Balázs Németh[1]
University of Pécs, Hungary

Ola Issa[2]
DVV International, Palestine

Farah Diba[3]
Indira Gandhi National Open University, India

Alan Tuckett[4]
University of Wolverhampton, UK

Learning Cities and Learning Communities: Analyzing Contextual Factors and Their Impacts on Adult and Lifelong Learning in Urban Settings

Abstract: This paper will elaborate upon the contextual aspects of community development in the scope of Learning City and Learning Community related practices of knowledge transfer and sharing in urban environments. Engaged colleagues will provide their critical approaches, reflections and proposals upon how we can understand and recognize adult and lifelong learning through communities trying to reach for peace, understanding, social inclusion and sensitive intercultural and intergenerational aspirations in times of difficulties and challenges affecting our vulnerable relationships. This paper will try to point out matters of equity, human discoveries of collection, sharing and saving values, tradition and dignities through Learning Communities in four different cultural

[1] Balázs Németh, PHD habil, associate professor, Institute for Human Development and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, University of Pécs, Hungary (nemeth.balazs@pte.hu).

[2] Ola Issa, M.Ed., Country Director/ Palestine, Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association, Bonn, Germany (issa@dvv-international.ps).

[3] Farah Diba, MA, research scholar of distance education, Faculty of Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India (farahdiba0111@gmail.com).

[4] Sir Alan Tuckett, Emeritus professor of Education (from January, 2021) of the Institute of Education, Faculty of Health Wellbeing and Education, University of Wolverhampton, UK (alan.tuckett@wlv.ac.uk).

environments from the British Isles, India, Palestine and Hungary. Their urban frames might not be necessarily called or considered as Learning Cities, but labels and notions are not the first priority. It is as simple as it sounds: No One Left Behind.

Keywords: learning community, encouragement, trust, sharing knowledge

Learning Cities and Learning Communities

The experience of the last thirty years or more teaches us that responsibility for lifelong learning is too important to be left solely to nation states. Whilst governments make significant progress in the area of structured initial education, they have failed to do anything alike when it comes to supporting young people and adults. This is evident in the outcomes of the UNESCO Education for All (EFA) program, where a commitment to halve the number of illiterate adults over a 15-year period was spectacularly undershot (UNESCO GEM, 2015; Tuckett & Popović, 2015). This is also noticeable in the European Union where member states agreed in 2010 to secure an adult participation rate in learning of 15% by 2020. As the decade ends, the number hovers around 10.5%, which is an increase of just 1.5% throughout the ten years.

Again, in 2015, countries promised in the global Sustainable Development Goals to promote lifelong learning for all—yet the Global Partnership for Education, which was charged with financing the goals, decided it had no money either for adult literacy, or for wider adult learning. In some ways this is unsurprising. Schools need buildings, trained staff, resource materials, to be within safe reach of their pupils and students, or to have technology appropriate for online learning. Making policies, securing funding, and monitoring practice for schools involve tasks the state can both instigate and deliver. In the same way, universities and technological institutions can also be planned for. But things are less clear with lifelong learning.

However, there clearly exists a role for the state in lifelong learning—in developing a clear overall strategy; in supporting literacy, numeracy and digital skills for adults; in supporting second chance provision; in securing an educated workforce and a critically engaged citizenship; and in supporting measures to overcome the marginalization of under-represented groups. However, securing these outcomes is much harder—whereas state support for primary and secondary education is focused on schools, lifelong learning involves a bewildering range of actors. Once again, formal education providers have a role to play, but so do employers, faith-based organizations, civil society organizations, professional associations and the mass media as well. The actors change in different circum-

stances and cannot all be managed from the center. As a result, it is critical that a centrally agreed strategy should then be devolved to regional and sub-regional networks for delivery. As the coronavirus pandemic demonstrates, effective measures to overcome its devastating impact involve the active engagement of civil society as a whole, in adapting behaviors to control the spread of the disease. That engagement involves a national strategy, widespread learning, and effective local partnerships.

Thus, at its heart, the argument for learning cities resides in their ability to match local needs with the coalition of local interests, and the financial resources capable of meeting them. One of the great strengths of city regions is their ability to bring together resources from a variety of different places to address challenges that cross the silos of national policy making. It is one thing to recognize that educating mothers has a positive health impact on their own lives and that of their children, and that increasing financial investment in the education of women will generate disproportionate savings in health budgets. However, it is quite another to argue the case for shifting resources from health to education—at least at a national level. It is far easier to secure inter-agency co-operation at a regional or sub-regional level. Decision-making is local enough to identify real priorities for learning to enhance economic and social development, and where necessary to shift resources across departmental boundaries to that end. They are local enough, too, to secure more effective engagement of firms and social enterprises in strengthening the skills of their employees. Moreover, city regions operate on a large enough scale to marshal sufficient resources to make a difference. But in just the same way that cities can identify more effectively targeted solutions to meet the learning needs of communities, civil society organizations can also contribute, helping to fine-tune city region priorities to identify and reach groups with needs that city region initiatives will otherwise fail to address. The power of city regions in addressing inter-disciplinary, complex challenges of many sorts can be also seen in the proliferation of Smart Cities, Healthy Cities, Creative Cities, Green Cities, as well as in the development of Learning Cities.

Cities are places where innovation, co-operative problem solving, and the harnessing of resources to address challenges coalesce. Their interest in the role learning can play in responding to the challenges of demographic, technological, ecological and economic change have steadily increased over the last thirty years (Facer & Buchazyk, 2019) and, whilst the idea of learning cities can be traced back to Ancient Greece (Osborne et al., 2013), current scholarly focus on cities as places where formal, non-formal and informal learning contribute to urban development, and social inclusion was first stimulated by Hirsch's OECD paper, for the 1992 Educating Cities Conference in Gothenburg in 1992, and by the

Delors' report for UNESCO in 1996 (Hirch, 1992; Delors, 1996). Attempts to codify emergent practice, first in the industrial north and subsequently worldwide (Cara & Ransom, 1998; Longworth, 2000, 2006; Faris, 2005; Duke, Osborne, & Wilson, 2006, Keans & Ishami, 2012) were accompanied by a search for criteria for comparative studies. The task was complicated by the radically different focus adopted in different places. Some, as in Latin America were grounded in "the democratization of social life and in the possibility of creating a community from or within an urban space" (Messina & Valdes-Cortera, 2013, p. 427); others framed the learning city in its relationship with its poorer, rural hinterland (Walters, 2009). Nevertheless, there are initiatives to develop matrices for evaluating the development of learning cities. Notable among these was the Canadian Composite Learning Index, which was used to focus on the learning city's capacity for partnership creation; its ability to foster participation, its progress and sustainability, and the extent of its learning culture (Canadian Council on Learning, 2010). Others include the German Learning Atlas (Bertelsmann, 2012), and the European Lifelong Learning Index (Bertelsmann, 2010). The establishment of UNESCO's Learning Cities network in 2010 (see below) has provided a focus for the sharing of experience among cities, and generated material for scholarly analysis. Nevertheless, as Facer and Buchazyk observe, much remains to be done to establish a robust theoretical underpinning for learning cities' research, given their inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary impact (Facer & Buchanzyk, 2019). Given this, the approach taken in this paper is to capture similarity in diversity, in much the way that Wittgenstein argued that the Churchill face was recognizable across generations, with a large number of common characteristics present in different faces, despite no single characteristic being common to all (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 55ff).

The growth of learning cities

From the 1990s, this idea was taken up in a number of European countries, and at the same time was flourishing in Japan and Korea. It was given a major fillip in Europe in 1996 as part of the European Year of Lifelong Learning, and subsequently through Socrates projects (Cara et al., 2002). Learning cities recognized the key importance of place in people's lives. As Faris explained, they are grounded in "lifelong learning as an organizing principle and social/cultural goal in order to promote collaboration of their civic, economic, public, voluntary and education sectors to enhance social, economic, and environmental conditions on a sustainable, inclusive basis" (Faris, 2007, cited in Hamilton & Jordan, 2011).

