

# VOCATIONAL SKILLS AND TRAINING IN HIGHER TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EDUCATION IN EGYPT: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

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## ABSTRACT

Preparing students for the realities of earning a living is the main responsibility of the education system. However, a significant mismatch in skills youth possess and the skills workplace need is highly reported in tourism and hospitality industry. Therefore, this paper examines the Egyptian higher tourism and hospitality education and training system and its structure in relation to vocational skills in order to identify whether there is a need for restructuring and development. The paper draws from different approaches to provide an analytical framework of vocational skills and training systems, therefore, both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed. First, the current situation is outlined through analyzing the curriculums' data derived from the standards regulations set by the Egyptian faculties of tourism and hotels. A checklist also was conducted in order to capture the strength and weaknesses relating to the curriculums and training system. Then, an evaluation questionnaire is directed to the students affiliated in ten faculties in order to measure their perceptions and views. It was revealed in the study that hospitality and tourism programs in relation to vocational skills and training in Egypt is facing a lot of issues and challenges such as marginalized attention and scattering of resources, etc. Finally, the implications are also discussed.

**Keywords:** *Tourism and Hospitality Education, Curriculum, Vocational Skills, Tourism Training, Egypt*

## INTRODUCTION

In many countries, tourism creates a multiplier effect in economy and provides numerous job opportunities. In the same line and in recent years, creation of a skilled labor force has been a challenge in many countries, where there is a growing demand for a skilled labor force which has remained unfulfilled (Morsy, Ahmed & Ali, 2016). All recruiters are expecting to employ graduates who are already well educated and qualified (Yorke & Knight, 2004; Alharthi *et al.*, 2019). Tourism education has a vital aid role to play with respect to the industry improvement, since quality depends to a vital degree on employees' qualifications and skills (Haywood, 1989; Qoura & Khalifa, 2016). As a result of the continuous development and promising prospect of the industry, tourism and hospitality education grew from a small unit under traditional disciple to a separate and independent faculty in a comprehensive university and schools. Many educational institutions all around the world offer varied courses to cover different aspects of travel and tourism. Different programs, ranging from the certificate level to postgraduate level, were rapidly developed (Shen, Luo & Lam, 2015). However,

tourism educational programs focus more on formal educational qualifications, degrees and certificates and fail to understand that potential industry recruiters are increasingly giving attention to vocational skills, such as management skills, communication, analysis, ethics, service operations, food handlings and competencies aligned with the requirements of the tourism industry (Batra, 2016; Khalifa, 2015). In this regard, Ladkin (2005) claimed that less than 20% of employees in tourism organizations/companies are graduated from tourism and hospitality faculties because of their limited skills.

Vocational education is designed to provide students with skills and competences specific to a class of occupations or trades (OECD, 2015) and the ability to work with and serve international customers. While, training is a set of activities organized in adequate environment as a complementary part of vocational education which aims to quality professional adequacy to the trainee through transforming theoretical knowledge into practical and professional skills that are required for certain types of jobs (Kotsikis, 2007). Therefore, vocational education and training system

aims to equip individuals with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or qualifications required occupations or more broadly on the labor market. According to Ellis (2003), the obvious advantages of a vocational curriculum are as follows:

- It provides instruction for many different fields that require technical skills beside academic knowledge,
- It allows students to pay a great focus on training, and
- It provides flexible programs available from a variety of reality sources (Ellis, 2003).

Subsequently, curriculums must be developed and tailored in line with the qualifications and skills needed and that are appreciated by the employers (Agwa, Aziz & Khalifa, 2018a, 2018b). According to UNESCO (2009), curriculum can be defined as the organization of learning sequences with the aim of producing specific, intended learning outcomes, whereas curriculum development is a set of procedures aimed at introducing planned changes in search of better enhancements.

Identifying and recording the structure of the Egyptian high tourism education system and analyzing the tourism and hospitality education in relation to vocational skills and training is the aim of this study, in addition to assessing strengths and exploring weaknesses and reviewing the conditions structure under which educational systems best work.

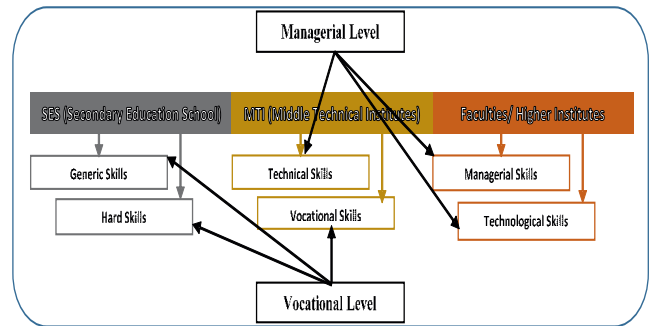
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Higher Tourism and Hospitality Education in Egypt**

In Egypt, the higher education and its various educational institutions are undergoing radical transformation with the increase and rapid global changes in competition that have altered the environment of education and its objectives, outputs and activities (Agwa, Aziz & Khalifa, 2018a, 2018b). Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE) is one of the types of higher education, which has been paid an interest in the world and Egypt in recent times. Tourism education in Egypt, as in most other countries, is provided by several state and private-sector bodies at the secondary, post-secondary and high educational levels. The framework of the different tourism educational levels is divided into three main levels in Egypt; secondary industrial, commercial and agricultural schools, and what is known of middle

technical institutes, in addition to various faculties (Hussein, Abou-Shouk & Khalifa, 2013). The link between the position's categories according national skills standards and the education levels is depicted in figure 1.

