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## GLOBAL EXPERIENCE OF ESTABLISHING NEW STANDARDS IN EDUCATION: THE CASE OF «GLOBAL NETWORK OF LEARNING CITIES» AND PERSPECTIVES FOR UKRAINE

**Abstract.** *Recent events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, boosted online learning, and under current conditions, many new opportunities for learning and self-improvement appeared in society. City development has been promoted in many spheres of public activity because of co-learning in the communities, and many more unresolved issues need the attention of the decision-makers, influencers, community leaders, educators, etc. The work is devoted to analyzing the essence of forms of education – formal and informal, and the need for their combination to increase the level of education for every member of society. One of the core ideas of the research is the preliminary analysis of implementation outcomes for the Learning Cities Approach. This project is analyzed through the lens of social welfare assessment. The project UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) is an international policy-oriented network that enables sharing of best practices and ideas for city development. This research is mostly an overview and analysis of the functioning of the different clusters of the UNESCO GNLC Strategy. The study of the characteristics of these clusters is necessary for further understanding of their practical use, opportunities for replication at different levels, and possibilities of implementation of some of the ideas in the educational process. The methodology of the research is a literature review, historical review, comparative analysis, and content analysis. The research is designed as follows: the overview of the current state of the project, the accumulation of recent findings of studies related to lifelong learning at different levels, the classification of these findings by their scope, and the revealing of the current and promising direction of further development. The main contributions of the research are that the system of approaches and actors in lifelong learning is schematically performed, the approaches to lifelong learning are classified by their scope and scale, and field of knowledge, and linked to educational leadership hypothetically.*

**Keywords:** *lifelong learning, learning cities, learning society, SDGs, SDG 4, educational leadership, distributed leadership.*

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**Introduction.** The sustainability of state development depends on the institutions' viability and the credibility of human activities in many spheres. The intention to improve one's living might be accomplished via lifelong learning. Educated individuals become the driver of social changes to achieve this goal. Recent studies by scientists in this field confirm the hypothesis about a direct link or indirect correlation between wealth and education level. Bannier C. E. & Schwarz M., in their research, examine the impact of actual and perceived financial knowledge (i.e., financial literacy and confidence) on financial wealth [1]. The paper by Pfeffer F.T. provides the first assessment of trends in educational attainment by family wealth. It suggests society should be at least concerned about the growing education gap [2].

Every sphere of society functions at a high level if there are people who strive for development. Constant changes in the country require everyone to be able to adapt and conduct activities under new, dynamic, and changeable conditions.

Communications strategy at a national level with other countries is crucial for the formation of sustainable development. For the construction of such relations, there is a need for a developed and educated society able to ensure high performance at the international level. It is possible to build a system where intercultural dialogue becomes the norm only with the proper education at different levels of society [3].

The GNLC, formally established in 2012, is actually an implementation of the older concept of urban entities committed to promoting the lifelong

learning concept, manifesting the equity of access to education, mobilizing all educational stakeholders to be united in promoting higher standards of education, to establish effective training institutions at different levels, and encourage extended networks to reinforce the lifelong learning strategy. Ukraine entered this process in 2019, and it is too early to conduct robust research. Hence this paper accumulates observations on possible ways of further developing the new field of study.

**Presentation of the main research material and its main results.**

According to the Law of Ukraine «On Education», education is the basis of the intellectual, spiritual, physical, and cultural development of the individual, its successful socialization, economic well-being, and the key to the development of a society united by shared values, and culture, and the state [4]. Education is a practical tool for providing people with new and relevant knowledge. There are three forms of education: formal, nonformal, and informal education.

Formal education is an organized education model, structured and administered by laws and norms, and subject to strict curriculum objectives, methodology, and content [5]. Formal education is an important and necessary stage in the development of a person. It should be complemented by nonformal and informal learning for continuous and comprehensive lifelong learning.

