

Global competitive pressures and career ecosystems

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**Global competitive pressures and career ecosystems:
contrasting the performance management systems in UK
and French Business Schools**

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Global competitive pressures and career ecosystems: contrasting the performance management systems in UK and French Business Schools

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this article is to compare the effects of global competitive pressures on UK and French B-schools’ management systems through the lens of career ecosystems.

Design/methodology/approach – This is a qualitative inquiry employing in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 44 Business School academics in the two countries.

Findings – We demonstrate the importance of top-down and bottom-up ecosystem influences for creating contrasting performance management systems in competitive B-schools in two countries, to different outcomes for institutions and faculty careers.

Research limitations/implications – We focus on faculty working in top business schools, which limits the generalizability of our findings. Future research could apply the ecosystem lens to other institutions and geographical areas to highlight best practices and evaluate their transferability across borders.

Practical implications – The study highlights alternative HR practices and potentially workable adjustments to current systems that could be envisaged in order to enhance performance of individuals and institutions without jeopardizing the chances of valuable human resources to bring their contributions to the success of B-schools.

Originality/value – This paper compares and contrasts different performance management systems taking into account exogenous and endogenous influences on B-schools that operate in a highly competitive and rapidly changing global management education market.

Introduction

Globalization and neoliberal policies of deregulation, privatization of state assets and free market have progressively permeated Western societies since 1980s (Bristow, Robinson and Ratle, 2017; Taberner, 2018). They arguably led to corporatization and managerialism in academia (Huzzard, Benner and Kärreman, 2017) amidst funding cuts and intensified work (Berg and Seeber, 2016). In a context of growing competition, external accountability, monitoring and performativity (Guillotin and Mangematin, 2018; Kallio, Kallio, Tienari and Hyvönen, 2016), academic institutions have become arenas for tensions, power games, contestation, resistance and compliance with managerial demands (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016).

Business Schools are growing in prominence worldwide because of enhanced focus on management in organizations in a changing economic, political, technological, and social landscape (Ojala, 2019). They face intensified international competition for students and faculty talent and seek competitive advantage through visible credentials such as ranking and accreditations (Alajoutsijärvi, Kettunen and Sohlo, 2018). The latter gained importance as proxy for objectively assessed quality that enhances status and reputation (Dubois and Walsh, 2017). These endeavors resulted in some national contexts in development of pervasive audit cultures through continuous performance assessment and management, and a narrow definition of the excellent academic (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014). Quantitative targets measure the quality of academic output through judgmental and disciplinary accountability measures (Hussain, 2015). Recent studies discuss the negative impact of performance management on academic freedom, motivation, career, and well-being (Bristow et al, 2017; Taberner, 2018). Others address shifting challenges, strategies, purpose and identities of B-schools in dynamic and changing environments (Jabbar, Analoui, Kong and Mirza, 2018; Ojala, 2019).

The global educational market in which B-schools operate exacerbates the pressures to conform to shared expectations for legitimacy (Pettigrew and Starkey, 2016). Institutions and academics face ‘accelerated rationalization’ to conform to the ‘global common sense’ and ‘one good way’ of judging academic quality, and failure to adopt practices similar to those of successful competitors could prove ‘a costly if not suicidal strategy’ (Paradeise and Thoenig, 2013: 191). However, B-schools are embedded in their social, economic, political, and professional context (Pettigrew and Starkey, 2016).

This study follows recent calls for exploring empirically the connectedness between different levels of analysis, supranational, national, institutional, organizational and individual (Baruch, 2015), and their influence on careers of faculty who contribute, through knowledge production,

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to the institution’s performance on the global arena (Baruch, 2013). Extant research on national systems reveals enduring differences, for example between the systematic implementation of performance measures in the UK from the 1980s and the more recent managerialist turn in other European countries (Boitier and Rivière, 2013). Institutional factors such as employment law and industrial relations (Huzzard et al, 2017), as well as culture, values, practices, and career systems shape context-specific responses of B-schools to global competitive pressures (Thomas et al, 2014). Whilst discussions of the effects of performative pressures in B-schools are rife, they have largely focused on a single country (Gebreiter and Hidayah, 2019; Harker, Caemmerer, and Hynes, 2016). We argue that comparing the interplay of endogenous and exogenous influences on B-schools and the responses in different contexts allows for a better understanding of the importance of local orders versus global standards (Paradeise and Thoenig, 2013). Such insights can be useful for B-schools seeking strategic differentiation in a mature industry characterized by dominant design and quasi-universal pursuit of ranking and accreditations which threaten the distinctiveness, competitiveness and sustainability of players (Guillotin and Mangematin, 2018; Ojala, 2019; Pettigrew and Starkey, 2016).

We focus on the impact of competition and reputational imperatives on Human Resources policies and practices in B-schools, and the related outcomes for individuals and organizations. The way academic careers are managed affects the appeal of such careers (Kallio et al, 2016), and, consequently, the ability of institutions to attract and retain top talent (Huzzard et al, 2017) and thus to maintain a competitive advantage. We use the concept of career ecosystem (Baruch, 2013), defined as “a social system of employment and career-related development and opportunity that emerges from interdependencies among actors or entities, including individuals, networks, firms, and social institutions.” (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019: 92). We focus on B-schools in the United Kingdom and France as they present contrasting roots and trajectories and evolve in different institutional and cultural environments (Thomas et al, 2014) but compete with comparable success on the international business education market through rankings and accreditations. Our qualitative enquiry based on interviews with academics in the two countries reveals that context still matters for shaping B-schools’ strategies in relation to external and internal stakeholders, thus leading to different career-related outcomes for faculty. We discuss the implications for individuals and institutions and speculate about potential future developments taking into account recent global and country-specific geopolitical and educational dynamics.

The paper is structured as follows. We first review the literature on global changes in Higher Education and the responses of B-schools and academics in their endeavors to play ‘the game’. We present our research context and methodology and continue by discussing our findings and the implications for institutions, people management, the individuals, and the profession.

Changing Higher Education: a global game?

Neoliberal doctrines in public management have changed the face of higher education worldwide (Berg and Seeber, 2016). As state funded education providers are seen as inefficient by market standards (Taberner, 2018), performance management has become integral part of academic systems across countries (Gebreiter and Hidayah, 2019). Government push for business-like academic governance combined with reduction in public funding led to managerialism and marketization of the sector and a host of related new challenges (Huzzard et al, 2017).

Management education in particular is in turmoil amidst technological, economic, and societal changes, legitimacy challenges, and enhanced international competition for prestige and talent in a globalized academic market (Guillotin and Mangematin, 2018). International rankings and accreditations have become the norm (Ojala, 2019) as they admittedly signify objectively assessed quality of education to students, other academics, and companies (Dubois and Walsh, 2017). Although not intended to encourage competition, they do so by creating aspirations and a competitive drive to belong to “the club” (Alajoutsijärvi et al, 2018). Their pursuit combined with enhanced performance management arguably causes increasing isomorphic pressures (Huzzard et al, 2017) and homogenization (Thomas et al, 2014) of the strategies and the agendas of B-schools. This is believed to lead to inertia that threatens the distinctive impact, relevance and sustainability of B-schools (Guillotin and Mangematin, 2018; Ojala, 2019), and to reduce their competitive advantage (Thomas et al, 2014).

