**Moustafa A. Mekawy / Moustafa M. Abu Bakr**

# Planning internship programs: Tourism students' perceptions

## Abstract

*Internship programs bridge the gap between formal education and practical work experience.4 Designing internship programs and involving student interns are significant themes in tourism research whose interrelationship has been largely neglected. This paper seeks to explore how tourism students' perceptions can be used to develop successful industry-based internship (IBI) programs. This is a subject that has received relatively scant attention since the publication of a number of seminal papers produced in the mid to late 1970s and early 21st century. A number of key themes or issues will be highlighted, all central to the thinking of the internship program planners. These include an analysis of internship cycles and components and the need to add value and increase students' ability to move theory into practice. Using a quantitative paper-based questionnaire survey of 47 items, the findings revealed that respondents had significantly different perceptions regarding their inclusion role and importance in designing internship programs. The paper presents a valuable conceptual and planning model called PPAF Cycle to achieve effective internship programs, which strengthen the interns' input. The study concludes that innovative planning ways should be found to ensure the interns' full involvement in building training program plans in an increasingly mature Egyptian educational tourism system.*

Key words: *planning; PPAF Cycle; industry-based internship; interns' involvement; Egypt*

## Introduction

Research in using industry-based internship (IBI) for educational purposes has been growing steadily in recent years in the tourism community, leading to a sizable body of knowledge in internship-related topics. This interest has been accompanied by several studies that have demonstrated the effectiveness of internships in higher education (Airey, 1996; Be4ggs, Ross & Goodwin, 2008; Beggs, Ross & Knapp, 2006; Collins, 2002; Go, 1981; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1998; Pollock & Ritchie, 1990; Sheldon, Fesenmaier & Tribe, 2011; Sheldon & Gee, 1987; Wahab, Hammam & Jafari, 1998). The results accumulated from previous studies to date point out to the many benefits of the experiential education methods employed in tertiary tourism programs today, such as class projects, site visits, service learning, computer simulations and IBI programs (Kolb, 1984; Sindiga, 1996; Young, Stenge, Chaffe-Stengel & Harper, 2010).

Investigations into the planning process of internship programs and IBI stakeholders' perceptions have also received the attention of researchers and employers as workplace internship practices have rapidly

**Moustafa A. Mekawy**, PhD, Department of Tourism Studies, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, University of Sadat City, Egypt; E-mail: mekawymoustafa@yahoo.com

**Moustafa M. Abu Bakr**, PhD, Department of Business Administration, Collage of Commerce, Menoufia University, Egypt; E-mail: dr_mobakr@yahoo.com


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developed (Airey & Tribe, 2005; Busby, Brunt & Baber, 1997; Weitz, 1990; Xiao, 2000). However, unlike at the international level, research into tourism students' perceptions and into IBI planning approaches, with the intention of improving the usefulness and effectiveness of the IBI experience, has not been a particular focus of Egyptian tourism researchers and planners. The key research question that will be explored through the present study is how do students perceive and describe their actual involvement as a tool for enhancing different phases of the planning process of IBI programs?

This study aims to address this gap in research and contribute to the evidence surrounding the potential involvement of students in designing IBI programs in tourism education, with a focus on interns' perceptions. Furthermore, the factors that might influence the effective involvement of students during the planning process of IBIs are explored. Accordingly, the objectives of the study are to (a) explore student perceptions towards their proactive, active and interactive involvement (henceforth-full involvement) role in planning IBI programs; (b) investigate the main challenges of interns' involvement in building IBI programs; and (c) propose a model to follow when involving interns in constructing internship programs.

# Literature review

## Tourism education and internship programs in Egypt

Egypt is one of the world's most exciting destinations due to its unique historical treasures and outstanding natural beauty. During the last years, Egyptian tourism has grown dramatically. The industry is the largest foreign exchange earner, in addition to a key driver for growth (Mekawy, 2012). Despite its potential, tourism developments in Egypt face various drawbacks. Human resources, particularly education and training, are important factors that affect the tourism growth elsewhere, and so in Egypt. (Hassanien, 2006). Tourism education and training system started in Egypt in 1962 when two two-year upper secondary-level technical institutes and a hotel training centre were established. In 1968, these two upper secondary-level technical institutes were converted into higher institutes. In 1975, those two higher institutes were merged in one entity, the "Faculty of Tourism and Hotels Management, Helwan University", which remained as an inimitable example until 1983 when several public and private tourism higher institutes were subsequently established (Afifi, 2010). Now, there are 27 tourism higher education entities in Egypt (seven public colleges, 16 four-year higher education-level technical institutes and four two-year technological institutes) (Egyptian Universities Network, 2012).

For Egyptian tourism and hospitality university students, conducting an IBI program is a prerequisite for graduation. However, over the last few years, the tertiary tourism programs started facing a rising problem concerning the quality of their graduates, who were considered to be below the standard required by employers (e.g. tour operators, travel agencies and airlines). This, among other reasons, resulted in launching a process of reviewing the entire internship programs applied by the Egyptian tourism programs (Hassanien, 2006). In this context, there is enough evidence to support the view that a fully rounded vision of students' involvement in building IBI programs does not always exist and that the term students' involvement is still ambiguous.

Due to the planning nature of preparing IBI programs, it is imperative that interns are involved with sufficient supervision. Notably, as with other experiential learning situations, internships work best

when all stakeholders, namely the organization, the college and the student involved are clear about the goals and expectations, when the program is meaningful and relevant for the student needs, and when the student is motivated (Gower & Mulvaney, 2012).

Following this line of thought, the view of students as consumers, as opposed to partners and active participants, will have severe impacts on designing IBI programs as well as greater tourism education system. Hence, it is argued that student involvement is essential in preparing all phases of the IBI program. Unfortunately, students are increasingly being viewed as passive customers, while the ongoing inclusion of other internship stakeholders have resulted in changes in governance structures that lead to the dilution of student representation in the planning process of the IBI programs.

Therefore, this paper focuses on students' perceptions to enhance the planning process of successful IBI programs. Thus, it is claimed that it is probable that the effectiveness of designing IBI programs could be improved if we had a greater understanding of interns' perceptions towards various aspects of their involvement in the different phases of the planning process of IBI programs.

## Planning IBI programs and students' involvement

In the context of travel and tourism education there is considerable literature about tourism internship types. However, only a limited number of studies were conducted to highlight the precise definition and planning dimensions of the IBI programs that were based directly upon tourism industry experience and students' perspectives. This means that more empirical studies focusing on students' perceptions of the IBI programs are needed in order to evaluate the quality of conducted internship experiences and to address related valuable planning propositions (Driscoll, 2006).

