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CONTINUOUS LEARNING COMPETENCIES FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SOCIETAL ADVANCEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objective: Rapid technological and labour-market change requires university students to develop competencies that support continued learning, employability, and constructive social participation. This study examined the objective-planning and personal-drive competencies needed by university students for societal advancement. **Methods:** A descriptive survey involved 65 undergraduate business education students selected purposively at a university in Lagos State, Nigeria. Data were collected with the 15-item Continuous Learning Competencies in Education Programme for Societal Advancement Questionnaire on a four-point scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$) and analysed using mean and standard deviation with a 2.50 decision threshold. **Results:** All objective-planning items were rated as needed (cluster $M = 3.40$); deadline setting was highest ($M = 3.94$) and periodic evaluation lowest ($M = 3.01$). All personal-drive items were also rated as needed (cluster $M = 3.32$), led by motivation to satisfy basic needs ($M = 3.58$) and accomplishment ($M = 3.47$). **Conclusion:** Structured goal management and sustained personal agency are central perceived continuous-learning capacities for these business education students. Curricula should integrate explicit goal-setting, reflective monitoring, experiential learning, career development, and motivational support while future research verifies actual competence and broader generalisability.

Keywords: Business education; Continuous learning; Objective planning; Personal drive; Societal advancement

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is increasingly expected to prepare students for a future in which knowledge, technologies, occupations, and forms of social participation change continuously. A degree can no longer be treated as a terminal stock of knowledge that remains sufficient throughout a career. Instead, graduates need the capacity to identify learning needs, locate and evaluate information, regulate their effort, revise plans, and transfer learning into unfamiliar settings. A recent systematic review conceptualised lifelong-learning competence through six interrelated categories: information literacy; self-regulation and self-direction; autonomous motivation; learning beliefs and strategies; initiative and perseverance; and adaptability and resilience (Van den Broeck et al., 2024). This broad framework positions continuous learning not as occasional participation in training, but as an enduring orientation that combines cognitive, motivational, behavioural, and contextual resources. The changing digital environment strengthens this requirement. Digital competence involves more than operating devices; it includes information management, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving. Van Laar et al. (2017) demonstrated that twenty-first-century digital skills combine core cognitive and social skills with contextual capacities needed for work, while Ng (2012) showed that university students who are assumed to be digitally native still benefit from purposeful teaching and meaningful opportunities to use unfamiliar technologies. Continuous learning therefore depends on the

ability to engage with new tools without assuming that exposure automatically produces competence. For university students, especially those preparing for business and entrepreneurial careers, the willingness and discipline to update knowledge are essential for responding to technological disruption, shifting consumer behaviour, and new modes of employment.

Self-regulated learning provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding these capacities. Zimmerman (2002) described self-regulated learners as active participants who set goals, select strategies, monitor performance, and reflect on outcomes. Panadero's (2017) review of major self-regulated-learning models similarly identified planning, monitoring, motivation, emotion, and self-evaluation as recurring processes across theoretical traditions. Meta-analytic evidence also indicates that self-regulatory processes are meaningfully associated with learning and training outcomes (Sitzmann & Ely, 2011). From this perspective, continuous learning is sustained when learners can convert broad aspirations into planned action, observe progress, and make adjustments rather than relying on external direction alone. Objective planning is a central component of this regulatory cycle. Goal-setting theory proposes that specific and challenging goals direct attention, mobilise effort, increase persistence, and encourage the development of task strategies when individuals possess commitment and receive appropriate feedback (Locke & Latham, 2002). Effective planning therefore involves more than stating an intention. It requires clarifying short- and long-term outcomes, identifying missing information, sequencing activities, allocating responsibilities, setting deadlines, reviewing progress, and making decisions after evaluation. These processes are particularly relevant to business education because students must learn to organise projects, assess opportunities, coordinate resources, and respond to deviations between intended and actual performance. Planning is unlikely to produce sustained action without personal drive. Self-determination theory distinguishes between forms of motivation and argues that high-quality, persistent engagement is supported when needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Bandura's (1997) account of self-efficacy further explains how beliefs about personal capability influence effort, persistence, resilience, and the selection of challenging activities. Personal drive in continuous learning consequently includes initiative, confidence, perseverance, willingness to improve, and the capacity to maintain purposeful effort when immediate rewards are absent. These qualities allow learners to remain engaged after formal instruction has ended and when professional or entrepreneurial tasks become uncertain. The relationship between continuous learning and employability has also been developed through several complementary models. Fugate et al. (2004) framed employability as a psychosocial form of proactive adaptability that combines career identity, personal adaptability, and human and social capital. The CareerEDGE model links career development learning, experience, disciplinary knowledge, generic skills, emotional intelligence, reflection, self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Tomlinson (2017) extended this discussion through the concept of graduate capital, emphasising human, social, cultural, identity, and psychological resources. These models imply that employability cannot be reduced to technical competence or possession of a certificate; it also requires learners to plan their development, manage transitions, and sustain motivation.