Many have economic and social regeneration as goals, and a focus on the needs of groups that have benefited least from initial education.

In the UK, perhaps the most developed of the first wave of Learning City initiatives was in Glasgow, a city with considerable poverty, and a high proportion of adult population that had low levels of formal skills. The goals the city set for itself were ambitious, and to some considerable degree achieved, and combined a focus on learning for economic transformation, but also on the development of a culture of learning (Longworth, 1999).

However, the enthusiasm of the 1990s and early 2000s cooled—at least in Europe. A number of cities, like Glasgow, embedded the key strategies developed in their Learning City initiatives into the core activities of Councils. In other cases, like Southampton in the UK, a change of City Council leadership led to the decline and eventual end of the initiative: the new administration perceived the Learning City idea as yesterday's news. A further and related challenge was that dedicated staffing was often at a relatively junior level, without automatic access to key decision makers in different sectors. A key lesson of this period was that ownership of the initiative needs to be shared by a range of stakeholders.

Nevertheless, the dynamic development of learning cities as the heart of national lifelong learning strategies did take off again—in Korea, where 75 cities were approved for support by the government, and following 2000 by 200 learning cities in China, whilst in South Africa the Cape Learning Region pioneered links between urban and rural hinterlands. In 2010, UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning adopted learning cities as a major focus for its work, and an international network of learning cities was established, biennial conferences were held with attendance from more than 250 cities across the globe, and outstanding initiatives were celebrated.

UNESCO defines a learning city as one that:

- effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;
- revitalizes learning in families and communities;
- facilitates learning for and in the workplace;
- extends the use of modern learning technologies;
- enhances quality and excellence in learning; and
- fosters a culture of learning throughout life (UIL, 2020).

A particular strength of UNESCO is its capacity to highlight positive examples of good practice. The UNESCO Mid Term Review of CONFINTEA VI—the 12 yearly world conference on adult education—was held in 2017 in Suwon, Korea, the year's winner of the Outstanding Learning City award. It

demonstrated clearly that the enthusiastic endorsement of political support by the local Mayor was central. But its Learning City had a visible presence across the full range of institutions, cultural organizations and local businesses. No one lived more than 10 minutes from a library—which ranged from a modest shelf of books in a metro station or hairdresser's salon, to a learning center at work or public library—and no one lived more than twenty minutes from a learning center. It helped that the city's commitment was supported by Samsung, whose corporate headquarters are in the city. But it was clearly an initiative with a wide engagement of citizens of all ages.

Cork, too, was winner of a UNESCO Outstanding City award in 2017. Its work is focused on inclusion, on "no one being left behind", a commitment demonstrated through its spectacular week-long annual Lifelong Learning festival, where hundreds of organizations contribute to events, where Learning factories open up for groups to discover the work they do and to explore career routes, where applicable. Buses are adorned with images of learners, from pre-school to post-retirement. There are initiatives to strengthen the skills for prisoners on the "Inside" project, and for wives and partners in the "Outside" initiative. A Learning Forest established at the corner of a carpark opens debate about the relationship of growing and consuming. Six learning neighborhoods keep the Learning City vibrant and attuned to the needs of Cork's different communities—at Knocknaheeney, for example and industry-academia and schools project focuses on serious gaps in school achievement, and develops work experience in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, whilst in The Glen the focus is on Mental Health across the age span, and on the development of an oral history of the area. The Learning City has active endorsement from the City Council and the two higher education bodies in the city (Cork Learning City 2019; Tuama 2016; O'Sullivan & Kenny, 2016; Németh 2020).

Like Cork, an early commitment of Wolverhampton's City Learning Region was to co-ordinate an annual learning festival—building on the experience of initiatives like Adult Learners' weeks, where celebrating existing learners is used to encourage others to participate (Tuckett, 2018). The Learning City region was sparked into life through an agreement of the University of Wolverhampton and the City of Wolverhampton, but interest was shown, too, in other parts of the University's footprint—in Walsall, Telford and most recently Stafford, which is establishing a Learning Town. Wolverhampton is a richly mixed community but like the rest of the Black Country faces the challenge of high unemployment, poor health, low levels of formal skills, and substantial areas in need of regeneration. At the Learning City launch, participants agreed to focus on three core themes—securing a healthy city, strengthening the skills in particular of workers in small

and medium enterprises, and to foster inter-agency co-operation through the engagement of faith-based and voluntary sector organizations in raising aspirations and achievements. Each city is different, but they share a need to combine the support of key senior decision makers with mechanisms to engage the active and passionate engagement of citizens. There is no better argument for a learning city than to meet someone whose life has been transformed by engaging in learning.

Learning Communities: giving meaning to community in the context of conflict, the case of Palestine

What does it take for a community to function in uncertainty and fragmentation? Defining a community in the context of conflict is a challenging task. A community is often associated with coherence and shared geographical space, infrastructure and rules. In a complicated and multi-layered conflict zone, characterized by fragmentation in political, economic and social systems, like Palestine, even this basic definition of a community becomes a luxury. Within the reality in which Palestinians live, it is extremely challenging to define entities, boundaries or rules. There is a complex of interrelated factors that lead to this challenge, namely, a prolonged and ongoing Israeli military occupation with no silver lining for a Palestinian statehood in the near future; a difficult (sometimes violent) political conflict on the national level, that has caused estrangement between the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 2007; a deteriorating economy that keeps experiencing one setback after another; and a vulnerable social cohesion that is threatened by patriarchal/ tribal/socio-economic power conflicts. Within such context, it is only natural to assume that people, especially young women and men, struggle with identifying themselves with a clear concept of their community. In numbers, this translates to the following: in 2019, especially with unemployment rates among youth reaching 45%, and 65% in Gaza (before the Covid-19 pandemic); more than one third of youth were seeking immigration (The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

In contexts of conflict, human values, especially those related to togetherness and collectiveness, are faced with several crucial questions: the question of identity; the question of priorities/needs/interests; the question of contributions and roles and the question of justice and equality. It becomes difficult to comprehend: Who is the citizen? Who is the authority? What is the group that makes up a community? And what are the relations/ interconnections/ mutual responsibilities/ rights/ boundaries for individuals, their surroundings, their neighbors, their communities, their society, their environment? So, why would the individuals of that community be interested in any work on advancing their community?

Nonetheless, a community can function under conflict and in an effective way. However, there are several factors and conditions that need to exist for a community to survive and thrive. To mention a few, there is a need for optimal investment in local resources; strengthened connectedness among community members to be able to detect, identify, prevent and mitigate problems; collective consensus on a form of community leadership that ensures active participation and inclusivity; strengthened willingness for volunteerism and community work and ensured respect of rights and needs of all groups, especially those at risk of any kind of discrimination.

A bulk of research and field experience has shown that a culture of continuous and ongoing learning, i.e. lifelong learning seems imperative to realize all of the above-mentioned conditions (Azar, 2016). Learning and awareness raising is required on the level of the individual as well as the level of the group. Furthermore, advocates of renewal of thinking of educational concepts in the Arab region (Negm, 2013) emphasize concepts of Tawwaai and Tarabbi (self-driven and self-generated awareness and learning) as opposed to Tawiyeh and Tarbiyeh (one's awareness is being raised by others and one being taught by others). Thus, an influential learning and awareness are those that are locally owned and locally generated, and that stem from the real needs, interests, dreams and ambitions of the community members. Only then, a community would become a learning community, and hence can achieve what it takes to continue and secure abundant life.

