

## تطوير المهارات الذاتية لطلبة المرحلة الجامعية

### IMPROVING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

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**Abstract:** The purpose of article is to equip Omar Al-Mukhtar University students with the necessary interpersonal skills to be ready for joining the right labour market with focusing on the faculty of Tourism and Archaeology. Effective interpersonal skills are difficult to both; students to learn and tutors to teach, requiring development, practice and evaluation in both educational and professional settings. In professions like tourism marketing, planning and guidance, traditional approaches to teaching these skills have encompassed tourism communication modeling. This can provide limited opportunity for students to mainly practice and receive feedback on their interpersonal competencies. And this paper describes the implementation of an experiential small group learning approach from the undergraduate BS tourism program and discusses the outcomes. Implications for practice are that experientially based small group learning with opportunities for improving self-motivation, evaluation enhancement and feedback which will improve students' confidence and interpersonal skills. Also consistent experiential learning chances and assessment of this participation in this program is a key to this approach. Interpersonal skills considered to be hard to learn for new tourism students, and support and mentoring in this domain by lecturers may enhance the transition to the labor market.

**Keywords:** Experiential learning, small learning group, tourism studies, interpersonal skills.

**ملخص:** إن السبب وراء إعداد هذا المقال الأكاديمي هو تزويد طلبة جامعة عمر المختار الليبية بالمهارات الذاتية المهمة التي تلبي احتياجات سوق العمل مع التركيز على طلبة كلية السياحة و الآثار. إن المهارات الذاتية تكاد تكون صعبة للطلبة من حيث التعلم و صعبة لأعضاء التدريس من حيث التعليم مما يؤكد الحاجة الى التطوير، ممارسة وتحليل العملية التعليمية خاصة في وظيفة مثل مهنة التخطيط والتسويق والارشاد السياحي وبالتالي فان ضرورة مهارات الاتصال مع السائحين والعاملين بالقطاع السياحي تقف وراء تدريس تلك المهارات الذاتية بشكل نموذجي وتفاعلي مع الاعتماد على المحاضرات المباشرة داخل القاعات. إن هذه الدراسة تستهدف مجموعة محددة من طلبة برنامج بكالوريوس الدراسات السياحية لمناقشة مخرجات المهارات الذاتية لهم ويتضمن الجانب التطبيقي المعد توفير الخبرة و التجربة الواقعية لإعطائهم الفرصة التعليمية لتحقيق اسلوب تطوير الحماس والتقييم الذاتي و التغذية الراجعة التي من شأنها تطوير المهارات الذاتية والثقة بالذات ويتحقق ذلك من خلال الحضور المتواصل للطلبة مع التنويه على أن تحصيل هذه المهارات الذاتية يعد صعب على طلبة الدراسات السياحية ويمكن التغلب على ذلك من خلال دعم الاساتذة و توجيهاتهم للطلبة بغية تجهيزهم للانخراط في سوق العمل.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التعليم الميداني، المجموعة التعليمية المصغرة، الدراسات السياحية، المهارات الذاتية.

## 1. Introduction

Improving university students' Interpersonal Competencies is an important element for well-designed Vocational Tourism Programme (VTP) specifically in this present age taking into consideration the fact that Interpersonal competencies are among crucial skills which are preferred in the marketplace setting for the development of both employers and employees. Over the last ten years, employers of the tourism sectors have drastically observed decline in interpersonal capabilities of high college graduates for meeting the 21st century workplace's needs, expectations and challenges. However, abundant literatures have indicated the potential roles of service-learning in providing most of Libyan Tourism Students to achieve knowledge, cognitive competencies (discipline specific Skills), generic competencies and core employability skills specifically the important interpersonal skills that are badly needed in 21st century tourism industry despite of COVID-19 negative impact. It is on this regard that this academic work shed light on the concept of interpersonal skills development, concept of service-learning, influence of service-learning in VTP for developing Libyan tourism students' interpersonal competencies and the needs of interpersonal skills in VTP related job places. In conclusion, the paper discloses that the fact that there is crucial demand for Tourism Vocational Higher Education graduates to be equipped with interpersonal competencies and other work skills for effective tourism job' performance in the competitive global working environment, it was finally recommended that in order to ensure no skills gap, educators in TVP universities and training institutions, should equip the forthcoming Tourism Vocational Higher Education graduates with the necessary generic and specific competencies for employment by laying more emphasis on renown and superior instructional pedagogies such as the Service-Learning.

In today's world, it is well noticed that Libyan tourism students interpersonal competencies have been considered as a very important human springhead for both individuals (graduates) and work place development particularly in the current reality of our life. In light with the above, researchers in many fields of studies have recommended the necessity for providing tourism trainees with these competencies. In addition, several departments of labour in both developed and developing nations in many parts of the world have identified and recommended the teaching of these employability skills including interpersonal competencies by integrating them into their college curriculums. Therefore, it deemed necessary for educators to ensure the transfer of these competencies to the next generations of youth. Above all, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2008) lamented that this can assist developing countries to build and reinforce their Higher Education for the ever changing world of work.

Interpersonal competencies are strongly required by employers at the job place according to scholars, previous literature, papers and book authors on interpersonal specific and generic skills and stated that these skills are mostly learnt by students / workers / people on the basis of real experience, through unscheduled and unintentional procedures of trial and error and this approach is successful but it can be unreliable and ineffective (Belbin, 1993; Berscheid, 1994; Hayes, 2002). However, employers of labour are currently complaining that fresh employed university graduates have to attend training modules particularly that focuses on building interpersonal and employability skill through behavioral changes before commencing work (Cline, 2005; Jameson, 2009; Griffin, 2009). This scenario avail in many continents and countries around the globe, for

example in United State there are programs such as Club Houses, Individual Placement and Support (IPS), Sheltered Workshops, Diversified Placement Approach (DPA) and Transitional Employment Program (Evans & Repper, 1999), in Europe include Skills Funding Agency, skills off, Reed Learning, Gilwell Park, CIPD Training, Development Process Group (DPG), Inspirational Development Group (Training Zone, ND), in Africa comprised of vocational rehabilitation centers, Dubai consultancy training services (DCTS), Education and training (E&T), Enterprises-based development (EBD), Keybase training Solution and skills tree (African Directory of special training, 2005). Mainly all these are social skills / interpersonal skills development agencies that are providing training to labour organizations and individuals that need to upgrade their skills in order to face the current challenges of today's workplace.

