

Sustainability of Final Year Projects of Diploma in Business Studies (DPM) Students Under the Innovation's Commerce Project (iComPro) Competition, Department of Commerce, Mersing Polytechnic

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Abstract. The Innovation's Commerce Project (iComPro) is a semesterly competition designed for final-semester students (semester 5) of the Diploma in Business Studies (DPM) programme at Mersing Polytechnic. It serves as an initiative to cultivate students' confidence and capability in producing innovative, technological, and creative products or services, developed from the start of the semester until its final week. This study involves the final-year projects of students from Session I 2023/2024, Session II 2023/2024, Session I 2024/2025 and Session II 2024/2025, comprising 22 students from semester 5 Programme Diploma in Business Studies, Department of Commerce. The purpose of this study is to assess the sustainability of students' final projects after completing the iComPro competition, to identify the success and failure factors in sustaining these projects beyond graduation, and to evaluate the impact of the iComPro competition on the continuity of students' projects. The data were collected and analysed qualitatively, using the Thematic Analysis and stored by the course coordinator. This study also identifies students who continue their final projects after graduation and provides opportunities for lecturers and institutions to guide and mentor students on how to commercialise their projects, thereby fostering resilient and sustainable young entrepreneurs. It is hoped that this study will provide recommendations to students, the Department of Commerce, and the institution regarding the factors contributing to why many students choose not to continue their final projects after participating in iComPro competition.

Keywords: Final year project, Sustainability, Entrepreneurial skills, Commercialization, Business project development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Innovation's Commerce Project (iComPro) is a competition that held every semester especially for the students who take the subject DPB50163 Business Project, where this subject must take by the students in Semester 5, Diploma in Business Studies (DPM) program. This competition is created to encourage students to produce a product or service that is innovative, creative, technology and besides that, it also hones the entrepreneurship skill among the students. The final year project is created along the Semester 5 students, start from the phase of planning, discussion with the supervisor, preparing the products or services also towards the phase of presentation at iComPro's competition.

The final year project is created by the students comes from various types of products such as example like website, furniture, foods, drinks, games for education, beauty products, health products, hardware products and many more. Students can create the products that is innovative also creative based from what they learnt from Semester 1 until Semester 5. The production of products or services for this student's final project was carried out throughout Semester 5 with the guidance of a supervisor, where each product was produced within a group, with 1 group consisting of 3 students. The final project presentation for students is held in the 13th week of each semester specifically for students to compete with the other groups to determine the winners for first, second, third places, best department project, best innovation project, and best commercial project. Each project presented by students must be linked to relevant

sustainability goals related to the projects they produced. These goals are necessary for the projects they created to ensure whether the projects developed by students can be continued after they graduated.

The final project that they presented is based on the creativity of each group, where each student project needs to highlight innovative features that are appropriate. In addition, their projects must also emphasize the concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), referring to development that meets current needs for industries as well as future generations, touching the aspects of entrepreneurship, economy, health, social issues, and the environment. Each project they develop must incorporate sustainability features according to the relevant pillars, indirectly supporting product or service innovations that benefit future generations and industry. Each project presented by each group will be evaluated by the invited judges composed of industry panels and academic panels, namely lecturers who have the expertise to assess student's final projects according to the required syllabus. According to the Student Project Implementation Guide Book (Diploma Program) of Malaysian Polytechnics, there are two (2) types of projects: project based on products of innovations and project based on research-based project. Most projects that students choose in projects based on products, meaning that they are more inclined to create or improve existing products and services in the market.

