A Learning City in Israel

A Model for Planning, Dissemination and Implementation in Local Authorities

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Prologue

The vision of a learning city and of a learning society in Israel originates in the recognition of the importance of lifelong learning as the key to social, economic and political progress on the individual and public levels, crossing cultures and regimes.

Awareness of lifelong learning is growing in the consciousness of the public, of which Israel is part through its active involvement in European and global associations for adult education.

Our participation in international conferences and in fashioning connections with the global City Learning Net, together with the Department of Adult Education in the Ministry of Education, the Israel Adult Learning Association, and the Modiin-Macabim-Reut Municipality with its Multidisciplinary Center, promote the first model of the learning city in Israel.

The material presented in this booklet is based on research conducted in various countries and on other existing models of learning cities.

The model for planning and implementation in local authorities in general, and in the city of Modiin-Macabim-Reut in particular, was developed and run by the signatories below, together with and under the auspices of the Israel Adult Learning Association, the Israel Union of Local Authorities in Israel, the Knesset Education Committee, the Modiin-Macabim-Reut Municipality and other organizations.

We would like to thank the partners to our work and activities for the advancement of a learning society in Israel.

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A learning city in Israel

The vision:

According to the OECD (Gothenburg, 1996), lifelong learning is essential for every person in the 21st century and must be accessible to all.

The importance of lifelong learning as the main motivating force for personal growth, social coherence and economic development in Israel must be recognized.

The goal:

The goal is to disseminate the model of learning cities in the local authorities in Israel in order to implement the principles of lifelong learning for all (similar to the Cities Learning Net – CLN) already existing in many cities around the world.

A learning city – main concepts

A learning city

The concept of a learning city or region has existed since the seventies. The OECD, at its meeting in Gothenburg in 1996, gave it a renewed stimulus. The conference encouraged focusing on the city as a means for lifelong learning. A learning city – a local council, a regional authority – is one that drafts all of its resources in all sectors to develop and enrich its human potential through lifelong learning for personal progress, social cohesion and growth in general.

The learning city harnesses and connects the economic, political, educational, cultural and environmental structure for the personal development and enrichment of each resident. It furthers learning in the broadest sense of the word, develops local cooperation and effectiveness between all the municipal sectors, while supporting and encouraging individuals and employers to participate in learning in order to achieve the goals of general economic expansion.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is an ongoing and supportive process that empowers and encourages the individual to realize achievements in knowledge, skills and understanding that he/she will need throughout life, and apply them from a position of confidence, creativity and pleasure with every role, situation and environment.

The term 'learning' in a learning city refers to both individual and organizational learning.

The challenge in coping with the global economy is to connect individual learning to the broad environment in which institutions in diverse sectors are also aware of the need for innovation and learning and are capable of realizing these objectives.

What is a learning city?

Hundreds of cities, in all of the continents, are learning cities. These are local communities that determined to devote themselves to social, economic and technological change by facilitating learning for all, based on understanding their needs.

Learning cities channel the resources embedded in the community, such as knowledge, social networks, environmental advantages and financial assets in order to allow the local residents and organizations to develop skills and values. Striving for cooperation, learning cities develop not only flexibility and the ability to adapt to change but also to increase their sustainability.

There is no one unique definition of a learning city, but common to them all is their commitment to innovation and to learning at the core of their development.

The traditional interpretation of the word 'learning' is deeper than purely receiving information. Learning means change by the individual in order to generate essential results and to attain the objectives important to mankind.

Lifelong learning is an ongoing and supportive process that empowers and provokes the individual to achieve knowledge, values, skills and understanding that will be needed later in life, and to apply them confidently and creatively, enjoying each role, situation and milieu.

Lifelong learning is not limited only to the place of work – everyone can apply it throughout life. Learning should be a seamless process, as natural as breathing, that brings out the best in people and raises their self-respect.

The term learning as in learning cities relates to both individual and organizational learning. Individual learning refers to the formal and informal acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding by individuals throughout life and not only to initial studies and training. Learning offers individuals opportunities for better chances of employment and improved salaries, while society benefits from flexible human resources and from being on the cutting edge of technology.

But lifelong learning is not enough to create a learning city.

The ability to cope with the global and international economy is also important. Additional strategies are imperative in order for the learning city to become competitive. The challenge is to connect individual learning to the broader environment in which the institutions are also aware of the need for innovation and learning and are capable of realizing these objectives.

