

# Building Bridges to Success: The Role of Career Management and Education for Emerging Employees

~ Ph. D. Professor **Carmen Nadia Ciocoiu** (*Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania*) ORCID: 0000-0002-3420-9182

E-mail: [nadia.ciocoiu@man.ase.ro](mailto:nadia.ciocoiu@man.ase.ro)

~ Ph. D. Post-Doctoral Student **Adina Liliana Prioteasa** (*Post-Doctoral School of Management, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania*) ORCID 0009-0006-0567-86563

E-mail: [prioteasaadina@gmail.com](mailto:prioteasaadina@gmail.com)

~ Ph. D. Student **Corina Daniela Certan (Bogheanu)** (*Doctoral School of Management, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania*)

E-mail: [certancorina21@stud.ase.ro](mailto:certancorina21@stud.ase.ro)

~ Ph. D. Student **Laurențiu-Dan Lazăr** (*Doctoral School of Management, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania*) ORCID 0009-0002-1069-6892

E-mail: [lazardan14@stud.ase.ro](mailto:lazardan14@stud.ase.ro)

**Abstract:** *In the rapidly evolving landscape of the global job market, the ability to effectively manage one's career has become increasingly vital. This article delves into the essence of career management skills among Business Administration students at the University of Bucharest, aiming to illuminate the pivotal role these competencies play in shaping the professional destinies of emerging employees. Drawing upon a comprehensive survey of 257 students, this research seeks to evaluate the current state of career management education, identify the key skills and resources deemed essential for success, and assess the demand for further specialized training in this domain. The foundational premise of this study is rooted in the acknowledgment of career management as a crucial determinant of professional development and success. Through a methodical analysis that integrates empirical data with theoretical insights from renowned scholars in the field, such as Lemeni, Miclea, Schein, and Holland, the article aims to bridge the gap between academic preparation and real-world business challenges. By examining students' perceptions, experiences, and as-*

pirations regarding career management, this research endeavors to offer actionable recommendations for educational institutions to enhance their curricular and extracurricular offerings in support of students' career aspirations. Furthermore, this article investigates the hypothesis that a robust foundation in career management skills significantly contributes to professional success and satisfaction. It also explores the role of digital and interactive resources in modern career planning and development strategies. Ultimately, this study not only highlights the critical importance of career management skills but also underscores the need for continuous learning and adaptability in the face of an ever-changing professional environment. Through this exploration, the article aims to contribute valuable insights to both the academic community and business professionals, fostering a deeper understanding of effective career management practices.

**Key words:** Career Management, Professional Development, Business Education, Lifelong Learning, Job Market Adaptability, Digital Learning Resources.

**JEL Classification:** I23, J24, M12, M54

## Introduction

In today's dynamic and increasingly complex job market, the imperative for robust career management strategies has never been more pronounced. As industries evolve and new professions emerge, individuals are faced with the challenging task of navigating their professional paths amidst a landscape characterized by uncertainty and rapid change. This reality underscores the significance of career management skills, particularly for students poised to enter the workforce. Among these, Business Administration students at the University of Bucharest (UniBuc) represent a cohort for whom such competencies are not merely advantageous but essential. These students stand at the cusp of entering the business sector, a realm where the ability to adapt, plan, and strategically manage one's career trajectory can markedly influence professional success and personal fulfilment.

The relevance and timeliness of this theme stem from the ongoing shifts in the global economy, technological advancements, and the changing nature of work itself. These factors collectively amplify the demand for individuals who are not only academically proficient but also adept at steering their careers with acumen and agility. Moreover, the increasing emphasis on lifelong learning and the continuous development of professional skills further accentuate the need for effective career management as a critical component of long-term career resilience and satisfaction. Within the framework of the fourth industrial revolution, succinctly referred to as "Industry 4.0", economies worldwide encounter significant challenges that span across all sectors of economic activity. The rapid and extensive changes ushered in by this new digitalization era affect not only corporate entities but also the everyday lives of individuals (Veith & Costea, 2019).

This article, therefore, seeks to explore the intricacies of career management skills among Business Administration students at the University of Bucharest, offering insights into how these future professionals perceive, value, and seek to enhance their ability to manage their careers. By shedding light on the specific skills, resources, and training deemed essential by this demographic, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on preparing graduates for the complexities of the modern business environment. Additionally, this research endeavours to provide

actionable recommendations for educational institutions to better support their students in developing the requisite competencies for successful career management.

