

## Tanuló városok

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### *The Trend and Development of Learning Cities in Korea*

Koreans today take great pride in their cities attaining the status of learning cities. As of 2007, 76 cities have been designated as learning cities by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. Learning cities are largely government funded initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of the people through economic progress. This paper traces the development of learning cities in Korea against the background of the global movement to promote lifelong learning and considers the following questions: What makes a city a learning city? How is a learning city defined in terms of its administrative functions and how do these impact on public perception? How can learning cities be sustainable? What is it in Korean culture that fosters the development of learning cities? What learning needs / training needs are being created by learning cities?

#### **Introduction**

Nowadays, the school education institution has failed to check and correct itself. Also, with the speedy development of information and technology, school has lost its dominant position as a learning venue and become just part of education channels. With the social change, education system has changed from school education to lifelong learning experience. Therefore, we are heading for network-centered life-long learning society where teaching and learning anywhere and anytime become natural part of our daily lives.

Lifelong learning society needs close access to where citizens spend most time. And it should be designed within physical boundary where people feel comfortable psychologically. It is because where people live and work is different thanks to urbanization. Also, it is because the living environment has changed thanks to the advance of transportation and telecommunication. To establish lifelong learning in cities requires measures to divide functions and roles of lifelong education institutions via networking and to ensure local citizens to recognize and have access to those institutions.



At the heart of lifelong learning city projects lie local citizens. It translates into that the aim of project is decided based on the needs and wants of citizens and the project is implemented with the active citizens' participation. Besides, it means that the success of the project depends on the citizens. Thereby, successful project can be seen as a process to explore the needs and wants of locals.

When it comes to lifelong learning city project in Korea, as of 2006, a total of 57 cities have been designated as pilot city by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and carried out various activities since 2001. At early stage, they benchmarked projects from advanced nations which established lifelong learning city. Also, given that the local self-governing institutions suffered a lack of awareness and citizens were not actively involved, the central government implemented awareness campaign. However, nowadays, unless a city is designated as a lifelong learning one, heads of local community are blamed for their lack of ability and the city is stigmatized as a backwater. This is why the project is all the rage.

However, as significant as the the quantity growth, quality growth well reflecting the needs and wants of locals are important for the successful and sustainable project. In this respect, I take stock of 6 year-old lifelong learning project of Korea and suggest the principle to stick with.

### **THE MEANING AND STRUCTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING CITIES**

Learning is an important factor in deciding the comparative advantage of national, regional and city economy as well as the success of an individual. OECD members promote regional development and innovation by establishing regional learning community. In this regard, learning city project and learning region campaign are carried out in order to respond to knowledge-based economy. The term "learning city/region" is used for city, town or community, regardless of the size of region. It can be a region composed of a few cities and a specific region. To be sure, it can be a region comprising a few administrative regions and beyond national boundaries. In Korea, lifelong learning city is established by city, 'Gun'(smaller than city unit) and 'Gu'(smaller than Gun) units with autonomy. It is because lifelong learning project is promoted centering on general administrative affairs. First, I analyze the meaning and function of learning city and suggest factors to be included.

### **The Meaning and Development Process of Learning Cities**

Learning city can be defined as city utilizing human, physical, and financial resources for realizing potential of all citizens under the assumption that learning lies at the core of personal wellbeing, stability and prosperity of society. Therefore, learning city means sharing of educational resources between institutions, local communities, and further nations(Longworth, 2000). In other words, learning city is one to recognize and take advantage of learning value for the better regional integration, revitalization and economic development. Besides, lifelong learning city means well positioned community to provide

learning for all citizens. To this aim, restructuring of comprehensive education system is under way in order to overhaul school-oriented and ill-organized education system.

Learning city project is good for regional learning level, productivity, innovation and economy (OECD, 2000). Learning city means a cooperative region for stockholders to initiate common solutions for shared issues and satisfy learning desire of locals, with economic vitality and social integration of region in mind (EU, 2001).