**Figure 1: The link between the position's categories according national skills standards and the education levels**



Source: The researchers based on SPU, Ministry of Higher Education, 2013.

According to National Authority for Quality Assurance of Education and Accreditation (2009), the regular THE has been begun since 1962 by establishing two institutes for tourism and hotels, till 1975, which witnessed founding faculty for Tourism and Hotels (Helwan University) which is considered the first academic institution for higher tourism education in Egypt and the Middle East) that included three programs (Tourism Studies - Hotel Management - Tourist Guidance). However, such specializations are not possible from the first year of the study in other Egyptian faculties of tourism and hotels. Now, number of governmental faculties of tourism and hotels reached ten (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2019).

Egyptian society has always been characterized by a strong demand for general education and university studies. Tourism and hospitality education held little appeal for young people especially after political unrest in 2011, as tourism education is associated with expectations of political and economic stability which in turn affect the structure of employment in each region, the standard of living, and consequently the motivations' status of students planning to join or enroll in high tourism and hospitality education. However, after experiencing the political stability in last few years, THE begun to get recovery especially after reaching around the normal average of arrivals. The enrolled students in tourism and hotels faculties in two different academic years are tabulated in table 1 which shows an increase in the number of students enrolled over the last few years.

**Table 1: No. of enrolled Students in Tourism and Hotels Faculties in two different academic years**

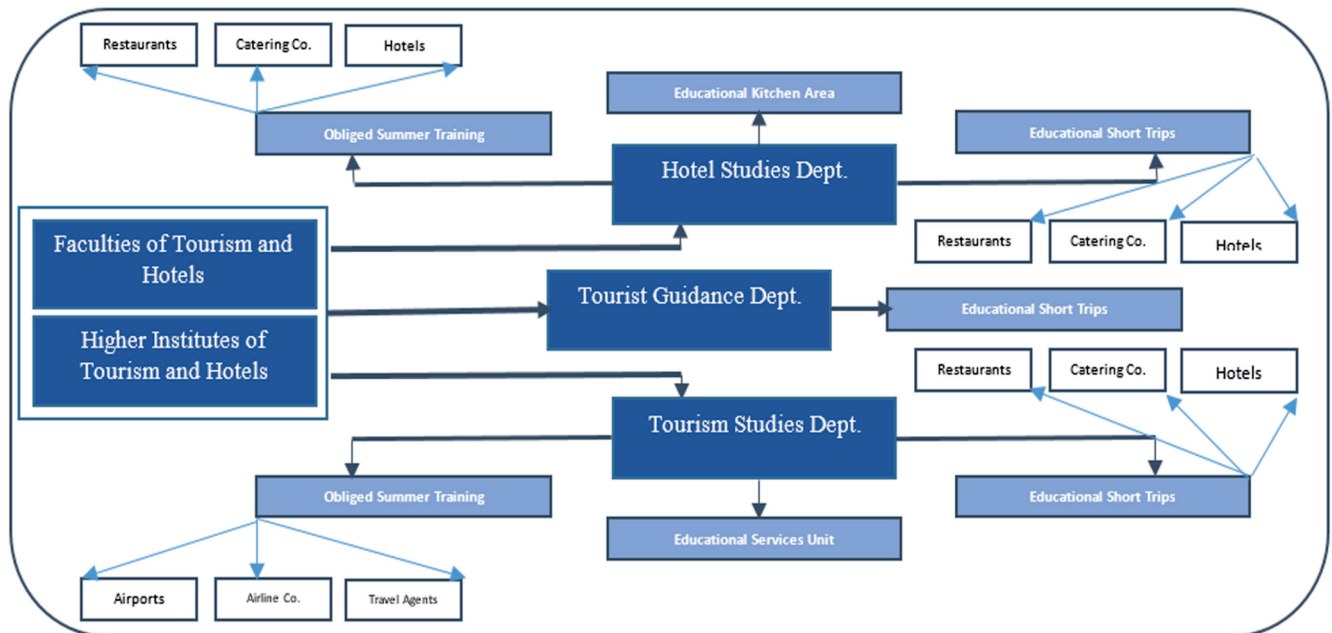
FTH	FTH. A lex University	FTH. Mansoura University	FTH. Helwan University	FTH. Minia University	FTH. Fayoum University	FTH. Suez Canal University	FTH. South Valley University	FTH. University of Sadat City	Total
2014-2015	209	242	837	367	123	48	69	67	1962
2017-2018	318	321	816	368	100	245	111	146	2425

Source: Information Center, Database, 2019

The three main programs existing in high tourism and hospitality institutions always include attached training units according to nature of the department' study which allows for on-class training. Their programs require four years of study. During the educational

journey, students are required to be enrolled in a practical training for two months at least during their summer holidays. In some cases, the success of educational process is contingent upon implementing some educational trips (see figure 2).

**Figure 2: Vocational education and training in the framework of the higher tourism and hospitality education in Egypt**



Source: The Researchers

According to Wang (2008), the most common purpose of tourism undergraduate programs is to prepare students to work in the tourism industry. However, the actual experience indicates that tourism graduates appear to be unable to respond the industry needs, and that the tourism industry has a continuing reluctance to recognize the value of university graduates in relation to vocational skills and training. As cited in Hussein, Abou-Shouk & Khalifa (2013), both the soft skills and vocational skills are highly required by the Egyptian stakeholders who divided skills into generic skills and professional skills; the first category includes communication and public relation skills, computer skills, leadership, teamwork and

supervising skills, and skills of decision making. While, the later skills comprise planning packages and reservation skills, housekeeping, and internal operation skills. Today's generation of graduates hold distinctive perceptions of and ideals toward work and then there appears to be a gap between hospitality graduates' qualifications and the requirements of the workplace (Richardson, 2009).