Notwithstanding such concerns, the race for B-schools is on, and they willingly play by the global ‘rules of the game’ (Bristow et al, 2017). The reference to ‘game’ and ‘game-playing’ is frequent in the literature and concerns institutions as well as the academics themselves who respond to such power and control dynamics with various strategies for coping and thriving (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2015).

Game players: B-schools

Academic institutions pursuit reputation through international ranking sand accreditations to signal quality and gain trust (Guillotin and Mangematin, 2018). They make market-driven

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3 strategic decisions to meet growing student expectations and differentiate themselves from
4 competitors (Jabbar et al, 2018). The ethos in academia has changed from collegial to
5 managerial (Craig, Amernic and Tourish, 2014), and academic activities are subordinated to
6 commercial objectives (Taberner, 2018), with significant impact on academic careers (Clarke
7 and Knights, 2015; Gebreiter and Hidayah, 2019). B-schools embrace and actively promote the
8 merits and achievements of the ‘corporate university’ and ‘commercial business school’
9 (Huzzard et al, 2017), whilst shifting from exchange to competition (Taberner, 2018) and
10 imposing quantitative performance targets and competing accountability pressures on faculty
11 (Gebreiter and Hidayah, 2019). They appear to have changed priorities, focusing on
12 maximizing publications at the expense of meaningful knowledge (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016).
13 Research evaluation is reduced to abstract points from publications in narrowly defined
14 “quality” lists of journals (Craig et al., 2014), thus leading to journal “fetishism” (Hussain,
15 2015). B-schools recruit researchers with publications in highly ranked journals (Thomas et al,
16 2014) to improve their research visibility. Growing numbers of managers and bureaucratic
17 procedures (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016) add to the pervasive audit culture (Taberner, 2018).
18 Managerialism in B-schools creates coercive, agenda setting, ideological and discursive power
19 dynamics that result in (over)compliance and surrender of autonomy by academics who
20 perceive it as a “game” which needs to be “played” (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016).
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35 ***Game players: B-school faculty***

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37 B-school academics also appear willing to play the “game of excellence” (Butler and Spoelstra,
38 2012: 891). The prestige of the institution is important for individual careers and can pressure
39 faculty to comply with managerialism for pragmatic reasons. Several studies discuss the
40 dynamics of power, compliance and resistance in academic institutions, and the strategies
41 academics adopt to deal with managerial demands. As faculty have to constantly prove
42 themselves worthy (Clarke and Knights, 2015) according to narrowly defined notions of
43 excellent performance and success in academia (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014), they adopt an
44 instrumental focus on their careers (Clarke and Knights, 2015) by concentrating on publications
45 in highly ranked journals (Bristow et al, 2019), considered of critical importance. Others engage
46 in resistance strategies with elements of concessions to deal with conflicting pressures and their
47 consequences (Bristow et al, 2017).
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56 Academics experience paradoxes of love and ‘cynical loathing’ of their labor and play with
57 power relations as “they stop thinking outside the game” (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016: 30).
58 Compliance allows benefiting from the privileges of the system whilst denouncing it in
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publications in top journals that increase individual's positional power (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016). 'Gaming' through lobbying for journal inclusion/exclusion in lists and through managing scores in performance measurement shows some of the dysfunctional outcomes of the audit culture (Craig et al, 2014).

In the forefront of these developments are Anglo-Saxon countries but the trend is spreading to other parts of the world (Baruch et al, 2018; Kallio et al, 2016). However, context matters as it encompasses values, practices, and career systems that differ across countries and cultures (Baruch et al, 2018). Performance management is now widely adopted but its specific implementation by institutions vary across jurisdictions (Baruch, 2013; Gebreiter and Hidayah, 2019). Cross-cultural comparisons allow for gaining important insights, alternative understandings, and lessons from the multiple influences that shape B-schools competitive strategies and faculty career management. They could help B-schools to focus on what determines the quality and value of their competitiveness (Ojala, 2019), and on authenticity as a strategic differentiation mechanism (Guillotin and Mangematin, 2018) through the reassertion of national cultural specificities, in a global educational market that would require rethinking of competitive advantages on the long run (Thomas et al, 2014). As academic institutions rely on knowledge creation and dissemination for meeting their performance and reputational targets, people management is crucial for their success in both the short and long-term (Baruch, 2013). We thus formulate the following research questions:

- *How does the interplay of global competitive imperatives and contextual factors translate into specific people management policies and practices?*
- *What are the resulting career-related outcomes for academics?*

Career ecosystems

To address these questions, we use the career ecosystem theory (Baruch, 2013) which accounts for the interdependencies of individuals, organizations, economies, institutions, networks, and relationships (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019) in globalized labor markets (Baruch, 2013, 2015). Politics, industrial relations, and employment regulations create institutional conditions for B-schools in each country (Huzzard et al, 2017). According to Baruch and Rousseau (2019), career ecosystems are created, maintained and changed by both top-down and bottom-up processes. Governments and official institutions regulate, structure and support the educational system and the labor market (Baruch, 2013, 2015), whilst organizations position themselves in relation to competitors and shape top-down and bottom-up influences on employees and their

careers through their HR strategies (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019). Top-down approaches focusing on achieving mutual benefits for the organization and the employees, such as high commitment HR practices, foster positive reciprocal employment relationships, fulfilment of the psychological contract, and perceptions of job security, and were found to enhance employee commitment and performance (Latorre, Guest, Ramos and Gracia, 2016). Other HR strategies promote individualism, winner-take-all competition for resources, and instrumental cost-benefit categorization of employees (Hornung and Höge, 2019), resulting in their differentiation into core and valued vs peripheral and less valued (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019). Bottom-up influences include idiosyncratic deals (i-deals, Rousseau, 2005) sought by employees to ease or improve their employment situation and careers (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019). I-deals can increase performance within the organization (Hornung and Höge, 2019), or push employees towards the external job market if they lack future opportunities with their current employer (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019).

Distinct dynamics are at play across geographical areas under conditions of fragility or resilience of the broader environment contingent on the support and resource flows provided by institutions, and the balance between top-down and bottom-up activity (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019). Therefore, “(w)ilst it seems reasonable to suggest that B-schools have been subject to similar isomorphic forces globally, most notably through ranking and accreditation practices, there are nevertheless differences in responses.” (Huzzard et al, 2017: 12). Following Baruch and Rousseau’s recommendation (2019), we chose contrasting career ecosystems: the United Kingdom and France.

By connecting the different levels of analysis, we hope to make the following contributions. First, we add to recent literature that questions the universality and sustainability of B-schools’ current competitive strategies based on ranking and accreditations (Guillotin and Mangematin, 2018; Ojala, 2019). We build on observations that these strategies are contingent, to an extent, on the context in which B-schools operate (Thomas et al, 2014), and on their ability to anticipate and plan for their future (Alajoutsijärvi et al, 2018). Second, we expand existing research on games institutions and academics play (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016; Butler and Spoelstra, 2012), by looking into policies, procedures, and career outcomes. We draw attention to implications for individuals and organizations and thus contribute to the debate on the consequential effects of performance management from comparative cross-cultural perspective in the light of recent developments in the sector. Third, we highlight practical implications for people management regarding the psychological contract, motivation, and talent attraction and retention.