Learning city means networked learning society aiming for city prosperity, social integration and sustainability. The relation between learning and regional development can take hint from the fact that the driving forces of regional competitiveness and growth are knowledge and innovation and knowledge and innovation come from learning. Simply put, first, learning boosts economic prosperity and employment of a city. Second, it improves equal opportunity, social integration and vitality. Third, it protects and improves the city environment for sustainability of region and beyond. Fourth, it contributes to the better city administration and empowerment to region.

In 1991, the first meeting for education city was held in Barcelona, Spain. This is considered the origin of promotion for lifelong city. the meeting for education city involved global 47 city representatives for sharing educational experiences and discuss the role and responsibility of a city in local education. OCED meeting at Gothenburg city in 1992 served as a huge inspiration. Since then, the concept and meeting of lifelong city have spread around the world. Also, The European Conference on Lifelong Learning Cities at Southampton in 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1998 defined 'lifelong city' as visionary for lifelong learning project, policymaker for economic development, recognizer for learning demand of locals, awarder for learning the performance and motivator for learning. Since then, The International Association of Educating Cities with 26 nations and 175 cities were established in 2000. Especially, the heads of Europe ambitiously aimed to create the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 and declared that the lifelong learning would help Europe to achieve the goal at Lisbon in March, 2000(European Commission, 2000).

OECD discussed lifelong city in the perspective of regional innovation and development. On the other hand, the EU discussed it as part of lifelong education. The EU selected lifelong education as a basic principle of education/job training program while implementing various initiatives for promoting lifelong education. To put the principle into practice, the EU has promoted R3L(Regional Networks for Lifelong Learning) project supporting network of 17 designated areas for lifelong education since 2002. R3L project is applied among 120 areas in Europe. It also serves as follow-up to "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality" project in 2001.

The British learning city, pioneer in the area, means a city to meet the demand of learning by locals through partnership between relevant institutions in the form of city, town or community. In 1995, 8 British cities established Learning Communities Network or LCN and it expanded to 32 cities in 2005.

Australian learning city is also dubbed as learning community and each city has a different goal as a learning community. Australian learning city aims to support members of community to be equipped with necessary capacity in lifelong learning society, as flexible community to cultivate its own future (Adult Learning Australia Inc., 2000). The trend of lifelong city has been in full swing since Wodonga city of Victoria state declared it as the first learning city. In 2005, 40 learning cities were in place nationwide.

In Japan, most local governments do its best to establish learning city/community while making it a policy to promote lifelong education. In other words, local governments integrate the lifelong learning concept into local administration as regional revitalization strategy. And Japanese lifelong learning city project has been implemented as part of policy for lifelong education promotion. In particular, the lifelong learning city project is promoted as project to vitalize lifelong learning by city/town/community units.

Lifelong learning city project provides diverse education such as culture, environment and self-governing to women, the elderly, and the youth. In this regard, the efficiency and effectiveness of administration and budget are kept in mind. Lifelong learning city is very positive in local education, productivity, innovation and economy in knowledge-based economy. Also, it is well recognized as major agenda to promote by administrators and politicians.

### **Factors in Lifelong Learning Cities**

Lifelong city is dynamic system to aid education of locals by integrating all resources for human learning. Lifelong city project is efficient and effective when all supporting factors of learning are operated systemically.

Lifelong learning city project is to create new network by checking city system for education. Thereby, the project should be run systematically. It is because project in which sub-factors of various learning city system are injected should be carried out in an organic and cooperative way. Simply put, it is because each independent factor such as project promotion, participation encouragement and learning aid is implemented organically rather than injected by timely order.

The core of learning city consists of two pillars: the integration of human capital and social capital. It is the project at the level of regional innovation through integration of social capital for regional innovation and human resource development or HRD. Social capital contributes to integrating community by boosting trust, network, and communication of society. And human resource development at a personal level help to enhance economic competitiveness through cultivating one's ability (OECD, 2001a).