### Literature review

The field of career management is vast, encompassing an array of definitions, theoretical perspectives, and empirical studies that contribute to our understanding of career development within organizational contexts. This literature review aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the evolving nature of career management, integrating the contributions of seminal authors and their implications for both individuals and organizations.

Career management has historically been perceived as the progression or advancement within a specific field, aiming for higher positions, rewards, and influence. However, this conception has undergone significant transformation. As highlighted by Lemeni and Miclea (2010), career management now encompasses a broader scope, recognizing the importance of personal development across various occupations and the entire organizational landscape. This shift reflects a deeper understanding of career as not merely a linear path but a complex journey marked by personal growth, adaptability, and the accumulation of diverse experiences.

The literature presents several perspectives on career development, each offering unique insights into the nature of career progression:

- Career as Advancement: Traditionally focusing on upward mobility within an organizational or professional hierarchy.
- Career as a Profession: Distinguishing careers from jobs by categorizing certain occupations as careers based on their status, required qualifications, or societal value.
- Career as a Series of Positions: Viewing career as a succession of roles an individual undertakes throughout their professional life, emphasizing the diversity of experiences.
- Career as Roles Related to Experience: This perspective, rooted in management theory, adopts a subjective approach to career, focusing on an individual's work experience history, personal concepts, aspirations, successes, or failures.

Lemeni and Miclea (2010) offer a definition of career that synthesizes these perspectives, describing it as "a succession of an individual's work roles" and "a series of separate, but inter-related experiences." This conceptualization underscores the importance of viewing a career as a sequence of roles and experiences, thereby highlighting its comprehensive and sequential nature.

Douglas T. Hall expands the conceptual framework of career by incorporating both subjective elements, such as experiences and roles played, and objective elements like attitudes and behaviors exhibited (David, 2014). This dual focus proposes a dynamic framework within which individuals navigate their career paths, reflecting on personal qualities, actions, and encountered events. In a volatile business world, managers need to adapt their leadership style and become proactive so that they can manage any difficult situations that arise in a timely manner (Minciu, Berar, & Dobrea, 2020).

Two pivotal theories in understanding career development and management are highlighted:

- Holland's Career Choice Theory: Focuses on the match between individuals' personality types and their career choices.
- Schein's Career Anchors: Identifies core values and motivations that guide individuals in their career paths and decisions.

These theoretical frameworks offer essential insights into the factors influencing career choices and the principles underlying career development paths.

The review further explores the lifecycle of career development, drawing on Schein (1978), who identifies seven stages of career development, each presenting distinct challenges and opportunities for growth. This segmentation is crucial for understanding the dynamic nature of career progression, emphasizing the significance of transitions that often necessitate reassessment and realignment with evolving self-concepts and life circumstances (Serbanescu, 2011).

In an increasingly complex business environment, influenced by the development of technology and the exchange of information, new skills, such as critical thinking, become more and more required in the labour market (Dumitru, et al., 2023). Jansen (2007) underscores the complexity of lifestyle changes within the context of career management. This approach calls for a nuanced understanding that recognizes the impact of external factors such as the social environment, support levels, resources, and personal adaptability on career paths. This perspective is vital for appreciating the diverse and individualized nature of career development.

Addressing common misconceptions, Duta O. (2012) challenges several myths surrounding career planning and development, including the beliefs that careers are linear and that hard work alone guarantees success. This discussion is crucial for fostering a realistic understanding of career development, emphasizing the need for resilience, adaptability, and continuous learning.

Career management is described by Jansen (2007) as a complex process that aligns individual career goals with organizational needs. This strategic approach involves formulating goals, strategies, and plans to meet the human resource needs of an organization while assisting individuals in achieving their career objectives. Mironov (2017) echoes this sentiment, describing career management as a process that designs the development of individuals within the organization, taking into account both organizational needs and individual preferences.

The literature outlines the primary objectives of career management, including promoting appropriate career development policies, integrating individual aspirations with organizational goals, and developing career plans that support both employee growth and organizational objectives (Cristea, 2012). These objectives serve as a guideline for effective career management practices.