Research context

UK and France have advanced Higher Education systems experiencing neo-liberal drive towards utilitarianism (Boitier and Riviere, 2013) but present distinct cultural and institutional environments. B-schools are amongst the longest established institutions of the kind in both countries but their origins, defining features, and development differ significantly (Harker et al, 2016; Thomas et al, 2014).

TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

In addition to global competition, B-schools are also subjected to national pressures. In the UK, the Government is involved in the design and promotion of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and makes funding decisions based on the results (Gebreiter and Hidayah, 2019). Competition for funding, students and faculty talent has accelerated in the last years because of state-encouraged marketization and consumerization of Higher Education (Jabbar et al, 2018). There is a “punishing regime of academic performance management” (Bristow et al, 2017: 1187). In France, the focus on research output as competitive strategy of B-schools is relatively recent (Dubois and Walsh, 2017). Publications in ranked journals are now integral part of the evaluation of institutions by the Commission for the assessment of Management education, whose conclusions inform government decisions and can lead to withdrawal of government accreditations (<https://www.cefdg.fr/>). Similar to their UK counterparts, French B-schools face internal competition in league tables (Thomas et al, 2014), and their ecosystem is changing under national and international pressures (Harker et al, 2016).

FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

Methodology

Sample and research design. We conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 44 academics employed at all hierarchical levels on contracts including research, in B-schools across the UK and France: 23 in the UK, 21 in France (Tables 1 and 2), 19 men and 25 women. In the UK, we focused on ‘research oriented’ institutions (pre-1992), and in France on independent Grandes Ecoles, as these appear in international rankings and hold prestigious Business School accreditations. All respondents were working at the time in EQUIS accredited and Financial Times listed B-schools. The interviews were between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours in length, and recorded and transcribed verbatim.

TABLES 2 & 3 AROUND HERE

We used both purposive and snowball sampling (Arber, 2001) in order to achieve a diverse non-probability sample with no claims of representativeness but sufficiently varied to provide insights on the researched questions (Hornby and Symon, 1994). We assume that individuals are ‘knowledgeable agents’ (Gioia et al, 2012: 17) who make decisions and attempt to explain their thoughts and actions in a socially constructed world. We identified academics in both countries and provided them with detailed information about the research and the type of respondents we were looking for, and then some suggested other potential participants.

Our interview guide contained core questions on career opportunities, performance assessment, and HR policies and practices. In addition, we collected data on salary scales, workload models, recruitment, performance and promotion criteria, faculty CVs, the REF, and journal rankings and awarded accreditations, whenever possible before, during and after the interviews.

Data analysis. We organized the data thematically taking into account extant literature on performance management systems and their effects on academic institutions and faculty, as well as the themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews. This process allowed us to create first order descriptive themes that we then explored further by adhering ‘faithfully to informant terms’ (Gioia et al., 2012: 20) and generating second order themes (Gioia et al., 2012: 20) through ‘progressive focusing’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), in order to gain more conceptual understanding of our findings. We stopped collecting interview data when we reached saturation (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) in each population and the informants’ accounts provided no new evidence (Suddaby, 2006). We followed Saunders and Townsend’s recommendation (2016: 850) that in heterogeneous samples “an initial estimate of around 50 participants, whilst credible, is only an estimate”. We therefore consider our sample sufficient for highlighting key themes (Saunders, 2012) related to the management systems characteristics and implications in B-schools in the two countries.

Findings

We found that international performative pressures affect B-schools and academics differently in each context, depending on how they permeate policies, practices, and norms for the profession. Through the analysis of the data, we identified two distinct approaches to secure performance of faculty: 1) through focus on *compliance* of faculty by emphasizing potential consequences and 2) through focus on *commitment* of faculty by offering incentives and (relatively) flexible organizational careers. The former is exacerbated by imposed competition

amongst academics, whereas the latter is encouraged by expectations for general collaboration, especially in publications. These approaches highlight national and cultural specificities and result in contrasting career-related outcomes for academics.

FIGURE 2 AROUND HERE

Competition and compliance vs collaboration and commitment

In UK B-schools, the performance management system is designed to push competition based on individual recognition for achievements and selective rewards. The now institutionalized Research Excellence Framework (REF) constitutes the reference for quality of academics:

'Universities are basically playing the REF game because they know that they are going to be judged on how many good journal articles they show through [...] so they are going to pass that down to the staff and look at the journal articles they produce.' (Peter)

This leads to segmentation of faculty into a two-tier system of REF-able and non-REF-able academics, with implication for rewards and career prospects. REF-able academics can benefit from lower teaching and administrative loads, accelerated promotion, and other advantages such as market supplements. Those who publish in highly ranked journals are considered 'elite', and given significant discretion and time for research (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016). The importance of first authorship exacerbates competition between individuals:

[with the REF] there is the question, who is first author. (Clare)

Both rewards for publications and 'punishment' for failure are highly visible. Academics who are not eligible for REF submission are marginalized and stigmatized, and there is institution-driven change to a teaching-only profile:

'anyone who [was] looking like they were not going to be REF-able was put on a list of people that they would start having meetings with... there is a disciplinary procedure... they move you to a teaching only contract'. (Matthew)

Conversely, time and workload constraints, and the exclusion of academics on teaching-focused contracts from REF submissions, hinder transitions from teaching to research contracts. However, REF-able academics are not safe from becoming 'ex-excellent' (Butler and Spoelstra, 2012: 893) under growing competitive pressures:

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3 *The journals are becoming more and more demanding in terms of technical expertise, so the*
4 *time it takes to craft your papers and revise them is going up. Every school is targeting the*
5 *same small list of top journals, so acceptance rates are going down further. (James)*
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9 In contrast, French B-schools offer both individual and collaborative recognition for
10 achievements, including for research, and there is no competition for first authorship. Bonuses
11 for publications in various outlets are a normal practice:
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15 *If I publish with colleagues from my institution, the bonus will be divided equally between the*
16 *authors, regardless of whose name comes first. (Julien)*
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19 Academics also receive bonuses for writing textbooks, case studies, and online teaching
20 materials, sitting in Committees, and for additional teaching hours and dissertation supervision.
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23 Although interviewees were aware of potential consequences if they did not meet research
24 targets, these are not visible and are therefore not stigmatizing in the same way as in the UK.
25 Unlike their UK counterparts, respondents did not show intense anxiety or fear of
26 consequences, possibly because the boundary between different academic profiles was
27 perceived as permeable. Profile changes are both institution and individual-driven as Schools
28 encourage all academics to conduct research and publish, and to apply for a revision of their
29 workloads accordingly. In the absence of competition between individuals, academics seem
30 willing to help colleagues to 'join the club' of publishing faculty:
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37 *If you are on a teaching contract, you can ask a colleague to collaborate on a research project,*
38 *co-author a paper. The School will allocate you some time for research anyway, they encourage*
39 *people to do research, it's good for the institution. Then, with some conferences and*
40 *publications, you can re-negotiate your contract to include research. (Sofia)*
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45 Unlike in UK B-Schools, academics in France are evaluated not only on past performance but
46 also on their potential, discussed at recruitment and at other points in time thereafter, including
47 at the academic's request. It is taken into account for determining the academic's profile:
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51 *'If there is a perceived capacity of the person to achieve the research objectives, they can*
52 *renegotiate their orientation, move to a research contract. They should demonstrate that they*
53 *have contributed to research papers and that they would be able to publish in the next [...]*
54 *years'. (Louise)*
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58 UK informants acknowledged the harmful impact of individualistic behavior and the pursuit of
59 status-enhancing activities (Bleijenbergh et al, 2013) induced by the performance management
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3 system. Notably, women discussed what they perceived as combined negative effects of
4 performance pressures and competition amongst faculty on power and gender relationships, and
5 how these created normative and structural constraints for women in all aspects of their work.
6 The primacy of publications and first authorship over other accomplishments created the
7 perception, also shared by some men, that women were burdened with more non-research duties
8 and were less successful in ‘wrestling’ to be first authors:
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14 *The bit that the workload model can’t capture is a lot of the extra citizenship... and [...] on*
15 *average women do more of those than men. (Michelle)*
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18 *But what if we contributed equally [to a paper]? Well, men are usually in a more powerful*
19 *position so there is a lot more pressure on us. So you see more men as first authors. (Clare)*
20

