2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: 
The Roles of University Lifelong Learning through 
Collaborative Dialogue

Dr Daniele Vieira
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
25 April 2017

EUCEN 2017 Policy Talks in Brussels

Introduction
Introduction

- The human population of the world is not only larger, but also older than it has ever been. Moreover, the proportion of older adults is still rising. These people have much to contribute to the development of society. Therefore, it is important that they have the opportunity to learn on equal terms with the young, and in age-appropriate ways. Their skills and abilities need to be recognized, valued and utilized.

- UNESCO’s vision of lifelong learning encompasses all contexts (formal, non-formal and informal) and ages of learning.

Introduction

- Still, understandings of lifelong learning differ widely, not only between countries, but also across the sub-sectors of education systems.

- On the one hand lifelong learning is accepted, in policy terms, by all OECD countries and many other countries, but on the other hand there is an uneven and slow pace of implementation of LLL.

- Variety of lifelong learners: young adults without a university degree, individuals seeking professional development, unemployed adults, migrants.

- What is called ‘lifelong learning’ in one country might be called ‘adult education’, ‘postgraduate studies’ or ‘continuing education’ in others. For example a bachelor’s or master’s degree with a professional orientation may be classified as LLL in one country but be part of the range of regular diploma courses in other countries.
Introduction

- Universities usually have more than one purpose in offering LLL and that purposes vary between institutions:
  - responding to the needs of the labour market
  - stimulating personal development by providing personal development programmes for postgraduates
  - encouraging the participation of non-traditional learners / attracting new groups into the university
  - supporting the social, cultural and economic development of the region
  - seeking new sources of revenue

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
The 2030 Agenda for SD

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development:

- Sets ambitious goals to transform our world, balancing the economic, cultural, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

- Encompasses all aspects of our lives, which implies that learning, if it is to contribute fully to this agenda, must be seen as both lifelong and life-wide.

- Emphasizes the relevance of non-formal education and informal learning for children, young people and adults, especially those not in education or from marginalized or disadvantaged parts of society, and that it must be recognized and fostered in universities if the 17 SDGs are to be met.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Context of change

While reading, writing and mathematics will continue to be essential, new knowledge and skills, such as in using technologies or dealing with new situations, will gain importance in most contexts.

Education for sustainable development (ESD):

- Is not just another subject but rather another way of learning and living that recognizes the need of a sustainable future.
- Should help people gain new knowledge and skills to improve their lives in sustainable ways, for example, through eco-friendly farming or by working to address social and economic inequalities.
- Aims at developing competencies that empower individuals to reflect on their own actions, taking into account their current and future social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts, from a local and a global perspective.
- Does not only integrate contents such as climate change, poverty and sustainable consumption into the curriculum; it also creates interactive, learner-centred teaching and learning settings. What ESD requires is a shift from teaching to learning.

Learning content: Integrating critical issues, such as climate change, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and sustainable consumption and production (SCP), into the curriculum.

Pedagogy and learning environments: Designing teaching and learning in an interactive, learner-centred way that enables exploratory, action-oriented and transformative learning. Rethinking learning environments – physical as well as virtual and online – to inspire learners to act for sustainability.
Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

**Learning outcomes:** Stimulating learning and promoting core competencies, such as critical and systemic thinking, collaborative decision-making, and taking responsibility for present and future generations.

**Societal transformation:** Empowering learners of any age, in any education setting, to transform themselves and the society they live in.
- Enabling a transition to greener economies and societies.
  - Equipping learners with skills for ‘green jobs’.
  - Motivating people to adopt sustainable lifestyles.
- Empowering people to be ‘global citizens’ who engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and to resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to creating a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world.

---

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

**What are today’s challenges? Which sustainability competences need to be developed to overcome these challenges?**

- **Anticipatory competency:** the abilities to understand and evaluate multiple futures – possible, probable and desirable; to create one’s own visions for the future; to apply the precautionary principle; to assess the consequences of actions; and to deal with risks and changes.

- **Critical thinking competency:** the ability to question norms, practices and opinions; to reflect on one’s own values, perceptions and actions; and to take a position in the sustainability discourse.

- **Systems thinking competency:** the abilities to recognize and understand relationships; to analyse complex systems; to think of how systems are embedded within different domains and different scales; and to deal with uncertainty.

- **Self-awareness competency:** the ability to reflect on one’s own role in the local community and (global) society; to continually evaluate and further motivate one’s actions; and to deal with one’s feelings and desires.
In 2009, the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education urged investment in higher education to help build inclusive and diverse knowledge societies and to advance research, innovation and creativity.

“The knowledge society needs diversity in higher education systems, with a range of institutions having a variety of mandates and addressing different types of learners” (UNESCO, 2009).

“The training offered by institutions of higher education should both respond to and anticipate societal needs. This includes promoting research for the development and use of new technologies and ensuring the provision of technical and vocational training, entrepreneurship education and programmes for lifelong learning” (UNESCO, 2009).
The Role of Higher Education in Promoting LLL

- Broader access to higher education should not be confined to the continuing professional development required by a fast-changing labour market. It must also respond to a growing demand for the personal development and cultural enrichment opportunities.
- Not limited to what is offered students; It also makes a vital contribution through initial and continuous training of teachers, research into lifelong learning, and the provision of community learning opportunities.
- Yet, access is far from equal and there are many factors underlying this unequal access: socio-economic classes, race, gender and location - HE systems should reflect the diversity of the society they serve.
- Increasing access does not always equate to broadening of access, as traditional beneficiaries may simply obtain more opportunity and maintain their relative advantage.

