

## THE IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION IN TEACHING: A TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION APPROACH

**Dina Mostafa Weheba**  
*University of Alexandria*

**Maher Abd El Kader**  
*University of Alexandria*

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*Teaching is an exciting adventure in which both the teacher and the students participate. The Teaching Philosophy includes basic communication approaches; (a) Passion and Communication. (b) Fairness: to understand students as individuals and students. (c) Critical thinking: as lecturers should be challenged to try to deliver course materials in different ways and from different perspectives. (d) Humour and fun; Pleasing students by being approachable will make them more determined to excel in their assignments and lecturers will be inspired by their students. Communication in the teaching process help students attach concepts to their own lives, as students will apply what they learn in class to the world around them. The researcher happened to apply some approaches on random sample of Hotel-Department students, at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, University of Alexandria. The importance of this study lies in the new trend of developing the education process nowadays, which will require the participation of students for best results.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Learning is a core activity in higher education by bringing students and staff together into a community of scholars engaged in active learning and the pursuit of knowledge. Universities are committed to sustaining an environment which fosters and supports the active learning process. It should fulfil this role in a number of ways.

This paper describes a series of approaches that were conducted on a sample of students in Hotel Department, within undergraduate courses. The approaches were represented in various forms achieved by the



researcher to make a two-way communication approach (*Student-Lecturer*) to enhance student learning and motivation, allowing better attendance, awareness and relationship accomplished.

The aim of the paper is to represent some approaches applied by the researcher to try to reach better communication and relationship with students, which showed that such communication and being connected with students can be the lost link to have better students and better ways of teaching, as both the student and the lecturer benefit from such communication in class.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Binstead, (1982) has identified three types of learning cycles: (a) Reflection: Which occurs when a student is gathering thoughts before writing or perceiving a situation from different perspectives, (b) Discovery: Is the mode that may happen when a learner is doing an active task and receiving feedback, and (c) Reception: The mode operating when a learner is listening to a lecture or reading.

Analoui (1995) argued that recently established teaching and learning development units in universities should adopt more realistic approach to promote high teaching standards. Since teaching constitutes only one aspect of teachers', lecturers' and trainers' activities to manage learning situations.

A paper represented by Rodrigues, (2004), covered ten business teaching/learning techniques. The study used a survey questionnaire to ask students to rate the importance level of each technique. The conclusion was that the study provided a framework that can help lecturers understand that different students and different situations require different instructional techniques, which resembles the findings of the present research in that not all students are the same, and the used approach and the data collected through the introductory papers can also help lecturers to adapt the best techniques to use in teaching. At the University of Adelaide, Australia, there is a system called *Student Evaluation of Learning & Teaching* (SELT) which is used systematically to inform learning and teaching improvements. In order to establish this system, the following major priorities for faculties were put:

- Developing a system for monitoring, analyzing and reporting results at faculties.

- Establishing a mechanism for reporting SELT outcomes and actions to students within 3 months of evaluating received reports.
- Place strategies, practice and policies supporting student feedback, including course SELT results on the university website.

These strategies had a target date, as well as measuring the achieving of each sub-strategy.

Another study by Ngware and Ndirangu in 2005, reported findings on teaching effectiveness and feedback mechanisms in Kenyan University, which can guide management in developing a quality control policy. The study showed that there was no clear university policy on evaluating teaching effectiveness despite its importance in quality control. Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) was found to be unreliable; as feedback form evaluation was not made available to respondents. One academic program that used feedback forms in teaching, formed a central aspect of quality assurance to make sure that expectations are being met and teaching standards are being reached. For this purpose, the University of Malta relies on feedback from external examiners and from students study-unit feedback forms. ([www.qac.org](http://www.qac.org))

Another study which was conducted in the UK (Thomas & Harris, 2000) regarding a questioning of the supposed connections between teaching quality and staff research, as result showed a negative relationship between these activities, in terms of student experience. This paper argues that encouraging and enabling research among academic staff, not only enhances their job satisfaction, but it also improves the education experience of their student. Such research can best be accomplished by getting continuous feedback from students as suggested in the present study in Alexandria.

As for applying ethics, a study aimed to find out the ethical beliefs of hospitality and tourism students, was conducted in Hong Kong by (Yeung, Wong & Chan, 2002) by using a 21-ethical-statement questionnaire, the lowest ethical standard was found towards 1- violations of faculty rules, followed by plagiarism and copying assignments. The latter was one of the findings of the recent study, and could only be noticed when all assignments are actually revised and read by the lecturer her/himself. It was recommended that priority should be given to the teaching of business ethics, as it impacts students' moral development and future career in the industry, therefore matching another finding of the importance of using business ethics during the students' academic years.

