



**SELINUS UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

**A Proposal to Improve Graduates'  
Employability in Australia, in Marketing-  
Related Fields**

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**A DISSERTATION**

Presented to the Department of  
Career Development  
program at Selinus University

Faculty of Art & Humanities  
in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Career Development

2024

## ***Abstract***

This study investigates the employability of graduates in Australia within marketing-related fields, addressing an evident gap between academic preparation and industry expectations. The research employs a mixed methodology, combining critical realist and pragmatist approaches through quantitative surveys and structured interviews. The study gathers data from recent graduates who are currently employed in marketing roles, students currently studying a business program in marketing as well as from industry professionals who work closely with graduates.

The findings reveal a significant misalignment between the skills and competencies acquired during tertiary education and those required in the workplace. Graduates' lack of practical experience, alongside insufficient soft skills such as communication and adaptability, were identified as key.

Key findings from the literature review reveal that graduates often feel insecure about applying for jobs due to a lack of both technical and soft skills. Additionally, the current pedagogical approaches in universities are not sufficiently aligned with industry requirements, emphasizing the need for more practical tutorials.

The study also highlights the importance of internships and work experience in enhancing graduates' employability. The findings suggest that opportunities for internships and work experience should be embedded within the curriculum to provide students with practical exposure and develop their skills for time period longer than 12 months. Additionally, universities should collaborate closely with industry partners to ensure that academic programs align with current industry needs.

Overall, this study aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry by providing recommendations for curriculum development that will better prepare graduates for the workforce. It also emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development and lifelong learning in order to stay current with evolving industry trends.

Further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the specific skills and competencies that are most desired by employers in the marketing industry, as well as the effectiveness. Surveys were distributed to 100 students and recent graduates, supplemented by structured interviews to gather in-depth insights.

The results underscore the necessity for educational institutions to revise their curricula to better prepare students for the demands of the marketing industry. The data also highlights the importance of internships and real-world experience in enhancing graduates' employability. In addition to curriculum changes, the study recommends that universities foster closer relationships with industry partners to keep their programs up-to-date and relevant. This can be achieved through regular communication, collaboration on projects, and opportunities for internships or guest lectures.

Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in a constantly evolving job market. By bridging the gap between academia and industry, we can create a more seamless transition for graduates into the workforce and support their long-term success. This study serves as an important reminder of the importance of collaboration and adaptability in preparing students for successful careers in marketing.

Moreover, this research also highlights the need for continuous evaluation and assessment of academic programs to ensure they are meeting the needs of both students and employers. By regularly reviewing and updating curricula, universities can better align their programs with industry demands, ultimately producing more skilled and employable graduates.

In addition to technical skills, soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and problem-solving should also be emphasized in marketing education. Employers often look for well-rounded individuals who can effectively communicate and collaborate with others, think critically, and adapt to a constantly changing business landscape. As such, universities should incorporate opportunities for students to develop these skills through group projects, presentations, and other hands-on activities.

Furthermore, the rise of digital marketing has also led to a demand for graduates who are proficient in technology and data analysis. This highlights the importance of incorporating courses on digital marketing and analytics into marketing programs. By equipping students with these in-demand skills, universities can better prepare them for the current job market and set them up for success in their careers.

It is also essential for universities to foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship within their marketing programs. With the rise of startups and the gig economy, graduates may find themselves in non-traditional marketing roles or even starting their own businesses. By encouraging entrepreneurial thinking and providing opportunities for students to explore innovative ideas, universities can prepare graduates to thrive in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

In addition to staying up-to-date with industry trends, universities can also play a crucial role in promoting diversity and inclusivity within the field of marketing. Marketing is all about understanding and connecting with diverse audiences, and it's important for students to learn how to do so effectively. By incorporating diversity and inclusion courses in their curriculum, universities can help prepare future marketers to navigate a global marketplace and create campaigns that resonate with a variety of demographics.

Moreover, as technology continues to advance, universities should also focus on teaching students the latest digital marketing strategies and tools. From social media to data analytics, these skills are becoming increasingly essential for success in the field of marketing. By providing hands-on experience and exposure to these digital platforms, universities can ensure that their graduates have a well-rounded understanding of modern marketing practices. Aside from curriculum development, universities also have an opportunity to foster industry connections for their students.

These findings have significant implications for policymakers, educators, and employers, emphasizing the need for collaboration to bridge the gap between academia and industry. This study ultimately

aims to contribute to the development of a more comprehensive and practical educational approach that will empower graduates with the necessary skills to thrive in the fast-paced and ever-evolving marketing industry. This research highlights the importance of bridging the gap through collaborative efforts between academia and industry, ensuring graduates are equipped with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in their careers. Recommendations are provided for both universities and employers to address the disconnect between education and employability, ultimately benefiting both graduates and the marketing industry.

In conclusion, the field of marketing is continuously evolving, and it is essential for universities to adapt their curricula and teaching methods accordingly. By prioritizing industry relevance and incorporating soft skills, technology, and innovation into their programs, universities can produce well-rounded and highly marketable marketing graduates. This not only benefits the students but also contributes to the growth and success of the marketing industry as a whole. So, it is crucial for universities to stay up-to-date with industry trends and provide students with the necessary tools and skills to excel in their future careers.

### ***Preface and acknowledgements.***

In the dynamic world of education and marketing, Claudia De Luca has carved out an impressive career that bridges continents and industries. With nearly two decades of diversified experience, Claudia De Luca's journey began in Italy, where she was raised and began her professional path. Her early years in sales, operations, and marketing for prominent American multinational companies like Groupon Europe and Pearson Education Italy laid a strong foundation for her future endeavours.

Driven by a relentless passion for growth and learning, Claudia moved to London and subsequently to Australia, embarking on a new chapter filled with academic and professional achievements. She holds an MBA, a Master of Education in Innovation and Leadership, and has completed numerous courses in teaching, learning, and marketing. These qualifications have enabled her to take on cross-functional roles, such as product manager and lecturer, enriching her expertise and broadening her impact.

In 2020, Claudia founded Marketing Master Creations (MMC), a small entrepreneurial venture aimed at supporting small businesses and sole traders in the realms of marketing, management, product development, and digital marketing. Her commitment to education and professional development extends beyond the classroom, as evidenced by her ongoing pursuit of two PhDs, one in Education and the other in Marketing, started in 2021.

Throughout her career, Claudia has demonstrated an unwavering dedication to excellence and innovation. Her work in developing learning content for over 20 subjects has not only enriched the academic landscape but also empowered countless individuals and businesses to achieve their goals. This preface serves as a testament to Claudia De Luca's remarkable contributions and her ongoing commitment to making a positive impact in the fields of education and marketing.

She would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have supported and contributed to her journey thus far.

### **Learning Content Development**

Thank you to my colleagues and students who have continually inspired me to create and refine educational materials across more than 20 subjects.

### **Founder of MMC**

Special thanks to the MMC team and our clients, whose trust and collaboration have been instrumental in the success of our entrepreneurial venture.

### **Lecturer and Marketing Professional**

I am deeply grateful to my peers and mentors in the academic and marketing communities for their invaluable guidance and support.

### **Colleagues and Students**

To my colleagues and students, your collaboration and enthusiasm inspire me every day to strive for excellence in teaching and learning.

### **My Family**

A special mention to my family, who, despite being on the other side of the world, have always been my pillar of strength and encouragement.

### **My Husband**

A special thanks to my husband, whose unwavering support and belief in my abilities have been instrumental in my achievements.

Thank you for taking the time to read this preface. I hope you find the content that follows both insightful and empowering.

Warm regards,

Claudia De Luca



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## ***Chapter one: Introduction and Aim of Study***

### **1 Introduction- the topic of enquiry.**

The objective of the following chapter is to introduce the topic of inquiry for the research project intended to be finalised. The research inquiry intends to investigate an issue related to graduates' employability in Australia in the field of marketing-related study areas, specifically the possibility for improving the rate of graduates' employability in the first three-year period. The inquiry intends to assess issues proved by the literature review and previous studies conducted, which appear to directly impact on the graduate's employability in Australia. The three areas directly impacting the graduate's employability in Australia appear to be the pedagogical approach adopted in class, the lack of practical tutorials dedicated to developing technical and soft skills, and development of career programs.

Having said that, the following chapter will initially report the problem statement, highlighting the need to fix an existing issue within a specific context of reference. Trustworthy sources will form the ground and basis of the context and the issue. The section will proceed, stating the purpose statement related to the research objectives and achievements, including the research design of the research project. It will then state the research questions and hypothesis to be tested, plus a brief recap of the literature review directly based on the problem statement, purpose statement and research questions that will provide a specific context of the research project.

## **2 Problem statement**

Graduates' employability in Australia could potentially be improved and optimized through cross-functional implementations (Bennett, 2019). Employers require an entry-level preparation which is substantially below the preparation level of graduates in Marketing. Indeed, according to Kovacs (2021), there is a gap in technical skills between the graduates in marketing related-areas and the pre-intermediate/intermediate level demanded by employers during the recruitment process, with some of the most required marketing software being Google ADS, HubSpot, WordPress and SEMrush which have a high level of complexity.

According to Deep et al. (2019), the gap is not only related to technical competency with the software, but it is also in relation to soft skills such as critical thinking, business communication, and design thinking.

### **3 Overview of the literature review supporting the problem statement**

The need is to substantially improve the graduate's employability in Australia in marketing-related subjects through hypothetical solutions that can leverage up different aspects such as the education system; the development of technical and soft skills during in-class practical tutorials and role plays; and the participation to long and continuing career development programs. As of today, internships for graduates in marketing usually last 12 to 24 weeks, whereas continuing exposure for 18-24 months during the higher education journey (second and third year of the bachelor program) could be beneficial to great extents as reducing the time of graduates' searching for their first employment (Stewart et al., 2021).

Moreover, according to (McArthur et al., 2017), an investigation has been run, and it highlights that graduate's employability in Australia suffers from poor preparation in specific areas of digital marketing.

In addition, Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne (2022), conducted a study which specifically highlights the lack of cross-functional skills experience for graduates in marketing which represents a further critical factor during the job-search process.

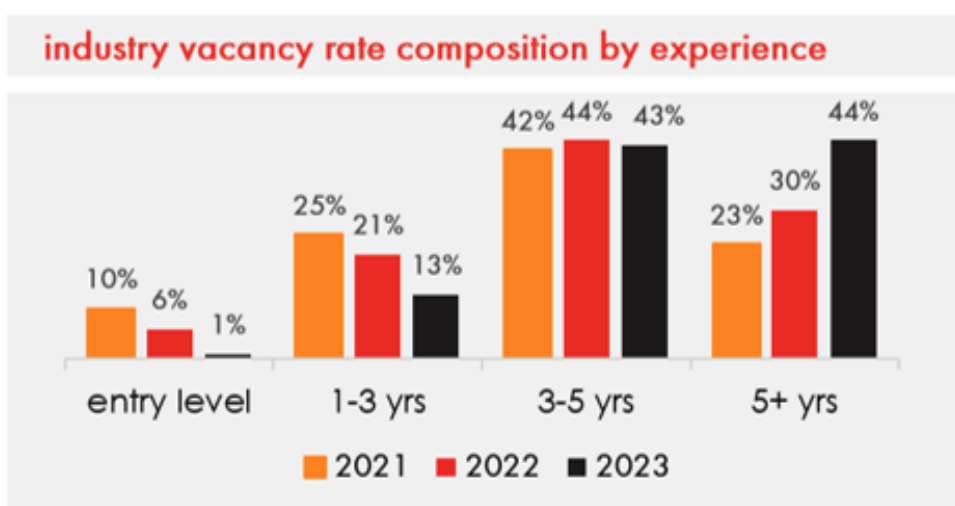
Another crucial aspect that sustains the problem statement of the research project is the inadequacy of graduates to present themselves as resilient and persistent workers able to work in fast-dynamics environments (Anderson & Lees (2016); major cause of this lack is to be connected to the lack of exposure that graduates have during the three-years bachelor program.

#### 4 Consequences

Major consequences in not solving or alleviating this issue could have a crucial impact on the Australian economy in major areas, specifically in the marketing area. Indeed, digital marketing roles have already been inserted in multiple immigration permanent visa lists for years, and the required number of digital marketing specialists is constantly increasing in Australia (Digital Advertising Industry Job Vacancy Rates More than Doubled in Last Year, n.d.). A continuing scarcity of this source could potentially represent a loss of Australian students moving abroad to study in learning systems more oriented in job-ready pedagogical approaches, as digital skills development today is not limited only to digital marketing anymore but to almost all the aspects of a business (Digital Skills Gap | Career Advice | Hays, n.d.).

In addition, according to Jolly (2023), without increasing the number of entry-level positions, there will be an even more negative impact on trend statistics showing an already concerning data related to the lack of a workforce with three-five years of experience.

Figure 1



Jolly, N. (2023, July 17). Job vacancies plummet across Australian digital ad industry. Mumbrella.

<https://mumbrella.com.au/job-vacancies-plummet-across-australian-digital-ad-industry-794366>

## **5 Purpose statement – research tentative achievements**

After stating and proving the credibility and validity of an existing problem through the support of studies conducted and a recent literature review related to the research problem, the research project intends to encompass and achieve the realisation of proof that a three-level approach solution could ultimately improve or solve the research issue.

The three-level approach intends to include:

1. The implementation of the project-based learning approach as a main pedagogical methodology in class.
2. The focus on implementing in the bachelor program additional hours of practical tutorials exclusively dedicated to developing soft and technical skills.
3. Lastly, a career development program for the duration of 18-24 months.



## **6 A Rational for the appropriateness of the Research Design**

The research design intends to approach a tentative decision to embrace a mixed methodology, critical realist, and pragmatist, composed of a literature review plus a quantitative investigation through surveys, and a qualitative instrument represented by structured interviews.

According to Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado (2015), given the complexity and the vastity of the subject area and the multiple connections with cross-functional topics and areas of study, the mixed methodology, critical realist, and pragmatist approach is usually a best practice for a research project in areas such as education, student's progression, human sciences, and management. The selected literature review, has indeed adopted a mixed methodology, critical realist and pragmatist as well; this represents a strong connection and a valid support to the choice of adopting a mixed methodology.

The quantitative approach, through surveys or questionnaire intends to highlight the student's perception and satisfaction level in relation to their readiness for the job market and the institution pedagogical approach for technical and soft skills.

The qualitative approach, through structured interviews will tentatively investigate the likelihood of a potential implementation and solution on a three-level into the pedagogical approach of bachelor programs.

As a market sample, there is a strong probability that it will include graduates within three years from their graduation and students enrolled in the second and third year of their bachelor program.

## 7 Research Questions and Hypotheses/Propositions

The mixed methodology, critical realist and pragmatist will include the following research questions and hypothesis/propositions.

### Quantitative

RQ1: How satisfied are graduates in marketing-related fields in Australia with their career outcomes within the first three years after graduation?

Null Hypothesis 1: a neutral parameter, where between 0 and 10, most of the results are null e.g., over 8 (optimal/very satisfied)

Alternative Hypothesis 1: ideal parameter for the scope of the research: between 0 and 6 out of 10 (from strongly dissatisfied to quite somewhat satisfied).