The process of capital accumulation has become all the more important as learning economy comes where human and social capital from learning is well responded as core resource for economic improvement. Organizational learning, a form of learning takes place when the



current knowledge is transferred or new information is created within the same organization. Its own 'mutual action' contributes to creating social capital

## **PROCESS AND PERFORMANCE OF LIFELONG CITIES**

Recently lifelong learning becomes a major policy to establish and promote by region. It started when Changwon city established rules of management for lifelong education center and supported the operation of education center for society by private organization in 1994. Since then, Gwangmyeng city declared to become lifelong learning city for locals to enjoy rich culture via learning and co-exist with nature in March, 1999. This is the beginning of the lifelong learning city. The declaration of Gwangmyeng city influenced lifelong learning city project by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. Since 2001, the ministry has selected and aided self-governing communities to desire to become the learning city yearly by creating policies to establish learning city for local revitalization.

### **The Process of Lifelong Learning Cities**

Learning is an important factor in deciding the comparative advantage of national, regional and city economy as well as the success of an individual. OECD members promote regional development and innovation by establishing regional learning community.

The Participatory Government is deeply committed to explore examples of regional innovation system and spread the cases in various ways. Each ministry strives to initiate its own projects such as local autonomy, local balanced development, regional innovation system, the council for regional innovation and nurturing of local colleges. For example, the Ministry of Finance and Economy pursues project to create culture and history community; the Ministry of Government Affairs and Home Affairs with project to create information-intensive community; the Ministry of Science and Technology with project to create science and culture community; the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry with project to have hand-on experience of agricultural areas; the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development is dedicated to improve public feature by expanding lifelong learning cities.

Learning is at the core of regional revitalization policy. It be because the local innovation is only possible when people change and people can change through learning. Boosted autonomy to stand on its own feet and enhanced innovation capacity are often cited as a sure-fire way to trigger dynamic growth of all areas. However, true innovation without learning is hard to expect. In this respect, the campaign to create learning city is the regional innovation strategy for knowledge-based society.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development picked up Gwangmyeng city, Jinan Gun, and Yuseong Gu as lifelong learning city in 2001; Jeju city, Bucheon city, Busan city's Haeundae Gu in 2002; Jeju city, Incheon city's Yeonsu Gu, Kyungnam's Geochang Gun, Jeju city, Suncheon city IN 2003; The number of cities increased to 33 cities by 2005; the number risen to 57 cities by adding 27 new local areas including Seoul Yeongdeungpo Gu, Busan Yeonje Gu, Nam Gu, Gwangju Dong·Gwangsan Gu, Ulsan city's Ulju Gun, Kwangwon Hwacheon Gun·Samcheok city.

Given that many communities are eager to become learning cities, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development picked up Seosan city, Incheon city's Nam Gu and Gwangju city's Gwangsan Gu as potential learning city in 2005. And then it plans to designate them as learning city after one year by establishing lifelong learning system via consulting. The interest of local communities in local education has grown dramatically year by year so that the competition is quite intense.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development plans to create 100 learning cities by 2008 as substantial result appears such as the boosted attention on learning and investment enlargement. Also, it plans to improve quality of learning city by evaluating the satisfaction level of locals for each city (the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2006).

Lifelong learning city project can be divided into budget, human resources, organization, rules, establishment of information infrastructure and operation of information infrastructure.

First, when it comes to budget for lifelong education, each community has a different budget. The budget is determined by the determination of the head of community and financial size. Generally, large community has a larger share of budget such as Bucheon city, Gwangmyeong city, Yeonsu Gu, Jeonju city, Changwon city. On the contrary, small community has budget limitation. And communities with similar population and budget capacity may have a different budget according to the willingness of the head.

Second, each community has a different level of human pools. The human pools can be divided into those designed to lifelong learning center and those performing project. If you take a look at the human resources sent to the center in city, Gwangmyeong city's lifelong learning center and Geumsan Gun's *darakwon* or learning center have a large pools of labor. And if you take a look at the whole community, Incheon city changed its center for local self-ruling into center for self-learning and hired experts for lifelong education.

Third, most cities has one or two the committee(s), advisory and decision-making group for project. Each committee promotes lifelong education project by acquiring opinions of locals and experts under the name of lifelong education promotion committee or lifelong education progress committee.