Career planning emerges as an essential component of career management, involving the identification of objectives, exploration of career options, development of competencies, and strategic decision-making (Pescaru, 2021). This process is integral to achieving career success and satisfaction. Furthermore, understanding the job market and aligning individual skills and qualifications with market needs are highlighted as critical aspects of career planning (Jigau, 2001). To capitalize on emerging business opportunities, embracing automation and digitalization while cultivating new markets, production methodologies, and products is imperative. The advent of Industry 4.0 has demonstrably enhanced productivity and efficiency. Although it has led to a contraction in employment within certain industrial segments, it has concurrently fostered the creation of more highly skilled and productive positions within the information technology sector (Veith, 2018).

Pânișoară and Pânișoară (2010) emphasize the interrelationship between individual career



aspirations and organizational development strategies. This synergy underscores the organization's role in facilitating professional development and creating an environment conducive to learning and growth.

Unpredictable changes in the business environment, such as economic instability, difficult forecasting of future activities and the increasing number of factors that need to be taken into account in the development of investment projects are causing essential modifications in organisations (Minciu, Berar, & Dobrea, 2021). Organizational career planning entails identifying employees, determining career paths, allocating responsibilities, and developing individual plans (Negovan, 2010). This structured approach is essential for guiding career development within the organizational context, ensuring a match between organizational needs and the potential of employees (Vlăsceanu, 2002). A crucial facet concerning the impact of digitalization on the growth of remote professional activities is the competencies required for employees to sustain their positions over the long term (Veith, Isbaita & Marinescu, 2021).

This literature review has provided a detailed examination of career management, integrating key theoretical perspectives, empirical studies, and practical insights. The discussions underscore the complexity and dynamism of career development, highlighting the importance of adaptability, continuous learning, and the alignment of individual aspirations with organizational goals. As the field continues to evolve, the insights garnered from this review contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying effective career management and planning.

### **Research methodology**

This research, conducted through a questionnaire aimed at Business Administration students from the University of Bucharest, with 257 respondents, sets a foundation for exploring the emerging needs in career orientation and professional training. It also seeks to gather information on best practices and resources utilized in career management. The utilization of SPSS software to analyse the data with the chi-square test enriches the research by providing a robust statistical basis to assess the relationships and trends within the collected data, thereby offering valuable insights into the effectiveness of career management competencies development and its impact on employment opportunities and industry requirements understanding.

The choice to process the collected data using SPSS with the chi-square test is pivotal for several reasons:

- Statistical Rigor because SPSS provides a comprehensive platform for statistical analysis, ensuring the reliability and validity of the research findings.
- The chi-square test is particularly useful for examining the relationship between categorical variables, making it an appropriate tool for evaluating the objectives set against the formulated hypotheses.
- This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how career management skills development impacts professional success and satisfies individual needs in this domain.

By focusing on the objectives that directly relate to the research hypotheses, the study aims to:

- Assess whether a formal framework for career management skills development exists in the target country and its implementation within the educational system.
- Evaluate the participants' level of knowledge regarding career management and identify the competencies deemed relevant in this context.
- Determine if these identified competencies are incorporated into the participants' education system and if activities promoting these competencies are being conducted.

The research hypotheses are designed to test the impact and effectiveness of career management skills development:

Hypothesis 1: The development of career management skills positively affects professional success.

Hypothesis 2: The provision of specialized programs and resources in career management meets the needs and requirements of individuals in this area.

The methodology, including the collection of data through a questionnaire and its subsequent analysis using SPSS and the chi-square test, serves multiple purposes:

- It ensures that the research objectives are directly aligned with testing the formulated hypotheses, providing a clear path to evaluating the study's aims.
- By analysing the data from 257 students, the research can offer detailed insights into the current landscape of career management needs among young professionals and students.
- The statistical analysis provides evidence-based conclusions on the effectiveness of career management programs and resources, supporting or refuting the research hypotheses with empirical data.

This methodological approach enhances the study's ability to provide actionable insights into the development of career management competencies, the role of specialized programs and resources, and their impact on individuals' professional success and satisfaction. Through this research, the study aims to contribute valuable knowledge to the field of career management and education, offering guidance for future initiatives and programs designed to support individuals in navigating their professional paths successfully.

## Results

By applying the chi-square test through SPSS, this study has meticulously analysed responses to the first five questions of the questionnaire, shedding light on the perspectives and experiences of 257 participants regarding official frameworks, sector involvement, educational system implementations, knowledge levels, and requisite skills for career management.

### 1. Official Framework for Career Management Skills Development

The findings indicate a mixed awareness and acknowledgment of an official framework for career management skills development within the country. While nearly half of the respondents (49.1%) affirm the existence of such a framework, a significant portion (45.6%) is unsure, pointing to a gap in communication or accessibility to this information. This variance in responses underscores the need for clearer dissemination of information regarding career management resources and frameworks.