Griffin, (2009) conducted a study with about 46 technological and vocational education related organizations on the way new employees are provided with non-technical competencies for work, the researcher obtained that out of 46 organizations 43 responses are having common conception that fresh graduates have to attained to inaugural training organized by private training institution and sponsored by the employers before joining the labor market. However, researchers and experts in VTP have acknowledged and reported this slip-up; that most VTP training institutions including HE institutes are greatly focusing and emphasizing their instruction on technical skills with little on nontechnical skills. Furthermore, VTP policy makers / curriculum designers have stipulated into instructional guide document the needs for educators to teach both the two skills area for the purpose of diversifying the employment potential of tourism graduate in the labour market. Yet everywhere around the world particularly, in developing countries; nontechnical skills including interpersonal skills of workers in the workforce remained an issue of concern to both the workplace and the individual employees (Archer & Davison, 2008; Baker & Henson, 2010).

## **2. Study Research Hypotheses / Problems**

This study concerns with the important interpersonal competencies and employability skills that Libyan tourism graduates desperately need to be equipped with and must achieve before joining the tourism industry. And these Tourism Interpersonal Competencies mostly refer to the level of mental and communicative algorithms applied during educational communications and interactions in order to reach the aimed and final results not only for tourism college fellows, but for all Libyan university students. These interpersonal skills are character traits possessed by individuals and must be taught in a classroom for some students. The purpose of this study also to explore the interpersonal skills of BS Libyan Tourism Students in relation to certain personal and demographic variables.. and the author is aiming to draw a clear vision leading to convenient strategy in order to overcome the problems facing interpersonal skills improvement for BS Tourism Students, further more; it seems that there were no enough previous studies nor serious policies from the Libyan Ministry of Higher Education regarding this important academic issue? And I see no specific excuse or justification for this failure? Therefore, by undertaking this study the author will open the door for academics, employers and researchers to pay more attention and do more efforts for improving interpersonal skills for universities students regardless of the area of specialization aiming that Omar Al-Mukhtar University will be leading the revolution of HE quality assurance in Libya. Moreover, the author has worked hard through academic literature and consulted tourism

students in the experimental part who worked as one team to ten of most important interpersonal skills that must be included in their BS Tourism Program.

Important interpersonal skills must be part of learning aims and outcomes. The different subject matter of BS tourism program as they have an impact on the selection employability skills that must be emphasized in each unit to provided a realistic opportunity for tourism students to develop the needed interpersonal skills from different perspectives whilst illustrating their generic nature. Tourism courses at Omar Al-Mukhtar University are often perceived by students as primarily quantitative. However, they also include a range of more qualitative learning outcomes, including critical analysis and critical thinking skills: vital generic competencies that Jack and McCartney (2007) have previously encapsulated in their arguments for the importance of developing 'argumentative employees'.

On the other hand, lack of previous studies in the same field about improving interpersonal skills for Libyan tourism students was a critical barrier, so it was important to ask professionals for second opinions, use external studies and to carefully target a specific group of Libyan tourism students. As a result this academic study is qualitatively oriented rather than being quantitative research based and according to the author's previous experience, meetings and open discussions with students, graduates and lecturers were held giving this group of students the chance to decide which interpersonal skills are in extra priority and guaranteed to be useable in the tourism market place.

### **3. Study Aims and Objectives**

As a reality, the most important aim of carrying out the responsibility to do this study is to improve Libyan tourism students interpersonal skills and to point out the most important and usable Tourism Interpersonal Skills in line with allowing our students achieving their personal aims and objectives while doing this study, with taking into consideration the Libyan culture and lifestyles with keeping students and employers favors, likes, and dislikes in mind. Also to assess the standard for efficient communication skills which lies not only in achieving set objectives, but also in attaining the feedback in the minimum time possible. Those who are able to use time efficiently while practicing their interpersonal skills are individuals who do not focus on a single subject within the given time, but those who distribute their time among various tasks and activities, such as work, private life, and individual areas of mutual interests and previous authors on interpersonal competencies stated that these skills are mostly learnt by graduates/people on the basis of experience, through unscheduled and unintentional procedures of trial and error and a times this approach is successful but it can be unreliable and ineffective (Berscheid, 1994; Hayes, 2002).

The other aim of this study is to develop a more up to date Students' Interpersonal Skills Model and framework, and from this perspective, the curriculum must consists of a set of academic tasks and duties that students encounter in classrooms where all students should be guided in processing information while lecturing them, in simple English words, by the tasks all tourism students are required to accomplish with subject matter and they should be well able to recognize and reproduce information previously encountered, to realize transformed versions of information from texts or lectures, or select from among several procedures those which are applicable to a particular type of task or duty regarding interpersonal skills improvement.

The third primarily goal or objective is to design a theoretical and practical components of interpersonal skills where every component is essential and if missing reduces graduates employability and how to lead students towards interpersonal skills Self-Improvement while facing different academic, social and environmental challenges, beside handling all unexpected changes and challenges today and in future. Therefore, Libyan lecturers should be creating and providing their university students with clear annual plan for interpersonal skills awareness-improvement and self-guided development, for both, new and existing tourism university students because employers are complaining that new employed tourism graduates have to attend training courses to focus on building their interpersonal skill before commencing work (Jameson, 2009; Griffin, 2009).