RQ2: How ready to dive into the job market, students enrolled in the second and third year of their bachelor are, in terms of technical and soft skills development?

Null Hypothesis 2: a neutral parameter, where between 0 and 10, most of the results are null e.g., over 8 (optimal/very ready).

Alternative Hypothesis 2: ideal parameter for the scope of the research: between 0 and 6 out of 10 (from strongly dissatisfied to quite somewhat satisfied).

### Qualitative

RQ1: What potential learning outcomes directly related to improve graduates' employability could be happening if an implementation of the project-based learning approach was approved?

Proposition 1: Assess the level of appreciation and feedback of graduates and students at the hypothesis of implementing an innovative and more practical learning approach scoped to develop technical and soft skills since year two of their bachelor, within the class environment.

To provide a cantered context to the project statement, it is significant to highlight that the perception of students and graduates about their readiness to launch themselves into the job market, is poor or very fluctuant (Kovacs, 2021). Bennett (2019) indeed reports significant results on graduates' employability mediocre rate in Australia.

Some studies conducted in other countries or for similar areas have highlighted how the project-based learning approach could represent a significant implementation to support students' soft and technical skills development, creating an environment to foster and leverage student centrality (Deep et al., 2020). Furthermore, career development programs also play a crucial role in inserting students within the professional context prior to their graduation and supporting their ability to manage challenging business situations through business project analysis (Parra, 2017).

## **8 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the chapter reports significant literature review related to an established issue of graduates' employability in Australia, in marketing-related fields. More specifically, the paper highlighted the poor student's perception of their readiness for the job market, the gap between the employer's demand of soft and technical skills development and the course curriculum orientation to provide job-ready learning outcome.

The chapter proceeded with a detailed purpose statement for the project to provide hypothetical solutions through the implementation of the project-based learning approach, in-class practical tutorials, and prolonged career development programs. The research design will potentially adopt a mixed methodology, critical realist and pragmatist, to conduct its investigations, and three research questions with their null hypothesis, alternative hypothesis, and proposition have been stated.

The section concludes with a brief literature review contextualized on the mentioned issue, the purpose statement and research project. The literature review, ultimately sustains and further support the evidence that answers to the research questions, and consequent actions into the problem could potentially represent a real solution.

## ***Chapter Two Concept Map and Literature review outline***

### **Introduction**

The following chapter is a concept map and a literature review outline on the research topic selected.

The concept map has the main function of graphically representing connections between ideas and concepts.

The literature review outline will demonstrate the main elements of articles grouped per theme: education system, employability skills and career development programs. Subtopics are related concepts to the research that will be conducted. The literature review outline aims to be a skeleton of the supporting academic evidence.

As last, the chapter will present five of the most important annotations of the bibliography, analysed against eight selected elements. The chosen annotations are among the most informative and insightful for the research.

## **1. Concept Map**

### 1.1 Introduction to the research topic

Graduates' employability is a status merging, acquired know-how, developed soft and technical skills and industry awareness. There is a gap between the undergraduate preparation and course curricula and the actual graduate's employability rate in Australia in the field of management marketing, proven by literature review and studies previously conducted (Jackson, 2013).

The importance of developed soft skills, is more always predominant as one of the main successful criteria for graduates to be successful during job interviews. Employers are tweaking the research of entry level graduates to workforce with pre-intermediate level of technical skills as well, with software such as SEMrush, Google ADS, WordPress and more (Kovacs (2021)).

### **1.2 Concept map overview**

The main idea related to the research topic is to assess existing knowledge and implement more understanding about a highlighted gap between graduates' current employability preparation status and real industry requirements. The research topic is: "Improving Graduates' employability in Australia in the Management Marketing Field". The main idea is strictly connected to the research question; it furthers the research to find additional macro- areas of interconnection.

Three macro areas:

Education System

- Curriculum alignment: Having hours of teaching theories and place them for tutorials.
- Teaching methods: PBL, Metacognition, Constructivism

- Assessment techniques: project-based assessments

#### Employability Skills

- Soft skills
- Technical
- Cross- functional
- Global competencies

#### Career Development Programs

- WIL (Work Integrated Learning)
- Internships
- Industry partnerships
- Career Counselling services

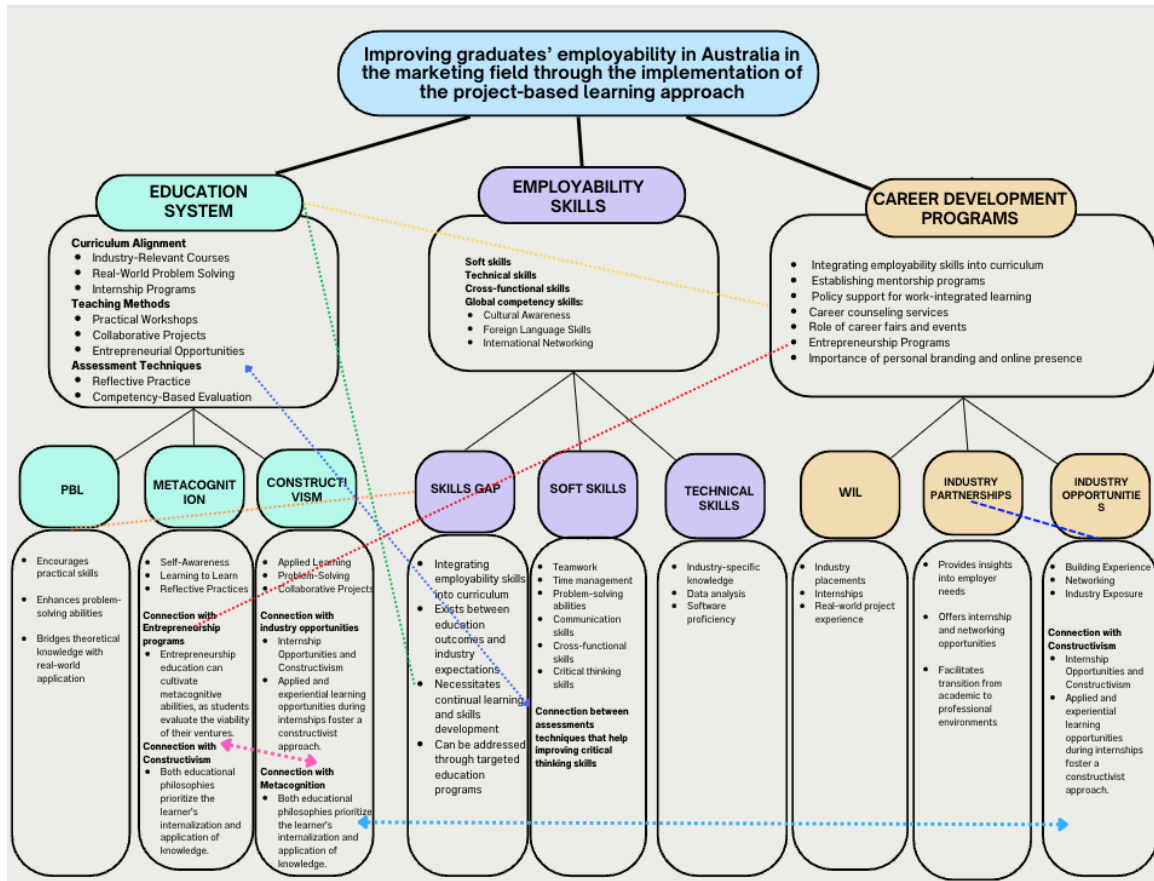
The Concept Map may be a strong tool for representing small-scale literature review to investigate a research-based learning method in education (Marin, 2021).

In the graphic representation below, connections, ideas, key topics and relationships between the main ideas, macro-areas of interconnection and sub-concepts, are represented.

### 1.3 Concept Map graphic representation

Figure 1

Concept Map





## 2. Outline of the Literature Review

Selected journal articles have been grouped following the thematic criteria.

The concept map highlights three major macro-areas directly related to the research topic: education system; employability skills; career development programs (Torrens University, 2021).

The table below illustrates some of the preliminary literature review research conducted that will be updated step by step during the research journey. It highlights the theme based on which the research has been structured, the search strategy through EBSCOHost of the University of Technology Sydney Library and Torrens University Library, and lastly, the group of articles found through the search methodology described.

*Table 1  
Outline of the literature review*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Literature search strategy</b>	<b>Group of articles</b>
<b>Education system</b>	<p>1) Through the Torrens University Library, access to EBSCOHost, Text match- Boolean/phrase of: "Improving graduates' employability in Australia in Marketing through the implementation of the project-based learning approach". This guarantee a focused and narrowed match of key terms and topic (Words with Barbara, 2017).</p> <p>1) Text match- Boolean/phrase of: "Improving graduates' employability in Australia in Marketing through the implementation of the project-based learning approach"</p>	<p>1) Integrating Marketing and Environmental Studies Through an Interdisciplinary, Experiential, Service-Learning Approach. (Wiese &amp; Sherman, 2010)</p> <p>1) Students' perception of a flipped classroom approach to facilitating online project-based learning in marketing research courses. (Shih &amp; Tsai, 2016)</p> <p>1) Improving Mastery Of Principles Of Marketing Concepts Through Interdisciplinary Learning And Integrated Business Projects. (McDermott et al., 2021)</p>

		<p>1) Exploring a problem-based learning approach to improve the quantitative skills of marketing undergraduates (He et al., 2016)</p> <p>2)The Problem-Based Learning Approach towards Developing Soft Skills: A Systematic Review (Deep et al., 2020)</p> <p>2) Do Specific Pedagogies and Problem-Based Employability? A Cross-Sectional Survey of College Students Teaching Improve Student (Li et al., 2020)</p>
<p><b>Employability skills</b></p>	<p>1)Through the Torrens University Library, access to EBSCOHost, Basic search, through Smart Text Searching match of:” Improving graduates' employability in Australia in Marketing through the implementation of the project-based learning approach”.</p> <p>2)Basic search, Text match- Boolean/phrase of:” Improving employability soft skills in Marketing through project case studies”.</p> <p>3) Basic search, Text match- Boolean/phrase of:” Improving graduates ‘employability soft skills in Marketing”.</p>	<p>1) The Importance Of Non-Technical Skills For Graduates’ Employability During And After Covid-19 Pandemic. (Ismail et al., 2020)</p> <p>1) Developing Employability Skills in Information System Graduates: Traditional vs. Innovative Teaching Methods (Osmani et al., 2018)</p> <p>2)Digital Marketing Soft Skills and University Students’ Perceptions of Employability (Kovacs, 2021)</p> <p>2)Digital Marketing Employability Skills In Job Advertisements – Must-Have Soft Skills For Entry-Level Workers: A Content Analysis</p>

		(Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022) Perceptions of students and employers regarding employability skills for entry-level positions in marketing and sales (Chowdhury & Miah, 2019)
<b>Career development programs</b>	1)Through the Torrens University Library, access to EBSCOHost, Basic search, Text match- Boolean/phrase of:” Improving employability skills in Australia in Marketing through project case studies”.  2) graduate AND employability AND australia AND internship AND marketing	1)” Professionalising The Curriculum And Increasing Employability Through Authentic Experiential Learning: The Cases Of Instb” (Maria Fernandez Parra, 2017) 2) Reconceptualising employability of returnees: what really matters and strategic navigating approaches (Pham, 2020) 2) Career services in Australian higher education: aligning the training of practitioners to contemporary practice (Brown et al., 2019)

## 2.1 Bibliography analysis

The Bibliometric Analysis is a tool to draft a picture of the origins, current status, and future development of a literature review in regard to a specific theme (Zhao, 2022).

It will highlight some preliminary data exported.

### 2.1.1 Bibliometric analysis, number of articles per thematic

For the purpose of this research, SCOPUS has been the main database adopted, and the research match followed the below criteria:

- Article, Authors, Keyword search or;
- Keyword search

The Boolean/phrase matches are highlighted below per theme:

*Table 2*  
*Bibliometric analysis, number of articles per thematic*

Search	Data base	Article, Authors, Abstract, Keyword	Theme	Keyword/Boolean-phrase match	Limited to	n. results
1st	Scopus	Article, Authors, Abstract, Keyword	General Management-Marketing	graduate AND employability AND marketing; graduate AND employability AND australia AND marketing; graduate AND employability AND management; graduate AND employability AND digital	English	88
2nd	Scopus	Article, Authors, Abstract	Education system	graduate AND employability AND australia AND education AND system; graduate AND employability AND australia AND project AND based AND learning	English	17
3rd	Scopus	Article, Authors, Abstract	Employability skills	graduate AND employability AND Australia AND soft skills; graduate AND employability AND Australia AND technical skills; graduate AND employability AND Australia AND digital AND skills; graduate AND employability AND digital AND skills	English	27
4th	Scopus	Article, Authors, Abstract	Career development	graduate AND employability AND Australia AND career AND	English	87

				development; graduate AND employability AND australia work AND integrated AND learning; graduate AND employability AND australia AND internship; graduate AND employability AND australia AND career AND programs; graduate AND employability AND australia AND industry AND demand AND management		
<b>Total</b>						<b>219</b>

### 3. Annotated Bibliography

Table 3

Five Annotations

Included elements	Annotation one	Annotation two
<b>Bibliographic citation</b>	<p>Shih, W.-L., &amp; Tsai, C.-Y. (2016).            Students' perception of a flipped classroom approach to facilitating online project-based learning in marketing research courses. <i>Australasian Journal of Educational Technology</i>.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.2884">https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.2884</a></p>	<p>McDermott, M., Gullekson, N., Kiersch, C., &amp; Tempksi, D. (2021). Improving Mastery Of Principles Of Marketing Concepts Through Interdisciplinary Learning And Integrated Business Projects. <i>Marketing Education Review</i>, 1–7.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2021.1908834">https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2021.1908834</a></p>
<b>Author</b>	Wen-Ling Shih; Chun-Yen Tsai	Maggie McDermotta, Nicole Gulleksonb Christa Kierschb, and Diana Tempskic
<b>Content and scope of the text</b>	It is an article that experiments with the implementation of flipped classrooms for university students in marketing with the scope of improving the teaching quality and learning experience.	The study aims to assess the validity of a school program that teaches master marketing concepts through interdisciplinary learning and integrated business projects.
<b>Main argument</b>	The article argues the student's perception, effectiveness, and recommendations about the implementation of the flipped classroom through the online (eLearning) project-based methodology in marketing courses	The paper is an analysis of data collected on several years of the program running in the school. The program adopts integrated multiciliary approaches and business projects which results to be very successful in developing soft skills as critical thinking and student's perception of the readiness to enter the job market.