In this framework, several studies highlighted that IBI itself has a number of meanings. For instance, McMahon and Quinn (1995) considered an IBI as a type of work experience for entry-level jobseekers. Further, they called IBI a "supervised work experience" and wrote that students are under special guidelines and attention during their internship instead of working alone by themselves in the industry (Lam & Ching, 2007; Lynn, Hales & Wiener, 2007;). In their article, McMahon and Quinn (1995) are portraying the IBI as an industry work experience that had no benefits other than to supervise the interns' hands-on. Yet, another set of studies indicate that narrowing the IBI down to such a narrow role is misleading. For example, Hassanien (2006) states that IBI serves as a bridge between university education and paid employment. A close examination of the research reveals that an IBI gives students the opportunity to examine career possibilities in a realistic environment and to explore a possible fit with a particular employer (Kapoor, 2000; Waryszak, 1999). Importantly, Busby (2003) highlights that it is an experimental opportunity to acquire transferable skills and the specific detailed knowledge necessary in today's workplace, although he fails to discuss in detail the experiential learning activities. One might argue that the tight concentration by some authors on the purely experiential education activities may result in unnecessarily narrow, incomplete and possibly biased conclusions.

Remarkably, the majority of mentioned studies have highlighted the issue of industry relevance in the planning, designing, and redesigning of tourism internship programs. If an internship program is not industry relevant, it lacks credibility and purpose (Luke & Ingold, 1990). However, often inadequate attention is given to the students' involvement in fostering the effective use of internship experience

and in defining interns' planning role in improving the overall quality of internship (Gower & Mulvaney, 2012). In this vein, this paper argues that the school, in cooperation with the industry, should determine the scope of the conducted learning experience and the specific work assignments related to a student's studies and/or career goals as well as establish a training program that will give the intern a clear understanding of what is expected, and include information about the duties that will be supervised and evaluated.

Interestingly, when defining IBI as a structured process, (Collins, 2002; Go, 1981; Hassanien, 2006; Luke & Ingold, 1990) omit consideration of interns' needs and aspirations, although both if these factors interact with the planning process of IBI programs in which they are brought up to create their role in supporting the involvement feature. Based on reviewed literature, this paper proposes a specific definition for the tourism IBI process concept, supported by the notion of "effective involvement" of students' perceptions (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Lee & Chao, 2008; Rao & DiCarlo, 2001), as follows:

IBI process consists of structured, supervised and well-timed activities and tourism workplace-based experiences that, guided by students' views, employers' needs, supervision guidelines and schools' missions, meshes classroom-based instruction with on-the-job knowledge while providing a reciprocally beneficial relationship among the internship stakeholders.

## Potential obstacles of students' involvement

A number of challenges obstructing the smooth inclusion of students in planning IBI programs were identified. According to Rothman (2007), responsibility of arranging the IBI program, determining IBI periods, treating interns as cheap labors, and unclear supervision features have been cited as being problematic.

Notably, although student interns are the focal point of work-based internship programs, students' involvement in the IBI planning framework can be challenging. Previous studies reveal that one of the greatest challenges facing a tourism intern's participation in the IBI planning process is how to conciliate between his/her responsibilities as a student and his/her role as a planner for the IBI strategies and action plans (Charles, 1992; Ju, Emenheiser, Clayton & Reynolds, 1999). Likewise, many academics (e.g., Brightman, 1989; Peng & Lin, 2009; Rothman, 2007) highlighted the conflicts of interest as the main challenge or dilemma that faces the interns' inclusion.

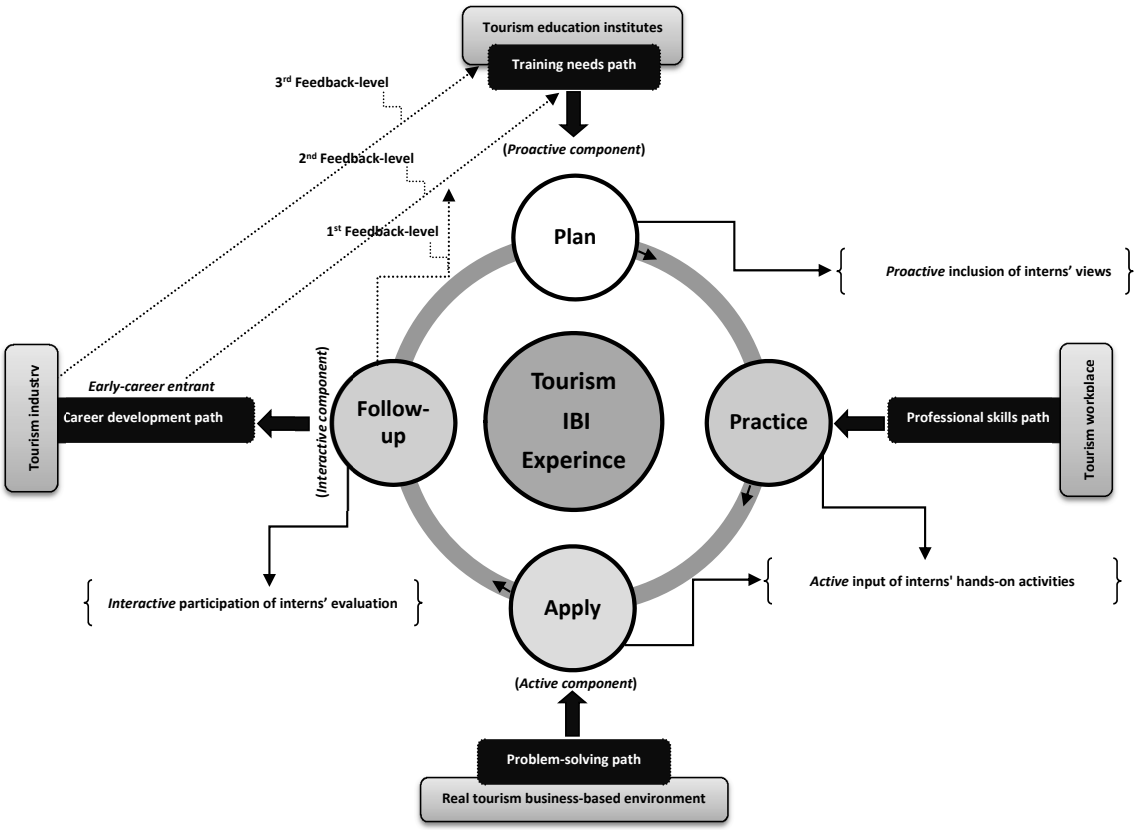
A specific example of involvement problems regarding the interns' interests versus industry directives is the planning considerations for the optimal IBI program period. The challenge behind this problem can be attributed to the students' perceptions that show that IBI periods are too short (Fox, 2001). Significantly, the majority of interns think that the most appropriate internship period should be six months (Mihail, 2006). This indicates that interns are willing to have a longer internship period and believe that they can learn more within a six-month period (Fox, 2001; True, 2008). In contrast, Mihail (2006) remarks that the majority of businesses are not interested in providing longer periods for IBI programs. Therefore, it is argued that conflicts of vision regarding the optimal period of work-related hands-on experience may bar the full involvement of interns in constructing IBI programs, particularly at the early stages (Huyton, 1991; Knutson, 1989).

