educator-student relationship (pedagogic relationship), the educator-knowledge relationship (didactic relationship) and the student-knowledge relationship (propaedeutic relationship).

More precisely, within:

1. The pedagogic relationship, the teacher needs to select learning activities that are appropriate to his/her students. The teachers' goal is to reduce barriers to entry in order to show students the course material is within their reach. Accordingly, teachers aim at transmitting a genuine interest in the course by making the content as intelligible as possible. The role of the pedagogic relationship is to build bridges between teachers and students. Thanks to their pedagogic skills, teachers can polish the structure of each lesson to make them easy to follow or they can convey clearer explanations so that students can better understand the subtleties of the lesson;
2. The didactic relationship, it can be taken for granted that educators master their own discipline sufficiently well to teach it. Yet, they absolutely need to go through the task of formalizing their knowledge in order to make it teachable to their students. This challenge allows educators to turn scholarly and established knowledge into information suited for teaching (Pastré, 2008).
3. The propaedeutic relationship is doubtlessly to allow students to receive practical training: they will learn how to learn. Such autonomy is crucially important for two reasons: firstly, it allows students to be confronted with the fact that they forgot what they formerly used to know. Actually, oblivion is consubstantial with any learning



endeavor (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995). Thanks to the propaedeutic ability, they will be prepared to walk along the road that leads to knowledge. Secondly, as mentioned above, at some point, students will have to do without the guidance of educators in order to acquire knowledge: in a constantly changing environment, in which knowledge may quickly become irrelevant, it is more important to know how to learn by oneself than to accumulate knowledge that is doomed to become obsolete (Van Fleet & Wren, 2005; Wright, 2010).



**Figure: Educational functions and challenges of history in management education (adapted from Meirieu, 2013).**

It is therefore important to examine more closely what concrete contributions history can make to them through these three key functions. Is the pedagogic, didactic and propaedeutic use of history equally important to management educators and their students? In our opinion, each relationship fosters a particular goal of history that corresponds to an educational challenge specific to the relationship concerned (see Figure).

To answer this question, we chose to focus on a single business school, ESCP Europe, for three major reasons:

1. First of all, the school's exceptional longevity – it will soon be 200 years old – makes it possible to analyze over a long period of time the main functions and challenges that history has fulfilled and keeps fulfilling in management education. ESCP Europe was established in 1819, under the name "*École Spéciale de Commerce et de l'Industrie*", by French businessmen who were eager to provide the sons of the upper

middle class with higher education in business (Renouard, 1920). The first classes comprised more than 25% of non-French students (Maffre, 1983). Founded as a private and autonomous school during the first 50 years of its existence, the establishment was renamed “*École Supérieure du Commerce à Paris*” in 1852. It was still then one of the oldest business schools in Europe (see Appendix). In 1869, it was the Paris Chamber of Commerce in 1869. The latter succeeded in turning it into a “*Grande École*”<sup>1</sup> after World War II, at a time when it began to recruit most of its French students after completion of their preparatory classes. In 1999, the Paris Chamber of Commerce implemented a merger with *EAP*, another of its business schools whose model was more distinctly European. Through this merger, the school – “*ESCP-EAP*” – became truly European: since 2005, it has operated campuses in Paris, London, Berlin, Madrid, Turin and Warsaw while more than half of its students are non-French. In 2009, the name of the school became “ESCP Europe.”

2. Then, this school is internationally renowned and recognized by three accreditations – EQUIS, AMBA, AACSB, as well as the *Financial Times* rankings. Such appreciation reflects international quality standards, meaning that this institution can currently be compared to other business schools.
3. Lastly, ever since the nineteenth century, the ESCP Europe model has inspired numerous business schools in France and in other countries (Kaplan, 2014). This process of institutional imitation reveals that this school, through its influence, is not an isolated example from a longitudinal perspective.

### **3. The various functions and challenges of history in management education: the case of ESCP Europe**

#### ***3.1. The exemplification challenge of history in the management educator-student relationship***

How can history foster the learning relationship that binds management educators to their students? History provides us with an unfathomable pool of facts, events and data that makes it possible for management science to exemplify *a posteriori* its content and established theories. History facilitates learning in two ways.

It provides academics with historical facts and events that are opportunities to illustrate management courses or shed a different light on them. Several examples taken from ESCP Europe's past illustrate this fact. For instance, in accounting and in law, nineteenth-century professors routinely used to show their students genuine documents from extinct trading firms such as liquidation certificates, account books, statements of accounts and legal documents (e.g. summons, notices of protest, dismissals of petitions, etc.). For reasons of confidentiality, professors could not use documents that were too close to the contemporary period. Therefore, they either bought old documents from paper mongers or borrowed similar documents from their personal records<sup>ii</sup> (Renouard, 1920). The latter could provide students with a concrete view of certain management concepts that they had studied in class: the subtleties of double-entry bookkeeping, as well as its numerous interpretations, could thus be empirically illustrated thanks to the account books that professors would produce in class. In such a case, knowledge of the past was not an end in itself but rather a pedagogic facilitator. More precisely, history is not used as course content *per se* – students are not expected to learn by heart accounting data pertaining to the past or jurisprudence of former times – but rather as a relevant complement of a general management education.

Then, history offers an inexhaustible set of raw data that students can draw upon so as to better understand the subtleties of management phenomena under the guidance of their professors. In this light, history is an auxiliary component of management knowledge viewed by business students “as an empirical laboratory to test their specific theories” (Leblebici, 2014: 69). This situation can be observed at ESCP Europe, from the nineteenth century to the present, in students' individual essays and reports, especially when their work reflects personal attempts to understand history, for instance in diachronic studies of a specific sector, industry, country, profession or occupation. Currently, numerous students at ESCP Europe resort to databases to explore the past in order to acquire history-based knowledge that will prove invaluable in their future managerial careers. The majority of the databases that the school has made available to them since the 1980s have a historical foundation: the Amadeus, Bankscope, Euromonitor and Lexis Nexis databases offer, for example, commercial, legal and financial information over a period covering the 1970s to the present. The fact that students feel a connection to the past can be observed in the longitudinal reports they produce and even more so in *ad hoc*, one-off surveys or in comparative studies between two periods.

Nevertheless, such analyses do not aim to provide students with an encyclopedic knowledge of the past, but rather to fully comprehend management concepts or principles. The acquisition of historical data is made in a purely academic context, as tutoring is

absolutely necessary to ensure quality. Within such a framework, the educator's role is precisely to make sure that history is neither perceived as an inextricable maze, nor as a field of research that allows fanciful interpretations, but rather as a discipline that is likely to enhance their comprehension of supposedly 'known' phenomena. Then, teacher support is absolutely necessary in order to consolidate the whole benefit that can be derived from student assignments that feature an historical dimension: the professor's role is to reconcile the multiple interpretations allowed by history while synthesizing relevant information, identifying topics for discussion and putting in perspective the different concepts and methods at stake. Thanks to its pools of data, history invariably provides students with an empirical base that enables them to achieve in-depth comprehension of management issues.

### ***3.2. The challenge of modeling history in the management educator-management science relationship***

How can history help educators in building their teaching programs? History stands as a modeling challenge in the educator-management science relationship. It pertains to the didactic function of history: indeed, the question is to resort to history, not with the aim of facilitating the learning of management knowledge but rather establishing the latter as a full-fledged discipline that deserves to be taught *per se*. To management educators, the scientific contribution of history comprises two benefits.

First, the disciplinary content of management science can fruitfully draw upon the results of historical work. The didactic teaching of history requires lectures intended to provide students with a vision of the world's longitudinal order as it relates to business and management. It is a descriptive type of history in which historical content is of the utmost importance. History – be it of an economic, monetary, financial, political or international nature – makes it possible to place managerial action in a more global setting. It is therefore an attempt to give meaning to the contemporary and future action of future managers. For instance history courses have been part of ESCP Europe's curriculum since 1825. At that time and until the 1940s, their content attempted to be exhaustive: starting in Antiquity, students were taught the world's history from a business perspective. The courses of business history taught at the school from the 1820s to the 1940s thus underscored the historical role successively played by Egyptians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans and Arabs in the development of the western civilization (Maffre, 1983). The primary objective assigned to such courses was to explain the state of contemporary business by putting it back into a

universal chronology. At present, several management programs, notably in economics and finance, *de facto* integrate courses geared to the past as objects of knowledge *per se*. A major historical dimension has emerged in a transversal fashion since the nineteenth century in key pedagogic documents: the textbooks that often present the widest range of theories within a given discipline in an historical perspective, whether in organizational theory, economics, production management (Gratacap, 2002; Gratacap & Médan, 2013), marketing or finance. The didactic function in such textbooks aims to help students understand changing management trends in connection with the needs of companies at such or such a period. Most organizational behavior manuals used at the school devote a chapter to the historical foundations of organization theories, giving credit to the contributions of Max Weber, Taylor, then Roethlisberger and Mayo, who are “timeless classics” in the field of organization. Sometimes, manuals go as far back as Antiquity (Starbuck, 2003). An idea thus became established: every management thought or theory is historically determined; it is a thought “of its age” which cannot be fully understood outside of its context. Understanding a theory, being able to apply it is then tantamount to capturing its spirit, perceiving how it developed in the *zeitgeist* of its age: it does not simply mean following it to the letter. Consequently, to have a perfect understanding of the original intent of a theory, one needs to understand the concerns of the individuals for whom it was designed when it was developed: there lies the historic importance of manuals.

Second, the methodology of management science can beneficially borrow some of the tools pertaining to historical research: the latter actually offers educators a set of methodological tools that can be applied to introduce a temporal dimension into management issues. At ESCP Europe, from the nineteenth century to the present, management educators have borrowed from historian’s scientific approaches – critical analysis of first-hand sources, quantitative methods applied to long-term analysis, interview-based qualitative analyses or life histories, counterfactual approach, etc. – that are well suited for the temporal comprehension of phenomena. A course titled “History of economic thought” is currently offered to describe the evolution over time of economic theory and thus place modern theories in their historical context. Along the same lines, a “Business experience, History and Society” course shows students how industry influenced and was itself influenced by the general historical evolutions that characterized the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the syllabus, this course’s objective is defined as follows: “to help students avoid the “historical amnesia” [...]. With a greater knowledge of business’s past, hopefully students will broaden their perspectives and be less inclined to become completely caught up in the present. This

course will introduce students to the role of business in modern western society. It is designed to form a link between historical and business studies.” (ESCP Europe, 2013: 226).

