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## **Building Communities into Lifelong Learning Cities: The Case of the Republic of Korea**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper was to explore the implications and strategies for building Lifelong Learning Cities in Korea by 1) examining the rationale behind the movement; 2) reviewing the results and accomplishments; and 3) drawing lessons for constructing Lifelong Learning Cities in other parts of the globe.

### **Introduction**

Since the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) funded a project to create 'educating cities' in the 1970s (IAEC, 2008; Longworth, 2006), the idea of creating Lifelong Learning Cities has expanded throughout the world. According to the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC), 335 cities in 36 countries have organized and are taking part in the IAEC (IAEC, 2008).

Nowhere has the Lifelong Learning Cities movement (hereafter LLCM) taken hold more than in South Korea. By 2007, 76 out of 232 local autonomous entities (cities/counties/districts) have been named Lifelong Learning Cities. Even more impressive, in 2004 learning cities of Korea, invested a total of \$40,000,000 to fund the creation of nineteen Lifelong Learning Cities (Byun, Kwon, Kim, Yang, B., & Yang, H., 2005). By now, \$144,000,000 is invested to fund because the lifelong learning cities increased in seventy-six cities in 2008. The Korean Lifelong Learning City for 2007, Chang Won, a city with a population 550,000, held its learning festival under the theme "learning citizenship rights, building positive citizenship, and building community." The festival held on September 26-28, 2007 attracted a total of 1.42 million people (Republic of Korea CONFINTEA VI Report, 2008) to its various activities. It is clear from the above data that the idea of creating a Lifelong Learning City has become a central and vital part of Korean society.

According to much of the literature on lifelong learning, constructing a learning society with an emphasis on citizenship, human rights, and human resource development is crucial to meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Field, 2006; Jarvis, 2007; OECD, 2002; UNESCO, 2008). The establishment of a Lifelong Learning City would, according to its original intent, contribute to developing regional human resources, expanding learning opportunities for the residents, forming a regional community through small, organized learning study circles, thus forming a society of democratic citizens (IAEC, 2009). The European Lifelong Learning Initiative sees the Lifelong Learning City as a learning community and defines it as "a city, town or region that mobilizes all regional resources to abundantly develop the citizens' potentiality for prosperity, maintenance of a unified society, and to promote personal advancement" (Longworth, 2006, p. 23). The Lifelong Learning City movement in Korea is one of the regional units of lifelong education organized as a "learning town", "learning region", or "learning community" (Kim, 2004, p. 5).

However, the political, social and economic rationale for the South Korean Lifelong Learning Cities movement has not been adequately addressed. Nor has the impact on society been adequately dealt with. Relying on the data produced by the Korean Ministry of Education,

Science, and Technology; Korean academic analysis; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning documents; studies from OECD and IAEC, this study analyzes both the theoretical underpinnings of the Lifelong Learning City movement in Korea and the movements impact on Korean society (Buyn et al, 2005; IAEC, 2009; MOE/HRD 2006.; OECD, 2001; Park, 2007; UNESCO, 2008). The study then provides suggestions for building on the Korean experience in North American and European contexts.

### **Concepts and Background of Lifelong Learning City**

There are several definitions around the concept of lifelong learning cities. Concepts of lifelong learning cities are differently defined by European Lifelong Learning Initiative (ELLI), Learning City Network (LCN), JAPAN, and Korea. ELLI defines Learning Cities as follows:

A learning city, town or region recognizes and understands the key role of learning in the development of basic prosperity, social stability and personal fulfillment, and mobilizes all its human, physical and financial resources creatively and sensitively to develop the full human potential of all its citizens to understand and react positively to change(Longworth, 2006, p. 21).

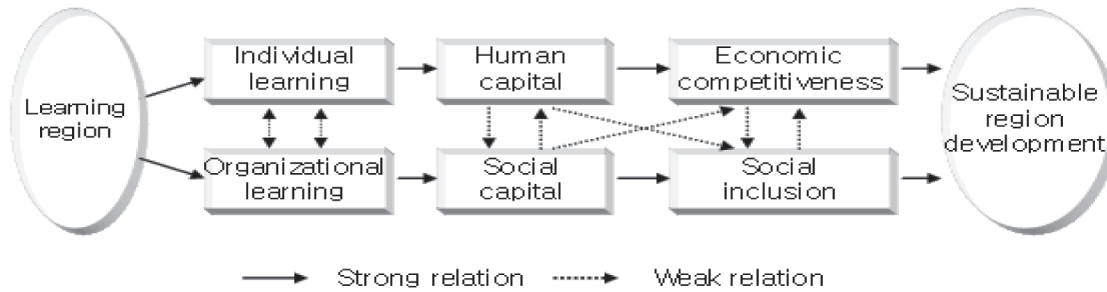
The Korean Ministry of Education, Skill, & Technology (hereafter MOEST) defines a lifelong learning city as follows:

A lifelong learning city is a general city restructuring movement designed to establish a learning community where learning can be enjoyed anytime, anywhere, and by anyone. At the same time, it is a lifelong education movement of the local society by the local citizens, for the citizens, of the citizens trying to form a learning community network with all educational resources of the local society in connection with organizations, local societies, and countries ( Official Document of MOEST, Lifelong 81700-501, Jun 8, 2001).