21
22 In the absence of interpersonal competition and lack of direct knowledge of who does what,
23 gender issues did not feature prominently in the respondents’ accounts in France. Research
24 objectives are reviewed annually but are usually set for a period of three to five years. High
25 levels of collegiality and the opportunity to renegotiate tasks and workloads at their initiative
26 gave faculty a sense of fairness regardless of gender:
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32 *We sat down and discussed what I wanted to achieve and how I could achieve it. Everyone does*
33 *this, so we have our own objectives. (Nathalie)*
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36 *You can also ask that your workload is adjusted depending on the projects you are working on.*
37 *[...] Teaching hours can be transferred to the next year. (Julie)*
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39
40 Therefore, whilst in the UK the exogenous pressures induced by the REF and unequivocally
41 integrated in people management policies and practices of B-schools have created competitive,
42 coercive and self-serving power dynamics and games (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016; Butler and
43 Spoelstra, 2012), French B-schools managed to maintain certain level of flexibility, collegiality
44 and mutual commitment between institutions and faculty.
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46 47 48 49 ***Contrasting career-related outcomes***

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51 Faced with “the pressures of excessive managerial competitive demands” (Clarke and Knights,
52 2015:1865) and their segregating implementation in UK B-schools, academics engage in
53 individualistic career strategies. The most prominent of these in our respondents’ accounts, and
54 one that differentiated them from their counterparts in France, was the use of publications as a
55 ‘bargaining chip’ for career purposes. Quality assumptions regarding publications in top
56 journals (Dubois and Walsh, 2017) facilitate job mobility between institutions:
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3 *All those REF-able academics [are] moving between institutions for promotion and to negotiate*
4 *better pay and conditions. (Matthew)*
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7 This encourages career self-management and proactive behavior in terms of mobility, as well
8 as 'gaming' and 'careering' within the institution as academics play by and with the rules to
9 optimize individual gains:
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13 *If you are REF-able, you will get promoted, and if you don't get promoted in your home*
14 *department, or if you are badly treated [...], you have a very good defense, which is to go...*
15 *because you will get appointed elsewhere' (George)*
16
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18
19 Academics also resort to various tactics to remain REF-able by maintaining focus on their
20 research at the expense of other academic activities:
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22
23 *At the end of the day, you look for the best return on investment so to speak, so you focus on*
24 *publications in those journals, that's what matters now, this is how you are judged. (Gail).*
25
26

27 *I also learnt how to say 'no' to requests for extra work, attending committee meetings, doing*
28 *extra supervision [of students]... (Lisa)*
29
30

31 Non-REF-able academics are viewed as 'underperforming' and their career options are limited
32 both by their institution and by potential recruiting institutions, as they are not able to rely on
33 REF-able publications. They 'surrender' by adapting to imposed career consequences:
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37 *I couldn't move... nobody would take me without the publications... Now I have a lot more*
38 *teaching and supervision... no time for research... I guess I'll have to get used to the idea [that*
39 *I won't be a researcher anymore]... I had no choice. (Jane)*
40
41

42
43 A different situation emerged in France where faculty still rely on their institution for career
44 management and development. French B-Schools offer intra-organizational careers with a
45 combination of incentives, flexibility, and individualized arrangements. Interviewees felt that
46 they could pursue their career within the School by balancing different academic
47 responsibilities despite growing competitive pressures. External job mobility is perceived as
48 difficult because of culture, family, and geographical distance, and is still frowned upon:
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52
53 *Perhaps this could be feasible for younger employees without family constraints, or when*
54 *children are much older, but once you are established and have a family, you are reluctant to*
55 *move. Moves are unlikely and difficult to envisage. (Audrey)*
56
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58
59 *If you move between institutions, you'd be considered as unreliable and unstable. (Mireille)*
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There is a beginning of a trend, the ‘mercenaries’ as they are called, who change institutions... as a recruiter I’d view this negatively’. (Louise)

The prevalent career management model in French B-schools appears to foster commitment through reciprocity and active faculty engagement with institutional demands.

FIGURE 3 AROUND HERE

Discussion and implications

By exploring exogenous and endogenous factors at play in career ecosystems in two different national and academic contexts, we offer the following contributions to theory. We bring further evidence questioning the homogenizing effects of supranational competitive pressures (Guillotin and Mangematin, 2018; Ojala, 2019) on B-schools performance management systems. We also demonstrate how the focus of B-schools on compliance or commitment of faculty produces different career outcomes. Finally, we elucidate the implications for people management, B-schools, and the long-term sustainability of the current management systems.

Applying the career ecosystem theory (Baruch, 2013; Baruch and Rousseau, 2019) to our findings, we identified major differences in both top-down and bottom-up influences between the two ecosystems. We distinguish between fragile ecosystem (UK) and robust ecosystem (France), the latter being, however, under growing pressures from the globalized business education market (Harker et al, 2016).

Despite the UK being liberal market economy with lower levels of state intervention compared to France, the government is heavily invested in the REF, de facto operating top-down regulation of the academic management system and labor market through funding allocation and research quality ranking of institutions. These exogenous pressures shape top-down HR approaches of economic rationalization and preferential treatment of strategically important “star” employees (Hornung and Höge, 2019). Both institutions and individuals are gaming and playing with and by the rules of the REF (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016), thus supporting the make-up of the academic labor market and HR practices through bottom-up processes (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019). I-deals (Rousseau, 2005) in the UK seem to exemplify “anti-type of individualized work arrangements as a labor political power strategy, reproducing neoliberal agendas of divisiveness, deregulation, and rationalization” that undermine “social cohesion, development of shared goals, positive relationships” and polarize between privileged and marginalized (Hornung and Höge, 2019: 3102, 3106). Inter-organizational and interpersonal

competition in research production, and the excessive focus on first authorship, could potentially affect B-Schools’ overall research performance, as academics engage in self-serving pursuits and external job mobility strategies. In addition to tensions, power games, resentment, demotivation, and negligence of other academic activities, B-Schools can thus experience loss of talent whilst limiting publication opportunities for new faculty and those who aspire to become research-active.