According to the accepted definition of nonformal education, «... it consists of organized, structured activities (otherwise it would be classified as informal); it is designed for an identifiable target group; it is organized to achieve a specified

set of learning objectives; and these non-institutionalized activities are carried outside the established education system and are intended for learners who are not officially enrolled in school...» [6]. Based on this, it can be stated that nonformal education is a necessary condition for the development of every member of society. Nonformal education provides an opportunity to obtain relevant knowledge and supplement the set of skills of the recipient of education.

The informal form of education is aimed at students as much as the public and imposes no obligations. «There generally being no control over the performed activities, informal education does not of necessity regard the providing of degrees or diplomas; it merely supplements both formal and nonformal education», according to the research [7]. Informal education expands and complements a person's knowledge and is most effective at a high level of self-motivation of the learner.

Hence, there are many opportunities for lifelong learning. By combining formal, informal, and nonformal education, everyone has the opportunity to expand and update their knowledge at different stages of the development of the society in which they live and carry out their activities.

The concept of «Learning City/Region» is a practical tool for creating and obtaining opportunities to learn, improve and develop for every member of society throughout life. The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities is an international policy-oriented network providing inspiration, know-how, and best practice [8].

Learning cities are designed by the changes of citizens demanding a

continuation of education [9]. Self-motivation of every citizen and conscious actions aimed at creating socially useful products are the basis for obtaining new knowledge in life. Constant changes in the world associated with scientific and technological progress and the ability to adapt to them require every member of society to improve constantly by acquiring new knowledge.

Seven main thematic clusters were performed in the adopted Strategy of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (2021-2023). These topics were identified based on the survey data of member cities that joined the network. The concerns and issues chosen by cities as most crucial allowed the design of these clusters. As long as the lifelong learning communities approach is an emerging field of study, we analyzed the most cited papers of scientists worldwide devoted to the topic (each cluster). Among all, we selected the most relevant keywords and conducted content analysis, with separate studies for each group (as it's shown in Table 1).

As can be seen from Table 1, each of the thematic clusters is extremely important for implementation in every city globally. Achieving results in regions and cities for each block will ensure the development of society as a whole.

*Education for Sustainable Development* is a universal tool for ensuring the formation of an up-to-date knowledge system. The three-dimensionality of this cluster covers all spheres of social life, namely economic, political, social, and spiritual. The development of Education for Sustainable Development ensures the creation of conscious approaches to the value of human life, the rational use of natural resources, and the desire

Table 1

**Characteristics of thematic clusters of the Strategy of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (2021-2023) based on a literature review**

Thematic cluster	Definitions, the possible focus of the efforts
Education for Sustainable Development	This category has a three-dimensional nature: the socio-cultural dimension, which refers to issues related to human rights, peace, and human security, gender equality, cultural diversity, and intercultural understanding, health, HIV & AIDS, and new forms of governance; the environmental dimension, which refers to issues related to natural resources (water, energy, agriculture, biodiversity), climate change, rural development, sustainable urbanization, disaster prevention, and mitigation; the economic dimension, which refers to issues related to poverty reduction, corporate responsibility and accountability, and re-orienting the market economy [10].
Literacy	«Literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world» [11]. Literacy education can constitute a profound form of socialization. In literacy education, attention must be given not only to teaching lists of important facts but to developing individual skills in exploring the relationship of these facts to the self [12].
Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurial firms make two indispensable contributions to market economies. First, they are an integral part of the renewal process that permeates and defines market economies. Second, entrepreneurial firms are the essential mechanism by which millions enter the economic mainstream [13].
Health and Well-Being	Health is a positive concept, emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacity. Well-being is a perceived state of harmony in all aspects of one's life [14].
Inclusion and Equity	Internationally,... it is increasingly seen more broadly as a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners. It presumes that the aim is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society. Hence, the emphasis on equity, which implies a concern with fairness [15].
Global Citizenship Education	Global citizenship education for peace would be a highly political education, not simply a bland multiculturalism, unquestioning «tolerance» or «being nice to each other». It has four interrelated components: knowledge, analysis, skills, and action (KASA). First, there is knowledge of current world events, economics, and international relations. Second is the capacity to critically analyze media, religious messages, dogma, superstition, hate literature, extremism, and fundamentalism. Third, it involves political skills, such as persuasion, negotiation, lobbying, campaigning, and demonstrating. Fourth are dispositions for joint action, which these days include networking through communications technology, starting a website, or joining international forums of young people working for peace [16].
Educational Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation	Planning, monitoring, and evaluation systems: need to view Capacity Development as both a means and an end, should be based on well-constructed logic, need to be iterative, require useful indicators that respect multi-layered values and concerns, need to develop indigenous capacity, results must address the information needs of different audiences, must be careful not to promise more than they can deliver [17].