<b>The research method</b>	Mix methodology: questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, online learning notes, and online discussion forums.	Analysis of data about the program run for years.
<b>Conclusion made by the author</b>	The study concludes by summarizing the findings of the study and highlighting the potential for the future implementation.	Data shows strong development of soft skills and a major gap filled between the pre and post semester.
<b>Strengths and limitations of the text</b>	Major limitations found are the mindset of the more conservative educators in embracing an innovative teaching approach. Strengths are related to the potential learning outcomes for graduates in marketing.	Major challenges are represented by the time and effort required by the faculty and students, where the margin to commit absenteeism is very limited in order to be successful.
<b>Your view on the text</b>	The study is particularly adapted to chosen research topic for the professional PhD as it adopted a mix methodology, exactly the same that I am planning to adopt, it analyses the PBL approach as I will do and it is contextualised within the higher education environment for marketing courses, as I will do.	The study proposes a program which has demonstrated to be feasible and valid despite the challenges and the effort required. It is adapted to chosen research topic for the professional PhD I am undertaking as it is close to the PBL methodology.

Included elements	Annotation three	Annotation four
<b>Bibliographic citation</b>	Deep, S., Ahmed, A., Suleman, N., Abbas, M. Z., Naza, U., Shaheen, H., & Razzaq, A. (2020). The Problem-Based Learning Approach towards Developing Soft Skills: A	Kovacs, I. (2021). Digital Marketing Soft Skills and University Students' Perceptions of Employability. <i>GiLE Journal of Skills Development</i> , 1(1), 25–36. <a href="https://doi.org/10.52398/gjsd.2021.v1.i1.pp25-36">https://doi.org/10.52398/gjsd.2021.v1.i1.pp25-36</a>

	<p>Systematic Review. <i>The Qualitative Report</i>.</p> <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4114">https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4114</a></p>	
<b>Author</b>	Sadia Deep, Ali Ahmed, Nazia Suleman, M uhammad Zahid Abbas, Uzma Naza	Ildiko Kovacs
<b>Content and scope of the text</b>	Review of the systematically role of project-based learning to develop soft skills in higher education, Vocational ed and other fields.	The study aims to analyse the gap between the student's perception about skillset important to be acquired by undergraduates in digital marketing and the requirements of the job market the latest years, furthermore it tries to evaluate the employability level in a such area.
<b>Main argument</b>	By implementing PBL in various educational contexts, students can develop leadership skills, communication skills, and other essential soft skills to be successful in job hunting.	The findings of the research underline An analysis was conducted on three courses through the MOOCs (a test) that validated the skills development from a technical (digital marketing) and soft perspective.
<b>The research method</b>	A qualitative method to achieve the systematic review, and analysis of the collected articles.	A quantitative survey
<b>Conclusion made by the author</b>	The author concludes validating the effectiveness of the PBL approach to develop soft skills as critical thinking in applied disciplines as medicine, marketing, or science in different educational contexts.	In conclusion data highlighted that creative thinking was retained to be one of the top important skills to be developed by student and that the most wanted courses where from platforms as Udemy, Coursera, LinkedIn and EDx.
<b>Strengths and limitations of the text</b>	Some limitations have been found related to the implementation of PBL, which is slow, and in some cases, not consistent; there are issues related to the collaborations and coordination of	The study highlights a gap to be resolved between the student's perception of soft skills and the real concept of soft skills required by the job market.



	the implementation within educational contexts.	
<b>Your view on the text</b>	The study represents in part the research analysis to be conducted, it substantially relates and contribute to part of the discussion that I will undertake.	The study touches on both the aspects that I am willing to analyse through my research: soft and technical skills on demand and required in the future.

Included elements	Annotation five
<b>Bibliographic citation</b>	Maria Fernandez Parra. (2017). Professionalising the Curriculum and Increasing Employability through Authentic Experiential Learning: The cases of INSTB. <i>Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E</i> , 4(4), 78–111.
<b>Author</b>	Joost Buysschaert; María Fernández-Parra; Gys-Walt van Egdom
<b>Content and scope of the text</b>	<i>The paper aims to present the European model of the curriculum professionalism and employability level within the higher education context. It brings a case study at INSTAB.</i>
<b>Main argument</b>	The case study demonstrates how the undertaken practices at INSTAB transform students into professionals in the classroom. Furthermore, the practices boost student's motivation and satisfaction.
<b>The research method</b>	Observations and review of the current practices within INSTAB.
<b>Conclusion made by the author</b>	The Authentic experiential learning is an effective, powerful tool that can transform the curriculum into professionalism and employability.
<b>Strengths and limitations of the text</b>	The program does not rely entirely on a professionalised learning environment, classrooms cannot be replaced, the theoretical approach remains still a valid tool to leverage up employability. There is no evidence of the opposite.
<b>Your view on the text</b>	The study is closed to one part of the research that needs to be conducted for my PhD, which is the part related to the technical skills in digital marketing.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the chapter intended to be a framework of reference about the literature review to be conducted for the research. It conceptualizes connections, ideas, and relationships between the research topic, sub-concepts, theories, and key areas directly and indirectly related to it. The document has followed a graphic, thematical conceptualization.

The preliminary literature review outline, organized per theme, has consistently reported a selection of the most informative and insightful literature review selected as a representation of the main source of information for the research to be conducted.

The chapter concludes with five selected bibliography annotations that will be used as a framework to be updated step by step during my research journey.

## ***Chapter Three Literature Review***

### **Introduction**

The following chapter is a literature outline that aims to report and highlight meaningful connections between the literature review of the research topic about improving graduates' employability in Australia through the implementation of the project-based learning approach within the bachelor programs in marketing-related fields. The goals and objectives of the literature review are to clearly highlight the status of the research within the topic area of the research project. Specifically, underline the current research status as per the concept map on the three main theme areas: educational system, employability skills, and career development programs. A further goal of the literature review is to contrast and compare the findings of the literature discussion and clearly highlight the new potential area of exploration for the selected inquiry. The literature review will be assessed and customised to the narrow research inquiry and topics of research as per the concept map, identification of the trends in the research area, and goals and objectives. Furthermore, there will be an analysis of points of contrast between the literacy of theories and practices and of the meaningful contribution of the literature to the research area. The results should report a combination of the ideas and findings of multiple sources that will be used to the discussion.

## **1 Introduction Section: Purpose of the literature review**

### **1.1 Introduction to the topic of enquiry.**

There is a proven gap in Australia between the graduates' employability skills in digital marketing and general marketing-related bachelor programs and the industry demand.

This project of research scope is to demonstrate that there would be a potential improvement in the current situation through the implementation of the pedagogical project-based learning (PBL) approach (Deep et al., 2019)

According to Jackson (2013), graduate employability consists in an established baggage of skills, technical experience, knowledge, and confidence at the level required by employers in the specific industry. From studies retrieved for the purpose of this research project, it appears that the gap between graduates' employability and industry demand is substantial.

Soft skills are today an essential component in being successful in a marketing-related job position, Especially within the digital marketing area. However, employers and digital directors look for entry-level candidates with a pre-intermediate/intermediate level of technical skills associated with software such as Google ADS, HubSpot, WordPress, AdSense and SEMrush (Kovacs, 2021).

According to (Chowdhury & Miah, 2019) in the last few years, a few studies attempted to address this issue, exploring students' perceptions of employability industry skills however, a few limitations have been highlighted.

This research project aims to reinforce the importance of addressing the gap through potential solutions that can leverage the Australian education system, soft and technical skills development through targeted employability programs during the undergraduates' studies, and career development programs for graduates within three years from their graduation.

## **1.2 Literature review objectives**

The literature review goals, for the purpose of this assessment, will be to clearly highlight the status of the research within the topic area of the research project. Specifically, underline the current research status as per the concept map on the three main theme areas: educational system, employability skills, and career development programs.

Further goal of the literature review is to contrast and compare the findings of the literature discussion, and clearly highlight the new potential area of exploration, for the selected inquiry.

In detail, objectives of the literature outline will be:

- Assess the current status of the research on the application of the project-based learning approach within human sciences, clinical and marketing areas of studies as example of the application, in Australia as well as internationally.

- Provide findings about the skillset needed by undergraduates in marketing-related fields as of today.

- Assess the research status on potential career development mentoring program to be added to Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and Internships, tailored on marketing-related job positions.

## **1.3 Overall trends**

On the chosen research topic, improving graduates' employability through the implementation of the project-based learning approach, there have been recent publications discussing the validation of the flipped classrooms, the implementation of the PBL to develop soft skills as problem-solving, communication skills, and critical thinking.

According to Shih & Tsai (2016), flipped classrooms or blended learning is a methodology that requires students to review the course content prior to class, and during the weekly class, lectures and students

collaboratively work hands-on activities, group discussions and games such as quiz pools, followed by post-class consolidating activities.

UTS College is currently using this methodology in their diploma courses. Classes are one hour and half appointments, twice per week, preceded by quizzes and pre-tutorial classes, and followed by post classes consolidation. Teachers have to be hands on activities during the in-class discussions, group projects and brainstorming (How is Learning Connected different? n.d.).

Further trends within the international higher education context highlight an increasing focus On career programs and professional development that achieve essential goals as academic excellence within the international educational context. Some of these goals are quality improvement, quality assurance, optimal technology delivery models (James Jacob et al., 2015)

## 2 Discussion

### 2.1 Summary of significant studies, grouped as per the literature concept map

Some of the most important studies conducted in the last ten years and, more specifically in the last six years, have been grouped below per thematic.

The concept map is organised per theme so that, the table below reports some of the most important sources, grouped per theme that will be discussed and that aligns to the research project methodology and objectives.

Table 1

Concept map explained

Theme	Sub-theme	concepts	Group of sources
Education system	Project-based learning (PBL)	Encourages practical skills.  Enhances problem-solving abilities.  Bridges theoretical knowledge with real-world application	Li, K., Peng, M. Y.-P., Du, Z., Li, J., Yen, K.-T., & Yu, T. (2020). Do Specific Pedagogies and Problem-Based Teaching Improve Student Employability? A Cross-Sectional Survey of College Students. <i>Frontiers in Psychology, 11</i> . <a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01099">https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01099</a>
	Metacognition	Self-Awareness  Learning to Learn  Reflective Practices  <b>Connection with Entrepreneurship programs</b>  -Entrepreneurship education can cultivate metacognitive abilities, as	Shih, W.-L., & Tsai, C.-Y. (2016). Students' perception of a flipped classroom approach to facilitating online project-based learning in marketing research courses. <i>Australasian Journal of Educational Technology</i> . <a href="https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.2884">https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.2884</a>  Deep, S., Ahmed, A., Suleman, N., Abbas, M. Z., Naza, U., Shaheen, H., & Razzaq, A. (2020). The Problem-Based Learning Approach towards Developing Soft Skills: A Systematic Review. The



		<p>students evaluate the viability of their ventures.</p> <p><b>Connection with Constructivism</b></p> <p>-Both educational philosophies prioritize the learner's internalization and application of knowledge.</p>	<p>Qualitative Report.</p> <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4114">https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4114</a></p> <p>Muniz, F., Geng, G., &amp; Ganesh, G. (n.d.). Exploring a problem-based learning approach to improve the quantitative skills of marketing undergraduates [Review of <i>Exploring a problem-based learning approach to improve the quantitative skills of marketing undergraduates</i>]. <i>Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education</i>, 29(1).</p>
	<p>Constructivism</p>	<p>Applied Learning</p> <p>Problem-Solving</p> <p>Collaborative Projects</p> <p><b>Connection with industry opportunities</b></p> <p>-Internship Opportunities and Constructivism</p> <p>-Applied and experiential learning opportunities during internships foster a constructivist approach.</p> <p><b>Connection with Metacognition</b></p> <p>-Both educational philosophies prioritize the learner's internalization and</p>	<p>McDermott, M., Gullekson, N., Kiersch, C., &amp; Tempiski, D. (2021). IMPROVING MASTERY OF PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING CONCEPTS THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING AND INTEGRATED BUSINESS PROJECTS. <i>Marketing Education Review</i>, 1–7.</p> <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2021.1908834">https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2021.1908834</a></p> <p>Cummins, S., &amp; Johnson, J. S. (2021). The Impact of Live Cases on Student Skill Development in Marketing Courses. <i>Journal of Marketing Education</i>, 027347532110345. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/02734753211034553">https://doi.org/10.1177/02734753211034553</a></p> <p>Hart, J. L. (2019). Interdisciplinary project-based learning as a means of developing employability skills in undergraduate science degree programs. <i>Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability</i>, 10(2), 50.</p>

		application of knowledge.	<p><a href="https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2019vol10no2art827">https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2019vol10no2art827</a></p> <p>Bae, H., &amp; Kwon, K. (2019). Developing metacognitive skills through class activities: what makes students use metacognitive skills? <i>Educational Studies</i>, 1–16.</p> <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2019.1707068">https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2019.1707068</a></p>
<b>Employability Skills</b>	Skills Gap	<p>Integrating employability skills into curriculum</p> <p>Exists between education outcomes and industry expectations.</p> <p>Necessitates continual learning and skills development.</p> <p>Can be addressed through targeted education programs.</p>	<p>Kovacs, I. (2021). Digital Marketing Soft Skills and University Students’ Perceptions of Employability. <i>GILE Journal of Skills Development</i>, 1(1), 25–36.</p> <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.52398/gjsd.2021.v1.i1.pp25-36">https://doi.org/10.52398/gjsd.2021.v1.i1.pp25-36</a></p> <p>Kovacs, I., &amp; Vamosi Zarandne, K. (2022). Digital marketing employability skills in job advertisements – must-have soft skills for entry level workers: A content analysis. <i>Economics &amp; Sociology</i>, 15(1), 178–192.</p> <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-789x.2022/15-1/11">https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-789x.2022/15-1/11</a></p> <p>Chowdhury, T. A., &amp; Miah, M. K. (2019). Perceptions of students and employers regarding employability skills for entry-level positions in marketing and sales. <i>Australian Journal of Career Development</i>, 28(1), 3–13.</p> <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1038416217751566">https://doi.org/10.1177/1038416217751566</a></p>
	Soft Skills	<p>teamwork</p> <p>Time management</p> <p>Problem-solving abilities</p> <p>Communication skills</p> <p>Cross-functional skills</p>	

		<p>Critical thinking skills</p> <p><b>Connection between assessments techniques that help improving critical thinking skills.</b></p>	<p>Ismail, N. A., Elham, F., &amp; Abdul Manaf, K. B. (2020). The Importance of Non-Technical Skills in Accounting Graduates. <i>Malaysian Management Journal</i>. <a href="https://doi.org/10.32890/mmj.4.1-2.2000.8581">https://doi.org/10.32890/mmj.4.1-2.2000.8581</a></p> <p>Osmani, M., Hindi, N. M., &amp; Weerakkody, V. (2018). Developing Employability Skills in Information System Graduates. <i>International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education</i>, 14(2), 17–29. <a href="https://doi.org/10.4018/ijicte.2018040102">https://doi.org/10.4018/ijicte.2018040102</a></p>
	<p>Technical Skills</p>	<p>Industry-specific knowledge</p> <p>Data analysis</p> <p>Software proficiency</p>	<p>Di Gregorio, A., Maggioni, I., Mauri, C., &amp; Mazzucchelli, A. (2019). Employability skills for future marketing professionals. <i>European Management Journal</i>, 37(3), 251–258. <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S026323731930043X">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S026323731930043X</a></p> <p>Anderson, D., &amp; Lees, R. (2016). Marketing education and the employability challenge. <i>Journal of Strategic Marketing</i>, 25(2), 128–137. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254x.2016.1182576">https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254x.2016.1182576</a></p> <p>Barkas, L. A., Scott, J. M., Hadley, K., &amp; Dixon-Todd, Y. (2021). Marketing students’ meta-skills and employability: between the lines of social capital in the context of the teaching excellence framework. <i>Education + Training</i>, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/et-04-2020-0102">https://doi.org/10.1108/et-04-2020-0102</a></p>

