Open Education Practices for Learners with Disabilities

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Abstract

Transition from traditional learning to open up education, the equality, openness and access has been reached for all learners without any time and distance limitations. Although this transition happens all around to world to underline equality in learning, the principles of online pedagogy and restructure on pedagogical and organizational levels come into the consideration. Access, openness and the equality for learning confirm the essence of active dialogue and engagement of learners to enrich transferable skills within the life. Higher education institutions turn attention on massive open online courses (MOOCs) as part of the transformation in education by focusing on innovation and strategic opportunity in education. The literature has pointed out that MOOCs are providing educational opportunities for lifelong learners and become solution for inclusion in learning. While engaging online learning process, student support is the crucial element to provide active participation and match learners' needs and expectations during the process. Within a framework of online pedagogy, learner development is challenging pattern and heart of the online practices which mainly three components have been underlined: (1) student support, (2) institutional support, and (3) teaching learning process including assessment as learning procedure in higher education. This study aims to provide an example of open resources education course for orthopedically disabled learners which online training course supports learners and their families for their professional development within a frame of counseling and guidance. The study is significant to underline the principles of online pedagogy within the process and enrich abilities of learners including family members in particular contents. Furthermore, the study shows how open education resources could be motivation for social learning within the life as part of the life-long learning philosophy. In addition to that, it contributes to underline the success of effective pedagogy in online context for learners with disabilities.

Keywords: Disabilities, Life Long Learning, Professional Learning, Open Education Resources.

1. Introduction

Transition from traditional learning to open up education, the equality, openness and access has been reached for all learners without any time and distance limitations. Although this transition happens all around to world to underline equality in learning, the principles of online pedagogy and restructure on pedagogical and organizational levels come into the consideration. Access, openness and the equality for learning confirms the essence of active dialogue and engagement of learners to enrich transferable skills within the life (European Commission, 2013).

Learning and teaching activities, nor was the monopoly of the traditional education system. Learning through the possibilities provided by information and communication technologies has become a lifelong process. Moreover, access to information, which is the main capital, has become easier. Changes in the structure of knowledge and access to information are reflected in the field of education.Today, there is a differentiation from the teaching-centered understanding to the learning-centered understanding. At the core of this change are key concepts that summarize the understanding of contemporary network society such as openness, flexibility, autonomy, and personalization. Thus, learning, gained independence in the context of time and space, always occurred everywhere, has become a continuous action. Lifelong learning has become important and meaningful as a reflection of this thought.

In other words, success has been valued as long as it is sustainable. As a result of all the above developments, Open Educational Resources (OER) and the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) have become transformations that can meet the information needs of twenty-first century learners.
Higher education institutions turn attention on Massive open online courses (MOOCs) as part of the transformation in education by focusing on innovation and strategic opportunity in education. The literature has pointed out that MOOCs are providing educational opportunities for lifelong learners and become solution for inclusion in learning.

While engaging online learning process, student support is the crucial element to provide active participation and match learners' needs and expectations during the process [2]. Within a framework of online pedagogy, learner development is challenging pattern and heart of the online practices which mainly three components have been underlined: (1) student support, (2) institutional support, and (3) teaching learning process including assessment as learning procedure in higher education.

Liberalization of learning have started to make equality for disabled people. Online learning and education become a medium of learning for the construction of educational policy for disabled people. This fosters adult education and life long learning in order to create a base for professional development. In this respect, this research study gives an insight on the significance of open resources for gaining quality, transformation and liberalization in education (Gazi & Aksal, 2017).

According to the Salmon Carpe Diem Model, there is significant need for team work in organizational aspects of online education. This study aims to provide an example of open resources education course for orthopedically disabled learners which online training course supports learners and their families for their professional development within a frame of counseling and guidance. The study is significant to underline the principles of online pedagogy within the process and enrich abilities of learners including family members in particular contents. Furthermore, the study shows how open education resources could be motivation for social learning within the life as part of the life-long learning philosophy. In addition to that, it contributes to underline the success of effective pedagogy in online context for learners with disabilities.

2. Methodology

In this study, content analysis method was used to investigate the studies made in Open Educational Resources (OER) and the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in the field of educational sciences. Content analysis is a scientific approach that allows for the objective examination of verbal, written and other sources in a systematic way (Tavşancıl ve Aslan, 2001).

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), content analysis is also defined as the process of summarizing and describing the main content of written information and the topics it contains.

This study has conceptual nature which comprehensive literature review shed a light to investigate OER practices for learner with disabilities. Although there are studies (Ossiannilsson, Altinay, Altinay, 2016; Ossiannilsson, Altinay, Altinay, 2016) which highlight online pedagogy principles and practices, the studies stay partial by putting emphasis on open education practices for learners with disabilities. Furthermore, the practice of open education course as an example of training course with its procedure, social dialogue, interaction and learner development has been developed in this research process. For the conceptual framework and comprehensive literature, the studies (Ossiannilsson, Altinay, Altinay, 2016; Ossiannilsson, Altinay, Altinay, 2015) underlined the methodological implications to highlight how open education resources become innovation and strategy for higher education. However, the studies are not sufficient to emphasis on transition could be the possible solution for learners with disabilities through open education resources.