Fourth, lifelong education rules were established to ensure the continuity of project. Most cities established rules involving promotion of project; building and operation of lifelong education center; lifelong education itself. Details are various according to each community given that situation and condition for learning are different by each community.

Fifth, this is information infrastructure establishment. Most cities have homepages at hand. 22 cities have a more organized information infrastructure rather than homepage. Budget for information infrastructure are divided into 7 cities and managed.



As above, most cities set aside budget for project; designate workers to administrative body and center; create a committee; establish rules. However, each community has a quite different level in these matters.

### **The Performance of Lifelong Learning Cities**

6 year-old implantation of project is followed by changes as bellows.

Local community is more interconnected via lifelong learning city project. Gwangmyeng city, Geochang Gun, Jeju city, Icheon city, Bucheon city has the most dynamic network businesses. The promotion of network project has more to do with social atmosphere of each city than promotion period. If you take a look at special training to boost expertise of those in charge, Bucheon city, Suncheon city, Gwangmyeng city do a great job.

The most popular programs are related to culture and leisure. The next common programs are citizenship education, job training, and Korean language course for adult, credit accreditation, and online learning. But, some cities do not have any job training, Korean language course for adult, credit accreditation, and online learning.

The analysis of performance of project is as follows in the respects of quality improvement, economic growth, humane resources development, social integration.

A slew of events to share the results and benchmark them come in the form of presentation, seminar, forum and learning festivals. Gwangmyeng city, Yeonsu Gu, Jeonju city, Changwon city hold many learning events and Gwangmyeng city, Yeonsu Gu, Jeonju city, Changwon city hold many seminars (Byen, Jong Im., et. al., 2005).

First of all, for improved quality of life, take a look at the number increase in lifelong education facility and study group of each city. Since 2001, Andong city and Icheon city have shown the biggest jump in the number of facility. Jeju city, Changwon city and Gwanak Gu have shown the biggest jump in the number of lifelong education program. When it comes to study group, Gwangmyeng city, Bucheon city, Suncheon city, Jeonju city, Chilgok Gun, Gwanak Gu have been very active.

Second, economic contribution of learning project can be measured through programs for opening my own business, commercialization of learning result, and commercialization of learning program. Mokpo city, Jeonju city, Changwon city, Gwanak Gu top the list in program numbers for opening my own business. Jeju city, Jeonju city, Changwon city, Chilgok Gun stands out in commercialization of learning result. Jeonju city, Chilgok Gun is great in commercialization of learning program. Therefore, cities can be found which contribute to regional economy by commercializing learning result and learning program as well.

Third, the level of human resources development from project can be measured in nurturing of local leaders, number of volunteers and voluntary organization for lifelong learning. Gwangmyeng city, Haeundae Gu, Suncheon city, Geochang Gun, Yeonsu Gu, Chilgok Gun have many programs to nourish local leaders. Jeju city, Jeonju city, Geumsan Gun, Gwanak Gu have quite a few volunteers for lifelong learning, while the number of volunteers are quite different



by community. city, Suncheon city, Jeonju city, Gwanak Gu are among the best in voluntary organization for lifelong learning. Though there is regional difference, it shows project for lifelong learning city is involved in HRD projects.

Fourth, social integration through project can be measured in program for boosting citizenship, program for those underprivileged, and program for boosting a sense of belonging in community. Gwangmyeng city, Suncheon city, Jeju city, Geochang Gun, Mokpo city, Icheon city, and Jeonju city carry out programs for boosting citizenship. Gwangmyeng city, Suncheon city, Yeonsu Gu, Jeonju city, Chilgok Gun, and Gwanak Gu run programs for those underprivileged. And Gwangmyeng city, Haeundae Gu, Seogwipo city, Suncheon city, Jeju city, and Jeonju city introduce programs for boosting a sense of belonging in community.