<b>Career Development Programs</b>	WIL	Industry placements  Internships  Real-world project experience	Pham, T. (2020). Reconceptualising employability of returnees: what really matters and strategic navigating approaches. <i>Higher Education</i> . <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00614-2">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00614-2</a>  Maria Fernandez Parra. (2017). Professionalising the Curriculum and Increasing Employability through Authentic Experiential Learning: The cases of INSTB. <i>Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E</i> , 4(4), 78–111. below
	Industry partnership	Provides insights into employer needs.  Offers internship and networking opportunities.  Facilitates transition from academic to professional environment.	Brown, J. L., Healy, M., McCredie, T., & McIlveen, P. (2019). Career services in Australian higher education: aligning the training of practitioners to contemporary practice. <i>Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management</i> , 41(5), 518–533. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080x.2019.1646380">https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080x.2019.1646380</a>
	Industry opportunities	Building Experience  Networking  Industry Exposure  <b>Connection with Constructivism</b>  Internship Opportunities and Constructivism  Applied and experiential learning opportunities during internships foster a	Okolie, U. C., Nwajiuba, C. A., Binuomote, M. O., Ehiobuche, C., Igu, N. C. N., & Ajoke, O. S. (2020). Career training with mentoring programs in higher education. <i>Education + Training</i> , 62(3), 214–234. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/et-04-2019-0071">https://doi.org/10.1108/et-04-2019-0071</a>  James Jacob, W., Xiong, W., & Ye, H. (2015). Professional development programmes at world-class universities. <i>Palgrave</i>

		constructivist approach.	<p><i>Communications</i>, 1(1).</p> <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2015.2">https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2015.2</a></p>
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## 2.2 Discussion of the literature in context of the basis on which they are grouped.

### Education system

According to Li et al. (2020) discuss findings around teaching pedagogies that directly and positively impact employability outcomes for graduates. These are called pedagogies for employability (POE). The article also sustains the POEs as a strong basis for students' academic competencies for employability (AC). Furthermore, the article discussion emphasizes the key essential role of teachers in creating courses that provide real case scenarios and incorporate competencies needed for the students' employability. Indeed, according to Deep et al (2019), applying the project-based learning pedagogy in class helps students to develop soft skills as well, being introduced to the real work-situation issues, from the introduction to a problem, through the analysis, until the solution application or evaluation. Students must apply or develop soft skills in order to role-play meetings and handle challenging situations. In addition, Muniz et al., (2021) prove that in-class project-based learning business cases boost students 'practical skills. The study has demonstrated a small piece of what is the day-to-day life of a marketer and yet, a significant ability of being able to read marketing metrics based on a few different situations. Last but not least, (McDermott et al., 2021), argues the importance of creating a program able to master student's technical competencies as well as develop their soft and cross-functional skills which will make them successful in a company. The program, called Integrated Core Program, enhance students' learning journey through innovative classroom environments which place practice at the centre (core) of the learning objectives.

The rationality of the PBL methodology is also facilitated by Cummins & Johnson (2021), who have conducted a mixed methodology of literature review and qualitative research conducted to reinforce the process achievable by the experiential case projects through which students are called to simulate real business situations as meeting clients and provide support to companies with their marketing strategy and marketing-based matters. Students have the opportunity to practice soft and technical skills. The methodology has proved itself successful also in fields such as human science and sociology. Furthermore, additional findings of a literature review conducted by Hart (2019), through a literature underline the successful employability rate of graduates in the science fields who adopted PBL. Entry-level graduates had a positive perception of their competencies and technical skills, especially in participating in discussions, brainstorming, and solving complex business case situations. Additionally, recently, metacognition approaches are being analyzed by research as potential incrementation in classes where the aim to develop student's soft skills. This is believed to be another trend and powerful tool to impact and improve student's employability (Bae & Kwon, 2019).

## **Employability skills**

According to Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne (2022), the employability gap between the graduates' readability and the industry demand in the field of marketing-related areas could potentially be fulfilled and minimize by the development of cross-functional skills which identify transversal competences and personality traits.

Also, Di Gregorio et al. (2019), through a mixed methodology, demonstrate that findings highlight the need for graduates to align and develop contemporarily soft, technical skills and customer-centricity attitudes.

Indeed, soft skills have been undermined and overlooked as potential tools to improve employability for many years, but according to Bae & Kwon (2019), "Most of the employability enhancement activities revolve around the soft skill or life skill development of the youth. The major factors like metacognition and self-efficacy are seldom acknowledged and been included for Employability enhancement Programmes".

However, going back, Anderson & Lees (2016), report that there is a potential need to go beyond the general soft skills and technical and personality traits, and emerging trends and findings highlight the importance of developing the ability to work under pressure and creativity/imagination. The article discusses the hypothetical solution of implementing assessment case-studies based.

An integration of the mentioned research findings is given by Barkas et al. (2021), where is underlined the productivity of being able as academic in higher education to provide, *spontaneous amendments* to alienate soft and technical skills development, similar to the vocational education methodology, which is closer to the project-based learning approach.

### **Career development programs**

According to Brown et al., (2019), career development programs provided by the higher education environment and institutions play more always more a key role in improving graduates' employability rate, as universities are seen as trusted institutions and symbol of quality by their students. The level of control played by the higher education environment has a key role in guarantee career development programs that train graduates or students with real intention.

Career development programs need to go beyond theories, class training and acknowledgement of subject concept (Rubio et al., 2017), they need to be specific and target the area of the students studies. However, (Okolie et al., 2020), discuss the importance of clarity in career ideas in the graduates success rate. Having personality tests and career orientation and mentoring programs, prior to the graduation is significant; indeed, universities are more always focusing is career programs and professional development to achieve essential goals within the international educational context.

Some of these goals are quality improvement, quality assurance, optimal technology delivery models (James Jacob et al., 2015). According to Bawica (2021), the success of an internship program depends on a good alignment and coordination of a few significant criteria and factors as, academic preparedness, positive attitude and self-initiative. An internship itself is no longer enough to provide a positive impact on tudent's employability readiness.



### 3 Synthesis: Comparison of the literature and presentation of key points for further inquiry

All the articles and the literature review that have been discussed present some key similarities. For example, all of them have focused their studies within marketing-related areas. Another example is that the literature review presents a mixed methodology for their investigation. The mixed methodology in some cases is composed by quantitative and qualitative instruments, in other cases it includes literature reviews and quantitative tools or qualitative tools. Thus, all the studies and literature reviews analysed have a combination of a literature review strategy and a component of qualitative and or quantitative methodology. Deep et al. (2019) adopted a mixed methods of surveys and document analysis. Kovacs (2022) uses data collection from eighteen job advertisement surveys, and Di Gregorio (2019), adopted a mixed methodology research. Qualitative research aims to create knowledge instead of waiting to discover it (Tummons & Duckworth, 2013). Lastly, it has been identified that the mixed methodology, critical realist and pragmatic is the most appropriate tool as research projects on educational issues are better investigated with a mixed methodology that analyses and understands the research problem from different perspectives (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). Areas such as education and social science are wide and complex. So that, a singular numerical or qualitative investigation would not provide most of the aspects of the research matter.

In terms of findings, the literature review highlights and confirms the need to minimize the gap between the graduates' employability level and the industry demand of technical and soft skills, and expertise in marketing-related areas.

Main contributions in the *educational system* theme area, underline the need to act directly on the pedagogical methodology. Bringing the student to a centred role in class and allowing them to play a simulation of roles as in the real business environment, represent an increasing need and a powerful tool to resolve the enquiry of this research project.

In the same way, selected studies in the *employability skills* area not only reinforce the need for students to be more aligned to the technical requirements in marketing-related jobs but also the key essential role of advanced soft skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and business communication skills.

The career development programs are where the literature findings become diversified and not always aligned. The multitude of program types and diversification makes an eventual alignment between particularly difficult studies, with a common ground only for the standard 12-week internship program.

As a market sample, the literature review not always takes in consideration the Australian market but instead, it creates comparison with successful markets as the European. However, all the studies take into consideration students enrolled and currently studying in a marketing-related field, and graduates working in the field of marketing.

Some limitations could potentially be represented by some of criteria in quantitative data collection such as relevance, credibility, validity, and reliability, which also represent valuable and ethical limitations usually to the research (Fendler, 2016).

The spine of the project research enquiry on improving graduates' employability within marketing-related areas, after further analysis of the literature review, appears to rely on the pedagogical approach undertaken and adopted in classrooms, alongside with targeted skills development approaches, both in and out of the class programs and career development mentoring programs (Li et al., 2020).

Through the quantitative data, a trend becomes available about the poor level of satisfaction about the student's preparation perception. Students are insecure about their level of skills and expertise, whereas the level of knowledge is perceived as substantial. For this reason, from the understanding retrieved from the literature review, a change of the leaning approach during the class hours could potentially reinforce and contribute to the competency's development (Chowdhury & Miah, 2019).

Another key pillar of the enquiry, becomes the career development programs which can replace part of the hours in class with mentoring and career development workshops and internships in marketing-related areas (James Jacob et al., 2015)

#### **4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the purpose of the research study is to analyse the literature review and investigations conducted until today on hypothetical causes and solutions for the mediocre employability rate in Australia in marketing-related roles for graduates' in marketing-related study areas.

Specifically, the inquiry of the research intends to analyse three aspects of the research issues: the educational and pedagogical approach utilised at the undergraduate level within the university environment; the employability skills currently required by the industry demand (employers), in marketing; the career development programs implementable within the university undergraduate programs in marketing.

The main findings of the literature review conducted highlight potential innovative pedagogical approaches to be applied as the flipped classrooms, the project-based learning (PBL) approach where the student's participation in discussions and brainstorming become the center of the full lesson. Specifically, findings demonstrate how this innovative application not only reflects on the current industry trends in higher education but also of the student's perception about their preparation for the industry demand.

Further literature review findings, applied to the second theme of analysis (employability skills), confirm and prove that the current industry skills required by undergraduates are technical, as the intermediate use required for software like GoogleADS, HubSpot, and MailChimp, but also soft as the ability to intervene and participate to a business discussion, resolve business issues through the critical thinking application and persuasive business communication skills.

Last but not least, the internship program or the WIL (work integrated learning) is no further enough to sustain the industry demand. There is a need a new trend related to career development mentoring programs.

Having stated this, the new area of inquiry intends to research about the improvement of graduates' employability in Australia in marketing-related roles, through the application of clear and specific measures as the project-based learning (PBL) approach; a program that can develop both soft and technical skills during the class time; a tailored career mentoring program in marketing, provided by the university, additional to the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) or internship.

## ***Chapter Four Data and Research Methodology***

### ***1 Project and Research Design alignment***

#### **1.1 Nature and scope of the project: research outcomes.**

According to Jackson (2013), graduate employability is a developed status of knowledge, skills, technical expertise, and confidence aligned with the industry and employers' demands. Indeed, there is a proven gap between the undergraduate preparation and course curricula and the actual graduate's employability rate in Australia.

As discussed by Kovacs (2021), soft skills are becoming increasingly significant within the digital marketing field for the purpose of long-lasting employment and satisfying performance. And yet, digital marketers seek for employees with an intermediate level of technical skills across some of the most important marketing software: Google ADS, HubSpot, WordPress, AdSense and SEMrush.

Specifically, the scope of the research is to address the documented graduate employability issue in Australia within the digital marketing area through a proposal to modify the bachelor curriculum program for digital marketing subjects, implementing the pedagogical project-based learning approach (Deep et al., 2019).

Surprisingly, only a few studies have attempted to address this issue, and many existing studies that have explored students' perceptions of employability competencies suffer from limitations (Chowdhury & Miah, 2019). It's then understanding the productivity of a further research project which can reinforce the importance of addressing the issue through a real and easy-adaptable solution such as the implementation of the PBL approach in marketing subjects related.

## 1.2 Research approaches.

For the purpose of this research project, a mixed research methodology will be applied, with two paradigm types, critical realist and programmatic, quantitative and qualitative investigations.

The quantitative research will be conducted in the form of surveys, online; and it will be a valid research approach to measure the current student's satisfaction and readiness level in the third year.

"Quantitative research is also characterised by concepts, like culture, social class, job search method, popularity, which are the building block around which social research is conducted" (Torrens University Blackboard, 2024)

Qualitative investigations will take a form of semi-structured interviews. This part of the research will be significant to unpack value, norms, and beliefs of graduates on the PBL approach as well as their like hood about the potential implementation (McGregor, 2018). Qualitative research aims to create knowledge instead of waiting to discover it (Tummons & Duckworth, 2013).

The chosen sample market will be at random, among selected:

- Students in their last year of bachelor's in business (major in digital marketing) and Communication.
- Graduates who have recently graduated (within one year)
- Graduates who have been working on the market for three years

### **1.3 Limitations**

- As the Australian educational and professional market is characterized by multiculturalism, especially in the quantitative investigation, through the survey, the answers related to the expectations and levels of satisfaction might be impacted by personal and cultural background determinants (Messner, 2022).
- Oral semi-structured interviews run person-to-person represent another limitation as emotions, moods, and feeling can impact on the participation and like hood level of the interview (Holtan et. Al., 2013)
- A further limitation of the chosen approach is represented by the more always- in- use artificial intelligence, which can impact the embedded learning process, where students are more always embracing AI to replace their technical competencies and skills.

### **1.4 Rationale alignment to the project methodology**

To align the rationale of my research project, the literature review of pre-conducted studies has been chosen with the following criteria:

- Alignment of the mixed methodology adopted.
- Studies conducted not more than ten years ago.
- Possible continuity of authors who have published in a row to provide a sense of logical rational alignment.



For instance, all the studies have a combination of a literature review strategy and a component of qualitative and or quantitative methodology. For example, Deep et al. (2019) use mixed methods such as questionnaires, observations, and document analysis. Kovacs (2022) uses data collection from eighteen job advertisement surveys which align the first part of my research methodology, and Di Gregorio (2019), adopted a mixed methodology research.