### *3.3.The empowerment challenge of history in the student-management science relationship*

The direct acquisition of management knowledge is an important issue for undergraduate students, that is to say learners devoid of any work experience in management: their ultimate goal is to learn by themselves, a capacity that will be indispensable after graduation, when they will operate in professional contexts without the guidance of educators who can help them understand vexing management problems. The issue of practically enhancing management knowledge is also crucial for participants in executive education programs: as the latter already have direct personal experience of management, which partly determines their managerial skills. Then the ability to dissociate themselves from their professional practices and put them in perspective is a vitally important question for all participants in executive education programs, especially in the field of management (Smith, 2007).

In both cases, for undergraduate or adult education students, the question is about learning and the ability to learn by oneself. Such a self-controlled learning process involves an empowerment challenge, a stake that pertains to the propaedeutic function of history, which is taught through participative courses instead of lecture-based courses – a method that plays the role of an incentive for students to elaborate their own interpretations of history and thus gain knowledge that is specific to them. At ESCP Europe, since the nineteenth century, this task is clearly evidenced by the reports, which students write upon completion of in-company internships but also, since the 1970s, by case studies. Indeed, when faced with a case study, management students do not content themselves with interpretations of history: they naturally put themselves in the place of the organization’s decision-makers to wonder what they would have done in the same situation.

In July 2009, ESCP Europe thus designed a strategic case study of a new type for about 60 Chinese managers who were eager to become familiar with European management practices. The goal of this case study was to present, from a European perspective, the problems related with strategic decisions, so as to expose Chinese managers to the specificities of European firms. As a program exclusively based on lectures would have been ill-suited for these participants, the school opted for a more appropriate alternative: they were offered a tailor-made case study organized in the Château de Versailles. It was geared to the

reign of Louis XIV and aimed to prompt these managers to review and discuss what personal and organizational skills were required from business leaders. The file given to the participants contained all the information that was needed to place them in an historical context of decision-making that was similar to the situation in which Louis XIV and his ministers had found themselves in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The information mainly dealt with France's financial situation as well as its foreign, military, religious and economic policies. It also concerned other aspects traditionally regarded as trivial such as details on the monarch's health and his relations with his favorite mistresses. In this illustration, knowledge of the past is not viewed as an end in itself, nor as a means to facilitate management learning: on the contrary, it is merely an excuse that allows students to learn how to make decisions in contexts that are not familiar to them. The case studies used at ESCP Europe emphasize one of the merits of the method over cases that are artificially created by educators: thanks to its effect of mental distancing, the past makes it possible to take outside the academic framework not only a pedagogic situation, but also relations to management disciplines. As such cases are much closer to real-life situations, they feature challenging decision-making issues. Besides, resorting to the past puts students into a context of strategic decisions that breaks automatic thought patterns which routinely lead them to deal with complex management realities in repetitive, simplistic ways. Accordingly, when used in a relevant and effective manner, resorting to the past makes it possible to put management and decision-making issues into constantly diversified contexts.

The propaedeutic goal of the past thus sharply differs from challenges described above. The educators' role here is distinct from their contribution when resort to the past is didactic or pedagogical: in such cases, they operate in a prescriptive and directive manner, acting as mediators of established knowledge whereas when their objective is of a propaedeutic nature, they assume a guiding role. In effect, their duty is to help students in understanding and solving the problems faced by managers while avoiding to be perceived as the sole holders of a relevant and final solution. The propaedeutic goal of the past also differs from challenges described above, as knowledge of the past here is not imparted to students as ready-made, unassailable truths: faced with a case study, students have to engage in a thorough interpretation of data.

## **Conclusion**

What emerges from this study is that history is instrumental in the training of managers. Management education integrates knowledge of history simultaneously as cognitive content suited for this discipline, a mediator of management knowledge and a practical application of management knowledge in academic programs. The three functions – didactic, pedagogic and propaedeutic – of history in the training of future managers involve educational challenges that are specific to them.

The pedagogic function of history is present in the relationship between management educators and their students. It involves an exemplification challenge: history can be used in order to facilitate the learning process, since it can effectively illustrate management knowledge. As regards the didactic function of history, it permeates the relationship between management educators and their discipline. This function contains a modeling challenge: history offers professors and researchers both content and methodologies that act as a stimulating input to build courses. Lastly, the propaedeutic function of history is brought to bear on the relationship between students and management knowledge. In this case, the challenge of history is to empower both first-degree students and executive education participants in learning management. By becoming able to learn by themselves, students are professionally and socially prepared to cope with their future careers: in the present-day world, they need to be able to update fast-changing knowledge without the help of educators.

At the end of the day, history may be regarded not only as an auxiliary discipline for management education but also as a constituent component for it. This is decisive from an epistemological point of view. This helps in understanding that management education could not exist without history instruction and knowledge of the past for at least two reasons. First, as is the case with any teaching endeavor, management education allows the transmission of a common heritage in which history is approached as provisional knowledge awaiting improvement thanks to the breakthroughs of advanced research (Pastré, 2008). Second, if management education can be defined in a teleological manner by any factor that might contribute to ensure the effective performance of business firms (Bouilloud, 1995), then history should be integrated, as other human sciences such as linguistics, psychology and even psychoanalysis already are. This is why the teaching and study of history are so fundamental for management education.

Because this research is based on a single case study, the findings might not be generalized to other organizations. Besides, as the term history was employed in its broadest sense, more research looking at the wide variety of contributions made by each type of history – corporate history, ethnographic history, serial history, etc. –, is needed.



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## Appendix

Dates of the opening of Business Schools in Europe prior to 1870 (part 1)			
Country	City	Institution	Opening of Institution
Austria	Budapest	Commercial Academy	1857
	Debreezin	Business School	1840
	Graz	Commercial and Industrial Academy	1861
	Laybach	Commercial Institute	1834
	Prague	Commercial Academy	1856
	Reichenberg	Municipal Business School	1863
	Vienna	Pazelt Business School	1840
	Vienna	Schwalbl Business School	1864
	Vienna	Commercial Academy	1858
	Vienna	Mühlbauer Business School	1848
Belgium	Antwerp	Superior Institute of Commerce	1852

Dates of the opening of Business Schools in Europe prior to 1870 (part 2)			
Country	City	Institution	Opening of Institution
Denmark	Copenhagen	Grüner Commercial Academy	1843
	Mulhouse	Superior School of Commerce	1866
	Paris	Superior School of Commerce	1819
Germany	Bautzen	Public Commercial Institute	1856
	Berlin	Salomon Commercial Academy	1858
	Breslau	Higher Commercial Institute	1869
	Brunswick	Higher Commercial Institute	1861
	Chemnitz	Public Commercial Institute	1848
	Dantzig	Commercial Academy	1814
	Dantzig	Business School	1858
	Dresden	Public Commercial Institute	1854
	Dresden-Neustadt	Superior School of Commerce	1860
	Erfurt	Superior School of Commerce	1868
	Frankfort	Business School	Unknown
	Gera	Superior School of Commerce	1849
	Hanover	Municipal Business School	1837
	Koenigsberg	Business School	1850
	Leipzig	Public Commercial Institute	1831
	Leipzig	Commercial Institute	1869
	Lubeck	Practical Commercial Institute	1829
	Munich	Municipal Business School	1868
	Nuremberg	Municipal Business School	1834
	Osnabrück	International Business School	1838
Pima	Public Business School	1850	
Stuttgart	Business School	1854	
Holland	Amsterdam	Business School	1846
	Turin	Special School of Commerce	1850
	Venice	Superior School of Commerce	1868
Romania	Bucharest	Public Business School	1864
	Craiova	Public Business School	1867
	Galatz	Public Business School	1864
	Madrid	Commercial Athenaeum	1867
Sweden	Stockholm	Schartau Commercial Academy	1865
	Gothenburg	Commercial Academy	1826

#### Appendix. Dates of the opening of Business Schools in Europe prior to 1870.

For more details on business education in Europe in the middle years of the nineteenth century see Passant (2016).

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<sup>i</sup> In France, the system of *grandes écoles*, which are strongly competitive and highly valued by employers, operates alongside national universities. Historically, this system developed in fields that had been traditionally neglected by universities, especially in management at the beginning of the 19th century. Consequently, full-fledged management programs started being taught in the early 1950's, with the creation of *Instituts d'Administration des Entreprises*.

<sup>ii</sup> It should be reminded that in the 19th century, no permanent faculty existed: most of the educators were professionals in their own disciplines. Accordingly, professors of law were generally lawyers, professors of accounting accountants, etc. See Maffre, 1983.

2. Passant, 2018 : *Exploiter des sources lacunaires pour écrire l'histoire d'une organisation*<sup>2</sup>



***EXPLOITER DES SOURCES  
LACUNAIRES POUR ÉCRIRE  
L'HISTOIRE D'UNE  
ORGANISATION : RÉFLEXIONS  
AUTOUR DU « PARADIGME  
INDICIAIRE » DE CARLO  
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<sup>2</sup> Communication présentée en mai 2017 aux Journées d'Histoire du Management et des Organisations (JHMO), Paris, France.

# ***EXPLOITER DES SOURCES LACUNAIRES POUR ÉCRIRE L'HISTOIRE D'UNE ORGANISATION : RÉFLEXIONS AUTOUR DU « PARADIGME INDICIAIRE » DE CARLO GINZBURG***

## **Résumé**

Travailler de manière rétrospective sur le passé d'une organisation suivant un horizon temporel de deux siècles expose le chercheur à des sources lacunaires. Toutefois, quelles que soient les imperfections de sa documentation et quelle que soit sa discipline de rattachement, le chercheur en sciences sociales se doit de composer avec ces lacunes. Comment peut-il travailler à partir d'un matériau lacunaire ? Le « paradigme indiciaire » développé depuis les années 1960 par l'historien Carlo Ginzburg nous semble offrir plusieurs propositions méthodologiques à cette question. À travers une analyse longitudinale menée sur l'histoire d'ESCP Europe sur un horizon temporel de deux siècles, la présente communication identifie trois fonctions principales de la recherche « indiciaire » ; à savoir : identifier, dans les sources consultées, les indices permettant au chercheur d'interpréter en creux les sources sur ce qu'elles ne disent pas ou cherchent à dissimuler (fonction maïeutique) ; identifier, dans les sources consultées, les indices permettant au chercheur de cerner des sources alternatives (fonction heuristique) ; enfin, utiliser les indices pour réévaluer les interprétations passées émises par d'autres chercheurs et conduites à partir de sources inaccessibles (fonction herméneutique).