Empirical studies reinforce this multidimensional view. Business graduates may possess disciplinary knowledge while remaining underprepared in non-technical capabilities needed for organisational performance (Jackson, 2013). Pre-professional identity helps students connect academic learning with the conduct, values, and practices of their intended occupation (Jackson, 2016), while career self-management competencies and work experience contribute to undergraduates' perceived employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2017). Employers and students also attach considerable importance to soft skills, although their priorities do not always coincide (Succi & Canovi, 2020). More recent evidence indicates that work experience and other developmental activities can contribute differently to employability, requiring universities to design coherent rather than isolated interventions (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2022). Objective planning and personal drive can be understood as enabling competencies within these models because they help students intentionally accumulate experience, monitor development, and respond to career uncertainty. Business education is especially relevant because it combines preparation for employment with entrepreneurship, innovation, and self-reliance. International evidence generally

supports the educational value of entrepreneurship programmes, although effects vary according to programme design and outcome measures. Meta-analyses have reported positive relationships between entrepreneurship education and human-capital outcomes (Martin et al., 2013) as well as entrepreneurial intentions (Bae et al., 2014). Systematic reviews have nevertheless cautioned that educational impact depends on pedagogy, institutional context, and the distinction between short-term attitudes and longer-term entrepreneurial behaviour (Pittaway & Cope, 2007; Nabi et al., 2017). Experiential approaches that connect theory, action, reflection, and further experimentation are therefore more defensible than instruction that is limited to abstract business concepts (Bell & Bell, 2020). Students need opportunities to plan projects, respond to feedback, evaluate results, and sustain effort through ambiguity. Within the Nigerian context, concerns have been raised about whether business education curricula and instructional processes adequately develop employability and entrepreneurial capacities. Omidiji and Ogwu (2019) emphasised the importance of twenty-first-century skill acquisition in business education programmes, while Okeke-Ezeanyanwu and Nweke (2021) identified strategies for strengthening employability skills among business education students. Evidence from public universities in Lagos State has also indicated weaknesses in soft-skill development and the need to connect curricula more closely with workplace requirements (Ore, 2023). Ore and Hassan (2023) similarly reported that curriculum content required enrichment to strengthen entrepreneurial skill development. These findings suggest that knowledge of business principles must be complemented by the personal and regulatory capacities that enable students to act on what they know. Continuous learning also has significance beyond individual employment. Higher education can contribute to societal advancement when graduates use their capabilities to generate livelihoods, participate productively in communities, adapt organisations, and address complex social and economic problems. Sustainability-competence research identifies systems thinking, anticipatory competence, normative judgement, strategic action, and interpersonal collaboration as important for addressing future challenges (Wiek et al., 2011). Rieckmann (2012) likewise showed that future-oriented higher education should cultivate critical, anticipatory, and systemic capacities, while Wals (2014) argued that sustainability-oriented learning requires institutional and pedagogical change rather than isolated content additions. Objective planning and personal drive do not represent the full range of sustainability competencies, but they provide practical foundations for translating intentions into sustained action.