A national framework that promotes ALE and LLL within community-based settings

While there is a shy emphasis in Palestine on the concept of a learning community, the National Policy Agenda of the State of Palestine (2017—2022) lists TVET as a major priority. In the midterm review of the NPA, community-based partnerships for lifelong learning were included as well. This reference document states the main policy interventions which require non-formal and further training and learning opportunities in the communities. These includes: improving transition from education to employment; ensuring equitable access to education opportunities, particularly in marginalized areas and for vulnerable groups; providing continuing training programs for workers; improving enrolment in continuing education and literacy programs; developing digital and e-learning programs; aligning TVET and higher education with development and local labor market needs; promoting social integration for groups at risk of exclusion (persons with disability, youth, women, ex-prisoners etc.); strengthening economic

and social empowerment programs benefiting vulnerable groups and the poor; strengthening preventive health care and wellbeing, raising awareness and promoting healthy lifestyles; preserving identity and culture; and enhancing youth participation in the public life.

Non-formal education is considered the fifth component of the Palestinian Education System in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2017—2022). This reference document defines this sector as: "every objective and organized educational activity and every piece of knowledge, skill, value or behavior outside the framework of official educational systems—such as schools, universities or any other formal educational institution—be they in social, economic or political institutions or in factories or Non-Governmental Organizations" (The State of Palestine, 2017). In the midterm review in 2020, two new goals were added to the Non-formal Education Program: 1. Enhancing recognition of Adult Education as a main component of the Palestinian Education System; and 2. Enhancing partnerships with communities to expand and disseminate Community Centers for Youth and Adult Education.

A learning community for abundant life, even within conflict: the example of the city of Ramallah

While conflicts are a natural part of human society, living under prolonged conflicts, that are worsened and not resolved over time, is not. Therefore, a self-generated and owned learning for a community means also transforming the conflict itself. A culture of a learning community and a lifelong learning community member is as significant and important in conflicts as it is in any other more stable contexts (if not more). Being a lifelong learner helps the learner think of their own continuation and future in life; it humanizes them again, when in conflicts they are dehumanized.

Lifelong learning entails empowered thinking, conscious learning and responsible action. It is one proven and effective way of conflict resolution/prevention; resilience and continuity as individuals (empowerment) and as communities (solidarity and development), and as importantly, it is an effective way of restoring hope.

Within a century of fast-changing realities in Palestine, Ramallah was no exception. In the beginning of the last century, the city's population dropped significantly due to the active migration movement after WWI to reach 4,582 persons in 1922. Following two wars and waves of forced displacement in 1948 and 1967, the population of Ramallah city grew to 32,780 persons before the war

of 1967. However, the second wave of forced internal displacement after the war caused a second significant drop to 25,171. In 1997, when the city became the center of Palestinian politics, economy and administrative authority, the population of Ramallah was 17,851.

Since then, due to recruiting public employees and their families and workers in the private sector and the fast-growing non-governmental sector in the city, the urban population grew to 70,000 in 2019, while the city serves on a daily basis over 370,000 persons, including the surrounding refugee camps, villages and towns (The Municipality of Ramallah, 2019).

UNESCO defines a learning city as a city that "effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education; revitalizes learning in families and communities; facilitates learning for and in the workplace; fosters a culture of learning throughout life" (UIL, 2019a). Although not officially labelled as a Learning City, Ramallah possesses, within this definition, the characteristics of a learning community in multiple dimensions:

First, shared spaces for community life, learning, action and leisure have been since the 1960s in the core of development work on the level of the municipality, citizens and local institutions in addition to networking, twinning and partnering with other Palestinian and international cities. Throughout the many challenging times imposed by the above-mentioned multi-layered conflict, there were many occasions (that were much needed) of celebrating the community and its values of solidarity, tolerance, togetherness, trust and continuity. In all those occasions, partnership, local ownership, and openness were key. Ramallah used the occasion of the year 2000 to coordinate with the Bethlehem 2000 Project and to organize and launch its Ramallah 2000 celebration as well. The year 2008 marked 100 years of Ramallah municipality. A few years ago, the annual cultural festival "Wein 3 Ramallah" which means: "Where? To Ramallah" was launched as an annual tradition. In 2017, the city launched its strategic plan as a resilient city, and officially opened its municipal theatre.

Second, the city provides for a collective narrative, identity, and cultural heritage that, at the same time, celebrates uniqueness and specificity of different sub-groups. As several other Palestinian localities, Ramallah is distinguished with its mixed layers of urban and rural textures and cultural heritage. Within its architecture that combines the old and the new, the modern life of the city revolves around a historical center that forms its basic structure and radiates possibilities of modern expansion and growth in different directions.

Third, within its strategic plans as a smart city, Ramallah started initiatives to promote smart transportation solutions, information systems, smart green environment and infrastructure and smart education services. The aim is to increase

accessibility, easier communication processes, innovation for comfort, providing for emergency and recovery plans, better connectivity, provision of better support for community-based organizations, and enhancing both green and grey infrastructure in the city. Be it easy access parking lots for persons with disability, shaded waiting areas, safe walking zones, the availability of such infrastructure encourages citizens to use the shared spaces and to invest in different learning opportunities.

Fourth, in its strategic plan as a resilient city (Ramallah Municipality, 2017), the vision for the community of Ramallah is to be "optimistic, sustainable, inclusive, proud of our own culture and in control of our own destiny". The Plan actually uses as a slogan, the words of the late Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish: "*We have on this land what makes life worth living.*" It was developed with vast participation of the community. While this plan elaborates on different types of existing challenges that hinder resilience, such as limited spaces to develop, acute climate changes, restricted resources and all risks that come from the uncertainty of the Palestinian context, it also explores the opportunities to promote and enhance resilience. These include in their core, the cultural identity that must thrive in the face of challenges. To build the resilience of the city, the plan states work will be emphasizing on using resources in the most efficient ways for the benefit of fulfilling the needs of the citizens; enabling two-way dialogue with the community and creating community-centered emergency plans and responses among others. While this plan sets the goal for 2050, it is already a process in the making.

Fifth, it is evident that the city invests in its people as sources and resources of mutual learning and support. Multiple initiatives were realized and are now actively functioning. One good example is establishing the Forum of Expertise of Ramallah by the municipality. The Forum was given a home with an attractive environment that encourages participation and learning. The concept builds on social programming of learning events and activities that are proposed by the citizens, especially senior citizens. The citizens prepare their own activities and the Forum invites interested groups to join the learning. Currently, the Forum is one of the most active community-based organizations in the city, with activities that vary from as simple as breathing classes to as complicated as creative writing or "The Artist Path: Learn How to Release Your Creative Potentials". Another example is the historical Ottoman Court building that was designated by the municipality as an interactive library for children and adolescents, a space for artistic learning for different age groups and a special garden for children. A third example is the Housh Kandah historical building. The building is used for learning workshops that target young craftspersons and visual artists. Products of artists in the yard (the housh) of the building are marketed in a Friday market that is a reintroduction of a traditional market that used to take place in the city—"El Harjeh".

Sixth, a well-functioning learning city should be able to function in times of crisis, not only in times of prosperity. The city of Ramallah is a good example of flexibility and ability to adapt to crisis. Previously, the city managed to cope with extreme circumstances such as the complete control by the Israeli troops over the city in 2002 (United Nations, 2002).

The municipality actively supported, for example, the emergency plan of implementing the general secondary education exams. The citizens implemented, in groups and as individuals, various initiatives to support each other and secure food and basic needs to isolated neighborhoods.

