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# Factors Affecting the Development of Target Competencies Among Final-Year Tourism and Hospitality Students in Egypt

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This research investigates the contribution of each dimension in the educational process to the development of target competencies that tourism and hospitality employers seek in graduates. Using a sample of 506 senior students in 7 public universities, and using structural equation modeling, we found that 5 out of 8 dimensions in the educational process significantly affect the development of target competencies. In turn, these target competencies significantly affect the ability of students to get a job in the tourism and hospitality market. It was found that staff members, teaching methods, and facilities provided to support the teaching process are still below students' expectations. This study is useful for policymakers who wish to do their best to improve the quality of tourism higher education in Egypt and increase its competitiveness.

Keywords: tourism and hospitality, higher education, competencies, educational process, Egypt

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism higher education in Egypt has received interest from several researchers in different specific issues, including quality, competencies, and skills (Beckett, 2004; Botterill, 2002; Horng, Teng, & Baum, 2009). Curriculum development and academia–industry linkages (Cooper, 2002; Jordan, 2008; Lewis, 2005), employers' attitudes (Lam & Xiao, 2000), students' perceptions (Hjalager, 2003; Roney & Oztin, 2007), and e-learning in tourism education have also been investigated (Afifi, 2011). Furthermore, the past two decades have witnessed rapid expansion in the hospitality and tourism industry, which has impacted tourism education accordingly (Riegel & Dallas, 2002). This fast growth has generated intense competition among hospitality and tourism

programs for better students and faculties to enhance their reputations (Hu, Jang, & Bai, 2004).

Egypt is no exception and has seen similar growth in both tourism and hospitality industry and education as the number of faculties and higher institutes has increased remarkably. Apart from the current situation occurred after January 25, 2011, over the past three decades, Egypt witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of international tourists. Given this rise in the number of tourists and tourist revenue, hospitality and tourism higher education in Egypt has developed in numerous faculties and higher institutes, reaching 10 university faculties (eight public and two private) and 15 private higher institutes compared to two public faculties and one private higher institute in 1994 (Higher Education Ministry, 2012). These numbers of faculties and higher institutes in Egypt seem small compared with other contexts such as the United Kingdom, which had two tourism courses in 1972 compared to 77 courses in 1997 (Airey & Johnson, 1999; Kuşluvan & Kuşluvan, 2000; Ryan, 1995) and 80

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