Despite the growing literature on employability, entrepreneurship education, self-regulated learning, and sustainable development, a specific empirical gap remains. Many studies examine curriculum adequacy, generic skills, entrepreneurial intention, or graduate outcomes as broad constructs. Fewer studies identify the item-level objective-planning and personal-drive competencies that business education students themselves consider necessary for continuous learning and societal advancement. This distinction matters because a programme may endorse lifelong learning in principle without explicitly developing the micro-competencies through which students set objectives, order actions, establish deadlines, evaluate progress, build confidence, and maintain effort. The present study addresses this gap by profiling these two domains among university business education students. Its contribution is descriptive rather than causal: it identifies perceived competency needs that can inform curriculum design, student-development activities, and future instrument validation. The study therefore examined the objective-planning competencies and personal-drive competencies needed by university students for societal advancement. It answered two questions: which objective-planning competencies are needed, and which personal-drive competencies are needed?

METHOD

Research Design and Reporting Standard

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was appropriate because the purpose was to describe respondents' ratings of specified continuous-learning competencies rather than manipulate conditions or estimate a causal effect. A formal reporting guideline was not specified in the source manuscript.

Context, Setting, and Study Period

The study was conducted in the Department of Business Education at Lagos State University of Education, Lagos State, Nigeria. The exact data-collection period was not reported in the source manuscript.

Participants, Sampling, or Data Sources

The study population comprised 65 undergraduate students, and the final analytic sample consisted of 65 respondents selected purposively because they were directly positioned to provide information about the competencies developed and needed within the programme. The use of a single departmental group means that the findings describe this participant group and should not be interpreted as statistically representative of all university students in Lagos State or Nigeria.

Variables, Constructs, and Operational Definitions

The study examined two continuous-learning competency domains. Objective planning comprised eight competencies: setting short- and long-term objectives, identifying missing information, identifying and sequencing required steps, determining individuals or groups involved in implementation, setting deadlines, evaluating objectives periodically, and making decisions after evaluation. Personal drive comprised seven competencies related to physiological needs, safety, belonging, accomplishment, self-actualisation, self-efficacy, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. A mean rating of 2.50 or higher defined a competency as needed/desired for the purposes of this descriptive study.

Instruments, Measures, and Data Collection

Data were collected with a researcher-developed structured questionnaire titled the Continuous Learning Competencies in Education Programme for Societal Advancement Questionnaire (CLCPSAQ). The instrument contained 15 competency statements organised into the two domains described above. Responses were recorded on a four-point scale: Strongly Desired = 4, Desired = 3, Undesired = 2, and Strongly Undesired = 1. The instrument produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .81.

Procedure or Intervention

The source manuscript states that the CLCPSAQ was used to collect responses from the purposively selected students. Recruitment procedures, administration mode, response setting, and the chronological data-collection process were not reported in sufficient detail for replication and should be completed by the authors before submission.

Data Analysis

Responses were analysed using mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used: an item with a mean of 2.50 or higher was interpreted as a needed competency, whereas an item below 2.50 was interpreted as not needed. Standard deviations described dispersion around each mean. Cluster means were calculated from the presented item means to support domain-level interpretation. No inferential tests were conducted; therefore, the analysis does not establish that the identified competencies cause employability or societal advancement.

Research Quality and Rigor

The internal-consistency coefficient of the CLCPSAQ was estimated with Cronbach's alpha and was .81. This coefficient was treated as adequate for descriptive use while recognising that alpha should be interpreted alongside item content and dimensionality. The source manuscript did not report factor-analytic, convergent-validity, measurement-invariance, or stability evidence; these remain priorities for future validation.

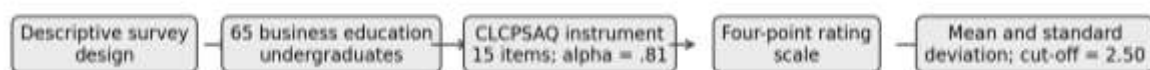


Figure 1. Research Design and Analytical Procedure

Ethical Considerations

Ethics committee approval or exemption, informed-consent procedures, confidentiality protections, and related data-security information were not reported in the source manuscript. These details should be supplied by the authors before submission.

RESULTS

Objective Planning Competencies

All eight objective-planning items exceeded the 2.50 decision criterion, with a cluster mean of 3.40. Deadline setting received the highest rating ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.31$). Setting short- and long-term objectives and sequencing the required steps each received $M = 3.63$. Periodic evaluation of objectives was the lowest-rated planning competency ($M = 3.01$), followed by identifying responsible individuals or groups ($M = 3.18$) and identifying missing information ($M = 3.22$). Standard deviations ranged from 0.18 to 0.31.

