Assistive Technology: Human Capital for Mobility (Dis)abled Workforce Diversity Development

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ABSTRACT

The international workforce must understand and utilize knowledge and competencies in order to achieve and sustain longevity. Such knowledge and competencies are derived from human capital because human capital is an organization’s most important asset. Hence, organizations need to be able to capitalize on human capital as a source of competitive advantage. Organizations must first, focus on human capital based on their ability, thereafter, provide modifications and accommodations, if necessary for (mobility) (dis)abled human capitals who may, upon request, require assistive technologies. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to analyze assistive technology. Assistive technology will be defined, assistive technology laws will briefly be covered, and negative connotations will be addressed in relation to disabilities. The utilization of assistive technology, in the disabled community, in relation to the independence of the (motor) disabled in the workforce in the United States.

Keywords: Assistive Technology, Cognitive Intelligence, Disability, Emotional Intelligence, General Intelligence, Global Capital, Human Capitals, Social Intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Workforce development has evolved to describe any one of a relatively wide range of national and international policies and programs related to learning for work. This evolution, in part, is the end result of the term being frequently misunderstood: workforce development consists of job training only. Harrison and Weiss (1998, p. 5) defined workforce development as the “constellation of activities from orientation to the work world, recruiting, placement, and mentoring to follow-up counseling and crisis intervention”. However, inequality in the workforce, specifically promoting equal rights to employment for members of discriminated groups with disabilities (Kriegal, 2002; McClain, 2002) has become a widely talked about phenomenon in the business world, and is visible from an international (Jakovljevic & Buckley, 2011) paradigm. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is not on the varieties of the availability of assistive technologies (AT) and their usages based on individuals’ specified disability, so that individuals who require the usage of ATs can be of equal playing field compared to those individuals who do not require the usage of ATs. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze assistive technology. Assistive technology will be defined, assistive technology laws will briefly be covered, and negative connota-

DOI: 10.4018/IJACI.2014070102
tions will be addressed in relations to disabilities. The utilization of assistive technology, in the disabled community, in relations to the independence of the (motor) disabled in the workforce in the United States.

BACKGROUND

Historically speaking, from past to present, for many developing countries, legislation regarding the employment of individuals with disabilities has been criticized due to its ineffectiveness (Schall, 1998; Siegal, 2001). In particular, according to Jakovljevic and Buckley (2011), the legislation has had little or no impact on the employment status of people with disabilities (Agocs, 2002; Brett, 2000; Conlin, 2000; De Jonge, Rodger, & Fitzgibbon, 2001; De Laurentiis, 1991; Hignite, 2000; IRS, 1998; McGregor, 1991; Robitaille, 2002; Saskatchewan, 2000; Schall, 1998, Thomas, 2002). When addressing the needs of employees with disabilities, the Act and the Code both include the term reasonable accommodation (Tran, 2015a). Reasonable accommodation (disability accommodation) is any modification or adjustment to a job or to a working environment that will enable a person from a designated group to have access to or participate or advance in employment (Department of Labour, 2002; Tran, 2015a). It includes acquisition and modification of equipment and devices, as well as any necessary training. These devices and equipment are collectively known as assistive technologies (AT).

HUMAN CAPITAL FOR WORKPLACE DIVERSITY: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES (AT)

Human capitals [cultural and global (Tran, 2014a)] include labor market skills, leadership skills, general education background, artistic development and appreciation, health, experiences, and intelligence [behavioral, emotional, cognitive, cultural (CQ), general (IQ), metacognitive, motivational, and social (Tran, 2014a)]. Human capitals are essential asset in most communities, both domestic, and international. Traditional approaches to human capital development emphasize individual responses. Quite often, individuals bear the cost, and the burden of obtaining education and training. Although many government programs have been developed to provide training, they tend to focus on specific populations and often are not well connected with local labor market conditions, as compared to nongovernmental that may have different types and levels of access and accessibility for various populations: the abled and the disabled.

Disability

There is much debate about the best way to define disability. The issue of definition has also been further complicated by the links to individual eligibility criteria for program and financial assistance or to legal implications. Furthermore, disability is difficult to define because it is a multi-dimensional concept with both objective and subjective characteristics. When interpreted as an illness or impairment, disability is seen as fixed in an individual’s body or mind (Tran, 2014b; Tran, 2015b). When interpreted as a social construct disability is seen in terms of the socioeconomic, cultural and political disadvantages resulting from an individual’s exclusion. Furthermore, people with disabilities, advocacy groups, legal and medical practitioners, policymakers and the general public, all have a different view of disability. Thus, the meaning of disability has evolved and changed over the years through various perspectives, as such moral, medical, social, and human rights perspectives (Department of Education & Training, 2005).
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