Compiled by authors based on: [10-17].

for economic development in modern conditions.

The implementation of tasks related to *Literacy* is a fundamental basis for the further formation of an informed and educated society in a certain region or city. The Literacy cluster also applies to all spheres of human life. Without solving the problems of this sphere, the further development of social and economic processes becomes impossible.

In a market economy, *Entrepreneurship* skills and abilities are highly demanded. The economic sphere of social life cannot exist without professionals with special skills and special attitudes educated in entrepreneurial processes, and venture creation.

Competition as a driver of market development may be created and supported if entrepreneurship and innovative thinking are acknowledged in society. Cooperation between institutions, businesses, and education creates additional synergy and contributes to the state's economic development at a higher level.

*Health and Well-Being* of the population should be prioritized for the implementation of activities in the social sphere of society. A healthy and developed community ensures the development of a specific city or region. There is a direct and reverse link between good quality education and well-being and health. The education develops needed skills and attitudes that allow citizens to design deliberate self-care strategies toward a healthier future and make solid decisions in response to many challenges (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic).

*Inclusion and Equity* are the principles on which educational

activities are conducted in democratic countries. These principles should be constantly used in any form of education for communication between members of the educational process. It is Inclusion and Equity that form a humanistic style of interaction between its participants in society.

*Global Citizenship Education* provides an opportunity for the population to gain knowledge about the rights and responsibilities of each participant in social interactions. Global citizenship education aims to empower all learners to face global challenges, make decisions proactively, and promote the values of peaceful, tolerant, secure, and sustainable societies. The Global Citizenship Education category impacts all spheres of social activities of the global community.

*Educational Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation* is a specific cluster, which enables clarifying the trends of changes over a certain time in the educational processes of a city and/or region. The implementation of the tasks of this sphere allows for satisfying society's needs effectively and maximally regarding acquiring new knowledge and skills. In broad terms, monitoring based on an advanced toolkit, combined with evaluation results, brings an understanding of the possibilities of achieving the SDG-4-Education Goal in general and the goals of UNESCO GNLC in particular.

The concept of learning cities is not new, it is rooted in cooperative behavior inside and between communities, targeted at solving complicated social problems and echoes our collective survival instinct. The COVID-19 pandemic lightened the bottlenecks in social institutions'

work and the problems of cooperation and coordination between institutions inside the countries and at the international level. When cities are faced with such big challenges as COVID-19 (global aspect), or invasion (i.e., invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine), they need to have a strong background to stay vital and integral.

Ukraine entered GNLC in 2019, and since then, five more cities have joined the network (Melitopol, Kyiv, Netishyn, Nikopol, Novoyavorivsk, and Poltava). Lviv and Sumy applied in 2021 and 2022, and yet the applications were postponed till the next year. While the GNLC is the global network that embraces 294 cities from many countries around the globe [8], the Association of Ukrainian Cities (founded in 1992) now unites 574 Ukrainian cities, aimed at developing multiple aspects of self-government in Ukraine [18]. The multifaceted phenomena of lifelong learning, learning cities, and advanced perspectives for the next city development towards learning societies have many aspects and are embedded in many interrelated processes; hence it is important to differentiate some of the categories and approaches in the field. Following the logic of the study by Atchoarena D. and Howells A., who distinguished several approaches (individual, social, 5<sup>th</sup> pillar, legal) [19], and taking into account the previous finding mentioned in the current study, it's possible to generalize ideas about dimensions of lifelong learning (as it's performed in Table 2), and the areas of further possible investigations.