In a study conducted on the Egyptian stakeholders' perception of tourism and hospitality graduates by Hussein, Abou-Shouk & Khalifa (2013), they quoted the Baum (1999)'s model of tourism and hospitality

education that stresses the capability of the educational program in responding to industry requirements in a way that produce graduates who can understand and manage economically and socially tourism businesses in host destinations.

In addition, the program should balance the enhancement of practical skills with development of a more general understanding of different social science disciplines (Santich, 2004; Diplari & Dimou, 2010; Badran & Khalifa, 2016). In the same line, the objectives of the higher tourism and hospitality education in Egypt that declared by the National Authority for Quality Assurance of Education and Accreditation in 2009 came to go in line with the previous Baum model's recommendations in the following four points:

- 1) Qualifying the human cadres in various operations and activities of tourism and hospitality with the necessary skills to compete in the labor market,
- 2) Providing graduates with the basics and concepts and methodologies associated with the various activities in tourism and Hospitality
- 3) Building the correct concepts and raising the awareness of graduates of the importance of tourism and hospitality in local and global economies, and finally
- 4) Preparing and providing graduates with ethics and professional ethics in the fields of tourism and hospitality (Hotels).

### **Vocational Skills and Training in Tourism and Hospitality Education**

The general employment pattern for those with low vocational skills in tourism industries is expected to diminish, while jobs requiring mid-range and high-level skills are expected to rise (Ioannidou, 2014). Therefore, the education of students with vocational oriented skills is considered a promising approach to create flexible and self-responsible learning attitudes, which might hence better prepare graduates for the requirements of the competitive work place (Eichhorst *et al.*, 2012).

Tourism and hospitality industry have many of the features common to other forms of service businesses, however, it still has unique attributes that require technical-vocational skills (Raybould & Wilkins, 2006). In the same line, still, there is an apparent gap between the knowledge and skills offered by educational programs and the requirements of the

tourism industry (Amoah & Baum, 1997). Maxwell *et al.*, (2010) have identified skills' shortage in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry: chef skills, kitchen control, general housekeeping, reservations techniques, sales and marketing mechanisms and most importantly customer service quality provision were chronic skills shortfalls (Burgess & Aitken, 2004). In addition, Baum (2002), reported that skills' shortages in hospitality industry are increasingly seen regarding a generic and specific technical skill, subsequently, managers in the hospitality and tourism sector value practical and vocational skills highly. Such skills' shortage formed the basis of the training agenda pursued by educational institutions all over the world and in both developed and developing countries. The statistics show that those with technical and vocational skills have less trouble getting jobs than those with general education. In addition, it was argued by Bishop & Mañe (2005) that students who take a certain percentage of vocational subjects go on to earn higher wages and go upward. Therefore, investing in a strong, tourism and hospitality education must be crucial especially in developing countries. Vocational education is a broader term which extends to include all levels of education that seek to provide the students with qualifications related to a specific career or employment or that aims to create the necessary training and the appropriate skills as well as technical knowledge (Kotsikis, 2007). Vocational skills involve a range of approaches, which combine theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum.

Although most designated vocational programs can be found at the middle level of education, there are also programs at all levels. In this respect, Sheldon *et al.*, (2011) have formulated a set of five values-based essentials that tourism students should acquire upon graduation in order to become qualified in their field: ethics, stewardship, knowledge, professionalism, and mutuality. According to the principle of ethics, students should be able to conduct an ethical behavior, and initiate changes for the better. While knowledge includes creativity, critical thinking and professional communication skills (Morsy *et al.*, 2016; Alareefi *et al.*, 2019). Describing stewardship emphasizes that students should be encouraged to question everything in lecturing rooms or during training sessions. Professionalism is defined as a complex of leadership skills that be reflected in practicality, team working and pro-activity. It means the attitude and behavior besides the skills and competencies. While, self-respect and



respect for others refer to mutuality which could be developed through constructive communication and discussions and avoiding conflict of interests and supporting the teamwork efforts (Lee & Kim, 2009). According to Diplari & Dimou (2010), university–industry cooperation is identified to enhance the quality of tourism studies, since such cooperation can provide detailed information about the qualification required by the tourism industry which in turn reflect on developing up-to-date programs and using the most appropriate teaching methods. Industrial placement provides a very efficient way for students to build on their acquired knowledge and skills through practice (Christou, 1999).

It could also provide students with a better idea of the tourism industry, and thus assist them in their career decision-making, as it could assist them in improving their skills and abilities (e.g., time management, group work skills, leadership and motivation abilities, etc.) (Cave, 1999). In addition to industrial placement, improving the education system in relation to vocational skills and training must be conceived as a vital pillar of the transformation into a knowledge-based economy. Several countries have begun to realize

the key influence of curriculum and begun to shape the content of the tourism and hospitality curricula to better respond rapid changes. However, such modifications entail just general recommendations rather than specific detailed requirements and practical guidelines (Milner & Tenore, 2010).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research was based on concurrent mixed methods research approach. In order to provide analytical description more deeply and exhaustively, attempting to make sense of it (Merriam, 2002), this study used the qualitative approach. While, quantitative approach was adopted for objectivity, reliability, validity, and reality purposes (Punch, 2009).

**Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

This study was conducted from September to December of 2018 in ten faculties of tourism and hotels in Egypt, which provides well-acknowledged accredited programs in higher tourism education. In this paper, the principle of triangulation for determining validity and reliability was applied to a wide range of data collection methods as shown in table 2.