**Mots clés :** paradigme indiciaire, Carlo Ginzburg, traces, recherches longitudinales



# ***EXPLOITING DEFECTIVE SOURCES TO WRITE AN ORGANIZATION HISTORY: REFLECTIONS ABOUT CARLO GINZBURG'S "EVIDENTIAL PARADIGM"***

## **Abstract**

Working retrospectively on the past of an organization over a two-century time horizon exposes the researcher to incomplete sources. However, whatever the imperfections of its documentation and whatever its field of study, the researcher must deal with these shortcomings. How can he work from defective sources? The "evidential paradigm" developed since the 1960s by the historian Carlo Ginzburg seems to offer several methodological propositions to this question. Through a longitudinal analysis of ESCP Europe's history over a two-hundred-year time horizon, this paper identifies three main functions of "evidential paradigm" research; that is to say: to identify, in the consulted sources, the evidences that allow the researcher to interpret the sources about what they do not say or seek to dissimulate (maieutic function); identify, in the consulted sources, the evidences that enable the researcher to identify alternative sources (heuristic function); finally, to use evidences in order to reassess past interpretations made by other researchers and conducted from inaccessible sources (hermeneutical function).

**Keywords:** evidential paradigm, Carlo Ginzburg, traces, longitudinal research

# INTRODUCTION

Les études sur la longue durée, par leur envergure, augmentent considérablement la probabilité pour le chercheur de se retrouver confronté à des sources lacunaires. Un chercheur en gestion peut ainsi être confronté à des données lacunaires lorsqu'il travaille sur le passé d'une organisation. Comme le soulignent Thietart *et al.* (2007, p.398), les recherches en gestion reposant sur la collecte de données *a posteriori* sont en effet, parfois, confrontées à « une impossibilité absolue d'obtenir les données nécessaires à la recherche. Celles-ci peuvent ne pas exister, ne pas avoir été conservées, être introuvables, ou refusées (plus ou moins explicitement) au chercheur ». Comment, dès lors, exploiter des sources lacunaires pour écrire l'histoire d'une organisation ?

Au-delà son intérêt académique, cette question de méthodologie nous semble également revêtir une importance toute particulière pour les praticiens de la gestion. La situation du chercheur travaillant sur la longue durée confronté à un matériau archivistique lacunaire peut, en effet, être comparée à celle du gestionnaire confronté à des informations parcellaires concernant des données comptables, financières, ou commerciales. Comme le souligne Ève Lamendour (2008, p.377) « cette incomplétude est aussi ce à quoi les acteurs sont confrontés au sein des organisations quand ils doivent s'engager dans une prise de décision. Ils disposent rarement, quelle que soit leur position dans la hiérarchie, de l'ensemble de la vue sur leurs actions. Le chercheur peut-il se prévaloir d'une meilleure vision, plus complète ? Sa légitimité et la pertinence de ses analyses ne nous semblent pas dépendre d'une improbable vision totalisante du monde des organisations ».

L'incomplétude des sources nous semble, de ce fait, revêtir des vertus méthodologiques dans la mesure où elle interdit au chercheur d'adopter une position surplombante ou totalisante sur son sujet, qui risquerait de l'amener à décrire son objet de manière réifiante et décontextualisée. Si l'incomplétude des données est, à cet égard, un appel à la prudence et à la vigilance pour le chercheur en gestion, il reste à préciser dans le détail la méthodologie appropriée pour traiter un sujet d'étude dont les données sont lacunaires. Comment le chercheur peut-il surmonter les lacunes – irrégularités, incomplétudes, biais, etc. – des données lorsqu'il entreprend une étude longitudinale sur le passé d'une organisation ?

Pour répondre à cette question, la présente communication propose une grille de lecture du « paradigme indiciaire » développé par Carlo Ginzburg. La communication est organisée en trois sections. La première expose les principales caractéristiques théoriques de

ce paradigme. La deuxième section propose quelques-unes des implications pratiques de ce paradigme pour le chercheur en gestion travaillant sur la longue durée. Enfin, la troisième section présente quelques-unes des solutions pratiques nous avons retirées de notre lecture du « paradigme indiciaire » et que nous avons mises en application dans le cadre de notre travail de thèse consacré à la retranscription de la stratégie d'une organisation sur deux siècles en dépit des lacunes des sources.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Une méthode de recherche face aux lacunes des sources : le « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg**

Les historiens sont régulièrement confrontés à des sources discontinues, absentes ou biaisées, avec lesquelles ils doivent pourtant composer pour construire la connaissance du passé. Comment y parviennent-ils ? L'historien italien Carlo Ginzburg a élaboré depuis les années 1960 une méthode de recherche pour permettre aux chercheurs en sciences sociales de composer avec les lacunes de leurs sources ; méthode dénommée « paradigme indiciaire ». Nous présentons ci-dessous le contenu de ce paradigme, sa genèse et ses implications pratiques pour le chercheur.

#### *1.1. Le contenu du « paradigme indiciaire » : une méthode interprétative fondée sur les données marginales des sources*

Carlo Ginzburg n'est pas un théoricien et le contenu du « paradigme indiciaire » qu'il a développé n'a pas été exposé sous la forme claire et structurée d'une doctrine établie. De ce fait, pour comprendre le contenu de cette méthode de travail qu'il développe depuis les années 1960, il convient de lire les principaux écrits de Carlo Ginzburg pour y récolter, ici et là, les précisions qu'il donne aux lecteurs sur ce qu'il entend par « paradigme indiciaire ».

En tant qu'historien, Carlo Ginzburg a fréquemment été exposé aux lacunes des archives, et plus particulièrement à leurs irrégularités – certaines périodes étant mieux couvertes que d'autres par les archives – mais aussi à leurs biais. Pour contrer ces difficultés, il a développé une méthode originale d'investigation. Le « paradigme indiciaire » repose sur la valorisation des détails – les indices – qui, en dépit de leur insignifiance manifeste, permettent d'accéder à une connaissance historique plus profonde.

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<sup>1</sup> Passant, A., "Transformations de l'espace concurrentiel et adaptations stratégiques de l'organisation dans le temps long : le cas d'une école de commerce européenne, ESCP Europe 1819-2017", thèse de gestion en cours à l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne sous la co-direction d'Anne Gratacap et de Jean-Philippe Bouilloud.

À ce titre, le « paradigme indiciaire » peut être défini comme une méthode interprétative fondée sur les données marginales des sources. Grâce à ces dernières, le chercheur accède à la connaissance du passé de manière indirecte « comme un archéologue reconstruit la vie d'une cité à partir de quelques ruines éparses, comme un chasseur du néolithique piste un animal à partir d'empreintes au sol et de minces brindilles cassées, comme un détective identifie un criminel à partir d'un mégot ou d'une goutte d'eau » (Cordoba, 2011, p.779).

De ce fait, le « paradigme indiciaire » constitue aussi une méthode qui vise à aborder les sources « à contre-courant ». En effet, ce que la source livre au chercheur à première vue ne constitue pas nécessairement l'objet poursuivi par le chercheur, bien au contraire. Les éléments les plus significatifs sont précisément ceux qui figurent en marge de la scène. « Ce sont les éléments qui ont échappé au contrôle du rédacteur de la source, des traces non conscientes, non contrôlées [...]. La nature référentielle des sources ne se situe donc pas là où l'historien positiviste l'attend, dans l'information explicitement délivrée, mais dans des traces, révélatrices d'une réalité profonde et inconsciente » (Cerruti, 2011, p.567).

Par exemple, pour restituer les cultures orales paysannes du seizième siècle, Carlo Ginzburg disposait seulement de sources rares et fortement orientées : les comptes rendus des procès de l'Inquisition au cours desquels certains paysans étaient jugés (Ginzburg, 1980a ; 1984). En dépit de ces limites, Carlo Ginzburg est parvenu, à travers la voix des Inquisiteurs, à restituer la voix de certains paysans – telle la voix de Menocchio, un meunier frioulan du seizième siècle en lutte contre l'Église – et, ce faisant, à accéder à des parcelles de la culture paysanne de l'époque qui lui étaient autrement inaccessibles (Ginzburg, 1980a). Paradoxalement donc, c'est par l'intermédiaires des sources lacunaires à sa disposition, que le chercheur a pu accéder à la connaissance d'un passé qui lui serait demeuré autrement inconnu (Ginzburg, 1980b). Le « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg est à ce titre considéré par certains auteurs comme une « version italienne de la qualification de l'épistémologie historique comme « connaissance par traces » (Morsel, 2016, p.826).

### *1.2. La genèse du « paradigme indiciaire » : à la croisée des chemins disciplinaires*

La genèse du « paradigme indiciaire » mérite d'être rappelée. Selon Carlo Ginzburg, cette méthode d'investigation historique serait apparue à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle en Europe (Ginzburg, 2010b, pp.218-220). Trois auteurs, issus de disciplines et de pays différents, auraient mis au point des méthodes d'investigation similaires. Leurs méthodes ont pour point

commun de permettre la reconstruction, à partir de traces perceptibles, d'un complexe plus large qui ne serait pas accessible immédiatement.

Le premier d'entre eux est l'historien de l'art Giovanni Morelli. Ce dernier a mis au point, pour démasquer les faussaires, une technique d'identification d'auteurs de tableaux fondée sur l'observation de détails jusque-là négligés par les historiens de l'art. Alors que ses prédécesseurs s'intéressaient principalement aux couleurs, Giovanni Morelli s'est focalisé sur des détails apparemment secondaires tels que les pieds ou les oreilles des figures représentées que les copistes peignaient à leur façon plutôt qu'à la façon de l'artiste original. Cette méthode d'identification des peintres lui a ainsi permis de pouvoir attribuer les tableaux à leurs auteurs avec certitude.

Le deuxième contributeur à l'émergence du « paradigme indiciaire » est le psychanalyste Sigmund Freud. Ce dernier, qui connaissait les travaux de Giovanni Morelli, a élaboré la psychanalyse comme une méthode d'investigation de la psyché humaine à partir de détails, verbaux, corporels jusque-là considérés comme insignifiants pas eux-mêmes.

Enfin, le troisième et dernier auteur à avoir, selon Carlo Ginzburg, favorisé l'émergence du « paradigme indiciaire » est le romancier Arthur Conan Doyle. Ce dernier, en inventant le personnage de détective Sherlock Holmes, a mis au point une méthode d'interprétation de la réalité, et plus précisément d'accès à un passé criminel difficilement abordable. Pour démasquer le meurtrier, Sherlock Holmes apporte une attention inhabituelle aux détails qui d'ordinaire passent inaperçus, tels que les traces de cendres ou les cheveux épars qu'il retrouve sur le lieu crime.