1.1 Problem Statement

Students often develop Real Type Projects (*Projek Jenis Nyata*), meaning they prefer to focus on products that are in the form of food, beverages, design products, health products, beauty products, educational materials, and hardware products. Students always think that these types of products are easy to develop and are associated with the Sustainable Development Goals according to the objectives of their relevant projects. However, there are several factors in the process that prevent students from producing creative and innovative projects. Factors such as lack of models, time constraints, and post-competition support have created barriers to the sustainability of students' final projects. Most students face difficulties in continuing their final projects after presenting them in front of judges. This is because they are quite busy with the other matters, such as focusing on preparations for Industrial Training in Semester 6. Students successfully developed their final projects during the competition when iComPro was held because at that time they received support from supervisors, encouragement from lecturers, and group members indirectly motivated them to win. However, after iComPro ends, the supports they always need, such as supervisor guidance, model financing, marketing space, and support from group members, are no longer available or are limited. Indirectly, this has caused students not to want to continue their final projects to the next stage. When this happens, it has harmed both the students and the institution because their projects had the potential to remain sustainable in the future. Therefore, this study was conducted to gain a broader understanding of the factors that support and hinder the continuity of students' final projects after the end of iComPro. Only a few projects continued to enter competitions outside the institution after iComPro, but these projects also came to a halt due to certain factors that will be discussed in this study.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study is conducted with the aim of identifying the factors of sustainability of the final projects of students among Semester 5 students of the Diploma in Business Studies (DPM) program at the Department of Commerce, Mersing Polytechnic, Johor. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- i) To identify the factors that support the sustainability of the final projects of Semester 5 students of the Diploma in Business Studies (DPM) program.
- ii) To analyze the challenges faced by students in continuing their final projects after the iComPro has ended.
- iii) To assess the impact of the iComPro competition on the sustainability of students' final projects.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Context of the final student project based on entrepreneurship and sustainability

Sustainability in a student's final project is a goal that is often mentioned by industry, institutions, and government at all times. However, measuring how an organization possesses sustainability characteristics in guiding student projects to maintain those projects is a challenge that needs to be addressed (Timothy F. S & Tanya J. H, 2011). The

institution, especially Mersing Polytechnic Johor, should have the skills and expertise to sustain students' final projects by supporting their projects, such as providing motivation and financial assistance, especially since most students do not want to continue their projects due to a lack of financial support. Aspects such as financial assistance are one of the important factors for students because they develop their final projects based on models created by the group members themselves, and each of them sometimes needs to produce quite a number of models that are beyond their capability. In addition to the financial assistance needed, students also need to reassess the sustainability of a project's ability to continue after the end of iComPro, which touches on economic, social, and environmental values. Indirectly, this relates to the Triple Bottom Line (TBL: Profit-People-Planet) framework, which is often associated with the sustainability dimensions of student projects in higher education institutions and for the business industry, leading to decisions on whether a project should be continued, incubated, or terminated.

Benefits, humans, and the environment are traditional frameworks often applied in most products and services in the market. These 3Ps elements (Profit-People-Planet) are often applied in student projects by supervisors, where with the presence of these 3Ps, students can either maintain their products in the market by preserving economic, social values, and producing environmentally friendly products (Timothy F. S & Tanya J. H, 2011). Every time students develop their final projects, supervisors will ask whether their projects can be commercialized in the market to make a profit if they wish to continue their projects after the iComPro competition has been held. Additionally, students have also been educated to incorporate elements that produce products that do not harm the environment, especially ecological health, which refers to the levels of balance, stability, and resilience of an ecosystem such as protecting forests, rivers, and oceans from pollution to support human, animal, and plant life.

The fundamentals of entrepreneurship have been instilled in students as early as the 3rd semester where they are taught how to manage businesses digitally. Throughout their learning process from semester 1 to semester 5, they learn how to manage a business consisting of subjects such as marketing, management, accounting, mathematics, supply chain management, human resource management, and various other subjects that they need to study to strengthen their understanding in order to become successful entrepreneurs. The students have also been given the opportunity to carry out buying and selling processes through the subject of Digital Entrepreneurship where they conducted online transactions in the 3rd semester. With the presence of such subjects, it indirectly encourages students to identify the factors that drive them to become the best entrepreneurs, in addition to thinking about how to sustain their final projects after graduation. Students need to be smart in seeking opportunities available in the market, whether collaborating with alumni entrepreneurs from Mersing Polytechnic to continue their final projects, which can also bring the profits they desire. The main goal of strengthening sustainable business strategies is to create a positive impact on the environment, society, or both, while also benefiting the company's shareholders (M. Kelsey, 2020). Companies in the industry are mostly aware of the importance of sustainability in their business strategies as well as identifying challenges to achieve company success. The iComPro competition is judged by a panel of industry judges from various companies, and it would be a waste if students do not seize this opportunity to communicate with the judges to grab the chance to collaborate with companies that prioritize Sustainable Development Goals in their products. Thus, students can practice the entrepreneurship they have learned from semester 1 to semester 5 to relate how to gain sufficient profits when they collaborate with appropriate companies during the iComPro competition. The companies invited to be judges at the iComPro competition include some who are willing to provide guidance, encouragement, and some are even willing to purchase the students' final products if those products can positively impact society and future generations.