In so many cases, large numbers of students and teachers in schools and colleges and workers who are from the surrounding villages were unable to go back to their homes. Several community initiatives took place to host them and ensure their safety. In 2020, the city has been affected, like every other city in the world, by the Covid-19 pandemic. Although Ramallah has gone through different kinds of emergencies before, this one was new and there was an urgent need for individual and collective learning. The city showcased a strong example of community-based partnership and solidarity. Not only on the formal level, but also among the different active groups in culture, arts, agriculture, information technology and others. Most active community-based organizations, including the Forum of Expertise, launched their learning activities digitally, mainly to help people and families cope under lockdown. Some colleges and schools implemented mobile graduation ceremonies that passed by the graduating students' homes and supported them; some civil society organizations supported the municipality to provide households with vegetable plants and carried out online demonstrations to help families grow their own food supplies; while main festivals and public events were cancelled, different new kinds of digital public events took place, including webinars, exchange activities and live streaming of music sessions and others; new small community-based gardens were opened as well.

Community-based Centers for Youth and Adult Education as catalysts of public partnerships for a sustainable learning community: examples from the towns of Al Karmel, Arraba and Yamoun

Since 2018, new forms of partnerships for the promotion of learning communities have been launched. Palestinian municipalities are joining the Ministry of Education (MoE), with the support of DVV International and Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, to establish community-based Centers

for Youth and Adult Education. These new social structures are community-based and they build on the real partnership of various local actors.

To establish these partnerships, an elaborate and participatory process has been conducted, including multiple consultations with education experts, community members and providers of ALE aiming at developing a locally relevant conception of the desired community center for learning and education; calls for community partnerships that include several local actors (mainly local literacy education centers that belong to the MoE and local municipalities and CBOs) aimed at encouraging collective action that can be also sustainable and owned by the communities; and conducting several rounds of rapid participatory assessments to inform analysis of communities' needs and local actors' needs. Before public launching of the partnerships, extensive capacity building programs were implemented with local managements of the newly created centers, members of municipalities and local educators/ facilitators and members and volunteers. The constant capacity building continues to enhance the centers' functionality, quality of provided learning programs and offers and networking and partnerships.

Three towns in the north and south of West Bank, that are distinguished with their locations of historical and modern significance and natural and cultural heritage, are now becoming the seeds for increased interest/ involvement in/ emergence of lifelong learning experiences, and enhanced culture of lifelong learning and understanding of the importance of adult learning and education within the Palestinian society, especially among the youth. Al Karmel is a town to the south of Hebron in West Bank, with an 11,000 population and 24500 dunams of space in a very important geographic location that is considered the main gate to all the unrecognized and vulnerable Masafer Bedouin communities in the South. The municipalities of Karmel and adjacent Yatta continuously support and provide services to the communities of Masafer. The community of Arraba in the north of the West Bank enjoys a mix of unique plain and mountainous natural heritage with great potentials for the development of agriculture. The town has a population of 13,000. The complete old Ottoman town in the historical center of Arraba was preserved, with a number of Ottoman palaces and homes. Arraba Municipality donated one of the buildings in this historic quarter for establishment of the community center. The Municipality is seeking increased visibility of the site. However, the site remains undiscovered by local and foreign tourists. Al Yamoun is another town in the north of the West Bank, with a population of 22,000. The town combines agricultural lands and a significant number of small and medium scale factories and businesses. In addition to the historical sites on the outskirts of the town, there are several educational institutions, but mostly of a formal type.

Results of the full report (DVV International, 2019) of the participatory rapid assessment of the communities' needs and priorities for development in 2018 showed that: the three local communities are very much affected by the surrounding settlements/ security measures and by the fact that many members of the communities rely on work possibilities in Israeli settlements and cities; the communities are constrained by several conservative traditions; there are some issues that risk the rights and well-being of vulnerable groups including early marriage and school dropout; as a general problem in Palestine, the three communities suffer from high rates of unemployment, especially among youth and women; these communities also lack many basic services and professions and there is a need for active awareness raising in terms of environmental responsibility.

The multiple participatory workshops, discussions and conceptualization with various stakeholders in each of the three communities recommended that the desired community centers design the learning offerings and initiatives that respond to those needs in specific ways for all community groups. This includes: learning initiatives for individuals and for groups (including young men and women, persons with disability and senior citizens) for a better and more comprehensive understanding of their rights; provision of more spaces/ opportunities for dialogue about the communities' specific problems and how they can be addressed and provision of popular and participatory programs to enhance social cohesion, solidarity and tolerance. In addition, community members who participated in the conceptualization and need assessment activities demanded provision of more and better-quality services and infrastructure, such as spaces for community action and participation in preserving local identity and cultural heritage and spaces for socializing and active engagement in the public life.

The background of the education system in India in terms of lifelong learning, adult education and skill training

Education is the foremost part of any society helping it grow, develop and advance in the social, economic, political and educational fields. Nations are judged by the educational level of its citizens. According to the Report of Indian Education Commission 1966 (1999) "*Education does not end with schooling, but is a lifelong process. The adult needs an understanding of the rapidly changing world and the growing complexities of society. Even those who had the most sophisticated education must continue to learn; the alternative is obsolescence... Thus viewed the function of adult education in a democracy is to provide every adult citizen an opportunity for education of the type which he wishes and which he should have for his personal*

enrichment, professional advancement and effective participation in social and political life" (Shah, 2019). It is evident that most developed countries have very sound education systems in comparison to developing countries and they have the capacities for acquiring and transferring knowledge in their societies.

India has a very long educational history from ancient times, which covered the period from childhood to adulthood without any limit/restriction of age for education. In the Gurukul system (educational institute) pupils received not only academic education, but also underwent basic skills training, such as archery, horse riding, swimming, war tactics, harvesting, manufacturing of fabrics and other handicrafts items. They received religious knowledge and skill training for their practical life in Madarsas (academic institutions for Muslim pupils) and temples (religious/academic institutions for Hindu pupils) as well. To this end, they lived away from their family until the completion of their education and training. In the British era, the existing government exerted efforts for eradicating illiteracy among adults in order to fulfill the requirement for lower clerks and officers and for spreading Christianity. Mahatma Gandhi himself advocated Nai Talim (New Education) which was directly related to life skills and employability. Students learnt spinning, weaving, leather work, pottery, metal work, and basket-making in order to become future entrepreneurs. Every community needs socio-economic and political balance among its citizens. To this end, equality of opportunity should be given to all and sometimes more to disadvantaged people in order to ensure proper social inclusion. Sometimes positive discrimination is helpful for social justice, peace and understanding among people. Education for all is a must as it is directly connected with employment, social status and well-being.

A caste system has existed in India since ancient times. Jobs were divided according to caste, e.g. Brahmins (most superior class) were deployed as priests, teachers and scholars. Kshatriyas were rulers, administrators, warriors and advisors. Vaishyas performed agricultural activities and businesses. Shudras are called the lowest class of society and performed laborer jobs and services. Their children could do only what their ancestors did. Even they couldn't change their class. After many social reforms—both pre– and post-independence, the castes system was removed but in recent years the lower class became increasingly marginalized and disadvantaged. They became backward socially, financially and educationally. Women's condition and their participation were also very negligible, since they didn't have rights and facilities to acquire knowledge through education. Thus, the need was felt to educate them and their children and to include them in the public. Afterwards, proper legitimacy was required to eradicate these evils of society. Besides this, the change of the community mindset towards education and social inclusion for all was needed.

LLL through learning cities

According to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, a learning city utilizes all its resources in all sectors to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education in families, communities and the workplace with the help of learning technologies for the best quality of learning throughout life. It will provide a boost to individual empowerment, social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity and sustainable development. We may conclude that learning cities are the foundation of national development through education from ECCE to the university level and through different formal, informal and non-formal way; enabling people can get employment, retain jobs, receive promotions and ultimately live a satisfactory life which is essential for well-being and for being a good citizen making a contribution for his country.