One more promising approach was not performed in Table 2, as it can not be described as a one-level term: Educational Leadership, and it

is multidimensional. This approach, or toolkit, a process embraces ways of elaborating ideas, accumulating the best and worst practices, performing techniques, ploys, benchmarking, and many other ways of identifying the leader in education. Educational leadership is a new type of leadership [20], and this concept should be researched in the future to reveal leadership and the best strategic ploys for common benefits. For the effective implementation of the tasks of the thematic clusters of the Strategy of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (2021-2023), the specifics of leadership in education should be taken into account, namely: the educational leader is in direct contact with his followers; educational leadership is multi-role, as the pedagogical activity itself includes many functions. It's not only the managers or heads of educational institutions but also other participants in the educational process who should be endowed with leadership qualities; education leadership is aimed not only at the self-realization of personality but also at the formation of leadership qualities in students [21].

Thus, realizing the concept of a «Learning City/Region» is possible by implementing a particular type of leadership – an educational one. Education ensures the development of the individual, entities, institutions, systems, and society. The main object of the educational process is a learner who strives for self-development and improvement of the environment.

Educational leadership has special forms of interaction with the participants of this process. Thus, J. P. Spillane specifies three directions for studying educational leadership – leadership

**The levels, actors, and possible directions of further investigations in the field of lifelong learning**

No	Approach	Actors	Explanations
1	The individual approach	Educator, learner	The individuals are provided with opportunities and learning experiences to increase their capacity to reshape their future in education, work, family, citizenship, and personal development. Further directions of research: the comparison of learning outcomes, expectations, and the results in the long run for individuals, such as income per capita increased.
2	The social approach	Educators, learners, NGOs, institutions of formal and informal education, business entities	The institutions of formal and informal education, as well as activists, NGOs, and other active participants in civic engagement act independently and form the level of aspirations, and standards of expected quality of education in the society through multiple activities, including sharing the best practices, requests, launching advocacy for needed practice and so on. Further directions of research: the efficiency and effectiveness evaluation of the events, activities, and different types of cooperation between actors (research of different scales & scope)
3	The network approach	City, communities, amalgamated territorial communities, associations, and networks (i.e., Association of Ukrainian Cities)	The aggregation of different actors and institutions, and public policies that are united towards developing and implementing a lifelong learning strategy. Further directions of research: the best practices accumulation, visible learning outcomes comparison, and validation of the results of an implementation of the strategy.
4	The network of networks approach	The network of Learning Cities (i.e., NGLC), Learning Communities, and finally, Learning Society	The united and interconnected structure between multiple networks (cities) where the indicators of dynamic, the predictor variables are identified for given networks according to their strategy related to lifelong learning goals and SDGs. Further directions of research: the evaluation and longitude monitoring of the Sustainable Cities Index, Intercultural Cities Index, Country Skills Ranking (Global Skill Index), Country Comparison (i.e., Global Competitiveness Index) and so on.

Compiled by authors.

for teaching and learning, distributed leadership, and systemic leadership [22]. Leithwood K. also considers Sources of Successful Leadership to use the concept of distributed leadership [23]. That is, distributed leadership is one of the effective leadership styles in the educational sphere. According to the recent understanding, «...distri-

buted leadership is not the same as dividing task responsibilities among individuals who perform defined and separate organizational roles, but rather it comprises dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers» [24]. The human-oriented educational leadership creates favorable conditions for the effective

implementation of the «Learning City/Region» concept.

