The Role of Technology in Creating Job Opportunities for Learners with Disabilities in the Tourism Industry

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Abstract

The aims of this study is to determine the importance of technology in tourism education in terms of creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The study is a conceptual review of the literature on the use of technology in the tourism education, specifically related to technology as a tool for increasing employment prospects for people with disabilities. As a result of this research, an alternative education model is proposed for the tourism industry directed at learners with disabilities.

Keywords: Disabilities; Education Technology; Tourism; Job Opportunities; Online Learning.

1. Introduction

Disability is a part of the diversity of human communities rather than a deviation from an objective norm. All communities contain individuals with disabilities with the World Health Organization (WHO) (1997) and the UN (2009b) estimating that an average 10% of the population have a disability. This equates to 650 million people with disabilities living in the world today.

Disability is an aspect of the diversity of human communities rather than a deviation from an objective norm. All communities contain individuals with disabilities, with the World Health Organization (2012) and the United Nations estimating that an average of 10% of the global population has a disability (UN, 2017). This equates to 650 million people with disabilities living in the world today. People with a disability impacting their socio-cultural and health needs have to work and earn an income. The disabled workers hiring provide advantage about higher loyalty and better performance (Schneider and Dutton, 2002). From this point of view, it is an economic necessity for people with disabilities to enter work life (Barnes and Mercer, 2008). In the broader sense, an important element of the labor force is wasted when people with disabilities are not employed.

The tourism industry is a labor-intensive industry. The rapid growth of the tourism sector has created a large number of jobs. Furthermore, tourism education is closely related to employment and careers within the industry (Ayres, 2006). Additionally, tourism establishments have become an

appropriate sector for the employment of people with disabilities after they have completed vocational training and orientation programs.

Online learning provides flexible access that supports content and instruction at any time, from any place. It is defined as an approach to learning and a teaching process that provides flexible access to learning materials, as well as interaction with the content and instructor. It utilizes the acquisition and usage of the knowledge in an educational context. Online learning experiences and practices support collaboration through the adoption of Internet and communication technologies (Barnes and Mercer, 2008).

The relationship between tourism education and the Internet can be viewed from three perspectives. These are: (1)the Internet as a teaching and learning tool; (2)assisting students with understanding the applications of the Internet in the tourism industry; (3)developing students' operational Internet skills.

The aim of this study is to provide recommendations for an alternative education model using technology, which will support new employment opportunities for learners with disabilities.

2. Methodology

This paper provides critical reflection on the literature in the field of education technology in the tourism industry in terms of providing job opportunities for learners with disabilities. In this respect, documentary analysis was applied to reveal the key arguments for the research focus. Additionally, the paper proposes a model and perspectives on the role of technology education applications in tourism, in regard to the literature. Furthermore, the research will recommend possible solutions for learners with disabilities through online learning in tourism education.

3. Research Findings

3.1. The Role of Technology in Tourism Education

The impact of the Internet has created the potential for educators to connect with learners on a global basis. This has enabled online learning to become a rich educational resource with the capability of supporting both real-time and asynchronous communication between instructors and learners as well as among different learners. Furthermore, the Internet as a teaching and learning environment also helps learners with understanding its applications in the tourism industry. Moreover, online learning is more than an alternative educational platform for learners with disabilities. Online learning tools are available for teaching and learning, and social media are increasingly being used by educational institutions. These tools can provide new opportunities and innovative ways to engage students, can promote collaboration, and can help enhance digital literacy (Muir, 2001). Two particularly criteria are increasingly being demanded by employers and using the internet in the teaching and learning environment in tourism education supports tourism students in achieving these criteria. Specifically, these understand the applications of the Internet within the industry, and a comprehensive set of operational Internet skills.

3.2. Creating Job Opportunities for Learners with Disabilities

Whiteneck, et al. (2004), stated that environmental factors should also consider out that any discussion for disability workers and barriers have a great impact in determining a person's activity limitations.The basic principles regarding the employment of disabilities in the tourism industry remarked are listed below:

- The employer should provide equal opportunities for people with and without disabilities and act in an equal, nondiscrimination manner.

- The employer should have no prejudice against candidates.

- Hiring should be based on merit, suitability of the person for the job and capability of the person.

- As a complement to the third principle, job analysis should be applied to determine the physical, cognitive and other requirements of the position.

- If necessary, positive discrimination should be used in favor of the workforce with disabilities, with regard to issues such as working hours and workload distribution.

The process of online learning leads students to take responsibility for their individual learning process. This online learning environment combined with the Internet provides resources that provide the opportunity to learners with disabilities to develop skills and confidence in managing difficult tasks and problem-solving. As social media continues to increase in popularity, they are increasingly incorporated in teaching and learning. Some of the advantages of online learning can be defined as:

- Learning can occur anywhere
- Learning can occur at any time and at any place.
- There is a synergy between the learner, instructor and environment.
- High quality dialogue can be maintained, because it is not restricted by the traditional classroom or time models.
- It can be adapted to individuals' learning styles with greater ease.

Bengisu and Balta (2011), argued that works that require a specific meaning or ability critically are not suitable for disabled people who do not have this meaning or ability, even with the help of technology or in other ways. Nevertheless, experts and researchers often agree that disabled workers can perform any task in the tourism sector, except in the extreme and obvious cases of professional knowledge and skills.

Therefore, it is important for learners with disabilities to continue their education and have a profession. Moreover, an increase in educational level can have a positive impact on employment prospects.

4. Conclusion

This conceptual study is aimed at revealing the potential of learners with disabilities by creating job opportunities with an innovation strategy by using technology in tourism education.

Technology and the Internet enable modern individuals to determine easier, faster and more economical solutions to satisfy their information and communication needs. In order to benefit from these opportunities, various regulations should be applied to the education provided, and new information technologies should be developed and disseminated. In particular, the development of online learning programs is aimed at increasing employment in this significantly important area. In this sense, considering that many positions within the tourism sector do not require specific physical abilities, creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities in these fields is important

By utilizing the online learning environment, learners with disabilities can acquire professional competences, which include: creativity, self-confidence, initiative, life-long learning, discipline and social abilities.

In this study, the online education model aims to be an effective academic resource in terms of continuing the effective use of the Internet and social media on the education for people with disabilities, increasing their employment prospects and removing obstacles. For further studies, the impact of practical courses for learning and social inclusion can be examined by analyzing the

qualitative and quantitative nature of the research studies. The online learning environment can be evaluated and observed during practical training courses or internships to understand the potential for skills development of the learners.

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