According to UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2015), "Although the idea of a learning city has mostly been conceptualized in developed countries, facilitated by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) since the 1980s and the European Commission since the 1990s, it is now rapidly gaining momentum in developing countries. In more and more Member States, local authorities now claim to be learning cities/ regions/ communities." India is also trying to follow to develop educational system and skill training for lifelong learning and better opportunities in communities.

In India, a non-government organization IAEA (Indian Adult Education Association) was formed in 1939 to promote adult education through its publication workshops, seminars, conferences and training programs. In 1960, work-oriented functional literacy programs were launched to empower skill-based education. In 1968—78, FTFLP (Farmers Training and Functional Literacy Project) was launched to educate farmers in terms of basic literacy and agricultural development education for a green revolution to take place. In 1975—76, a functional literacy program for adult women was initiated which covered women in the 15—45 age group. Its aim was achieving basic literacy and creating better citizens who could participate in the development of society.

The Indian government made a five-year educational plan after receiving independence, but in the Fifth and Sixth five-year plans (1974—85), efforts were made by the directorate of adult education to integrate 65 schemes/ developmental programs under non-formal education for adults, such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras (Agricultural Science Centers), Workers Education Programs,

Nehru Yuvak Kendra (Nehru Youth Centers), Satellites Instructional Television Experiment, Shramik Vidyapeeth (Labor Educational Centers) for professional competency, Rural Welfare Extension and family and children welfare projects concerned with technical literacy. Many other centrally sponsored schemes or government schemes, like the National Higher Education program (Rashtriya Uchchattar shiksha Abhiyan—RUSA), have been launched to encourage skill-based higher education programs intended to make adults competent to attain livelihood.

The NSDC (National Skill Development Corporation) under the auspices of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is regularly involved in building skill development capacity and forging strong ties with the market. It provides funding to enterprises, companies and organizations that organize skill training. It also develops appropriate models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives.

For fulfillment that purpose, all universities, technical universities and non-government organizations are also working towards educating adults and making them skilled workers.

India, as a signatory of the Belem Framework, organized a cross-sectoral consultation at Bangalore on 27—28 June 2011 to identify areas and issues of adult education according to frameworks and benchmarks. Hence the theme of the national workshop was Sakshar Bharat, Belem Framework and the LIFE (Literacy Initiative for Empowerment). Its objectives were to advocate for the further strengthening of policy framework for adult education in India programs in context of the Belem Framework and LIFE.

India Education Commission (1971) concluded that the scope of adult education is extremely broad. The Commission stated that the function of adult education in a democracy is to provide opportunity for education to every adult citizen for his personal enrichment, professional advancement and effective participation in social and political life.

In India, literacy is the principal format of adult education. As a sequel to the NPE's Program of Action (1986), the National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched in 1988 with the aim of imparting functional literacy to 80 million adults in the 15—35 age group by 1995 (Deb, 2015). It started with a mass campaign approach, known as the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), but evolved into a massive program of adult education. More stress was given on economic reforms through adult education by giving them basic skill development training, especially to the disadvantaged people (Mandal, 2019).

The impact of learning cities in the formation
of the Smart City model

In India, the concept of the Learning City is not a well-established and recognized model. Instead, decision makers have been following the concept of the "Smart City". According to the Government's (2016) understanding: "Smart Cities' mission is an innovative and new initiative by the Government of India to drive economic growth and improve the quality of life of people by enabling local development and harnessing technology as a means to create smart outcomes for citizens." According to Facer & Buchczyk (2019), "A smart city is a municipality that uses information and communication technologies (ICT) to increase operational efficiency, share information with the public and improve both the quality of government services and citizen welfare." From this we can assume that the Smart City model considers the city as a "laboratory" and all policies, industries and academic institutions work together to promote and develop learning environments.

Additionally, smart cities try to improve lives by the development of ICT, providing better practices of urban planning, collaborations and coalitions between public and private organizations to form policies. In this regard, the city may focus on cleanliness campaigns through organizations and institutions such as Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), the Digital India movement for computer literacy, National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), skills development for better employment, housing facilities for everyone, setting up museums funded by the Culture Department and other programs connected to social infrastructure, such as health, education and culture. Complete enhancement of people's well-being is the main focus of the city (Government of India, 2016). These are the facilities of a smart city which are to be completed within five years (2015—16 to 2019—20) and will be evaluated by the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) and also be reviewed after two years and incorporating the learnings into the Mission in 100 Smart Cities. For that purpose, funds under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) will be given to the stakeholders in the following areas, among others:

- Adequate water supply,
- Assured electricity supply,
- Sanitation, including solid waste management,
- Efficient urban mobility and public transport,
- Affordable housing, especially for the poor,
- Robust IT connectivity and digitalization,

- Good governance, especially e-Governance and citizen participation,
- Sustainable environment,
- Safety and security of citizens, particularly women, children, the elderly and
- Health and education.

Urban life comprises many complexities, such as a large population, inequality in economic conditions, gender inequality, migration, improper education, poor hygienic/sanitary conditions and arrangements for well-being of citizens. After food, clothes and shelter, education is the most important factor that can change the status of society members through awareness. It can solve the above mentioned problems to a great extent. That's why the Indian Government has taken it as a mission towards progress because education has the power to transform the situation and solve issues such as:

In terms of education and population, there is a problem of large population in cities which is a big issue for the government and communities standing in the way of accommodating and fulfilling basic needs. Therefore, through education, people can be aware at what extent they can afford their family responsibilities and will think about family planning and help to control the population.

Education and economic conditions also have direct connections. If people get equal educational opportunities, they will find better economic solutions for themselves. Education enables them to find better employment which will bridge the gap in terms of socio-economic status. Furthermore, financial conditions are the main culprit for school dropout. Education will upgrade income level, which is why people can provide proper and continuous education to their children.

In terms of education and migration, people move from rural to urban areas in search of better education and job opportunities. They live in very poor living conditions without any basic facilities. The landless farmers leave their villages because they only get seasonal jobs which are not sufficient for the survival for their family. If they receive education and find jobs in their own place of living, they will not migrate. Even they can generate their own means of earning for themselves and their families. In this way, rural areas can also be developed.

In terms of education and hygienic/sanitary conditions, education makes people aware about cleanliness. Population control can also affect the change of sanitation conditions in the city.

In terms of education and the well-being of citizens, education gives ease, comfort and financial independence in the life. Hence people can consider a healthy lifestyle, creativity, physical activities, innovation and development. Thus, it affects public well-being.

In terms of education and social changes, education broadens the mind and helps bring about positive social change, such as equality in educational opportunities, gender equality, awareness about health, fitness, hygiene, elimination of superstitions and child marriages, and so on. When a nation is socially developed, it develops in every other aspect.

Therefore, the Indian Government is focusing on enhancing the status of education. India is a very big country from a geographical standpoint. It is divided into 28 states and 8 union territories (Know India) which are again divided into cities to distribute responsibilities and get better results in social, political, educational and economic fields. Every area or city has its unique lifestyle due to its culture and traditions. According to Government of India, Ministry of Urban Development (2015), 31% of the Indian population lives in cities and contributes 63% of GDP. Urban areas are providing accommodation to 40% of the Indian population and will contribute to 75% of India's GDP by 2030. To this end, social, economic and institutional infrastructures are required to improve the quality of life and attract people and investment. Thus, the development of Smart Cities is a very urgent need (Government of India, 2016).

Based on different kinds of educational philosophy, the Indian Government has provided various models for its citizens to step toward the principles of "education for all" and "no one left behind" through the provision of formal, non-formal and informal education.

As regards to formal education, governments and private institutions run schools, colleges and universities. Additionally, many NGOs are also working in this field to provide education in formal ways. These institutions are running in a very systematic manner. After schooling, any adult who wishes to acquire knowledge can get admission into these institutions where he can attend classes, as well as technology-enabled learning to get a proper degree/diploma or certificate from a recognized university.