Le rappel de la genèse du « paradigme indiciaire » est significatif à plusieurs titres. D'abord, Carlo Ginzburg souligne que les trois précurseurs de cette méthode étaient tous médecins – Sigmund Freud et Arthur Conan Doyle – ou du moins formés à l'exercice de la médecine – Giovanni Morelli. De ce fait, la posture du chercheur en sciences sociales qui mobilise le « paradigme indiciaire » relève, selon lui, de la posture du médecin qui, face à des symptômes, doit interpréter une réalité difficilement compréhensible pour le commun des mortels, à savoir la maladie de son patient. En d'autres termes, quelles que soient les lacunes des sources auxquelles il est confronté, le chercheur doit s'attacher aux indices qui lui permettront d'accéder à une réalité passée qui autrement se déroberait à son étude. Émettre des hypothèses permet ainsi, même si le chercheur peut se tromper, de construire la connaissance du passé (Ginzburg et Poni, 1981). En somme, l'histoire telle que l'appréhende Carlo Ginzburg consiste pour le chercheur à « raconter des histoires vraies (qui ont parfois le faux pour objet) en [s]e servant des traces » (Ginzburg, 2010b).

Ensuite, la genèse du paradigme que propose Ginzburg montre que la connaissance par traces, loin de constituer une spécificité de la démarche historique, se rattache à un ensemble plus vaste de disciplines de connaissance telles que la médecine, la psychanalyse, la criminologie, mais aussi la critique d'art. De ce fait, la connaissance par traces ne doit pas être réduite à une simple technique de connaissance dictée par la nécessité – c'est-à-dire par l'impossibilité d'accéder directement à l'objet d'étude – : elle constitue une épistémologie à part entière, « dotée d'une généalogie qui place la trace du côté de l'empreinte, l'historien du côté du chasseur » (Morsel, 2016, p.829).

## **2. Les implications concrètes du « paradigme indiciaire » pour le chercheur travaillant sur la longue durée**

Concrètement deux propositions de travail nous semblent pouvoir être déduites du « paradigme indiciaire » tel qu'il est développé par Carlo Ginzburg, à la fois au niveau de la recherche elle-même (2.1.), puis au niveau de la rédaction des résultats de celle-ci (2.2.).

### *2.1. Les implications concrètes du « paradigme indiciaire » en termes de recherche*

Le « paradigme indiciaire » peut se traduire par des pratiques méthodologiques pour le chercheur travaillant sur la longue durée au niveau de sa recherche tout d'abord.

Il s'agit pour le chercheur en sciences sociales confronté à des sources lacunaires de substituer une éthique de l'enquêteur à une éthique de l'expert ou de l'explorateur. En d'autres termes, il ne s'agit pas pour lui de chercher à tout prix à délivrer des certitudes à l'issue de ses investigations – tel un expert – ni de restituer des vérités historiques qui préexisteraient à sa recherche et qu'il n'aurait fait que dévoiler – tel un explorateur –, mais bien d'accepter de reconnaître qu'une partie de ses conclusions restent hypothétiques. Les doutes, en cela, doivent être acceptés comme consubstantiels à son travail (Ferry, 2011). Le savoir que construit alors le chercheur appliquant le « paradigme indiciaire » est partiellement conjecturel, fondé sur des hypothèses entre lesquelles il ne pourra pas toujours trancher. Comme le souligne Carlo Ginzburg « souvent, je me suis moi-même comparé à l'âne de Buridan, condamné à mourir de faim (à renoncer à achever mon livre) parce que je ne pouvais pas choisir entre deux interprétations auxquelles les documents donnaient la même valeur » (Ginzburg, 2010a, pp.443-444).

Cette éthique de l'enquêteur est également une invitation à reconsidérer les sources du chercheur travaillant sur la longue durée : la voie de la connaissance historique peut se tracer à travers des sources lacunaires – biaisées, incomplètes, irrégulières, absentes, etc. Le

chercheur doit, de ce fait, savoir « faire feu de tout bois » en exploitant les insuffisances des sources, à l'instar de Carlo Ginzburg qui est parvenu à accéder aux non-dits des comptes rendus judiciaires des procès de l'Inquisition. « Naturellement, ces documents ne sont pas neutres ; l'information qu'ils nous fournissent n'a rien d'objectif. Ils doivent être lus comme le produit d'un rapport spécifique profondément inégal. Pour les déchiffrer, nous avons besoin d'apprendre à saisir derrière la surface lisse du texte un jeu subtil de menaces et de peurs, d'assauts et de retraits. Il nous faut alors apprendre à démêler les fils de multiples couleurs qui constituent l'écheveau de ces dialogues [...] Il n'y a pas de textes neutres : même un inventaire de notaire implique un code, qu'il nous faut déchiffrer » (Ginzburg, 2010a, pp.416-417).

Si la voie de la connaissance scientifique peut passer par l'exploitation de sources lacunaires, elle peut également se frayer à travers l'utilisation de sources, non pas lacunaires, mais vraisemblablement peu représentatives. Une information historique douteuse, par exemple une information qui n'est recensée qu'une seule fois dans les sources – ce que les historiens appellent « un hapax » – peut être valablement utilisée par le chercheur travaillant dans la longue durée. L'intérêt de l'hapax tient alors non pas à ce que le document dit en lui-même – information par nature incertaine car invérifiable – mais à ce que son existence révèle des sources contemporaines qui n'ont pas véhiculé ladite information. Comme le suggère Carlo Ginzburg : « Que la connaissance historique implique la construction de séries de documents, cela va de soi. Mais ce qui va moins de soi, c'est l'attitude que l'historien doit assumer par rapport aux anomalies qui viennent à la surface de ses documents. Furet proposait de les ignorer, fort de ce que l'hapax (c'est-à-dire ce qui n'est documenté qu'une seule fois) n'est pas utilisable dans une perspective d'histoire sérielle. Mais l'hapax, en toute rigueur, n'existe pas. Tout document, même le plus anormal, peut s'insérer dans une série ; mieux encore : il peut servir, pour peu qu'on l'analyse d'une manière adéquate, à éclairer une série de documents plus vaste » (Ginzburg, 2010a, p.381).

Le « paradigme indiciaire » n'est donc pas neutre en termes de recherche : le chercheur travaillant sur la longue durée doit accepter l'incertitude de son travail, de même que le statut hypothétique des conclusions auxquelles il pourra parvenir. En outre, sa perception des sources elles-mêmes en ressort entachée : le chercheur qui applique le « paradigme indiciaire » ne peut se rattacher à l'approche positiviste de l'histoire qui aborde les sources comme autant de réceptacles transparents d'informations ; il ne peut pas non plus adhérer à l'approche sceptique qui tend à réduire les sources comme autant de constructions dépourvues de référence à toute réalité extérieure (Ginzburg, 2010a, pp.305-334 ; Cerutti,

2011). L'enquêteur doit avoir ce que Carlo Ginzburg appelle « la foi historique » : cette dernière lui permet « de surmonter l'incrédulité, nourrie par les objections récurrentes du scepticisme, en rattachant à un passé invisible (grâce à une série d'opérations opportunes) des signes tracés sur du papier ou sur des parchemins ; des pièces de monnaie, des fragments de statues abîmées par le temps, etc. » (Ginzburg, 2010a, p.140).

## *2.2. Les implications concrètes du « paradigme indiciaire » en termes de rédaction des résultats de la recherche*

La seconde proposition de travail qui nous semble pouvoir être déduite du « paradigme indiciaire » s'exprime, non pas au niveau de la recherche, mais au niveau de la rédaction des résultats de celle-ci.

La finalité poursuivie par le chercheur appliquant le « paradigme indiciaire » n'est pas de fournir aux lecteurs finaux un résumé aseptisé de son enquête mais bien d'exposer cette dernière dans le processus même de son élaboration. Pour reprendre la savoureuse métaphore utilisée par Carlo Ginzburg et Adriano Prosperi, les chercheurs doivent faire entrer le lecteur « dans leur cuisine, mais non pour leur servir un appétissant poulet rôti accompagné de pommes frites, mais pour les confronter à la réalité, en l'espèce un volatile encore vif et caquetant, avec plumes et barbillons qui se laisse difficilement attraper » (Ginzburg et Prosperi, 1975, p.3). En termes plus académiques, le « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg est donc indissociable d'une certaine écriture mais aussi d'une certaine relation aux lecteurs. Il s'agit pour le chercheur d'exposer au final « non pas une recherche bien achevée, mais les allers-retours de la recherche, les fausses pistes suivies et écartées avant d'arriver au résultat retenu » (Ginzburg et Prosperi, 1975, p.4).

Le chercheur confronté à des sources lacunaires ne saurait, en effet, leurrer ses lecteurs en leur faisant croire que le processus de recherche a été parfaitement linéaire et exempt de doutes. En cela, Carlo Ginzburg semble préconiser d'exposer clairement aux lecteurs les difficultés et les hypothèses qui se sont présentées à l'enquêteur au cours de ses investigations. « Les obstacles qui se dressaient contre cette recherche appartenaient à la documentation, et ils devaient donc faire partie du récit ; tout comme les hésitations et les silences du protagoniste face aux questions de ses persécuteurs – ou face aux miennes. De cette manière, les hypothèses, les doutes, les incertitudes, faisaient partie du récit ; la recherche de la vérité faisait partie de l'exposition de la vérité atteinte (nécessairement incomplète) » (Ginzburg, 2010a, p.385). C'est pourquoi tous les écrits publiés par le chercheur appliquant le « paradigme indiciaire » doivent faire figurer la marge d'incertitude



qui est la leur par des expressions dubitatives telles que « sans doute », « probablement », « il me semble », « il n'est pas aisé de répondre à cette question », etc. (Ginzburg, 2010a, p.453-477).

La restitution de la marge d'incertitude du chercheur dans ses écrits alterne avec des phases plus classiques d'érudition documentaire – première phase de restitution de son examen de l'archive – et de la problématisation conjecturale – deuxième phase d'élaboration d'hypothèses pour accéder aux non-dits de l'archive. Comme le note avec justesse Patrizia Lombardo « le travail de l'historien vise à resserrer le plus possible l'hypothèse vers un maximum de vraisemblance factuelle. La reconstitution de pièces oscille entre le goût pour les dates et la recherche des causes [...] les hypothèses doivent être constituées 'sur la base d'inductions et d'associations plausibles', passant ensuite du plausible au vraisemblable ou au vrai » (Lombardo, 2011, p.495).