The financial sustainability of continuous external recruitment and turnover of top researchers can also be questioned. B-schools make short-term gains in research output but in the long run they could face demographic concerns and shortages aggravated by disincentives for those willing to enter the profession. Because of the ever-accelerating competition between academics, the divide between ‘successful’ and ‘unsuccessful’ academics is likely to deepen. Disproportionate rewards given to REF-able faculty relative to those who perform other academic duties create an ecosystem that fails to “provide sufficient resources throughout the system to foster good performance, quality of life, and adaptation to environmental change” and thus is fragile to external shocks (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019: 94). Our respondents discussed how even ‘star’ researchers are not safe from ‘failure’ in what appears to be a coercive, short-term, between-REFs performance evaluation strategy, as institutions engage in “REF-related reshuffle” (Times Higher Education, 24 January 2020) to move faculty on teaching-only contracts ahead of the REF assessment. Reluctant ‘stayers’ with imposed work conditions and no external job mobility options can experience motivational issues, or leave academia. Precarity therefore threatens all academics in the UK, and can “exacerbate the problems of working long hours under high performance pressure” (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019: 95). Faculty engage in “proactive compliance” with organizationally desirable behaviors in conditions of limited options (Hornung and Höge, 2019: 3108). The current management system aggravates insecurity, stress and anxiety (Clarke & Knights, 2015), and affects faculty well-being: *depression is not uncommon (Michelle)*.

In the light of the above, the UK can be considered as a fragile ecosystem (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019) characterized by winners and losers of the game (amongst both institutions and faculty), precarity with stressors for less advantaged (non-REF-able academics), ‘tit for tat’ reciprocity in relationships, and idiosyncratic deals (i-deals, Rousseau, 2005) for top performers only (REF-able faculty). These can make the ecosystem vulnerable to uncertainty, for example in relation to long-term sustainability and differentiation of B-schools in a mature global market (Ojala, 2019) with growing numbers of competing players through rankings and accreditations.

Symptomatic of the fragility of the system is the current state of UK faculty's psychological contract, the "individual's system of beliefs regarding exchange arrangements" (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019: 84), which is transactional for 'star' researchers. However, the exogenous, government-led, deterministic, sector-wide, and financially consequential REF makes any attempt to change the performance management system and related HR practices challenging for institutions.

In contrast, lesser direct impact of government policies, absence of external research assessment mechanism, and financial independence of French B-Schools appear to create conditions for HR strategies based on incentives, collegiality, and employee long-term commitment. French B-Schools encourage research collaborations as common good that contributes to reaching shared organizational goals beyond the individual. Research endeavors benefit all contributors who can get involved in multiple projects to various degrees, which can in turn boost the overall research production of the School. As the spotlight is not excessively on individual research output, new and teaching-only faculty can aspire to publish by joining a research team, and get recognition as researchers regardless of their authorship position and without fear of negative impact on their academic performance evaluation and careers.

The pursuit of employability by building movable publications capital is not a priority, and is still viewed negatively in a society with a particular cultural and employment makeup. This is in line with earlier research, which shows that employees in France prefer to stay in the same organization if the benefits from staying outweigh the benefits of moving (Dany, 2003). Unlike UK B-schools who value external candidates, French institutions offer favorable conditions to faculty for building intra-organizational careers with no perceived threat of precarity. Bonuses for publications and other activities, flexibility and permeability of academic profiles and the absence of stigmatization in French B-Schools deter faculty from seeking opportunities in the external labor market, thus allowing B-Schools to attract, motivate and retain talent. Furthermore, in the absence of individualized competition, gendered effects seem to lack prominence in France.

In contrast to UK B-Schools where top-down HR strategies are deterministic, and bottom-up, employee-initiated i-deals are contingent on REF-ability, French B-Schools enable mutually beneficial, individually initiated and negotiated arrangements with no stark and visible distinction between academic profiles. The absence of salient differentiation amongst faculty makes possible the implementation of systematic approaches to talent management (Baruch

and Rousseau, 2019) and seems to increase the confidence in the employer, as highlighted by our informants in France.

The ecosystem in France is thus characterized by a combination of top-down influences from government, the broader cultural environment, and traditional HR strategies, and bottom-up influences from faculty through idiosyncratic deals free from excessive power dependence and privileging win-win outcomes for individuals and the organization. Therefore, academic careers in French B-Schools evolve in a robust ecosystem characterized by government protection of employment, relational psychological contracts based on open-ended trust and reciprocity, better position for all faculty to bargain for i-deals, and satisfactory well-being of employees (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019), as exemplified by our respondents' accounts. In the absence of external quality assessment mechanism of the sector similar to the REF, institutions and individuals privilege collegiality and collaboration to reach their research objectives and boost their competitiveness on the internal and the global management education markets.

However, recent developments in the educational landscape and practices both domestically and internationally might push French institutions closer to the UK model. Several B-schools have merged to reach critical mass (Baruch, Point and Humbert, 2018) of multi-campus structures with larger budgets and greater global visibility. Traditionally, B-schools' were practice-oriented with focus on training future managers but the pursuit of rankings and accreditations combined with a government 'push' have brought research to the fore (Harker et al, 2016). They have also contributed to the globalization of research by broadening their research networks both nationally and internationally (Dubois and Walsh, 2017). As English has become the international language for research, French academics experience lower citation rates (Baruch et al, 2018) and socio-cognitive challenges (Chanlat, 2014). Schools increasingly recruit academics from abroad with established publication records in English in highly ranked journals. In a country with strong employment protection and low employee mobility, B-schools could face the question how to manage the careers of non-publishing faculty. The drive to attract top foreign researchers could also result in highly differentiated employment arrangements and gaps in salaries (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019), in a profession with no official salary scales, lack of transparency, and potential for nepotism and opaque individual arrangements. These could create possibilities for two-tier system and related motivational and career consequences. A growing focus on research for accreditation purposes might also affect research agendas and thus the relations with industry, funding opportunities from industry bodies, and the balance between teaching and research (Harker et al, 2016).

Our findings suggest that the ever-growing supranational competitive pressures affect the UK and French systems differently. B-schools in both countries face sustainability and HRM issues but their strategies to cope are contingent on the interplay between multiple top-down and bottom-up influences within their respective ecosystems. Recruiting and keeping the best people in academia is important (Baruch, 2013) for knowledge production and for meeting expectations of stakeholders, but the success of specific performance and people management systems will depend on the hierarchy of strategic priorities embedded in their national contexts.