The Role of Higher Education in Promoting LLL

How to expand and transform the role of universities in promoting lifelong learning?

- Increased access to universities is not enough: HESs should ensure retention and progression of all learners. Especially in communities with an ageing population, universities need to facilitate learning for adults and senior citizens.
- Teaching and learning at universities can be transformed by linking learning to the wider issues of life: by recognising shared responsibilities, by creating innovative curricula and by capitalising on the diverse experiences of learners.
- The reform goes beyond mere pedagogy and didactics: it is a social process which links teaching and learning to students’ personal and individual life patterns, their social and cultural context, and their chosen discipline.
The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) (DESD) aimed at integrating the principles and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. It also aimed to encourage changes in knowledge, values and attitudes with the vision of enabling a more sustainable and just society for all.

Political agreements, financial incentives or technological solutions alone do not suffice when dealing with the challenges of sustainable development.

Individuals should also be empowered to act in complex situations in a sustainable manner, which may require them to participate in socio-political processes, moving their societies towards sustainable development.

To build on achievements and create new momentum when the UN Decade closed in 2014, UNESCO has developed a Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development.
The Global Action Programme on ESD and Cities

Objective 1  “to reorient education and learning so that everyone has the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower them to contribute to sustainable development”

Objective 2  “to strengthen education and learning in all agendas, programmes and activities that promote sustainable development”

The Global Action Programme on ESD and Cities

Priority Action Area 1
Advancing policy: Mainstream ESD into both education and sustainable development policies, to create an enabling environment for ESD and to bring about systemic change

Priority Action Area 2
Transforming learning and training environments: Integrate sustainability principles into education and training settings

Priority Action Area 3
Building capacities of educators and trainers: Increase the capacities of educators and trainers to more effectively deliver ESD

Priority Action Area 4
Empowering and mobilizing youth: Multiply ESD actions among youth

Priority Action Area 5
Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level: At community level, scale up ESD programmes and multi-stakeholder ESD networks
Building learning cities for sustainable development

What is a learning city?
A learning city promotes lifelong learning for all

UNESCO defines a learning city as a city that

- effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;
- revitalizes learning in families and communities;
- facilitates learning for and in the workplace;
- extends the use of modern learning technologies;
- enhances quality and excellence in learning; and
- fosters a culture of learning throughout life.

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

Why building learning cities is an effective approach to achieve the SDGs?
Lifelong learning lays the foundation for sustainable development

Change begins with the citizen

Lifelong Learning is an important way of empowering citizens

If we are to eradicate poverty and hunger, improve health, protect our planet and build more inclusive, resilient and peaceful societies, then every individual must be empowered with access to quality lifelong learning, with special attention to opportunities for girls and women. We must work together across all development areas to make lifelong learning a universal right.

— Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO

Implementation happens at the local level

All SDGs are local

Cities and territories are where women and men, girls and boys, live, where they work to create their livelihoods and where dreams are made. They are where poverty and inequalities are tackled, where health and education services are provided, where ecosystems are protected and human rights must be guaranteed.

The advantages of cities: having the facilities and potential to motivate and enable citizens to learn
What is the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)?

The UNESCO GNLC is an international policy-oriented network for inspiration, know-how and best practice among member cities; for innovation; fostering partnerships; providing capacity development; and developing tools and instruments to encourage and recognize progress made in building learning cities;
The Membership of the UNESCO GNLC

Requirements
- Pursue the vision of enhancing lifelong learning and becoming a learning city.
- Adopt the key documents, the Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities and the Key Features of Learning Cities
- No membership fee

UNESCO Learning City Award
- to showcase and recognize good practice in building learning cities for sustainable development

The Key Features of Learning Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wider benefits of building a learning city</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual empowerment and social cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development and cultural prosperity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Major building blocks of a learning city
- Lifelong learning for all is our city's future
- Governance and participation of all stakeholders
- Mobilisation and utilisation of resources
- Fundamental conditions for building a learning city
- Strong political will and commitment

http://www.uill.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities
Guidelines for building learning cities

**Aim**

- To provide cities with strategic approaches for building dynamic and sustainable learning cities.

**6 Key Areas**

- Planning
- Involvement
- Celebration
- Accessibility
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Funding

http://www.ull.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities

Online tutorials and online city cases

**Online tutorials: a supportive implementation tool for developing sustainable learning cities**

- 6 modules
- Best practices
- Tools, approaches and techniques
- Quiz

**Online city cases: a platform for cities to share and to learn**

Filter member cities by

- Region
- Population
- GDP

**Challenges addressed regarding**

- Economic development and cultural prosperity
- Individual empowerment and social cohesion
- Environmental sustainability

**Themes addressed**

- Core areas of the Key Features
- Guidelines for Building Learning Cities
- UNESCO Priorities
  - Youth/Gender

How to build a Learning city?
Some Final Thoughts…

- Break down universities blocks, really integrate it in the society.

  - Pleasure to learn: go away from formal understandings of learning. It is part of daily life.

  - SDGs and education: to make it possible for everyone around the world to take action in favour of the SDGs, all educational institutions must consider it their responsibility to deal intensively with sustainable development issues, to foster the development of sustainability competencies and to develop specific learning outcomes related to all SDGs.

  - Universities clear message in this matter still not clear - More an opportunity than a threat.
Thank you!

Contacts:
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Feldbrunnenstr. 58
20148 Hamburg
Germany
Tel.: 0049 40 80 41 12
learningcities@unesco.org
learningcities UIL.unesco.org

twitter.com/uil
facebook.com/unesco.uil/