A paper that outlined the aim of university lecturers wishing to use the internet for teaching and learning, was presented by Fayter, (1998) evaluated some benefits of using the internet, covering the design and development of the course. It also considered some important points that lecturers should bear in mind before using the internet.

The present study covers a series of communication approaches, applied on a sample of students in Hotel Department, (undergraduates) in a try to discover the importance of communication in teaching, and how communicating with students can help in knowing their styles, thus adopting the lectures to match as much styles of students as possible. Therefore better teaching atmosphere can be applied that serves both the lecturer and his/her students to have smoother lectures and better understanding and performance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The chosen sample for this study included some of the 4<sup>th</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, in the Hotel Department, at the Faculty of Tourism & Hotels, University of Alexandria.

The researcher started involving the students in such feedbacks since 2004, but the approaches were developed to be numerous within 2006. Students were given a questionnaire form, consisting of 10 main questions to answer. The data of the research were collected through a questionnaire form, distributed among students and placed on the Group (online) to be answered. About 90 questionnaires were distributed, representing a sample size of about 45% of the total number of the population. The respondents represented about 77% of the total distributed questionnaires. (about 35% of the total population)

The research method used in this study is the descriptive method, and this type of research did not have hypothesis given, as it was meant to study the effect of the applied approaches on the students and reach results regarding their responses, to better examine the approaches, how they were conducted, their results, and how they actually affected the studied sample.

### **Presentation of the study**

The study was conducted by adopting the following approaches:

1. An Introductory Paper to be filled by the students themselves, at the beginning of the academic year. These papers included some

points such as (name, school, city, first and second foreign language, as well as their hobbies and interests). It is very important to be introduced to the lecturer, as this connection increases the chances of better relationship, respect and loyalty, which in turn is the basic factor in the success of the lecture.

2. A Feedback Form given to students to "honestly" evaluate the courses' contents, lectures' methods and tools as well as the lecturer.
3. Setting "Codes of Ethics" in which the students themselves shared in putting and suggesting its codes, to have order in class, among other points. Codes of ethics is very important because it helped the students know their rights and their responsibilities, giving a mutual basis in communication between the student and the lecturer, which allowed smoother, easier understanding of lectures, as well as more respectable communication.
4. Starting an Online Group, only for the Hotel Department Students, where they shared ideas, either by exchanging messages or through live discussions. Students could also have their lectures found in the group for any future use or downloads.
5. The researcher was available online for chats and discussions, for all group members, as well as for all students who just wanted to discuss topics online (*available email address*)
6. Giving Extra Lectures in Professional & Social Etiquette to discuss the common points that can help students either in their careers or in their personal social lives. (Lectures were also available in the group for downloads and reviews)
7. A study visit was arranged (for 2<sup>nd</sup> year students) to allow them to see and experience what they have just finished learning about.
8. A Survey form was distributed after the visit was done, to get the students' opinions about the visit; how they evaluated the visit, and how they evaluated their own attitudes during the visit, as well as any suggestions they have to better organize such visits in the future.
9. Mid-Term exam papers were given back to students, after being corrected, and comments about their mistakes and how to improve their answers in the future (which was something students did not expect to get) This means that their papers and answers were actually read thoroughly, corrected and comments given to each and every one of them on a separate basis. This also gave the lecturer a hint about any cheating possibilities that

might have happened, as some sort of seating arrangement is done during the exam, allowing the lecturer to know who cheated, this resulted in almost no cheating was done on the final exam, remarkably. Students had a belief that their answers were not accurately read, so this was a way of making them know that all what they wrote was actually read and evaluated.

10. 1A Final Survey was given to students, to know their opinions in all practiced approaches, how important they found them, and why, ending the survey with any suggested ideas to help improve the two-way communication approaches in the future.

These approaches helped decreasing the barriers between the student & lecturer, and allowed us to communicate freely with our lecturer, as a respected, and a trusted member of our family.