### **TASK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING CITIES**

Lifelong learning is process to provide opportunity to get education anytime, anywhere and anyone and establish system for this matter. Thereby, nobody should be isolated in the process and those in education institution should also establish foundation to study further. The project is not only national project but also securing citizens' survival right.

First, project for lifelong learning city should be promoted as part of local community campaign. The establishment of local community started from campaign to boost a sense of belonging and affection for the community. And ultimately, it helps locals to solve their own problems and create social capital. A variety of projects for regional competitiveness are implemented by each ministry. Nevertheless, enhancing regional competitiveness is impossible without locals' interest and involvement. In other words, the project contributes to enhancing participation of locals via connection between learning and locals. Learning city is regional innovation strategy for locals and administration to win together by enhancing capacity to self-rule via learning. Social integration requires interest in wellbeing of others, care, consideration, and respect. Lifelong learning city campaign contributes to integration by providing lifelong learning opportunity to those underprivileged educationally, culturally, regionally, by gender, and by generation. Therefore, center for self-ruling under the local office should function as a channel to provide self-ruling education by doubling as a learning center. However, center for self-ruling led by Ministry of Government Affairs and Home Affairs fails to serve as center for self-ruling when it fails to align learning of locals with capacity for self-ruling.

Last, locals should be nurtured as local leader through lifelong education relating to regional innovation utilizing RHD. As part of learning city project, leadership system should be established and opportunities should be given to ensure locals to actively involve themselves in the project. And then, locals get the change to be major voice in the project and as regional leader, locals should come up with system and strategy to pioneer regional innovation. Competitiveness of corporate should be also enhanced via HRD with regional innovation strategy to upgrade economic competitiveness. And it can be done by boosting learning

partnership system between corporate and community, and possibility of employment via HRD of citizens. Therefore, workers' continuous education and local partnership should go hand in hand so that competitiveness of corporate should be stronger. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development are uncooperative so that there is little relevancy between lifelong education and jobs, failing to securing competitiveness.

Central government and local governments are also important as doer of project. Currently, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development is in charge of project for lifelong learning city. However, there are many overlapped areas with other central agencies. Thereby, the cooperation between agencies should be strengthened in implementing project. It is because lifelong learning city project involves various projects of central agencies and those implementing project happen to be under the central agencies.

Beside, legal and systematic institution should be in place in order to implement the project stably and continuously. Also, budget for the project should be secured. As of now, lifelong city project is part of lifelong education under the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, but without legal and systematic foundation. It is necessary to change the lifelong education article to include project for lifelong city along with project for lifelong learning subject, project for lifelong learning festival and project for lifelong learning promotion.

The policy direction for project for lifelong learning city focuses on the spread of cities. But, in the future, it also pay due attention to quality improvement of learning city. In this regard, it is required to take stock of cities for additional aid, implement consulting business and select and promote project for priority investment. Also, it is required to have administrative action such as nullify the position of lifelong city when designated cities fail to promote the project.

## **SUGGESTION**

When it comes to learning for citizens, each community has a different access to learning and contents and levels of learning are also various. The bottom line is Korean learning infrastructure fails to meet the demand of locals and cookie-cutter education material is provided according to the lifelong education institutions. Worse yet, only for the matter of existence, one institution shamelessly copies education program from another institution. Therefore, contents and levels of education program are similar among institutions so that each institution is in lack of its own features. Under this circumstance, without transfer of learning and seamless learning, this kind of condition cannot lead to another productive learning. To be sure, living and learning circumstances are different given that convenience facilities, culture institutions and lifelong learning institutions are not equally distributed.

The road to learning city is expected to be bumpy. It is because awareness campaign should be implemented to involve all members of society; culture and network for members to go hand in hand should be established; administrative system should be in place to capture the

heart and mind of locals. Only when these three conditions are satisfied, learning city can take root.

Adult education can be effective when it is aligned to welfare and work: during learning period, social safety net should be provided as part of welfare policy in order to eliminate barrier to learning; during working period, the system to save time and money, tools for future learning should be in place. Advanced welfare society uses learning as a connection between welfare and work. “LearnFare” functions as a basic principle to sustain society.

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