2.2 *The Role of the Student Project Innovation Competition*

The Student Final Project Competition (iComPro) plays an important role among students and institutions because it produces students who are entrepreneurial, creative, innovative, and ready to continue the sustainability of their final projects after competing. However, in this competition pattern, most students do not wish to continue their final projects after competing due to specific factors. Competitions like iComPro are beneficial for student learning development, especially for fifth-semester students, as they prepare students for the real business world and help identify their ability to produce sustainable products. Furthermore, participation in competitions like iComPro has opened the eyes of students to the importance of registering patents for their projects and ideas to prevent them from being plagiarized by others, fostering leadership values, entrepreneurial values, and enhancing communication with the industry. However, the continuation of their projects depends on the support students receive post-competition, whether it comes from supervisor support, funding, or incubation. Competitions like iComPro should inspire students

to maintain the sustainability of their projects after the competition, not just to complete a final project solely for a desired grade but to continue the project afterward.

The involvement of students in innovation and entrepreneurship competitions is one effective step for the students. This is because through innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, it can focus on the education that innovation is a good tool to encourage students to be more enthusiastic in generating new ideas and products, honing their technical skills, design, teamwork, good communication methods, and also fostering leadership qualities among students (Adamczyk, Bullinger, & Moslein, 2012). With the involvement of students entering innovation competitions, whether within the Department of Commerce or outside of Politeknik Mersing Johor, it indirectly opens the eyes of the industry that polytechnic students are capable of producing products and services that meet the needs of the present generation and support the sustainability of projects so that their projects can not only compete in any competition but also can endure in the future. This final project involves at least 3 or 4 students in a group where there will be 1 leader among them who acts as the group representative to lead their peers. When students frequently engage in innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, it can produce student leaders who learn how to manage technical work, how to handle group members' emotions, radiate high self-confidence as they are involved with the industry during competitions (Yue, Y., Chen, S., & Wang, Q, 2024). This way, students know whether their final project presented in any innovation and entrepreneurship competition has the sustainability to carry on the project to the next level, especially after they graduate or finish their studies. Frequent exposure to competitions can also make students think maturely and analyze the factors that often cause a project to fail and not continue after students have completed their studies.

2.3 *Dimensions of Competency and Sustainable Awareness*

The final projects presented by students during the iComPro competition are the result of the learning they have undertaken from semester 1 to semester 5, where students are exposed to the Sustainable Development Goals of a project. They have been instilled by their supervisors that each final project created must incorporate several characteristics of the Sustainable Development Goals, which consist of 17 goals. Students' final projects need to think about ways to contribute to the generation, to society, environmental care, and other lives on this earth. Awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals is important and must be incorporated into the education system of higher institutions as it can expand knowledge among students, not just producing products according to syllabus requirements but also considering how their products can contribute to others and can be continued after they graduate (Kalsoom, Q., & Khanam, A., 2017). When students emphasize sustainability competency and awareness in their final projects, it indirectly contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals and also focuses on how their final projects can have a long-term and short-term impact on sustainable practices among students. There are opinions stating that students studying sustainability courses can enhance awareness of sustainability issues (Nousheen et al., 2020; Novo-Corti et al., 2018) which can lead to a positive impact as well as knowledge regarding the sustainability of the resilience of a product. Among the issues often raised in sustainability are how a student's final project can endure for a long time so that students have the opportunity to continue the project which indirectly preserves the Sustainable Development Goals, thereby impacting the community's awareness of sustainability.

Competence consists of several aspects that can be instilled in students, such as opportunities for appreciation, creativity, resilience, and networking. Students can be educated to identify the causes and problems or needs required by the community by producing products that can solve societal issues and indirectly create opportunities to continue projects into future profits. Students need to intelligently incorporate elements of creativity in generating new ideas and producing flexible products that are easily accepted by customers while also applying sustainability awareness. Additionally, entrepreneurial competence is an important role that needs to be instilled in students of the Department of Commerce as they are business students learning how to establish businesses that successfully attract customer attention. Entrepreneurial competence is also crucial in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly as it supports integrated development encompassing aspects of the economy, social issues, the environment, innovation, health, and others (Rashid, L. 2019).