While these previous articles report significant research supporting the view that IBI period can have a negative impact on a student's involvement in building IBI programs, the conclusion that IBI period alone can hinder student's input is based on a misinterpretation of the interns' interest. Founded upon the previous perspectives, in the next section, this article builds on the notion outlined in the proposed definition as well as the reviewed studies to develop a suggested conceptual and planning framework for a successful IBI plan.

## PPAF (plan-practice-apply-follow-up) cycle: A proposed conceptual and planning framework

In an attempt to verify the role of interns' participation in building IBI programs, by which internship stakeholders may achieve several goals including the provision of specific pathways that lead to effective training outcomes for all trainees, this paper argues that to facilitate development of industry-based competencies in a well-planned manner, interns should work closely with their teachers and supervisors, to eventually become an integral part of the IBI program planning process from the outset. These critical involvement features are represented in a four–phase process called the PPAF cycle (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
**PPAF tourism internship cycle (conceptual and planning framework)**




Source: modified based on (Kolb, 1984)

Fundamentally, Kolb's experiential learning cycle model was used to shape the theoretical framework of this PPAF model (Kolb, 1984). Arguably, the proposed PPAF framework provides a sequence of interns' activities for IBI planners and interns to follow. The PPAF cycle adheres to important phases that are essential for student interns, such as planning, practicing, applying, and self-monitoring, which are explained in the section below.

Firstly, through the proactive involvement in designing and making proposals for setting up IBI programs, interns will explore their role in transferring classroom knowledge into workplace competencies over determining the actual training needs path in their schoolroom environments. Secondly, by increasing interns' involvement through active hands-on practices and, thirdly, through innovative applications, this PPAF cycle gives interns the opportunity to propose alternative solutions, describe strengths and weaknesses of workplace experience, and submit problem-solving ideas with recommendations. Finally, through the interactive contribution by receiving and addressing regular feedback as well as by formal evaluation of interns' progress, internship program planners may recognize and appreciate the interns' planning role and responsibility in sustaining the training process and continued career development path.

As noticed, the proposed PPAF cycle, which is presented in Figure 1, incorporates a range of IBI planning issues. This cycle offers a model to follow when involving interns in constructing internship programs and protocols to capitalize on the students' training experience. Mainly, the full involvement of interns and follow-up procedures are examples of PPAF's belief that all internship paths are a process of reflecting on interns' needs and expectations to achieve a mutual useful rapport among the stakeholders. Further, it is argued that while the "plan" phase is primarily the intern's involvement itself, the first intern's inclusion feature precedes the actual IBI experience. An internship proposal is required to be developed by each student and approved by the department internship coordinator (Collins, 2002; Echtner, 1995). Debatably, the proposal not only ensures that the internship satisfies experiential requirements, but it also begins the concrete experience of the intern's proactive participation in the planning process (Kolb, 1984).

An advantage of the proposed conceptual framework is that it is designed to integrate interns' planning responsibilities and views into the internship experience to help ensure satisfactory accomplishment of the internship's objectives. Furthermore, the framework is considered to be flexible and can accommodate the various tourism internship settings, exemplified by the main stakeholders with their diverse strategic directions. It can similarly support the synthesis of planning tourism training studies undertaken from a variety of views. In addition, it provides a three-level monitoring feedback system through which the interns, as well as other stakeholders, can interactively identify and address eventual remedial actions in an appropriately well-timed manner. Ultimately, this may lead to shaping an early warning assessment scale of IBI problems experienced by tourism interns, which can help to re-identify the training needs for different categories of interns, which in turn can be used in re-drawing the IBI plan.

## Methodology

In light of the preceding discussion, the main research question of this study was: How do students perceive and describe their actual involvement as a tool for enhancing different phases of the planning

process of IBI programs? A quantitative research design was used to determine the relationship between interns' inclusion (as independent variable) and successful (plan-practice-apply-follow-up) phases of IBI programs (as dependent or outcome variables). The quantitative method used for the interns' survey was a paper-based questionnaire (Creswell, 1994; Mekawy, 2010; Mekawy, 2012), and the following specific questions were posed: (RQ1) what are the students' perceptions towards their full involvement's role and importance in designing IBI programs?; (RQ2) what are the students' perceptions concerning their proactive inclusion during the "plan" phase?; (RQ3) what are the students' perceptions regarding their active input during the "practice" and "apply" phases?; and (RQ4) what are the students' perceptions in relation to their interactive participation during the "follow-up" phase?

## Participants

The sampling frame of this study consisted of tourism and hospitality colleges in Egypt, in which undergraduate students are required to undertake an IBI program. For pragmatic reasons, using the flow theory approach of Huang, Backman and Backman (2010) and adopting a selective-sampling method, a total of five hundred undergraduate students enrolled in at least one-month IBI program at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels Management, Sadat City, previously Menoufiya, University in Egypt, were approached for this research. The participants were recruited voluntarily in a tourism class at the faculty premises and received an extra class credit for their participation. Informed consents were distributed to participants to protect their moral and legal rights as an ethical necessity as well as to inform them about the study aim.

A student was considered appropriate for the sample, regardless of his/her age; gender; grade; etc., if he/she had had experience with an IBI program in the last 12 months, which means that he/she had acquired suitable knowledge of IBI experience and, therefore, could "inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). During a class period of two hours the participants took part in a simulated IBI program planning process to be aware of the main four phases presented in Figure 1, and to give them basic information about the internship such as a brief summary of tourism workplace sites, hands-on tasks to do there, and why a newcomer to the workplace would be interested in participating in the planning process of an IBI program. This step was considered necessary to articulate the nuts and bolts of the IBI planning process that shapes participants' awareness and attitudes about their possible involvement features in each phase.

In addition, this orientation meeting presented instructions for participants to create a typical plan for an IBI program and prepare a set of protocols to take part in each planning phase. After the preparation stage, this study provided participants a one-hour in-class training workshop to become familiar with the possible involvement features of setting up an IBI plan and also provided a training manual for participants to experience the basics of implementation and supervision in industry locations. Finally, student interns were presented with a paper-based questionnaire that asked them to respond to questions that measured individual differences in interns' perceptions regarding their participation role and importance; the interns' inclusion in the "plan" phase; the interns' input in the "practice" phase; the interns' involvement in the "apply" phase; and the interns' inclusion in the "follow-up" phase.

## Measures and data collection

Data were collected in March 2012, using a semi-structured questionnaire (Creswell, 2007). The questions were formulated in a Likert-like format with a five-point response scale ranging from ''strongly agree'' (one) to ''strongly disagree'' (five). At the end of the in-class training workshop trained research facilitators administered the survey. The instrument was adapted from the work of Knemeyer and Murphy (2002) and Beggs *et al.* (2008) for administering interns' participation evaluation as well as from the work of True (2008) for implementing successful internship programs. The role and importance dimensions of interns' involvement were measured with an adaptation of the student-practitioner approach of Knemeyer and Murphy (2002) and Beggs *et al.* (2008).

