

# Practical steps to implement the concept of Learning Cities

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## Abstract

In this article the author has investigated the role of Learning Cities and lifelong learning as the basis for ensuring of the sustainable development of the world community. Also this article has tracked the chronology of formation the concept of learning city and the practical ways to its implementation. The author has determined the importance of cooperation between representatives of local authorities, business entities and specialists in the sphere of formal and non-formal education during transformation of cities into the learning rank.

**Keywords:** learning cities, lifelong learning, key features, concept

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## 1 Introduction

Today modern development of the global community is focusing on a large-scale transformation of the concept of the world, where everyone is guaranteed justice, social integration and healthy environment. This concept has been declared in The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development where 17 targets and 169 tasks have been worked out. These targets and tasks are aimed at ensuring safe and healthy living conditions for each person, contributing to his personal development and prosperity. In this regard, there is a need to change existing models of social and economic development of cities and countries, their orientation to achieve the global goals.

One of the main factors for achieving the goals of sustainable development is the implementation of the concept of learning cities and the widespread introduction of lifelong learning globally. The learning cities play an important role of "architects and executors of strategies", contribute to the continuous education of the population, creative human capital formation at the local levels, and the basis for stable economic, social and environmental development of the world community as a whole.

For the first time, the issues of formation and development of learning cities were reviewed and coordinated with the UNESCO initiative at the I International Conference on Learning Cities in 2013, in Beijing. As a result of the consolidated work of the conference participants, the concept of the learning city was developed, which was set out in the Beijing Declaration and supplemented in the document "Key Features of Learning Cities". According to this concept, it is made a determination of a learning city as a city which effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector [1, pg.10; 2, pg. 6] and it includes the following:

1. promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;
2. revitalize learning in families and communities;
3. facilitate learning in the workplace;

4. extend the use of modern learning technologies;
5. enhance quality and excellence in learning;
6. foster a culture of learning throughout life;
7. create individual empowerment, forming social cohesion, firm civic position;
8. stimulate economic and cultural prosperity of the cities, transform them into the zones of creative business.

To implement the concept of learning cities, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Mexico City within the II International Conference on Sustainable Cities in 2015 adopted The Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities. This document has outlined the eight strategic directions for sustainable learning cities. To implement these strategies, the Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) has been created to promote the ideas exchange between the cities and to promote the creation of opportunities for lifelong learning in all the countries of the world community.

And two years later, the III International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC) took place from 18–20 September 2017 in Cork, Ireland. As the result of this Conference, The Guide to Action for Learning Cities Creating has been worked out [3].

This document outlines the main aspects of urban activities (actions) in order to promote their sustainable development:

1. green and healthy learning cities (environmental sustainable development);
2. equitable and inclusive learning cities (individual empowerment, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion);
3. employment and entrepreneurship in learning cities (economic development and cultural prosperity);
4. culture (cultural expression and heritage, and diversity).

It should be noted that the central focus of attention in the concept of learning cities is the human resource as the main source of their development. Therefore, in order to promote the development of sustainable cities, greater responsibility is placed on national governments, which must create appropriate conditions for cities for life-long

learning, adult education, non-formal and informal education, and education in the family and communities, in small and in large cities [3, pg. 6].

The role of the learning cities is important not only in terms of their sustainable economic and social development, but also for the personal development of their citizens with the goal of building the potential of creative human capital that can anticipate new global challenges and find the right answers to them. The preparation and formation of an intellectually developed human resource in the cities should be ensured by a modern education system with a high level of teaching quality.

An example of the introduction of the education continuous system in their cities is demonstrated by the United Kingdom as a country with a dynamically developing creative economy, where in April 2017 a new Law on Higher Education was adopted, replacing the previous law in force since 1994. The priorities of the vocational education system, according to the new law, are:

- high quality of educational organizations;
- expansion of opportunities for training students;
- growth of employment opportunities of graduates;
- correspondence of the training cost to the quality of services [4, pg. 20].

According to the Conference Report [5, pg. 11] in 2015, 12 cities received the UNESCO Learning City Award – the first-ever award of its kind in the history of UNESCO. In 2017, 16 cities across all UNESCO regions received the award: Villa María (Argentina), Contagem (Brazil), Mayo-Baléo (Cameroon), Hangzhou (China), Gelsenkirchen (Germany), Giza (Egypt), Larissa (Greece), N'Zérékoré (Guinea), Surabaya (Indonesia), Limerick (Ireland), Okayama City (Japan), Pécs (Hungary), Câmara de Lobos (Portugal), Suwon (Republic of Korea), Tunis (Tunisia) and Bristol (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). These all cities have demonstrated particular

progress in developing the learning city initiative and made outstanding progress in implementing the Key Features of Learning Cities.

## 2 Conclusions

Thus, today the world community is actively introducing the concept of their sustainable development into the practice of urban development, the basis of which is a system of lifelong learning. Taking into consideration all above mentioned, we can state, that conceptual approaches and practical actions (steps) should be developed for the transformation of cities into the rank of trainees at a city level. They are:

1. development of business education new format and educational practices that disseminate the ideas of lifelong learning;
2. popularization of education through involving business, cultural and educational institutions, and civil society into the educational process. With the help of such inter-sectoral cooperation, it is possible to find a vector of modern education development, the formation of a favorable creative environment;
3. integration of education and training in all the socio-economic processes at the local level, targeting the needs of the local territory and its inhabitants (societies, organizations);
4. sharing resources and achieving the synergetic effect through this.

So, it is possible to ensure the activation of creative potential at the local level and the formation of the creative business sector in the regions due to the joint actions and cooperation of representatives of local authorities, business entities and specialists in the sphere of formal and non-formal education.

## References

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