Definitions of lifelong learning city basically include in the contents as follow: First, in the method aspect, lifelong learning city is fully utilizing all resources in local region. All facilities including public institutions and NGO without stipulating LEA as well as lifelong learning facilities can be participated in lifelong learning city projects. Second, in goals and directions, lifelong learning city is related to the development of local society. It has commonly goals and directions to self-actualization, social inclusion, and economic competitiveness (National Institute for Lifelong Education, 2008, p. 20).

### **Idea for Lifelong Learning City**

LLCM in Korea follows the idea for lifelong learning city on the base of learning region model studied by OECD (2001). Individual learning and organization learning occur in the region. Both are themselves to some extent, dependent upon the level and nature of the institutions or the regions. Individual learning will make it possible to accumulate human capital in institutions or regions, and organizational learning can form social capital in them. Human capital accumulation through individual learning will contribute to economic competitiveness (and the growth it makes possible) in the regions and the institutions, and social capital formation through organization learning will contribute to form social inclusion. As the model for realizing lifelong learning city idea in Korea, conceptual relationships between human capital and social capital is depicted in Figure 1( Buyn, et al., 2005).



(Figure 1) Conceptual Relationships between Human Capital and Social Capital in the Lifelong Learning City

Types of Korean lifelong learning cities were investigated on the basis of classification for learning city types in EU and lifelong learning cities in Japan.

First, citizen community building type reinforces self-autonomous learning community for building lifelong learning city. This typology operates programs corresponding to citizen's need and is linked strongly with NGO/NPO. This category could be found in four cities including Geumsan county.

Second, vocational competency development emphasizes individual ability and self-actualization for building the lifelong learning city. It focuses on residents' own vocational competency development and operates professional education and vocational training. This category could be found in Cheongju city and Chilgok county.

Third, regional society integration emphasizes the public good more than individual benefit for building the lifelong learning city. It reinforces social inclusion and welfare through operating programs for the unprivileged classes and establishing the lifelong learning infrastructure. There are nine lifelong learning cities including Jinan county which belong in this category.

Fourth, industry based innovation emphasizes individual ability and self-actualization for building lifelong learning city. This reinforces regional industrial innovation by civil groups and private corporations, and focuses on inducing companies and cultivating regional manpower through learning.

### History and Background for LLCM

In Korea, the LLCM was first initiated at the local level by city/district and not led by the government at the central level. In 1995, Chang Won City first established 'Regulation of Establishment and Management for Chang Won City Lifelong Learning Institute' but did not use the term of lifelong learning city at that time. In order to meet residents' learning needs, the city has first established a lifelong learning center in each village and supported lifelong learning programs by consigning the management of centers to NGOs in the region (KEDI, 2002). Also, Gwang Myeong City first declared the lifelong learning city on March 9th, 1999 before the Korean government introduced and supported the lifelong learning cities project in order to maximize the expected effectiveness for LLCM (LEE, 2002). The Korean government did not regulate the LLCM until the Lifelong Education Act was amended on Lifelong Education Act in February 29th, 2008.

### Framework for LLCM

Most of lifelong learning cities are implementing projects and programs by setting up the vision, objectives, strategy, and base for LLCM

## Vision

A lifelong learning city ultimately aims to establish learning community in the region. A lifelong learning city is a city that widely promotes learning, a city that effectively develops local partnerships with all sections of the local society, and a city that supports and motivates the participation of individuals, organizations, corporations, and enterprises to learning. The vision for LLCM in cities/counties/districts is established and emphasized based on a motto such as individual life & self actualization, learning sharing, community building, regional development, making an ecological region. They can be illustrated as follows:

Building human oriented lifelong learning society (Gwangmyeong City), Improvement of citizens' life through learning: Always Learning community(Jeju City), opening the future through learning with citizen(Yeonsu District), Citizen growth and regional development(Changwon City) ecological, historical, and tourist region leading acknowledge based society(Iksan City)

## *Objectives*

The objective of the lifelong learning city policy is the environmental composition of a learning community. The objective of the lifelong learning city policy promotion is first, to construct a better local environment, second, to build a learning environment to enhance the quality of life, and third, to create a city where people learn, grow, and live together.