#### **4. Study Methodology**

For achieving the objectives of this academic study, the author has applied a theoretical and empirical methods (Alexander A. Galochkin, Galina V. Grivusevich) with the use of a One Sample Sign Nonparametric Statistical Analysis as an alternative to parametric test because of the small sample size of the tourism department students, and the data was not distributed but utilized internally throughout intensive periodic meetings and brain storming sessions aiming to define and examine the most important interpersonal skills that must be included in certain subjects curriculums to be merged in a BS Tourism Degree Programme, also to be a good example for other degree programmes without ignoring the importance of employability competencies which are necessary for all graduates once they join different labor markets. The focused group made of existing students and some graduates were involved in evaluating the intense interpersonal skills to conclude them in Omar Al-Mukhtar University BS Tourism Program, and this methodology finally led to very important ten interpersonal competencies, side by side with working on enhancing university students self-improvement to be professionally put in practice with good performance after graduation taking in consideration Libyan tourism employers' needs and expectations of new employees/people.

This micro study has also addressed the perception of the essential higher education interpersonal competencies empowering the current tourism students' employability skills and the importance of the needed employable abilities improvement, and the small group sample of students and graduates have participated and voluntarily contributed by to analyze and evaluate the most important Interpersonal Skills (IS) that were agreed upon by four stakeholders: (Students, Graduates, Employers and Lecturers) Moreover, for addressing the best possible Interpersonal Competencies to be merged in a specific university program, the author left the door open for graduates and students to think, analyze and describe what they believe are the important IS to be considered as career success factors at their futuristic occupations. On the other hand, the author worked with his graduates and targeted students to highlight the needs for developing practices in the Libyan Higher Education and Training System with embedding the required employability initiatives aiming for Strategic HE Human Recourse Development to help HE policy makers to design their plans according to employers needs and expectations.

Universities and higher education institutes are the best to provide quality employees who are capable of performing as required individually or as team players, also the final analyses and evaluation suggested the necessity for Libyan policy makers and Lecturers

to realize the importance of blending in the essential interpersonal skills in all university programs' units, and to get them updated on regular bases to guarantee that Higher Education Quality Assurance is in extra priority for providing successful graduates. This chosen methodology is beneficial for data collection and students' knowledge exploration having in mind that interpersonal skills would help new staff to improve their soft and hard skills.

### **5. Study Motivation and Literature Review**

'Interpersonal skills' are part of broadly similar terms that are sometimes used interchangeably. Other such terms include interactive competencies, people skills, face-to-face skills, social skills and social competence. Argyle (1984) defines socially competent people as those who possess the necessary interpersonal skills to produce desired effects on other people in professional and social situations. These desired effects may include persuading students to work harder to learn more, to make customers purchase products and services, make a concession in a negotiation, be impressed by one's expertise or support one in a crisis. Honey (1988) offers a similar concept and he refers to interactive competencies as the skills students use in face-to-face encounters to arrange their behaviour so that it is in step with their final goals and he emphasizes the point that interactive interpersonal skills have very little to do with being nice or winning friends unless these kinds of outcomes are encapsulated in the individual's aims and objectives. A common theme in these definitions is the ability to behave in ways that increase the probability of achieving desired outcomes and the same end in mind. It therefore seems appropriate to define interpersonal skills as goal-directed behaviours used in face-to-face interactions in order to bring about a desired state of affairs.

Designing coherent and cumulative Vocational Tourism BS programme will engage tourism students in improving their interpersonal skills and will provide them with the needed experience which is fundamental tenet of pedagogy and Interpersonal Skills Improvement provides a structured and comprehensive overview of the interpersonal skills that are essential for effective functioning at the tourism sector. It presents a micro-skills approach to skill development that can be used to improve interpersonal competences for college students, as well as explaining through the use of illustrations and practical examples how to read the actual or potential behaviour of others around us. And this soft skill knowledge can then be used to guide the way in which students relate to others as they learn to manage their social and professional relationships more effectively and interpersonal competences depend upon students' ability to understand and manage the dynamics of social interaction, also they require both diagnostic and action skills to be able to read behaviour and act in ways that will bring about desired outcomes and the same end in mind, as well as, higher education policy makers and university programme designers should provide a clearly structured and comprehensive overview of the interpersonal skills required for effective functioning at work and present a micro-skill approach to skill development. An important feature of this higher education methodology can lead to the inclusion of a wide range of exercises to help university students to monitor their own behaviour, identify areas for improvement and practice new ways of relating to others.

#### **5.1 Approaches to the study of interpersonal interaction**

The study of interpersonal competencies and interpersonal relationships is multidisciplinary and, at one level, each discipline has tended to focus attention on

different contexts and different sorts of relationship. In the management literature, relationships with bosses, subordinates, peers, customers and suppliers receive significant attention whereas in the higher education literature, the focus is on the lecturer–student relationship and in the social work literature, marital, family and similar relationships tend to be the focus of attention. Berscheid (1994) observes that this has led to a situation where the matrix of interpersonal relationship knowledge is fractured along the lines of relationship type. Even within the context of a particular relationship nature, the study of interpersonal skills has been influenced by a rich array of various conceptual approaches.

### **5.2 The effect of behaviour on goal achievement**

Students spend a considerable part of their studying day relating to others. One of the findings of the early activity studies, echoed more recently by Oshagbemi (1988), is that people consistently underestimate the amount of time they spend in face-to-face interaction. There are also indications that they underestimate seriously the effect their daily behaviour has on the way others behave, and therefore on the achievement of personal and organisational goals. An examples may serve to illustrate this point. Selecting interviewers need to obtain from applicants as much relevant information as possible in order to determine which applicant (student) will be most suitable for the right college. To achieve this end they need to manage the interaction in a way that encourages each applicant/student to provide the maximum amount of relevant and the minimum amount of irrelevant information. This objective is likely to be frustrated if the interviewers do most of the talking. It will also be frustrated if they prevent applicants from giving full answers by overusing the kinds of questions that limit their responses to yes or no, or if they ask questions in a way that prompts them into giving the answer which they think the interviewers want to hear. In negotiations, there is evidence that negotiators' opening bids have an important influence on the expectations of opponents and that this can affect the outcome. There is also evidence that, in competitive negotiations, concessions are more likely to be hesitant when the person offering the concession is perceived by opponents to be in a relatively strong position. It is possible for a negotiator to create this impression by behaving in certain ways. In decision-making groups, one of the factors which can influence the quality of a decision is the extent to which the knowledge and skills of group members are well applied to the task.