## 2. Sector Utilization of Career Management Activities

The data reveal that career management activities span various sectors, with a notable emphasis on the educational sector, including “School” (17.5%) and “University” (64.9%) sectors. This indicates a significant focus on developing career management competencies within the educational framework, suggesting that institutions of learning are pivotal in equipping students with necessary career management skills. The inclusion of other sectors like “Public Employment Service” (21.1%) and “Adult Education” (19.3%) highlights the broader applicability and necessity of career management activities beyond traditional educational settings.

## 3. Implementation of Career Management Skills Activities in the Educational System

A substantial majority of respondents (61.4%) acknowledge the implementation of career management activities within the educational system, suggesting an active effort to integrate career management into educational curricula. However, the fact that 19.3% of participants are either unaware of such activities or believe they are not implemented indicates potential areas for improvement in program visibility and accessibility.

## 4. Knowledge Level Regarding Career Management

The assessment of respondents’ self-reported knowledge levels reveals a broad spectrum of familiarity with career management, from very low to high. The distribution of responses suggests a diverse understanding and engagement with career management principles among participants, emphasizing the need for targeted educational efforts to enhance awareness and knowledge across the student body.

## 5. Skills Deemed Important in Career Management

Participants highlight several key skills essential for effective career management, including self-image development, work-life balance, adaptability, self-awareness, and support building for career choices. These responses point to a comprehensive view of career management that extends beyond mere job-seeking strategies to encompass personal development, emotional intelligence, and continuous learning.

The results from question one to five underscore the significance of career management skills development as a multifaceted endeavour that is recognized and valued across different sectors, particularly within the educational system. The varied awareness of official frameworks and the diverse assessment of personal knowledge levels indicate both the successes and challenges in current career management education and support structures. The identification of essential skills for career management reflects a holistic understanding of the competencies needed to navigate today’s dynamic job market, emphasizing the importance of personal development, adaptability, and lifelong learning in achieving career success.

These findings lay the groundwork for further analysis and discussions regarding the remaining questionnaire items. They also provide a basis for evaluating the research hypotheses concerning the positive impact of career management skills development on professional success and the adequacy of specialized programs and resources in meeting individual career management needs.

## 6. Implementation of Career Management Skills in Education

The findings reveal that a majority (57.9%) of respondents acknowledge the implementation of career management competencies within their education system, indicating active efforts

to foster these skills among students. However, the presence of respondents who are either unaware of such initiatives (24.6%) or believe they are not implemented (17.5%) suggests a need for increased visibility and communication of these educational efforts.

#### 7. Activities Promoting Career Management Competencies

The data presents a balanced view on the existence of activities aimed at promoting career management skills, with 49.1% of respondents affirming their presence. This suggests a concerted effort within certain educational settings to enhance career management competencies through various programs and initiatives. However, an equal percentage of respondents (50.9%) perceive a lack of such activities, indicating potential gaps in program implementation or awareness.

#### 8. Preferred Activities for Competency Development

Respondents highlighted several key activities they utilize for developing career management skills:

- Maintaining a positive self-image and adapting behavior to fit various contexts were both cited by 47.4% of participants as crucial for career competency development.
- Making appropriate career decisions was identified by 50.9% of respondents as a primary activity for skill enhancement.
- Maintaining confidence, resilience, and a learning attitude in challenging situations was mentioned by 49.1% of participants.
- Understanding the interplay between personal, professional, community, and societal interactions was noted by 22.1% of respondents.

These findings underscore the importance of attitude, adaptability, informed decision-making, resilience, and self-awareness in career progression and management.

#### 9. Role in Supporting Skill Development

A significant portion of respondents (63%) do not identify with a specific role in supporting the development of career management skills, indicating a perceived division of responsibility among various stakeholders in the educational and career guidance ecosystem. However, a small segment of participants identifies as career guidance teachers (8.8%) or teachers of other subjects (8.8%), suggesting that educators across different disciplines contribute to the development of these competencies, albeit to a limited extent.

The questions six to nine underscore the essential role of the educational system in embedding career management skills and highlights the diverse range of activities employed by individuals to develop these competencies. The balanced distribution of responses regarding the promotion of these skills points to both the achievements and challenges within educational and professional settings in adequately supporting career development.