In the context of non-formal education, there is another way to educate people, e.g. distance education is provided through the proper institutional setup. This form of education offers the flexibility of time, age, place, pace and duration, so that adult learners can learn according to their convenience. In India, the School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education was founded at the University of Delhi in 1962. Then the first Open University (Andhra Pradesh Open University, now known as BR Ambedker Open University) opened in 1982 and on 20th September 1985, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) came into existence (Kundu, 2014). Now there are one National (IGNOU) and 14 state open and distance learning universities. Nowadays, online learning is a very popular and convenient option in which information and

communication technology plays a very significant role. It made studies quite practical and available for learners to help them in continuing lifelong learning anywhere and anytime, especially in the current pandemic situation.

Informal education is framed to help with its complementary role towards learning communities. In this regard, some NGOs like Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA, 2020) are working to lessen the irregularities in government works for the smooth running of democracy. From 1982, New Delhi-based PRIA has been a global center for participatory research, which is connected with around 3000 NGOs all over India. It creates coordination among citizens, communities, government bodies, policy makers, think-tanks, financers, corporate society, media, learners and institutions. It builds links among all on the local, national and global level to enhance the capacities of people, communities and institutions for better and equality-based societies. It also supports people, especially women and the poor, disadvantaged, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to be aware of their rights for increased participation in democracy by knowledge creation about values of equity, justice, freedom, peace and solidarity. (https://www.pria.org/about-pria-3–2–0)

Equality and social inclusion through learning environment— choices and limitations

Steps taken by PRIA (2020): PRIA works in all areas of socio-economic development, maternal health, literacy, skills and non-formal education, lifelong learning, water conservation, hygiene and sanitation awareness, housing schemes for the urban poor, preventing exploitation of women, etc. For example, urban India needs a solution for migrants who live in informal settings without any basic facilities, as they are not present in official documents e.g. in Patna, Chhapra (Bihar state) Varanasi and Rae Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh). It worked with the youth of these communities to map their locations and submit a record to the authorities to legitimate these urban poor communities, and provided them with basic services.

In another example, PRIA researched the reason of poor acceptance of improved maternal mortality scheme in 13 districts on the request of Rajasthan Government and found that fear, traditional belief and non-awareness were the reasons behind the non-acceptance of these beneficial schemes. It gave proper information to the community and bridged the gap between the government and the citizens. It believes in the inclusion of the poor and marginalized for complete participation and breaks the "culture of silence" to ensure equal status in the society.

PRIA (2020) works under these categories: (https://www.pria.org/about-pria-3–2–0)

1. Information sharing and awareness generation
2. Building human and institutional capacities
3. Advocacy with officials at multiple level
4. Co-creation and dissemination of knowledge

Within this approach, let us explore three examples of urban educational structures that enhance learning communities and, simultaneously, help citizens develop their knowledge and skills:

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

This NGO basically works in rural and urban slums and arranges skill up gradation of disadvantaged, vulnerable, dropout youths by providing them with academic and technical resource support and preparing them for employment by means of financial support and loans. The scheme of JSS has been collaborating with NGOs, public and private entities over the past 50 years. It coordinates with other agencies who also work on skill development. It creates awareness in communities. (https://jss.gov.in/)

Community Colleges

The Indian Government started community colleges in 1995 (Alphonse, 2012) in 11 states to provide education, life skills, work-related skills, internships and preparation for employment within 52 weeks to disadvantaged groups of society. A certificate program with duration of 26 weeks and a diploma program with duration of 56 weeks are provided. These community-based colleges get to know their learners better and provide them with education according to their needs.

Sakshat

This is the free e-portal where anyone, anywhere and anytime can access course materials, lectures, assignments etc. The Government of India also developed the world's lowest cost computing-cum-access device on October 5, 2011 called AAKASH which is affordable for UG and PG learners. Besides this, an initiative

was launched by MHRD to raise teachers' awareness and literacy regarding the Sakshat portal for lifelong education (Mahat & Nalawadw, 2013).

SWAYAM-NPTEL

It has been offering self-study online certificate courses from the IITs University, such as engineering, humanities and science streams from March 2014. These courses are free for the learners who wish to enhance their capabilities. (https://swayam.gov.in/NPTEL)

National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)

NIOS is the largest open schooling system in the world. In 1989 under MHRD, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) started offering secondary (10th grade), senior secondary (12th grade), vocational courses and Basic Education and Elementary Teacher education programs through open and distance learning (ODL) mode. NIOS operates through five Departments, 22 Regional Centers and more than 6500 Accredited Institutions in India and abroad, which have catered to 2.82 million learners during the past five years. It is very open and flexible in its nature e.g. freedom on the choice of subjects, self-learning study materials, transfer of credits and a flexible examination system with an ICT-based On-Demand Examination (ODES) System are some of the learner-centric facilities with no age barrier. NIOS offers 42 courses on the SWAYAM Platform. (https://swayam.gov.in/nc_details/NIOS)

Challenging issues in promoting educational environment in a very diverse country like India

According to MHRD, in 2001, the overall literacy rate was 64.84%, male literacy was at 75.26% and female literacy rate was at 53.67%, with a vast gender gap. The Census of India (2011) stated the overall literacy rate of 72.98% with an 8.14% growth (64.84% in 2001 and 72.98% in 2011). However, illiteracy still remains a concern for India, especially when it comes to closing the gap between the rates for the male and female population. The government is working on the SKILLING INDIA program. They are trying hard to provide skills to the people of the country. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is one of

a kind, public-private partnership in India, under the auspices of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship.

India is a multicultural and multilingual society with 22 official languages (Singh, 2020). "According to the Census of 2001, there are 1,635 mother tongues and 122 languages with more than 10,000 speakers" (Jayasundara, 2014). Therefore, it's very difficult to make a single policy for all. This is why the central and state governments jointly work on the implementation of various policies with some modification according to the needs of that particular state. The Government always makes policies in favor of nation's development after deep analysis and research. The think-tank of the country works hard to make policies which institutions have to implement, regarding education, skill development, social cohesion and inclusion, to maintain equality of opportunities. Thus, the government plays a role in theoretical terms, but a practical role is played by institutions/universities. Both of them can bring tremendous and positive changes in the educational field by helping each other.

On other hand, sometimes universities cannot implement all the policies on practical grounds. Various social and economic barriers stop them from applying all policies as is. So, modifications are required but changing policies in short intervals is not possible, which creates imbalance. In the words of the government: the medium of instruction should be in mother tongue which is very good for maintaining cultural diversity. But on practical grounds this is not possible all the time. Sometimes, educators who teach in several languages are not available and not all learners are multilingual. In this case, havoc would be created and learning and clarifying the concept is not ensured. Therefore, policies and implications contradict one another. In another case, government mandates compulsory education up to 14 years of age. All the institutions are trying to implement this, but the socio-economic condition of learners, distance from home to institution, involvement of learners in the workforce, family responsibilities, mindset regarding the non-importance of education, geographical constraints etc. are the factors which influence the enrolment of learners. In this way institutions are unable to implement policies in spite of willingness and all efforts. Thus, targets cannot be achieved.

Adequate and timely financial aids help in the development and implementation of policies. Otherwise, they create hurdles in progress. Moreover, political stability is also a must for the implementation of legislation as every government has its own vision for every field, hence in education. The Government makes national education policies for five years or ten years, but it is not stable itself, it is very difficult to maintain the same rapport with newly elected govern-

ments. To accept sudden changes in the educational sector is not possible for institutions, which creates a situation of imbalance and non-cooperation.

Global organizations like UNESCO and others are working on lifelong learning/ adult learning but then, there is no well-planned policy on LLL. Institutions are basically helpless. They depend on government initiatives and vice versa, government wants something from the institutions e.g. skill-based education for better employment. If institutions don't take initiative to change their curricula, all government policies could fail. Thus, both are dependent on each other for better results and success.