Some of this task-relevant knowledge may not be available to the students because some knowledgeable but non-assertive members of the group lack the confidence to make their views known, or because some students fail to pay attention or give appropriate weight to the views of others. The student who is able to recognise what is happening, and who can use this awareness to intervene, to act consciously in ways that make it more likely that relevant knowledge will be applied to the task, can make an important contribution to improving other students performance.

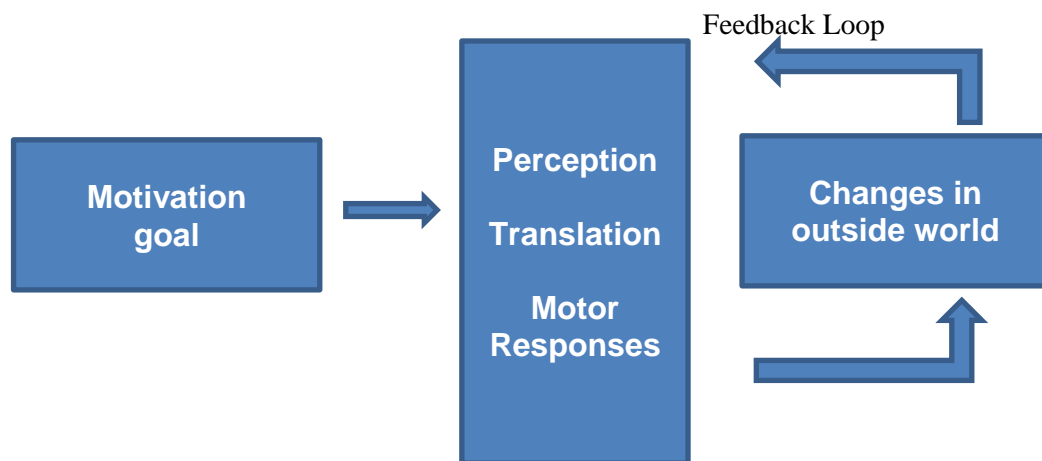
### **5.3 The importance of interpersonal skills**

In order to be aware of the importance of interpersonal skills, students need to pay attention to one of the most widely used definitions of management, which is *getting things done through people*. Mangham (1986) argues that a person's success as a manager depends upon the ability to conduct oneself in the complexity of the organization as a subtle, insightful, incisive performer. He goes on to suggest that successful managers appear to have a natural and/or highly developed ability to read the actual and potential behavior of others around them and to *interpersonal skills at work*

construct their own conduct in accordance with this reading. This is an ability we all have but, according to Mangham, ‘the most successful among us appear to do social life with a higher degree of skill than the rest of us manage’.

#### 5.4 Argyle’s social skill model

Argyle’s social skill model (1994) is one of the most frequently cited models of social interaction (Figure 1.1). Developed more than thirty years ago, it posits that in any social encounter individuals have plans / aims that they attempt to realise through the continuous correction of their social performance in the light of the reactions of others. The sequences of behaviour that occur in social interaction are viewed as the interviewer can take corrective action when the respondent is talking too much by interrupting, asking closed questions or looking less interested in what the respondent is saying. This model draws attention to the importance of feedback and the perception of appropriate hint, and to the ability to identify an effective correction routine. The effectiveness of social performances is vary as open-ended questions make people talk more and that closed questions make them talk less. Although this is presented as a motor skill model as there are some aspects of social behaviour that have no immediate parallel in motor skills such as seeing the other person’s point of view and projecting a self-image.



**Figure 1.1 Argyle’s motor skill model, 1994.**

Argyle reports that the most important and direct criticisms leveled against his interpersonal skills model is that when people/students are engaged in relaxed informal ‘chat’ they do not appear to be motivated to influence or control the behaviour of others. His response to this criticism is that even in this kind of situation those concerned are trying to maintain a certain kind of interaction, and that this involves the control of others’ behaviour. For example, it might involve keeping them comfortable and happy, preventing them from leaving or from getting too serious or keeping the intimacy at the right level. And once tourism students understand how the hierarchical model of interpersonal skills can facilitate a micro-skills approach to the development of interpersonal competence they will be able to:

1- know that the hierarchical model of interpersonal skills can be used to help individuals to critically assess the effectiveness of their social skills at every level.



- 2- Describe the hierarchical structure of interpersonal skills and explain how this offers the possibility of breaking down complex interpersonal skills into their component parts.
- 3- Understand the contribution that conceptual models and theories can make by sensitising them to the elements of their behaviour that might be the focus of micro-skills training.
- 4- Recognise the importance of an individual's own subjective theory of social interaction and the role it plays in guiding behaviour.
- 5- Understand the difference between cueing and learning and how the experiential learning model can help students to learn from their experience and refine their subjective theories of social interaction.

### **5.5 Interpersonal skills can be learned**

Previous literature review suggest that students can do to improve their ability to relate to others. Most tourism students and graduates learn how to relate on the basis of theory and practice, through unstructured and unintentional processes of trial and error. Sometimes this planned approach is successful but it can be unreliable and ineffective. It is not unusual for students to develop habitual modes of relating to others/colleagues that consistently yield unsatisfactory results. For example, some decision makers may find it difficult to get job applicants to talk about themselves and, even though they may have come across this problem many times before, they may be unaware of how their own behaviour contributes to the problem. In simple English, they may have little awareness of alternative ways of behaving that might improve matters. Interpersonal skills involve diagnosing what is currently going on in professional and social situations, identifying the action required to bring about a desired state of affairs and translating this requirement into an effective performance. And this paper will offers tourism students a series of conceptual instructions that may be used for developing these diagnostic and action skills.

### **5.6 The hierarchical nature of interpersonal skills**

Interpersonal skill, according to Argyle (1994) and others, has a hierarchical structure in which the larger, higher level units consist of integrated sequences and groupings of lower level units. Wright and Taylor (1994) rather focus attention on three levels in this hierarchy. At the lowest level are primary components. These are what people actually say and do, their verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Interpersonally skilled graduates and college students are those who, at this level, have a wide range of verbal components (for example, questions and statement types) at their disposal and are able to select the one most appropriate to the situation and purpose at hand. They are also able to perform it well with the appropriate non-verbal indications. The next level up is structure concerned with the way in which students sequence the primary components of behaviour. Also at this level interpersonally skilled tourism students would be able to organise and integrate the primary components into purposeful sequences which steer the interaction towards their aims and objective.