Some of the original questions were slightly reformulated in the current study, and some were split into two independent items to improve clarity; new ones have also been added based upon related studies. Items are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4. The interns' perceptions regarding their full involvement scales were measured using the work of Lam and Ching (2007) and the short forms of Internal Needs Assessment, Final Assessment of Student Performance, and the Top Concerns of Interns Questionnaires (True, 2008). The focus of the evaluation was based on principles for implementing a successful internship program, developing effective training plan, and the quality of the self-evaluation process. Individual items on the instrument were grouped into categories utilizing Lam and Ching's factor analysis. The questionnaire was divided into five sections. The first part contained questions relating to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, but no names were collected, thus retaining the privacy and anonymity of participants. The other four parts evaluated the perceived views of participants towards the issues mentioned earlier.

## Data analysis

Firstly, the descriptive statistics and the profiles of the student interns were evaluated using SPSS 16.0 for Windows. The exploratory factor analysis was used to identify and to quantify all the dimensions designed to assess the relative significance of the IBI factors in predicting the overall role and importance of interns' full involvement. It was also used to explain the variance in the observed variables in terms of underlying latent factors. Thus, factor analysis offered not only the possibility of gaining a clear view of the data, but also the possibility of using the output in subsequent analyses (Kinnear & Gray, 2004).

The exploratory factor analysis and the Varimax rotation method with Kaiser Normalization were used to factor analyse the 47 internship variables into a set of composite factors; eigenvalues equal to or greater than one were considered significant and were chosen for interpretation. Such factor loadings can be considered ''practically significant'' at ± 0.50 or greater and chosen for analysis (Kinnear & Gray, 2004). Finally, the analysis was undertaken to validate the scale that was developed using these mentioned methods. As a result, besides subscale one that was dedicated to the demographic characteristics, a five-subscale instrument has been developed in which the other four subscales of the interns' perceptions towards IBI planning features were: role and importance of their involvement in designing IBI programs, proactive inclusion during the "plan" phase, active input during the "practice" and "apply" phases, and interactive participation during the "follow-up" phase.

## Quality and reliability

Based on the sample size (N=399), this study's results have a 4.9% sampling error with a 95% confidence level. This sample size was adequate for performing statistical analysis, based on studies by Marsh, Hau, Balla and Grayson (1998) and Westland (2010). Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α) was used to estimate the reliability of used scale by determining the average correlation of items within the test (Kinnear & Gray, 2004). It was found that the (α value Cronbach) for each sub-scale as 00.73, 0.79, 0.78, and 0.76 respectively. While the coefficient of internal consistency of the total scale reliability of students' full involvement features was calculated as 0.77.

Noticeably, all of the scores exceeded the recommended significance level of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Thus, these scores indicated that the instrument had an acceptable level of internal consistency for items measuring the same construct and may be considered as very good.

# Results and discussion

This section introduces and discusses the students' perceptions survey findings. The survey yielded much information regarding role and importance of their full involvement in the planning process and their needs. In most cases, the survey findings reinforced information gained during the literature review phase. Yet, the survey provided a higher level of specificity and allowed findings to be projected across a broader cross-section of the Egyptian IBI stakeholders. Findings from the survey are summarized in sub-sections 4.1 through 4.5 below.

## Students' perceptions across their full involvement in the IBI planning process

The recruitment effort resulted in 399 usable responses, representing an effective response rate of 79.8%. Of the respondents, 43% were male and 57% were female.

A majority (89%) reported participation in an IBI program lasting more than two months, while the remainder participated in shorter programs.

Nearly one-third of the participants (31.7%) have been paid for their training period, whereas the remaining 68.3% have completed their IBI period without any compensation. Among those who were compensated, 49.6% had a monthly income under US$50, 42.7% between $50 and $99, and 7.7% earned $100 or above.

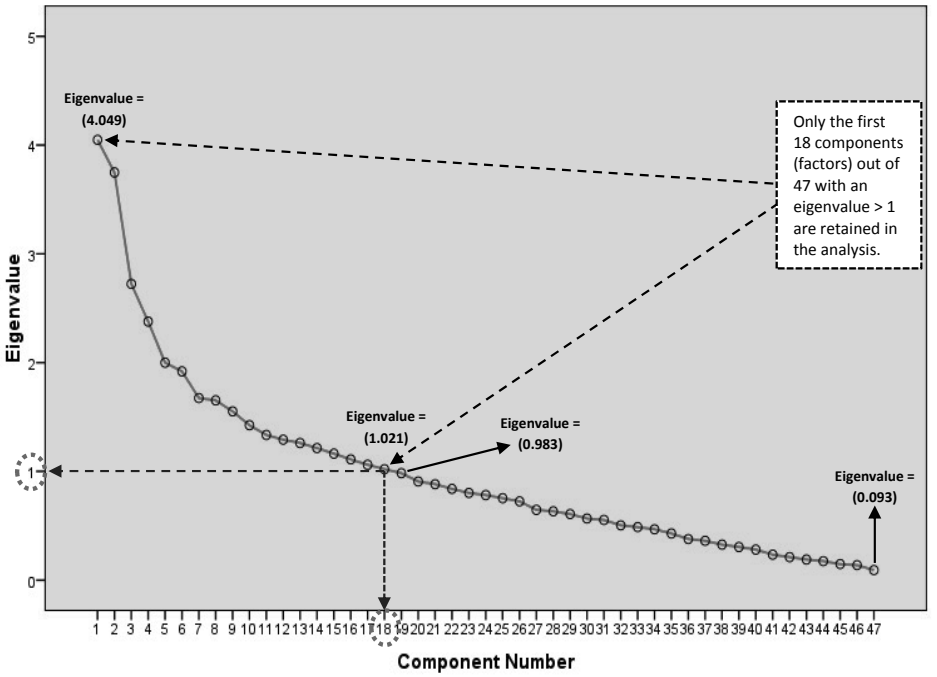
Interestingly, having compared that most Egyptian workers in the tourist business receive rather low monthly wages, in 2012, 1500 LE ($214) per month would be a very good salary, with most interns (92.3%), getting around US$100 per month and they are thus depending very much on this compensation to sustain their daily expenses.

This survey covered the entire undergraduate classes, for whom the IBI program is mandatory, including respondents among second-year students (19%), third-year students (28%) and fourth-year students (53%). Of the respondents, 56.9% had been placed with travel agents, 33.7% with tour operators, and 9.4% in airlines.

Of the respondents, 83.2% participated in internal IBI related workshops at the faculty's electronic virtual reality laboratory. This lab was established in 2006 to serve as a "practical training tool" to understand the dynamics and implications of conducting tourism experiences in immersive virtual reality simulations and other forms of simulated programs and tours in tourism entities in Egypt.

This study attempts to determine conceivable perceptions of tourism students from different undergraduate classes towards their full involvement aspects in the IBI planning process by employing reviewed related data on IBI programs and tourism students' perceptions, to generate factors that could obstruct students' involvement in the internship program planning phases from becoming more effective (Beggs *et al.*, 2006). A factor analysis test, as shown in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, reduced the 47 variables to 18 components (factors) with eigenvalues greater than one for each. This means that these 18 components have to remain in the analysis; to satisfy Kaiser's criterion, factors with an eigenvalue of less than one (currently represented by components 19–47) were excluded (Kinnear & Gray, 2004).

