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Key Features of Learning Cities

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Introductory Note

Introduction

Several approaches have been taken in recent years to translate the concept of a learning society into reality. One significant example is the growth of 'learning communities', 'learning cities' and 'learning regions'. Although the idea of a learning city has mostly been conceptualised in developed countries, facilitated by the OECD 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. Their proliferation has become a major worldwide phenomenon, with considerable educational, social, economic and environmental implications.

What is a Learning City?

Cities differ in their cultural and ethnic composition, in their heritage and social structures. However, many characteristics of a learning city are common to all. The initiative on learning cities developed by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning defines a learning city as follows:

A Learning City is a city which effectively mobilises its resources in every sector to

- *promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;*
- *re-vitalise learning in families and communities;*
- *facilitate learning for and in the workplace;*
- *extend the use of modern learning technologies;*
- *enhance quality and excellence in learning; and*
- *foster a culture of learning throughout life.*

In so doing it will create and reinforce individual empowerment and social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development.

Why monitor progress in developing learning cities?

Since a learning city facilitates lifelong learning for all, and therefore helps to realize the universal right to education, building such a city has far-reaching appeal. This is a continuous process; there is no magic line over which a city will pass in order to become known as a learning city. There are, however, attributes by which a learning city can be recognized, mainly in terms of what it does rather than what it is. The construction of a learning city entails an

operational and pragmatic approach to the implementation of lifelong learning. It is not an abstract theory. If a city has the political will and commitment to build a learning city, it will also need a set of indicators or key features against which it can monitor its progress.

Put simply, monitoring the progress of a learning city is necessary for three main reasons:

- To transform political and theoretical discourses into concrete strategies and approaches;
- To measure progress over time; and
- To evaluate the benefits of the strategies it has put into place

The Key Features of Learning Cities will make it possible:

- To support in a meaningful way the development of lifelong learning within and across member cities;
- To determine up to a certain level how much progress is being made to implement lifelong learning for all in many of the world's communities; and
- To facilitate international comparative analysis and experience-sharing and mutual learning among member cities.

The development of the Key Features of Learning Cities

This normative instrument for measuring learning cities is the result of a long consultation process. Initially, UIL held a workshop on developing a framework for the Key Features of Learning Cities from 3 to 5 July 2012. Experts representing some of the partners for the establishment of IPLC, including the PASCAL Observatory, Bertelsmann Foundation, CISCO Systems, Beijing Municipal Education Commission, National Centre of Education Development Research of China, Kuwait University and the Cape Higher Education Consortium, as well as some UIL professional staff and consultants, participated in the workshop.

This workshop first of all drew inspiration from the following well-established conceptual frameworks and indicators for measuring social and economic development:

- The *Human Development Index (HDI)* and related indices developed by UNDP (2007);
- The *Revised Official Monitoring Framework for the Millennium Development Goals: goals, targets and indicators* (UN, 2008);
- *The Knowledge Assessment Methodology: Variables and Clusters* by the World Bank (2012);
- The *Better Life Index* by OECD (2012);
- *The Future We Want – RIO+20 Report* (UN, 2012);
- *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty And Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development* (UN, 2013); and
- *Post-2015 Development Agenda: Goals, Targets and Indicators* (The Centre for International Governance Innovation and the Korea Development Institute, 2012).

Inspired by a list of criteria for indicators developed in the UN report *Analysing and Measuring Social Inclusion in a Global Context* (UN, 2010), the following criteria were endorsed at the workshop to develop the Key Features of Learning Cities.

- *Ambitious but achievable* – achieving the target should represent significant progress but should also be realistic.
- *Crucial* – every feature reflects a value, a priority or a critical issue.

- *Relevant* – a feature must fit its intended purpose; achieving the target should contribute significantly to meeting a key objective.
- *Clear and understandable* – a feature must be simple and easy for all stakeholders to understand, and should make sense to the average person.
- *Easy to measure* – a feature should be measured by available data, or by data to be collected through a well-designed survey.
- *Valid and reliable* – people must trust the information that a feature provides.

As a result of intensive debates and group work, the workshop produced the first draft of the framework of the Key Features of Learning Cities. Taking the comments from experts into consideration, UIL has produced a draft which was presented in the 1st meeting of the Expert Group for Developing Learning Cities in Hangzhou, China. In April and May 2013, UIL consulted some experts and a number of cities on the relevance of the key features and the feasibility of data collection. On 4–5 June 2013, UIL held a second meeting in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea. The participants of the meeting elaborated further on the draft Key Features of Learning Cities.

