

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPROVEMENT OF GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES WITHIN THE EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITY SECTOR

Iman Nassef

Dr., Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport, Egypt,
inassef@hotmail.com

Abstract

In Egypt earlier this century, the government recognised the importance of reforming its higher education sector to meet the challenges of the new era. One of these challenges was Egyptian employers' dissatisfaction with graduate attributes which were described as not meeting employment demands. To address such a problem, the Egyptian government, through a reform strategy, initiated a number of projects which among other things aimed to improve graduates' readiness for the labour market and thus reduce the skills gap. Yet, with all the initiatives achieved to date the problem still persists. This research has sought to study the skills gap problem in depth but within the scope of computer engineering undergraduate studies. It aims to understand the contextual factors affecting the effective implementation of graduate attributes in taught courses in Egyptian universities. To do this, a number of questions were posed, using semi-structured interviews, to a purposive sample of academics and graduates belonging to two different computer engineering undergraduate programmes; one private and the other public. To ensure the validity of the data, more information was collected from Egyptian employers as well as the documents that represent the different educational policies and practices implemented in both private and public programmes of study. Through thematic data analysis and by applying complexity theory as a conceptual framework, the study identified the different contextual factors that affected Egyptian academics' performance when teaching and learning graduate attributes in computer engineering undergraduate courses.

Keywords: University education in Egypt, the skills gap, higher education, education reform, education policy, complexity theory.