One of the factors that causes a project to develop and continue after students graduate is the sustainable development of a project, which is education that provides extensive job opportunities for students. It also helps shape students' behavior to utilize their skills in a productive manner, namely by executing the sales of their final project products and boosting the country's economy (Badea et al., 2020; Eustachio et al., 2024). Polytechnic students are the

country's hopes for the future, as after they complete their studies, they will be prepared to hold key positions in various industrial sectors within society. If students know how to find job opportunities by continuing their final projects, it is a sound decision that has a positive impact on environmental, social issues, and also enhances the economy in line with the principles of sustainability. Therefore, it is important for students to have knowledge and education about the Sustainable Development Goals integrated into one of the curricula, namely Green Technology Compliance, where students learn green elements when executing their final projects. Knowledge about sustainable development helps students make beneficial decisions for the environment, society, and the economy as well, and students will educate themselves to be more responsible in fulfilling the given tasks, which is to ensure that their final projects continue after graduation (Vargas-Merino et al., 2024).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The method used in this study is qualitative, specifically through a case study design, which was chosen because it provides the opportunity for researchers to explore phenomena in depth within real contexts. For this study, the phenomenon being examined is the sustainability of final year projects by students of the Diploma in Business Studies Program (DPM) after the students have participated in the iComPro competition held every semester, where students compete with their classmates to see which final project has the potential to win the awarded prizes. The data for this study was also obtained from the final project reports submitted by the students at the end of the semester. A qualitative approach was used for this study because it is simple, quick, and suitable as it allows supervisors to delve deeper into the sustainability of the students' final projects through their own perspectives.

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

A total of 6 groups of final year projects consisting of 22 semester 5 students from the Diploma in Business Studies program participated in the iComPro competition organized by the Department of Commerce. The sessions involved are Session I 2023/2024, Session II 2023/2024, Session I 2024/2025, and Session II 2024/2025, where each group has at least 3 or 4 group members. In addition to the students, there are 3 supervisors involved in guiding the students throughout the sessions to produce their final projects.

3.3 Study Materials Used

Throughout the iComPro competition held at the Department of Commerce, Mersing Polytechnic every semester, supervisors and the involved groups are requested to obtain feedback regarding the factors that influence the sustainability of students' final projects, which affects whether students will continue their final projects after the competition or not. The main instrument for this study is based on a semi-structured interview guideline for supervisors and group members involved. The questions posed to the study sample are open-ended questions, allowing flexibility for respondents to express their own opinions when answering the questions and to discuss in more depth.

3.4 Data Collection Method

The method used to collect qualitative data is through semi-structured interviews with project supervisors and student groups involved in the iComPro competition from year 2023 until early 2025. One of the purpose of using semi-structured questions is to facilitate respondents in answering the questions given more openly; they can also share experiences, challenges, suggestions and identify planned and unplanned sustainability elements involved in the students' final project. Table 1 below shows examples of questions posed to the supervisors and also the students involved during the iComPro competition session.

Table 1: Questions raised during the iComPro competition

Number	Questions
1.	What are the factors that help you to develop this student final project?
2.	In your opinion, what challenges did you face during the process of developing the final project?
3.	What challenges do you face in maintaining this final project after the iComPro competition ends?
4.	Do you feel that support from Mersing Polytechnic is important in ensuring the continuity of the students' final projects?
5.	Are you excited to participated in any external competitions after the iComPro competition?
6.	In your opinion, is it important to incorporate the elements of Sustainable Development Goals into students' final projects? If so, please state your reasons.
7.	Do you plan to continue this final project as a business venture after graduation? If not, please state your reasons.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis process should be conducted in a more systematic way so that this study can address the objectives stated at the beginning of the study. For this study, the data analysis technique involved is Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the analyses that is suitable for studies that implement qualitative data collection methods. This qualitative data collection is carried out in various ways, among them structured interviews with respondents. This thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze, and also extract patterns of ideas from the data obtained through the interviews with respondents through observation notes or relevant documents. This thematic analysis also involves several processes that will help researchers identify key issues, challenges, and respondents' views towards the iComPro competition regarding the sustainability of student final projects. By using this thematic analysis, researchers can repeatedly read the answers provided by respondents through interviews and the results of observations as well as notes. Additionally, it can also assist in organizing findings from interviews with respondents in the form of tables, narratives, or conceptual models. This thematic analysis method is also more flexible as it can be used in various fields such as education, health, business, social sciences, and others. This method is easier for researchers and can provide a deep understanding of the main topic highlighted in this research paper.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the data collected from the year 2023 to early 2025, Table 2 presents the answers provided by the respondents as well as their views and opinions regarding the main topic of this research.