Based on the expert group's validation, UIL selected a number of cities in each of the UNESCO regions for piloting, which was completed in September 2013. The Key features reflect the results of the piloting.

Components of the framework of the Key Features of Learning Cities

As shown in Figure 1, the framework of the Key Features of Learning Cities corresponds to the pediments, columns and foundation steps of the UNESCO logo.

The Pediment – three areas of focus reflect the wider benefits of building a modern learning city, broadly defined as:

(1) Individual empowerment and social cohesion;
(2) Economic development and cultural prosperity; and
(3) Sustainable development.

The Columns – six areas of focus reflect the major building blocks of a learning city:

(1) Inclusive learning in the education system;
(2) Re-vitalised learning in families and communities;
(3) Effective learning for and in the workplace;
(4) Extended use of modern learning technologies;
(5) Enhanced quality in learning, and
(6) A vibrant culture of learning throughout life.

The Foundational Steps – three areas of focus reflect the fundamental conditions for building a learning city:

(1) Strong political will and commitment;
(2) Governance and participation of all stakeholders; and
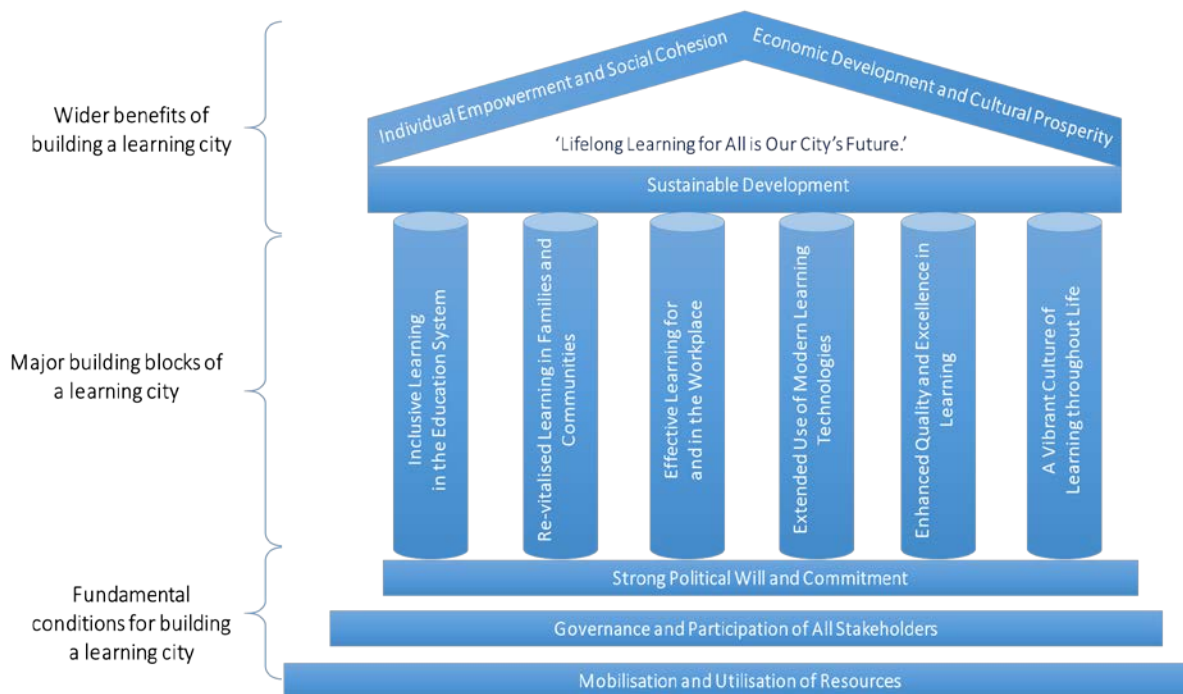(3) Mobilisation and utilisation of resources.

Figure 1: The Framework of the Key Features of Learning Cities

A total of 42 features are included in the Key Features of Learning Cities. Most of the features are quantitative, and related statistics can be provided by the responsible city authorities. As for qualitative features, some can be measured by the results of a survey conducted by independent professional agencies such as Gallop, while others can be measured through expert review of reports provided by the responsible city authorities.

The objective is not to make distinctions between cities. Each city is different and its progress towards a learning city can only be measured within the context of its own cultural, economic and social history and traditions.