3. Research Findings

a. Comprehensive look into OER researches

Atkins, Brown, Hammond (2007) provided review on OER researches which highlights opportunities, challenges to implement OER for the future practice of higher education institutions. Haggard, et al. (2013) reflected forms of online learning including MOOCs practices. The limited studies such as Altinay, et al. (2016) highlight the significant framework of OER for learners with disabilities thus it even stays conceptual. Therefore, there is significant shift to reflect practical implications of OER diffusion on learning for learners with disabilities.

It is possible to define Open Course Resources as (Carson, 2005):

- Organized in the format of a course, free and easily accessible,
- Usage and adaptation are open to the public with certain license terms (creative commons)
- It is a high quality educational resource that is not used to give certificates or diplomas alone.

Mass Open Online Courses will bring all the features necessary for participants to have full access over the networks, everyone is open and attendance is usually free. There are often a high number of participants, often more than five hundred. Within a Mass Open Online Course structure, each individual participates in the system free of charge, creates content, interacts, analyzes, and reflects his / her achievements according to learning needs (Koutropoulos et al., 2012; McAuley et al., 2010). Teachers in the Mass Open Online Course System undertake facilitator functions. Participants are both learners and educators with the contributions they provide (Rodriguez, 2012; Norvig, 2012).

In the Mass Open Online Course system, learners are expected to find four types of activities (Levy, 2011):

- reach different sources,
- to trace the source, bring together the resources that access,kişisel hesaplar oluşturmak,
- for developing new insights bringing together their thoughts
- to share the products revealed by other learners as well.

b. Maintaining Course as a Model

As this study aims to provide an example of course regarding open education resource, the practical implications of courses and its effectiveness need to be examined from the perspectives and experiences of learners with disabilities. In order to maintain a model of course, firstly the expectations and needs of the learners with orthopedically disability as adult learners were asked to determine the course contents within a framework of professional learning. In fact, the result of workshops and meetings also highlighted the necessity of open education resources for adult learners with disabilities to support social inclusion and equality in learning within a framework of life-long learning. In line with workshop and meetings, particular course contents were constructed: (1) Problems and possible solution path in society for learners with disabilities, (2) Family and communication, (3) Arts for learners with disabilities, (4) Environment, life and travel, (5)

Technology. The course contents reflect the nature of counseling and guidance for the learners with disabilities and also for their families. The courses will be supported by tutor and social activities will provide awareness of learners between each others. The exercises and social activities of the courses will support social dynamism and engagement of the learners and their families as a motivation for learning and the life itself. As this course is the preliminary stage and first example for the Northern part of Cyprus, evaluation and assessment of the course will also provide indicators of success for open education resources for learners with disabilities. However, the course is only limited for learners with orthopedically disability.

The course as a model covers following principles to overcome barriers and exploit opportunities for learning to all learners with disabilities within a framework of professional learning and competence development based on social interaction and engagement:

- Assistive technologies applications
- E-learning systems for people with disabilities
- Open access to teaching and learning for people with disabilities
- Learning technology standards and people with disabilities
- Accessibility and usability of educational content and applications
- Pedagogical issues for technology-supported education for people with disabilities
- Evaluation and assessment as part of learning
- Orientation and training for technology-supported education for people with disabilities

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This conceptual review of literature aimed to reveal the potential opportunities of serving learners with disabilities through open education resources as change and innovation strategy in higher education. The proposed course as a model and literature gap supported that open education resources can be the solution path for transformation of innovative pedagogy and learning for learners with disabilities. For that transformation, digital leadership and institutional support is crucial to open the doors as educational policy. For learning and innovation in higher education, social inclusion, access, openness and equality need to be implemented with the opportunities of OER in higher education (Akcil, Altinay, Altinay, 2016; Akcıl, Aksal. A., Mukhametzyanova, Gazi. A., 2016).

Technology-supported education as regarding the open education resources and MOOCs offer equality, openness and access for all learners with disabilities. Beside educational opportunities, OER and online platform propose social inclusion and motivation within a safe and engaged learning environment. Reaching learning environments with multi-touch devices provide benefit of knowledge construction in any time and any place within an interactive dialogue and engagement. Without any time and location barriers, open education resources and online education practices create a potential access, openness, equality for all learners with disability within a framework of life-long learning (Aksal Altınay, 2015; Altınay, Dagli, Altınay, 2016).

These services provide opportunities of learning experiences as including nature of counseling and guidance. This model of course as stated in this study open an academic debate and challenge to further investigate new applications and trends for overcoming barriers and providing potential opportunities for learners with disabilities. For further studies, the impact of course for learning and social inclusion can be examined with qualitative and quantitative nature of the researches. Further to this, each course activities can be evaluated to understand the potential skills development of the learners in both assessment and activities process.

As peer learning and assessment increase collaboration and construction of knowledge in online context, the experiences of learners for that course can be examined to evaluate the system of learning technology standards and people with disabilities. Accessibility and usability of educational content and applications can be examined in detail to overcome barriers of learning for learners with disabilities.

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