Conclusions

Our research centralizes context within discussions of academic careers and provides a comparison between two distinct performance management systems. We demonstrate how the interconnectedness of different levels in ecosystems, as well as the hegemonic discourse of performativity cutting across these systems, affect B-schools and academic careers to various outcomes. Our findings offer insights on an alternative to the Anglo-Saxon model and question the transferability of practices across borders and ecosystems. Intensified interpersonal competition has consequential effects on recruitment, motivation, retention, psychological contract, faculty wellbeing, and knowledge production and dissemination. These are difficult to address by individual Schools operating under exogenous sector-wide regulating mechanisms such as the REF. On the other hand, cultural and institutional factors shape the implications of academic capitalism for B-school faculty (Huzzard et al, 2017) and can prevent academics from proactively seeking to enhance their career options to face changing conditions, for example through external job mobility in France. Limiting our sample to faculty in top business schools limits the generalizability of our findings but helps to strengthen the validity of our findings for that specific population. A potential avenue for future research would be to apply the ecosystem lens to other institutions and geographical areas to highlight best practices and assess their transferability across borders. Our findings could inspire evaluation of alternative HR practices and potentially workable adjustments to current systems in order to enhance performance of individuals and institutions without jeopardizing the chances of valuable human resources to bring their contributions to the success of B-schools.

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Personnel Review

Table 1: B-schools in the UK and France

	UK B-schools	French B-schools
Broader environment	Liberal market economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deregulation, market coordination of economic activities, flexible labor market 	Coordinated market economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State intervention in economic activities, employment, and Higher Education
Roots	Universities & Colleges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic focus 	Chambers of Commerce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elite Grandes Ecoles: emphasis on professional & technical training
Governance & funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of universities, dependent on university-wide policies, procedures & funding Government involved in funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent in governance, resources, funding & profit
FT ranking of European B-Schools (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26 institutions
Triple accreditation AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS (March 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 institutions

Figure 1: Pressures on UK and French B-schools

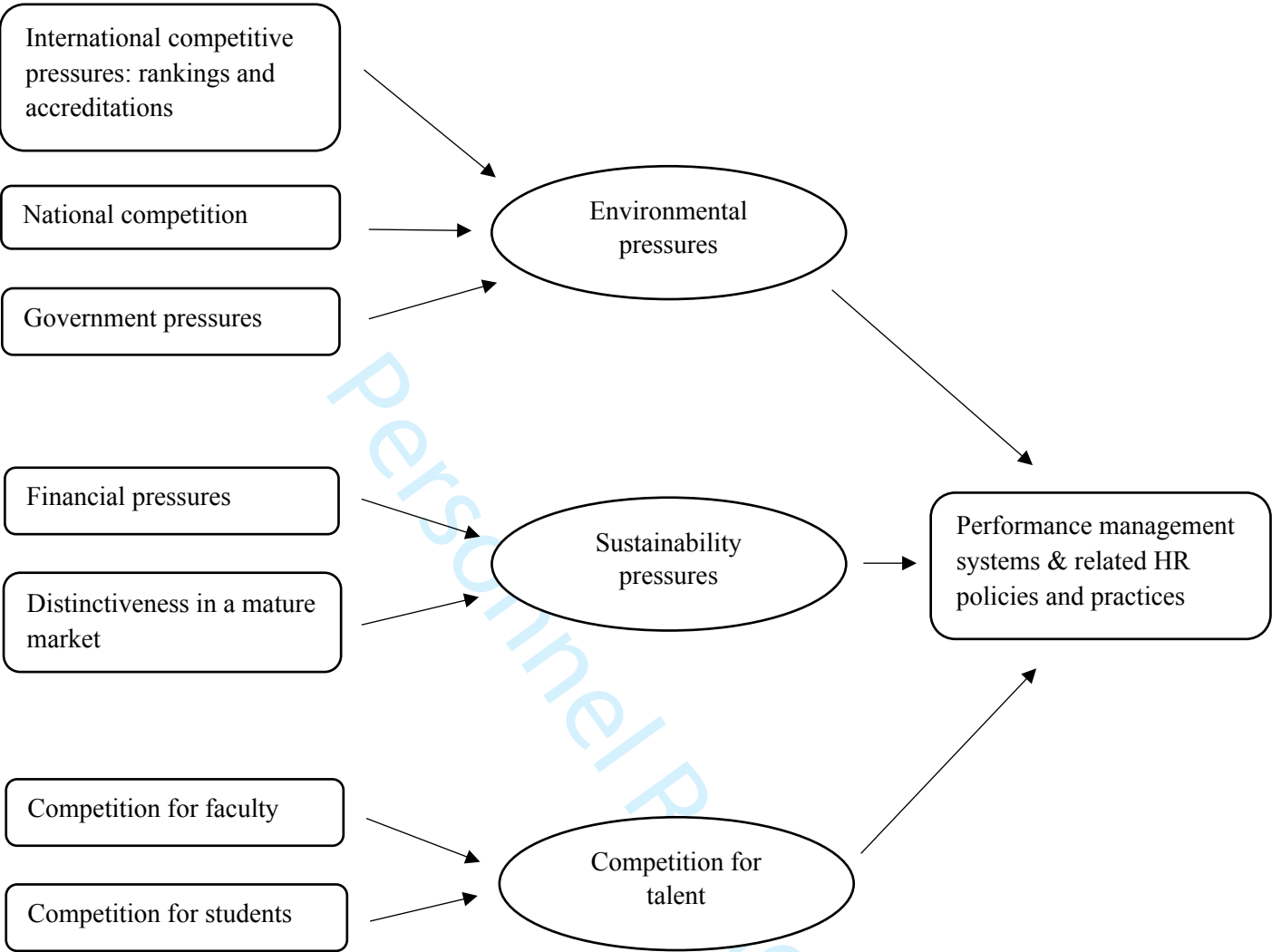


Table 2: Respondents in the UK

Discipline	Position	Pseudonym
Management	Professor	Peter James David George Harry Michelle Cathleen Lisa
	Senior Lecturer	Adam Ellen Debbie Hannah
	Lecturer	Edward Anna Susan
Marketing	Professor	Gail
	Senior Lecturer	Nathan
	Lecturer	Alex
Accounting & Finance	Professor	Jordan Clare
	Senior Lecturer	Matthew Jane
	Lecturer	Carol

Table 3: Respondents in France

Discipline	Position	Pseudonym
Management	Professor	Damien Philippe Chloé Louise
	Associate Professor	Fabrice Julie
	Assistant Professor	Sofia
Marketing	Professor	Daniel Benoit
	Associate Professor	Thomas Mireille Nathalie Sylvie
	Assistant Professor	Mathilde
Accounting & Finance	Professor	Stéphane Audrey
	Associate Professor	Julien Marie
	Assistant Professor	Margot
Pilot interview (Management)	Assistant Professor	Mia
Pilot interview (Marketing)	Associate Professor	Camille