Force est de préciser que l'écriture relevant du « paradigme indiciaire » ne doit pas être confondue avec l'écriture de l'histoire contrefactuelle. « Les hypothèses contrefactuelles ne se formulent pas dans des expressions dubitatives, mais dans des phrases hypothétiques : elles abandonnent les 'peut-être' pour s'ériger sur la conjonction 'si', surtout lorsqu'elles se conjuguent à l'imparfait du subjonctif ou du conditionnel. L'historien est celui qui fait la différence entre l'indicatif et le conditionnel, dit Ginzburg » (Lombardo, 2011, p.497).

En résumé, le chercheur qui applique le « paradigme indiciaire », se doit de révéler explicitement à son lecteur les difficultés qui ont été les siennes lors de la collecte et de l'interprétation des données. En outre, il doit lui préciser le statut conjectural de certaines de ses conclusions. En cela, le chercheur se doit de mettre en lumière ce que d'autres scientifiques considèrent comme devant être passé sous silence. « Contrairement à l'art, où l'on demande au restaurateur de masquer les traces de son intervention, le bon historien sera celui qui rend visibles les ficelles de son métier. Telle est la réponse que Ginzburg apporte aux querelles que notre époque intente à l'histoire » (Simon-Nahum, 2011, p.1).

### **3. Une déclinaison opératoire du « paradigme indiciaire » sur notre terrain de recherche : les trois fonctions du « paradigme indiciaire »**

Quelles préconisations méthodologiques retirons-nous de « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg pour notre recherche ? Trois fonctions principales de la recherche « indiciaire », nous semblent pouvoir être identifiées aux niveaux de la collecte et de l'analyse des données, à savoir : identifier, dans les sources consultées, les indices susceptibles de permettre au

chercheur d'interpréter en creux les sources sur ce qu'elles ne disent pas ou cherchent à dissimuler (fonction maïeutique); identifier, dans les sources consultées, les indices susceptibles de permettre au chercheur de cerner des sources alternatives (fonction heuristique); enfin, utiliser les indices pour réévaluer les interprétations passées émises par d'autres chercheurs et conduites à partir de sources inaccessibles (fonction herméneutique). Ces fonctions principales de la recherche «indiciaire», sont présentées de manière synthétique dans le tableau ci-dessous.




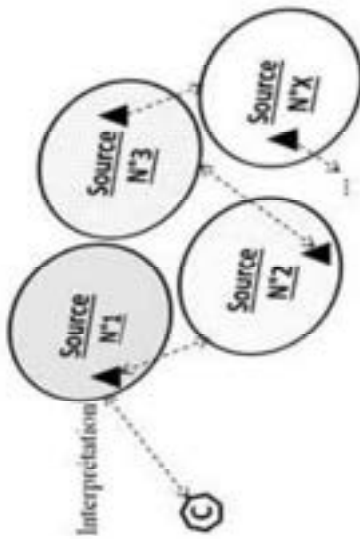
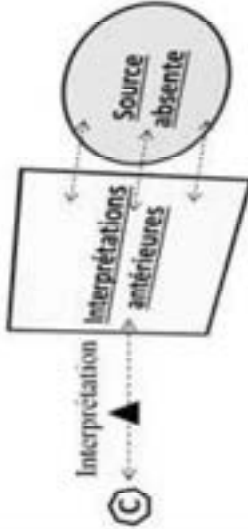
	Fonction maïeutique du « paradigme indiciaire »	Fonction archivistique du « paradigme indiciaire »	Fonction herméneutique du « paradigme indiciaire »
Finalité poursuivie par le chercheur	Identifier, dans les sources consultées, les indices susceptibles de permettre au chercheur d'interpréter en creux les sources sur ce qu'elles ne disent pas ou cherchent à dissimuler.	Identifier, dans les sources consultées, les indices susceptibles de permettre au chercheur d'identifier des sources alternatives.	Utiliser les indices pour réévaluer les interprétations passées érites par d'autres chercheurs et conduites à partir de sources inaccessibles.
Schéma d'interprétation  Chercheur  Indice			
Lacunes des sources traitées	• Biais des sources consultées (non-dits, silences, lapsus des sources).	• Discontinuité des sources consultées ; • Absence de sources consultables.	• Absence originelle de sources n'ayant jamais existé • Absence accidentelle de sources ayant existé autrefois mais rendues inaccessibles ensuite.
Exemples empruntés aux travaux de Carlo Ginzburg	• Interpréter une formule d'invocation du pape à l'intention des Juifs (indice verbal) comme un lapsus permettant de doter le document d'un niveau de « significations cachées » qui n'est pas donné immédiatement (Ginzburg, 2001).	• Utiliser les noms des métayers de Bologne (indices nominatifs) pour identifier un réseau d'indices (noms des fonds fonciers ; noms de leurs propriétaires) ouvrant la voie à l'exploration de nouveaux fonds d'archives (cadastrales, privées) permettant aux chercheurs de connaître l'étendue des réseaux sociaux des propriétaires fonciers (Ginzburg et Poni, 1981).	• En raison de l'absence originelle des sources, utiliser le ruban rouge arboré par un personnage du tableau <i>La Flagellation d'Urbino</i> (indice pictural) pour élaborer une hypothèse sur la signification du tableau ; hypothèse remettant en cause toutes les interprétations élaborées précédemment par les chercheurs (Ginzburg, 1984 ; 2002).
Exemples issus de notre recherche	• Interpréter les silences et imprécisions (indices verbaux) du directeur de l'école dans la description de l'établissement qu'il adresse au Ministre du Commerce comme autant d'aveux sur les difficultés rencontrées dans sa gestion au quotidien.	• Utiliser les médailles (indices honorifiques) remises aux anciens directeurs de l'école pour identifier une source alternative (les archives militaires) pour accéder aux dossiers personnels des anciens directeurs de l'école. • Utiliser le nom (indice nominatif) d'un individu pour identifier une source alternative (le mausolée familial) pour découvrir les liens familiaux de cet individu de façon à authentifier sa filiation.	• En raison de l'absence de sources contemporaines (correspondances privées de la famille d'Adolphe Blanc), utiliser les liens de filiation de cette famille (indice généalogique) pour élaborer des hypothèses expliquant pourquoi les fils d'Adolphe Blanc n'ont jamais été associés à la gestion de l'école à l'époque où celle-ci était une entreprise familiale.

Tableau : Synthèse des différentes fonctions du « paradigme indiciaire » observées dans notre communication.

### *3.1. La fonction maïeutique de la recherche « indiciaire » lors de la collecte et de l'analyse des données*

À l'exemple de la maïeutique socratique par laquelle le chercheur fait accoucher son interlocuteur d'un savoir qu'il porte inconsciemment en lui, il nous semble possible d'identifier la pratique du chercheur « indiciaire » à celle d'un maïeuticien. La maïeutique que ce dernier pratique ne porte toutefois pas sur un interlocuteur de chair et d'os, mais sur une source de données lacunaires dont il cherche à combler les béances. La finalité du chercheur indiciaire est ici d'exploiter les non-dits et les silences des sources ; ce qui présuppose bien évidemment l'existence de sources à interroger mais aussi leurs limites. La principale lacune qui nous semble pouvoir être traitée ici par le chercheur est le biais des sources. Certaines sources donnent un aperçu tronqué de la réalité, délibérément ou non. Ce biais du document peut être exploité par le chercheur car il est susceptible de lui révéler des informations qu'il serait pertinent pour le chercheur d'avoir à sa disposition. Le document est alors vu comme un énoncé dual avec une face visible, et une face dissimulée c'est-à-dire un sous-texte dont un indice révèle l'existence.

Carlo Ginzburg a utilisé cette fonction maïeutique du « paradigme indiciaire », fonction qui consiste à faire émerger de la documentation un contenu latent. Cette opération présuppose une dualité de la source examinée entre ce qu'elle dit ouvertement et ce qu'elle dissimule. Comme le soulignent Carlo Ginzburg et Carlo Poni : « entre la forme et le contenu existe un écart que la science a pour tâche de combler. (Si la réalité était transparente, et donc immédiatement connaissable, disait Marx, l'analyse critique serait superflue) » (1981, p.5).

Dans son texte « Un lapsus du pape Wojtila » (2001), Carlo Ginzburg interprète ainsi, une quinzaine d'années après les faits, un discours du pape Jean-Paul II prononcé lors du célèbre pèlerinage à la grande synagogue de Rome en 1986, comme un texte offrant potentiellement plusieurs niveaux de lectures. Cette polyphonie est perçue par Carlo Ginzburg qui identifie un indice, qu'il qualifie de "lapsus", permettant de lire le document de plusieurs façons. En effet, Ginzburg perçoit dans l'invocation du pape aux juifs qualifiés de « frères aînés » un indice constituant une « citation cachée » de l'Épître de Paul aux Romains (IX, 12) ; texte considéré comme l'un des énoncés fondateurs de l'antijudaïsme chrétien. Cette référence cachée est interprétée par Ginzburg, non pas comme l'expression d'une haine inconsciente du pape à l'égard des juifs, mais comme la trace dans le présent des origines du texte fondateur de cette domination. La référence au lapsus freudien est volontaire chez Carlo Ginzburg. Toutefois, ce dernier ne cherche pas à débusquer l'intention ou l'inconscient de son auteur, le pape. En ce sens, le travail du chercheur n'est pas de se livrer à des analyses

psychanalytiques d'auteurs mais à l'étude des modalisations de l'énoncé. Par la fonction maïeutique du « paradigme indiciaire », Carlo Ginzburg désigne un indice faisant signe vers un contenu caché que le chercheur se doit de révéler. La première lecture consisterait ainsi à voir dans cet indice une citation délibérée du pape à travers laquelle, sous couvert de condamnation de l'antijudaïsme, il aurait cherché à conserver la soumission du judaïsme au christianisme. La seconde lecture consiste à voir dans cet indice une citation inconsciente du pape qui, en cherchant une formulation conciliante à destination des juifs, aurait involontairement puisé son inspiration dans un texte considéré comme fondateur de l'antijudaïsme chrétien. Si Carlo Ginzburg (2001) dans la suite de son chapitre se prononce sur l'hypothèse qui lui semble la plus vraisemblable – la seconde – l'intérêt de son texte pour nous est ailleurs. Il réside bien dans la démonstration que dans un document biaisé – ici un discours du pape sur les rapports entre chrétiens et juifs – des indices peuvent faire signe vers plusieurs lectures possibles. Le rôle du chercheur est d'identifier ces indices pour restituer l'éventail des interprétations possibles, qui peuvent paraître dissimulées à première vue.