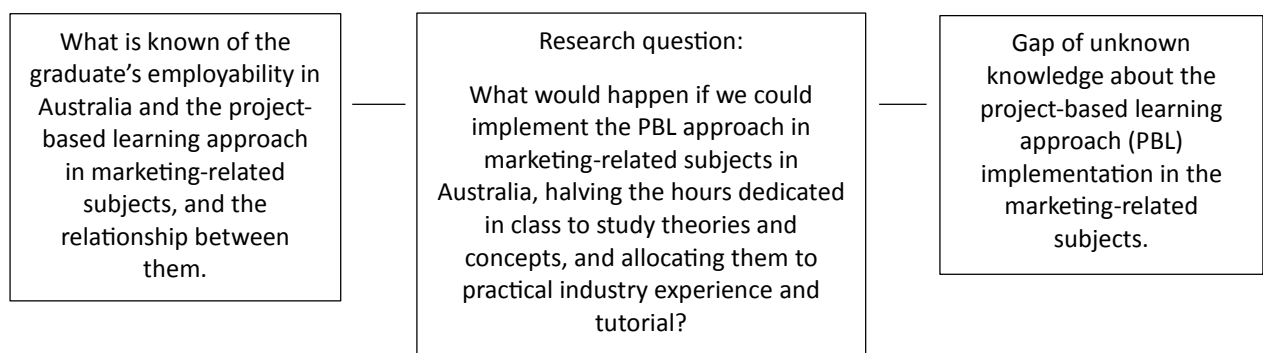
## 2 Methodology Choice and Rational

### 2.1 Discussion of the elements of an appropriate research paradigm, methodology and method

In educational contexts, the word *Paradigm* refers to the research's worldview, including beliefs and values (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). More specifically, considering the research topic of the graduates' employability improvement through the implementation of the PBL approach, the paradigm represents the set of assumptions and criteria to interpret data resulting from the methodology of research applied, the critical realist and pragmatic (qualitative and quantitative) and core beliefs (Kathri, 2020).

The four elements of a paradigm are Epistemology, Ontology, Methodology, and Axiology. The Epistemology represents the knowledge and the relationship between the inquirer, me (the researcher), and the known knowledge about graduates' employability in Australia and the possible application of the PBL approach as a successful implementation to improve graduates' employability in Australia in the field of marketing. The Epistemology strives to understand the unknown that the researcher must discover (Watson, 2016).

#### Framework



This research topic is of particular interest as I have spent years working in marketing-related jobs, more specifically in product management and digital marketing and. Unfortunately, the first 2 years have been the most difficult.

After reflecting on the reason for such a discrepancy between the academic studies and the real industry demand, findings of the critical reflective phase, highlight a substantial gap between the content taught in marketing subjects, during the bachelor learning journey and the industry demand in relation to soft skills as communication and critical thinking, and technical skills as the use of industry software.

Ontology refers to all the considerations and assumptions that I will create and ponder during the investigation (Scotland, 2012).

Some of these assumptions will be formulated at the beginning and then edited in due course, based on the data analysis and results will be obtained.

Assumptions:

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Graduates feel disappointed by the intermediate level required by the industry in order to employ entry-level positions in marketing roles.</li><li>2 Graduates do not feel their preparation at the level of the industry demand</li></ol> |
|---|

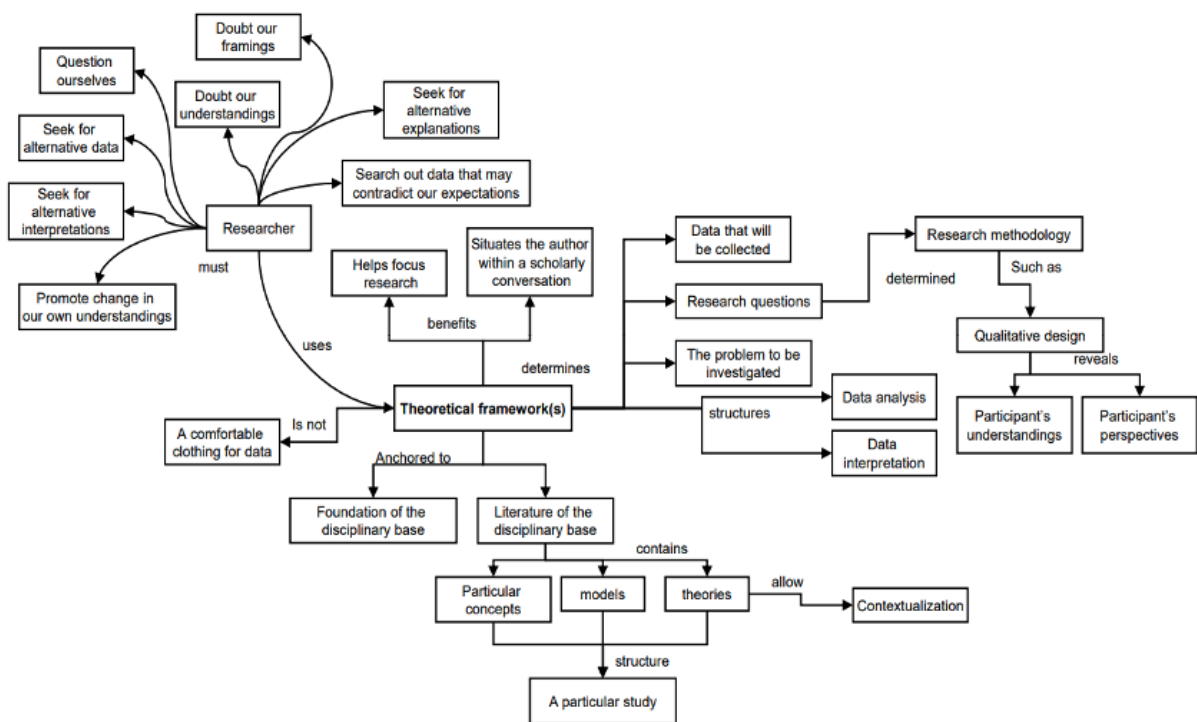
A methodology is all the procedures, investigations, data gathering, and methods that will be applied in order to create the evidence on which assumptions will be made and conclusions drafted (Kazdin, 2016). For example, in this project context, the identified mixed methodology, critical realist and pragmatic, qualitative and quantitative, with surveys and semi-structured interviews. The methodology is strictly connected to Epistemology as it creates the unknown knowledge needed, the gap of knowledge, understanding, and theories required to be covered to follow the project rationale.

Axiology refers to the ethical aspect of the topic of research. Specifically, regarding the implementation and integration of digital tools within the learning programs, through project-based learning, strengthening values and beliefs will help keep an ethical communication paradigm for this project (Oxana Gordienko et al., 2019). As such, the axiology component will be particularly significant during this research project.

The following theoretical framework represents my role, the role of the researcher, tasks, priorities, and connections.

**Figure 2**

*Theoretical framework*



Anfara, V.A. and Mertz, N. T. (2006). Theoretical Frameworks in

(2024). Blackboard.com.

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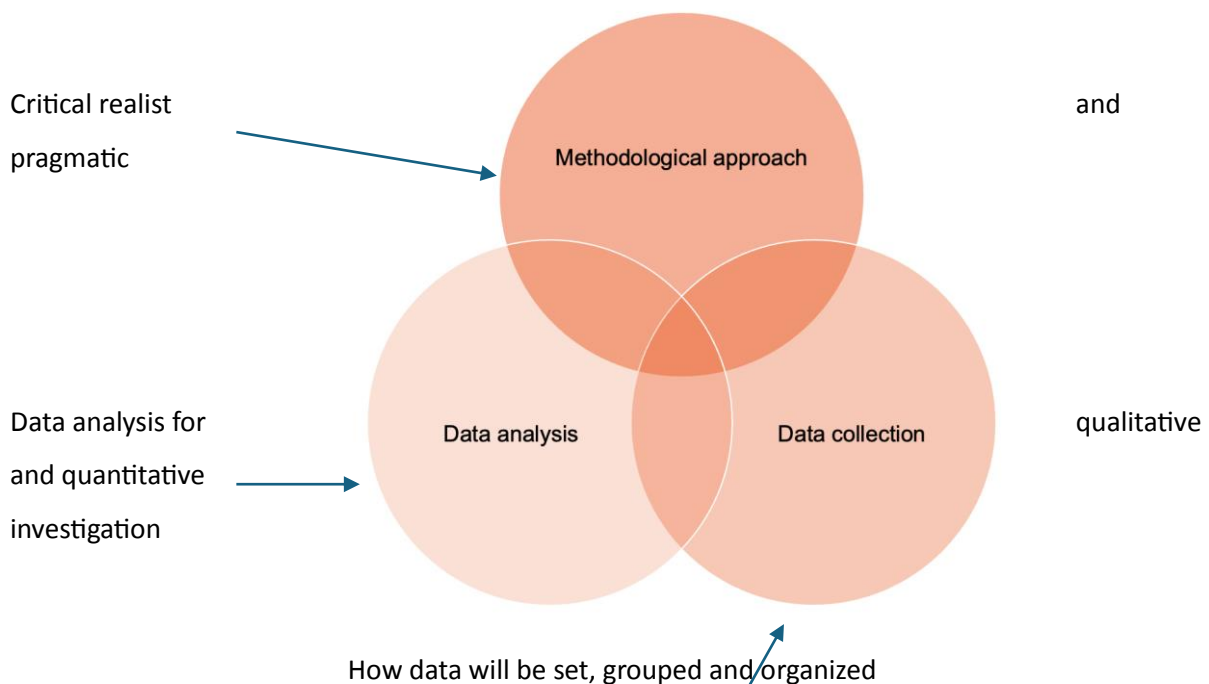
## 2.2 Elements of the Methodology

According to Oladele (2022), there are a few essential elements part of methodology. Part of the key elements of the methodology are *the design of the research project*, including the chosen research methodology, which in this case is a mixed research, critical realist and pragmatic; *delineation of the sampling techniques*, which means the specific population segment, in this case students enrolled into a bachelor program in a marketing-related field and, graduates within three years since their graduation; *measurement of the objectives*; procedures designed for *data collection and data analysis*, in this case surveys and interviews and open coding and axial coding; *the research tools or instrumentations* (i.e. surveys), including ethical consideration and assessment of the limitations (validity, transferability and reliability) of the qualitative and quantitative instruments, and the *reporting plan* of the data analysis and *drawing of the conclusions*.

The following visual representation shows the three-macro area of the research project:

**Figure 1**

*Macro- areas of the elements of Methodology*



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Regarding the research methodology that will be applied to the research on improving graduates' employability in Australia through the implementation of the project-based learning approach in the marketing-field of study, it has been identified as an appropriate mixed methodology, critical realist and pragmatic. Specifically, a quantitative methodology might be used through a survey, and a qualitative instrument through semi-structured interviews. The reason finds its origin in the fact that research projects on educational issues are better investigated with a mixed methodology as it provides quantitative and qualitative data to better understand the research problem from different perspectives (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). Areas as education and social science are vast, subject to subjectivity and complex. So that, a singular numerical or qualitative investigation would not provide the most of the facets of the topic.

Through the quantitative data, a trend will be highlighted on the level of satisfaction about the student's perception of their preparation for a job in marketing, but through the qualitative data collection, it will be possible to implement the graduate's understanding and perspectives once in the job market. As the sample to be taken into consideration includes students enrolled and currently studying a bachelor program in a marketing-related field and graduates working in the field of marketing, having their perspectives can enrich possible and holistic hypothesis or findings. Some of the characteristics of the measures in quantitative data collection are relevance, credibility, validity, and reliability, which also represent valuable and ethical limitations to the research (Fendler, 2016). Regarding the qualitative component, a narrative typology through semi-structured or structured interviews will probably be adopted, whereas for the quantitative data collection, surveys would be helpful to understand specific trends of data.

### **2.3 Relevant ethical issues and principles that will be adopted to mitigate such issues.**

It is important to note that there are principles and ethical guides to observe throughout the research project; however, they do not provide answers to all the possible ethical issues that may arise during the research (Tummons, Duckworth, 2013). A specific example related to this research project could be a candidate (in this case, the student, or the graduate) experiencing mental health issues while running a semi-structured interview as part of the qualitative methodology.

According to Mendez (2021), ethical issues that could probably arise with the quantitative investigation, the surveys, are for example related to the selection of the correct market sample. In an ever-changing job market, from the time the sample is selected to the time when the participants receive the survey, there might be significant changes to their career choices.

Another hypothetical issue could be related to the compensation provided to candidates to participate in the investigation.

A further ethical issue about the quantitative investigation is also related to the geographical assumptions or biases. Considering the geographical diversity of Australia, with job mobility and flexibility being very rigid in the regional and remote areas (Regional disadvantage and unemployment, n.d.), some questions may be insignificant for the participant. In addition, this point is strictly connected to another ethical issue related to the representative sample selection process. As a result, it will be essential to focus the research on geographical areas with a similar level of job flexibility and mobility.

The surveys will be conducted online, and despite the digital version allows to ethically defend the online method to conduct research, some ethical issues related to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, and data quality could still potentially occur (Roberts & Allen, 2015).

According to Smith (2003), some of the principles that can be adopted in order to prevent or overcome such ethical issues during the research, and more specifically, during the investigations will be applying honesty and integrity at the base of each stage and decision-making process, for example ensuring to discuss the intellectual property frankly. Another principle is to follow informed consent rules, “When done properly, the consent process ensures that individuals are voluntarily participating in the research with full knowledge of relevant risks and benefits” (Smith, 2003). Further prevention stands with privacy protection. According to Kisselburgh & Beever (2022), the UTP model of privacy (User-Tailored Privacy) can possibly minimize privacy issues related to technical access from the user or uncontrolled privacy settings by the users. Kisselburgh & Beever (2022) discuss that the UTP allows to take out the full control of the privacy settings from the user by replacing some of the decision-making processes through personalised nudges that can simplify privacy responsibilities.

#### **2.4 Discussion of the rationale behind the type of data, the data analysis and interpretation required for the project.**

The research project on how to improve graduate employability in Australia through the project-based learning approach will adopt a mixed methodology, critical realist, and pragmatic (qualitative and quantitative). The quantitative component will be conducted through surveys, and the qualitative component will be conducted through semi-structured or structured interviews.

##### *Type of data*

The type of data that would be retrieved by surveys will have a visual representation, for example, a bar chart or pie chart. The quantitative data will have the form of a numerical entity through an ordinal scale type (satisfaction from 1 to 5; agree-disagree from 1 to 5), and data will be measured according to rank. An example of the hypothetical survey is reported here below and in appendix I.



**Figure 3**

*Graphic example of the survey*

Part A

**SURVEY 2023**  
**UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY**  
**Department of creative industries**  
**Digital Literacies- CDL011**

**PART A**

COURSE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS**

On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you? Please follow the below indications

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
0-1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-10

1. Overall, how much do you feel ready for a job in your future professional area of expertise?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

2. Look in SEEK or INDEED for a job AD for an entry level position that you would potentially cover once graduated. After carefully reading it, how likely do you feel prepared?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

3. Do you think that UTS provides enough hours for tutorial classes where you can develop real skills and work competencies?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

4. During your current classes, how much time is dedicated to practical development? tick 0-1 for none; 2-3 for not enough; 4-5 for maybe enough but you are not sure; 6-7 enough; 8-10 enough hours and you are greatly satisfied.