The acknowledgment of specific roles in supporting skill development, although limited, suggests a broader ecosystem involving educators, career counsellors, and external resources, contributing to the cultivation of career management abilities. This multifaceted approach to career skill development emphasizes the need for a collaborative effort to enhance the visibility and effectiveness of career management programs and initiatives.

These insights provide a basis for further exploration into the remaining aspects of the questionnaire, aiming to deepen the understanding of how career management competencies are



developed, promoted, and supported across different sectors and by various actors within the educational system and beyond. This examination is crucial for validating the research hypotheses and for contributing to the development of more integrated and effective career management strategies.

From question ten, the focus shifts to how career management activities are delivered within the learning process, the desire for further training in providing career management programs, the necessary training resources to support career management skills development, and the perceived value of these skills among respondents. This analysis aims to deepen our understanding of the practical application and significance of career management competencies in professional development.

#### 10. Delivery Methods of Career Management Activities in the Learning Process

The data reveals a diverse approach to delivering career management activities, with 38.6% of respondents engaging in extracurricular activities, 49.1% relying on self-learning processes, and 21.1% participating in specific career management lessons. This diversity highlights the importance of a multifaceted approach to career management education, allowing individuals to choose methods that best fit their needs and preferences. The emphasis on self-learning and extracurricular activities suggests a proactive engagement by students in shaping their career paths beyond the traditional curriculum.

#### 11. Desire for Additional Training in Career Management Program Delivery

A significant majority (70.2%) express a desire for further training to enhance their ability to deliver effective career management programs, underscoring the recognition of continuous professional development as key to improving career management skills. This strong interest in further training indicates a widespread acknowledgment of the complexities involved in career management and a commitment to acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate this domain effectively.

#### 12. Training Resources Necessary for Supporting Career Management Skills Development

Respondents highlight the importance of competency-matching software (54.4%) and career databases/directories (52.6%) as essential training resources for supporting career management skills development. These preferences indicate a leaning towards digital and information-rich resources that offer personalized recommendations and access to comprehensive career information. The lesser importance placed on workbooks (24.6%) suggests a shift towards more interactive and technologically driven learning tools in career management education.

#### 13. Valuation of Career Management Skills

The valuation of career management skills is highly positive among respondents, with 47.4% rating these skills as extremely valuable (grade "5"). This high valuation reflects a broad recognition of the critical role that effective career management plays in achieving professional success and personal fulfilment. The responses indicate a strong awareness of the benefits associated with mastering career management competencies, including enhanced employability, career progression, and personal growth.

This final part of the results chapter illuminates the varied approaches to career management education, the strong desire for further professional development in this area, the preference for

technologically enabled learning resources, and the high valuation of career management skills among participants. The findings suggest that while there is a clear recognition of the value and importance of career management skills, there is also a call for more innovative and accessible training resources to support their development. The expressed desire for additional training and the specific resources deemed necessary for skill development highlight the need for tailored educational programs and tools that can effectively address the diverse needs of learners in the field of career management.

Moreover, the data underscores the critical role of personal initiative and self-directed learning in acquiring career management skills, alongside the value of structured educational programs. As such, there is an evident need for a balanced approach that combines self-learning with formal education, leveraging digital resources and personalized learning experiences to equip individuals with the competencies required for successful career management.

These insights offer valuable implications for educators, career advisors, and policymakers in developing and implementing effective career management education strategies. By understanding the preferred learning modalities, desired training opportunities, and the high value attributed to career management skills, stakeholders can better support individuals in navigating their career paths and achieving their professional goals.

## Discussions

The analysis of data collected from respondents reveals a pronounced valuation of career management skills, highlighting their perceived importance for achieving professional objectives and career success. This discussion extends the initial observations, offering a deeper examination of the implications drawn from the presented results.

A significant majority of respondents recognize career management skills as crucial for navigating the complexities of the professional world. With over 75% rating these skills as highly valuable (4 or 5 out of 5), it's clear that effective career management is not merely a beneficial attribute but a necessity for professional advancement and success. This strong valuation underscores the consensus among participants regarding the critical role these competencies play in personal development and career progression.

The expressed desire by more than 70% of respondents for additional training or perfection in career management skills underscores a widespread acknowledgment of the continuous nature of professional development. This recognition reflects an awareness that enhancing career management competencies can lead to substantial benefits, including better career planning and progression. It highlights a proactive stance among individuals towards seeking opportunities for skill enhancement and professional growth.