Figure 2
**The component scree plot of students' perceptions towards their involvement features**




In deciding the number of factors to retain in the analysis, a scree test was used (see Figure 2). Figure 2 clearly shows this finding where it can be seen that the "scree" begins to flatten out between the 18th and the 19th factors. Additionally, it is noticeable that component 19 has an eigenvalue of less than one (eigenvalue= 0.983<1), so only the first 18 components have been retained. As noticed, the results of statistical analysis Tables display that the extracted 18 factors explained 69.31% of the total variance explained (VE). This indicates that the students' perceptions may have been affected by previous involvement in related IBI hands-on activities that they experienced at their faculty's electronic virtual reality laboratory, which adapts the concept of "indoor virtual training" as a tool for developing the computer-based hands-on activities. In terms of realizing their actual planning role and responsibility

of being involved, however, there is no change in communality, suggesting that the interns' perceptions are not influenced by internship placements.

Therefore, this paper argues that although tourism education in Egypt has developed continuously and rapidly over the last decade, however, some schools and mentors are still using rules of ordinary disciplines to determine internship workplaces, regardless of students' perceptions. For that reason, imitation and innovation are both necessary to strengthen the planning framework of students' involvement of finding appropriate IBI workplace and that may benefits students by improving their understanding of the work environment and employers' expectations as well as by providing opportunity to undertake relevant courses, which count towards the student's exit credential and articulate into further education and training.

## Role and importance of interns' involvement in designing IBI programs

Tables of statistical analysis reveal the perception means, standard deviation (SD), communalities, eigenvalues, and loadings of interns' perceptions towards their involvement in the different stages of the IBI planning process. For comparison, rankings of components were also indicated, based on the initial eigenvalues and squared loadings. The results of mean values indicate that some variables have a stronger effect than others on the students' perceptions regarding the predictable role and importance of their inclusion in the planning process. All of the mean scores lay between 1.7393 and 4.7594 points, suggesting that students, in general, neither agreed nor disagreed with components that describe the role and importance features of their full involvement experience in designing an IBI planning process, but this was not to an impressive extent.

Data in Table 1 shows that for the majority of respondents, the importance of "making interns be paid" (97.2%; mean=3.7995; SD= 1.35613), ''helping interns to be hungry to learn, eager to make a good impression and willing to perform'' (92%; mean=4.1930; SD=1.04682), and the role of "providing opportunities to make interns well-represented in the IBI program plan" (89.2%; mean=2.0000; SD=0.40100) received the most responses of ''strongly agree''. On the other hand, the importance of ''helping trainee to advocate, when appropriate, through sharing strengths, needs, and aspirations'' (93.2%; mean=4.7594; SD=0.72795) received the most responses of ''strongly disagree". In this study, the highlighted importance of "making interns be paid" feature is perceived as valuable independent variable for supporting the successful IBI planning process through full involvement of interns.

This is perhaps unsurprising, given that a large portion of participants (68.3%) have completed their previous IBI experiences without any compensation. As a planning matter, students with unpaid internships usually have the additional time commitment of gainful employment elsewhere, which may restrict their available time for both internships and other academic coursework. Agencies, on the other hand, may feel reluctant to give interns greater responsibilities and assignments that are more challenging if the interns are not being paid (Walmsley, 2004). In other words, both the intern and agency may take the internship experience more seriously if pay is involved, thus resulting in a better and more meaningful internship experience. Accordingly, this study suggests that the useful link between IBI program planning and student involvement had both a positive and significant effect on the willingness of interns to effectively participate in the internship experience, and the latter had the greatest impact.

Table 1

**Interns' perceptions across their full involvement in IBI planning process - descriptive and factor analyses (N= 399)[a]**

| Factors/ variables* | Variables interpretations/ interns' views | 5-Point Likert Scale | | | | | | (Descriptives) | | | Factor analysis test[b] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1+2 | | 3 | | 4+5 | | | | | | |
| Subscale-two "Role and importance of full involvement" | For each of the following statements, please tell us to what extent you agree with it? | Strongly agree/ agree | | Neutral | | Strongly dis-agree/disagree | | M | SD | VE | Eigenvalues (Total) > 1 | Squared Loadings (Cumulative %) |
| | • I believe that full involvement does… | f | % | f | % | f | % | | | | | |
| V1 | Make us feel part of the team. | 233 | 58.4 | 63 | 15.8 | 103 | 25.8 | 2.6115 | 1.28461 | n/a | n/p | 0.725 |
| V2 | Reduce feelings of frustration. | 48 | 12 | 48 | 12 | 303 | 76 | 3.8070 | 1.02499 | n/a | n/p | 0.560 |
| V3 | Enhance the accessibility to supervisor (dates, times, and duration). | 110 | 27.6 | 30 | 7.5 | 259 | 64.9 | 1.7920 | 0.99967 | n/a | n/p | 0.648 |
| V4-RC5[c] | Make us be paid. | 388 | 97.2 | 5 | 1.3 | 6 | 1.5 | 3.7995 | 1.35613 | 4.254 | 1.999 | 0.819 |
| V5 | Develop interns-supervisors human relations. | 24 | 6 | 101 | 25.3 | 274 | 68.7 | 3.8822 | 0.87607 | n/a | n/p | 0.662 |
| V6 | Put a positive spin on any less-desirable details in terms of students' aspirations. | 252 | 63.2 | 35 | 8.8 | 112 | 28 | 2.2180 | 1.33942 | n/a | n/p | 0.606 |
| V7-RC16[c] | Benefit providing a meaningful IBI experience regarding the learning objectives. | 121 | 30.3 | 41 | 10.3 | 237 | 59.4 | 3.6266 | 1.37032 | 2.366 | 1.112 | 0.759 |
| V8 | An intern who was treated like an "insider" is much more likely to accept an IBI program. | 59 | 14.8 | 39 | 9.8 | 301 | 75.4 | 4.0802 | 1.14461 | n/a | n/p | 0.708 |
| V9-RC9[c] | Advantage speaking favorably about a workplace to our peers. | 317 | 79.4 | 2 | 0.5 | 88 | 20.1 | 2.5414 | 1.09254 | 3.302 | 1.552 | 0.784 |
| V10-RC8[c] | Help us to be hungry to learn, eager to make a good impression and willing to perform. | 367 | 92 | 14 | 3.5 | 18 | 4.5 | 4.1930 | 1.04682 | 3.518 | 1.654 | 0.790 |
| V11 | Allow intern to share important information related to his/her personal/academic circumstances that could affect programming, positively or negatively. | 50 | 12.5 | 37 | 9.3 | 312 | 78.2 | 1.7393 | 0.84606 | n/a | n/p | 0.691 |
| V12-RC15[c] | Help trainee to advocate, when appropriate, through sharing strengths, needs, and aspirations. | 21 | 5.3 | 6 | 1.5 | 372 | 93.2 | 4.7594 | 0.72795 | 2.475 | 1.163 | 0.760 |
| V13-RC10[c] | Provide opportunities to make interns well-represented in the IBI program plan. | 356 | 89.2 | 7 | 1.8 | 36 | 9 | 2.0000 | 0.40100 | 3.032 | 1.425 | 0.778 |

Key: = (M) = Mean, (SD) Standard deviation, (VE) = Variance extracted, (f) = Frequency, (%) =Percentage, (RC) = Ranked components or factors, (n/a) = Not available, (n/p) = Negligible proportion.
* Please note that subscale one was dedicated for the demographic characteristics.
a: Based upon the descriptive statistics, (SPSS, V.16.0).
b: Extraction method: Factor, Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
c: RC(5,16,9,8,15, and10)= Rankings of components underlying interns' full involvement in the IBI planning process as perceived by Egyptian tourism students from high to low.