Table 1. Objective Planning Competencies Needed by University Students (N = 65)

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Ability to set short- and long-term objectives	3.63	0.28	Desired
2	Ability to identify information not already available to meet the objective	3.22	0.18	Desired
3	Ability to identify the steps needed to accomplish the objective	3.26	0.24	Desired
4	Ability to put the steps in the order in which they need to be completed	3.63	0.28	Desired
5	Ability to determine the individuals or groups involved in implementation	3.18	0.23	Desired
6	Ability to set a deadline for each step required to achieve the objectives	3.94	0.31	Desired
7	Ability to evaluate the objectives periodically	3.01	0.21	Desired
8	Ability to make decisions after the objectives have been evaluated	3.34	0.24	Desired

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. The decision criterion was 2.50; values at or above 2.50 were interpreted as desired/needed competencies.

Personal Drive Competencies

All seven personal-drive items exceeded the decision criterion, with a cluster mean of 3.32. Motivation to satisfy physiological needs received the highest rating ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.27$), followed by maintaining self-possession through accomplishment ($M = 3.47$), maintaining or improving self-efficacy ($M = 3.39$), and establishing self-confidence through self-actualisation ($M = 3.37$). Belonging received the lowest personal-drive mean ($M = 3.13$). Standard deviations ranged from 0.22 to 0.27.

Table 2. Personal Drive Competencies Needed by University Students (N = 65)

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
9	Capacity to be sufficiently motivated to satisfy physiological needs	3.58	0.27	Desired
10	Capacity to establish a sense of predictability through the need for safety	3.16	0.23	Desired
11	Capacity to experience a sense of belonging	3.13	0.22	Desired
12	Capacity to maintain self-possession through accomplishment	3.47	0.26	Desired
13	Capacity to establish self-confidence through self-actualisation	3.37	0.25	Desired
14	Capacity to improve or maintain self-efficacy	3.39	0.25	Desired
15	Capacity to initiate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	3.16	0.23	Desired

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. The decision criterion was 2.50; values at or above 2.50 were interpreted as desired/needed competencies.

Domain-Level Pattern

The objective-planning domain had a slightly higher cluster mean (3.40) than the personal-drive domain (3.32). Both domains were above the criterion and were therefore perceived by respondents as needed continuous-learning competencies.

DISCUSSION

Objective Planning and Regulatory Structure

The pattern suggests that respondents did not view planning as a vague statement of ambition. They attached particular importance to temporal structure and orderly implementation. In goal-setting theory, specific objectives and time parameters direct attention and help individuals regulate effort, while task strategies translate goals into action (Locke & Latham, 2002). For students, deadlines may serve as proximal standards that make a distant academic, career, or entrepreneurial objective manageable.

The high ratings for goal definition and sequencing also align with cyclical models of self-regulated learning. Zimmerman (2002) located task analysis and goal setting in the forethought phase, followed by performance control and self-reflection. Panadero (2017) showed that planning, monitoring, and evaluation recur across major self-regulated-learning models even when terminology differs. The current results add an applied business education perspective: students regarded not only goal setting but also the ordering of steps and post-evaluation decisions as necessary continuous-learning competencies. These processes can support assignments, enterprise projects, internships, job searches, and later professional development.

The ordering of the ratings may indicate that students more readily recognise visible planning activities, such as setting targets and dates, than reflective and collaborative activities that occur during implementation. Yet monitoring and feedback are indispensable because plans often require revision. Sitzmann and Ely (2011) identified monitoring and regulatory processes as important components of self-regulated learning across educational and work-related settings. A curriculum that teaches students to establish plans without creating routines for evidence review may therefore produce rigid rather than adaptive planners.

The relatively narrow dispersion of ratings does not prove that students possessed the competencies; it shows only that they were similar in judging them to be needed. This distinction is important for programme evaluation. A needs rating should be followed by performance-based assessment, such as evaluation of project plans, learning contracts, decision logs, and reflective revisions. Such evidence would allow educators to distinguish students' awareness of planning requirements from their demonstrated ability to execute a full planning cycle.