The preference for specialized resources, such as competency-matching software and career databases/directories, by over 50% of respondents, points to a growing demand for tools and information that support the career management process. These resources are valued for their potential to facilitate decision-making and to provide structured guidance in navigating career paths. This indicates a shift towards leveraging technology and digital platforms to enhance

career planning and development efforts.

The minimal endorsement of workbooks as valuable resources for career management skill development suggests a broader preference for dynamic and interactive learning methods over traditional, static tools. This preference may reflect the evolving landscape of educational resources and the increasing accessibility of digital and personalized learning experiences that offer more relevance and engagement in the context of career management.

These conclusions highlight a clear recognition of the value of career management skills and a demand for targeted resources and training in this area. Respondents' preferences and needs present an opportunity for organizations and educational institutions to respond with relevant programs, tools, and information designed to support the development of career management competencies. By addressing this demand, these entities can play a pivotal role in facilitating individuals' professional success, offering programs that not only enhance career management skills but also align with the dynamic requirements of the modern workforce.

To effectively cater to these needs, a collaborative approach involving educators, career advisors, policymakers, and technology developers is essential (Adăscăliței, 2021). Together, they can develop and implement innovative solutions that integrate the latest technological advancements and educational methodologies. Such initiatives could range from online platforms offering personalized career guidance to workshops and seminars that focus on developing specific competencies required in various industries.

Ultimately, the insights from this research underscore the importance of a strategic focus on career management skills development as a fundamental component of lifelong learning. By investing in specialized resources and fostering a culture of continuous professional development, organizations and educational institutions can empower individuals to achieve their career aspirations and navigate the challenges of an ever-changing professional landscape. Training for the entire workforce engaged with diverse cultures is essential. Since 1986, scientific literature has emphasized that such training ought to encompass skill development, adaptation, and performance enhancement to navigate cultural differences effectively (Veith, 2020).

## **Conclusions**

Career management emerges as a pivotal element in the professional development and success of individuals. The empirical results of this research not only validate the critical role of career management skills highlighted in the literature review by authors such as Lemeni and Miclea (2010) but also reinforce the necessity of these competencies in navigating the modern business landscape, aligning with the theories of career adaptability and resilience discussed by Schein (1978) and the importance of continuous learning and self-improvement emphasized by Holland's career choice theory.

The overwhelmingly positive valuation of career management skills among respondents supports the first hypothesis that the development of these skills has a positive impact on professional success. This finding aligns with Lemeni and Miclea's (2010) discussion on the importance of adaptability and continuous learning in career development, suggesting that a solid

foundation in career management can prepare individuals to face challenges and deepen their understanding of the business world.

The empirical evidence indicating a strong desire for further training and the high valuation of digital resources for career management, such as competency-matching software and career databases, corroborates the second hypothesis. This reflects the theoretical perspectives offered by Holland, which emphasize the alignment of individual competencies with career opportunities. The preference for dynamic and interactive learning tools over traditional methods, such as workbooks, further illustrates the evolving nature of career development strategies and the critical role of technology in facilitating career planning and decision-making processes.

The findings that highlight the significance of extracurricular activities, self-learning processes, and specific career management lessons in the learning process resonate with Schein's (1978) theory of career anchors. They underline the necessity for educational institutions to provide diverse and flexible learning opportunities that cater to the varied needs and aspirations of students. This supports the idea that effective career management involves understanding and leveraging one's strengths, values, and preferences in making informed career choices and planning for future development.

In conclusion, career management is crucial for the professional growth and success of all students. By assessing competency levels, setting realistic and measurable career development objectives, and enhancing career management skills, students can lay a strong foundation for achieving their professional and personal aspirations in the business field. The research findings advocate for a comprehensive approach to career management education that includes offering specialized training programs, utilizing digital resources, and facilitating mentorship and networking opportunities.

Educational institutions are encouraged to respond to these needs by:

- Collaborating with industry professionals and organizations to provide practical learning experiences through internships and workshops.
- Leveraging online platforms and digital tools to offer up-to-date information and self-assessment capabilities for career planning.
- Establishing mentorship programs that connect students with experienced business professionals for guidance and support.

Furthermore, the importance of regular feedback collection and analysis cannot be overstated. By continually assessing the effectiveness of career management programs and adapting them based on student needs and industry trends, Universities can ensure that its students are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the business world and achieve their career goals.



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