Au cours de notre recherche, nous avons également observé cette fonction maïeutique du « paradigme indiciaire ». Face aux biais de certaines de nos sources, nous avons ainsi pu identifier des non-dits à approfondir pour le chercheur. Par exemple, l'histoire d'ESCP Europe<sup>2</sup> nous demeure en grande partie inconnue pour la période 1854-1867. Si la situation juridique de l'établissement, son organisation matérielle, sa discipline scolaire, les soutiens gouvernementaux nous sont connus, en revanche, certains éléments aussi basiques que le nombre d'élèves ou de professeurs ne nous sont pas connus. La seule source contemporaine interne que nous ayons à notre disposition pour cette période est un rapport officiel de 1865 rédigé par le directeur de l'école, Guillaume Gervais, au Ministre du Commerce. Ce rapport rappelle l'histoire de l'école depuis sa fondation en 1819 et son organisation depuis la mort d'Adolphe Blanqui en 1854.

Toutefois, l'intérêt de cette source réside précisément dans ce qu'elle ne dit pas. Si le directeur prétend que son école peut accueillir au maximum entre cent et cent-dix élèves annuellement, il ne fournit pour autant aucune donnée sur la fréquentation annuelle moyenne de son école depuis qu'il en assure la direction (Gervais, 1865, p.681). De manière habile, le directeur évoque la capacité d'accueil potentielle de son école mais non sa capacité effective... De même, s'il assure que des élèves étrangers sont formés sur les bancs de l'école,

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<sup>2</sup> Créé en 1819 sous le nom d'« École Spéciale de Commerce et d'Industrie » à Paris, cet établissement privé est devenu en 1852 l'« École Supérieure de Commerce » de Paris. Après avoir été rachetée en 1869 par la Chambre de Commerce de Paris et avoir subi plusieurs changements de noms, cette école est devenue en 2009 « ESCP Europe ».

aucun ordre de grandeur n'est communiqué sur les années écoulées (Gervais, 1865, p.686). Ces imprécisions interpellent le chercheur : Guillaume Gervais a passé sous silence des statistiques qu'il a vraisemblablement eues en mains, en tant que directeur et propriétaire de l'école, au moment de la rédaction de son rapport en 1865. Pourquoi une telle imprécision ? Peut-être faut-il rechercher l'origine de ce demi-silence dans le fait que les statistiques n'aient pas été suffisamment prospères pour être communiquées au Ministère de rattachement de l'école. Plusieurs indices semblent en effet laisser entendre que l'école n'était pas vraiment un établissement prospère dans les années 1860.

Certains indices permettent de déchiffrer à demi-mots une situation moins brillante qu'il n'y paraît au premier regard. Chaque année l'école subissait « à raison du nombre de ses élèves étrangers, les fluctuations que les événements politiques lui ont toujours imprimées » (Gervais, 1865, p.686). De façon pudique, le directeur de l'école évoque donc des variations à la baisse des effectifs d'élèves. Cette information est confortée par une comparaison avec les écoles de commerce de cette époque qui accueillent aussi des élèves étrangers. Au milieu du dix-neuvième siècle, dans un contexte de profonde réorganisation de l'Europe, la conjoncture internationale ne manque pas d'être perturbée. Les guerres mettent à mal la capacité des écoles de commerce à mener à bien leur mission éducative : certaines réussissent à surmonter la baisse parfois draconienne de leurs effectifs, à l'instar de l'Académie de Commerce de Prague qui, suite à la guerre austro-prussienne de 1866, voit ses effectifs scolaires passer de 250 à 137 ; l'Institut Supérieur de Commerce d'Anvers voit, de même, ses effectifs scolaires diminuer en cours d'année en raison de cette même guerre : en mai 1866, une dizaine d'élèves de nationalité prussienne sont conduits à quitter l'école pour s'engager dans l'armée de leur pays (Grunzweig, 1975). Enfin, certains établissements, comme l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Mulhouse, sont amenés à fermer leurs portes après une baisse considérable des effectifs suite à la guerre franco-prussienne et à une annexion douloureuse à l'empire allemand.

Autre aveu à demi-mot de Guillaume Gervais sur la situation réelle de l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris : « le temps que les familles accordent à l'École pour le développement de son enseignement, deux ans à peine en moyenne, est trop court pour qu'elle puisse en consacrer une partie à lutter contre des intelligences mal réglées ou contre des caractères rebelles, œuvre très méritoire sans doute, mais qui n'est pas praticable avec les moyens dont nous disposons » (Gervais, 1865, p.682). Le manque de moyens financiers semble attesté quand cet aveu est triangulé avec les données contemporaines dont nous disposons. En effet, quand le directeur décède en 1867, tout son héritage revient à Jane

Blanqui... Mais l'héritage en question est relativement modeste et ne lui permet pas de se constituer une dot pour se marier. Cet insuffisant héritage semble avoir joué un rôle important dans la décision que prit Jane Blanqui de vendre l'école à la Chambre de Commerce de Paris en février 1869. Les longs mois de négociations entre Jane Blanqui et la Chambre pour fixer le prix de vente laissent également supposer que la négociation fut difficile pour Jane Blanqui, femme et mineure juridique, pour qui l'enjeu était de taille puisque du prix de vente dépendait le montant de sa dot et, partant, la qualité de son mariage. En outre, les premiers témoignages des agents consulaires après avoir racheté l'école en 1869 révèlent le piètre état matériel dans lequel se trouve l'école : la première urgence de la Chambre fut d'entreprendre dès avril 1869 une campagne de réfection matérielle – réparation de l'amphithéâtre, agrandissement du rez-de-chaussée, remplacement du mobilier scolaire, construction de latrines dans la cours, modernisation des dortoirs, etc. (Renouard, 1920, p.117 ; pp.136-137). Alfred Renouard, élève à l'école entre 1868 et 1870, témoigne aussi de l'état déplorable de l'école à la fin des années 1860 et reconnaît que l'entretien des bâtiments n'était plus assuré depuis des années (Renouard, 1920, p.116).

À l'instar de Carlo Ginzburg, nous avons donc cherché à « faire feu de tout bois » lors de nos recherches. Confronté à une documentation peu nombreuse et imprécise, nous avons identifié des indices pour « faire parler » les sources, c'est-à-dire pour mettre en lumière les propos qu'elles ne tenaient pas clairement et laissaient percevoir indirectement. Tous les indices fournis par la présentation de l'école en 1865 par son directeur d'alors, triangulés avec les données tierces, permettent donc d'entrevoir, entre les mots, ce que pouvait être la situation réelle de l'école dans les années 1860. La fonction maïeutique permet ainsi de faire advenir une réalité passée qui ne s'avoue qu'à demi-mots dans le document d'archive.

### *3.2. La fonction heuristique de la recherche « indiciaire » lors de la collecte et de l'analyse des données*

La deuxième fonction du « paradigme indiciaire » est de permettre au chercheur d'identifier, à partir des indices présents dans les sources consultées, d'autres sources de données à exploiter. Lorsque le matériau historique est lacunaire, le chercheur travaillant dans la longue durée se doit en effet de contrer la minceur de ses sources en identifiant des sources alternatives auxquelles il n'avait peut-être pas pensé initialement et qui, même si elles peuvent paraître parfois éloignées de ses préoccupations premières, peuvent lui livrer des données sur le passé sur lequel il enquête.

Il s'agit donc d'explorer de nouvelles sources alternatives pour compléter une documentation dont la lacune première est la discontinuité. Les sources discontinues sont des sources incomplètes, marquées ou bien par la présence de béances au sein d'un même document, ou bien par les irrégularités constatées dans une série continue de documents. Pour mener à bien sa tâche d'exploration de nouvelles sources, le chercheur indiciaire doit identifier des indices qui, en dépit de leur apparente insignifiance, peuvent lui permettre d'identifier des sources alternatives à étudier.

Cette fonction du « paradigme indiciaire » renvoie à la science heuristique qu'utilisent les historiens. Chez ces derniers, l'heuristique désigne, en effet, la science qui permet à l'historien de chercher les documents qu'il utilise pour son travail d'analyse (Colas, 2011). À cet égard, l'heuristique est parfois confondue avec l'archivistique. La distinction entre ces deux termes tient au fait que si l'archivistique porte uniquement sur les archives, l'heuristique porte plus généralement sur toutes les sources que le chercheur peut consulter, à savoir les archives mais aussi les monuments. En outre, l'archivistique désigne le travail de l'archiviste – gérer les archives – plutôt que celui de l'historien (Colas, 2011). C'est pourquoi nous utilisons ici le terme « heuristique » dans le sens que lui donnent les historiens pour qualifier l'usage du « paradigme indiciaire » tel que nous venons de le décrire.


La fonction heuristique du « paradigme indiciaire » permet ainsi au chercheur de se servir des indices qu'il récolte comme des signes qui, collectés ensemble, peuvent pointer dans une direction de recherche qui n'était pas immédiatement perceptible. Pour reprendre la métaphore cynégétique, les indices collectés par le chercheur-chasseur lui permettent d'identifier une piste de recherche-chasse pour parvenir à son but.

Dans la littérature, cette fonction heuristique du « paradigme indiciaire » a été utilisée par Carlo Ginzburg et Carlo Poni (1981) lorsqu'ils ont cherché à établir le réseau des rapports sociaux des propriétaires fonciers de la région de Bologne. Ainsi, un indice nominatif – le nom d'un métayer dans la campagne de Bologne – ouvre directement sur les archives paroissiales. Celles-ci ont renseigné les chercheurs sur les nom et prénom de l'exploitant des terres ainsi que sur les noms et prénoms des membres de sa famille, et le nom de sa ferme et du fonds foncier dont il a la charge. Ces nouveaux indices nominatifs ont pointé vers une nouvelle source archivistique : les registres cadastraux. Ces derniers ont livré aux chercheurs le nom et la taille de l'exploitation, ainsi que l'identité du propriétaire du fonds. Ce dernier indice leur a permis d'investiguer vers une nouvelle source : les archives privées du propriétaire qui leur ont livré de nouveaux indices, comme les registres d'administration, les comptes annuels de l'exploitation, les mouvements annuels de la production agricole,



l'endettement pour chaque famille de métayers... En d'autres termes, le « paradigme indiciaire » peut fonctionner suivant un mode rhizomique : le chercheur collecte des indices qui l'amènent à découvrir de nouvelles sources qui, en retour, lui font découvrir de nouveaux indices qui pointent en direction d'autres sources, etc. L'indice est ici le support d'un « jeu de renvois et de ricochets [composant] une sorte de toile d'araignée aux mailles étroites » (Ginzburg et Poni, 1981, p.3).