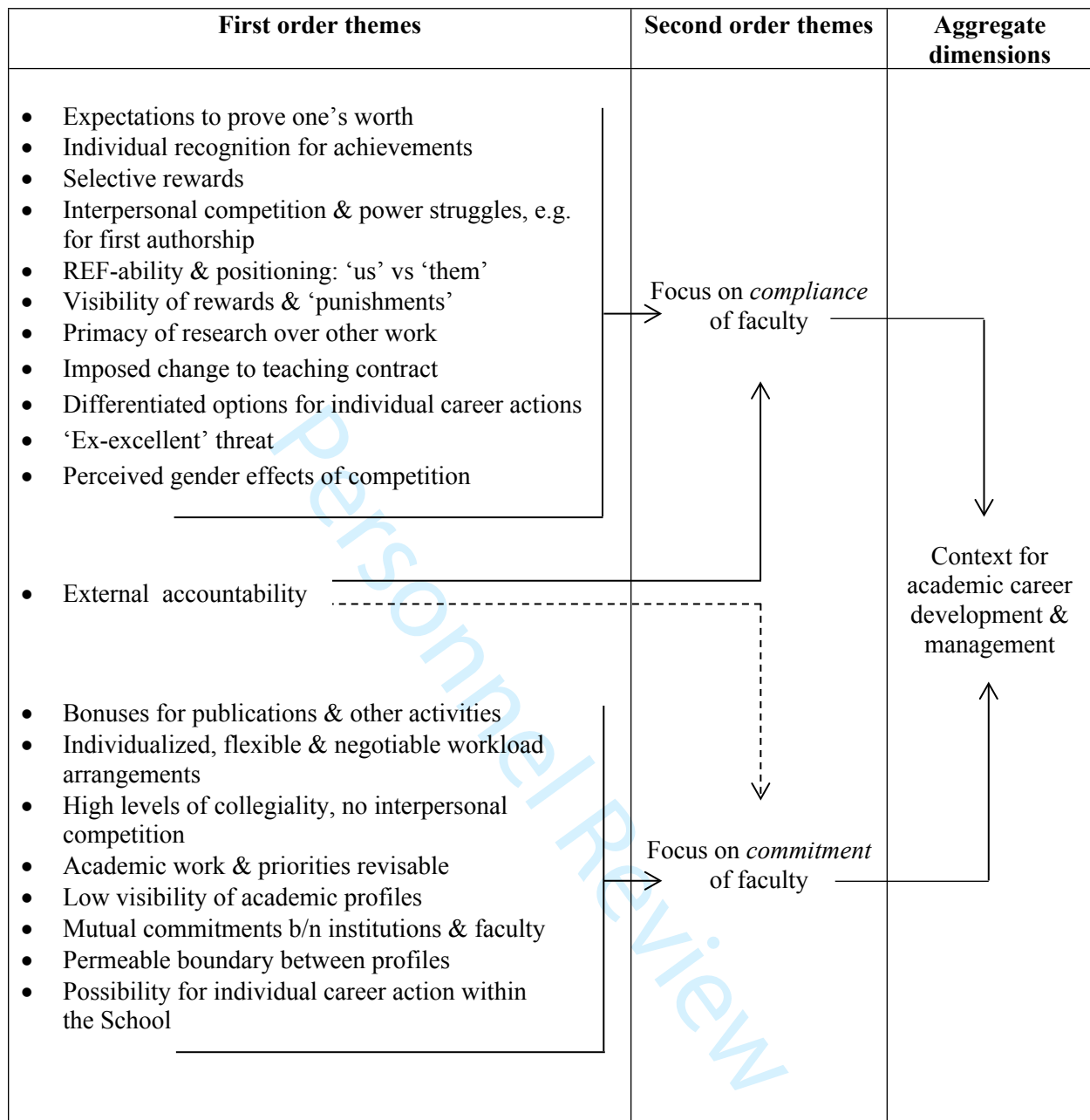
Figure 2: Context for academic careers

Figure 3: Career strategies and outcomes

First order themes	Second order themes	Aggregate dimensions
UK faculty <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determination to pursue REF-ability• Career self-management & proactive behavior• Publications as ‘bargaining chip’• Job mobility between institutions widely practised• Prioritizing research over other work• Inability to produce required research• Devaluation & stigmatization for ‘failure’ to produce research• Imposed conditions/ teaching roles• Perception of hopelessness regarding career development	<div>Compliance through ‘gaming’ & individualistic strategies</div> <div>Compliance through ‘surrender’ & acceptance of imposed conditions</div>	<div>Segregation of careers</div>
Faculty in France <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness of opportunities to achieve targets through collaboration & negotiation• Success in meeting expectations through various routes• Mutually beneficial relationship between academics & their institution• Negative perception of mobility between institutions	<div>Commitment through active engagement with institutional demands</div>	<div>Development of organizational careers</div>

Responses to Reviewers Manuscript ID PR-05-2019-0250.R1

Title: Global competitive pressures and career ecosystems: contrasting the performance management systems in UK and French Business Schools

Dear Associate Editor and Reviewers,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to resubmit our paper to Personnel Review and for your insightful comments. We trust that these helped us to improve our paper further. Please see the table below that identifies the editor and reviewers' comments we received and provides the responses to them, with an explanation of the changes that we have made to the previous submission.

We hope we have addressed all the comments. In particular, we hope we have strengthened our discussion of the implications of the HR practices in the two contexts, reviewed more critically our theoretical framework, and accurately answered our research questions in the light of our findings. We were mindful of balancing the need for detail and criticality while remaining within the word limits. However, if we have not fully responded to any point, please do come back to us and we will make the necessary revisions.

Editor	Comments and changes
As usual I returned your paper to the original reviewers for a second opinion. The reviewers are positive with the revisions you have undertaken. I am also similarly positive with the new direction of the paper. Bravo! As the major items are being addressed, minor ones become more salient. Both reviewers have additional comments which I would ask you to address.	Thank you for your positive comments and for providing us with the opportunity to improve further our paper. We have highlighted the significant additions and changes in the paper.
As you will see, Reviewer 1 also asks for a stronger discussion on the implications of your findings. I would ask you to strengthen your discussion with HR practices in both the UK and French environments in light of your findings.	Following the feedback, we deepened the discussion by analysing further the differences and addressing the implications with regard to the respective i-deals in the two contexts.
Reviewer 2 raises some questions and concerns over the conceptualization and theorizing of the study. Specifically, you may wish to review your new theoretical framework more critically. Provide some linkages between performance management and the career ecosystem theory. Ensure that you are able to accurately answer your research question from your data.	We have taken into consideration these recommendations and provided a more critical review of the framework with linkages to different approaches to performance management and top-down and bottom-up influences. We also reviewed our questions to focus on the two that accurately relate to our data.

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Reviewer #1	Comments and changes
<p>It is always a challenge when author(s) receive conflicting suggestions, in this case, when my suggestion was to shift the focus from gender issues and the other reviewer was suggesting how to strength the gender aspect. Apology for leading to such a discrepancy. Luckily for the authors, the Editor noted this and was positively directing the author(s) as for how to address this.</p> <p>In general, I am happy with the direction the manuscript is shaping now, more useful input for management studies. I am also happy to see a clear distinction between the two cases.</p>	<p>Thank you for your positive comments.</p>
<p>You refer to HR ‘practices’ several times, but only on page 10 you list some: “In addition, we collected data on salary scales, workload models, recruitment, performance and promotion criteria, faculty CVs, the REF, and journal rankings and awarded accreditations, whenever possible before, during and after the interviews.”</p> <p>Then on page 11 you refer to a specific practice that differentiate the French and the UK business school – the bonus system that is common in the mostly private French business schools, and almost non-exist in UK business school.</p> <p>Then again you return to mention ‘practices’ – bit not to discuss what these practices are (or may be) and how they differ across the two environment. Real example of HR practices and their relevant in the different environment would make the paper much better fit for Personnel Review n HRM journal.</p>	<p>Thank you for your insightful observation. In addition to bonuses in France, we have identified a number of differing practices in the two contexts: excessive focus on publications by individuals and first authorship vs encouragement on collaboration; salary scales and market supplements vs no transparency on salaries and individual negotiations; change to teaching only contracts imposed by the institution vs permeability of the teaching and research profiles and, again, collaboration for teaching-to-research moves; visibility, disciplinary procedures and stigmatization of contract changes vs discreet arrangements; exclusion of academics on teaching-focused contracts from REF submissions vs favourable conditions to publish regardless of profile; REF-generated potential for precarity and push for inter-organizational mobility vs job security strengthened by organizational support, cultural expectations and employment regulations; etc.</p> <p>In the Discussion section, we elaborate further on the contrasting characteristics of HRM strategies and practices and their implications for faculty careers. We discuss i-deals in the two contexts. We trust that we have accurately followed your recommendations and that our paper is significantly improved as a result.</p>
<p>Otherwise, I am fairly happy with the paper – and do not wish to be over-instructive – I feel I might have even over-did it in my original first review.</p>	<p>Thank you, we appreciate your advice and encouraging comments.</p>