## Students' perceptions concerning their proactive inclusion during the "plan" phase

Eight extracted factors described students' perceptions of their effective proactive inclusion to strengthen the "plan" phase (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Interns' perceptions across their proactive inclusion in IBI planning process - descriptive and factor analyses (N= 399)[a]**

| Factors/ variables | Variables interpretations/interns' views | 5-Point Likert Scale | | | | | | (Descriptives) | | | Factor analysis test[b] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1+2 | | 3 | | 4+5 | | | | | | |
| Subscale-three "Proactive inclusion" | For each of the following statements, please tell us to what extent you agree with it? | Strongly agree/ agree | | Neutral | | Strongly disagree/disagree | | M | SD | VE | Eigenvalues (Total) > 1 | Squared Loadings (Cumulative %) |
| | • I believe that proactive inclusion does… | f | % | f | % | f | % | | | | | |
| V14 | Help to develop a bottom-up IBI planning approach. | 332 | 83.2 | 9 | 2.3 | 58 | 14.5 | 2.3434 | 0.98476 | n/a | n/p | 0.679 |
| V15-RC14[c] | Define the interns' responsibilities. | 330 | 82.7 | 23 | 5.8 | 46 | 11.5 | 2.1454 | 1.00197 | 2.585 | 1.215 | 0.761 |
| V16-RC18[c] | Support identifying the most beneficial specific terms and conditions of IBI experience (e.g., dates, compensations "if any", reporting relationships, duties, tasks, working conditions ...etc.). | 294 | 73.7 | 76 | 19 | 29 | 7.3 | 2.3467 | 0.84602 | 2.172 | 1.021 | 0.745 |
| V17-RC2[c] | It injects new innovative planning ideas into IBI protocols. | 334 | 83.7 | 13 | 3.3 | 52 | 13 | 4.4261 | 1.06753 | 7.975 | 3.748 | 0.838 |
| V18-RC1[c] | Help ensuring that the program is structured in terms of hours and days per week. | 369 | 92.4 | 1 | 0.3 | 29 | 7.3 | 4.5764 | 0.58760 | 8.614 | 4.049d | 0.855 |
| V19-RC12[c] | Assist developing typical challenging work-place assignments relative to the students' abilities. | 248 | 62.2 | 83 | 20.8 | 68 | 17 | 2.1253 | 1.27769 | 2.748 | 1.291 | 0.771 |
| V20-RC13[c] | Aid confirming that IBI experience will incorporate the needs, abilities and academic goals of the students. | 17 | 4.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 382 | 95.7 | 4.7895 | 0.81493 | 2.685 | 1.262 | 0.771 |
| V21 | Help to closely work with both faculty and employer to establish specific learning objectives for student interns. | 35 | 8.8 | 2 | 0.5 | 362 | 90.7 | 1.5990 | 1.06785 | n/a | n/p | 0.627 |
| V22 | Make us be willing to incorporate our particular strengths. | 0.0 | 0.0 | 159 | 39.8 | 240 | 60.2 | 2.0501 | 1.30615 | n/a | n/p | 0.591 |
| V23-RC17[c] | Support carrying out the specific parts of the program plan that are student responsibilities, as collaboratively agreed through the proactive IBI program planning process. | 0.0 | 0.0 | 20 | 5 | 379 | 95 | 2.0902 | 0.73456 | 2.254 | 1.059 | 0.747 |
| V24-RC7[c] | Help the intern to identify the best experiential learning strategy for a specific hands-on task. | 110 | 27.6 | 16 | 4 | 273 | 68.4 | 3.8371 | 1.65065 | 3.563 | 1.675 | 0.796 |
| V25 | Empower interns to integrate their past, present, and future experiences and interests into the IBI plan. | 45 | 11.3 | 16 | 4 | 338 | 84.7 | 1.8972 | 1.34387 | n/a | n/p | 0.674 |
| V26 | Identify necessary training needs according to the vision of trainees, and ultimately, instructs the training needs path. | 312 | 78.2 | 37 | 9.3 | 50 | 12.5 | 1.4862 | 0.99202 | n/a | n/p | 0.718 |

Key: = (M) = Mean, (SD) Standard deviation, (VE) = Variance extracted, (f) = Frequency, (%) =Percentage, (RC) = Ranked components or factors, (n/a) = Not available, (n/p) = Negligible proportion.

a: Based upon the descriptive statistics, (SPSS, V.16.0).

b: Extraction method: Factor, Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

c: RC(14,18,2,1,12,13,17, and7)= Rankings of components underlying interns' proactive inclusion in the IBI planning process as perceived by Egyptian tourism students from high to low.

d: The first factor extracted with the largest eigenvalue.

Table 2 lists those factors in the order of their significance in accounting for the correlations between the overall perception of students towards their proactive involvement features and each factor in the battery, where it is clear that "It helps ensuring that the program is structured in terms of hours and days per week" is the most important factor in explaining the proactive planning features in question with the value of the test's coordinate, or loading (0.855), eigenvalue (4.049), and VE (8.614). This result articulates "strong agreement" in being able to proactively participate in adapting IBI programs that reflect interns' planning opinions to meet their time limits. This finding supports the conclusion of Aggett and Busby (2011), who pointed out that internship workloads should be timetabled at more appropriate times or be fully integrated into an evaluated module, as a pre-planning matter.

However, when compared to the degree of importance (0.0%) produced by simple frequencies for the twenty-third variable, "It supports carrying out the specific parts of the program plan that are student responsibilities, as collaboratively agreed through the proactive IBI program planning process", it becomes evident that difficulties in supporting proactive involvement in developing IBI programs probably exist. Therefore, it is argued that with a bit of proactive planning, the IBI will be more successful for the agency, the university, and the intern. Interestingly, when asked to identify potential benefits for students' proactive involvement, 334 out of 399 respondents (83.7%) indicated that proactive involvement would be considered a supportive planning threshold "to inject new innovative planning ideas into IBI protocols" with the value of the test's coordinate (0.838), eigenvalue (3.748), and VE (7.975).