Connections and partnerships are the key since collective learning and strength rely on the flow and exchange of information regarding products, processes and work organizations. Partnerships are usually formed between cities, towns and regions, as well as among organizations whose ties are founded on stability and trust.

In fact, the common objective, the identification and the trust between the various participants, is the motivating force for nurturing and disseminating values in the community. This social wealth is essential for developing learning cities.

The concept of the learning city or learning locality was raised as early as the 1970s, but the OECD Gothenburg conference in 1992 gave it new impetus and encouraged focusing on the city as a means for ongoing learning throughout life.

Lifelong learning is likely to be created while harnessing resources and partnerships that, although existing in the same city, are not necessarily connected to each other. The city is unique for several reasons:

- People relate and identify with the place in which they live and work. The city focuses on the learning activity, thereby providing a meaningful national statement to its residents.

- Education, especially post-school education, is not a methodical and organized process but is constantly interrupted and usually competitive. The city's focus is useful in improving the continuity and coordination among the various providers.

- By the nature of things, a community that is based on adult education enables foundations for learning to develop in the city and also serve as a means for community activity.

A city is not only a place where many people work and live. It must also be an important place where people spend their leisure hours, a place that facilitates initiatives and education; in other words, a place where studies and education form an integral part of it.

Learning is not only commitment to a process of formal education. It is the connection of different types of learning with the work environment, the involved organizations, and the family. The learning city is a city, town or area that recruits all of its resources in all sectors to develop and enrich the human potential through learning for the sake of personal development, for social cohesion and for growth in general.

Learning cities bind and connect the economic, political, educational, cultural and environmental structure in order to develop the personal talents and potential of each resident. They promote learning in a broader manner, develop local partnerships and effectiveness between all the sectors in the community, and support and encourage individuals and employers to participate in learning.

A learning city strives to learn how to renew itself in a world in which there is tremendous global change. It advances cooperation between private civilian voluntary and educational sectors in the process of realizing the topics that are connected to objectives of general economic progress.

In their essence, learning cities react to challenges of globalization by seeking ways to enrich the human potential within them. In harnessing all of the resources in the community, these regions wish to assure that people of all ages will have access to a high standard of learning and to a variety of learning experiences in every domain that interests them or that they need, by both formal and informal learning. In brief, lifelong learning for all!

In a society in which the citizens are motivated and actively encourage learning throughout life, self-esteem and ability will be manifested, organizations will be able to function more efficiently, democratic values will be strengthened, the community's cultural life will be enriched, the community will be revitalized, and the economy will thrive.

Community commitment to the learning city, in order to improve access and opportunities for lifelong learning, adds to the residents' quality of life and improves their economic conditions through adaptable, stable and creative human resources.

The role of the local authority in creating a learning city

National and local government policy plays a decisive role in developing lifelong learning. The local authority has the right to define goals, to support viable initiatives, to alter methods, to influence their development, and to turn ideas into practice.

The awareness that economic productivity depends on education and training increasingly focuses the attention on lifelong learning as a means for solving employment, economic and social problems in a city and region.

The local authority plays a significant role in imbedding the approach and attitude towards lifelong learning in the city by:

- Establishing a task force or steering committee that will examine ways of applying Lifelong Learning;
- Initiating, developing and teaching courses, seminars and workshops on lifelong learning for public servants and key activists in the local authority and professional associations;
- Raising learning as a viable and enjoyable activity to the public agenda through promotion campaigns such as advertising in the local media, in newspapers, on billboards, in the curricula, in films, videos, and by the mass distribution of flyers;
- Encouraging communities to become learning communities and developing guidelines for resident participation in know-how and expertise, in establishing a set of mutual values and using their professionalism and talents for the wellbeing of the entire city;
- Reorganizing the financing of learning through integrated budgets and by pooling resources, including human resources;
- Encouraging people to participate in learning through development, assessment and knowledge of the new methods that positively reward all learning and support further study;
- Recruiting the help of local industry and businesses to improve the learning image among the labor force, and to plan the means to improve learning awareness;
- Nurturing national and international cooperation and encouraging the movement of ideas, approaches and activities between cities, regions and countries;
- Advancing lifelong learning through local and regional marketing strategies;
- Organizing learning festivities and festivals;
- Initiating a student treaty that presents the right of every citizen to learn;
- Helping individuals to develop a closer approach to learning through personal study programs, instruction and advice, and developing programs for advisors and leaders of learning;
- Establishing research centers for lifelong learning at universities, colleges and in other non-party public organizations.