How to use the Key Features of Learning Cities

Formally endorsed by mayors and city education executives of learning cities as well as experts participating in the International Conference on Learning Cities, the Key Features can serve as a comprehensive checklist of action points to help municipal governments and other stakeholders of cities in their efforts to build learning cities that promote lifelong learning for all.

Furthermore, as the members of a global network of learning cities need to be recommended by UNESCO Member States, the national authorities of the Member States can use the Key Features to select and recommend cities to join the network.

More generally, the Key Features can also be used as a reference document for international organisations and national authorities in promoting the development of learning nations, regions, cities and communities.

A list of key features and measurements

Area of focus	Key features		Possible measurements	Source of data	Statistical data in 2012 or survey/review results		
1. Wider benefits of building a learning city							
1.1 Empowering individuals and promoting social cohesion	1.1.1	Ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to become literate and obtain basic skills	**Adult literacy rate**: Total number of literate persons aged 15 and above, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group	Official data provided by city authorities	Male		%
					Female		%
					Total		%
	1.1.2	Encouraging and enabling individuals to actively participate in the public life of their city	**Participation rate in election**: Participation rate of population of eligible age in the most recent major election in the city	Official data provided by city authorities		(Year:	%)
			Participation in volunteering and community activities: Percentage of citizens involved in unpaid volunteering and community activities in the 12 months preceding the survey	Survey results			%
	1.1.3	Guaranteeing gender equality	**Gender equality in politics**: Percentage of seats held by women in city council/congress	Official data provided by city authorities			%
			Gender equality in business management: Percentage of seats held by women in boards of top 10 enterprises	Survey results			%
	1.1.4	Creating a safe, harmonious and inclusive community	**Crime level**: Number of recorded crimes per 100,000 inhabitants	Official data provided by city authorities			
			Social mobility: Percentage of citizens with disadvantaged social background who believe that their children will enjoy higher social status than themselves	Survey results			%

Area of focus	Key features		Possible measurements	Source of data	Statistical data in 2012 or survey/review results				
1.2 Enhancing economic development and cultural prosperity	1.2.1	Stimulating inclusive and sustainable economic growth	**Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita**: Total value produced (adjusted for purchasing power parity in US$) within a city divided by the total number of inhabitants	Official data provided by city authorities					US$
			Urban poverty: Percentage of citizens living below US $1.25 a day (PPP) at 2005 international prices	Official data provided by city authorities					%
	1.2.2	Creating employment opportunities for all citizens	**Unemployment rate**: Unemployed working age population (15 years or older) as a percentage of the total labour force	Official data provided by city authorities	Male				%
					Female				%
					Total				%
	1.2.3	Actively supporting science, technology and innovation	**Human resources in science and technology (HRST)**: Professionals working in a science and technology occupation as a percentage of total employment	Official data provided by city authorities					%
			Patent filing: Number of new patents per 100,000 inhabitants	Official data provided by city authorities					
	1.2.4	Ensuring access to diverse cultural activities	**Participation in cultural activities**: Number of visits to museums, theatres, cinemas, concert halls and sporting events per inhabitant per month	Official data provided by city authorities or survey results					No. of visits
	1.2.5	Encouraging participation in leisure and physical recreation	**Participation in physical exercise and sports**: Percentage of population participating in physical exercise or sports no less than five times a week	Survey results					%
1.3 Promoting sustainable development	1.3.1	Reducing the negative impacts of economic and other human activities on the natural environment	**CO₂ emissions**: Total CO_2 emissions, in tonnes per capita	Official data provided by city authorities					No. of tonnes
			Waste management: Total annual domestic waste collected and processed, in kg per capita per year	Official data provided by city authorities					Kg per capita
	1.3.2	Enhancing the liveability of cities	**Living condition**: Percentage of population living in slums	Official data provided by city authorities					%
			Public transportation: Citizens' satisfaction with the public transportation system	Survey results	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	1.3.3	Promoting sustainable development through active learning in all settings	**Education for sustainable development**: Effective measures for promoting sustainable development at all levels of education	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
			Environmental stewardship: Citizens' perception of their own behaviours in terms of environmental responsibility	Survey results	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor

Area of focus	Key features	Possible measurements	Source of data	Statistical data in 2012 or survey/review results				
2. Major building blocks of a learning city								
2.1 Promoting inclusive learning in the education system	2.1.1 Expanding access to early childhood care and education	**Enrolment in pre-primary education**: Net enrolment rate in pre-primary education (ISCED 0)	Official data provided by city authorities	Gender	Boys			%
					Girls			%
					Total			%
	2.1.2 Expanding access to education from primary to tertiary level	**Mean years of schooling**: Average number of years of formal schooling received by people aged 25 and older	Official data provided by city authorities	Gender	Male			years
					Female			years
					Total			years
	2.1.3 Expanding access to and participation in adult education and technical and vocational education and training	**Participation in adult learning and education**: Percentage of citizens aged 25–64 that reported receiving education/training in the 12 months preceding the survey	Survey results					%
	2.1.4 Providing support for marginalized groups, including migrant families, to ensure access to education	**Support for disadvantaged groups**: Measures adopted by the city authorities to support learners from linguistic/ethnic minorities and disadvantaged backgrounds	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
		Support for senior citizens: Measures adopted by the city authorities to support senior-citizen learners (aged 65 years and older)	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
2.2 Revitalising learning in families and communities	2.2.1 Establishing community-based learning spaces and providing resources for learning in families and communities	**Infrastructure**: Number of functional community-based learning spaces (including community learning centres, cultural houses and public libraries) per 100,000 inhabitants	Official data provided by city authorities					
		Policy initiative for supporting learning in families: Availability of policy to support learning in families	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	2.2.2 Motivating people to participate in family and community learning	**Participation in community learning**: Percentage of citizens participating in community learning activities on a regular basis (not less than 2 hours per week)	Official data provided by city authorities					%
		Participation in family learning: Percentage of citizens engaging in learning activities in their families in the 12 months preceding the survey	Survey results					%
	2.2.3 Recognising community history and culture, and indigenous ways of knowing and learning as unique and precious resources	**Development of learning resources through indigenous knowledge**: Number of learning programmes based on community history, culture and indigenous knowledge developed by the city authorities	Official data provided by city authorities					

Area of focus	Key features		Possible measurements	Source of data	Statistical data in 2012 or survey/review results				
2.3 Facilitating learning for and in the workplace	2.3.1	Ensuring that all members of the workforce, including migrant workers, have access to a broad array of learning opportunities	**Employees' participation in education and training**: Employed people's participation rate in job-related education and training	Official data provided by city authorities or survey results					%
			Migrant workers' participation in education and training: Existence of intiatives or strategies adopted by city to support migrant workers' particiation in education and training	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	2.3.2	Helping public and private organisations to become learning organisations	**Learning organisations**: Existence of intiatives or strategies to develop learning organisations that encourage employees' participation in learning	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	2.3.3	Encouraging employers and trade unions to support workplace learning	**Employers' financial commitment to skill development**: Total investment in employees' education and training as a percentage of the employees' payroll in both the public and private sectors	Official data provided by city authorities	Public sector				%
					Private sector				%
	2.3.4	Providing appropriate learning opportunities for unemployed youth and adults	**Youth involvement in education and employment**: Total number of youth (aged 15–24) not in education, employment or training as a percentage of the total youth population	Official data provided by city authorities					%
			Training for the unemployed: Percentage of the unemployed enrolled in various employment training programmes offered in the city	Official data provided by city authorities					%
2.4 Extending the use of modern learning technologies	2.4.1	Training administrators, teachers and educators to use technologies that enhance learning	**ICT Training for administrators, teachers and educators**: Percentage of teachers/educators who have received ICT training in the last 12 months	Survey results	Schools				%
					Community learning spaces				%
	2.4.2	Expanding citizens' access to ICT tools and learning programmes	**Use of ICT for class activities**: Percentage of teachers/educators who use ICT on a regular basis for class activities in schools and community learning spaces	Survey results	Schools				%
					Community learning spaces				%
			Mobile penetration rate: Total number of people with mobile phone connections as a percentage of the total population	Official data provided by city authorities					%
			Internet usage: Percentage of citizens with household or shared access to the internet	Survey results					%
			Participation in learning through the internet: Average number of hours per week that citizens use the internet for learning purposes	Survey results					hours