*Table 2: Data Collection Methods and Purposes*

PHASE	TOOL	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE
<b>The First Phase</b>	Content analysis	The examination of tourism and hospitality courses taught in Egyptian universities focusing on vocational skills- oriented curriculums.	The first stage of the study was to present and evaluate the current public system of Egyptian tourism education in relation to vocational skills and training systems.
<b>The Second Phase</b>	Observation checklist	It includes 3 sections with a total of 15 items conducted within five faculties.	The personal observation checklist was designed to evaluate settings and facilities of training units provided by the educational institutions for conducting vocational educational and training.
<b>The Third Phase</b>	Survey	Purposive sample was contacted, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tourism Studies Students: 100 students,</li> <li>▪ Hotel Studies Students: 100 Students, and</li> <li>▪ Tourist Guidance Students: 50 students.</li> </ul>	The third stage was to explore and identify perceptions and views of students about their tourism education.

**Description of Vocational Skills and Training within the Egyptian higher education curriculums**

Content of educational curriculums are interlinked with the qualities and attributes of graduates (Pearce, 2005). Therefore, the following section provide a content

analysis of vocational skills that are provided through the tourism and hospitality curriculums (collected from the government websites of Ministry of High Education and Tourism and Hotels Faculties). The interesting point is the names of tourism curricula at the undergraduate level and their departmental locations

within faculties. Within the three programs (Hotel, Tourism, and Guidance), about only one third of curricula at the undergraduate level use “tourism/ travel or hospitality/hotel” in the title, such as Business of the tourism companies/Restaurant Service. Such note deserves creating a significant debate whether higher tourism education curricula contain the enough basic business courses with a tourism specialty or not (Wang, 2008). In this regard, and in the course of analyzing tourism curricula offered in Egyptian tourism education, an attempt was made about seven basic categories of tourism and hospitality study that are developed by Wang (2008) into:

1-Research Skills.

- 2-Accounting/Finance/Economics,
- 3-Business Management,
- 4-Marketing,
- 5-Tourism Theory,
- 6-Tourism Management, and
- 7-Employment Skills,

The three categories from 5-7 represent the specialized vocational areas, while 1-4 indicate the support studying areas. The table 3 provides a simple categorization of the vocational curricula that are collected from the faculties' websites into specialized and non-specialized tourism curricula in relation to vocational skills.

**Table 3: Percentage of Specialized vocational vs., Non-specialized vocational curricula in each department**

Programs	Specialized vocational Curricula			Hours per Week	Non-specialized vocational Curricula			Hours per Week
	*HSD	*TSD	*TGD		HSD	TSD	TGD	
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	5	3	-	2hrs	3	2	1	2hrs
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	6	1	1		3	4	2	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	8	4	3		5	3	1	
4 <sup>th</sup> Year	6	2	2		4	2	2	
Total	25	10	6		15	11	6	
<p>*HSD = Hotel Studies Department, *TSD = Tourism Studies Department, *TGD = Tourist Guidance Department.                      Note: Total of curricula in each year expresses the total number of courses' options from which each faculty must syntheses its curriculums (14 courses are required in each year including theoretical in addition to vocational-oriented curriculum).</p>								

Findings of table 3 indicate to a notable number of non-specialized vocational curricula taught in three programs during the four years. This indicates that the Egyptian tourism curriculum is specifically relied on industry-related sciences (e.g., businesses management, accounting, finance, agriculture, etc.) rather than specialized ones. In addition, the practical hours (training) are very limited, this is confirmed by SPU Report, in which they reported that 55% of the studying hours were a theoretical-based nature (2013). The interesting positive point here is, there may be good quantity of logic in designing the curriculums in relation to the three programs, as the nature of potential work that waits the graduates of each program direct the educational institutions' management to vocationalize the educational system accordingly. As a result, hotel studies department has got the highest number of specialized vocational curricula (44.64%), while, a low number of specialized vocational curricula is conducted in tourist guidance (10.71%). However, for all tourism programs, building vocational skills into the subjects in tourism curricula is an outstanding and critical issue because of the limited number of specialized vocational curricula which is unsuitable for preparing students for the purpose of employment in the tourism sector. In this regard, in an attempt of developing the tourism and

hospitality education, Luka and Donina (2012) stated some points that are needed to be taken into account: 1) the needs of the industry (external actor), 2) the interests of students (internal actor), and 3) the guidelines of the World Tourism Organization.

In order to identify the study areas of tourism and hospitality education system that need to be covered by vocational curriculums. A simple categorization for 36 study areas is conducted based on data adopted from the teaching standards of the Egyptian faculties of tourism and hotels, in addition to National Authority for Quality Assurance of Education and Accreditation – Tourism and Hotels Sector. It was revealed that only six tourism areas were conducted theoretically and relied on supporting vocational skills. This reflects on the overall knowledge of the graduates which will suffer shortage regarding some specific areas. Therefore, tourism curriculums must follow a formal approach that combines theoretical and occupation-specific knowledge. Moreover, the following studying areas are suggested by the researchers to be included within the education system in a practical-based way:

- Tourism, Culture and Society (e.g., guests and hosts psychology, tourist destinations' development, tourism planning and development, key sustainability issues for

tourist projects),

- Tourism Enterprises Management (e.g., strategic tourism and hospitality management, entrepreneurship in the tourism sector, economic analysis for tourism businesses, manners and practices of planning, monitoring, supervising and controlling business aspects),

- Employability Skills (e.g., employment skills, operations engineering, development for the workplace, ergonomics activities, and work-threatening risks for tourism and hospitality, and skills necessary for gaining employment).