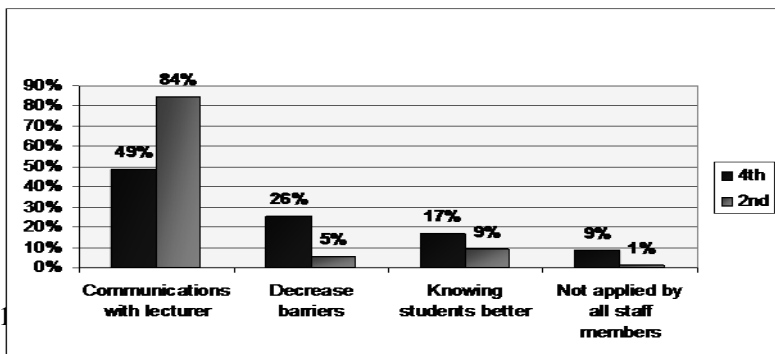
Aiming to assess the students' opinions, regarding the several teaching communication approaches the questionnaire form consisted of 10 statements, using Likert scale (on a 1-3 range) rating their choices as Not Important, Important and Very Important. The results gathered students' explanation and reasoning for their choices as well as showing how each approach helped them in the learning process.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Introductory paper

The highest reason given by both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students, regarding this approach, was that it made them feel that there is a better communication with their lecturer, giving them the feeling that they are properly introduced as individuals, as well as decreasing the barriers in communication with their lecturer. The 4<sup>th</sup> year-students had a main complaint that it was not applied by all staff members.

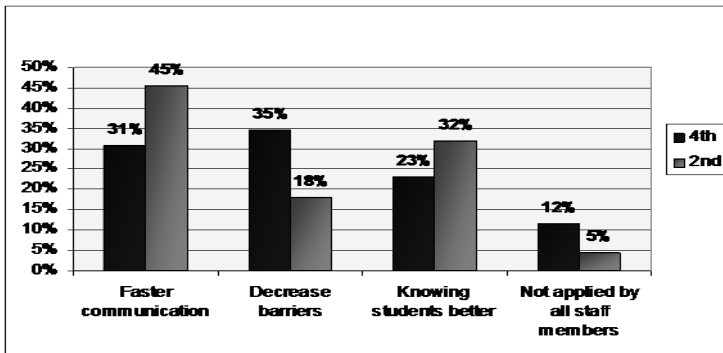
**Figure 1.** Responses of students for introductory papers approach



## Feedback forms

To 2<sup>nd</sup> year-students, the feedback forms gave them the impression that it was a way of a faster communication between lecturer and student, as they felt that their suggestions and opinions were adopted faster, for their benefit, whenever possible.

**Figure 2.** Responses of students for feedback form approach



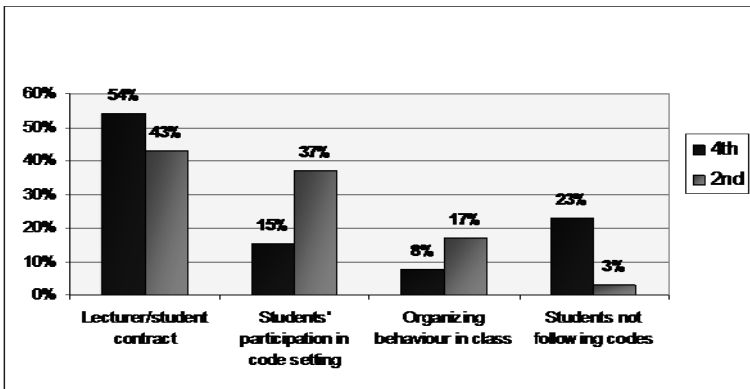
## Codes of ethics

Responses of both 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students showed that applying these codes of ethics was as a two-way contract, mutually respected and applied. As 2<sup>nd</sup> year-students were the first year in specialization, they enjoyed sharing in setting the codes themselves, and found out that the codes also helped organizing their behaviour in class, which made lectures go smoother as they benefited more this way. The minor percentage in both years responded that it was not followed by all students, specially in 4<sup>th</sup> year, which was the main difference in the results, as it proves that it is more useful to apply such approaches from first years at the faculty, or with 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, it will be more likely to have them follow and shape their characters in a better way, and obtain better manners during their studying years, specially when the approaches are applied in all lectures.