For instance, in a problem-solving interview this might involve adopting a funnel sequence of questions which begins with very open questions and then progresses towards more closed questions. In an interrogation, however, a completely different sequence might be more effective accordingly.

The highest level in Wright and Taylor's hierarchy is the overall approach, or what Honey (1988) refers to as 'style'. The primary components people use in an interaction and the way in which these are structured will depend, at least in part, on the type of

interaction students intend to have. At the stylistic or overall approach level interpersonally skilled tourism employees are those who are able to develop an approach to the interaction that is congruent with both their objectives and with the probable reactions of others who are involved. For example, tourism and hotels managers who want to help members of their team become more effective may decide to adopt a helping style that involves helping them to help themselves.

They might place a high priority on inspiring and empowering them to experiment and learn from their own mistakes, and they might deliberately resist the temptation to 'take them by the hand' and tell them precisely what they need to do to improve their performance. They may behave this way because they believe that a more prescriptive helping approach would encourage tourism students and trainees to become too dependent on their guidance and advice and would inhibit their learning.

### **5.7 Educational Implications**

Interpersonal competencies become very natural that students may take them for granted, never thinking about how they should communicate with other people. Impairment in the talent and ability to effectively communicate may hold back successful relational development in young adults.

This can potentially impact on the organization of students life areas such as family relationships, daily activities, homework, socialization, college performance, and employment. Subconsciously all university students will be developing their interpersonal skills since childhood. Students need to be taught the skills required for interacting effectively with others and then motivated use these skills as part of promoting their employability skills. All the stakeholders-government, policy makers, educational institutions, professors and primarily the parents should help the students to improve their interpersonal skills in perfect compatibility. Through awareness of how an individual interact with others and how practice can develop tourism students' interpersonal skills.

### **5.8 Tourism Interpersonal Micro-Skills Improvement**

Tourism Micro-skills improvement is based on the claim that an effective approach to training interpersonal skills is to isolate and practice important sub or micro skills before bringing the components together and synthesizing them into larger units of tourism professional skills.

This reductionist approach to the development of tourism interpersonal skills has a number of clear advantages, but Hargie (1997) highlights some other disadvantages which worth consideration.

Studying a number of small units of interpersonal skills in isolation may not be equivalent to studying the whole. This argument has some validity, but it does not apply to the treat- meant of interpersonal skills offered in the BS tourism program. The approach adopted here analyses social interaction in terms of clearly identifiable competencies while at the same time highlighting the way these skills relate to one another. The advantage offered by this approach is that information is pre-scented and discussed in a way that can help tourism students develop their micro-skills by focusing their attention on selected aspects of professional interaction.

### 5.9 The experimental learning model

The experiential learning model developed by Lewin can be used for refining the subjective theory that guides tourism interpersonal interactions. Kolb (1984: 21) highlights two important aspects of Lewin's theory:

- 1- The first is the emphasis it places on here-and-now concrete experience to validate abstract concepts. While we may draw on explicit conceptual models, such as those presented in this book, to alert us to new possibilities and to provide a guide for action, it is the immediate personal experience that is the focal point of learning.
- 2- The second is the attributed to feedback, the process that generates valid information to assess deviations from intended goals. This feedback provides the basis for the continuous process of goal- directed action and the evaluation of the consequences of that action.

Against lifelong learning recommendations from both sides; industry and HE institutions, the previously mentioned Mayer Australian Committee excluded more subjective concepts such as individual values or attitudes (Williams 2005).

Similarly, the identification of generic skills in the 2001 Acer study, which had consulted with universities and other interested bodies, was complicated (probably compromised?) by the academic need to differentiate competencies that were considered vital but also assessable. Indeed, of the Generic Competencies recommended such as; organization, oral, reading and writing communication, good time management, students self-improvement, critical thinking, tasks and duties prioritization, problem solving, skills transformation and interpersonal understandings must be justified in a solid and concrete report for inclusion in the initial test, because they are 'popular' with universities, also the same generic competencies seemed are most likely to be essential elements of all Libyan universities (such as capacity for lifelong learning), and were seemed to be usable and transferable and readily measurable (ACER 2001). A 2003 international analysis of generic or employability competencies sought by businesses employing graduates and encompassed countries in Europe, across the Commonwealth (including Australia, Asia and the subcontinent) and North America similarly found that communication emerged as the most important skill valued by stakeholders.

The other competencies rated highly were teamwork, self-management, problem-solving, conceptual skills and social interaction (interpersonal) skills (Billing, 2003). As with other studies (Hambur et al 2002), Billing observed that employers viewed the issue of transferability as unproblematic – and in simple English words it means the possession of generic competencies was indicative of an ability to transfer them from one individual / context to another. Driven by real economic pressures to attend to government and industry's identification of 'appropriate' generic competencies, and their own support for social lifelong learning agendas, higher education institutions have acted to establish themselves as an integral component of the lifelong learning cycle, via the facilitation of such generic skills.

One of the most effective actions in this respect has been to redefine these skill-sets as 'graduate attributes'. The use of this phrase clearly situates the development of GS within a formal tertiary educational setting; the implication being that such skills cannot be improved elsewhere. In an examination of the application of recognition of prior learning in Western universities, Louise Whelan used this notion of 'graduateness' to pinpoint the belief by many within the sector that graduate attributes were superior and unique

identifiers of a student with a university education and that could not be obtained from outside the institution.

### **5.10 Creative Communication Skills**

Creative communication skills encourage students to succeed in their future careers. Previous studies indicated that communication competencies are influenced by the interaction with surrounding environment and Lecturer-Student interaction. Supportively, Adler and Rodman (2006) strongly narrated that communication skills are affected by interaction with the environment and they can be learned through well designed learning process (Kayi, 2006). Communication competencies improvement can be carried out based on the social inferential learning theory by maintaining Tutor-Student interaction that constructs students' knowledge (Arends, 2012) and through a well-organized learning process.