In summary, the content analysis of tourism curricula indicates that most of the taught courses of Egyptian tourism curricula depend on developing tourism knowledge through theoretical settings rather than vocational frameworks. In addition, the investigation on the core subject areas reveal a strong education orientation in the current Egyptian tourism curricula to cover the category of Business Management, Marketing, and Accounting/Finance/Economics compared to tourism and hotel operations. This indicates the Management Skills Study area has a higher priority than the Employment Skills Study area in the current tourism curricula. Hence, tourism curriculums are needed to be 'updated, reflecting a more realistic view of the industry' (Lee & Kim, 2009).

**RESULTS**

**Analysis of the Personal Observation Checklists**

The efficiency of resources, teaching staff, and the time frame specified for conducting training sessions are considered the determinant to quality education, all are evaluated through using a personal observation checklist. The checklist included three-degree scale used to evaluate the sub-attributes were: 1= completely unavailable, 2= improvements required and 3= completely available. Descriptive statistics represented in frequencies and percentages were used in order to analyze personal observation checklist.

The tabulated data in table 4 indicate that two attributes of the educational museum settings have 70% of the availability in relation to a specified space for an educational museum and the proficiency of the staff responsible for the practical sessions with a mean score of 2.80 and standard deviation of (0.75).

On the other hand, they lack the enough settings and antiques and need improvement with (60%), the same picture is captured relating to the time spent a training session in the place with overall mean 2.03. Regarding the educational kitchen, despite eight out of 10 of the inspected faculties of tourism and hotels have a specified space for the educational kitchen, but they suffer shortage of the enough devices and equipment (50%) with a mean score of 1.50. In addition, the training time appeared insufficient (60%) with overall mean 1.40. Two main attributes related to the financial budget and the practical efficiency of teaching staff are needed to be improved and enhanced (50% & 60%) respectively.

*Table 4: Evaluation of Training Units Settings*

Attributes	* Response	Overall mean*	S.D.	Rank
<b>Educational Museum Settings</b>				
There is a specified space for an educational museum in my university.	1	2.80	0.75	1
	2			
	3			
If there a specified space for an educational museum, it is installed of the enough antiques for the educational purposes.	1	2.03	0.71	2
	2			
	3			
The instructors responsible for teaching in the museum are having the required practical experience.	1	2.80	0.75	1
	2			
	3			
Training time is enough to get qualified in the field.	1	2.03	0.71	2
	2			
	3			

<b>Educational Kitchen Settings</b>				
There is a specified space for an educational kitchen in my university.	1	2.40	0.27	1
	2			
	3			
If there is a specified space for an educational kitchen, it is installed of the enough equipment for the educational purposes.	1	1.50	0.83	4
	2			
	3			
There is a financial budget for providing food materials required for completing the education process.	1	1.90	0.16	3
	2			
	3			
The instructor (chef) responsible for teaching in the kitchen are having the required practical experience.	1	2.10	0.53	2
	2			
	3			
Training time is enough to get qualified in the field.	1	1.40	0.46	5
	2			
	3			
<b>Tourist Service Unit Settings</b>				
There is a specified space for the tourist service unit in my university.	1	1.50	0.56	3
	2			
	3			
If there a specified space for the TSU, it is installed of the enough equipment and software for the educational purposes.	1	1.45	0.71	4
	2			
	3			
The instructors responsible for teaching in the TSU are having the required practical experience.	1	1.60	0.70	2
	2			
	3			
Training time is enough to get qualified in the field.	1	2.30	0.41	1
	2			
	3			
* Response: 1 = Completely unavailable, 2 = Improvement required, 3 = Completely available.				
* Mean of training unit facilities ; were 1= Completely unavailable, 2 = Improvements required and 3 = Completely available.				

Concerning the educational service units, there were not a specified space for a TSU in five faculties with an overall mean 1.50. Subsequently, the statement that checks devices and software prepared for the educational purpose got nearly a similar negative response with an overall mean of 1.45. In the same line, the instructors responsible for teaching in the educational tourist service unit also need an improvement as the researchers captured that some faculties recruit professionals on a temporary basis for teaching software of reservation technique. Time specified for training in such units as recorded in lectures tables seems to be enough with an overall mean 2.30 which ranked first.

Clearly, the evidence on the effectiveness of training is

suffering unprofessionalism given that it mostly pertains to three factors (physical facilities, training time, and instructors' efficacy). Subsequently, all higher education institutions which offer tourism and hospitality programs must make certain that they have the required infrastructure in terms of the investigated three factors that allow for the effective teaching of all needed and desired vocational skills.

#### **Analysis of the Student Survey**

In order to investigate the perception of the internal actor (students) about the education system, and also to achieve the validity purpose, a survey is used as it is considered a popular research design method that provides useful information to evaluate programs in



schools (Creswell, 2005) by collecting feedback from the students who are considered the main stakeholders of the educational process. Purposive sample of 250 tourism students from 10 Faculties of Tourism and Hotels (FTHs) was contacted, and 215 copies were analyzed: Three tourism departments were targeted: Hotel studies department-80 students (37.20%), Tourism studies department-89 students (41.39%), and 46

students (21.41%) belong to tourist guidance. The first section of the survey entails identifying the respective perception of students on undergraduate curriculum and training settings in terms of the quality of studies, training system, the practical experience of instructors, and the degree of cooperation between their educational institutions and tourism-related organizations (refer to table 5).