Au cours de notre recherche, nous avons également appliqué cette fonction heuristique du « paradigme indiciaire ». À ce jour, tous les chercheurs ayant travaillé sur l'histoire d'ESCP Europe, de sa création en 1819 à son acquisition par la Chambre de Commerce de Paris en 1869, ont exploité les archives consulaires et les archives départementales de Paris. Ces archives traitent explicitement de l'histoire de l'école mais elles se signalent par leur incomplétude et leur minceur – un carton d'archives uniquement pour le premier demi-siècle d'histoire de l'école. Pour combler ces lacunes, nous avons donc exploré des sources alternatives en suivant le « fil d'araignée » des indices. Nous décrivons ici un exemple.

Les listes nominatives parues au dix-neuvième siècle sur la composition des commissions administratives et des conseils de perfectionnement de l'école font figurer, de manière d'autant plus anecdotique qu'aucune légende ne les accompagne jamais, des icônes  indiquant les décorations civiles et militaires détenues par les personnels administratifs de l'école. L'intérêt principal de ces indices honorifiques est de pointer vers des sources alternatives d'informations pour notre sujet : l'attribution de ces décorations laisse en effet présager de l'existence de dossiers administratifs déposés auprès des autorités ministérielles appropriées en vue de leur sollicitation. En effet, toute remise de décoration fait l'objet depuis le dix-neuvième siècle au moins d'un rapport officiel sur les états de services rendus au pays par l'éventuel récipiendaire. Ce rapport, généralement remis au Ministre approprié, lui permet de se prononcer sur l'opportunité ou non d'attribuer la décoration sollicitée.

En d'autres termes, la collecte de ces indices – décorations honorifiques – a ouvert la voie à l'exploration de nouvelles sources qui n'avaient pas été envisagées initialement en début de recherche. Par exemple, nous avons appris que l'un des cofondateurs de l'école, Amédée Brodart, a été décoré en 1857 de la Médaille de St-Hélène<sup>3</sup>. Cette indice nous a permis de découvrir une source alternative de renseignement dans la mesure où l'attribution de cette décoration était accordée après la demande du requérant, sur la foi de ses faits

<sup>3</sup> La médaille de Sainte Hélène a été créée par Napoléon III le 12 août 1857. Elle récompense les 405 000 soldats encore vivants en 1857, ayant combattu aux côtés de Napoléon I<sup>er</sup> pendant les guerres de 1792-1815.

militaires mais aussi civils. Nous avons ainsi exploré les sources militaires conservées aux Archives Départementales de Paris concernant les secours, les pensions, les actes de justice militaire entre 1815 et 1906 (cote DR2 21-28, 34). Ces dernières nous ont appris les états de services militaires d'Amédée Brodart et, notamment, qu'il était décoré de la Légion d'honneur depuis 1813, soit six années avant de fonder l'école.

Nous avons, dès lors, quitté les Archives Départementales pour aller explorer les Archives Nationales, et en particulier celles du Ministère du Commerce. Cette source alternative de données nous a appris qu'après avoir quitté la direction de l'école en 1824, Amédée Brodart a écrit, à la fin des années 1840, plusieurs courriers à l'adresse du Ministère du Commerce pour solliciter une promotion dans l'ordre de la Légion d'honneur. Dans ces sollicitations, Amédée Brodart cite expressément ses activités à la tête de l'École Spéciale de Commerce et d'Industrie comme susceptibles de faire valoir la justesse de ses sollicitations à être promu dans l'ordre de la Légion d'honneur. Des pièces authentiques concernant l'administration de l'école au début des années 1820 ont ainsi été adressées au Ministère du Commerce. Le dossier personnel d'Amédée Brodart conservé aux Archives Nationales nous a également appris qu'après 1854 cet individu s'est retiré à Amboise.

Armé de cet indice de localisation géographique, nous sommes partis à Amboise explorer les archives municipales de la ville. Cette troisième source alternative de données nous permis de reconstituer la biographie du fondateur de l'école dans sa quasi-totalité et de mettre en relief certains aspects de sa gestion de l'école dans les années 1820.

### *3.3. La fonction herméneutique de la recherche « indiciare » lors de la collecte et de l'analyse des données*

Si les deux premières fonctions du « paradigme indiciare » que nous avons analysées ci-dessus – fonctions maïeutique et heuristique – présupposent l'existence de sources lacunaires – respectivement biaisées et discontinues – à exploiter, il nous semble qu'existe une troisième fonction, liée à une troisième lacune des sources. Lorsqu'il est confronté à l'absence de sources qu'il lui aurait été pertinent de travailler, le chercheur ne peut pas recourir aux fonctions maïeutique et heuristique précédemment citées. Les sources sont manquantes ou bien parce qu'elles n'ont jamais existé – absence originelle – ou bien parce qu'elles ont existé par le passé mais sont devenues inaccessibles par la suite, comme cela peut être le cas des sources détruites, égarées, ou détériorées et inexploitable, etc. – absence accidentelle.

La fonction que nous qualifions d'« herméneutique » nous semble constituer une solution à cette situation. En l'absence des sources, le chercheur peut, en effet, réévaluer les

interprétations que ses prédécesseurs ont conduites par le passé à partir d'indices que ceux-ci ont négligés. Dans ce cas, l'attention première du chercheur porte non sur le contenu latent de la source qu'il étudie – fonction maïeutique – ni sur les possibles sources alternatives – fonction heuristique –, mais sur les interprétations que les chercheurs avant lui ont proposées. Cette focalisation sur l'interprétation explique le qualificatif d'« herméneutique » que nous appliquons à cette troisième fonction du « paradigme indiciaire ».

Dans son étude sur Piero della Francesca (1984 ; 2002), Carlo Ginzburg a, selon nous, pratiqué cet usage herméneutique du « paradigme indiciaire ». Le tableau du quinzième siècle la *Flagellation* d'Urbino attribué à Piero della Francesca, est encore aujourd'hui un document iconographique énigmatique. Aucune source de la Renaissance n'a été conservée sur les circonstances de la commande de ce tableau. De ce fait, l'identité des personnages représentés demeure en grande partie inconnue, notamment pour les trois personnages au premier plan. Cette absence complète de sources d'époque n'a cependant pas empêché les chercheurs de se livrer à des interprétations multiples et variées... rarement compatibles entre elles. Comme le souligne avec humour Carlo Ginzburg, malgré trente années de débats entre les chercheurs et les experts, aucun consensus n'a émergé, ne serait-ce que sur des informations aussi élémentaires que la date du tableau, l'identité de son commanditaire ou le sujet représenté. Selon les termes mêmes de Carlo Ginzburg « the same ingredients, cooked in different hermeneutic sauces, can produced concoctions of very varying flavour » (Ginzburg, 2002, p.56). Pour départager les multiples interprétations de ces prédécesseurs, Carlo Ginzburg se penche alors sur un détail en particulier, un ruban rouge arboré par l'un des personnages. À partir de cet indice, jusque-là ignoré par ses prédécesseurs, il élabore une hypothèse sur la probable identité ecclésiastique de l'individu qui l'arbore ; le ruban rouge pouvant être interprété comme l'écharpe d'un cardinal. Cette hypothèse permet donc à son auteur de réfuter ou de nuancer la plupart des interprétations de ces prédécesseurs, tout en constituant une interprétation nouvelle même si elle n'est pas nécessairement exacte. Dans l'appendice II, Carlo Ginzburg (1984) avoue ainsi s'être trompé dans son interprétation : l'écharpe rouge est un *becchetto*, c'est-à-dire un accessoire largement utilisé dans l'Italie du Quattrocento, qui n'a donc rien à voir avec la signification ecclésiastique que l'historien avait initialement donnée à ce détail. Cet exemple nous montre que le « paradigme indiciaire » peut être utilisé à des fins herméneutiques par le chercheur dans la mesure où il lui permet de critiquer – au sens large du terme – les interprétations de ses prédécesseurs : même si Carlo Ginzburg admet que son hypothèse ecclésiastique se révèle finalement erronée, elle offre le mérite de remettre en

question, de valider ou de disqualifier, certaines interprétations élaborées par ses prédécesseurs.

Au cours de notre recherche, nous avons, de même, appliqué cette fonction herméneutique du « paradigme indiciaire ». Nous l'avons appliquée notamment pour réévaluer les passations de pouvoirs à la tête de l'école lorsque celle-ci était une entreprise familiale, de 1830 à 1869. À ce jour, tous les travaux parus sur l'histoire d'ESCP Europe sur l'époque où elle fut une entreprise familiale dressent un tableau simple et apparemment serein des passations de pouvoir à la tête de l'école. Renouard écrit ainsi, pour la passation de pouvoirs après la mort d'Adolphe Blanqui<sup>4</sup> en janvier 1854 : « la succession d'Adolphe Blanqui revint tout naturellement à [Guillaume] Gervais » (Renouard, 1898, p.42). Toutefois, cette interprétation nous a semblé discutable dès la première lecture dans la mesure où aucune source n'est mentionnée. Le récit que Renouard (1898 ; 1920) nous dresse de ces passations de pouvoirs repose exclusivement sur l'analyse des actes notariés de la famille Blanqui. Or, ces documents – que nous avons consultés – ne portent aucune information sur la qualité des relations familiales au sein de la famille Blanqui. Les seuls documents d'époque qui auraient pu nous renseigner sur le sujet sont précisément les correspondances épistolaires que les membres de la famille s'échangeaient. Ces correspondances privées n'ont pas été retrouvées, ni par Renouard ni par nous. Renouard n'a pas non plus interrogé les contemporains directs de ces passations, comme l'épouse et les enfants d'Adolphe Blanqui qui vivaient encore à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle. Comment le chercheur aujourd'hui peut-il espérer éclairer ces phénomènes de passation de pouvoirs à la tête de l'entreprise familiale alors que les sources contemporaines qui auraient pu nous renseigner ont disparu ? L'enjeu pour le chercheur est ici de valider la pertinence des interprétations qui jusqu'à aujourd'hui ont présenté les successions à la tête de l'entreprise familiale Blanqui comme non-problématiques.

Le point de départ de notre enquête était le constat suivant : les soins qu'Adolphe Blanqui a apportés pour assurer la transmission de l'école après sa mort et pour préserver les intérêts de sa famille au sein de celle-ci<sup>5</sup> témoignent de sa volonté de maintenir l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris dans le giron de la famille Blanqui. Pourquoi dès lors n'a-t-il pas associé ses enfants à la gestion de l'entreprise familiale ? Pour identifier les membres de

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<sup>4</sup> Adolphe Blanqui, économiste et professeur au CNAM, a été le directeur et propriétaire de l'école entre 1830 et 1854 ; ce qui a valu à l'établissement le surnom d'« École Blanqui » à l'époque.