Evidences obtained in previous research and related studies also show that learning wisdom based (LWB-ELSII) Model has been effective in improving students' problem solving and communication skills. The model was developed from inquiry learning that is expected to encourage university students' problem solving and communication abilities and competencies (Dewi, Poedjiastuti, & Prahani, 2017). The finding is relevant with results of an academic research conducted by Duran (2014), Trilling and Fadel (2009) who reported that inquiry learning has been able to develop students' problem solving and communication competencies.

In addition, several other studies have proven that the implementation of process-oriented guided-inquiry learning (POGIL) successfully enhanced students' higher order thinking skills which include problem solving skills (Prodjosantoso, 2018). Similarly, learning models in Libya that engage local culture as learning resources are also associated with significant improvement in students' cognitive and generic competencies (Sochima, 2013) and it involves the potentials of local wisdom in learning process (Dewi, Poedjiastuti, & Parhani, 2017). Therefore, it can be understood that the ELSII learning model gave significant effect on preserve Tourism students' problem solving and communication competencies. The significant improvement might be affected by the local wisdom-based ELSII learning model that opens up the chances for different students to construct their meaningful learning experiences (Dewi, Poedjiastuti & Prahani, 2017). Meaningful learning process occurs when students are actively engaged in constructing their own comprehension based on their prior experiences and their interaction with the environment and adapting themselves to the local nature factors (Kanhadilok & Watts, 2013). The ELSII learning model also offers the integration of local wisdom that conforms with the social constructivism learning approach proposed by other scholars.

### **5.11 Good Time Use and Management.**

Wise time usage and management is a competency that perhaps impacts all university students' academic achievement with realizing the importance of time management skills and perceived academic achievements among our Tourism Graduates and the surprising fact proves that students never write a set of goals for their self on daily bases and do not normally spend time for each day planning? And they don't review their class notes, even when a test is not imminent, and do not make a schedule of the activities that they have to do on work days and make no constructive use of their time. As well as, to improve academic performance because students are in need of designed programs in relation to time management. Some other academic studies suggested that a lot of university students

complain about shortage of time when their tutors ask them to do a certain task, they get frustrated because they are not able to make it before the deadline because they keep delaying doing their tasks and duties to the very last day and that is called student syndrome. On the other side, others find enough time to meet their friends and complete their tasks, duties and assignments with no struggle. Time management then is: the art of arranging, organizing, scheduling and budgeting one's time for generating more effectiveness work and productivity. Gerald defined time management as: a set of principles, practices, skills, tools and systems that work together to help you get more value out of your time with the aim of improving the quality of your life.

In today's modern world, time is seen as an indefinitely divisible and usable and valuable commodity. It helps stakeholders to center the concept of time through the institution. All the material and human resources possessed by organizations can be enhanced in the course of time or be transformed as time goes by; yet the only asset that cannot be changed or purchased or stored is time itself. And the secret to achieving success in educational, cultural, economic and social life is concluded in using and managing effectively. Time as an important asset / resource that everyone especially university students possesses equally and paying sufficient emphasis to planning (Macan, Shahani, Dipboye & Phillips, 2000). Though effective and efficient use of time varies with respect to the tasks performed, the further increase in the level of knowledge and competencies expected from modern students and employees has further increased the necessity of time planning. The competitive environment encourages people from as early as their elementary education to plan and manage time effectively. The high performance required by competitive conditions at universities, lecturers and directors to use time effectively and stipulates the search to control time (Alay & Koçak, 2003). Time management is a priority-based structuring of time allocation and distribution among competing demands since time cannot be stored nor rewind, and its availability cannot be increased beyond nor decrease from the twenty four hours. Academic achievement is the outcome of education, and this is how students, lecturers and Institution can achieve their educational aims.

### **5.12 Prioritizing Academic Tasks and Duties.**

In previous literature written by (Brenmer et al., 2008) reported the impact of academic tasks prioritization perception of confidence and comfort levels of tourism students entering their first year of their university experience. Using Assessment inventory to determine students learning and coping styles and the two groups who participated in a meetings and sessions prior to the first and second tourism academic years. For clarification, both groups participated in this study were statistically significant decrease in stress levels prior to first-time university experience. Libyan students must continuously assess and prioritize their academic tasks to the best of their ability, often in time critical situations and in a dynamic environment. In this part there is a critical question of whether Tourism Students can change their task prioritization performance through higher education and training so they can use them professionally after graduation. It is possible that human abilities to effectively process inputs and prioritize tasks vary greatly from one individual to another.

However, a certain level of multitasking ability is required in order to perform even at the basic level adequate to achieve initial University Tourism BS certification, As a result, students in general comprise a group that should be pre-selected to some extent based on

their demonstrated ability to properly prioritize and execute tasks in the context of employability skills focusing on the most needed generic competencies. Therefore, year 1 and year 2 Tourism Students may represent a more homogeneous group with respect to multitasking ability than a similar size group selected randomly from the general Libyan population. Following is an overview of related background literature, previous studies, focus on Students Tasks Prioritization having in mind that their social life can seem like an additional task. There never seems to be enough time in the day to do multitasking to cover the same end in mind, and the idea of tackling everything on a list can be overwhelming. The key to managing students' priorities can be found by taking just few organized steps to arrange their responsibilities and simplify students' life.