**Table 5: Perception on Tourism Degrees, Undergraduate Curriculum and Training**

Statements	Respondents*	N	Perception					Sig.
			SD	D	N	A	SA	
<i>THE QUALITY OF STUDIES</i>								
<b>A tourism degree grants me the enough qualification to success in the practical field.</b>	HSSs	80	23	36	19	2	0	0.521
			28.75%	45%	23.75%	2.50%	0	
	TSSs	89	31	42	13	3	0	
			34.83%	47.19%	14.60%	3.38%	0	
	TGSs	46	11	22	9	4	0	
			23.91%	47.82%	19.56%	8.71%	0	
<b>The curriculum of an undergraduate tourism degree is relevant to the tourism industry requirements.</b>	HSSs	80	32	31	17	0	0	0.632
			40%	38.75%	21.25%	0	0	
	TSSs	89	29	41	15	4	0	
			32.58%	46.08%	16.85%	4.49%	0	
	TGSs	46	5	6	20	15	0	
			10.86%	13.04%	43.47%	32.63%	0	
<b>The curriculum of an undergraduate tourism degree is up-to-date and is responsive to current market needs.</b>	HSSs	79	20	30	22	6	1	0.555
			25.31%	37.97%	27.84%	7.59%	1.29%	
	TSSs	88	27	37	19	5	0	
			30.68%	42.04%	21.59%	5.69%	0	
	TGSs	46	13	9	20	4	0	
			28.26%	19.56%	43.47%	8.71%	0	
<i>TRAINING SYSTEM</i>								
<b>Practical training content is relevant to the tourism industry requirements.</b>	HSSs	80	44	30	6	0	0	0.502
			55%	37.50%	7.50%	0	0	
	TSSs	89	36	34	18	1	0	
			40.44%	38.20%	20.22%	1.14%	0	
	TGSs	46	13	22	8	2	1	
			28.26%	47.82%	17.39%	4.34%	2.19%	
<b>Duration of practical training is enough to provide with the enough skills to success in the practical field.</b>	HSSs	80	42	31	7	0	0	0.533
			52.50%	38.75%	8.75%	0	0	
	TSSs	89	33	36	17	3	0	
			37.07%	40.44%	19.10%	3.39%	0	
	TGSs	46	19	20	3	4	1	
			41.30%	43.47%	6.52%	8.69%	0.02	
<i>PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE INSTRUCTORS</i>								
<b>Theoretical knowledge and practical experience of instructors is enough.</b>	HSSs	80	19	23	26	9	3	0.001
			23.75%	28.75%	32.50%	11.25%	3.75%	
	TSSs	89	22	20	21	17	9	
			24.71%	22.47%	23.59%	19.10%	10.13%	
	TGSs	46	11	10	9	10	6	
			23.91%	21.73%	19.56%	21.73%	13.07%	
<b>The instructors are always keeping on track of the latest and dynamism of the tourism industry.</b>	HSSs	80	25	22	18	13	2	0.018
			31.25%	27.50%	22.50%	16.25%	2.50%	
	TSSs	89	20	26	33	7	3	
			22.47%	29.21%	37.07%	7.86%	3.39%	
	TGSs	46	5	12	8	12	9	
			10.86%	26.08%	17.39%	26.08%	19.59%	

COOPERATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TOURISM-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS							
Educational short trips to tourism - related institutions are conducted on a regular basis.	HSSs	80	55	23	3	0	0
			68.75%	28.75%	2.50%	0	0
	TSSs	89	52	30	7	0	0
			58.42%	33.70%	7.88%	0	0
	TGSs	46	17	20	4	5	0
			36.95%	43.47%	8.69%	10.89%	0
Educational short trips to tourism - related institutions helps to keep in touch with the reality in a proficient manner.	HSSs	80	29	26	24	1	0
			36.25%	32.50%	30%	1.25%	0
	TSSs	89	39	25	21	4	0
			43.82%	28.08%	23.59%	4.51%	0
	TGSs	46	1	3	8	25	9
			2.19%	6.52%	17.39%	54.34%	19.56%
* Respondents: HSSs = Hotel studies' Students, TSSs = Tourism studies' Students, TGSs = Tourist guidance' Students.							

As one would expect, students from different programs seem to have different perceptions on the quality and usefulness of the tourism degree and the acquired skills in relation to the practical field requirements. Students affiliated in tourist guidance program considered the curriculum of an undergraduate tourism degree relevant and useful compared to those enrolled in two other programs. About two third of the students affiliated in either hotel studies or tourism studies department considered their acquired skills during their educational life to be inadequate and insufficient to qualify them to enter the labor market successfully. In this regard, Sangpikul (2009) stressed the need for internationalizing the curriculum with aims to prepare and equip students for rapid market needs. In a related direction, about two third of the students from the three different programs claimed that on-class training provided within their educational institutions is unsatisfactory. Also, findings indicate that there is a constant need for educators who retain relevant skills in the tourism industry and practices to ensure that the academic perspective is consistent with the industry approach. Accordingly, the emphasis must be given to turn the theoretical knowledge into action via using different approaches and styles such as training sessions, observation, imitation, self-correction, in addition to

the theory provided by textbooks (Agwa, Aziz & Khalifa, 2018b) as vocational, technical, hands-on, job-specific skills are taught from 'practical expertise or know-how' (Mucunguzi, 2013). Short trips to tourism-related institutions and places have a significant effect on developing the students' practical expertise, however, almost more than two third of the students affiliated in the three programs reported dissatisfaction case. Insufficient funding may be the major cause behind lack of such training trips, as the funding of such training activities mainly occurs via public budget allocations (based on past enrollment), student fees are usually limited and only cover administrative costs in Egypt (Eichhorst *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, weak coordination between the relevant stakeholders (Perez, 2006) have a prominent role in creating such dissatisfaction case.

**Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) of skills and training**

In order to identify the important skills and training settings and the degree to which they are covered and conducted in the tourism curriculums, an Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) was conducted. Students were asked to rate the level of importance and satisfaction of attributes (skills and training) on a 1-5 five-item Likert Scale questionnaire.

**Table 6: Tourism Students' Evaluation on Tourism Curriculum in Relation to Vocational Skills and Training**

Vocational Skills and Training	*Importance <sup>a</sup>		* Performance/ Satisfaction <sup>b</sup>		T-test		
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean Difference	T value	Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>Hotel Studies Dept. (N= 80)</i>							
Managing Guest Hosting perfectly	4.55	1	3.85	11	0.70	11.02	0.00
Cooperate in customer service	4.50	2	4.40	1	0.10	3.07	0.00
Plans daily routine tasks in Kitchen area	4.45	3	3.40	15	1.05	13.37	0.00
Team Working Skills	4.45	3	3.90	8	0.55	6.25	0.32
Organizing Festivals and Special Events	4.40	4	3.50	14	0.90	9.21	0.00

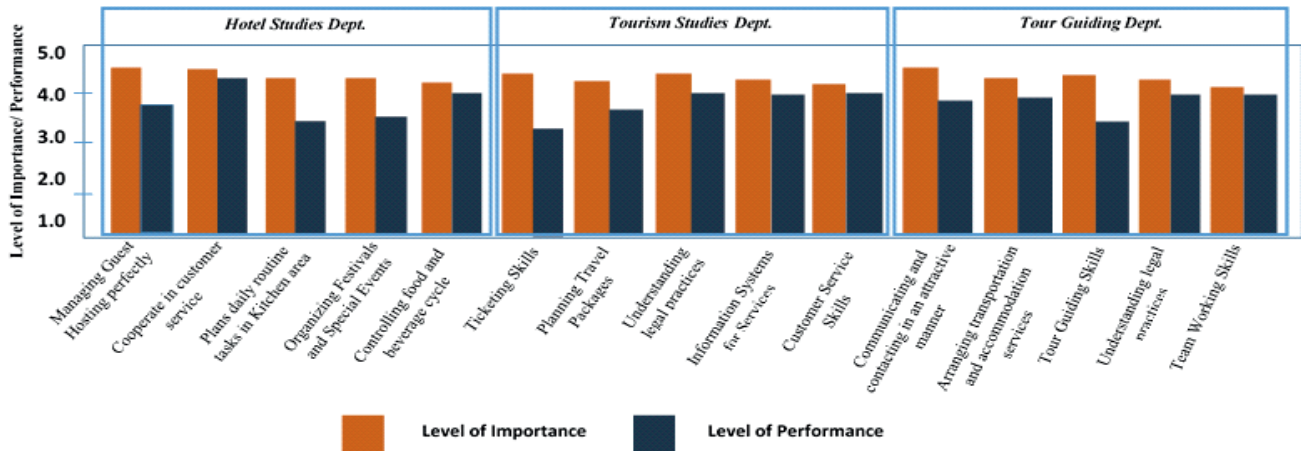
Controlling food and beverage cycle	4.35	5	4.00	5	0.35	3.68	0.00
Organizing the work environment	4.33	6	3.75	12	0.58	7.61	0.00
Work ethics	4.33	6	3.89	9	0.44	6.13	0.00
Understanding legal practices	4.25	7	3.55	13	0.70	11.41	0.00
Plans daily routine tasks in housekeeping area	4.20	8	4.06	3	0.14	5.33	0.00
Applies gastronomic principles	4.19	9	3.50	14	0.69	7.49	0.00
Finishes and displays dishes	4.15	10	4.03	4	0.12	4.22	0.00
Plans daily routine tasks in Restaurant service area	4.15	10	4.11	2	0.04	4.95	0.00
Plans daily routine tasks in reception and administration area	4.12	11	3.88	10	0.24	2.68	0.00
Accounting Skills	4.08	12	4.40	1	-0.32	-3.69	0.00
Purchasing and Storing Procedures	4.00	13	3.98	6	0.02	1.02	0.00
Pre-prepares and prepares food items	4.00	13	3.89	9	0.11	2.73	0.00
Economic Analysis	4.00	13	3.50	14	0.50	6.72	0.00
Use food ingredients in a good manner	3.99	14	3.95	7	0.04	6.23	0.00
<b>The Total Average Score</b>	<b>4.24</b>		<b>3.87</b>		<b>0.37</b>		
<b>Tourism Studies Dept. (N= 89)</b>							
Ticketing Skills	4.60	1	3.25	7	1.35	12.84	0.00
Making Online Reservations	4.60	1	3.60	6	1.00	11.60	0.00
Applying negotiation Skills	4.60	1	4.00	4	0.60	7.50	0.00
Planning Travel Packages	4.55	2	3.75	5	0.80	9.62	0.00
Understanding legal practices	4.50	3	4.00	4	0.50	6.30	0.30
Plans daily routine operations in Travel Agents	4.45	4	3.25	7	0.20	4.08	0.00
Information Systems for Services	4.45	4	4.00	4	0.45	6.05	0.00
Customer Service Skills	4.40	5	4.25	1	0.15	1.62	0.00
Economic Analysis	4.30	6	4.00	4	0.30	5.17	0.00
Organizing the work environment	4.25	7	4.00	4	0.25	2.54	0.00
Work ethics	4.20	8	4.15	2	0.05	6.23	0.00
Marketing and Sales Skills	4.15	9	4.25	1	-0.10	-6.62	0.00
Computer Skills	4.15	9	4.25	1	-0.10	-5.83	0.41
Team Working Skills	4.15	9	4.10	3	0.05	5.68	0.00
Accounting Skills	4.00	10	4.10	3	-0.10	-1.64	0.10
<b>The Total Average Score</b>	<b>4.35</b>		<b>3.93</b>		<b>0.36</b>		
<b>Tour Guiding Dept. (N= 46)</b>							
Communicating and contacting in an attractive manner	4.60	1	3.85	4	0.75	11.64	0.00
Arranging transportation and accommodation services	4.55	2	3.90	3	0.65	7.12	0.00
Tour Guiding Skills	4.50	3	3.40	5	1.10	13.50	0.00
Understanding legal practices	4.45	4	4.00	2	0.45	5.96	0.00
Team Working Skills	4.25	5	4.10	1	0.15	4.92	0.00
Work ethics	4.20	6	4.10	1	0.10	1.12	0.00
<b>The Total Average Score</b>	<b>4.42</b>		<b>3.89</b>		<b>0.53</b>		
a: <b>Level of importance:</b> 1-5 scale; "1" = Extremely Unimportant,..., "5" = Extremely Important.							
b: <b>Level of performance</b> (satisfaction): 1-5 scale; "1" = Extremely Dissatisfied,..., "5" = Extremely Satisfied.							