<sup>5</sup> Par l'acte notarié en date du 30 septembre 1852 qui transforme l'école en société civile, Adolphe Blanqui donne obligation au conseil d'administration, dans le cas où il viendrait à décéder, de consulter sa veuve pour pourvoir à son remplacement à la tête de l'école (article 16). De même, l'article 19 dispose qu'en cas de décès de tous les administrateurs, le liquidateur de la société civile devra consulter les héritiers et ayants-droit des administrateurs décédés. Voir la copie de l'acte notarié reproduite dans Renouard, 1920, p.79.

la famille d'Adolphe Blanqui, nous avons été confrontés à la très grande imprécision des sources contemporaines mais aussi de la littérature actuelle. Parallèlement à notre recherche au sein des archives notariales, nous avons donc parcouru les cimetières parisiens du Père-Lachaise, de Montparnasse et de Montmartre où sont enterrés les membres de la famille Blanqui. Ces visites funèbres, complétées par nos recherches aux archives, nous ont appris qu'Adolphe Blanqui avait eu deux fils avec son épouse Julie : l'aîné, Arthur Anatole (1828-1871) et le cadet Octave Adolphe (1835-après 1872). Cette information a le mérite de remettre en perspective une partie de l'histoire connue de l'école à l'époque où elle était une entreprise familiale. En effet, toute la littérature, à ce jour, a présenté la succession d'Adolphe Blanqui à la tête de l'ESCP comme une entreprise fluide et apparemment consensuelle : en 1852, Adolphe Blanqui crée une société civile avec deux coassociés, Guillaume Gervais et Auguste Marie, appelés à lui succéder à son décès. À sa disparition en janvier 1854, Guillaume Gervais devient directeur de l'école et, sans descendance, la lègue par testament à Jane Blanqui, l'une des quatre filles d'Adolphe, qui en hérite finalement en décembre 1867 avant de la revendre à la Chambre de Commerce de Paris en février 1869.

La découverte de l'existence des deux fils d'Adolphe Blanqui remet en cause le caractère non-problématique des passations de pouvoir à la tête de l'école. Pourquoi Arthur Anatole et Octave Adolphe ont-ils été écartés de la gestion de l'école dirigée par leur père ? En 1852, ils étaient âgés respectivement de vingt-quatre ans et de dix-sept ans. Si l'aîné avait déjà atteint l'âge de la majorité légale, le second était en passe de l'être puisque qu'il devait fêter ses vingt-et-un ans quatre ans plus tard en 1856. Leur âge en faisait donc *a priori* des candidats sinon pour remplacer leur père, du moins pour participer à la gestion de l'École Blanqui<sup>6</sup>. Le fait que tous les deux exerçaient, dès les années 1850, des activités de négociants<sup>7</sup> laisse en effet penser qu'ils avaient manifestement des connaissances, voire des compétences, dans le domaine d'enseignement couvert par l'école.

À ce jour, aucun document ne laisse penser qu'Adolphe Blanqui ait songé à faire de ses fils ses successeurs à la tête de l'école dont ils portaient le nom. De même, dans les années 1860, pourquoi est-ce à Jane Blanqui, une jeune fille mineure juridique et sans expérience aucune dans le commerce, que Guillaume Gervais lègue l'école, et non à ses frères ? En

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<sup>6</sup> Amédée Brodart a cofondé et dirigé l'École Spéciale de Commerce et d'Industrie en 1819, à l'âge de trente ans. Adolphe Blanqui y a enseigné dès l'âge de 27 ans avant d'en devenir propriétaire et directeur à l'âge de 32 ans.

<sup>7</sup> D'après les archives notariales, l'aîné travaillait à l'international où il avait acheté des propriétés au Paraguay et en Espagne. Le cadet est présenté comme « négociant à Paris ». Archives Nationales, 307 Mi 10 ; Archives Départementales de Paris, VD4 C 16.

l'absence de sources sur la qualité des relations familiales, ces questions demeurent sans réponse ferme.

Néanmoins, le « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg permet au chercheur de se livrer à des conjectures. Peut-être les fils d'Adolphe Blanqui ne souhaitaient-ils pas prendre part à l'œuvre éducative familiale ? Peut-être préféreraient-ils exercer une activité commerciale plutôt que de travailler dans l'entreprise familiale dont les revenus et la stabilité demeuraient incertains ? Peut-être s'étaient-ils brouillés avec leur père ? L'âge du décès prématuré du fils aîné – 43 ans – de même que l'année et le lieu de son décès – 1871 à Paris – ainsi que le mystère de son lieu d'inhumation peuvent alimenter bien des hypothèses. Mort à Paris, l'année de la Commune, Arthur Anatole aurait-il comme son oncle le révolutionnaire Auguste Blanqui, adhéré aux idées socialistes de la révolution ? Aurait-il pris part, quel que soit son camp, aux événements de la Commune au cours desquels il aurait pu trouver la mort ? L'hypothèse d'un rapprochement entre le fils aîné d'Adolphe Blanqui et son oncle, le révolutionnaire Auguste Blanqui, pourrait expliquer les raisons de son évincement de la gestion de l'école familiale.

Il ne s'agit toutefois que d'une hypothèse dont le degré de fiabilité est très mince en raison du manque complet de sources sur le sujet. Néanmoins, l'intérêt de la fonction herméneutique du « paradigme indiciaire » tient moins, comme nous l'avons exposé plus haut, aux affirmations historiques qu'elle permet de dégager qu'à la remise en question des interprétations passées apparemment bien établies à laquelle elle invite.

## *Conclusion*

Comment exploiter des sources lacunaires ? Le premier apport de cette communication est d'avoir tenté une synthèse sur les implications méthodologiques que le chercheur peut retirer du « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg, à la fois en termes de recherche mais aussi en termes de formalisation des résultats de cette dernière. En outre, le second apport de cette communication est d'avoir distingué, à partir de notre terrain de recherches, une distinction tripartite entre les fonctions possibles du « paradigme indiciaire », à la disposition du chercheur travaillant sur la longue durée.

La première fonction de ce paradigme est maïeutique. Bien que lacunaires, les sources à la disposition du chercheur contiennent parfois des indices dont il peut se servir pour faire

« accoucher » les sources consultées d'informations qu'elles contenaient sans pour autant les mettre en avant de manière explicite. La principale lacune qu'exploite ici le « paradigme indiciaire » est le caractère biaisé parfois de certaines sources. L'indice est ici vu comme un « iceberg » face auquel se retrouve le chercheur : si la manifestation de l'iceberg peut sembler insignifiante à première vue, elle dissimule toute une réalité que le chercheur se doit de découvrir. Les difficultés de gestion à peine esquissées par le directeur Guillaume Gervais dans son courrier au Ministre du Commerce en 1865 peuvent ainsi être perçues, quand elles sont confrontées à des informations issues d'autres sources.

À côté de cette fonction maïeutique, nous avons mis en exergue une fonction heuristique pour le « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg. Il s'agit de collecter des indices qui, à première vue, peuvent sembler insignifiants en eux-mêmes mais permettent au chercheur d'identifier des pistes d'exploration de nouvelles sources de données. La principale lacune que permet d'appréhender cet usage du « paradigme indiciaire » est la discontinuité des sources. Face à des sources incomplètes, le chercheur se doit de trouver, grâce au fil d'Ariane des indices, de nouvelles sources à explorer. Ces sources de données peuvent être de nature très différente : il peut s'agir de documents d'archives mais aussi de monuments. Notre lecture heuristique du « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg nous a ainsi amené à identifier des indices peu significatifs en eux-mêmes – insignes des décorations civiles remises aux directeurs de l'école – qui nous ont permis d'exploiter de nouvelles sources de données. Parmi ces dernières, une source de données est plutôt inhabituelle pour le chercheur en gestion : les monuments funéraires. Les monuments funéraires de la famille d'Adolphe Blanqui ont notamment été utilisés comme une importante source de renseignement pour constituer l'arbre généalogique de cette famille ; outil qui nous a permis de poser un regard renouvelé sur l'histoire d'ESCP Europe à l'époque où celle-ci était une entreprise familiale connue sous le nom d'« École Blanqui ».

Enfin, nos travaux ont mis en lumière une troisième fonction du « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg : une fonction herméneutique. Cette dernière consiste pour le chercheur, non pas à utiliser les indices pour faire advenir dans les sources à sa disposition des informations cachées (fonction maïeutique), ni à utiliser les indices pour partir en quête de nouvelles sources à exploiter (fonction heuristique), mais à utiliser les indices pour remettre en cause les interprétations de ses prédécesseurs. La principale lacune des sources que permet d'appréhender cet usage du « paradigme indiciaire » porte sur l'absence même des sources. Quand les sources n'ont jamais existé ou quand elles ont été rendues inaccessibles suite aux aléas de l'histoire, le chercheur ne peut s'appuyer que sur les interprétations de ses

prédécesseurs qui ont, parfois, pu consulter des sources rendues inexploitable par la suite. La remise en cause des interprétations passées des autres chercheurs consiste en un véritable travail critique dont la finalité est moins de faire émerger une connaissance certaine du passé que des hypothèses permettant de revisiter les interprétations disponibles à ce jour sur ce que fut le passé de l'objet de recherche. Dans notre communication, nous avons ainsi remis en cause la vision sercine qui jusque-là avait été donnée des passations de pouvoirs à la tête de l'école à l'époque où cette dernière était une entreprise familiale. Nous avons mis à jours des indices nouveaux – notamment la généalogie de la famille d'Adolphe Blanqui – qui nous permettent d'émettre des hypothèses originales remettant en cause les précédentes interprétations.

Ces trois fonctions du « paradigme indiciaire » mériteraient d'être confrontées à d'autres terrains de recherche que le nôtre pour être affinées. En outre, cette grille de lecture gagnerait sans doute à distinguer certains concepts clés pour la compréhension du passé ; concepts qui ne sont pas aujourd'hui distingués par le « paradigme indiciaire » de Carlo Ginzburg. Si ce dernier défend une connaissance par traces du passé, force est toutefois de constater que la « trace » n'est pas complètement assimilable à un « indice » : si la première est laissée involontairement par son auteur, comme le souligne à juste titre Ginzburg (2010a, pp.139-144), le second relève d'une opération délibérée (Morsel, 2016).

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