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

5. Would you implement more hours of laboratory, role-play simulations, analysis of case studies and development of skills? (e.g. learning how to use digital tools and softwares)

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

6. Do you feel satisfy by the preparation provided by UTS in using software and industry programs?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

**Figure 4**

*Graphic example of the survey*

*Part B*

**SURVEY 2022**  
**UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY**  
**Department of creative industries;**  
**Kaplan Business school**

**PART B**

COURSE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS**

On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you? Please follow the below indications

Very Dissatisfied    Dissatisfied    Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied    Satisfied    Very Satisfied

0-1    2-3    4-5    6-7    8-10

1. The creative industry department of the university is considering to add tutorial classes, 2 times per week. Would you be happy to have 2 extra hours per week to focus on practical skills development?

0-1    2-3    4-5    6-7    8-10

2. Would you be happy to pay for 2 extra tutorial hours per week?

0-1    2-3    4-5    6-7    8-10

3. The additional tutorial hours will only focus on practical skills development, there won't be any lecture content, some examples are: case studies, critical thinking, presentations, technical skills development. Would you be satisfied of this decision?

0-1    2-3    4-5    6-7    8-10

4. There will be link to most up-to-date softwares and tools used within the digital world (WordPress; Wix; Abobe Creative; Social Media Ads etc.), in this way students will have access to softwares to practice and training their skills. How much would you be satisfied?

0-1    2-3    4-5    6-7    8-10

5. How much are you satisfied of having 2 additional hours per week?

0-1    2-3    4-5    6-7    8-10

6. Do you think there should be more than 2 additional hours per week dedicated to tutorials?

0-1    2-3    4-5    6-7    8-10

### *Data analysis and interpretation*

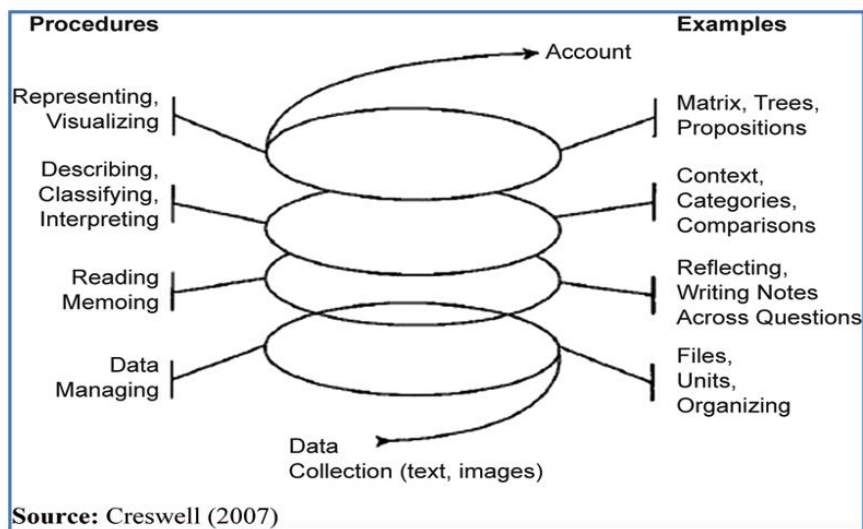
Data analysis is the process of creating meanings, connections understanding from the data (Northern Illinois University, 2022). It is a continuing process that needs to be adjusted until the research is concluded, and sometimes the researcher keeps following the project evolution up even after the conclusion of the research project.

It is essential that, during data analysis, integrity and accuracy of the data and interpretation are guaranteed, preventing unethical processes and procedures (Millet et al., 2015)

Specifically for this project, for the quantitative instrument (surveys), it might be possible to apply the data analysis spiral, following the below recognised stages.

**Figure 5**

*The data analysis spiral*



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The qualitative part of the mixed methodology for this project is represented by semi-structured or structured interviews where words will be recorded from the participant's answers (interview notes). One of the following three levels of coding might be applied in order to organize the amount of data (words) and its interpretation:

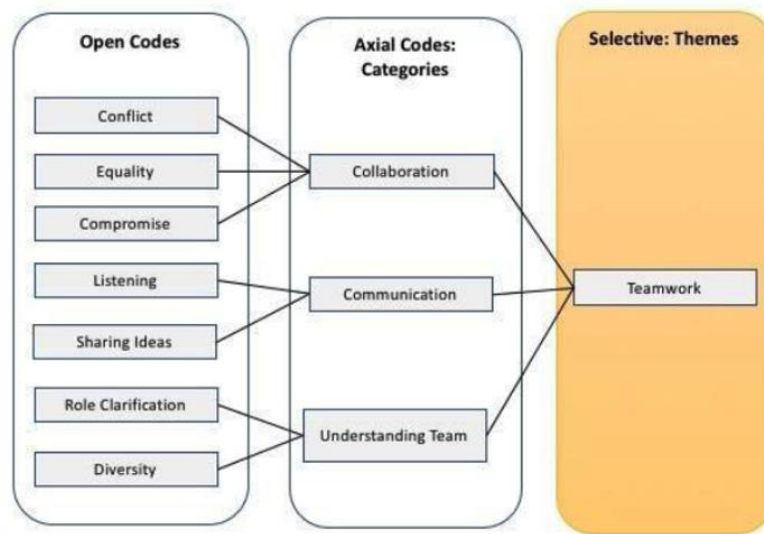
- Descriptive to Interpretative to Pattern Coding
- Open to Axial to Selective Coding
- First cycle to second cycle coding

The first and the second coding levels appear to be more appropriate as the research starts from the project-based learning theory. Indeed, it might create and implement advanced theories on the same topic of research.

Following the data reduction scheme, it will be essential to group open codes into axial codes (wider categories) and axial codes into themes. This will allow us to decode a large number of words into productive meanings for the aim of the research (Northern Illinois University, 2022)

**Figure 6**

*Data reduction scheme*



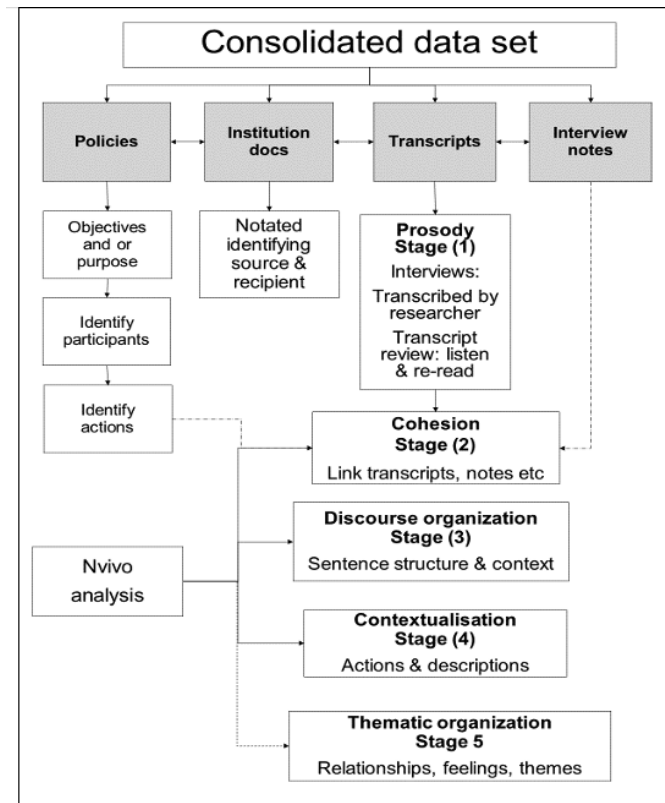
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The below is an example of how the stages of the analysis could be coordinated and integrated for the aim of the e qualitative data analysis.

**Figure 7**

*Stages of the qualitative analysis*



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While conducting the qualitative analysis, some of the principles guaranteed will be to focus on the research questions, as the topic is quite dispersive, as well as apply continuing rigoristic (2024). The data analysis results will probably be represented as frequently mentioned phrases.

Regarding the data analysis, the quantitative data collection, will be conducted through surveys (example in Appendix I). Once the data will be collected, they will be probably entered into a data base

as numerical entity through an ordinal scale type (satisfaction from 1 to 10; agree-disagree from 1 to 5), data will be measured according to a rank and represented through a bar chart or a pie chart.

Given the primary stage of this research, it is still not clear which type of editing, data transformation, descriptive statistic or technique and model validation will be adopted for the aim of this research.

Some of the key aspects that will need to be selected, are:

- SPSS (model summary, ANOVA, Coefficients etc..)

- Model of Validation (fit, significance, strengths of effect, predictive validity, etc..)

### ***3 Research Methodology Design***

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The following chapter is a research design document on the research project about how to improve graduates' employability in Australia in marketing-related fields.

Essential elements of the research design will be critically analysed. The first element is the research paradigm of a mixed methodology, critical realist and pragmatist that will be adopted as the most appropriate paradigm due to the nature of the topic research; this part will be consistently supported by a valuable literature review. The paper will proceed to highlight not only the type of tools for both the quantitative and qualitative investigations but also their link to the literature review and characteristics such as the duration, the delivery methodology, and the data storage. In this part, there will be a specification of the form that each tool will adopt (surveys and semi-structured or structured interviews) and their potential.

A further section dedicated to the ethical principles and guides to conduct research, will be framed supported by trustworthy literature review and customised on the specificity and subjectivity of the investigation tools that will be adopted for this research design; a specific consideration will be made in relation to the participants protection and methodology to mitigate ethical concerns for the entire duration of the research project.

The last part of the paper will be dedicated to specifying and describe the last two elements: the data collection and its issues; and the data analysis and interpretation strategies. In this final part there will be description of the methods that will be applied to collect data during both the investigation sessions and possible hypothetical issues related. Furthermore, a final data analysis strategy will be identified for both the quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (semi-structured or structured interviews) investigations.



### **3.2 Researcher's paradigm**

The research design for the research project on how to improve graduates' employability in Australia in marketing-related fields will apply a combination of tools of investigation that will define its research paradigm. A research paradigm is a defined model of methodology to investigate the research questions of a research project (David et al., 2018).

The research paradigm that will most likely be adopted is a mixed methodology, critical realist, and pragmatist. This type of paradigm is characterized by a combination of quantitative and qualitative investigative methodologies. While pragmatism has a strong appeal with social explanations, critical realism supports the interaction of additional elements of the circumstance that can represent a condition (Elder-Vass, 2022). This combination of research paradigms results be complex and generally well used in social sciences, human resources areas and education, for the complexity of the subject area, and its vastity, multiple elements can potentially create a condition that impacts on results and make the subject area complex so that, these elements should not be overlooked (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015).

The combination of critical realism and pragmatism is also a good practice if the research intends to achieve a higher quality of the study and investigation, allowing both the interpretation of social dilemmas and potential causalities that cause or interact and change the course of the social dilemma in hypothetical scenarios (Bogna et al., 2020). After applying an analytical tool of investigation, adopting a qualitative model can support the contextualization of the analytical data obtained in the first phase, resulting in action-oriented research (Heeks et al., 2019). Moreover, a qualitative investigation allows a constructive model to collect participant's points of view on multiple meanings of specific social phenomenon (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

### 3.3 Type of research to be undertaken (qualitative or quantitative) including justification and then specific method

As a mixed methodology will be applied, the skeletal structure of the qualitative and quantitative instruments, will adopt the following criteria.

#### *Quantitative investigation*

The first stage of the investigation will be characterized by a quantitative approach.

Specifically, for the purpose of this research project, the quantitative tool is represented by a survey. Specifically, this survey will investigate the level of satisfaction of students enrolled in the second and third year of a bachelor program, questions will enquire about the preparation provided by the school and its learning methodology on technical aspects of marketing and development of soft skills, plus the students' perception of the readiness level for the job market. This structure has been logically and strategically thought to create a sense of logic and a cause-affect dynamic between the first part of the survey, dedicated to the school preparation and methodology (the cause) and, the second part of the survey, the readiness level for the job market perceived by students, identified as a consequence (effect) of the first part.

**Figure 1**

*Research paradigm: relationship of the variables.*



This survey will have about ten to fifteen questions, with parameters from zero to ten, where zero will represent a not satisfied at all and ten will represent the maximum level of satisfaction.

**Table 1**

*Example 1 of quantitative criteria of reference of the survey*

0-2 not satisfied at all
3-4 sometimes satisfied;
5-6 satisfied enough;
7-8 satisfied;
9-10 very satisfied;

Or

**Table 2**

*Example 2 of quantitative criteria of reference of the survey*

0-2 don't agree at all;
3-4 don't agree with exceptions;
5-6 Somewhat agree;
7-8 Agree;
9-10 Strongly agree

The surveys will be sent to the market sample per email through a customer relationship management system as Mail Chimp, HubSpot or Survey Monkeys. The system will guarantee the optimization of the delivery, the timing, the track and record of answers, and collection of data. Managing surveys online will not only optimize the time but also the productivity and the control over the results.

Data collection of the quantitative investigation will include graphic representations as the bar charts, pie graphs, or similar graphs. Representing graphically the quantity of data will help the visualization and understanding of the trend, phenomenon and issue. The survey will be sent out in total a few times, probably four times, with a week of distance between each time. Participants will have one week of time to complete the survey. After one month (four weeks), all the data will already virtually exist in the system.

**Figure 2**

*Quantitative investigation, hypothetical timeframe*

Week 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

The participants target market will most likely be around one hundred between students enrolled in the second and third year of the bachelor program and graduates within three from graduation.

*Qualitative investigation*

The qualitative investigation will adopt a form of semi-structured or structured interviews.

There will be a set of ten to fifteen open questions to investigate two facets of the research issue and the hypothetical solution to be implemented. Questions will assume that the issue has already been assessed during the first stage of the investigation (the quantitative part), and results would have demonstrated and confirmed the existence of the issue. Questions of the interview will be an identical set for all the participants. Questions will enquire about the following concepts, as part of the assessed issue.

Hypothesis one, the issue has been confirmed during the first stage of the investigation (quantitative tool):

Example of questions

- Given the asessed issue related to graduates' employability in Australia, where most of the participants who participated to the survey have expressed their dissatisfaction about the level of preparation that the school provides, how would embrace a new learning methodology called project-based approach which implement more student-centred role in class, and provides class sessions where students can practice real-work situations or can work on business case-studies to develop the soft and technical skills required by employers?

Hypothesis two, the issue has not been confirmed during the first stage of the investigation (quantitative tool) or is latent:

- No questions/interviews will be run, the enquiry of the research needs to be amended/adjusted.

Hypothesis three, the issue has not been confirmed during the first stage of the investigation (quantitative tool), the results are Null or neutral:

- No questions/interviews will be run, the enquiry of the research needs to be amended/adjusted.

The interviews will be run in person or online, through video tools as Zoom or Teams, the entire single interview duration will be around 30 minutes and it will be recorded. An initial identification of the person will be assessed to guarantee the integrity, ethics, and congruency of the selected market sample. Interviews will be run with about one hundred participants in a timeframe of about five months.

- Month one- 20 participants
- Month two- 20 participants
- Month three- 20 participants
- Month four- 20 participants
- Month five- 20 participants

### 3.4 Application of ethical principles to conduct research

It will be significant to have principles and guides to run an ethical research however, some of the hypothetical ethical issues related to this research project and specifically to the mixed methodology, critical realist and pragmatist, that could happen are related to the technology involved for the online surveys and face to face/online interviews but not limited to (Tummons, Duckworth, 2013).