However, limitation of programs and shortage of resources, lack of innovation, excessive documentation, and dissemination of programs hurt the aim of creating learning environments, because of improper and low-quality professional training of educators. Furthermore, there is hardly any research on the impact of lifelong learning. Proper financing can also be a booster. There should be strategies of prior learning assessment and credit transfer facilities for any previous learning acquired somewhere else. Also, there should not be inequalities in accepting these qualifications in the employment sector. In every educational sector there are three levels: Macro, Meso and Micro. The Micro level comprises individuals or participants, the Meso level comprises institutions and the Macro level comprises the government and its policies/legislations. Therefore, the majority of stakeholders are the government and its policies, institutions and their administration, as well as learners and their academic needs. India has not formed any laws on lifelong learning, although it is urgently needed to form policies, clarify the concept and link it to the mainstream of educational policy agenda in India.

Learning City Development in Pécs

Combining Global Initiatives with Community Development

The University of Pécs has always played a key role in the development of the Learning City model in Pécs, Hungary. It started in 2003 when the University, having been a member of EUCEN since 1999, joined PASCAL International Observatory and some of its key EU-funded Erasmus and Grundtvig projects based on the development of learning city-regions across Europe. Such former projects, like LILARA (Learning in Local and Regional Authorities), PENR3L (PASCAL University Network of Regions of Lifelong Learning), and Grundtvig R3L+ accelerated our partnership with the City of Pécs and its local authority together with several other distinguished stakeholders in education, training and

culture (PASCAL Observatory, 2019). Such former PASCAL projects together with a special session of the Commission of Education (EDUC) of Committee of the Regions in 2006 and the 2007 PASCAL Conference in Pécs generated good ground for further platform-building amongst relevant bodies engaged in effective knowledge transfer within lifelong learning activities.

The Pécs Learning City-Region Forum was formally grounded in the year of 2010 amongst thirteen different institutions of education, training and culture, together with the local and regional authorities of Pécs and Baranya County and that of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Based on a decade-old international project-based partnership dealing with Learning City-Region innovations in association with PASCAL and UIL, the University of Pécs and its Faculty of Adult Education and HRD re-initiated the establishment of the Pécs Learning City Region Forum in 2013 to develop a direct tool in certain areas of pedagogical/andragogical work targeting trainers, educators and facilitators of learning. The project was incorporated into the project of the University of Pécs, financed by the Hungarian Government's Social Renewal Operative Program (TÁMOP 4.1.2.B—Developing Teachers Educators/Pedagógusfejlesztés), focusing on the Development of Teachers.

Its so-called K4 project's sub-group decided to develop structural models for collecting and sharing good knowledge and experience for teachers, trainers, mentors and facilitators engaged in the promotion of quality learning and skills-development in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Therefore, the Pécs Learning City-Region Forum started its activities in the fall of 2014 in three major fields by accelerating partnerships and dialogues (Németh, 2015):

– *Atypical/Non-formal Learning platform* (This platform tried to help cultural organizers, curators, managers be more successful with their educational programs organized for adults and also for school teachers engaged in the development of cultural programs for children). Such a collaborative framework involved more than 8 organizations/institutions and their representatives in order to identify innovative learning methods, tools, methodologies with atypical contexts.

– *School and Environment platform* (This platform supported the initiation of dialogue amongst professionals developing specific environment-oriented programs for local youth and their parents to help them become nature-friendly, and conscious in protecting their environment). Around nine member organizations/institutions worked actively in the Forum through delegates, professional experts by providing platform-based exchange of ideas upon bringing closer schools,

pupils and their families to the environment and environment-friend-
ly, green thinking, actions and change management with attention to
interdisciplinary thinking and human behavior.

–   *Inclusion and Handicapped Situations platform* (This platform helped
teachers to engage in collaborative actions providing dialogue to un-
derstand problems emerging from working with young children with
learning difficulties, e.g. autistic children). This community aimed
at supporting our urban community of schools addresses problems
resulting as a consequence of early school-leaving and matters of basic
adult education in the neglected area of second chance schooling.

The Learning City-Region Forum identified some potential issues which
accelerated the development of the learning city-region model of Pécs. On the one
hand, the Forum renewed its membership in PASCAL International Observatory's
Learning Cities Networks (LCN), more precisely, it integrated the Pécs Learning
Festival program into the group called "*Harnessing Cultural Policies in Building Sus-
tainable Learning Cities"* in order to continue its ties to this international platform
which was formally established in 2007 when Pécs hosted PASCAL's annual inter-
national conference on Learning City-Regions (Németh, 2016a).

In 2016, the University of Pécs initiated the realization of close ties to
UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities so as to prepare for the Global
Learning City Award of UNESCO which may help in the further development
of collaborative actions amongst key providers of lifelong learning in and around
the city of Pécs. In this regard, the University of Pécs and the local authority/
municipality of Pécs decided to launch a campaign for using the Learning City
Region Forum to establish an annual Learning Festival where both the concept
and the three areas of action of the Forum can be multiplied into a real learn-
ing community of around seventy institutions and organizations under the same
umbrella movement.

The Making and Progression of Learning Festivals in Pécs

The Learning City Program of Pécs identified its first LearningFestival in 2017
as a set of three thematic topics in order to offer flexible platforms which include
each and every learning provider, with their particular programs based on the
participation of local citizens from school-age to retired members of the com-
munity. There were three topics for 2017 set at the beginning of the year to
represent a broad range of interests and, simultaneously, to incorporate differ-
ent interests which are to be channeled into representative topics signaling both

global and local focuses with popular calls. Those 2017 learning city topics were (UIL, 2019b): 1. Culture and arts; 2. Environment, green Pécs; and 3. Knowledge transfer and skills development.

The above topics generated growing participation since more than seventy organizations and institutions got involved into the one-hundred and thirty programs of the first Learning Festival held on 15—16 September 2017. One can estimate whether it was a good decision and direction to get the House of Civic Communities to take a central role in the organization of the Learning Festival. But having evaluated the impact of the first Learning Festival, we can conclude that the learning community of Pécs has gained a lot to start getting used to the formation of the Learning City model and its flagship initiative called the Pécs Learning Festival. I am concerned that this focus cemented a bottom-up approach based on trust and partnership, but the initiative could not avoid the lack of funding and limited political attention, although the City of Pécs received the Global Learning City Award on 18 September at the 3rd UNESCO International Conference on Learning Cities (Németh, 2016b).

The organizers of the Learning Festival had collected public proposals for the topics of the Festival, and it was a great achievement that participating platforms of learning providers came to consensus to provide three authentic topics of lifelong learning which would definitely meet the characteristics of Pécs as a city of high culture influenced by multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual and multireligious dimension. This particular focus was highlighted in the GNLC reporting of Pécs as a Global Learning City and incorporated into the publication of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and on its website (UIL, 2019c).

According to the key features of learning cities, the Learning City Program of Pécs and its Learning Festival have emphasized, from the very start, connection and partnership building with local and regional businesses, corporations and other market-led groups like the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UIL, 2015). This approach and special attention were lifted up through the organization process of the first Learning Festival in 2017 to initiate and promote the particular angle of business and economy driven narratives, understanding around the benefits of learning and of skills development. Companies like the local forestry group, the local public bus transportation corporation and the local power plant joined the Festival with their programs and learning models, like environmental learning through the forest/woods, learning community skills on buses and learning new dimensions of energy supply for residential and business areas (Németh, 2016c).

A necessary conclusion is that the initiation of the Learning Festival resulted in moving of the notion of learning away from negative meanings and

contexts, moreover, it helped in the raising of participation, the growing needs towards community learning, intergenerational collaborations and the inclusion of depressed, underdeveloped districts of the city. The above three topics helped move Pécs towards smart and creative city directions, with culture-based orientations in a city of culture (Németh, 2016c).