Domains typical of a learning city

The most comprehensive study on the subject is the TELS project (Towards a European Learning Society) that developed a tool for monitoring learning cities. Below is an outline of an interactive questionnaire for understanding the areas and indices that differentiate between a learning city and other cities.

Domain	Explanation	Sub-domains
High municipal commitment	The extent to which the city or municipality has begun to apply the plans and strategies intended to pave the way to a learning community, and their impact on thought	• Lifelong learning strategies • Lifelong learning organizations • The urban rights treaty for lifelong learning • The city as a learning organization • Preparedness for a learning city
Information and communications	Ways in which ideas and lifelong learning plans can be transferred to the following factors: a. By whomever is responsible for its implementation b. By citizens in general, including developing new learning programs for training teachers, for learning centers, for use by the media, and to gather information about the learning requests, etc.	• Information strategies • Use of the media • Studying the literature • Marketing lifelong learning
Partnerships and resources	The degree to which the various sectors in the city are connected and encourage and facilitate learning, and the effectiveness of these links including the connection between schools, colleges, businesses and industries, universities, professional associations, special interest groups, local government and additional organizations. This also includes the involvement of human and physical resources, the creation of information, mobility, etc.	• Types of partnership • Use of new resources • Integrating existing resources
Developing leadership	The way and extent in which lifelong learning leaders will be trained, including resources of community leadership, project management, city management, organizational mix	• Existing leaders • New leaders • Tangible development

Domain	Explanation	Sub-domains
Social inclusion	Projects and strategies intended to include special populations such as people with physical and mental disabilities, the unemployed, the minorities, women who return to work after a break, people with learning difficulties, etc.	• Barriers to learning, skills, competencies, standards and assessment • Special national programs
Environment and citizenship	Innovative ways of using information and communications technology in order to connect organizations and people, while applying the connection in other communities. This includes the use of open learning and e-learning, the effective use of networks by all learning age groups, and understanding the Internet	• E-learning • Multimedia and open learning • Use of the Internet and other networks • A connected city
Technology and networks	Innovative ways of using information and communications technology in order to connect organizations and people, while applying the connection in other communities. This includes the use of open learning and e-learning, the effective use of networks by all learning age groups, and understanding the Internet	• E-learning • Multimedia and open learning • Use of the Internet and other networks • A connected city
Generating employment and employment capability, and a healthy quality of life	Projects that will improve the quality of life and employability and provide the citizens with skills for life, knowledge and competence that will improve their chances of employment. This includes economic and learning incentives, employment connections, etc.	• Employment and competence • Developing a healthy quality of life • Learning the requests and their analysis • Employment initiatives

Domain	Explanation	Sub-domains
Mobility, participation and personal development of citizens	The extent to which the citizens' contributions are encouraged and feasible. This includes projects for collecting and applying the knowledge, and the use of these competencies for public development of the city	• Tools and techniques for lifelong learning – personal learning curricula, consultancy, learning circles, etc. • Personal development of the citizens • Teacher/counselor's development • Citizen participation in developing strategies that will contribute to learning
Learning events and family involvement	Projects, programs and events that will increase people's skills, learning and the city's attraction among citizens from both the family and the individual perspective. This includes preparing booklets, learning festivals and festivities, learning competitions, events to familiarize citizens with the learning, etc.	• Learning festivals and festivities, fairs, etc. • Recognition and reward for learning • Family learning strategies