### **5.13 Students Self-Awareness and Self-Development.**

Modern progress in the Libyan Higher Education Sector, Tourism Field and Human's Life require them to work on developing their own self-improvement and self-reliance, which is very necessary for the future of Libya students and for having the right employability skills, as well as, to maintain the status of career professionalism, and constantly be creative in their professional world, master and apply them in practice, to improve their generic skill. The Libyan ultra-fast rates and prices of tourism accommodation and services as a result of hospitality high demand and continues development that put the need for higher education institutions to produce such Tourism-Specialists capable of

fulfilling their main responsibilities and good at continuous self- awareness who independently replenish their knowledge, gradually improve their own professional employability skills. Formation of such abilities at the future of tourism-students for today's world is extremely an important element for pedagogical collectives of colleges. Its solution will allow the requirements of the tourism labor market and ensure the competitiveness of Libyan University students and graduates on it. Overall, the development and implementation of self-improvement innovations cause their integration into all sectors of the economy, which leads to the reorganization of industries, companies, the use of new opportunities at each workplace, therefore, it's important to handle changes in terms of priorities in the professional training of tourism students for self-motivation and lecturers should be more innovative to benefit their students with working on combining the current situation of education development with the relevant principles and to adjust the principles and mechanisms of tourism education in a timely manner and develop towards a healthy direction (Song et al. 2016).

Moreover, Libyan lecturers should provide a variety of methods to make successful units content for Higher Education Tourism Enhancement into individuals' mind, aiming to proactively achieve substantial results. Recently, the systematization and diversification of the research methods of self-awareness and self-improvement in higher education did not satisfy the requirements of the scientific development of its research goals (Wang et al, 2011) Therefore, decision makers in higher education should proactively draw on the ideas and self-motivation elements to improve their students research independency and self-improvement, the innovation of cognitive is applied to tourism and hospitality students' research methods, advanced technology and broader research perspective based on the tools that are provided by previous studies in students self-development which reported that self-improvement and continues long-life learning

skills are two of the most important employability skills that Libyan tourism university students and graduates must be equipped with in modern days.

## 6- Study Experimental Part

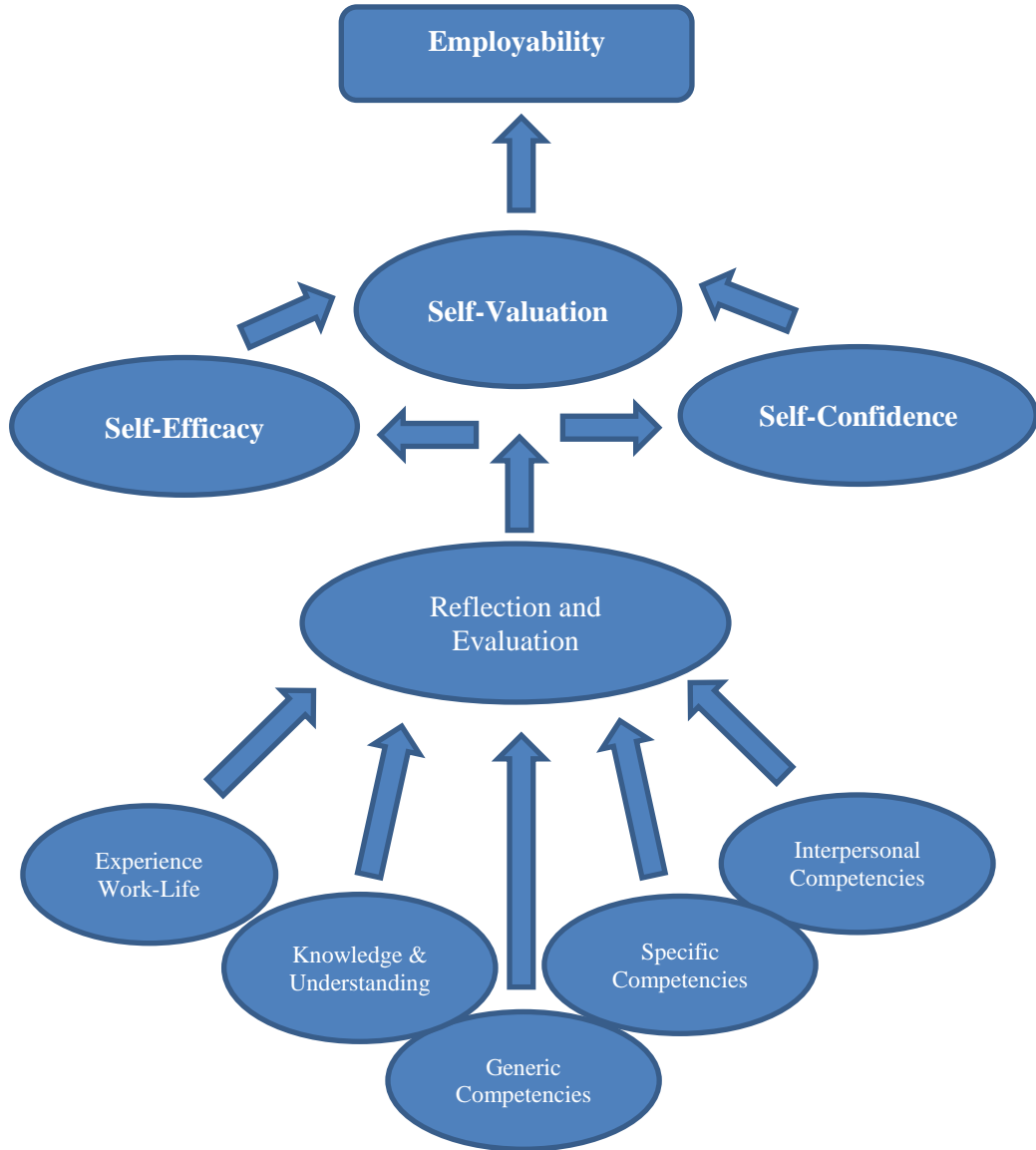
In this part the author made a good use of a small group of graduates and students from year one and year two in the Tourism Department and this small size sample group who participated in periodic intensive brain storming meetings, workshops, and round table deep discussion throughout the first semester to filter a broad range of interpersonal skills. The selected interpersonal competencies represent those skills identified by previous studies investigating tourism graduates (Gammie et al., 2002).

The result of this experimental part showed that our Libyan students interpersonal skills need continual development and must be increased and taught using local wisdom-based learning model. More significantly, the author concluded that local-wisdom based learning strengthens Libyan tourism students' employability skills improvement based on the principles of interpersonal quality learning.