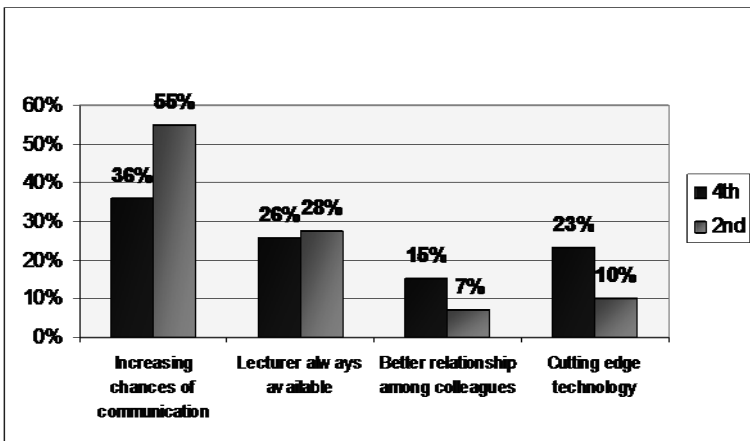
## Hotel department online group

For both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year-students, having this online group made them feel that they have better chances of communicating with their lecturer, even during the lecturer's days off, 2<sup>nd</sup> year-students were more participating in the group, with their opinions and discussions. Getting replies online made the communication faster and made the students feel that it was a better way of using technology in communication with either each other and in the department.

**Figure 3.** Responses of students for codes of ethics approach



**Figure 4.** Responses of Students for online group approach



## Online discussions and chats with friends and lecturer

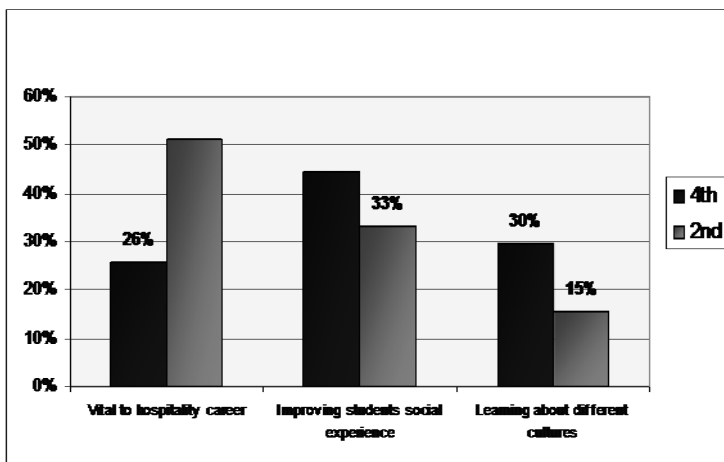
These were almost the same results as of the previous approach, as they are both dealing with technology and internet, the main difference was that; to some students it was not applicable as they didn't have access to the internet or as not all students do have computers at home, so that made the process somehow difficult to this category. On the other hand, some of the responses showed that some students lacked the ability to use technology, and that led to the suggestion of giving students the chance to "get some summer training" at the faculty's labs to improve such needed requirement for the hospitality career.

## Extra lectures of professional and social etiquette

The analysis of the responses regarding these extra lectures, which were given to students after their basic lecture, showed that the majority of students of second year felt that these lectures were vital to their career and demanded more of such lectures as they were found helpful in improving the students' social experience.

Students had the chance to learn about different cultures and how they should be dealing with guests and each other according to social and professional etiquette. Some students actually got the chance to apply some of the studied points in reality, and it felt so good for them to know that the lectures actually helped in communicating with others.

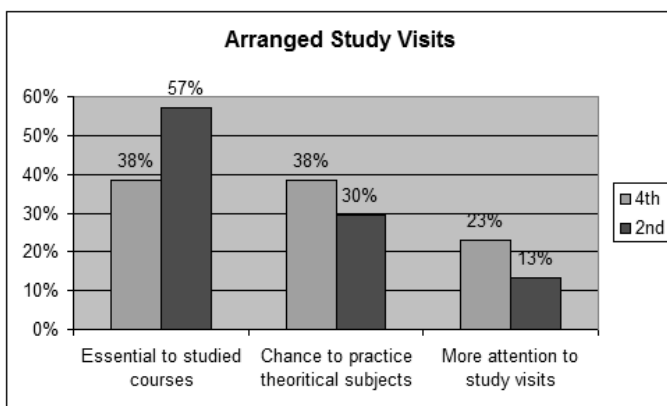
Figure 5. Responses of students for extra lectures approach



### Arranged study visits

For 2<sup>nd</sup> year-students, who were the ones who actually applied the visit, their responses showed that they consider such visits to be essential to see what they studied in their courses, as well as being a chance to apply what was studied theoretically. As for 4<sup>th</sup> year-students, their responses showed almost the same, and they suggested that such visits should be given more attention, and should be organized more often, as to the department, it is essential to see and experience what had been studied in books.