## *Strategies*

Strategies for LLCM in cities/counties/districts are promoted by means such as providing ubiquitous opportunities for learning, categorizing learning region zones according to each village, networking & partnership, etc. They can be explained as follows:

- Gwangyang City – city administration concentration for lifelong learning, partnership strategy, categorizing and dividing learning region zone. Downsizing for practicing projects and business, providing ubiquitous opportunities for learning.
- Gwanak District – resident participation, networking, and information-oriented strategy
- Jeonju City – learner centered strategy for LL, region centered strategy, information-oriented strategy, partnership strategy.

## *Base for LLCM*

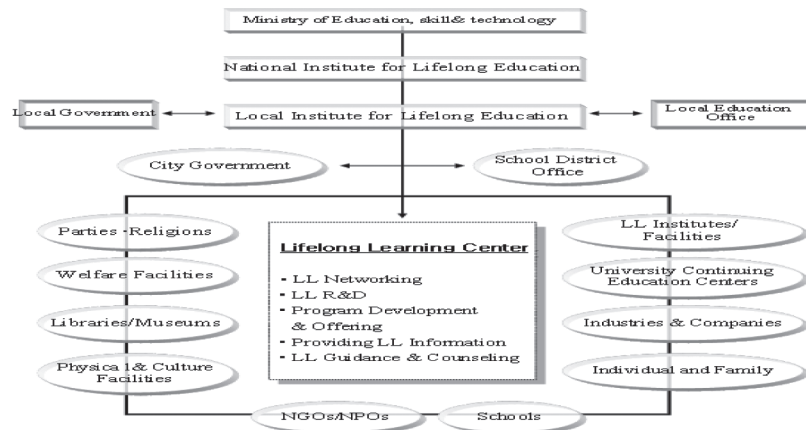
Lifelong learning cities movement is implemented by participating positively in learning groups, lifelong learning institutions, and lifelong learning facilities in the region. In order to operate various programs within the local society, lifelong learning centers of lifelong learning cities operates lifelong learning projects by utilizing university continuing centers, schools, NGO/NPOs, cultural centers, industries and companies, resident municipal centers, libraries, social welfare centers, research institutes, volunteer centers, women's education institutions, juvenile groups and museums

Korean lifelong learning cities movement is focused on the revival of a region and regional human resources development, and has been promoted as a means to expand the lifelong learning opportunities of local residents through the enhancement of local lifelong education activities as well as the formation of local learning communities. Simultaneously, cooperative planning exists between lifelong education facilities and organizations through formation of partnerships between the district and regional education office (Kwon, 2005).

## **Promoting System and Mechanism for LLCM**

LLCM are implemented and promoted by various systems and mechanisms related to human and physical infrastructure in lifelong learning cities/counties/districts. Systems and mechanisms for LLCM can be explained by elements such as regulations and rules, the lifelong

learning centers, manpower, networks, study groups, and special mechanisms for promoting LLCM, etc. Networking between agencies, institutions, and other facilities centered by lifelong learning center in lifelong learning city is depicted in Figure 3.



[Figure 2] The Network Structure of Lifelong Learning Center in City/County/District

### Conclusion and Implications

Future realization of a lifelong learning society depends on how the regional community is established as residents freely enjoy the learning in their lives that is based on the region. Therefore, there is a need to prepare a lifelong learning location for the development of the local society in this localization period and for the enhancement of quality of life of the local residents. This is precisely the lifelong learning city construction movement.

The Korean Lifelong Learning Cities movement has provided opportunities for many local autonomous entities to strengthen administrative organizational structures with regard to citizen education. Moreover, residents in a Lifelong Learning City play an important role in building local learning communities by voluntarily organizing study groups under the support of local governments. There are also an increasing number of citizens acquiring college degrees through the Academic Credit Bank System operated as part of the Lifelong Learning City movement.

In some regions, the Lifelong Learning City Movement takes the form of local autonomy in order to solve community problems with residents' collective efforts. This was achieved by making full use of the local resident autonomous facilities and organizations in fostering lifelong learning. For example, many Lifelong Learning Cities have been operating various lifelong education programs while utilizing general administrative local autonomous centers as residents' lifelong learning facilities. Some Lifelong Learning Cities changed their resident autonomous center into the local autonomous learning center, and placed lifelong educators within so that they could plan local lifelong education projects, offer various lifelong education programs, and hold various lifelong education events (Republic of Korea CONFINTEA VI Report, 2008).

While a similar movement seems problematic in the North American context, aspects of the movement can be adopted to the Western context. Building on the Korean example, closer relationships can be forged between local governmental and popular education projects in urban communities. Building on the current interest in citizenship education, such cooperative projects may go a long way towards beginning to build a learning society in Western countries



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