

# **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LEARNING CITY, TOWN AND REGION**

## **Module 1 Topic 1: Why a Learning City, Town or Region?**

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### **Topic Description**

This topic explores the different pressures on municipalities and regions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and examines the rationale for the transformation of cities, towns and regions into 'Learning communities'. It presents the crucial need for administrations to respond to rapid and wide-ranging change in most aspects of local, national and global economics, politics, social structures and cultures. It uses interactive exercises to highlight how this change is affecting individuals and families as well as cities, regions and nations, and produces insights into the connection between past, present and future work and lifestyles. It concludes that more and better learning by all citizens is the key to the City's continued well-being and explains why it is important for everyone to understand that message.

### **Topic Objectives**

- a) To explore the urgent need for cities, towns and regions to concentrate on improving learning in individuals, families, organisations and institutions in order to cope with rapidly changing economic, social, cultural, political and environmental structures.
- b) To prepare the way the way for the study of future modules and topics relating to 'learning cities, towns and regions'

### **Lesson 1.1.1 Your City and family past and present (1 hour)**

**Objective:** to raise awareness of continuing and accelerating change in people, organisations and administrations.

### **Suggestions for Learning Leaders.**

**Pre-lesson suggestion:** - ask the class to bring in old photos of their (great) grandparents, parents and any young child who is part of their family.

- a) (20 minutes) After explaining the purpose of this lesson, give each member of the group item 1 in the toolkit (the questionnaire about their town, city or region) Ask them to guess. Even if they do not know the answers to the questions it will serve to highlight the complexities of educational provision to large populations. Discuss the results with the class.

(You may wish to obtain the answers to the questions from the education department beforehand).

b). (40 minutes) Change in the city – people, organisations and administrations. Ask the class to complete the first part of item 2 in the toolkit. If they have brought old photographs divide into small groups to exchange information on these.

c) Ask the same small groups to brainstorm part 2 of toolbox item 2. Bring the class together and consolidate the list. Ask them to classify and prioritise it individually. Initiate a class discussion on the changes that have taken place over the past 50 years and their significance. Bring out the message of accelerating change.

### **Lesson 1.1.2 Your City and the part you can play in its Future (1 hour)**

**Objective:** to identify the future pressures of modern life in your city , the challenges they present to individuals and organisations and the crucial need for education in order to cope with this.

#### **Suggestions for Learning Leaders**

- a) (30 minutes) Ask the class to complete toolbox item 3 individually. Discuss results in plenary and put into consolidated priority.
- b) (30 minutes) small group exercise. First show quote a) in item 4 of the toolkit to the whole group and ask what the main implication is for the city. Then give one or more of the other quotes to a small group of 4-5 people and ask them to discuss what the implications of these might be for a city, town or region. Each group should produce 3 implications and 3 action points and then present them in plenary.
- c) Sum up – the result should be a need for more and different education, and the need to develop the municipality as a ‘learning community’.

### **Lesson 1.1.3 Change in your life (1 hour)**

Item 4 in the toolbox shows quotations from books and reports on modern life. We suggest that the whole class completes the exercise. Then discuss their opinions in plenary. Then summarise.

**Toolkit for lessons 1.1.1. and 1.1.2**

**Toolkit Item 1 – Questionnaire on the city, town or region**

**1. About your city, town or region**

1.1 What is its name .....

1.2 Population

1.4.1 20-50000 .....

1.4.2 50-100000 .....

1.4.3 100-150000 .....

1.4.4 150-250000 .....

1.4.5 More than 250000... .....

1.3 How many Universities? ..... How many students there? .....

1.4 How many Schools? ..... How many schoolchildren? .....

1.5 How many Adult Education establishments? ..... How many students there? .....

1.6 How many Industry Training Centres ?..... How many courses? .....

1.7 How many Community Centres? ..... How many courses?

1.8 Where else do people learn in your city?.....

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1.9 Population in Education

1.9.3 for qualification .....

1.9.4 not for qualification .....

1.10 What percentage of people are learning in formal education?.....

1.11 How many full-time educators are there in your city .....

1.12 How many people are involved in the city administration .....

1.13 make a list of the job titles of some of the people in education at all levels.

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1.14 How many children are 'home-learners?'

1.15 How many dropouts from the system? In schools..... in adult education .....



### Toolbox Item 3 – The city, the citizen and the changing world

Imagine that you have just become adviser to the Chief Executive Officer of your city, town or region. He believes that the public must be consulted about their own city and the challenges it faces either directly or through the education providers. Grade the following according to the importance you believe he should attach to them.