Personal Drive and Motivational Agency

The ratings highlight a combination of external life demands and internal beliefs about competence. In an employability and entrepreneurship context, the prominence of physiological needs can be interpreted as recognition that learning is connected to livelihood, security, and the capacity to meet material responsibilities.

Self-determination theory helps clarify why the quality of motivation matters. Deci and Ryan (2000) argued that behaviour varies in the extent to which it is autonomous or externally controlled, and that sustained engagement is supported by autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The present questionnaire includes both intrinsic and extrinsic drive, but its descriptive design does not distinguish their relative quality or behavioural consequences. Curriculum designers should therefore avoid assuming that pressure alone will sustain learning. External incentives may initiate activity, while autonomy-supportive teaching, meaningful choice, competence-building feedback, and connection with others can help students internalise learning goals.

The high rating for self-efficacy is consistent with Bandura's (1997) explanation that capability beliefs shape the goals people select, the effort they invest, and their persistence after setbacks. In business education, self-efficacy can influence whether students attempt unfamiliar digital tools, present proposals, seek feedback, or pursue entrepreneurial opportunities. It should not be developed through encouragement detached from performance. More defensible sources of efficacy include successful experience, observation of credible models, constructive feedback, and manageable challenges. Experiential entrepreneurship education is valuable precisely because students can act, receive information about consequences, reflect, and try again (Bell & Bell, 2020).

The comparatively lower rating for belonging should not be interpreted as evidence that social support is unimportant. Relatedness is one of the core needs in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and employability models emphasise social capital and access to networks (Fugate et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2017). Students may have rated individually framed achievement and confidence items more strongly because business and career success are often presented as personal responsibilities. Nevertheless, continuous learning occurs within communities: students obtain feedback from lecturers, peers, supervisors, professional associations, employers, and customers. Programmes should therefore combine individual agency with collaborative learning and mentoring.

As with the planning domain, the scores do not measure actual persistence, self-efficacy, or motivational regulation. Future assessment could triangulate self-report with behavioural indicators such as completion of optional learning tasks, response to feedback, revision after failure, sustained engagement in internships, and maintenance of professional-development portfolios. This distinction would strengthen claims about the relationship between personal drive and subsequent employment or entrepreneurial outcomes.

Continuous Learning, Employability, and Societal Advancement

Taken together, the cluster means for objective planning (3.40) and personal drive (3.32) indicate that respondents perceived both regulatory structure and motivational energy as necessary. Neither domain is sufficient by itself. Planning without drive may remain an unimplemented schedule, while drive without planning may produce intense but poorly directed activity. Their combination resembles the interaction between forethought, performance, and reflection in self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002) and the combination of self-direction, autonomous motivation, initiative, perseverance, adaptability, and resilience identified in the contemporary lifelong-learning framework (Van den Broeck et al., 2024).

The findings also fit broader employability theory. CareerEDGE proposes that reflection and evaluation help transform knowledge, experience, and generic skills into efficacy and confidence (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Fugate et al. (2004) emphasised proactive adaptability, while Tomlinson (2017) located psychological and identity resources alongside human and social capital. Objective planning contributes to career self-management by enabling students to identify desired roles, competence gaps, learning opportunities, deadlines, and evidence of progress. Personal drive supports the persistence required to acquire those resources. Jackson and Wilton (2017) found that career self-management and work experience were associated with undergraduates' perceived employability, reinforcing the value of treating career development as an active learning process.

For business education, these competencies can help bridge the gap between curriculum content and action. Prior Nigerian studies have questioned whether existing programmes sufficiently develop soft skills and entrepreneurial capabilities (Ore, 2023; Ore & Hassan, 2023). Omidiji and Ogwu (2019) and Okeke-Ezeanyanwu and Nweke (2021) likewise stressed the importance of employability-oriented skill acquisition. The present study does not evaluate curriculum effectiveness directly, but it specifies competencies that can be made visible in curriculum outcomes and assessment criteria. Rather than stating that graduates should be self-reliant, a programme can require students to formulate objectives, produce implementation plans, document information searches, revise deadlines, evaluate outcomes, and reflect on motivational challenges.