Involving technology, the level of cyber security required, and of data privacy and protection, will need to be guaranteed and communicated appropriately to the participants. Participants will have to sign a formal and legal policy and consent related to their data protection and privacy, specifically, the allowance of recording tools, storage of private and identity data for the purpose of the research project and the entire duration of the project (Roberts & Allen, 2015).

Potential further ethical issues related to this research project are the following:

1. Subjectivity and temporary conditions of participant during the interview's stages. For example, a participant could be in an uncomfortable situation during the interview because of private reasons related to their family or their lives, and this could exercise a temporary conditioning of the answers provided. For this purpose, a point of contact will be guaranteed prior to the interview day with all the participants to assess their willingness to participate in the interview; an assurance about a possible reschedule, in case of specific conditions, will be pointed to place participants in the best position to be transparent.
2. Compensation to be provided and expected by participants. It is still not clear if the participants will have a monetary or a similar form of compensation however, proceeding towards the realisation of the research project, it will be specified and clearly stated on a policy.
3. Australia has a geographical composition that makes a few different areas remote or regional. This means that the job market demand-offer, and fit dynamism are impacted by their

geographical position. This critical point could represent an ethical issue for the validity of the research as the perception of the job market for candidates' residing in those areas is completely different from that of metropolis. To mitigate these issues, it will be essential to guarantee and assess the provenience of the candidate and residency details prior to the allocation of the participant into the list of candidates.



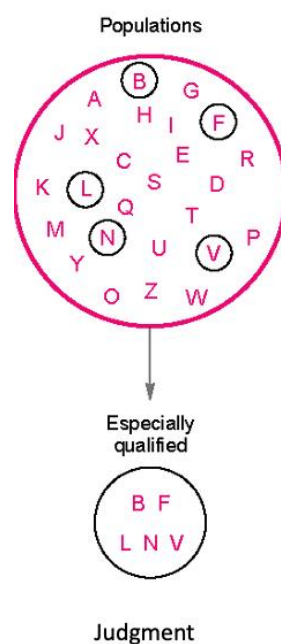
### 3.5 Data collection and issues: Population, sampling method, validity, reliability and trustworthiness

As briefly mentioned in the previous paragraph, the data collection part presents some specific characteristics and concerns. Defining the sample of the population will ensure the validity and reliability of the research design and project (Lameck, 2013). Ensuring validity means ensuring that the study address the research inquiry and research objectives. Having a target sample of the exact typology of the population that can answer to the research inquiry will actually ensure the reliability and relevance aspects of the research.

Some of the advantages of adopting a sample are the optimization of costs, errors, and time. For the purpose of this research design, the market sample to be adopted is a non-random sampling method (nonprobability sampling), specifically a judgment sampling.

**Figure 3**

*Non-random sampling method representation*



(2024). Blackboard.com.

[https://torrens.blackboard.com/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course\\_id=\\_153339\\_1&content\\_id=\\_11772851\\_1](https://torrens.blackboard.com/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id=_153339_1&content_id=_11772851_1)

It will indeed include the following two *especially qualified* sources of the population:

- Students enrolled in the second and third year of the bachelor program.
- Graduates with no more than three years' experience from their graduation

The reason is directly related to the purpose of the research project, which intends to assess the level of satisfaction, readiness for the job market and perception of students and graduates in marketing-related fields. Only these two categories can provide this information.

Although the target sample market is naturally available, one of the issues will be represented by the ability to obtain concession from the school, database management providers, and private citizens to have the private contact details of current students and graduates and their consent to be contacted for research purposes. Another issue is represented by the financial resources needed to obtain an eventual pipeline of candidates and the compensation for candidates to participate in the research investigation. Finally, a further issue is represented by the entire organization process of contacting each possible candidate, organizing the consent and policies acceptance, managing the organization of a calendar for each candidate, and creating a second agenda for recall actions of know-shows.

The same market, the defined pipeline of candidates will be a representative sample of a larger target segment. Potentially it will be composed by about one fifty participants, both domestic and international students, and domestic and international graduates.

Regarding the qualitative investigation, the interviews will have direct questions and the interviews will adopt a structured format, with pre-determined questions.

The research investigation sessions (quantitative and qualitative) including surveys, data collections, interviews and data collection will approximately take a timeframe of six to seven months.

### **3.6 Data analysis and interpretation strategies**

In order to export information and transform that information into spendable new knowledge, aligned with the scope of the research objectives, the final step is data analysis and interpretation. This process aims to provide a rational meaning to the data collection and interpretation not only during and soon after the research, but also on continuing basis (Northern Illinois University, 2022).

Regarding the quantitative investigation, through surveys, the data interpretation will follow the parameters and metrics created for the purpose of the survey and research project. Most likely the survey will adopt the above-mentioned quantitative criteria: zero to ten where zero means not satisfied at all or totally disagree; and ten represents strongly satisfied or strongly agree.

As mentioned above, the quantitative data representation of the survey results, will most likely be represented, interpreted and analysed through the following methodology.

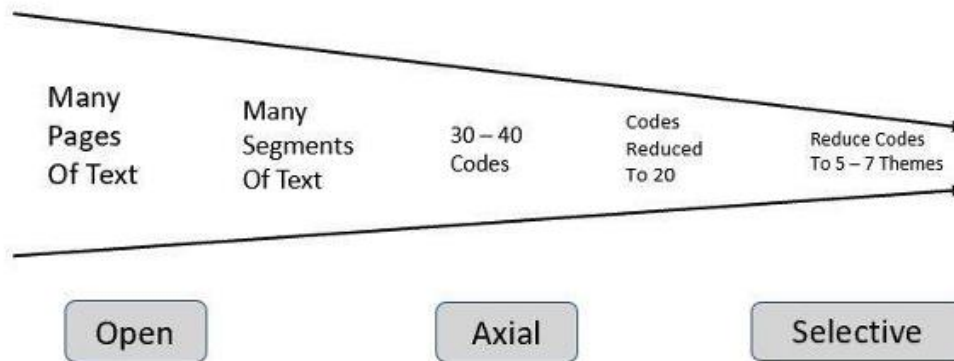
- Model of Validation

(fit, significance, strengths of effect, and predictive validity)

Interviews will have instead pre-determined questions and will be essential to provide a meaning to the wording, through a specific application of a data analysis methodology for qualitative analysis, in order to have clear understanding and interpretation. One of the methodologies to interpret the working could be Open to Axial to Selective Coding. Indeed, this qualitative data analysis tool allows to group words belonging to the same Axial Code Category and then group all the Axial Codes Categories to provide a unique meaning/interpretation (Ortiz Juarez-Paz et al., 2019).

**Figure 5**

*Open, Axial and Selective Coding process*

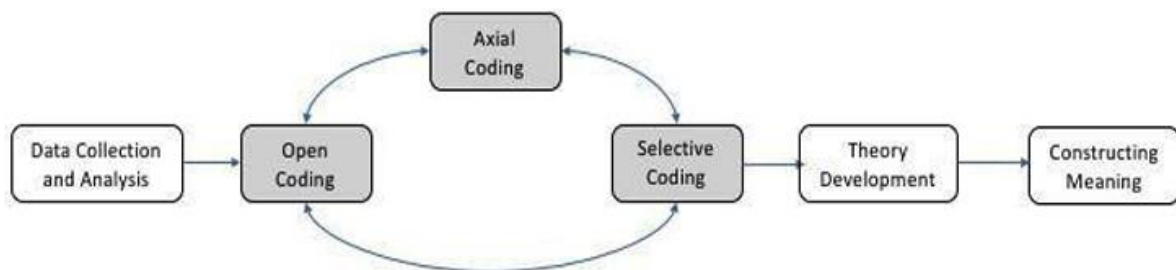


Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review*, 15(1), 45-55. <http://www.imrjournal.org/uploads/1/4/2/8/14286482/imr-v15n1art4.pdf>

In figure six it is possible to observe a graphic representation of the relationship and connection between the words and theme and the retrieval or re-connection to theories.

**Figure 6**

*Non-linear process of qualitative research through Open, Axial and Selective Coding*

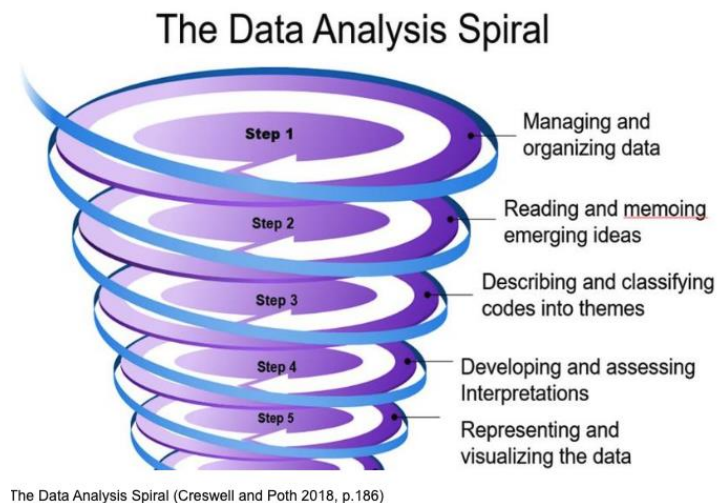


Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review*, 15(1), 45-55. <http://www.imrjournal.org/uploads/1/4/2/8/14286482/imr-v15n1art4.pdf>

As reported in assessment two, the Data Analysis Spiral also appears to be an appropriate methodology to represent both quantitative and qualitative data and provide a meaning of them through guided steps interconnected (Iyaloo et al., 2018).

**Figure 7**

*The Data Analysis Spiral*



Iyaloo, Tekijät & Nghihalwa, Iyaloo. (2018). Teachers' Involvement in the Planning and Development of National Curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia. 10.13140/RG.2.2.34946.73929.

During the collection of data software as Survey Monkeys, HubSpot or Mail Chimp will be adopted to send the online survey and track/record results.

Once the data analysis will be commenced the data results and interpretation will be stored in database and then transform in written report and graphic representation for the purpose of the research.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the document intended to frame and define the identified research design on the research project on how to improve graduates' employability in Australia in marketing-related fields.

The paper presented the significance of the selected research paradigm, the mixed methodology through critical realist and pragmatist, supporting the validity and readability of the choice with a valuable literature review. Going deeper into details, the paper has underlined and described the two types of investigative methodologies, quantitative and qualitative research. Expressly, paragraph three has provided details of the selected tools of research: the surveys (quantitative investigation); and the semi-structured or structured interviews (qualitative investigation). Elements and characteristics of these two investigation tools have been highlighted, for example, the duration, timeframe, organization, deliverables, and the format. The surveys will be conducted online for one month; the interviews will have a face-to-face format or an online format, and in both cases, they will be recorded.

An additional paragraph has underlined potential ethical issues that could be accruing during the research project and strictly related to the research design, for example, the use of online formats in relation to data privacy protection or the impact of subjective circumstances of candidates during the interviews, which are out of any control. Related actions, precautions, and solutions to mitigate such ethical issues for the entire duration of the research have been mentioned. Finally, the last two paragraphs of the paper describe and define some data collection methodologies that could potentially be applied and the interpretation strategies of the same. Within the data collection paragraph, a specific section has been dedicated to the sampling methodology, which, for this project research, has been defined as a non-random sampling method, and specifically the judgment methodology.

## ***Chapter Five Contents and results***

### **Introduction**

A response rate of 65% is incredibly high, demonstrating the strong engagement and interest of the market sample captured.

### **Diverse Participation**

The survey captured a broad spectrum of participants, providing diverse perspectives and comprehensive insights. As per the targeted sample, the main groups of participants who received the surveys are:

-Graduates within three years.

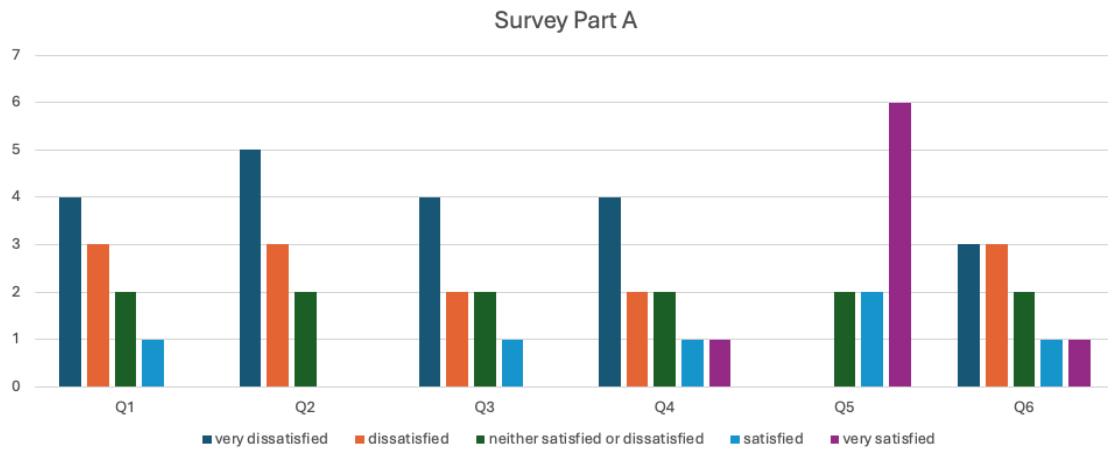
-Current students studying a bachelor or diploma of business with major in marketing.

### **Areas of Focus**

Based on your responses, here are the key areas that stood out:

- **graduates Satisfaction:** Most participants shared their satisfaction levels, providing their perception and experience.
- **Service Improvements:** targeted questions addressed possible future improvements and pedagogical implementation.