Table 2: Thematic Table

Main Thematic Questions	Sub-Thematic	Respondent's answer
1. What are the factors that help you to develop this student final project?	The need for courses, interests, and the desire to solve problems faced in the market.	<i>“One of the factors that influenced us to create our group product, which is multifunctional furniture that can be used for ironing clothes, storing clothes, and can be folded, is because in the dormitory, we have no multifunctional furniture like this. We created this furniture to solve the problems of students living in dormitories who need a lot of space to store their belongings. Our product is also suitable for customers living in small houses who need multifunctional furniture to store various items.” (R1)</i>

		<p>“Our group created this product that we have developed, which is a website to facilitate the process of picking up items or parcels from kiosks because we are interested in the digitalization system that needs to be implemented in all aspects of life.” (R2)</p>
2. In your opinion, what challenges did you face during the process of developing the final project?	Lack of skills, lack of models especially facing financial issues, lack of time.	<p>“Our group is interested in systems and websites, but we face a lack of skills in terms of how to develop a website. As students of the Department of Commerce, we do not have in-depth skills on how to develop a website. This has caused us to have to hire experts to realize the product we want.” (R3)</p>
3. What challenges do you face in maintaining this final project after the iComPro competition ends?		<p>“Our main challenge is money. We don't have enough money, and our model is also going out individually. Each group member has to contribute money, with a maximum of RM50 that we can spend.” (R4)</p>
		<p>“We also do not have enough time if we want to continue this final project of ours. Because after iComPro, we will be busy with the Industrial Training.” (R5)</p>
		<p>“It's difficult for us to balance with other tasks, that's why we have no intention of continuing this project after iComPro” (R6)</p>
4. Do you feel that support from Mersing Polytechnic is important in ensuring the continuity of the students' final projects?	Support in terms of guidance, finance, motivation, opportunities.	<p>“I feel that the main support is money, because there are many models that we are willing to continue our project.” (R7)</p>
		<p>“If possible, we would like to know how you plan to collaborate with the industry because the judges who came to judge us are interested in collaborating with the products we produce, but we need support from the supervisor.” (R8)</p>
		<p>“Our supervisor has informed us about how to enter the competition, we are interested and thank God we have won an award from an external competition besides iComPro that we entered, thanks to the guidance of our supervisor and also the Polytechnic.” (R9)</p>
		<p>“For me, it is very important. Because we often, after finishing iComPro, really have no intention to continue or pursue our project because we are afraid, we won't be able in terms of time and money. If the polytechnic can help us in various ways, especially financially, we might consider whether to continue our project or not.” (R10)</p>
5. Are you excited to participated in any external competitions after the iComPro competition?	Motivation for recognition, achievement, internal support, challenges.	<p>“We are not interested because we feel we have fully committed to iComPro and we are not interested in participating in any competitions outside of iComPro..” (R11)</p>
		<p>“Outside competition? We are also interested in participating because we want to know if our project's sustainability can compete with projects from other Polytechnics.” (R12)</p>