International entrepreneurship research supports such an applied orientation. Martin et al. (2013) found that entrepreneurship education contributes to entrepreneurship-related human capital, and Bae et al. (2014) reported a positive but context-sensitive relationship with entrepreneurial intentions. Nabi et al. (2017) warned that the evidence base often emphasises short-term and subjective outcomes, while Pittaway and Cope (2007) highlighted definitional and pedagogical inconsistencies. These cautions are relevant to the current study. Students' positive ratings should not be presented as proof that the competencies have been acquired or that they will create enterprises. They should be used as a starting point for designing learning experiences and for testing whether demonstrable competence predicts later behaviour.

Societal advancement is also broader than employment. Students can contribute through responsible enterprise, organisational innovation, community service, informed citizenship, and solutions to local problems. Sustainability competence frameworks emphasise anticipatory thinking, strategic action, systems understanding, values, and collaboration (Wiek et al., 2011; Rieckmann, 2012). Objective planning can support strategic action by linking desired futures to sequenced steps, while personal drive can support perseverance in the face of complexity. Wals (2014) noted that higher education for sustainability requires integrated changes in learning and institutional practice. Accordingly, universities should create environments in which students use planning and motivational competencies to address authentic social and economic challenges rather than learning them only as decontextualised concepts.

Digital change provides a further application. The capacity to identify information needs, learn new systems, evaluate sources, and revise strategies is increasingly embedded in professional work. Van Laar et al. (2017) showed that digital skills are intertwined with critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and problem solving. Ng (2012) demonstrated that students can develop digital literacy when technologies are used for meaningful educational purposes. Business education programmes can therefore integrate objective planning and personal drive into digital tasks, such as creating a market-analysis dashboard, learning an unfamiliar accounting platform, developing an online enterprise campaign, or evaluating digital customer feedback. These activities make continuous learning observable and relevant.

Theoretical and Methodological Contribution

The study's contribution is descriptive rather than causal. It makes objective-planning and personal-drive competencies visible at the item level instead of treating lifelong learning, employability, entrepreneurship, or societal advancement only as broad constructs. This focus clarifies the micro-competencies through which students formulate objectives, sequence action, establish deadlines, evaluate progress, develop confidence, and maintain effort. Methodologically, the CLCPSAQ offers an initial two-domain structure with internal consistency of $\alpha = .81$; however, its single-site purposive sample and absence of factor-analytic validation mean that it should be treated as a preliminary descriptive instrument rather than a fully validated scale.

Implications for Education, Policy, and Practice

The results support explicit curriculum mapping of continuous-learning competencies. Course outcomes should specify observable planning behaviours rather than relying on general statements about lifelong learning. Students can be required to develop goal hierarchies, learning contracts, milestone charts, responsibility matrices, risk registers, and decision records. Assessment rubrics should reward not only the quality of an initial plan but also the use of evidence to revise it. Because periodic evaluation was the lowest-rated planning competency, structured checkpoints and reflective progress reviews deserve particular attention. This approach aligns with self-regulated-learning research in which monitoring and reflection connect forethought to improved subsequent action (Panadero, 2017; Zimmerman, 2002).

Experiential learning should be organised as a developmental sequence. Enterprise simulations, consulting projects, internships, community-based business assignments, and student ventures can create meaningful conditions for applying plans and regulating motivation. The educational value of experience depends on guided reflection and opportunities for reapplication; activity alone does not guarantee learning. Bell and Bell (2020) proposed an experiential entrepreneurship framework that links educational theory with staged practice. In the present context, lecturers can require students to establish objectives before an activity, collect performance evidence during implementation, evaluate outcomes, and formulate a revised plan after feedback.

Career development services should be integrated with academic programmes rather than offered only near graduation. Students can maintain portfolios that include competence audits, career objectives, evidence of work experience, reflective accounts, and plans for addressing gaps. This is consistent with the emphasis on career-development learning in CareerEDGE (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), pre-professional identity formation (Jackson, 2016), and the accumulation of graduate capital (Tomlinson,

2017). Partnerships with employers and professional bodies can provide realistic feedback, mentorship, and exposure to changing workplace expectations. Jackson and Tomlinson (2022) showed that employability-enhancing activities have different perceived value, so institutions should evaluate combinations of experiences rather than merely counting participation.