The second Learning Festival of Pécs was planned from February 2018 in association with more than seventy organizations and institutions which claimed that they would continue with their active engagement and participation in the formation of the Festival and its program for the second time. Three topics were dedicated to support the overall theme of Experimental Learning (UIL, 2019c): 1. Environmentally conscious and sustainable environment in and around Pécs; 2. Place and values—the cultural heritage of Pécs; and 3. Is it easier to do things together? Intergenerational learnings and partnerships for skill development.

A great number of people worked on the planning and development of the 2nd Learning Festival of Pécs to be held on 20—22 September 2018 and got together several communities from kindergarten-based harvest-festival programs to special learning activities of senior citizens and their special Senior Academy run by the support and organizational assistance and the third mission of the University of Pécs and its Institute for Human Development and Cultural Studies. The Festival became better-positioned through the UNESCO Global Learning City Award which generated attention, respect and equitable status amongst other culture-based festivals in the City of Pécs.

In accordance with this progress, a special Learning City Conference was organized for 20 September 2018 in the town, with several participants discussing the topic of Learning Cities and Culture Working Together at three strands (UIL, 2019b):

– The impact of Heritage, Values and Culture in Learning Cities and Regions;
– Smart and Learning Cities, Technological Innovations and System Developments;
– Learning Cities to Promote Intergenerational Learning.

The above three strands provided a good opportunity to have a look into the innovative potential of the Learning City initiative and into some particular perspectives of development and challenges of tackling more attention being given to the needs of stakeholders and individuals as local citizens, regardless of age. Pécs could well position its Learning City Program with the support of the University of Pécs to provide research and innovation into this valuable initiative

and, consequently, the Festival concept became recognized through many collaborative actions based on the brand of Learning City by 2018.

More than seventy participating organizations and institutions carried out one-hundred and twenty programs and involved a big part of lifelong learners in the city center of Pécs to participate in colorful programs and interactive, mostly intergenerational events, lectures, presentations, games, concerts, dialogues, platform talks, etc. through which learning was again moved into a better spectrum to demonstrate joy, entertainment, community building, access, inclusion, care and solidarity. One example for this was a little roundtable with short presentations on the Routes of Learningwith special attention to drama-games and motivations for learning, learning as a source of happiness, early childhood integral development, inclusive pedagogy, focus on "a City to Touch", and the Pygmalion effect and its relation to learning (Szederkényi-Németh, 2018).

We have to recognize and pay tribute to the House of Civic Communities that provided the co-ordination and management of most Learning Festival related programs for those two days of action. In this regard, the House became the motor and real headquarters of the Learning Festival in Pécs, providing full capacities and care towards the partners of this respected program, with a view to organizing the 3rd Learning Festival in September 2019 around the theme of Learning Communities and Community Learningembedded into the triangle of art/culture, health and environment. There were more than seventy programs of intergenerational and intercultural actions through learning to highlight the relationships in between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Finally, the 4th Learning Festival of Pécs in September 2020 was an irregular one due to the COVID-19 situation and its consequences, aimed to help citizens of Pécs organize programs still focused on their learning needs, interests and the growing aim to collect and share good knowledge and experience. The Festival was formulated around fifty different programs to reflect the theme of Learning Together: Culture and Community.

Conclusion

Having collected some particularly important messages of those country, culture and community specific examples of learning communities having been organized into learning cities or regions, one must recognize the impact of responsibility, local partnership through the coalition of interest that can result in the ownership of the learning city initiative amongst a range of stakeholders and citizens to formulate a developing community of inclusion where lifelong learning can

really become an organizing principle. The above practices underline the value of stories of individuals, their cities and communities to recognize learning needs and actively engage each and all for better living through learning.

The discoveries and collections of contextual factors and aspects referring to learning city and community developments in the countries examined may provide good lessons of how different formations of collecting and sharing knowledge and skills may result in strengthening urban settings of adult and lifelong learning. Context is necessary to recognize the value of communities with the aspiration to survive, develop and change in order to respond to growing challenges and societal and economic demands tied to environment. In this regard, learning cities and communities offer a collective ground where members of a community can experience the force of inclusion, equality, equity by engaging into the formation of place through both individual and community learnings and, simultaneously, reflecting upon the learning experience towards the community which thereby recognize the value of learning. Examined models from the UK, Palestine, India and from Hungary are drawing a colorful picture with a same message:

> By exploring life experiences, one learns that solidarity and empathy are binding factors anchored in a community fabric. Not only providing education in formal or non-formal way but helping others by other means as well. Simple encouragement or motivation in this crucial time would also be a contribution for the community. In this scenario, togetherness and trust will be the biggest strength for coping with the situation brought on by the pandemic.

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Balázs Németh[5]
Univerzitet u Pečuju, Mađarska

Ola Issa[6]
DVV International, Palestina

Farah Diba[7]
Nacionalni otvoreni univerzitet „Indira Gandi", Indija

Alan Tuckett[8]
Univerzitet u Vulverhemptonu, UK

Gradovi i zajednice koji uče: analiziranje kontekstualnih faktora i njihovog uticaja na učenje odraslih i celoživotno učenje u urbanim okruženjima

Apstrakt: U ovom radu ćemo razmotriti kontekstualne aspekte razvoja zajednice u opsegu praksi gradova i zajednica koji uče u vezi sa prenosom znanja i deljenjem u urbanim okruženjima. Kolege uključene u projekat ponudiće svoje kritičke pristupe, razmatranja i predloge o tome kako možemo da razumemo i prepoznamo učenje odraslih i celoživotno učenje kroz zajednice koje nastoje da ostvare mir, razumevanje, socijalnu inkluziju i osetljive interkulturalne i međugeneracijske težnje u teškim vremenima prepunim izazova koji utiču na naše delikatne odnose. U ovom radu nastojaćemo da istaknemo koncept pravičnosti, ljudskog otkrića prikupljanja, deljenja i očuvanja vrednosti, tradicije i dostojanstva putem zajednica koje uče u četiri različita kulturna okruženja Britanskih ostrva, Indije, Palestine i Mađarske. Tamošnja urbana okruženja možda ne moraju nužno da se nazivaju ili smatraju gradovima koji uče, ali etikete i koncepti nisu naš primarni prioritet. Jednostavno je baš onako kako i zvuči: ne smemo nikoga zapostaviti.

Ključne reči: zajednica posvećena učenju, ohrabrenje, poverenje, deljenje znanja

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[5] Dr habil. Balázs Németh, vanredni profesor, Institute for Human Development and Cultural Studies (Institut za ljudski razvoj i studije kulture), Fakultet humanističkih i društvenih nauka, Univerzitet u Pečuju, Mađarska (nemeth.balazs@pte.hu).

[6] Ola Issa, M.Ed., direktor / Palestina, Institut za međunarodnu saradnju Nemačkog saveza visokih narodnih škola (DVV), Nemačka asocijacija za obrazovanje odraslih, Bon, Nemačka (issa@dvv-international.ps).

[7] Farah Diba, MA, naučnik istraživač obrazovanja na daljinu, Staff Training & Research Institute of Distance Education (Institut za obuku i zaposlenih i istraživanje u sferi obrazovanja na daljinu) pri Nacionalnom otvorenom univerzitetu „Indira Gandi", Nju Delhi, Indija (farahdiba0111@gmail.com).

[8] Ser Alan Tuckett, profesor emeritus u oblasti obrazovanja (od januara 2021), Institut za obrazovanje, Fakultet za zdravstveno blagostanje i obrazovanje, Univerzitet u Vulverhemptonu, Ujedinjeno Kraljevstvo (alan.tuckett@wlv.ac.uk).