		<p><i>“If given the opportunity, we want to try. Because we want to gain appreciation from external parties, but that's the main problem of our money. Because if we want to compete externally, we definitely need to improve our products again after iComPro according to what the judges have commented on our products.” (R13)</i></p>
6 In your opinion, is it important to incorporate the elements of Sustainable Development Goals into students' final projects? If so, please state your reasons.	Sustainable development goals.	<p><i>“It is important for students to specify which SDGs are part of our final project because we will understand how our project can contribute to the community, health, the environment, and others.” (R14)</i></p> <p><i>“It's very important. Our supervisor always emphasizes this SDG chapter. Besides, we have indeed learned, so if we don't apply what we've learned, it would be a waste.” (R15)</i></p> <p><i>“Our supervisor has a message that if we all have the desire to participate in external competitions besides iComPro, it is important for us to apply SDG values in our projects. Because sometimes, external competitions do recognize projects that emphasize these SDG values.” (R16)</i></p> <p><i>“We feel that it is necessary to apply sustainable development in our project. Because what we know, the scoring rubric for our project includes testing the sustainability of the project. In addition, we also need to focus on producing products that can save the Earth while at the same time trying to provide job opportunities from the results of our product production.” (R17)</i></p>
7. Do you plan to continue this final project as a business venture after graduation? If not, please state your reasons.	Interest, motivation to do business, support, other commitment, risks, confidence.	<p><i>“In our opinion, we do not want to continue with our final project anymore. There are many reasons. Among them are, we lack models, funding, and we do not feel we have the time to continue this project. Because after iComPro, we will be busy with Industrial Training.” (R18)</i></p> <p><i>“No. We do not intend to continue our project. We just want to focus on industrial training for now.” (R19)</i></p> <p><i>“Maybe yes, because we see our product can collaborate with other groups. But our constraints might be money, and time as well, but if we have enough models, we might try to continue this project.” (R20)</i></p> <p><i>“We don't want to continue because we are worried about our self-confidence. The supervisor has offered support to continue, but sometimes we feel that the products out there are better than ours.” (R21)</i></p> <p><i>“No. We do not want to continue our project. Because we feel we are tired of working on the project for iComPro and now we want to focus on our other commitments which is industrial training.” (R22)</i></p>

5. DISCUSSIONS

Referring to the results of interviews conducted with respondents, particularly fifth semester students of the Diploma in Business Studies program from 2023 to mid-2025, the study found that among the factors supporting students in producing their final projects is that students observe the problems faced, especially around Mersing Polytechnic, which encourages them to think of ideas for their final projects. Through the interview process with

Respondent 1, they created a product for the final project because they found that students living in the dormitory had limited storage space and needed multifunctional furniture. This has shown that students are aware of the Sustainable Development Goals, where products are created to facilitate the community by providing new innovative products in the market. Referring to Respondent 2, students created the product because they were thinking of an easy way for the institution to manage the collection of packages or parcels using a manual method, which involved writing in a logbook when taking packages or parcel. This method has educated students to learn new things where they need to learn something outside their skills and create a simple system for collecting packages at kiosks, which can also indirectly facilitate the institution in managing packages at kiosks.

The students also mentioned the challenges they faced while developing this final project. One of the most significant challenges is the lack of strong financial support, which limits their skills to produce the products they want to create, based on Respondent 3. Some students need to use expensive project materials and require expert assistance to help them create their projects. Therefore, they need many models, but due to existing constraints, they are limited in producing the outputs they planned. Some groups are creating websites for their final projects. However, due to the high cost of the models needed to create websites, they had to hire expertise to assist them and learn together to build the websites, thus their final projects are limited to what they can currently achieve. Some features of their products may not be realized, which has led students to not want to continue their final projects. This indirectly limits students from expanding their ideas because most students have interesting concepts, but due to the lack of models, specifically financial resources, they have to execute their final projects based on what they have. Students need financial assistance to continue their final projects, and even possibly after iComPro ends, they still need to raise enough money to ensure they can continue their projects, allowing them to venture into entrepreneurship by selling their projects in the market.

Through the interview with Respondent 8, students believe that institutions play an important role in maintaining the sustainability of a student's final project. One way to sustain the final project is to provide guidance to them before, during, and after the iComPro competition takes place, especially after the iComPro event. This is important because with support from Mersing Polytechnic in particular, students will be motivated to continue their final projects, especially if they receive good guidance from supervisors. Some students are eager to learn how to collaborate with the industry as they want to showcase their projects to interested companies, which can create business opportunities and foster an entrepreneurial spirit among students.