The percentage of students surveyed who experienced problems with proactive input was much higher at 83.7% than the 36% reported in Gower & Mulvaney (2012:8). This may be due to the large number of experienced students recruited to this post-experience orientation meeting. Hence, this study claims that greater opportunities might proactively be provided to students in terms of planning, designing protocols, and the encouragement of new ideas and personal growth, if the desired IBI planning outcomes are to be reached.

## Students' perceptions regarding their active input during the "practice" and "apply" phases

Table 3 is presented here to give an insight into the active input aspects of students in the IBI planning process in general and in practice and apply phases in particular.

As shown in Table 3 , the majority of respondents (85%) perceived that "allowing the intern to suggest necessary basics that help in developing his/her exceptional competencies and practical skills", with the value of the test›s coordinate (0.835), eigenvalue (2.723), and VE (5.794), is the most important feature of active input. This result confirms previous efforts of Thiel and Hartley (1997) and Chen and Shen (2012), who debate how active involvement of students is characterized by direct enhancement, allowing students to gain unique professional capabilities, which help the interns to resolve problems effectively by considering appropriate options before making a decision. Notably, results also show that student interns are interested in "defining needed hands-on practices and applications related to their area of study" as the second most important aspect of their active involvement with the value of the test's coordinate (0.797), eigenvalue (1.919), and VE (4.082).

Table 3

**Interns' perceptions across their active input in IBI planning process - descriptive and factor analyses (n= 399)[a]**

| Factors/ variables | Variables interpretations/ interns' views | 5-Point Likert Scale | | | | | | (Descriptives) | | | Factor analysis test[b] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1+2 | | 3 | | 4+5 | | | | | | |
| Subscale-four "Active input" | For each of the following statements, please tell us to what extent you agree with it? | Strongly agree/agree | | Neutral | | Strongly disagree/dis-agree | | M | SD | VE | Eigenvalues (Total) > 1 | Squared Loadings (Cumulative %) |
| | • I believe that active input does… | f | % | f | % | f | % | | | | | |
| V27 | Define the opportunities to develop intern's creativity. | 185 | 46.4 | 74 | 18.5 | 140 | 35.1 | 2.8997 | 1.28774 | n/a | n/p | 0.560 |
| V28 | State the needed efforts to make the IBI practice as a real learning experience for interns. | 111 | 27.8 | 71 | 17.8 | 217 | 54.4 | 3.4361 | 1.38923 | n/a | n/p | 0.655 |
| V29 | Help to define required practical assignments that lead to develop interns' critical thinking, judgment, interpretation, and problem-solving skills and eventually, to improve both their overall professional skills and problem-solving paths. | 245 | 61.4 | 49 | 12.3 | 105 | 26.3 | 2.4637 | 1.47953 | n/a | n/p | 0.719 |
| V30 | Provide appropriate levels of responsibility consistent with intern's ability and growth. | 208 | 52.1 | 59 | 14.8 | 132 | 33.1 | 2.7870 | 1.45355 | n/a | n/p | 0.609 |
| V31 | Address the interns' visions regarding the appealing business-based environment that they want to come to practice (e.g., to be free from cattiness, unnecessary drama, and oversized egos). | 246 | 61.6 | 43 | 10.8 | 110 | 27.6 | 2.3317 | 1.54057 | n/a | n/p | 0.676 |
| V32- RC6[c] | Help to define needed hands-on practices and applications related to intern's area of study. | 302 | 75.7 | 41 | 10.3 | 56 | 14 | 4.3033 | 1.10083 | 4.082 | 1.919 | 0.797 |
| V33 | Enrich both the "practice" and "apply" phases through empowering the intern to be involved, to the best of his/her ability, in the development of appropriate tasks, assignments, and services. | 180 | 45.1 | 39 | 9.8 | 180 | 45.1 | 2.9524 | 1.44939 | n/a | n/p | 0.524 |
| V34 | Assist in determining the valuable cooperativeness of fellow workers/interns. | 211 | 52.9 | 48 | 12 | 140 | 35.1 | 2.7218 | 1.49549 | n/a | n/p | 0.481 |
| V35- RC3[c] | Allow the intern to suggest necessary basics that help in developing his/her exceptional competencies and practical skills. | 304 | 76.2 | 26 | 6.5 | 69 | 17.3 | 4.1178 | 0.95036 | 5.794 | 2.723 | 0.835 |

Key: = (M) = Mean, (SD) Standard deviation, (VE) = Variance extracted, (f) = Frequency, (%) =Percentage, (RC) = Ranked components or factors, (n/a) = Not available, (n/p) = Negligible proportion.
a: Based upon the descriptive statistics, (SPSS, V.16.0).
b: Extraction method: Factor, Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
c: RC(6 and 3)= Rankings of components underlying interns' active input in the IBI planning process as perceived by Egyptian tourism students from high to low.

Previous studies identified similar findings (e.g., Lam & Ching, 2007; Waryszak, 2000), pointing out that student trainees would be satisfied if they were given a certain degree of decision-making in the workplace (through the practice phase) instead of following strict operational policies and procedures (through the apply phase). However, it seems that due to the lack of active input in the Egyptian context, student interns appear to be afraid of taking the risk of solving workplace related problems. Furthermore, these problems may lead to psychological distress, depression, and frustration (Lam & Ching, 2007). Therefore, it is argued that through active input features, interns may address their role in developing the required practical assignments needed to improve both their professional skills and problem-solving paths in the workplace location as a planning threshold.

## Students' perceptions in relation to their interactive participation during the "follow-up" phase

Researching the follow-up features from the students' point of view was important, because this presented a novel and diverse perspective on the fourth dilemma in question. In this section, the goal of the survey was to explore Egyptian students' views regarding their interactive participation aspects. The results of this issue are given in Table 4.

Table 4

**Interns' perceptions across their interactive participation in IBI planning process - descriptive and factor analyses (n= 399)[a]**

| Factors/ variables | Variables interpretations/ interns' views | 5-Point Likert Scale | | | | | | (Descriptives) | | | Factor analysis test[b] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1+2 | | 3 | | 4+5 | | | | | | |
| Subscale-five "Interactive participation" | For each of the following statements, please tell us to what extent you agree with it? | Strongly agree/agree | | Neutral | | Strongly disagree/disagree | | M | SD | VE | Eigenvalues (Total)> 1 | Squared Loadings (Cumulative %) |
| | • I believe that interactive participation does… | f | % | f | % | f | % | | | | | |
| V36 | Help in determining appropriate experimental educational resources, IBI programming supports and workplace equipment requirements. | 137 | 34.3 | 6 | 1.5 | 256 | 64.2 | 3.3835 | 1.53709 | n/a | n/p | 0.616 |
| V37 | Assist in ensuring successful entry into real career life. | 147 | 36.8 | 28 | 7 | 224 | 56.2 | 3.3459 | 1.47532 | n/a | n/p | 0.589 |
| V38- RC4[c] | Benefit students to self-evaluate. | 339 | 85 | 23 | 5.8 | 37 | 9.2 | 4.6241 | 1.03653 | 5.057 | 2.377 | 0.820 |
| V39 | Support in confirming that intern's self-criticism is coupled with clear direction on how to make improvements. | 106 | 26.5 | 40 | 10 | 253 | 63.4 | 3.5689 | 1.32416 | n/a | n/p | 0.693 |
| V40 | Ensure that a transition plan is in place at the end of interns' IBI experience for taking the "next step" in their career development path. | 347 | 87 | 18 | 4.5 | 34 | 8.5 | 1.6165 | 1.02522 | n/a | n/p | 0.698 |
| V41 | Assist to inform the education curriculum with needed enhancements. | 121 | 30.3 | 23 | 5.8 | 255 | 63.9 | 3.5088 | 1.50853 | n/a | n/p | 0.677 |
| V42 | Help to offer actual feedback on intern's progress and abilities. | 136 | 34.1 | 35 | 8.8 | 228 | 57.1 | 3.3484 | 1.42710 | n/a | n/p | 0.722 |