**Figure 6.** Responses of students for the study visit approach



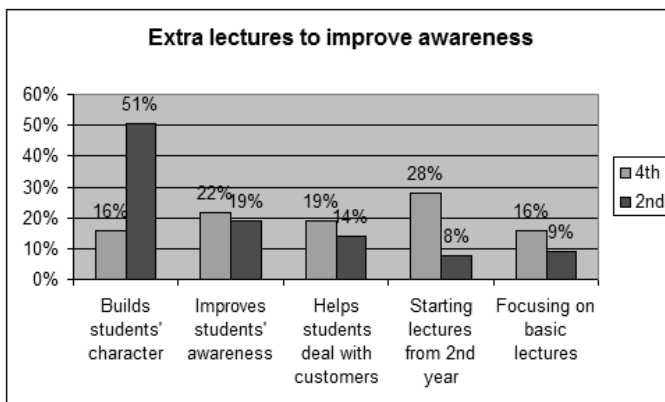
### Suggested extra lectures to improve awareness

Students were asked if they find suggested extra lectures to be given to them, to improve their awareness about how to best deal with tourists, as well as how some rules should be followed to give better impression about the city and people. The responses of students showed that it can be very useful to have such lectures, as they can help build their characters in general. For 4<sup>th</sup> year-students, they also agreed, suggesting that such lectures can better be started earlier, like 2<sup>nd</sup> year or even 1<sup>st</sup> year, to give better chance for students to know more by the time they graduate. The students who thought that they should just focus on their basic lectures,

had a wrong idea, that they will have to take exams in such extra lectures, which is not intended to happen. The main goal of these lectures is to improve knowledge and awareness of students in general to give better image.

In general, to the majority of students in both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year, the course that included all these approaches was found to be useful for them, as it applied a better way of communication with lecturer, thus making it smoother for both parties to make use of lectures and their contents. The students gave further suggestions that, from their point of view, will help have better department, having analyzed these suggestions, it was found that they were completely different for both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year-students. (See figures 8 & 9)

**Figure 7.** Responses of students for suggested extra lectures



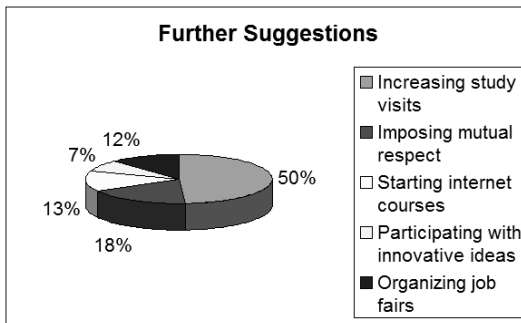
### Further suggestions of second and fourth year students

The main suggestions made by second-year students were as shown on figure 8, as students suggested increasing and having more study visits related to their careers and study.

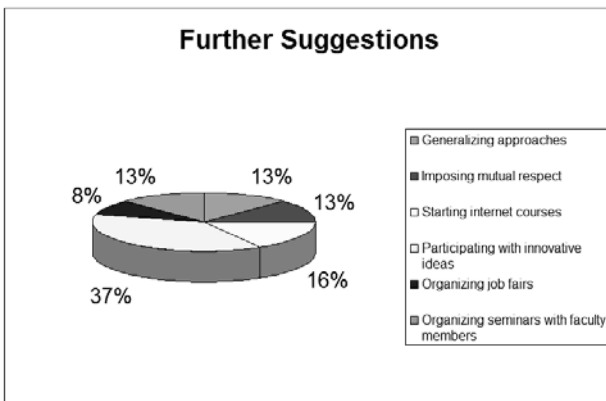
They also liked the idea of imposing mutual respect between the teaching staff and students, to make it more comfortable to communicate. Most of them felt that they need to start having internet courses to increase their knowledge about that area, which will eventually help them get their lectures online, as well as communicating with their friends and lecturer more effectively.

Most of the students liked the idea of participating with new and innovative ideas in class or through the online group, they liked it when they felt that their voice was heard, and there was nothing wrong in expressing what they want to say in a proper and respective way. Students also felt that organizing job fairs and having a closer opportunity to make contact with the professionals in the field, to know what to be expected and what is required from them in their career.

**Figure 8.** Further suggestions of 2<sup>nd</sup> year students



**Figure 9.** Further suggestions of 4<sup>th</sup> year students



As for the 4<sup>th</sup> year students, their suggestions were not the same as the ones put by 2<sup>nd</sup> year students. The students suggested that these approaches should be generalized to be effective by all other staff

members, and to start them from their second year at the faculty (first specialty year at the department), as they felt that applying these approaches made a noticeable difference.