Through Respondent 13, students expressed interest in participating in other competitions aside from the iComPro competition because they want to test whether their final project has sustainability when competing with external parties. The students are eager to participate in competitions outside the institution because they feel that such programs can provide the recognition, they need to further strengthen their reasons if they wish to continue their projects after the iComPro competition. Furthermore, when students have recognition from external parties besides Mersing Polytechnic, it can also give them confidence that they have produced a product that addresses several Sustainable Development Goals useful for society. Through interviews with Respondent 14, students are aware that one factor that can contribute to the sustainability of students' final projects is by integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into their projects. This is because they learn about the Sustainable Development Goals and it is important to ensure that the final project they create is not just for the sake of curriculum requirements, but students also need to know how their final project can contribute to society, the economy, the environment, health, and other lives on this earth.

In addition, most students do not have the desire to continue their final projects after the iComPro competition ends. This is caused by many factors that arise, and one of the main reasons is that they feel they do not have sufficient budget to continue with the final project. Based on Respondent 4, students need to contribute their own financial model, with each group member contributing a minimum of RM50 to purchase necessary items to complete their final project. Some students do not have enough money, and some are limited in producing the projects they desire due to financial constraints. Students also do not want to continue their final projects because they feel there is not enough time to focus on their final projects after iComPro. Students need to focus on Industrial Training where they will enter their dream job opportunities, which makes it difficult for them to fully commit to continuing this final project, as mentioned in an interview with Respondent 22. However, according to Respondent 20, they want to continue their final project because they have identified the group that competed with them during iComPro, and they wish to collaborate with that group to create a more sustainable product that can indirectly continue the legacy towards entrepreneurship.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the main findings from the interviews conducted with 22 semester 5 students of the Diploma in Business Studies Program show that most of them do not wish to continue their final projects after the iComPro competition. It is evident that the primary factor in maintaining the sustainability of students' final projects is the issue of a lack of models, namely financial constraints. Students need to produce their own models during the process of creating their final projects, which has placed a burden on them. Some students also mentioned that they cannot provide models beyond their capabilities, and sometimes they have to search for materials or tools that suit their models, even though the projects they wish to develop require high-cost raw materials. When students face issues such as a lack of models, it can stifle their desire to continue their final projects after the iComPro competition. It is crucial for the institution to assist students, especially financially, as not all students can maintain the sustainability of their final projects, given that most come from low-income families and many do not have a steady income.

From the interviews with the students, the final projects they produced have the sustainability features required by the industry. However, there are other factors that cause students not to want to continue their final projects. In addition to the lack of funds, students also have the mindset that their final projects are created merely to reach the iComPro stage. They do not plan or are interested in advancing the project to the next level. The Mersing Polytechnic, in particular, could motivate and inspire students that their final projects can be continued if they are interested in turning their projects into job opportunities so that they can benefit from their efforts. Competitions like iComPro provide space and opportunities for students to continue their final projects after competing because students have the chance to communicate with judges from the industry. Indirectly, students' final projects can be continued after iComPro, but they need strong support from supervisors and Mersing Polytechnic by encouraging students to attempt to enter competitions outside the institution. The success of a project depends on the spirit shown by students in producing their final projects. If they rely solely on 100% assistance from supervisors and the institution, it does not help the sustainability of their final projects. Therefore, it is also important for students themselves to have diligence, confidence, and strong enthusiasm in maintaining the sustainability of their final projects after the iComPro competition.

As a suggestion to maintain the sustainability of student final projects, if students are interested in continuing their projects after the iComPro competition, it is important for them to learn skills other than what they have learned in class. If they lack skills, for example in web development systems, they could seek help from lecturers in the Department of Information Technology to learn a little about how to create a simple website. Besides support from lecturers, institutions, supervisors, and group friends, students themselves need to have an interest in continuing the sustainability of their final projects. Without interest, no matter how great their final project is, it will ultimately not be continued just because they feel that the project was created solely to fulfill the curriculum requirements.

Overall, this study indicates that this student's final project is not just to fulfill the required syllabus criteria. Instead, it is also a platform for students to communicate with industry to seek opportunities so that they can maintain the sustainability of the final student project by creating entrepreneurial opportunities based on their project ideas. It can also serve as a medium to show that the final student projects can also produce projects that prioritize sustainability for society, the economy, and the environment.

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