A strategic model for disseminating a learning city in the local authorities

	Stages	Process
1.	Establishing a national task force that will lead a process for assimilating the learning city in local /regional authorities in Israel	• The leading team will serve as a body of knowledge and experience that heads the application of policy and advances strategies at the national level and in local authorities • Accompanying the city of Modiin-Macabim-Reut in a pilot study • Advancing a national pilot study in 2-3 additional municipalities during 2009 • Cooperating with organizations and institutions involved in advancing the subject The leading team: The chairman of the Israel Adult Education Association, the director of the interdisciplinary center in Modiin, a representative of the Department for Adult Education in the Ministry of Education, a representative of the Israel Union of Local Authorities (IULA), a representative of the Ministry of Industry Trade and Labor, the mayor of Modiin, an academic representative, a representative of the National Economic Council
2.	Development and initiative Seminars/instruction/training on the subject of a learning city and lifelong learning for key people in the diverse sectors	Developing a shared array of training in content and strategy
3.	Public promotion of the subject on the national agenda, national marketing strategies Increasing the visibility of the learning city	Disseminating the model and its advertising in the IULA channels of communications and in the local authorities Conferences/ national training days
4.	Planning and developing guidelines for local and regional authorities for the deployment of learning cities	A strategic format for the learning city (see below)
5.	Recruiting leading players in industry, business and other sectors to promote the importance of learning	
6.	Nurturing and promoting international cooperation; sharing ideas, perceptions and activities with other member countries in the global network of learning cities	Assembling and distributing updated information on the topic in Israel and abroad Connecting to CLN – a network of learning communities in Europe - to exchange information and for cooperation Collaborating with global organizations that advance the subject/international conferences

A strategic model for promoting a learning city

	Stages	Process	Implementation
1.	Presenting a learning city model	The model and the principles will be presented to the mayor and the municipal management for approval	The project's strategic advisory team
2.	Declaring the learning city and signing the municipal treaty	A municipal ceremony together with the sectors in the city/region, and commitment to the joint treaty Declaration of municipal rights	Urban coordinators
3.	Urban/regional steering committee	Establishing a multi-systemic and multi-sector steering committee to consolidate a shared vision of the city as a learning organization, responsible for assimilating the principles, for planning, coordination, initiative and information Study day/training for the leading staff	With the accompaniment and guidance of the strategic advisory team, under the responsibility of urban coordinators
4.	Consolidating the integrative strategic plan	Developing a basis for a strategic plan: mapping that which is existing in the city /urban profile Familiarity with the social-community-economic attributes that are connected to the subject and identifying the disparities and needs Mapping the services and plans in the various sectors, and recognizing the patterns of their use and the degree of satisfaction Consolidating the plan according to agreed targets and municipal priorities, and creating the local agenda for advancing the subject Presenting the plan to the municipal management for its approval	The urban steering committee under the responsibility of the urban coordinators

	Stages	Process	Implementation
5.	Developing integrative /recurring, multi-year activity plans	Interdisciplinary /inter-sector task teams in cooperation with the residents; emphasis on creating partnerships and pooling resources between the diverse sectors in the city/ groups/interested individuals, industries and businesses by: • Developing leadership that promotes and leads public opinion on the issue of (community/organizational) leaders of lifelong learning • Encouraging the residents to contribute, participate, be involved • Using existing talents for general development	Urban coordinators
6.	Awareness and explanation of marketing strategies	Promoting the subject of lifelong learning on the public agenda by advertising and distributing the information via communications technologies, at festivals and urban events	Steering committee Urban coordinators
7.	Training and learning options	Seminars/courses/study days and training on lifelong learning issues for opinion-leaders, key persons, decision-makers, project coordinators in the local authority, in professional associations, in industry and business, in communities, in institutions of study, etc.	Strategic advisory team and IULA Local steering committee Urban coordinators

A treaty for a learning city in Israel

We recognize the importance of learning as a main motivating force for future growth, stability and the success of our citizens.

We declare our commitment to advance, disseminate and implement lifelong learning in our city by:

1. Recognizing the right to learn at all ages as one of the human rights, a key to the freedom and realization of those rights as a person and member of society;

2. Offering all residents a chance to complete and expand their education, competencies and talents in a broad variety of areas of knowledge and employment throughout life;

3. Establishing a multi-disciplinary steering committee for developing, advancing and implementing lifelong learning;

4. Developing constructive partnerships among the various sectors of the city in order to pool resources to the maximum and broaden opportunities for learning for all;

5. Promoting creative enrichment activities through developing, initiating and helping public organizations, communities and individuals, and their conversion to learning organizations;

6. Raising awareness of lifelong learning in the public agenda through local and regional marketing strategies, festivals and enrichment events;

7. Nurturing local, regional, national and international cooperation to encourage and disseminate lifelong and shared learning;

8. Developing plans that are adapted to each individual for personal growth, career development and family harmony;

9. Encouraging lifelong learning through citizen involvement and its contribution of knowledge, capabilities and expertise in advancing learning and in active citizenship.

Signed

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