The UNESCO GLNC started in 2012 and has since reached the status of a well-known platform, causing a lot of positive social transformation in many cities and areas, unleashing the potential for the development of communities globally. Nonetheless, wars, conflicts, and significant social changes may foster and slow the processes down. The start of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014, with the occupation of three regions, led to the unprecedented activation of civic education institutions; for instance, in 2018, NGO «Lifelong Learning Centre» was founded in Sumy (very close to the border with Russian Federation). In 2019 Sumy representatives went to Beijing and, after that visit, started reshaping the city development strategy in a team with the Sumy City Council. Now, the city has a city strategy with the Intercultural Development Chapter and Lifelong Learning City Chapter. The escalation of the war in 2022 has not changed any strategic objectives in this sphere; just postponed some of them.

In the current research, the authors analyzed the interrelations between thematic clusters of the UNESCO GLNC strategy to visualize lifelong learning at different levels. And the analysis of the actors and approaches to lifelong learning brought a different perspective to further conceptualization of it, revealing challenges and promising direction of further research. However, the main idea is that lifelong learning may be formed at any level and become contagious enough to catalyze social innovations. The only missing component may be proactive,

transparent educational leadership that develops a healthy lifelong learning attitude in society.

Such an example of educational leadership may be institutions (i.e., UNESCO), as well as cities (i.e., Sorocaba in Brazil, Beijing in China), as well as leaders in local communities (i.e., NGO «Lifelong Learning Centre» in Sumy, or Sumy City Council representatives). And again, as it was mentioned earlier, longitudinal research in the sphere of lifelong learning is needed to prove the link between civic education initiatives and social transformations.

**Conclusions.** The Global Network of Learning Cities helps connect cities worldwide that support and enable lifelong learning. The Strategy of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (2021-2023) includes seven thematic clusters – Education for Sustainable Development, Literacy, Entrepreneurship, Health and Well-Being, Inclusion and Equity, Global Citizenship Education, Educational Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation. Each of these units has a powerful positive influence on the development of all spheres of social activity – economic, political, social, and spiritual. However, lifelong learning is a multifaced phenomenon, and the approaches to it may be distinguished as follows: the individual, the social, the network, the network of networks (NoN), and educational leadership approaches.

The key importance of education in the process of forming a developed city or region is undeniable. Education, like any activity, needs influential leaders. Studying the specifics of educational leadership and its differences from other types of leadership is the key to the success of managerial activities in



the educational field. In the current research, some of the key aspects of educational leadership were identified. Although the link between educational leadership and social innovations toward learning society still needs to be investigated.

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## СВІТОВИЙ ДОСВІД ВСТАНОВЛЕННЯ НОВИХ СТАНДАРТІВ В ОСВІТІ: КЕЙС «ГЛОБАЛЬНОЇ МЕРЕЖІ МІСТ, ЩО НАВЧАЮТЬСЯ» ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ДЛЯ УКРАЇНИ

**Анотація.** Статтю присвячено аналізу попередніх результатів реалізації проекту ЮНЕСКО «Міста, що навчаються» (GNLC). При цьому проаналізовано сутність поділу форм освіти на формальну, інформальну й неформальну, підкреслено необхідність їх поєднання для підвищення рівня освіченості кожного члена суспільства та рівня життя. У запропонованому дослідженні використано історичний метод, порівняльний аналіз і контент-аналіз. У ході дослідження узагальнено основні характеристики кластерів Стратегії GNLC ЮНЕСКО. Дослідження побудовано таким чином: огляд поточного стану проекту, накопичення останніх результатів досліджень, пов'язаних із навчанням протягом життя на різних рівнях, класифікація цих знахідок за їх масштабом та окреслення перспективних напрямів подальших досліджень. Основні наукові результати полягають у тому, що система підходів і суб'єктів навчання впродовж життя представлена схематично, підходи до такого навчання класифікуються за масштабом і галуззю знань, а також встановлено гіпотетичний зв'язок з освітнім лідерством, що є специфічною формою впливу на суспільні процеси. Специфіка освітнього лідерства здатна забезпечити розвиток освіченого суспільства, яке є основною рушійною силою позитивних змін у країні.

**Ключові слова:** навчання впродовж життя, міста, що навчаються, суспільство, що навчається, Цілі стійкого розвитку, Ціль стійкого розвитку № 4, освітнє лідерство, розподілене лідерство.

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