Table 4 **Continued**

| Factors/ variables | Variables interpretations/ interns' views | 5-Point Likert Scale | | | | | | (Descriptives) | | Factor analysis test[b] | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1+2 | | 3 | | 4+5 | | | | | | |
| Subscale-five "Interactive participation" | For each of the following statements, please tell us to what extent you agree with it? | Strongly agree/agree | | Neutral | | Strongly disagree/disagree | | M | SD | VE | Eigenvalues (Total)> 1 | Squared Loadings (Cumulative %) |
| | I believe that interactive participation does… | f | % | f | % | f | % | | | | | |
| V45- RC11[c] | Assist 4th year students to find full-time employment. | 337 | 84.5 | 32 | 8 | 30 | 7.5 | 2.3609 | .97201 | 2.840 | 1.335 | 0.773 |
| V46 | Support interns to act as professionals. | 315 | 78.9 | 47 | 11.8 | 37 | 9.3 | 1.7143 | 1.11345 | n/a | n/p | 0.682 |
| V47 | Support interns' self-commitment to enhance their performance. | 311 | 77.9 | 49 | 12.3 | 39 | 9.8 | 1.6441 | 1.10215 | n/a | n/p | 0.602 |

Key: = (M) = Mean, (SD) Standard deviation, (VE) = Variance extracted, (f) = Frequency, (%) =Percentage, (RC) = Ranked components or factors, (n/a) = Not available, (n/p) = Negligible proportion.
a: Based upon the descriptive statistics, (SPSS, V.16.0).
b: Extraction method: Factor, Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
c: RC(4 and 11)= Rankings of components underlying interns' interactive participation in the IBI planning process as perceived by Egyptian tourism students from high to low.

Initially, some key findings from the conducted EFA provide evidence that the interactive involvement feature, ''benefiting students to self-evaluate'', is the most important aspect for student trainees, with 339 out of 399 respondents (85%) choosing it as such, giving it the highest mean value (mean = 4.6241) and the smallest (SD = 1.03653). Interestingly, going beyond the simple descriptive statistics confirms the students' perception regarding the self-evaluate feature with the value of the test's coordinate (0.797), eigenvalue (1.919), and VE (4.082). These findings suggest that student interns are primarily concerned with interactive participation in self-evaluation issues; however, this may be more a reflection of the questions participations in the survey were asked than it was a reflection of their primary concerns since no open-ended questions were asked.

This paper suggests that through the PPAF's fourth stage, interns can do this by filling out self-evaluation forms, taking tests, writing revisions of IBI work, asking questions, and participating in discussions. Consequently, the argument is that when students evaluate themselves, they are assessing what they know, do not know, and would like to know. When considering the postulate that fourth-year students already prepare themselves to become early career entrants (see Figure 1), it becomes possible to identify the most noticeable follow-up feature of the interns' planning role, which is limited to the need to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses as well as to become more familiar with their own beliefs and possibly their misconceptions. It is, therefore, possible to suggest that the self-evaluate feature will help interns to set goals that they feel they can attain with the new knowledge they have about themselves.

# Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to explore how tourism students' perceptions can be used to develop successful IBI programs and to determine the possible challenges that could affect interns' full involvement in the IBI planning process. Determining the students' involvement aspects in the IBI planning process was not an easy task, especially in view of the complexity and diversity of the subject

matter. Academically, the authors believe that the core value of the study is derived from the developed conceptual and planning framework of the PPAF tourism internship cycle, which made it possible to structure the integration of the interns' planning tasks and opinions into the IBI experience, to confirm achievement of the IBI's goals, and to analyse the underlying factors that affect successful student involvement in a broader perspective.

Practically, the majority of surveyed students think that conducting a 'group meeting' with the mentor teacher, as an innovative practical way to involve interns into the plan phase, to discuss issues that arise during the IBI and to support creative and educative planning practices and problem solving is needed. Thus, it is suggested that schools, as a proactive strategy, should help mentor teachers and interns in developing shared understandings about how they will work together in initiating internship protocols and programs to support the intern's learning.

Notably, this paper highlights that student interns should receive a full opportunity to be involved in the planning process and a reasonable compensation for their training time. This can only occur if they are involved appropriately and can take advantage of opportunities to express their needs and expectations in this matter. If this is to occur, then internship planning must go beyond understanding concepts and must demonstrate appropriate usage of quality training principles in a tourism related internship, to address student interns' needs and expectations by answering the present study's four questions, posed earlier. However, in order to ensure that the IBI experience meets the needs and expectations of the student intern, it is important to understand how he/she views the internship benefits as well as the expected outcomes that are based upon his/her full-involvement in the IBI planning and implementation processes.

Importantly, this paper concludes that the success of planning an IBI program depends on the partnership between representatives of the organization, the college and the student. These three parties need to agree on the components of the IBI plan, the responsibilities of each party, and the reporting requirements. The college role is the critical link. The responsibilities of the college may include offering students access to industry internship opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in a "real world" professional environment; assigning a mentor teacher, who can help the intern make connections between prior and current studies within the IBI program and classroom practices; helping to ensure that the intern benefits as much from the IBI as possible; assisting to clarify the mutual expectations of intern and host through an internship plan, setting out the main tasks in advance; negotiating an appropriate sequence of activities and responsibilities that promote interns' learning to practice; identifying areas where the intern needs support and guidance in learning to teach, and develop strategies to promote the intern's professional growth in these areas; and assisting the interns in identifying strategies for coping, in ways that promote continued learning, with the various demands that they will face during the IBI period.

Despite its contributions, the present study has some limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, the study sample was small. Second, all Egyptian participants were students of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Sadat City University, which provides its students with useful related industry internship hands-on activities, including electronic virtual reality programs in its own laboratory. This might affect the research results of perceptions of participants and lead to higher satisfaction ratings than might be seen among other Egyptian tourism students who do not participate in these voluntary

groups. Future research should include samples that are more diverse. Third, because this research consisted of a short quantitative survey, I only obtained information regarding the perceptions of Egyptian undergraduate tourism students enrolled in one of the public universities. More information that is detailed might be obtained from qualitative research with focus groups or participant observations.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