Apology for that. I hope that the minor further comments offered above are not too much to suggest. Good luck	
Reviewer #2	
<p>This second version of the paper presents many changes.</p> <p>The literature review has been completed with an additional theoretical framework, the ecosystem theory as recommended by reviewer one. The scope now goes beyond the gender lens and the paper is more concentrated on contrasting academic performance management systems in both UK and France.</p> <p>The comparison between countries is clearer than before.</p>	Thank you for your positive comments.
<p>The research questions have been reframed now including three questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How supranational competitive pressures are filtered through national performance management systems in B-schools? - How do they translate into specific people management approaches? - What are the resulting career-related decisions and outcomes for academics? <p>I think that answering the three questions is too ambitious for the paper and that you don't have enough empirical data to do the three levels. I agree that the article addresses the translation of national performance management systems in B school and what are the consequences of it in terms of career related decisions. In my point of view, the first question is beyond the scope of this article and I don't see it in the findings.</p>	Thank you for this observation. We agree that answering all three questions is ambitious for the scope of a single paper. Therefore, we decided to focus on two questions that are clearly answered in our findings.
<p>A big 3 pages contextual part has been added. I'm surprised by its length as the theoretical framework (ecosystem theory) that was also added (and asked by both reviewers) is less than one page long. I'm really surprised by such choice, I would have expected a deeper engagement with the theoretical framework and</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Following your recommendation to rebalance these parts, we reduced the contextual part and deepened our engagement with the theoretical framework. We also discussed top-down and bottom-up influences.</p> <p>Given that context is central to our arguments and</p>

<p>not with the context. More info is for example needed on bottom up and top down processes. An equilibrium must be restored.</p>	<p>findings, we believe that any further shortening of the contextual part would undermine our key premise.</p>
<p>I also feel that now (in this new version) performance management system is central in the new version of the paper but is lacking in term of literature review (again, why is the context so much developed?). Can it be articulated with the ecosystem theory?</p> <p>Performance management is in the research questions but is never defined in the paper?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, the word count limit would not allow us to broaden further our literature review. We did not wish to expand the literature at the expense of the other important parts of the paper.</p> <p>The context is central to our argument, namely in how it shapes responses of B-Schools and academics, hence the presentation of the two contexts.</p> <p>We refer to multiple recent papers that address performance management in academia and B-Schools. We also highlight many of the features of performance management, such as quantitative performance targets, the centrality of research at the expense of other academic activities, journal fetishism, competing accountability pressures on faculty, development of pervasive audit cultures, narrowly defined notions of excellent performance and success in academia, etc. We hope that this would be acceptable.</p> <p>Following your comments, we endeavoured to articulate performance management with the ecosystem theory.</p>
<p>Findings. If you want to answer your first research question you should clearly have a findings part explaining with you verbatims or collected secondary data the link between the supranational competitive pressures and the business schools performance management system. I'm not sure that academics only can answer the question, you would need the implication of the directory board of the schools. I think this is really interesting but this is another study. Answering the two other questions is enough I think and more in accordance with the reality of your data.</p> <p>The announced contribution is also too ambitious compared to what really come out through the findings.</p>	<p>Thank you for your insightful recommendations. We focused on two question as you suggested.</p> <p>We also strengthened our discussion and hope that this helped us to justify our contributions.</p>

<p>In the UK system can you really talk about career decision? Your verbatims say that people have no choice (not to be a researcher anymore). Where is agency here? People just can't have the career they want. Maybe you should just keep outcome in the research question and not decision. It's not really an individual decision.</p>	<p>Thank you for your suggestion. We decided to keep outcome, as it is indeed relevant for both countries. This being said, the UK respondents were not a homogenous group and some did use agency through "gaming" the system. Our research question concerns the whole of our sample in both France and the UK, and many of our respondents in both samples could make career-related decisions.</p>
<p>In the French case the choice is not clear either.</p> <p>"French B-Schools offer organizational careers that benefit from a combination of incentives, flexibility, and individualized arrangements. Interviewees felt that they could follow a traditional path and advance their career by balancing different academic responsibilities despite growing competitive pressures. External job mobility is perceived as difficult because of culture, family, and geographical distance, and is still frowned upon: (P13);</p> <p>Can you be clearer in the way you define career outcomes here? Because of non permanent pressure they all choose to have different academic responsibilities? Is there only one way to have a career or several?</p> <p>You should show here how different career paths are still possible compared to the UK context, it would be more interesting than talking about maintenance of organizational career. (what kind of career and what kind of maintenance are we talking about? Purely academic? Mixte career??).</p> <p>Is it maintenance or opening career possibilities?</p> <p>And I don't see why you talk about mobility as mobility is not mentioned in the UK case.</p>	<p>Thank you for your observation. We chose to refer to organizational careers in France because they develop within the organization as opposed to moving between the organizations for career development purposes, which is often the case in the UK for publishing faculty, as highlighted in the paper. French academics benefit from flexibility and a variety of career paths within the same organization in a context of stronger general employment protection and distinct cultural values.</p> <p>We do discuss inter-organizational mobility of UK faculty on several instances throughout the paper, in the Findings and the Discussion sections and in Figure 3.</p> <p>We have replaced 'maintenance' with 'development' to bring more clarity to our arguments.</p>
<p>Discussion</p> <p>Isn't it harsh and too dichotomous to qualify the UK system as fragile and the French system as robust?</p>	<p>Thank you for raising this question. The UK and France present the characteristics of contrasting ecosystems but we do acknowledge that the situation could potentially evolve in a different direction in France.</p>

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<p>To sum up I would advise to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A deeper engagement with the new theoretical framework (and maybe articulate it with- Come back to a length equilibrium between the context development and the theoretical framework- Maybe think about including some literature on the connection between performance management (that needs to be defined) and the ecosystem career theory.- Clarifying career outcomes in the findings part- Reflect on the capacity of the data to answer the first research question and adapt findings accordingly.	<p>Thank you for summarizing your recommendations so clearly. We hope that we have managed to address them in our paper and that we have adequately responded to them in the above sections.</p>
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With our best regards.