

Employment of the Disabled Workforce in the Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

Employment is one of the important requirements for the integration of disabled people to daily life. The tourism industry is one of Turkey's important industries with a great potential for growth. However this growth must be a planned and balanced one with appropriate consideration of its human resources. In order to get the most benefit from the disabled workforce, it is of interest to understand the types of jobs that may be more suitable for specific types and degrees of disability. Suitability is a relative issue which may be described differently if one is an employee, an employer, or an expert. It would also change from one person to another. This study aims to determine different types of jobs suitable for different types of disability. A two-round Delphi survey will be used to find some optimized answers to this complex question. The study does not aim to limit or dictate the types of jobs for disabled people, but rather to find out new possibilities of employment and come up with certain recommendations for the disabled community and the hospitality industry on this issue.

The Delphi technique is a tool used both for forecasting/foresight (Heraud and Cuhls, 1998) as well as for determining expert opinion on complex and uncertain issues (Miller, 2001). In this technique, experts in the field answer open-ended questions in the first round. The initial responses are summarized and fed back to the same participants who are asked to reconsider their opinion on each item that is investigated in the survey (Schneider and Dutton, 2002). The purpose of iterations is to come to a consensus of opinion or to build a common vision, although this may not be possible in all cases.

Statistics show that the hospitality industry is a significant employer and lodging is the largest sector, assuming a critical role in the hospitality industry (Page and Connell, 2006). Therefore, the major focus of this study is the hospitality industry. The suitability of jobs to people with different classes of disability in the hospitality industry, more specifically in the lodging and food service sectors, will be investigated. The classification of disabilities will be based on World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2007). Our hypothesis is that certain jobs may be more suitable for a given type of disability. In addition to traditional jobs assigned to people with certain disabilities, it is hoped that potential jobs will be identified for disabled workers. For example, studies revealed that the majority of workers with ocular disabilities (i.e. blind or visually impaired) work as masseurs (Chi et al., 2004) and

switchboard operators (Bengisu et al., 2008). On the other hand, a small number of blind individuals were active as teachers, lawyers, or assembly workers (Bengisu et al., 2008). It is important to enrich the types of jobs and opportunities for disabled people for two reasons. Firstly, the employment of disabled workers is a legal obligation in Turkey for private companies which employ 50 or more employees. Secondly, there may be some advantages of hiring disabled workers such as higher loyalty and better performance (Schneider and Dutton, 2002). The possibility of enhancing job opportunities will be investigated considering no special equipment and adaptations as well as with minor adaptations in procedures and equipment.

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