Another important element is that first and two year tourism students insisted that tutors should merge the necessary interpersonal competencies in all units and must be well designed to equip all tourism students at Omar Al-Mukhtar University with the required employable interpersonal skills to build the main required employability profile alongside with developing their subject specific knowledge to gain the necessary work experience to get ready for working in the Tourism Sector or maybe at other state departments.

This resulted that Omar Al-Mukhtar University Lecturers in general must be student centered and invest in their development regularly with being intended to encourage their students to build their own specific and generic skills base as part of their pathway to higher levels of cognitive development, and there was general agreement on the priority skills areas identified by tourism students as essential for employment and the concluded list of chosen generic skills and abilities are essential for all graduates. Specific areas of agreement on essential skills were oral and written communication skills, teamwork, responsibility and decision making, information literacy, and problem solving skills. Business administration (practical skills, not theoretical)

With being a researcher in Higher Education and Human Resource Improvement and Strategic Development, in a previous study this year (MERGING GENERIC EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN A TOURISM DEGREE) the author already managed to design a **WAY to EMPLOYABILITY** model which is connected and directly attached to Libyan tourism students interpersonal competencies awareness and continual improvement, where every component is more than essential and if missing reduces tourism students and graduates interpersonal and employability skills and competencies. A certain degree of overlap between some of the components is acknowledged, and this is obviously reflected in the visual presentation of the model. However, these are not the only areas of overlap as this occurs at various points. In addition to placement work experience, it's important to differentiate between students Interpersonal Skills and Specific and Generic Competencies with including employees satisfaction indicators as shown in (Figure 1.2) in the next page which might seem broad and comprehensive which indicates the importance of each component alongside with complete focus on the labor market needs and expectations, students self-awareness and interpersonal skills strategic improvement.



**Figure 1.1: The Essential Components of Way to Employability Model**

Interpersonal Skills for Libyan tourism students' BS program are very essential for career progression so they should be supported with new technological methods of lecturing enabling students to be more confident communicators, well team players, real problem solvers, and excellent decision makers (Holmes, 2001). Eventually, it must be said again that this study is focusing mainly on improving Libyan tourism interpersonal skills to deliver client services and attend business operations.

### **7.Study Initial Results and Discussion**

Previous articles in the same field showed perceived skills gaps when investigating interpersonal skills, attitudes and comments of relevant new employers, students and most of the recent graduates (Arquero Montano 2004). It is also clear from the previous literature that the provision of interpersonal skills and other relevant employability skills



are neither easy nor straight forward (Tempone & Martin 2003). Furthermore, Morgan (1997) refers to the tension between competencies improvement and the provision of support for interpersonal skills in higher education and eventually noticed that this tension is particularly high in vocationally-based degrees.

Moreover, Milner and Hill (2008) discovered that some academics have the attitude that there is “no time” for interpersonal skills development and periodic improvement in Undergraduate Degree Curriculums, due to the demands of the discipline, degree research and professional accreditation. Yet experience indicates that many first and second year students do not appear to develop appropriate learning strategies or possess the necessary interpersonal skills to deal adequately with the contested nature of the business and other work related disciplines. The basic premise of the project / study was that interpersonal competencies are important for life-long learning process and graduates employability performance and students capacity, also addressing generic skills gaps at an early stage in students’ university studies is important in helping them to accelerate their cognitive development and provide the transferable interpersonal skills that required by employers.

This premise is in line with the current views of professional bodies and significant elements of the Libyan higher education establishment (SHEFC, 2005 and 2006). As well as, combination of subject specific elements and interpersonal skills will certainly provide value added in employability profiles of current students who are ready and willing to begin their professional career path. (Arquero Montano et al., 2004). The challenge for Libyan academics in higher education is therefore to improve and periodically update what is taught and how it is taught to generate the value added (Tempone & Martin 2003). Therefore this academic project attempted to do just that: change the small group teaching of two degree courses to facilitate generic skills development alongside subject learning. Overall, lecturers should be interested in their students / graduates interpersonal skills and employability competencies overall development which are generally in high demand by Libyan employers in the tourism public and private sectors in recent years.

## **8. Study Conclusion and Recommendations**

For the Libyan tourism students to understand the nature of interpersonal skills from a historical perspective and to develop a critical appreciation of the different approaches and they will able to:

- 1- Understand and improve their interpersonal skills, and recognise that they involves the use of goal-directed behaviours to achieve desired outcomes.
- 2- Compare and contrast the behavioural and cognitive approaches to studying social interaction.
- 3- Be aware of how cognitive processes influence behaviour and how social interaction may be viewed as a transaction in which each interactor is seeking a satisfactory outcome.

### **New Findings:**

- 1- The analysis of tabulated meetings data pointed out the following findings:
  - A. There is an important difference in Libyan Tourism students Interpersonal Competencies with respect to their degree, gender, year of study, area of study, life style, family type and residential locality.
  - B. Male students have more mean behavior than the female students.
  - C. There is no significant difference in tourism students Interpersonal Skills with respect to their Stream of the Study.

- 2- Good interpersonal skills will help to improving many aspects of students' life professionally and socially as they lead to better understanding and relationships.
  - 3- Tourism students agreed that Interpersonal Skills Includes:
    - Verbal Communication including what we say and how we say it.
    - Non-Verbal Communication; What we communicate without words.
    - Listening Skills: How we interpret both the verbal and non-verbal messages
    - Negotiation: Working with others to find a mutually agreeable outcome.
    - Problem Solving and this is by identifying, defining and solving problems.
    - Decision Making by exploring and analyzing options to make decisions.
    - Assertiveness by sharing values, ideas, beliefs, opinions, needs and wants freely.
  - 4- Tourism students agreed on core characteristics of Interpersonal Skills:
    - Collaborative Skills – the ability to jointly complete tasks with others.
    - Cooperative Attitude – the willingness to offer and accept input.
    - Leadership which is the recognition by peers as someone to follow.
    - Social Influence which is the capability to persuade other people.
    - Social Empathy which is an awareness and concern for other people.
    - Social Connection which is a skill for meaningfully relating to others.
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