Motivational support should combine high expectations with autonomy, competence, and belonging. Students need challenging tasks that are achievable with appropriate scaffolding, feedback that identifies specific improvement pathways, and opportunities to make meaningful choices. Peer teams and mentoring networks can strengthen relatedness and social capital, while successful completion of progressively demanding tasks can build self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Educators should also help students identify how external goals, such as employment or income, can be connected to personally endorsed values and community contribution. This process can transform compliance into more durable commitment.

Institutional provision remains important. Continuous learning is difficult when students lack access to current instructional materials, digital infrastructure, practical equipment, career information, and qualified guidance. The original recommendations concerning adequate funding, modern facilities, balanced theory and practice, and career-development mechanisms remain supported by the expanded analysis. However, resources should be linked to a coherent pedagogy. A computer laboratory contributes to continuous learning only when students use it to solve authentic problems, learn unfamiliar applications, evaluate information, collaborate, and reflect on their performance. Similarly, career advice is stronger when it leads to documented goals and monitored action.

Programme evaluation should move beyond students' perceptions of need. Direct assessment can examine the quality of plans, adherence to milestones, evidence-based revision, persistence, and transfer across contexts. Longitudinal follow-up can determine whether students who demonstrate stronger planning and personal-drive competencies engage more frequently in professional learning, obtain employment, create ventures, or contribute to community initiatives. Such evidence would respond to the methodological concerns in entrepreneurship education about reliance on short-term intentions and self-reported outcomes (Nabi et al., 2017).

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations delimit the interpretation of the findings. The study involved 65 undergraduates from one business education department and used purposive selection. The sample is therefore context-specific, and the results should not be generalised statistically to all university students. The design was cross-sectional and descriptive, so it cannot establish developmental change or causal relationships among continuous learning, employability, entrepreneurship, and societal advancement. The questionnaire measured perceived need rather than demonstrated competence, and socially desirable responding may have increased agreement. In addition, the instrument addressed only objective planning and personal drive, whereas contemporary lifelong-learning frameworks include information literacy, learning strategies, adaptability, resilience, and other domains (Van den Broeck et al., 2024).

Future studies should involve multiple institutions, disciplines, year levels, and more diverse student groups. Probability-based or stratified sampling would improve population inference, while larger samples would permit exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of the CLCPSAQ. Researchers should test convergent and discriminant validity by comparing the instrument with established measures of self-regulation, motivation, self-efficacy, and employability. Performance tasks and qualitative interviews could reveal how students enact planning and personal drive in authentic learning situations. Longitudinal research could examine whether these competencies predict continued learning, career transition, entrepreneurial behaviour, or community engagement after graduation. Experimental or quasi-experimental studies could also evaluate whether structured goal-setting, reflective monitoring, mentoring, and experiential projects produce measurable improvement.

CONCLUSION

The study established that university business education students perceived all examined objective-planning and personal-drive competencies as necessary for continuous learning and societal advancement. Objective planning was characterised by particularly strong endorsement of deadline setting, goal definition, and orderly sequencing, while personal drive was reflected in motivation related to livelihood, accomplishment, self-efficacy, and self-actualisation. The findings support an integrated view in which students need both a structure for directing and evaluating action and the agency to sustain effort through uncertainty. Their descriptive nature requires caution: the ratings identify perceived needs, not proof of competence or causal impact. Nevertheless, they provide a practical basis for curriculum improvement. Business education programmes should explicitly teach and assess goal formulation, information seeking, implementation planning, periodic evaluation, decision making, motivational regulation, self-efficacy, and collaborative support through experiential projects, career-development activities, digital tasks, and reflective portfolios. When these competencies are embedded in authentic learning and supported by adequate resources, students are better positioned to continue learning, manage career transitions, pursue self-reliance, and contribute responsibly to social and economic development.

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Ethics Approval

Information was not provided in the source manuscript; author completion is required before submission.

Informed Consent and Assent

Information was not provided in the source manuscript; author completion is required before submission.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable to the reported results because no identifiable participant information, images, or quotations are presented. Authors should confirm this statement before submission.

Data, Code, and Materials Availability

Information was not provided in the source manuscript; author completion is required before submission.

Preregistration and Protocol

Preregistration or a protocol was not reported in the source manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

Information was not provided in the source manuscript; author completion is required before submission.

Use of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

Information was not provided in the source manuscript; author completion is required before submission.

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