The students liked the idea of imposing mutual respect between students and their lecturers, which is not common nowadays in the education attitude, as some lecturers do not like to hear what students have to say, although they are the core of the educational process and hearing them out can help make the required changes to improve the quality of the whole process.

The 4<sup>th</sup> year students also felt the importance of using the computers and being able to keep in touch with their lecturers and friends through the group and the internet, so those who did not have access to the internet or did not know how to do so, suggested to have internet courses to help them communicate effectively.

Students felt that they can participate with their ideas and opinions through the group, or through the feedback forms, which made them feel they are part of the whole process.

Students wanted to have the faculty organising job fairs for them, just before they graduate, so that they can be marketed, as well as having a better chance to know what hoteliers and managers are looking for in the graduates in the field of hospitality.

The last thing they suggested was to have some kind of seminars with staff members, a kind of gathering where both parties can exchange ideas and be heard.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

**Using introductory papers** showed that students of 2nd year did not have an earlier chance to talk to one another before this introductory paper, as many students are not from Alexandria (different cultures and interests) meanwhile, the introductory paper showed that many students have good-enough capabilities to use the computer tools. There are no clear characteristics for choosing students in this department. Many students have very good potentials to work in the hospitality career (although they have obvious defects in their foreign language). These potentials can never be noticed, if no effort is made to actually KNOW and have a proper introduction with students.

**Extra Etiquette lectures** showed that students felt that these lectures satisfied their needs to learn more about essential points related to the hospitality careers. Some Students actually applied some studied

examples in real life and felt so good about it. Feedback Forms helped the lecturer in re-directing efforts and modifying them to suit interests of students and preview of lectures (to be more attractive and interesting) as NOT all students have the same interests. Assignments requested were always revised by the lecturer, to make sure that: (1) Students understood what the assignment was about, (2) There was NO duplication or copied assignments and (3) Online communication helped the students to feel closer to one another and free to express themselves, as well as sharing ideas and opinions with others.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It's very important to put some quality standards, in the teaching process, for all staff members to respect and follow, making an example for students to ensure quality in all learning aspects. It is also very important to supply students with all convenient learning tools for best results, such as (a) Lecture halls (ventilation, lighting, etc...), (b) Teaching tools (equipment, audiovisuals, etc...) and (c) Standard uniform (just formal outfits) for the students of the department or in general for all students of the faculty. For example: The Faculty of Management & Hospitality – U.A.E has compatible courses with the hospitality University of Lausanne, Switzerland, which at least allows for standards in given courses and how they are applied. Students entering the faculty should be chosen on other specific characteristics other than their marks upon graduation from high schools, as some students may be excellent but in the same time, lacking tactfulness required to communicate with others.

## **Practical implications**

Some of the results of the analyzed data, suggested that generalizing online communication among all faculty members is a must, to keep in touch (even on days off) in all other departments of the faculty, as it will ensure better communication between students and staff; as students from other departments are demanding for similar online groups to be able to communicate with their professors and lecturers. (This point has been activated when more staff members cared to join the group, to be part of the department online, sharing ideas with the students, and the response of students was great, knowing that they can reach their lecturers and professors online, sending them messages and waiting for their replies,

the only problem was that NOT all staff members have the time to actually be there often)

More attention should be given to improve students' main tools required in the hospitality career (foreign languages, computer and internet practical courses). Starting extra courses on how to increase social awareness, dealing with surrounding environment, dealing with each other in a respectful way, the same way they will be dealing with customers in the future, which will help them gain the experience while being at the faculty, such lectures to give them better attitudes. Such lectures can be arranged to be given to students as extra lectures, without the need to have final examinations at, or to be given as courses arranged by the faculty's staff members to have better students with better attitudes.

Finally, taking Alexandria as a Model City, as it has been, and its people are famous for their love of beauty and order, and they are a good example of being an idol city. The students of the hotel department can participate in such community activities that will increase awareness of the citizens of the city as well.

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**Dina Mostafa Weheba** (dr\_dinamw@yahoo.com) is a Lecturer at the University of Alexandria, Faculty of Tourism & Hotels, Hotel Department, Dr. Mostafa Mosharrafa Street, El Shatby-Alexandria, Egypt.

**Maher Abd El Kader** (mahermoh@hotmail.com) is a Professor of Methodology at the University of Alexandria, Faculty of Arts, Dr. Mostafa Mosharrafa Street, El Shatby-Alexandria, Egypt.

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