Topics under evaluation matched the study courses included in the curriculums of FTHs. Thus, the results enabled analyzing their information on the vocational knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes acquired by the students at FTHs. The mean scores of the perceptions on each attribute by students are presented in table 6. Findings indicate that students emphasized the importance of skills and training related to work in the field: Managing Guest Hosting perfectly (mean 4.55), Ticketing Skills (mean 4.60), Making Online Reservations (mean 4.60), communicating and

contacting in an attractive manner (mean 4.60), and Arranging transportation and accommodation services (mean 4.55). They gave a lower ranking to skills related with branches of accounting and human resources: Accounting Skills (mean 4.00), Team working skills (4.15), and Work ethics (mean 4.20).

A simple comparison of skills and training in relation to their importance and performance showed that the skills perceived as the most important got a lower ranking in relation to its performance or the extent to which they covered in curriculums – see figure 3.

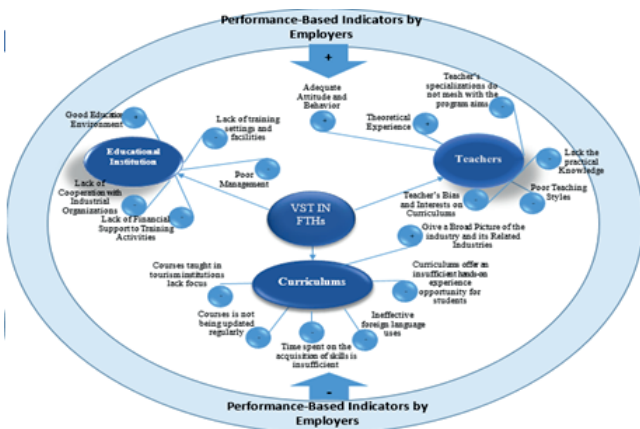
Figure 3: A comparison of skills and training in relation to its importance and performance



Based on the fore mentioned discussion, the vast majority of students rated the quality of the education they receive as 'low'. More specifically, the lowest self-evaluation was given to the quality of studies, training system, and practical experience of the instructors, respectively.

The figure 4 presents an analytical framework for strength and weakness points associated the components of higher tourism and hospitality education.

Figure 4: Analytical Framework for Vocational Skills and Training in the Egyptian Higher Tourism and Hospitality Education



For fulfilling the educational institutions' purpose, the tourism education system should be constructed as a more articulated system, it's recommended to consider restructuring the curriculums with a view to introduce more practical work in some areas with focusing on the specialty matter (e.g., chef skills, kitchen operations,

general housekeeping activities, reservations techniques, sales and marketing mechanisms and most importantly customer service quality provision, ...etc.), consequently, vocational skills and training must be integrated as compulsory academic part. In addition, efficient staffed career offices must be founded by academic institutions in cooperation with the industry organizations. Moreover, adopting a comprehensive long-term strategy must be activated that involves public- private partnerships among governments, employers, and unions to continuously develop and improve the use of skills, as the involved partners need to shoulder some responsibility. In this context, stakeholders' engagement is required as the direct involvement of industry partners in the explanation, and supervision of the assignments and activities of the students (Alexopoulos *et al.*, 2006) in addition to delivering performance-based indicators on a regular basis to re-assess and improve the educational system.

**CONCLUSION**

The results of our study indicated deficiencies in higher tourism and hospitality education in relation to conducting vocational skills and training. Through this paper, it has become clear that VST suffers from a lack of straight approach in terms of the three pillars constituting higher tourism education. VST suffers from being marginalized and treated as a “second/secondary choice”. While, soft or behavioral skills conducted within the curriculums of institutions of higher tourism education refer to an increasing approach that promoted the theoretical framework and prioritized the soft skills over others. Terms like tourism and hospitality impose tourism related



educational institutions to have training units specified for the educational practices' purposes as a requirement of their studies, however, there is a clear lack of training settings and facilities. The instructors responsible for

teaching also have less practical ability to deliver to their students, this may be the main reason behind their tendency to neglect developing such skills within their curriculums.

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