Survey part A  
1= 10

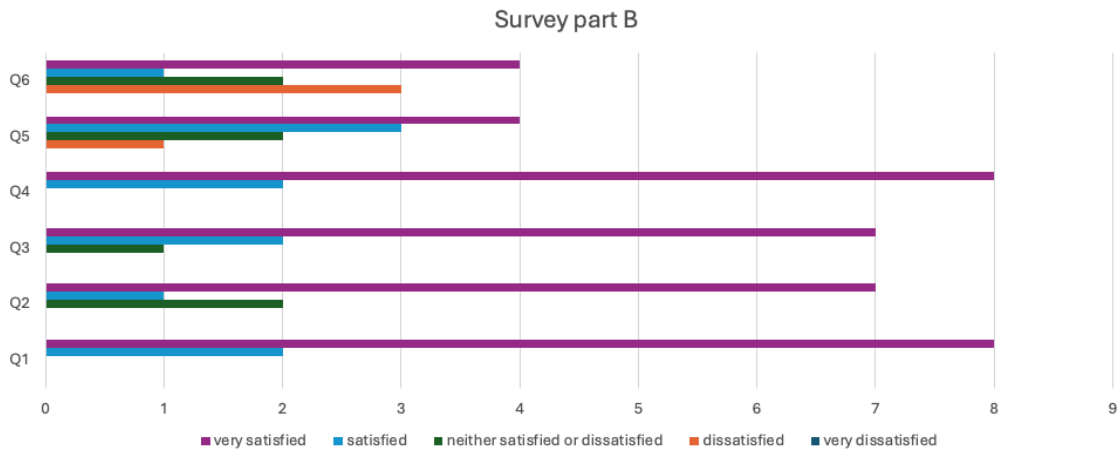


Cronbach's Alpha Value between 0.60 and 0.65

Column1	very dissatisfied	dissatisfied	neither satisfied or dissatisfied	satisfied	very satisfied
Q1	4	3	2	1	0
Q2	5	3	2	0	0
Q3	4	2	2	1	0
Q4	4	2	2	1	1
Q5	0	0	2	2	6
Q6	3	3	2	1	1



Survey part B  
1=10



Cronbach's Alpha Value between 0.60 and 0.65

Column1	very dissatisfied	dissatisfied	neither satisfied or dissatisfied	satisfied	very satisfied
Q1	0	0	0	2	8
Q2	0	0	2	1	7
Q3	0	0	1	2	7
Q4	0	0	0	2	8
Q5	0	1	2	3	4
Q6	0	3	2	1	4

Cronbach's Alpha Value between 0.6 and 0.8

Structured interview set one

- 1 How much do you feel prepared for the job industry? Explain your answer
- 2 Do you think the university has prepared you enough to develop soft skills that are aligned with the industry's demand?
- 3 Do you think the university has prepared you enough to develop soft skills which are aligned to the industry demand?
- 4 (if applicable) When you entered the job market, were your soft and technical skills developed enough for the company's requirements? (presentations, professionalism, use of Google ADS, and marketing programs)?
- 5 (if applicable) Is the internship completed during the third year of your bachelor's degree enough to prepare you for the job market?
- 6 How do you evaluate the career services/programs provided by the school?

Results

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6
Common words/answers	Common words/answers	Common words/answers	Common words/answers	Common words/answers	Common words/answers
Not very; not at all; I feel unsecure	Not much; not enough; it could be better; no	I don't have technical skills; not really; my level is elementary; I need more hours	I am not working yet; no when I entered the market I was a pre-elementary level, not at all; a bit	Not at all; my internship was useless; I didn't learn much; not it should be longer	Quite ok; they could be better; needs improvements; enough good.
Poor- not satisfied	Poor- not satisfied	Poor- not satisfied	Poor- not satisfied	Poor- not satisfied	Poor- not satisfied

## Structured interview set two

1- PBL is the Project-based Learning methodology, it supports a practical teaching approach where students are called to have an active role in the learning process, for example analysis of case studies, practical use of software and tools to improve the theories understanding and training the skills

Would you have been more satisfied to have the PBL methodology during your recent studies?

2- Would you have implemented more hours of laboratory, role-play simulations, analysis of case studies and development of skills? (e.g., learning how to use digital tools and software in class)?

3- The additional tutorial hours only focus on practical skills development, there is not any lecture content included. Some examples are: case studies, critical thinking, presentations, technical skills development. Would you have been satisfied of this implementation and structure?

4- If the school had considered to add tutorial classes, two times per week, would you have been satisfied to have two extra hours per week, on the top of your scheduled classes to focus on practical skills development only?

5- Do you think there should be more than 2 additional hours per week dedicated to tutorials and practical training?

6- There will be link to most up to date software and tools used within the digital space (WordPress; Wix; Abobe Creative; Social Media Ads etc..), in this way students will have access to software to practice and training their skills. How much would you be satisfied?

## Results

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6
Common words/answers	Common words/answers	Common words/answers	Common words/answers	Common words/answers	Common words/answers
I think yes; maybe yes; I am curious to know more	Definitely yes; we need more, sure; yes.	Definitely yes; we need more, sure; yes.	Maybe yes; I should organize better my timetable but I would be open; much better	Yes, I would be open; maybe yes; I don't know.	Yes, it would be great; very satisfied; yes
Positive- interested	Positive- satisfied	Positive- satisfied	Positive- satisfied	Positive- quite satisfied	Positive- satisfied

## ***Chapter Six Discussion***

### **Introduction**

The transition from academic life to the professional world is a critical phase for graduates, especially in specialized fields like marketing (Li et al.,2020) This thesis focuses on the employability of marketing graduates in Australia, shedding light on a pressing issue confirmed by the majority of participants in surveys and structured interviews run for the purpose if this research project. The findings reveal that over 60%% of the 100 participants identified a significant gap between their academic preparation and the demands of the job market. These findings underscore the need for an in-depth analysis of the factors contributing to this issue and potential solutions.

## **Key Issues Identified through the surveys and interviews**

### *Curriculum-Industry Mismatch*

The first critical issue highlighted in surveys and structured interview is the mismatch between the curriculum offered by educational institutions and the skills required by employers. Courses often focus more on traditional marketing concepts and less on emerging digital trends and technologies. This gap leaves graduates at a disadvantage when they enter a workforce that increasingly values digital literacy and technological proficiency.

Another critical issue highlighted is the mismatch between the curriculum offered by educational institutions and the skills required by employers. Courses often focus more on traditional marketing concepts and less on emerging digital trends and technologies. This gap leaves graduates at a disadvantage when they enter a workforce that increasingly values digital literacy and technological proficiency.

### *Lack of Practical Skills*

One of the most recurring themes in the feedback from participants is the lack of practical skills. While theoretical knowledge is essential, the marketing field demands hands-on experience with tools, platforms, and real-world scenarios. Unfortunately, many graduates find themselves unprepared for tasks such as digital marketing campaigns, social media strategy execution, and data analytics. It is crucial for marketers to have a deep understanding of digital technologies and how they can be used in marketing strategies. However, the survey results show that many courses still lack significant coverage of digital concepts and tools. To adapt to the changing landscape, curriculums must include modules on digital marketing, social media management, analytics, and other relevant

### *Soft Skills Deficiency*

Beyond technical skills, the importance of soft skills cannot be overstated. Employers look for candidates who can communicate effectively, work in teams, and adapt to changing environments. The survey results indicate that many graduates feel underprepared in these areas, which further hinders their employability.

### *Insufficient Internship Opportunities*

Internships are crucial for bridging the gap between theory and practice. However, many participants pointed out the lack of sufficient internship opportunities during their studies. This shortage deprives students of the chance to apply their academic knowledge in real-world settings and gain valuable industry experience. The survey results clearly show that practical learning is essential for preparing graduates for the marketing field. Hands-on experience with tools, platforms, and real-world scenarios is crucial for developing skills such as data analysis, content creation, and campaign management. Incorporating more practical components in courses can help address this issue.

The importance of mentorship was also highlighted as a key issue by participants. Many felt that they did not have access to experienced professionals who could guide them and provide valuable insights into the industry. This lack of mentorship can lead to a disconnection between academic knowledge and real-world application, making it difficult for graduates to navigate their careers effectively.

## **Comparative Analysis**

A comparative analysis between industry expectations and academic output reveals a stark contrast. Employers expect graduates to hit the ground running with minimal training, while academic institutions primarily focus on theoretical foundations. This disconnect necessitates a reevaluation of marketing education to incorporate more practical, hands-on learning experiences. The challenges faced by marketing graduates are not limited to a specific region or country. With the rise of digitalization and globalization, the landscape of marketing is continuously evolving, and so are the demands for skilled professionals. Keeping up with these trends and adapting to new technologies is critical for staying competitive in the job market.

When compared to global standards, Australian marketing education appears to lag in integrating digital skills and technologies into the curriculum. Countries like the United States and the United Kingdom have made significant strides in updating their marketing programs to align with industry needs, offering more specialized courses in digital marketing, data analytics, and content strategy.

Bridging the gap between academic education and industry expectations requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders. It is essential for academic institutions to collaborate with industry partners and stay updated on current trends, technologies, and skills required in the job market. Additionally, internships, mentorship programs, and workshops can provide students with valuable hands-on experience and exposure to real-world scenarios. On the other hand, employers should also invest in training programs for new hires to familiarize them with company-specific processes and technologies.

## ***Chapter Seven Conclusions***

In this thesis, we have explored a critical concern regarding the employability of marketing graduates in Australia. Our research, which included surveys and structured interviews, revealed that more than 60% of participants feel underprepared for the job market. This points to a significant gap between the academic preparation provided by educational institutions and the expectations of the industry.

Furthermore, our analysis also highlighted the importance of practical skills and experience for employability in the marketing field. Most participants stated that internships and other hands-on learning opportunities were crucial in developing the necessary skills for their current roles.

Based on these findings, we recommend that educational institutions review and update their marketing curriculum to better align with industry needs. This could include incorporating more practical components such as internships, case studies, and real-world projects into the curriculum. Additionally, collaboration with industry partners could provide students with valuable insights and networking opportunities.

Moreover, we also encourage marketing graduates to actively seek out opportunities for hands-on learning and skill development through internships, volunteering, or part-time work during their studies. This will not only enhance their employability but also give them a better understanding of the marketing industry and its demands.

In conclusion, there is a clear need for bridging the gap between academic preparation and industry expectations to improve the employability of marketing graduates in Australia. By addressing this issue through collaboration and practical learning opportunities, we can ensure that future marketing professionals are well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of the industry



To address this issue effectively, a collaborative effort is essential. Educational institutions need to revamp their curricula to better align with industry needs, incorporating both technical and soft skills training. Additionally, employers must provide more internship opportunities, ideally lasting between 12 to 18 months, to give students practical experience and a clearer understanding of the workplace environment. Students, on their part, must be proactive in seeking out these opportunities and honing the skills that are in demand. Networking and building connections with industry professionals can also provide valuable insights into the current market trends and expectations.

Furthermore, it is crucial for marketing graduates to continuously update their skills and knowledge through online courses, workshops, and seminars. With the ever-changing landscape of marketing, it is essential to stay updated on the latest technologies, strategies, and consumer behavior. This will not only make graduates more attractive to potential employers but also equip them with the necessary tools to succeed in their careers.

In addition, employers must also play a role in providing ongoing training and development opportunities for their employees. This will not only keep their skills relevant but also show a commitment towards nurturing and retaining top talent. By investing in employee growth and development, companies can create a positive work culture and attract top marketing talent.

Moreover, with the rise of remote work and digital marketing, it is becoming increasingly important for graduates to have a strong understanding of technology and digital platforms. This includes knowledge of social media marketing, search engine optimization, content creation, and data analytics. By possessing these skills, graduates can not only stay competitive in the job market but also bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the table.

Overall, the marketing field offers endless opportunities for growth and development, but it requires both students and employers to actively invest in continuous learning and staying updated on industry

trends. By doing so, we can create a thriving marketing environment that benefits both individuals and businesses alike. So instead of viewing graduation as an end point, let it be

Implementing these changes will not only enhance the employability of marketing graduates but also contribute to the overall growth and competitiveness of the marketing industry in Australia. Therefore, it is recommended that universities and private higher education providers in Australia adopt new pedagogical approaches for marketing-related subjects. By doing so, we can better prepare students to meet the demands of the marketing industry, ultimately benefiting both graduates and employers alike.

Some potential pedagogical approaches for marketing-related subjects include incorporating hands-on projects and real-world case studies, providing opportunities for internships or industry placements, and offering courses focused on emerging technologies and digital platforms. Universities can also partner with industry experts to co-teach classes or offer workshops and seminars.

**SURVEY 2022**  
**UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY**  
**Department of creative industries;**  
**Kaplan Business school**

**PART A**

COURSE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS**

On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you? Please follow the below indications

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
0-1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-10

1. Overall, how much do you feel ready for a job in your future professional area of expertise?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

2. Look in SEEK or INDEED for a job AD for an entry level position that you would potentially cover once graduated. After carefully reading it, how likely do you feel prepared?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

3. Do you think that the university provides enough hours for tutorial classes where you can develop real skills and work competencies?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

4. During your current classes, how much time is dedicated to practical development? tick 0-1 for none; 2-3 for not enough; 4-5 for maybe enough but you are not sure; 6-7 enough; 8-10 enough hours and you are greatly satisfied.

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

5. Would you implement more hours of laboratory, role-play simulations, analysis of case studies and development of skills? (e.g. learning how to use digital tools and softwares)

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

6. Do you feel satisfy by the preparation provided by UTS in using software and industry programs?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

**Appendix Two- Survey part B**

**SURVEY 2022**  
**UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY**  
**Department of creative industries;**  
**Kaplan Business school**

**PART B**

COURSE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS**

On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you? Please follow the below indications

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
0-1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-10

1. The creative industry department of the university is considering to add tutorial classes, 2 times per week. Would you be happy to have 2 extra hours per week to focus on practical skills development?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

2. Would you be happy to pay for 2 extra tutorial hours per week?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

3. The additional tutorial hours will only focus on practical skills development, there won't be any lecture content, some examples are: case studies, critical thinking, presentations, technical skills development. Would you be satisfied of this decision?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

4. There will be link to most up-to-date softwares and tools used within the digital world (WordPress; Wix; Adobe Creative; Social Media Ads etc.), in this way students will have access to softwares to practice and training their skills. How much would you be satisfied?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

5. How much are you satisfied of having 2 additional hours per week?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

6. Do you think there should be more than 2 additional hours per week dedicated to tutorials?

0-1      2-3      4-5      6-7      8-10

***Appendix Three- First set of validated questions for the structure interviews***

- 1 How much do you feel prepared for the job industry? Explain your answer
- 2 Do you think the university has prepared you enough to develop soft skills that are aligned with the industry's demand?
- 3 Do you think the university has prepared you enough to develop soft skills which are aligned to the industry demand?
- 4 (if applicable) When you entered the job market, were your soft and technical skills developed enough for the company's requirements? (presentations, professionalism, use of Google ADS, and marketing programs)?
- 5 (if applicable) Is the internship completed during the third year of your bachelor's degree enough to prepare you for the job market?
- 6 How do you evaluate the career services/programs provided by the school?|

#### **Appendix Four- Second set of validated questions for structured interviews**

1- PBL is the Project-based Learning methodology, it supports a practical teaching approach where students are called to have an active role in the learning process, for example analysis of case studies, practical use of software and tools to improve the theories understanding and training the skills

Would you have been more satisfied to have the PBL methodology during your recent studies?

2- Would you have implemented more hours of laboratory, role-play simulations, analysis of case studies and development of skills? (e.g., learning how to use digital tools and software in class)?

3- The additional tutorial hours only focus on practical skills development, there is not any lecture content included. Some examples are: case studies, critical thinking, presentations, technical skills development. Would you have been satisfied of this implementation and structure?

4- If the school had considered to add tutorial classes, two times per week, would you have been satisfied to have two extra hours per week, on the top of your scheduled classes to focus on practical skills development only?

5- Do you think there should be more than 2 additional hours per week dedicated to tutorials and practical training?

6- There will be link to most up to date software and tools used within the digital space (WordPress; Wix; Adobe Creative; Social Media Ads etc..), in this way students will have access to software to practice and training their skills. How much would you be satisfied?

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