	Very High	High	Average	Low	unimportant
1. Sustaining the Environment					
2. GM Foods and bio-technology					
3. Dealing with the threat of terrorism in the city					
4. Impact of Technology on Employment					
5. Media Manipulation of people					
6. Impact of a Multi-cultural society					
7. Tackling educational drop-out rates					
8. Hyperdemocracy and giving an informed opinion					
9. Promoting the city to the outside world.					
10. Finding sustainable solutions to increasing crime and violence					
11. Increasing the skills base of the city					
12. Relieving Poverty and addressing social stability					
13. Regenerating city wastelands					
14. Promoting Social inclusion					

2. Now put a star against your top 3.

3. Now put a ++ against those about which you think the public would be able to advise him wisely.

## Toolkit item 4 - Quotations

The following are quotations from books, newspapers, periodicals and reports.

In the third column put a mark out of 5 for your estimate of its importance for today

1= of no importance, 2= mildly important, 3= quite important, 4= very important, 5= crucial

In the 4<sup>th</sup> column put a tick if you believe that your city understand and is addressing the issue

1	<p>Governments may pontificate but the places where the action is are in the cities, towns and regions of every country. Here is where more than 80 percent of the people live, work and play, and here is where the problems and opportunities must be dealt with.</p> <p>(the TELS project)</p>		
2	<p>The media have a great influence on the thoughts and minds of people - yet sections of the press for example are known to be often and deliberately misleading in order to persuade readers to think in a certain way. TV is potentially even more powerful especially when it is a state monopoly. Unless people are given the skills to discriminate and to isolate opinion from fact, prejudice from thoughtful analysis, they are vulnerable to manipulation by unscrupulous power barons, politicians etc.</p> <p>(Lifelong Learning – New Vision, New Implications, New Roles)</p>		
3	<p>In 1975 80% of the staff of ICI, a UK based Chemicals company, was British in origin and 70% of its business was conducted in the UK. It now operates in more 100 countries and 11% of its staff is British. Globalisation is affecting the way large industries operate. Many are supra-national in the way they organise their business, treat their staff, operate their finances etc.</p> <p>(Making Lifelong Learning Work )</p>		
4	<p>From 1960 onwards the decrease in the earth's resources outstripped the capacity of the earth to renew them. Many examples - burning down of tropical forests, destruction of temperate forests for paper-making, reduced iron ore, tin, zinc coal etc. The movement to Sustainable Development is increasing pace but it is much too slow to make up the deficit.</p> <p>(Brundtland Report)</p>		
5	<p>Many large companies are now quoting the equation <math>1/2 \times 2 \times 3</math>. This means that in a short period they intend to employ half the number of staff, pay them twice as much to receive 3 times the productivity.</p> <p>(Lifelong Learning in Action)</p>		
6	<p>Already many companies have out-sourced their Departments, buying in expertise in areas such as personnel, estates and management, education etc to smaller service companies. At first these are run by the displaced staff, which also serves other companies for the same services. The amount of work to be done has not decreased - if anything it has increased - there are now many small quick-on-their-feet organisations acting as suppliers. But it does have implications for the learning business.</p> <p>(The empty raincoat)</p>		
7	<p>f) 8000 new academic papers are published every month - further new papers then feed off the new knowledge so obtained in a self-generating process - this means that the amount of knowledge in the world doubles</p>		

	<p>every 3 years or so. In addition people are subject to a barrage of information from the press, the television, posters, the internet, other people etc. This raises questions about what should be taught and when in all parts of the education system, and more particularly, how people might be given the skills to assimilate, sift and make sense of the information around them and how they may make sensible decisions on a whole range of issues which affect their lives. Information-handling skills are not exactly the most prominent part of modern curricula</p> <p>(Megatrends)</p>		
8	<p>Increasingly people are being asked for instant opinions on a variety of subjects through street interviews, telephone polls, postal preferences etc. Democracy has become hyper-democracy, in which the answers they give may be treated as representing a best solution rather than a slice of mainly uninformed opinion - eg ask a sample of voters whether education need to be improved, then whether it needs new money, without asking whether they want to increase their taxes to pay for it. The opportunity for abusing democracy becomes greater - unless people have the lifelong learning skills to make intelligent decisions.</p> <p>(Lifelong Learning – New Vision)</p>		
9	<p>'As the old millennium departs and leaves behind its wars, its hatreds and its shallow perspectives, we have the possibility to re-evaluate our values, our beliefs, our intellect and our perceptions toward the creation of a far better world. Before us lies the beguiling vision of the regeneration of our unique individuality, of the precious liberty of thought and conscience, of unselfish contribution to the betterment of community and the life of others and of a mature, open-minded sense of ethics more advanced than this planet has ever known. The ideas, awareness and tools for learning throughout life are now moving into place to unlock the vast creative potential in each one of us for vitalising a new harmony with nature, with one another and with the concept of a divine intelligence, however we may interpret that.'</p> <p>(Dee Hock)</p>		
10	<p>We belong to the first generation that knows for certain that it doesn't know what the future will be like.'</p> <p>(Sir Christopher Ball)</p>		