Area of focus	Key features		Possible measurements	Source of data	Statistical data in 2012 or survey/review results				
2.5 Enhancing quality in learning	2.5.1	Promoting a paradigm shift in education and learning	**Paradigm shift in education and learning**: Education policy to promote a paradigm shift from teaching to learning, and from the mere acquisition of information to the development of creativity and learning skills	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	2.5.2	Raising awareness of shared moral, ethical and cultural values, and promoting tolerance of differences	**Learning to live together**: Percentage of citizens who socialized with people from other cultures on a regular basis	Survey results					%
	2.5.3	Employing appropriately trained administrators, teachers and educators	**Availability of appropriately trained teachers/educators**: Ratio of students/learners to teachers/ educators in pre-primary, primary, secondary, and adult and continuing education	Official data provided by city authorities	Pre-primary education				%
					Primary education				%
					Secondary education				%
					Adult and continuing education				%
	2.5.4	Fostering a learner-friendly environment	**Learner-friendly environment**: Percentage of learners' satisfied with their learning environment	Survey results	Schools				%
					Community learning spaces				%
2.6 Fostering a culture of learning throughout life	2.6.1	Organising and supporting public events that encourage and celebrate learning	**Advocacy for learning**: Existence of public activities (adult learning week and learning festivals) and use of all media to promote and celebrate learning	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	2.6.2	Providing adequate information, guidance and support to all citizens, and stimulating them to learn through diverse pathways	**Information and services**: Percentage of learners satisfied with the provision of information and counselling to learners	Survey results					%
	2.6.3	Developing systems that recognize and reward all forms of learning	**Recognition and reward of learning outcomes**: Availability of policy and practice of recognising, validating and accrediting all learning outcomes	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor

Area of focus	Key features		Possible measurements	Source of data	Statistical data in 2012 or survey/review results				
3. Fundamental conditions for building a learning city									
3.1 Strengthening political will and commitment	3.1.1	Demonstrating strong political leadership and making a steadfast commitment to turning our cities into learning cities	**Leadership**: The strength and commitment of leadership demonstrated in developing and implementing the learning city strategy	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	3.1.2	Developing and implementing well grounded and participatory strategies for promoting lifelong learning for all	**Public policy and strategy**: Legislation, public policy and strategy for promoting 'lifelong learning for all' adopted by the city council/	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	3.1.3	Monitoring progress towards becoming a learning city	**Measures to monitor progress**: Measures adopted by the city authorities to monitor progress in developing and implementing the learning city strategy	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
3.2 Improving governance and participation of all stakeholders	3.2.1	Establishing inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms to involve governmental and non-governmental organisations and the private sector	**Mechanisms for stakeholder coordination**: The effectiveness of meaures to encourage stakeholder mobilisation and coordination in developing learning cities	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	3.2.2	Encouraging all stakeholders to provide quality learning opportunities and to make their own unique contribution to building a learning city	**Stakeholders' participation**: Stakeholders' commitment, plans and actions to develop better and more accessible learning opportunities within their areas of responsibility	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
			Private sectors' commitment: The existence of partnerships and cooperation between the city and the private sectors to support the learning city strategy	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
3.3 Boosting resource mobilisation and utilisation	3.3.1	Encouraging greater financial investment in lifelong learning by government individuals	**Financial investment in education and learning**: Public expenditure on education and learning as a percentage of the total city budget	Official data provided by city authorities					%
			Distribution of public education expenditure: Percentage of public education expenditure spent at different levels/types of education	Official data provided by city authorities	Basic education (ISCED 0 -3)				%
					Adult and continuing education				%

Area of focus	Key features		Possible measurements	Source of data	Statistical data in 2012 or survey/review results				
3.3 Boosting resource mobilisation and utilisation	3.3.2	Making effective use of the learning resources of all stakeholders to support lifelong learning for all	**Effiective use of resources**: Innovative ways of mapping and utilising human, financial, cultural and other resources available to city to facilitate learning in the city	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	3.3.3	Adopting pro-poor funding policies and providing various types of support to disadvantaged groups	**Subsidies to disadvantaged groups**: The allocation and effective use of funds to support the particpation of disadvantaged groups in learning	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor
	3.3.4	Encouraging citizens and residents to contribute their talents, skills, knowledge and experience on a voluntary basis	**Citizens' contribution to helping other citizens learn**: Percentage of citizens who contribute their skills, knowledge and experience to help other citizens learn at least once a month in the 12 months preceding the survey	Survey results					%
	3.3.5	Encouraging the exchange of ideas, experiences and best practice between different cities	**International partnership**: Progress in facilitating and utilizing opportunities for international partnerships and exchanges with other learning cities	Experts' review	5 Excellent	4 Very good	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor