DVV International

83

IPE
International Perspectives
in Adult Education

Local policies and practices in adult learning and education

Best practices from Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, and Ukraine

Heribert Hinzen (Editor)

With financial support from the
BMZ Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

International Perspectives in Adult Education – IPE 83

The reports, studies and materials published in this series aim to further the development of theory and practice in adult learning and education (ALE). We hope that by providing access to information and a channel for communication and exchange, the series will serve to increase knowledge, deepen insights and improve cooperation in ALE at the international level.

Published by:
DVV International
Königswinterer Straße 552 b
53227 Bonn
Germany
Phone: +49 (0) 228 97569-0
info@dvv-international.de
www.dvv-international.de

DVV International is the Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e. V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association. As the leading professional organisation in the field of adult education and learning (ALE) and development cooperation, DVV International provides worldwide support for the establishment and development of sustainable structures for adult education and learning.

Responsible: Esther Hirsch

Editors: Heribert Hinzen, Ravshan Baratov

Authors: Heribert Hinzen, Ulrich Klemm, Avetik Mejlumyan, Adnan Mević, Daniela Munca-Aftenev, Balázs Németh, Khau Huu Phuoc, Katie Jones

This publication was produced within the framework of the DVV International Europe Continental Project.

Layout: Bela Stetzer
Typesetting: Editura Lexon-Prim

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available at http://dnb.dnb.de

ISBN: 978-3-942755-55-9

83

IPE
International Perspectives
in Adult Education

Local policies and practices in adult learning and education

Best practices from Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, and Ukraine

Heribert Hinzen (ed.)

Contents

Introduction 6

Heribert Hinzen
Global recommendations, national priorities, local realities – a thematic introduction to the role of local authorities and community-based adult learning and education 11

REFLECTIONS FROM THE SIX PROJECT COUNTRIES

Ester Hakobyan, Avetik Mejlumyan
Opportunities for increased implementation of ALE programmes in communities in the Republic of Armenia: Review of legal foundations, policies and practices 28

Adnan Mević
Policy and system development of adult learning and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The role of local authorities and ALE centres 43

Nana Chabukiani
From goodwill to policy: The case of adult education centres in Georgia 57

Vullnet Gusia
Youth and Adult Learning and Education Centre (YALEC) in Peja, Kosovo – cooperation between the people, local authorities and international partners 72

Munca-Aftenev Daniela
National policy development enables local authorities and activities of ALE Centres – the case of Chişinău municipality, Republic of Moldova 82

Victoria Furhalo
Bottom-up initiatives: How communities develop adult learning and education in the absence of a national law in Ukraine 92

REFLECTIONS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES
IN EUROPE, ASIA AND GLOBALLY

Ulrich Klemm
Adult education as a factor for local development and locational determinant – Volkshochschulen in Germany as an element of services of general interest at local level 105

Balázs Németh
Pécs Learning City as a model for community development in Hungary: A case of good practice based on partnership amongst municipal authority and collaborative stakeholders 125

Un Shil Choi
Good governance at national level supporting successful experiences of local authorities in ALE developments and learning cities in Korea 139

Khau Huu Phuoc
Community learning centres in Vietnam as spaces of lifelong learning practices 162

Katie Jones
Learning cities at the helm of lifelong learning for climate action – What does this mean for ALE? 180

Abbreviations 194
Authors and editor 196

Introduction

Adult learning and education (ALE) in community settings is at the heart of the matter when discussing access by and participation of adults, including younger and older ones, in education, training and learning, be it formal, non-formal or informal. The classifications or names differ as adult education centres, folk high schools, lifelong learning institutes or, most commonly, community learning centres (CLC). A key role is thus played by local authorities in a variety of capacities as enablers, supporters or managers in related processes, and it is one of the aims of this publication to identify the diversity of these functions and provide ideas and suggestions for further implementation.

Institutionalising ALE is not only about creating and maintaining the respective institutions and infrastructure. There is a broader understanding behind institutionalisation which includes aspects of governance, with structures based on ALE policy, legislation and financing, as well as on institutional requirements, but also investment in the digitalisation of ALE, bringing onsite and online learning opportunities together. All of this requires professionalisation of ALE in running programmes, capacity building and training of staff, as well as the preparation of future adult educators, including through higher education institutions.

DVV International is the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV), which in turn is the national association of local ALE providers, the Volkshochschulen (vhs), literally translated as “folk high schools”. DVV International has a keen interest in ALE centres and local authorities, and therefore in developing projects jointly with partners, sharing professional expertise, and shaping framework conditions. All of this is understood and implemented with a perspective towards local, national and global levels.

The Continental Exchange Project was launched in 2022 at DVV International’s “Eastern Neighbours” Regional Office, currently based in Chișinău. The project covers six countries in Europe: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Its main objective is to improve policy frameworks for ALE and to strengthen the contribution of ALE centres in the implementation of sustainability efforts in the above countries, in Europe more widely, and ultimately

globally. Sharing best national, regional and international practices and experiences is important.

During the past three years, the Continental Exchange Project has been implementing a series of regional events on the topic of ALE and local authorities. During these events, representatives from local authorities and various ALE Centres from the countries of the project region learned about good practices in developing local policies aiming to support and promote ALE in municipalities. Participants came from Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Serbia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Ukraine, amongst others. They engaged in a professional exchange, based on presentations by the partners in the neighbourhood countries. Other highly relevant activities included several advocacy training activities and capacity building for needs assessments. The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), as well as the European Training Foundation (ETF), the Committee of the Regions of the European Commission, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), were also involved.

From its inception, the Continental Exchange Project planned to collect, review, structure and document existing experiences and successful practices of ALE policy developments at local level in the project countries. Based on the findings, this publication was developed describing the cases of successful ALE policy development at municipal levels in cooperation between local authorities and ALE providers in the project countries and Europe, including continental or global programmes for promoting the concept of learning cities.

DVV International's country offices in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova and Ukraine served as focal points to identify best cases of local policy development at municipal levels, and recommended authors for drafting the articles. In addition to the case studies from the six project countries, five more cases were selected. Two of these were from Asia – Republic of Korea and Vietnam –, two were from Europe – Germany and Hungary –, and these were complemented by a global study from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) on learning cities involved in climate action.

The case studies are a valuable resource to better understand the realities of community-based ALE, institutions such as ALE Centres, and the support that local authorities can provide to offer and strengthen their services. What follows here are brief extracts from the studies to explain in the words of the researchers what they see as key findings. Let me start with the six countries of the Continental Project:

- Armenia: Local authorities could assume more responsibilities in promoting ALE by reviewing the system of local self-government (LSG) and pinpointing legal provisions and relevant policies that could be favourably utilised to enable increased access to ALE at local level. The authors argue that, despite ALE not being part of local authorities' direct mandates and functions, there are several policies and practices that can trigger communities' motivation to support provision of ALE services.
- Bosnia & Hercegovina: The adult education system is not sufficiently well funded. For this reason, various forms of support, beyond financial assistance, have developed in our country. Many local communities have acquired spaces where continuous education can be conducted or various activities in the adult education sector can be organised.
- Georgia: Despite the major strides that have been made in recent years, the field continues to be fragmented and underdeveloped. Local adult learning and education centres however persist in promoting ALE and LLL within their communities. This article argues that, in the absence of a national policy, the goodwill and values of individual local authorities are crucial to the success of these advocacy efforts.
- Kosovo: This article shares the journey of establishing the Youth and Adult Learning and Education Centre (YALEC) in Peja, Kosovo. It highlights how local authorities, international partners, and the people of Peja, worked together to make lifelong learning accessible to everyone. With practical examples and a focus on human connections, this story demonstrates how education can empower individuals and strengthen communities.
- Moldova: The 2024 revision of the Republic of Moldova's Code of Education provided a robust framework for ALE, enabling diverse learning formats, certification of competencies, and municipal funding for tailored programmes. The Municipal Centre for Adult Learning and Education (CMIEA) became a cornerstone, offering over 50 courses and prioritising disadvantaged groups, fostering inclusivity, personal and professional growth, as well as community engagement.
- Ukraine: Adult education thrives thanks to local initiatives, and despite the lack of a dedicated Law on Adult Education. NGOs, supported by local authorities, offer diverse non-formal programmes that address various adult learning needs. These programmes are crucial in light of the ongoing war, providing pathways to reskilling,

psychological support and reintegration. Municipal programmes, while not always formalised into fully-fledged strategies, are an important tool for implementing local initiatives and meeting the needs of the community.

In addition, an attempt was made to take a closer look at ALE Centres and support through local authorities in several countries beyond the Continental Project – two from Europe and two from Asia. From a global perspective, there are findings and recommendations, especially on learning cities and sustainability education, presented by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL):

- Germany: Adult education centres (vhs) have played a prominent role since the beginning of the 20th century, alongside other institutions, in general continuing education at local level, and have strengthened local network structures. The adult education centre landscape will continue to be important in the 21st century if it manages to provide structures as an educational principle and as a municipal venue for lifelong and networked learning processes.
- Hungary: This case study analyses the history and present arrangements of the Pécs learning city model, especially in light of the activities and cooperation of partners in the community, shows relevant measures for widening access to ALE, improving the policy environment in the communities and the cooperation with local authorities, and indicates ways in which the House of Civic Communities, and its partner institutions, benefit as providers from these developments, together with participants.
- Korea's ALE initiatives have evolved into a robust national framework, fostering inclusive and sustainable learning cities. With 198 lifelong learning cities, policies focus on expanding accessibility through national networks, digital platforms, and targeted programmes for marginalised groups. Government-led efforts, including financial support, legislative advancements, and expansion of digital learning, enhance lifelong learning opportunities.
- Vietnam: CLCs are vital to the promotion of lifelong learning and the development of a learning society. To maximise their potential, CLCs require increased financial support, professional training for instructors, improved infrastructure, and stronger partnerships. Addressing these challenges will enable CLCs to better serve their communities, thus advancing the goal of an inclusive and equitable learning society. As Vietnam is preparing to draft a Law on Lifelong

Learning, these critical points could be incorporated to ensure the effective development and sustainability of CLCs.

- UIL: This article explores how learning cities are fostering lifelong learning for climate action worldwide. While the global challenges we face today and will face tomorrow are sizeable, lifelong learning can offer a suitable response, equipping all citizens with the tools to thoughtfully respond, and ensuring it is never too late to become an agent for change. Given their resources, action-orientated focus and close relationship with individuals, learning cities are optimally placed to act as urban hubs that champion learning from life's first breath to its lasting impact.

The Continental Exchange Project continues its programme in full swing together with its partners, and prepares for the next phase. It is expected that this publication will serve as a support to better understand the diversity of ALE at local level, how institutionalisation and professionalisation can be strengthened through local authorities, as well as the need for support in policy, legislation and financing from the national level.

Heribert Hinzen
Editor

Heribert Hinzen

Global recommendations, national priorities, local realities – a thematic introduction to the role of local authorities and community-based adult learning and education

Mapping the field of study

Adult learning and education (ALE) in community settings is at the heart of the matter when discussing access by and participation of adults, including younger and older ones, in education, training and learning, be it formal, non-formal or informal. The classifications or names differ as adult education centres, folk high schools, lifelong learning institutes or, most commonly, community learning centres (Belete et al., 2022). A key role is thus played by local authorities in a variety of capacities as enablers, supporters or managers in related processes, and it is one of the aims of this publication to identify the diversity of these functions and provide ideas and suggestions for further implementation.

Institutionalising ALE is not only about creating and maintaining the respective institutions and infrastructure. There is a broader understanding behind institutionalisation which includes aspects of governance, with structures based on ALE policy, legislation and financing, as well as on institutional requirements, but also investment in the digitalisation of ALE, bringing onsite and online learning opportunities together. This perspective includes the creation and strengthening of adult learning systems (Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020).

That having been said, stressing the importance of ALE system building and institutionalisation should by no means be taken as an argument that other possibilities and places where learning takes place in adult life are less important. Just to mention two dimensions to underline the need to learn from one another's experiences and fields, and look for bridges to cooperation: Work-based learning has strong non-formal components, and must be available throughout working life. This is nothing new in theoretical or even political terms, but it has to be implemented and organised as stated in recurrent education. A strategy for lifelong learning (Kallen & Bengtsson, 1973) is a strategy claimed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) since the early 1970s. It is even more challenging to open and widen lifelong learning for the informal sector (Palmer, 2020), and move on to the discussion on the human right to lifelong learning for all (Dunbar, 2019). This is also reflected, albeit from a different angle, in the shift from employment to employability, with a need for the provision of permanently available learning opportunities.

The other dimension is closer to what Alan Rogers presented in The Base of the Iceberg. Informal Learning and its Impact on Formal and Non-formal Learning (2014). He explained: "My focus here is on the learning below the level of visibility of the iceberg – the unrecognized, unconscious everyday learning through life´s experiences, rather than the intended, planned activities of self-directed or non-formal learning that are engaged in outside of any educational context" (Rogers, 2014, p. 33). The point is not what is more important or more widespread – it is recognising and accepting each other's share in a growing acceptance of not only lifelong but also of life-wide and life-deep learning, as discussed in Self-construction and social transformation: Lifelong, life-wide and life-deep learning (Bélanger, 2016). This in turn leads to the need to ensure that processes and procedures of recognition, validation and accreditation of prior learning are put in place and are documented in future (UIL, 2012).

Interventions of DVV International

DVV International is the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV), which in turn is the national association of local ALE providers, the Volkshochschulen (vhs), literally translated as "folk high schools". 2019 was the year when the Volkshochschulen celebrated 100 years since they were incorporated in the Constitution of the first democracy in Germany, in 1919 (Hinzen, Meilhammer, 2022). It was also the time to recognise 50 years of DVV International and its engagement in cooperation with partners in the development of ALE around the globe,

some of them celebrating similar anniversaries (Hinzen et al., 2024). A more detailed account of the activities and achievements of DVV International is the anniversary volume entitled 50 Years. Half a Century of Adult Education (Hirsch, Jost & Waschek, 2019), with examples and experiences from some 50 countries, now and in the past.

Looking at the Strategic Fields of Action (DVV International, 2024), it becomes obvious that the interest in ALE centres and local authorities is close to all three areas defined: the development of projects jointly with partners, the sharing of professional expertise, and the interest in shaping framework conditions. All of this should be understood and implemented with a perspective at local, national and global levels. More details on this approach can easily be accessed by visiting the DVV International website, or reading the latest and previous annual reports.

Together with its partners, DVV International has gained substantive experience over the years, and started to assemble an ALE Toolbox (DVV International, 2021) which shares freely available materials through our website. The ALESBA (ALE System Building Approach) is such an instrument. Others are the Curriculum institutionALE on capacity building and organisational development of ALE centres, or the Curriculum globALE on training of adult educators. Feel free to consult these via DVV International's website.

Research on community-based ALE and the importance attached to support through local authorities has been strengthened by DVV International and its partners globally. Several sets of case studies have been published (Avramovska et al., 2017), leading to a thematic conference with relevant recommendations on "adult education centres as a key to development" (DVV International, 2017), and followed up especially in the countries which are in the focus of the Continental Exchange Project (DVV International, 2020; Avramovska et al., 2021a; Avramovska et al, 2021b). However, there is also a keen interest on the part of UNESCO and its partners in a variety of countries, especially in Asia (Duke, Hinzen, 2016). A major contribution from DVV International has been the publication on financing community-based ALE through public funding (Duke et al., 2021), including a case study on public funding of ALE in Ukraine (Smirnov, Andrieiev, 2021).

The Continental Exchange Project

The Continental Exchange Project was launched in 2022 at DVV International's "Eastern Neighbours" Regional Office, currently based in Chișinău, and covers six countries in Europe: Armenia, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Its main objective is to improve policy frameworks for ALE and to strengthen the contribution of ALE centres in the implementation of sustainability efforts in the above countries, in Europe more widely, and ultimately globally. It is important to share best national, regional and international practices and experiences.

Over the last three years, the Continental Exchange Project has implemented a series of regional events on the topic of ALE and local authorities, such as in November 2022 the Conference on the "Role of ALE in the Development of Local Communities" in Chișinău, in March 2023 the exchange study visit to ALE providers and stakeholders in Lower Saxony, Germany, and in 2024 a Conference in Sarajevo on "ALE as a Responsibility of Local Authorities". Representatives from local authorities and various ALE centres from the countries of the project region learned about good practices in developing local policies aiming to support and promote ALE in municipalities during these events.

The project implemented many more related activities, such as the High Level Meeting in Brussels "On the Way towards EU Integration: Countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe Shaping Lifelong Learning Systems" in 2024, organised by DVV International, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and the European Training Foundation (ETF), hosted by the Committee of the Regions, with presentations by the European Commission, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). Participants came from Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Serbia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Ukraine, and engaged in a professional exchange, based on presentations by the partners in the neighbourhood countries. Other highly relevant activities included several advocacy training activities and capacity building for needs assessments.

Global commitments – including peace

All the countries that we looked at more closely through case studies in this publication are members of the United Nations (UN) and its specialised agency UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. As such, we are all contributing to and gaining from the achievements and work at global level, either directly or through our governments.

It may not be an exaggeration – we are living in most difficult times where peace, social and climate justice are in danger and democratic

values severely under threat. While we worked on this publication, the world witnessed wars raging in Ukraine and Gaza, despite all the commitments and insights already entered into by UNESCO in its constitution: “Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed” (UNESO, 1945, Clause 1).

Peace is a key concern for UNESCO, most recently confirmed in its “Recommendation on education for peace and human rights, international understanding, cooperation, fundamental freedoms, global citizenship and education for sustainable development” (UNESCO, 2023).

However, we all see and experience a world around us where peace is not only lacking between countries, but in addition we have so many cases of conflict and crises within countries and communities with causes that are closely related to economic, ecological, social, cultural or technological aspects. The gaps between rich and poor, between haves and have nots, are growing, or at least not closing fast enough. There are many good reasons to migrate and search for a better world to live in. ALE and lifelong learning should be seen as strong allies and instruments in processes of sustainable development – too often not understood and reflected appropriately (Benavot et al., 2022).

CONFINTEA as a process and the SDG agenda

There have been repeated calls to provide more and better education, and a hope spread that education can help to improve the situation for the individual and society. Our generation can build on several important processes in this respect which on the one hand support our assumptions that education is a vehicle for development, and at the same time contribute to the growing set of data and critical discussion.

We in the field of ALE appreciate its more prominent role in the lifelong learning paradigm which is now prevailing (Grotlüschen et al., 2023). This is in line with a view of ALE as a human right to education, and a human right to lifelong learning for all (UIL, 2022a). A few examples of this global debate with national and local concerns in this introduction may help in understanding, reflection and implementation:

- CONFINTEA (Conférence internationale sur l’éducation des adultes) is a series of UNESCO World Conferences on ALE which started in 1949, convening every twelve years (Ireland, Spezia, 2014; Knoll, 2014). CONFINTEA V was held in Belém, Brazil, in 2009, and CONFINTEA VII was in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2022. The Belém

Framework for Action (BFA) recommended "creating multi-purpose community learning spaces and centres and improving access to and participation" (UIL, 2010, p. 8). The Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) recognised "the importance of strengthening ALE at the local level, as a strategic dimension for planning, design and implementation for learning programmes" (UNESCO, 2022c, p. 6), and thereby strengthened the arguments for ALE institutionalisation and professionalisation.

- GRALE (Global Report on Adult Learning and Education) was recommended as a regular monitoring tool in the BFA, and ever since GRALE V, has presented findings on thematic areas including impact, participation and citizenship education together with data and developments in respect to the five BFA priority areas "policy, governance, financing, participation, quality". While this publication is being finalised, a call to support GRALE VI is circulating. The 3rd GRALE in 2016 covered "The Impact of Adult Learning and Education on Health and Well-Being; Employment and the Labour Market; and Social, Civic and Community Life", and the 5th GRALE looked deeper into citizenship education (UIL, 2022b).
- The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 proclaimed "Education for All", together with six goals covering education sub-sectors and perspectives on gender and quality. Following on from Dakar, the Global Monitoring Report on Education for All (GMR, now GEM) was established as a yearly monitoring tool covering thematic areas such as literacy, youth and skills, the role of non-state actors, and more recently technology or leadership in education. The GEM on "Non-State Actors in Education: Who chooses? Who loses?" reported: "CLC are increasingly recognized as playing an important role in providing education opportunities meeting local communities´ needs". (UNESCO, 2021, p. 259)
- The World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in 2015 agreed on an overarching goal to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", with ten targets, none of which referred specifically to ALE. However, the full Incheon Declaration with its lifelong learning dimension became goal four, out of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) on which the UN agreed in 2015 (UN, 2015). This entails making "…learning spaces and environments for non-formal and adult learning and education widely available, including networks of community learning centres and spaces and provision for access to

IT resources as essential elements of lifelong learning" (WEF, 2016, p. 52).

- RALE (Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education) brought together the five BFA priority areas with the SDG Agenda, and called for "…creating or strengthening appropriate institutional structures, like community learning centres, for delivering adult learning and education and encouraging adults to use these as hubs for individual learning as well as community development" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 6).

In addition, it should be noted that the lifelong learning agenda is strongly informed through three UNESCO Reports, based on the work of international commissions, chaired by prominent figures: Edgar Faure, as former French national education minister, was responsible in 1972 for Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow (Faure et al., 1972). Jacques Delors, as former President of the European Commission, in 1996 came up with Learning: the treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (Delors et al., 1996). In 2022, the International Commission was chaired by Sale-Work Zewde, the President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, and she was responsible for Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education (ICFE, 2021). All these three reports advanced lifelong learning as a paradigm globally.

We appreciate that civil society could join most, if not all, of these milestone events and reports, especially through the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), its members and partners. Representatives of ICAE were part of the CONFINTEA VI and VII conferences, and were even invited to the drafting groups for the BFA and MFA. Background papers on Basic and continuing adult education policies (Duke, Hinzen, 2005) enriched the GMR for 2006, or on Citizenship Education and Adult Learning and Education (ALE) (Popović, 2022) which informed GRALE 5.

Earlier, ICAE contributed a statement for the "Faure Report" in 1995 on adult education and lifelong learning: Issues, concerns and recommendations (ICAE, 1994). The most recent UNESCO's Futures of Education Initiative (ICFE, 2021) invited ICAE to make a statement on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) – Because the Future Cannot Wait. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) contributed by bringing forward arguments strengthening institutionalisation and professionalisation of ALE which found their way into the final report (ICAE, 2020).

At European level

The Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (CEC, 2020) was a most influential document for EU Member States, as well as for other European countries, and even beyond these (Nuissl, Sava, 2024). It called on all sub-sectors of the education system to re-think their understanding of education against a background of lifelong learning. In 2006, the European Parliament came up with a recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (CEC, 2006a).

For the adult education sub-sector, it was EAEA who through their EU-funded research on Adult Education Trends and Issues in Europe (EAEA, 2006) informed a Communication on Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn (CEC, 2006b), which a year later was followed by an Action plan on adult learning: It is always a good time to learn (CEC, 2007).

Today, almost twenty years later, these documents still have their relevance for strengthening arguments of ALE within lifelong learning. However, within the triangle of policy, legislation and financing, the funding aspect remained weak in most of the countries. Only few countries developed legislation that covered ALE fully, which also means that financing remained inadequate at local level.

It therefore came as no surprise when partners engaged in projects which had the financing of ALE or the responsibilities of local governments as a thematic priority. There are several of them on the EAEA website. Two should be mentioned here:

- The RegALE project aims to increase the impact and sustainability of regional/local adult learning and education (ALE) organisations by setting up or reinforcing networks among them and with regional/local authorities.
- FinALE focussed on funding for ALE in Europe. The Executive summary of the outcomes of the FinALE project explains through nine recommendations why investing in ALE is needed to ensure access and participation.

Meanwhile, the European Union (Council, 2021) prepared a New European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030 which called for involvement: “Partnerships between governments, regional and local authorities, education and training providers, companies, social partners, public employment and social services as well as civil society are a necessity and are strongly linked to the shared responsibility borne by all parties involved.” The chapter on Governance also tells us: “Cooperation and partnership of stakeholders at national, regional and local levels should

meet the needs of adult learners and employers, including, if possible and according to national circumstances, the effective and efficient funding of adult learning initiatives." In its response, the adult learning sector claimed: "EAEA underlines the need for adequate support for infrastructure, civil dialogue and funding in adult learning."

An interesting survey on Adult Learning Policies in Europe has been carried out as part of the RegALE project. An Insight of Regional and Local Stakeholders (Torlone, 2023) has been finalised, based on case studies from seven countries (Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom) with relevant findings on systems, financing and governance, but also on training of the workforce and disadvantaged groups.

What could and should be done to increase participation in ALE? The article entitled Participation in Adult Learning: System Characteristics and Individuals' Experiences suggests: "While adults need to understand the benefits of lifelong learning, they have difficulties accessing systems that are underfunded and provide a limited range of training options." (Boeren et al., 2023, p. 108).

The research that has been published recently on conditions for successful adult learning systems at local level is also quite substantial in terms of its findings: creating a conducive socio-spatial environment for adults to engage in learning: "As a result, 12 conditions were identified, including system-related characteristics (political will, governance, partnership, funding and monitoring) and intervention characteristics (trusting environment, professionalism, guidance, outreach, tailoring to needs, learning leads to progression). Both blocs of conditions impact each other, and they should both be considered by policy makers in assessing and developing adult learning policies and interventions at meso-level." (Broek et al., 2024, p. 200).

The case studies of this project

It is within the context described above that we see the case studies provided here. The starting point was formed by the six countries of the Continental Exchange Project, all of which have rather low ALE participation rates among younger and older adults. Some of the reasons are quite common, whilst others are more specific due to historical or current developments.

The focus here was on identifying experiences where local authorities support community-based ALE, whether in line with national laws or regulations – or as in most cases without them, following the question:

What can be done even if support from the national level is not yet forthcoming. The objective of the assignment for the authors and the editor was therefore to collect, review, structure and document existing experiences and successful practices of ALE policy development at local level in the project countries.

DVV International's country offices in Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova and Ukraine served as focal points to identify best cases of local policy development on municipal levels and recommend authors for drafting the articles.

Five more cases were selected in addition to the case studies from the six project countries. They can be seen as a soft form of benchmarking and comparison, and thereby create opportunities for borrowing, not as a mechanical transfers, but more in providing an opportunity to learn from each other: two from Asia – Republic of Korea and Vietnam, two from Europe – Germany and Hungary, complemented by a global study from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) on learning cities involved in climate action.

In short, this publication attempts to describe the cases of successful ALE policy development on municipal levels in cooperation between local authorities and ALE providers in the project countries and selected countries in Asia and Europe, including continental or global programmes for promoting the concept of Learning Cities.

References

Avramovska, M., Hirsch, E., & Schmidt-Behlau, B. (eds.) (2017): Adult education centres as a key to development: Challenges and success factors. International Perspectives in Adult Education series, no. 78. Bonn: DVV International. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.de/fileadmin/files/Inhalte_Bilder_und_Dokumente/Fachkonferenz_AEDC/AEDC_2017/IPE-78_web.pdf

Avramovska M., Hakobyan, E., Reichert E. & Widany S. (eds.) (2021a): Study on Adult Learning and Education in Armenia. Yerevan: DVV International. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Armenia/Other/Study__ENG__FINAL.pdf

Avramovska M., Santeladze L., Reichert E. & Widany S. (eds.) (2021b): Study on Adult Learning and Education in Georgia. Tbilisi: DVV International. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Georgia/Resources/Tvisobrivi_kvleva__GEORGIA_-_English.pdf

Bélanger, P. (2016): Self-construction and social transformation: Lifelong, lifewide and life-deep learning. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244440

Belete, S., Duke, C., Hinzen, H., Owusu-Boampong, A. & Phuoc K. H. (2022): Community Learning Centres (CLCs) for Adult Learning and Education (ALE): development in and by communities. In: International Review of Education, 68, 259–290. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-022-09954-w

Benavot, A., Hinzen, H., Hoppers, C.O. & Stepanek, A.L. (2022): Special Issue on Strengthening the Future of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning for All: Building Bridges between CONFINTEA and the SDGs. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11159-022-09955-9

Boeren, E., Cabus, S. & Mackie, A. (2023): Participation in Adult Learning: System Characteristics and Individuals' Experiences. In: Holford, J., Boyadjieva, P., Clancy, S., Helfer, G. Studená, I. (eds.) Lifelong Learning, Young Adults and the Challenges of Disadvantage in Europe. Palgrave Studies in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. Cham: Springer. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14109-6_4

Broek, S., Kuijpers, M. A. C. T., Semeijn, J. H. & van der Linden, J. (2024): Conditions for successful adult learning systems at local level: creating a conducive socio-spatial environment for adults to engage in learning. In: International Journal of Lifelong Education, 43:2-3, 200-223, DOI: 10.1080/02601370.2024.2338366.

CEC (2000): A memorandum on lifelong learning. Commission staff working paper SEC (2000) 1832. Brussels: CEC. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2023/05/european-communities-a-memorandum-on-lifelong-learning.pdf

CEC (2006a): Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC). Official Journal of the European Union, L394, 10–18. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF

CEC (2006b): Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn. Communication from the Commission COM (2006) 614 final. Brussels: CEC. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0614:FIN:EN:PDF

CEC (2007): Action plan on adult learning: It is always a good time to learn.

COM (2007) 558 final. Brussels: CEC. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0558:FIN:EN:PDF

Council of the European Union (2021): Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030 (2021/C 504/02). Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214(01)

Delors, et al. (1996): Learning: The treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first century. Paris: UNESCO

Desjardins, R. & Ioannidou, A. (2020): The political economy of adult learning systems – some institutional features that promote adult learning participation. Zeitschrift für Weiterbildungsforschung, 43(2), 143–168. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s40955-020-00159-y

Duke, C. & Hinzen, H. (2006): Basic and continuing adult education policies. Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006 Literacy for Life. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44836454_Basic_and_continuing_adult_education_policies

Duke, C. & Hinzen, H. (2016): Synthesis report on the state of community learning centres in six Asian countries. Hamburg: UIL. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247555/PDF/247555eng.pdf.multi

Duke, C., Hinzen, H., Sarrazin, R. (eds.) (2021): Public Financing of Popular Adult Learning and Education (ALE). Experiences, lessons and recommendations from 14 country and case studies. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.de/fileadmin/files/Inhalte_Bilder_und_Dokumente/Materialien/Analysis/DVV_International_Analysis_Financing_Popular_ALE_Web2.pdf

Dunbar, M. (2019): A review of entitlement systems for LLL. Prepared for UNESCO and ILO, August 2019. Geneva: ILO. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_752215.pdf

DVV International (2017): Conference documentation. Adult education centres as a key to development: Responsibilities, structures and benefits. 11–12 October 2017, Tbilisi, Georgia. Bonn: DVV International.

DVV International (2020): Adult Education in Armenia – Study of

Policies and Practices. Review of the State of Affairs and Developing Recommendations for Integration in Policy Framework and Practice. (Team of national experts: Khachatryan, S., Soghomonyan, E., Mejlumyan, A./ International expert: Hinzen, H.) Yerevan: DVV International. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Armenia/Resources/ALE_Review_Eng.pdf

DVV International (2021): The ALE Toolbox. https://www.dvv-international.de/en/ale-toolbox

DVV International (2024): Strategic Fields of Action. Bonn: DVV International. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.de/fileadmin/files/Inhalte_Bilder_und_Dokumente/Materialien/Fach-_und_Positionspapiere/DVV_International_strategic_fields_of_action_2024.pdf

EAEA (2006): Adult Education Trends and Issues in Europe. Restricted tender no. EAC/43/05. Brussels: EAEA. Retrieved from https://www.ginconet.eu/sites/default/files/library/AE_trends_issues_Europe.pdf

EAEA (2024): Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century. Brussels: EAEA. Retrieved from https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/EAEA_Manifesto_Digital_compressed-1.pdf

Faure, et al. (1972): Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow. Paris: UNESCO/Harrap. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000223222/PDF/223222eng.pdf.multi

Grotlüschen, A., Belzer, A., Ertner, M. & Yasukawa, K. (2023): Adult Learning and Education within the Framework of Lifelong Learning. (= International Perspectives in Adult Education – IPE 81.) Bonn: DVV International. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.de/fileadmin/files/Inhalte_Bilder_und_Dokumente/Materialien/IPE/IPE_81_ALE_within_Framework_04-2023_web.pdf

Hinzen, H. (2011): Policy developments towards Lifelong Learning in the European Union. In J. Yang & R. Valdés-Cotera (eds.), Conceptual evolution and policy developments in lifelong learning (pp 98–109). Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192081

Hinzen, H., Meilhammer, E. (2022): 100 years of Volkshochschule in Germany – 50 years of DVV International: Signposts for local and global comparative perspectives on adult learning and education. International Review of Education, 68(1), 125–154. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-022-09944-y

Hinzen, H., Slowey, M. & Khau, H.P. (2024): Learning from the past for the future: Signposts and landmark anniversaries in adult learning and education. International Review of Education, 70(2), 177–204. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-024-10089-3

Hirsch, E., Jost, Ch., Waschek, G. (eds.) (2019): 50 Years. Half a Century of Adult Education. Bonn: DVV International. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.de/en/materials/publications/anniversary-publication-50-years-dvv-international

ICAE (2020): Adult Learning and Education (ALE) – Because the Future Cannot Wait: Contribution of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) to the UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/sites/default/files/2020-10/ICAE%20-%20Futures%20of%20ALE%20FINAL.pdf

ICFE (International Commission on the Futures of Education) (2021): Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707

Ireland, T. & Spezia, C. H. (2014): Adult Education in Retrospective 60 years of CONFINTEA. Brasilia: UNESCO. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227635/PDF/227635eng.pdf.multi

Kallen, D. & Bengtsson, J. (1973): Recurrent education. A strategy for lifelong learning. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED083365.Pdf

Knoll, J. H. (2014): The History of the UNESCO International Conferences on Adult Education – From Helsingör (1949) to Hamburg (1997): International education policy through people and programmes. In: Ireland, Timothy/Spezia, Hernandes (eds.): Adult Education in Retrospective. 60 Years of CONFINTEA. Brasilia, 11-28. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227635

Nuissl, E. & Sava, S. (2024): Tracing the effects and impacts of the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning in the scholarly debate since its inception. International Review of Education 70, 223–252. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-023-10044-8

Palmer, R. (2020): Lifelong learning in the informal economy: A literature review. Geneva: International Labour Organization (ILO). Popović, K. (ed.) (2020): Citizenship Education and Adult Learning and Education (ALE). Background paper supporting the thematic chapter of GRALE 5. Belgrade:

ICAE. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/86124746/Citizenship_Education_and_ALE

Rogers, A. (2014): The Base of the Iceberg. Informal Learning and its Impact on Formal and Non-formal Learning. Opladen, Berlin, Toronto: Barbara Budrich Publishers. Retrieved from https://shop.budrich.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/9783847402589neu.pdf

Smirnov, O., Andrieiev, M. (2021): Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Ukraine. In: Duke, Hinzen, Sarrazin (eds.). Public financing of Popular Adult Learning and Education, 214-231. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.de/fileadmin/files/Inhalte_Bilder_und_Dokumente/Materialien/Analysis/DVV_International_Analysis_Financing_Popular_ALE_Web2.pdf

Torlone, F. (2023): Adult Learning Policies in Europe. An Insight of Regional and Local Stakeholders. Firenze: editpress. Retrieved from https://www.editpress.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/9791280675286_anteprima.pdf

UIL (2010): CONFINTEA VI Belém Framework for Action. Harnessing the power and potential of adult learning and education for a viable future. Hamburg: UIL. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187789

UIL (2012): UNESCO Guidelines for the recognition, validation and accreditation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. Hamburg: UIL. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000216360

UIL (2022a): Making lifelong learning a reality: A handbook. Retrieved from https://uil.unesco.org/making-lifelong-learning-reality-handbook

UIL (2022b): 5th global report on adult learning and education: citizenship education: empowering adults for change. Retrieved from https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/global-report/5th-global-report-adult-learning-and-education-citizenship-education

UIL (2022c): CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action: harnessing the transformational power of adult learning and education. Hamburg. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382306

UN (2015): Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

UNESCO (1945): Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. London: UNESCO. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00003825 00

UNESCO (2015): Recommendation on adult learning and education. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245179

UNESCO (2021): Non-state actors in education: Who chooses? Who loses? Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379875

UNESCO (2023): Recommendation on education for peace and human rights, international understanding, cooperation, fundamental freedoms, global citizenship and education for sustainable development. Paris.: UNESCO. Retrieved from https://www.unesco.org/en/global-citizenship-peace-education/recommendation

WEF (2016): Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf

Reflections from the six project countries

Ester Hakobyan/Avetik Mejlumyan

Opportunities for increased implementation of ALE programmes in communities in the Republic of Armenia: Review of legal foundations, policies and practices

By reviewing the system of local self-government (LSG) in Armenia, and pinpointing legal provisions and relevant policies that could be favourably utilised to increase access to ALE at local level, this article explores the ways in which local authorities in Armenia could assume greater responsibilities when it comes to promoting adult learning and education (ALE). The authors argue that, despite ALE not being part of direct mandates and functions of local authorities, there are several policies and practices that can trigger communities' motivation to support provision of ALE services. The article features two successful cases from two municipalities in Armenia demonstrating how collaboration between DVV International Armenia and local authorities can foster ALE initiatives.

Part 1: Local self-government and education in the Republic of Armenia (RA)

When, almost 30 years ago, the newly-established independent Republic of Armenia adopted its Constitution (5 July 1995), decentralisation of power and distribution of public administration functions at state and community levels were two of the imperatives and principles that the document emphasised (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, 1995). Local self-governance (LSG) is therefore considered as one of the main pillars of democracy in the Republic of Armenia, and is guaranteed by the Constitution based on a number of principles, including but not limited to:

- Any function related to community interests is part of powers of local self-governance bodies, if it is not assigned to other bodies by laws.
- Transfer of powers/functions from state authorities to LSG, if those can be performed more effectively at community level.
- Community budget independence to form a budget from sources stipulated in the RA Law on Local Self-Government and the possibility to autonomously manage the budget (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, 2002).

The foundations of a new public administration system, including local self-governance, were thus established in the first decade of the 21st century through a number of laws and normative acts. The first Law on Local Self-Government was adopted in 1996, followed by a recast one in 2002 that reflected the signing (and subsequent ratification) by the RA of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Several amendments ensued over the next two decades to incorporate such key developments as constitutional changes in 2015, the process of community consolidation/enlargement (reflected in the RA Law on Administrative-Territorial Division), as well as the new electoral system and certain functions of local self-government (2016-2024). Alongside the RA Law on the Budgetary System, the RA Law on Financial Equalisation, and the Tax Code of the Republic of Armenia, these are the key legal acts governing the system of local self-governance in the Republic of Armenia.

When these laws were initially introduced, and the territorial division of the newly-independent country was set, the number of municipalities was 926, of which 40 were urban municipalities, and 866 were rural. Yerevan with its twelve districts had a special status. While this number has changed slightly over the years, the vast majority of small and fragmented municipalities with weak systems, infrastructure and inadequate budgets

remained constant up until 2015, when the process of the consolidation/ enlargement of the municipalities got underway (Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2011). The underlying cause of this process was the realisation that there were several differences and inequalities between the municipalities, including the areas/land they owned, number of residents, infrastructure, financial situation based on tax collection, urban-rural divide, and many others. Despite such differences, all municipalities were required by law to exercise the same powers/functions and provide similar services. Their inability to comply has ultimately proven itself to be a limiting factor for effective local self-government in Armenia, which is why the enlargement process started in 2015 and continued after the 2018 Velvet Revolution, since the new Government also considered this an important step toward more effective public administration at local level.

There are currently 71 municipalities (Capital Yerevan +70 municipalities in 10 marzes [regions]) in Armenia. Consolidated municipalities include both townships and rural settlements.

These communities have several powers of their own (which are in their turn sub-divided into mandatory and voluntary ones), and those delegated by the State, in which case funding sources for those need to be defined as well. Several voluntary powers are also assigned to them through laws governing different aspects of public life and activity. The Community Council is the body that passes decisions about the funding and implementation of these voluntary powers.

With respect to education, LSG bodies have their own mandatory powers in two directions, i.e. 1) pre-school education and 2) after-school/ extra-curricular education including funding and maintenance of relevant institutions such as kindergartens, music schools, art schools and others, involvement in programme development, oversight and other key functions.

In its turn, Article 2 of the main RA Law on Education stipulates that the legislation should ensure a division of authority between state and local self-administration bodies (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, 2014). In addition, the Education Development Programme 2030 states that there is a need for "revising and effectively redistributing the powers and functions of state and local administration bodies" with gradual delegation of general/school education to LSGs with consideration of community consolidation (Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2022).

While neither the Law on Education nor the Law on Local Self-Government of RA includes any references to continuous education, lifelong learning (LLL) or adult learning and education (ALE), there are certain provisions that can be favourably used as a foundation for advancing LSG motivation to expand its voluntary powers to provide non-formal adult education. Some of those are discussed below:

- Participation as a principle: The Utrecht Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the Right to Participate in the Affairs of a Local Authority was adopted in 2009, emphasising that the right to "participate in the conduct of public affairs is one of the democratic principles that are shared by all member States of the Council of Europe" (Council of Europe, 2009). While voting and standing for election, participation in local affairs, and decision-making, are key forms of participation defined in the Protocol, it requires local governments to provide such forums for participation as consultative processes, petitions and referenda at the level closest to them.

  To comply with the Charter, the Armenian Law on Local-Self Government includes Article 11 on the general principle of participation of residents in local self-governance, and Article 37 on the responsibilities of the head of the community to ensure such participation. As one of the ways to ensure participation (in addition to awareness-building and information dissemination) engaging community residents in training activities and educational programmes is included as a separate clause (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, 2002). However, as noted by the interviewed experts, while this is a legally-binding obligation for local governments/mayors, outside the donor-supported and other programmes, not much has happened on their own initiative. This article of the Law can be a valid foundation on which consideration should be given to supporting ALE by communities.

- Community consolidation and regional/community development plans as an opportunity: As noted above, community enlargement has been ongoing in Armenia in the past decade with the aim in mind of increasing the efficiency of public administration at local level, consolidating their financial resources, improving services, etc. As a result, the budget levels of consolidated communities have recently increased, and they have more opportunities to direct funds (by Community Council decision) to voluntary powers. However, it is important that education (including ALE) be included in five-year regional and community development plans, since it is on the basis of these plans that the mid-term expenditure plan, annual budgets and annual work plans are then specified.

- Other related powers of heads of communities: Article 12 of the Law on Local Self-Government lists twenty areas of a community's mandatory issues where the local authorities have a mandate to

address and for which funding is provided. Among many others, there are two that could be favourably utilised to promote ALE, including:

- Designing and implementing programmes for addressing the issues of young people in the community, and
- Support for philanthropy to establish different cultural, educational, health, sport, social and other structures in the community, as well as ensuring their financial independence (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, 2002).

In addition, according to the Law, the heads of communities also have some related voluntary responsibilities delegated to them by the State that could be implemented through educational activities, including ALE. Support for crafts and local arts, youth empowerment and employment creation are the most relevant entry points for ALE programmes.

- Social assistance as an LSG responsibility: Yet another important amendment was made to the Law on Local Self Government in October 2024, in accordance with which a number of functions and services related to social assistance at local level are now part of responsibilities of community heads (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, 2002). These include (but are not limited to) identification of socially-vulnerable residents/families, their needs assessment, and planning and implementing supportive interventions/providing social services through different institutions and social partnerships of which the head of the community is a member. The amendment separately stipulates support for employment opportunities in the community as one of the functions of the head of the community. These additional responsibilities have implications for training, especially for skill development as one of the interventions, and can be further explored.

Summary of Part 1: Local self-government and decentralisation of power is an important principle of democracy that Armenia has emphasised since its independence. The legislative foundations of the system have been established over the past 30 years. Communities, represented by their local governments, currently play a major role in the two-tier system of Armenia's public administration with several own and delegated powers. Education is also part of their powers, albeit in limited areas, including pre-school and after school education/institutions. There are however provisions in the legislation that allow for more vigorous ALE to be embraced as an important part of community-level work.

Part 2: Opportunities for increased access to ALE through ALE-related policy measures and practices

Background and context

Supported by DVV International's Armenia country office, several studies, surveys and monitoring reports were conducted in 2020-2023 to review the policy and practice of ALE in Armenia. These also provide a context and evidence regarding participation in, or access to ALE. Some of the key findings indicated the following:

Law on Education and ALE terminology: The Law on Education does not include "Adult Learning and Education" as a concept or sub-sector of education. Instead, the term Supplementary and Continuous Education (SCE) is used to denote "educational programmes that are implemented throughout a person's lifetime to fulfil the professional/vocational and personal education needs" (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, 2014). A 2014 amendment to the Law however introduced some key concepts and terms into it, including "lifelong education", "formal, non-formal and informal education", and "learning centre". The Law does not make provision for funding of SCE/ALE programmes.

Providers: The main providers of SCE/ALE programmes are the State (training and requalification of public servants, as well as programmes for the unemployed), universities (through their Continuous Education Centres that mostly focus on training of faculty), employers (that provide on-the-job or other skills training to their employees), and CSOs/NGOs mostly through international donors that focus on such areas as human rights, community development, employability skills, and others. More and more private-sector institutions are offering courses and training, especially in areas such as IT and languages. Local authorities are not directly responsible for providing SCE/ALE programmes in their communities (as also discussed in Part 1 of this document). It should however be noted that CSOs, regional employment agencies, and others, cooperate with local authorities in practice when implementing interventions in their communities. Both the amended Law on Education and the new Law on Vocational Education and Training (VET) also recently introduced the notion of social partnership, i.e.: "A universally-agreed form of educational, labour, partnership and social cooperation between vocational education institutions (VEIs), employers, their associations, other non-profit organisations, trade unions and public authorities, aimed at providing education aligned with the needs of the labour market and economic development" (National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, 2024). As essential players under the public authorities, local governments have thus become somewhat involved in supporting broader educational activities outside their own/delegated functions.

Some facts and figures: The Adult Education Survey (AES) implemented by DVV International Armenia in 2020-2021 indicates that only 14% of respondents (nationally representative) partake in non-formal education, compared to the EU average of 41% (DVV International Armenia, CRRC, 2021) (see the table below).

	Armenia (2020, aged 18-64)	EU-27 (2016, aged 25-64, UK not included)
Formal education	8%	5.0%
Non-formal education	13%	41.4%
Informal learning	75%	59.5%

Source: DVV International Armenia, CRRC (2021): Study on Adult Learning and Education in Armenia. Yerevan: DVV International Armenia.

Differences by locality should also be noted, since more people are involved in training and courses in the capital Yerevan (22%) compared to other towns (12%) and rural settlements (8%) (DVV International Armenia, 2021). Understandably, access to and awareness of the benefits of such training/courses is much higher in Yerevan, and these are inequalities that should be addressed at both policy and practice level in order to provide more opportunities for the residents of smaller townships and rural settlements.

Understandably, DVV International Armenia's work in ALE advocacy and awareness, professionalisation, and most importantly supporting model ALE centres in Armenia, has been directed to fill in the gaps in ALE access. Since 2007, DVV has supported five ALE centres and some additional partner CSOs that have provided courses and other ALE-related interventions (public discussions, community events, etc.) to thousands of beneficiaries in eight localities of Armenia every year.

Recent developments in support of increased access to ALE at national and community levels

Action Plan of the RA Government 2021-2026, Education Development Programme 2030, and amendments to the Law on Education: The inclusion of ALE-related action items in the Government Action Plan and Education Development Programme has been a key achievement for ALE in the last five years. Action Plan items include harmonisation of ALE terminology

with global frameworks, improved data and statistics for informed policy-making, awareness building about ALE as a key to increased access, and implementation of systems for the registration of non-formal education entities/service-providers and ALE programmes, and most importantly recognition and validation of prior learning results (Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2021). These system-related changes were incorporated into the Law on Education through an amendment in 2022, and initial steps are currently being taken to lay the necessary foundations for their enforcement. It is expected that ALE programme certification and recognition of learning outcomes will prove to be favourable factors for increasing motivation to participate in ALE.

DVV International Armenia's efforts with respect to awareness and improved quality of ALE: In support of Government/MoESCS efforts to increase awareness of (and subsequently access to) ALE, DVV International Armenia has initiated and implemented a number of advocacy/awareness campaigns, including an ALE for SDGs (2021) campaign, an ALE popularisation campaign in 2022 through a number of media appearances by DVV International Armenia and MoESCS representatives, events, social media and publications, and a "From Marrakesh to Yerevan" conference and campaign aiming to help popularise the Marrakesh Framework of Actions (MFA) and ALE. One of the most impactful events at local level (attended by state and local authorities) was the ALE Centre Fair in June 2024 in the community of Aparan, where DVV International Armenia will be supporting another centre in 2025.

Illustration 1. Representatives of Armenia's Local Self-Government and ALE Centers at the 'Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in the Responsibility of Local Communities' Conference

Source: DVV Internatioanl Armenia

Efforts with respect to quality of ALE are based on the underlying rationale that investing in the quality of ALE curricula and institutions is vital to increase access to and appreciation of ALE. Different DVV-developed ALE toolkits including Curriculum GlobALE (CG) for training of trainers, Curriculum InstitutionALE (CI) and Curriculum ManagerALE (CM) for ALE provider management and staff are used to enhance individual and institutional capacities of ALE providers and professionals.

Feedback, appreciation and reflections received from partners, different stakeholders and beneficiaries allow us to believe that the understanding of ALE and its uses is increasing incrementally in Armenia, including at community level. DVV International Armenia's work, with its many aspects and different levels, is ongoing and essential for promotion of ALE in the country, including at national and local levels.

Youth Centres, Community Learning Centres, Youth Capital of The Year, and Learning Cities, as formats to promote ALE at local level: There are a number of developments with respect to youth policies and youth work that can be explored to create synergies with ALE at both national and local levels. The RA Government's 2021-2026 Action Plan thus prioritises investment in young people for the country's development, especially with respect to participation in state building, community life, socialisation, the labour market, etc. (Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2021). There is a youth department under the MoESCS, and funding is available to activities such as youth centres supported by the State, or the Youth Capital of the Year. The Ministry plans to establish youth centres across Armenia (2-4 per year) as effective spaces to deliver youth work by 2024-2025. According to the Guidelines (Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2024), such centres are spaces for continuous capacity building, active citizenship, as well as intellectual and cultural leisure, that implement educational, business, environmental and community development initiatives funded by the State and other sources. As such, these centres can become foundations for ALE, both as partners, as well as resource and collaborative platforms. Similarly, the annual designation of the Youth Capital of the Year (for 2025 it is Aparan, where the most recent ALE centre supported by DVV is located) is an opportunity to increase awareness of ALE and non-formal education.

Six Armenian cities (Abovyan, Echmiadzin, Dilijan, Gyumri, Sevan and Sisian) have been registered as UNESCO Learning Cities in the last decade, and ALE centres supported by DVV are located in three of them (Dilijan, Gyumri and Sisian). Building on the learning opportunities provided by these centres, and turning them into model communities, can be a valuable effort in terms of advocating for more ALE at local level in Armenia.

Illustration 2. Language Training for the Council of Elders of Dilijan Community

Source: Dilijan Community Center

Support for displaced persons: In an effort to support labour market integration for Armenians forcefully displaced from Nagorno Karabakh in September 2023, in January 2024 the Government approved an assistance programme that offered short-term (up to five months) vocational training for this group with a stipend and tuition fee compensation options. While the circumstances under which the government programme was devised and put into practice were unfortunate, this was the first attempt to use non-formal ALE to address a disturbing social issue. While the results are still not clear, given that the majority of the displaced persons have relocated to the regions/communities of Armenia, this is another opportunity where ALE centres can play a role in their host local communities to address the needs of this particular group.

New Employment Strategy: And finally, on 27 December 2024 the Armenian Government approved the Employment Strategy for 2025-2031, with the main goal of combating unemployment. Among other priorities, the employment strategy sets the goals of "Increasing employment in the non-agricultural sector with high productivity in communities, including regional cities" with the aim of reaching 60% employment instead of the current level of 51%. Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and middle-aged women, are the two key target groups of the Strategy. Improved relevance and capacity of non-formal education providers in the regions with respect to the economy/labour market priorities of the region/community, development of flexible non-

formal educational offers, and increased involvement in vocation education up to an intensive level of 30.6%, are among key measures to reach the goals of the Strategy (Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2024). It is consequently fair to expect that non-formal vocational ALE programmes have potential for growth in Armenian municipalities, assuming that the Strategy is implemented effectively and consistently.

DVV International Armenia's Collaboration with Local Authorities in Support of Adult Education Centres: The best practice in communities of Sisian and Aparan.

DVV International's own efforts to provide good practice demonstrations of the benefits of ALE through supported centres in the communities of Armenia is an essential contribution to showcasing the advantages of ALE in practice. Local government appreciation of the opportunities offered by these centres, and their contribution to them, is becoming increasingly tangible. This article concludes by illustrating two best practice cases of DVV International-local government collaboration in support of ALE centres. DVV International's support for ALE centres has followed different models in Armenia. Thus, three of the four centres funded by DVV International Armenia in 2024 are well-established CSOs/foundations in different fields to which DVV International Armenia delegates adult education programmes. Local government involvement is minimal in these instances. The cases of the two centres with a more or less significant contribution from the local government are presented below.

Sisian Adult Education Centre (AEC) is the only centre established by DVV International that focuses solely on the education of adults. In 2012, DVV International Armenia announced an open call for establishing a new adult education centre in the municipalities of Armenia's southern regions. The programme presented by the municipality of Sisian city (Syunik region) was recognised as the best, and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed in 2013 between DVV International Armenia and Sisian municipality to establish the Sisian AEC. This became the first step in a successful cooperation which developed into a strong partnership during the next ten years. In 2013, Sisian municipality gave Sisian AEC a facility that it could use free of charge, which was then renovated and equipped with financial support from DVV International Armenia. In addition to providing a venue, the municipality has contributed annual funds to the centre's operations. Whilst the funding was initially in the area of 2,000 Euros, in 2024 (ten years after the centre was established), it has since doubled. Coupled with tuition fees and main funding support

from DVV International, this allows the Sisian AEC to provide educational programmes in more than 20 different subjects (including but not limited to computer literacy, English, healthy living, sewing and others) to over 1,500 beneficiaries. It should be noted that municipal support is based on Article 12 of the Law on Local Self-government (which stipulates support for philanthropic efforts to establish different cultural, educational, health, sport, social and other structures in the community, as well as ensuring their financial independence, as a mandatory responsibility for the municipality), and this example can be followed by other local governments and advocated by DVV International.

A fifth ALE centre in the consolidated community of Aparan will start operating from April 2025 onwards, with DVV International Armenia's support. The selection of this centre was based on an open call among a number of municipalities that was announced in 2023, with a final decision being made in 2024. The call emphasised municipal contributions as one of the key selection factors. In the case of Aparan, the defining factor was the fact that Aparan municipality had the foresight in 2023 to repurpose World Vision's office in the community, which was closing, to become a non-commercial community organisation to provide social services, thus becoming the Aparan Community Social Centre. The community proposed to add ALE programmes and services to that centre, which already had

Illustration 3. MoU Signing Ceremony Between DVV International Armenia Country Office and Aparan Municipality for the Establishment of a New ALE Center (DVV International Armenia)

Source: DVV international Armenia

both the appropriate infrastructure and human resources provided and was supported by the Aparan municipality. An MoU was signed between DVV International Armenia and Aparan municipality on 10 July 2024 to launch a partnership in 2025 (with some initial steps being taken in 2024). According to that document, DVV International undertakes to fund ALE programmes and infrastructure, while the municipality will provide the space, pay the utility bills, and support the centre in other ways such as awareness building, some additional funding of programmes, etc.

Summary of Part 2: While the Law on Education does not include ALE as a concept, it is not considered a priority and there is no state funding for non-formal ALE programmes (other than civil servant/teacher/doctor retraining), there are developments in Armenia at both policy and practical levels that could be conducive to increased access to ALE at community level. These include amendments to the Law on Education such as recognition of prior learning outcomes, efforts to increase awareness of the benefits of ALE, and the quality of ALE supported by DVV International, prioritisation by the State of youth participation, programmes targeting displaced people, and finally and most importantly the recently-approved new Employment Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, which contains several provisions relevant to increased access to non-formal vocational ALE. DVV International Armenia's support for ALE centres in five localities in Armenia is a highly tangible demonstration of how communities can benefit from ALE, and is a practical way of providing increased opportunities to ALE.

List of Interviewed people

- Karen Hovhannesyan, head of Sisian Adult Education Centre
- Hrayr Mkrtchyan, deputy mayor of Aparan municipality
- Vahan Movsisyan, head of Community Finance Officers Association (CFOA)
- Arsen Simonyan, youth expert
- Vahram Shahbazyan, local government expert at CFOA

References

Altunyan, K. (2021): Community Enlargement: Analysis of Positive and Negative Aspects. Yerevan: "Artsakh".

Ալթունյան, Կ. (2021): Համայնքների խոշորացում. դրական և բացասական կողմերի վերլուծություն, Երևան, «Արցախ» հրատ.

Council of Europe (1985): European Charter of Local Self-Government. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe (2009): Utrecht Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the Right to Participate in the Affairs of a Local Authority. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

DVV International Armenia (2021): Adult Education in Armenia: Study of Policies and Practices. Yerevan: DVV International Armenia.

DVV International Armenia (2021): Study on Adult Learning and Education in Armenia, Yerevan: DVV International Armenia.

DVV International Armenia, CRRC (2021): Adult Education Survey Armenia 2020-2021. Yerevan: DVV International Armenia.

Galstyan, T. (ed.) (2023): Decentralization of Powers as a Direction for Increasing the Efficiency of Local Self-Government. Yerevan: Amberd Research Center, Economist.

Գալստյան Տ. (խմբ.) (2023): Լիազորությունների ապակենտրոնացումը որպես տեղական ինքնակառա-վարման արդյունավետության բարձրացման ուղղություն, «Ամբերդ» հետազոտական կենտրոն, «Տնտեսագետ» հրատ.

Government of the Republic of Armenia (2011): Concept on Enlargement of Communities and Formation of Intercommunity Unions. Yerevan: Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Government of the Republic of Armenia (2021): Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia for 2021-2026. Yerevan: Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Government of the Republic of Armenia (2022): Education Development State Program until 2030. Yerevan: Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Government of the Republic of Armenia (2024): Employment Strategy for 2025-2031. Yerevan: Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Government of the Republic of Armenia (2024): Guidelines for Youth Centers in the Republic of Armenia. Yerevan: Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Mazhinyan, A. & Mejlumyan, A. (2024): Study of Terminology in the Field of Adult Learning and Education and Development of Proposals for Implementation of Changes, Proceedings of the “Global and Local Trends in Adult Learning and Education” Conference (March 22, 2024). Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Armenia/Resources/MFA_final.pdf

Մաժինյան Ա., Մեջլումյան Ա. (2024), Մեծահասակների ուսումնառության և կրթության բնագավառի եզրաբանության ուսումնասիրություն և

փոփոխությունների իրականացման առաջարկությունների մշակում, «Մեծահասակների ուսումնառության և կրթության գլոբալ և լոկալ միտումներ» համաժողովին (մարտի 22, 2024թ.) ներկայացված հետազոտությունների ժողովածու (առցանց հրապարակում https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Armenia/Resources/MFA_final.pdf

National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia (1995): Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (most recently amended in 2015). Yerevan: National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia (1995): RA Law on Administrative-Territorial Division. Yerevan: National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia (2002): Law on Local Self-Government of the Republic of Armenia. Yerevan: National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia (2014): Law on Education of the Republic of Armenia. Yerevan: National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia (2024): Law on Vocational Education and Training. Yerevan: National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

Shahbazyan, V. (ed.) 2021: Local Self Government in Armenia. Yerevan: Communities Finance Officers Association.

Adnan Mević

Policy and system development of adult learning and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The role of local authorities and ALE centres

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country divided into various administrative regions by its Constitution, with the adult education system being governed by 12 distinct laws that regulate this area. Despite the complexity and numerous challenges faced by adult education organisers, the relevant institutions, and the participants themselves, we can be optimistic, as adult education has become one of the areas that has transcended all internal divisions. In practice, adult education has served as a tool for reducing unemployment, a means of supporting the elderly, a way to strengthen the economy and entrepreneurs, and even a form of assistance to young people.

The political and governing system

Adult learning and education (ALE) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) remains largely focused on formal learning activities related to vocational education, including requalification and upskilling aimed at facilitating integration into the labour market. However, even though the majority of the population primarily associate adult education with the completion of formal education, public perception has started to change in recent years. This change is attributed to 2020, a year that witnessed dynamic developments in the adult education sector in BiH, with the enactment of all relevant legal regulations governing this field.

To gain a better understanding of the ALE sector in BIH, and to comprehend the complexity of the system in which activities aimed at enhancing this process are carried out, it is crucial to start by explaining the administrative structure and the operational functioning of the education system in our country.

BiH is a country with a highly complex internal structure, resulting from the peace negotiations that ended the war fought in this region from 1992 to 1995. Historical facts indicate that this war was a conflict not only between local population groups, but also one which touched on the interests of other countries. In addition, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague sentenced several people for crimes against humanity, but also for the genocide committed in Srebrenica. All of this has contributed to the war in BiH being recognised as the largest armed conflict on European soil since World War II.

To stop the bloodshed and prevent further destruction, significant efforts were made to create an agreement that would end the war and establish a framework for the functioning of the country. The General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) was signed in Paris on 14 December 1995, and the Constitution was integral to it. This Constitution is still in force in our country today.

The GFAP divided our country into two entities, plus the Brčko District of BiH. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) covers 51% of the country's territory, with a predominantly Bosniak and Croat population, while the Republika Srpska (RS) constitutes 49% of the territory, with most of its population being ethnic Serbs. In addition, the FBiH is further divided into ten cantons, each of which has autonomy in making its own decisions, laws and regulations.

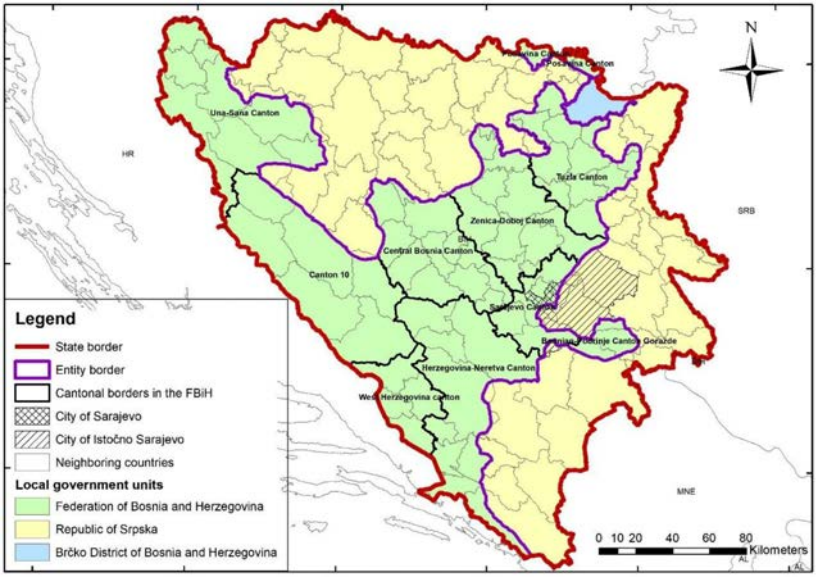

Illustration 1: The administrative division of BiH

Source: https://www.arl-international.com/sites/default/files/2024-05/Map_0.jpg

The responsibilities of these administrative units are quite extensive, and encompass areas such as healthcare, internal affairs, education, social welfare, culture, sports, finances, and other relevant sectors that regulate citizens' lives. It is particularly important to highlight this, as this administrative division has led to the creation of a system containing over 170 different ministries.

The central executive authority is represented by a directly-elected three-member Presidency, consisting of one Bosniak, one Serb, and one Croat member, as well as the Chair of the Council of Ministers, who serves as the Prime Minister. Foreign policy, diplomacy, military affairs, security and defence policies, as well as fiscal and monetary policies, are managed at central level.

The place of adult education in the complex system of administration

The education system and sub-system of ALE is divided among the competencies of the State, entities, cantons, and the Brčko District of BiH. Consequently, there are 13 relevant ministries in the country responsible for developing policies and regulating the field of education, including ALE.

Due to its fragmentation and the divided political sphere, the education system is characterised by low efficiency and limited quality (Isanović Hadžiomerović, Pfanzelt, Pfanzelt, 2022: 30). The following image illustrates the governance structure responsible for adult education.

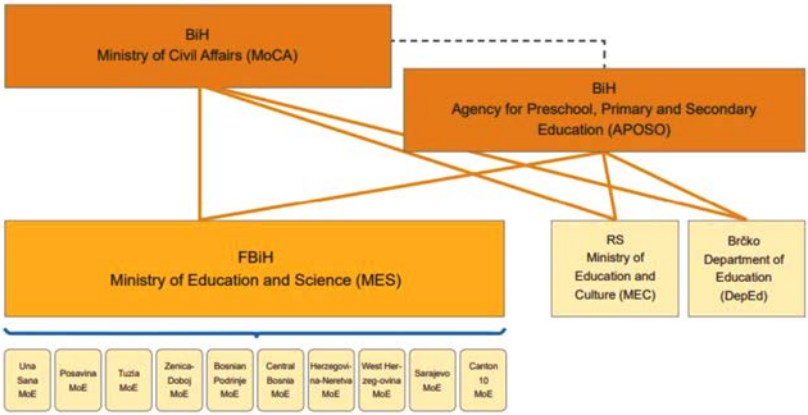

Illustration 2: The education system and relevant ministries in BiH

Source: World Bank, 2019, p. 14.

Adult education is managed and coordinated at State level by the Ministry of Civil Affairs through the education section. Due to the administrative division and the greater powers held by lower levels of government, the Ministry's role is limited to developing framework laws at State level, ensuring common standards, representing education-related issues abroad, and monitoring BiH's participation in various international agreements.

As has been emphasised, the Ministry of Civil Affairs is responsible for aligning policies and legal regulations in adult education with internationally-recognised goals and principles. BiH has adopted three key documents as a consequence which provide a framework for defining the adult education system in the country. These documents are:

- Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in BiH with an Implementation Plan for 2008-2015 (adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH in June 2008),
- Principles and Standards in the Field of Adult Education in BiH (adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH in 2014),
- Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education within the Context of Lifelong Learning in BiH for the Period 2014-2020 (adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH in 2014).

Lower levels of government have significantly greater authority in the field of adult education. The process of adopting all laws regulating adult education at all levels of administrative division was completed in 2020. As a result, all lower levels of government adopted laws, regulations, certain rules, and standards. It is commendable that all relevant laws in all administrative units were adopted, thereby laying the foundation for the accelerated development of the adult education system.

The first Adult Education Law was adopted in the RS in 2009, and the Law on Amendments to the Adult Education Law in RS was passed in 2011. Furthermore, the Adult Education Law of the Una-Sana Canton was adopted in 2013. In the years that followed, other laws were enacted for the remaining cantons, as well as for the Brčko District of BiH (Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, 2021):

- The Adult Education Law of the Zenica-Doboj Canton (ZDK) was adopted in 2014 (Official Gazette of the ZDK, 2014). Amendments to the Adult Education Law were furthermore adopted in this canton in 2018,
- The Adult Education Law of the Tuzla Canton (TK) was adopted in 2015 (Official Gazette of the TK, 2015),
- The Adult Education Law of the Bosnian-Podrinje Canton (BPK) was adopted in 2015 (Official Gazette of the BPK, 2015). After the law came into force, amendments to the Adult Education Law were adopted in 2019,
- The Adult Education Law of the West Herzegovina Canton (ZHŽ) was adopted in 2015 (Official Gazette of the ZHŽ, 2015),
- The Adult Education Law of the Sarajevo Canton (KS) was adopted in 2015 (Official Gazette of the KS, 2015). Amendments to the Adult Education Law of the KS were adopted in 2020,
- The Adult Education Law of the Central Bosnia Canton (SBK) was adopted in 2017 (Official Gazette of the SBK, 2017),
- The Adult Education Law of Canton 10 was adopted in 2017 (Official Gazette of the Canton 10, 2017),
- The Adult Education Law of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (HNK) was adopted in 2018 (Official Gazette of the HNK, 2018),
- The Adult Education Law of the Brčko District of BiH was adopted in 2018 (Official Gazette of the Brčko District of BiH, 2018),
- The Adult Education Law of the Posavina Canton was adopted in 2019 (Official Gazette of the Posavina Canton, 2019).

Administrative division – challenges for adult education providers

Numerous challenges and issues arise during the implementation of adult education programmes because of the administrative division. One specific problem was observed in the Brčko District regarding qualification programmes. In several administrative units, deficiencies in the legal framework were identified which left room for violations of legal regulations and various forms of malpractice by adult education providers (cases of trafficking of public certificates, failure to conduct educational processes, etc.). This was one of the key reasons for amending existing laws or drafting entirely new legislation in these administrative units.

ALE providers encountered numerous practical difficulties when accrediting organisations and programmes, resulting in lengthy processes, sometimes taking up to a year. Excessive red tape was identified as a significant barrier to the development of programmes aimed at acquiring new skills and competencies, such as digital professions, for which there is an urgent need in our country (Čerkez, Berberović, 2022). Consequently, adult education providers emphasise the need for more stimulative legislative solutions that would encourage the creation of new adult education programmes and streamline the accreditation process by reducing costs and shortening the procedure.

As administrative units in BiH have different laws, adult education providers operating centres in various local communities across different administrative units are faced with the need to repeat the entire accreditation process for both organisations and programmes. This requires additional resources and time, and it will be essential to establish agreements among ministries to regulate the recognition of accreditations conducted in other administrative units.

All these factors pose significant challenges for adult learning and education centres (ALE centres) which remain unresolved to this day.

There is no doubt that all twelve laws have helped improve the adult education system in our country. However, there was no systemic approach to this sector. As a result, most educational programmes were limited to training sessions primarily organised by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Although NGOs have continued to implement their own training programmes, the lack of a quality assurance system to assess the knowledge and competencies acquired during the training process remained a significant issue.

This is also the reason why there is very little evidence of the recognition of non-formal education, primarily for two reasons. First, there are challenges within the education management system. Even if one

administrative unit succeeds in implementing a system for the recognition of non-formal education, this does not necessarily lead to recognition by another administrative unit. Second, adult education under the authority of ministries is mostly formal and carried out by public institutions. There is still a lack of trust or general acceptance of non-formal education offered by civil society organisations and private institutions. However, there is an increasing awareness among ministry representatives that the value of certificates obtained through non-formal education can be recognised by employers, even if they are not publicly validated.

The importance of ALE for societal development

Adult education has become one of the priorities for authorities at all levels. One example is the Adult Education Plan of the Zenica – Doboj canton for the period 2022–2024. This plan emphasises adult education as a tool to address the mismatch between the demand for and supply of labour. To develop this plan, the ZDK Government identified the occupations with the highest percentage of employed individuals within the overall workforce. A labour market needs analysis was also carried out, and a plan was created prioritising the following three areas (CREDI, 2021):

- Basic adult education
- Attaining qualifications through the completion of secondary education
- Various programmes for developing competencies for both employed and unemployed individuals.[1]

However, although the plan emphasises the development of various competencies, the ZDK Government only finances formal education programmes. This should not be seen as a limitation, but rather as an opportunity to increase the number of employed individuals in BiH. According to available data, BiH has the highest unemployment rate in Europe, making adult education a tool for training the long-term unemployed to improve their competitiveness in the labour market. According to the 2024 data from the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the largest group of unemployed individuals (85,000) has been unemployed for four years or more. Data on the number of unemployed individuals by duration of unemployment is presented in the chart below.

---

[1] https://credi.ba/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ZE-DO_report-2806.pdf

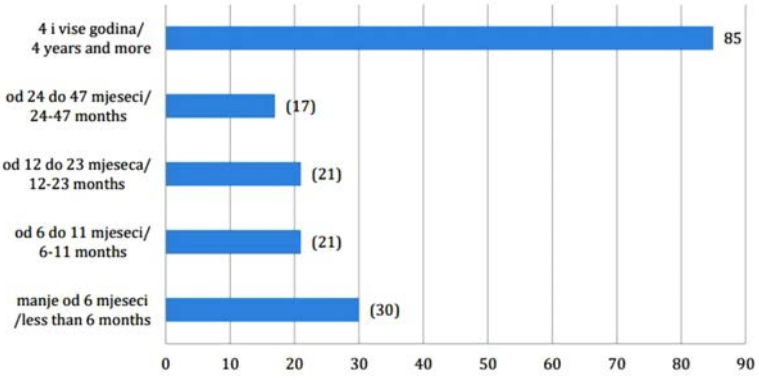

Illustration 3. Unemployed persons by duration of unemployment in BiH

Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This chart makes it clear that 51,000 individuals, or 29.2%, have been seeking employment for less than one year (12 months). The large group of 21,000 individuals, or 12.1%, have been looking for work for more than one year but less than two. The highest percentage, 58.7%, have been unemployed for more than two years, with particular emphasis on the long-term unemployed, who make up the largest group. This data suggests that it is more difficult for individuals to find employment if they have been unemployed for a longer period. This is the main reason why most governments have decided to fund programmes related to formal adult education, such as retraining and upskilling programmes.

Positive practices in the implementation of adult education programmes by local authorities and ALE centres

One of the most important practices is to improve the employability of unemployed and young people. In that sense, local communities and ALE centres have very strong collaboration. One of those centres is "Nova Zanimanja"[2] from Sarajevo, and they have very important collaborations with local communities such as Ilidža, Novi Grad, and the municipality of Centar (all three municipalities are part of Sarajevo canton). These three

[2] Web page: https://novazanimanja.ba/

municipalities, on an annual basis, publish calls for unemployed individuals to apply. After the selection process, unemployed individuals who were selected and have received funding could choose from various retraining and upskilling programmes, thereby increasing their chances of securing a job and enhancing their capacity to be more competitive in the labour market.

Also, one example is the Government of the BPK, which implemented a framework for adult education through legislation, enabling vocational schools and adult education centres to conduct programmes for:

- Gaining new qualifications
- Professional development and retraining
- Supplemental education tailored to labour market needs.

This provides an institutional foundation for the delivery of training, and offers a variety of options for citizens.

According to the information from the ALE centre AITI from Goražde (which is part of the ALDI Association[3]), the City of Goražde, as the centre of the BPK, emphasised in its development strategy for 2024-2027 the need to link the economy with educational institutions. Although adult education is not within the jurisdiction of local communities, these communities can help reduce unemployment through the adult education system.

In addition, many local communities in BiH support entrepreneurship development, with a particular focus on women and marginalised groups. One such community is the city of Visoko, which organises several activities

Illustration 4: Participants in education in Visoko

Source: Web page of the city of Visoko

[3] Web page: https://www.aldi.ba/

per year to promote the creation of new businesses founded by women, people with disabilities, and the long-term unemployed. It is especially important to note that most programmes funded in this way include a component of adult education, and all beneficiaries are required to undergo specific training that will facilitate the implementation of these programmes.

Although it is true that retraining and upskilling programmes are funded by public budgets at all levels of government, especially local community budgets, the level of public spending on the education sector is relatively low. According to data from 2018, total expenditures on education amounted to 4% of GDP, including public and private expenditure, as well as foreign sources of financing (Isanović, Hadžiomerović, Pfanzelt, Pfanzelt, 2022: 49).

The ALE system in BiH is recognised as an important form of capacity building for entrepreneurs. For example, in the KS, the Chamber of Economics of the SK established the Centre for Education and Information Technology[4], which is an accredited provider of education. Through its programmes, training sessions, and nationally recognised courses, the centre enables businesses to enhance their capacities. However, despite the importance of these programmes for the economy and the empowerment of enterprises, they are not supported by public budgets.

A major issue for the development of the education sector in BiH is the fact that the weak economy does not generate enough returns that could be directed towards adult education. While the adult education sector is systematically structured, it is an undeniable fact that all levels of government support projects implemented by various non-governmental organisations, which organise different training sessions, workshops and education programmes for adults.

According to available data, different levels of government in BiH, with particular emphasis on local authorities, are the largest financiers of projects and programmes implemented within local communities, which include components of adult education. According to the Centre for Investigative Journalism, approximately 50 million euros[5] annually are allocated to non-governmental-organisation projects from various levels of government, funding numerous non-formal-education programmes. Since there is no quality management system for these educational programmes, there is also no system for procedural training, and nor is there an evaluation system for acquired skills.

---

[4] Official web page: https://pksa.ba/?page_id=17532&lang=en

[5] https://cin.ba/nekontrolisano-trosenje-budzetskog-novca-za-nevladine-organizacije/

Other forms of governmental support for the ALE system in BiH

The adult education system is not sufficiently funded. For this reason, various forms of support, beyond financial assistance, have developed in our country. One such example is the provision of spaces where various adult education programmes can be organised, such as in the city of Banja Luka, which is the founder of Banja Luka Youth Centre, offering numerous rooms where workshops, educational programmes and seminars for young people can be organised[6]. Another example is in Tešanj – Centre Dobropolje Mekiš municipality, which has been operating since 2017 and is a starting point for the implementation of all free education in Tešanj.

Many local communities have secured spaces where continuous education can be conducted or various activities in the adult education sector can be organised. One of the latest examples comes from Sarajevo, where, through joint efforts, the government of the KS and the municipality of Centar have enabled a space for young people as a centre for activism and education[7]. In addition to the space, the founders have committed to providing the necessary financial resources to cover maintenance, protection and other necessary expenses.

Different levels of government support both professionalisation and research within the ALE sector. The Ministry of Science, Higher Education and Youth supported and organised the scientific conference held in October 2024, which gathered some of the leading European experts in the ALE sector. The organisers of the conference were DVV International – Country Office for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Sarajevo[8]. The desire to advance knowledge in the ALE sector is also evident through the publication of a professional journal on adult education, which was published by DVV International's Country Office for BiH until 2019. Since that date, the publication of the journal has been taken over by the Public Institution Bosanski kulturni centar, which is an institution of the Sarajevo canton government.

A particularly interesting form of support for elderly citizens is the implementation of educational programmes by establishing centres for healthy aging. One such centre is the Ilidža Centre for Healthy Aging[9],

---

6 Official web page: https://domomladinebl.rs.ba/

7 https://radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/lokalne-teme/nihad-uk-vila-braun-postaje-centar-za-mlade-kantona-sarajevo/574289

8 More information: https://www.dvv-international.ba/news/article/international-conference-adult-education-in-the-european-education-area-perspectives-from-southeast-europe-successfully-held-in-sarajevo

9 Facebook page: Centar za zdravo starenje Ilidza | Sarajevo | Facebook

which runs programmes for citizens from the municipality of Ilidža. These programmes offer free or very low-cost educational opportunities for the population residing within this local community.

This type of support is highly beneficial, and can exert a positive influence on the development of adult education. However, non-governmental organisations organise most of the programmes implemented within these spaces, and there is no systemic monitoring of programme quality, or any method for assessing the skills and competencies acquired.

This is one reason why the official participation rate of citizens in adult education programmes is relatively low. According to the BiH Agency for Statistics, data from the latest survey conducted in 2018 reveals that only 2.2% of the population participates in formal education programmes, and 6.9% of the population engages in non-formal education programmes, while 74.7% of the population participates in some form of informal learning. Compared with the EU-27 average, it is evident that the participation rate of BiH citizens in adult education systems is quite low, and is below the EU-27 average.

Because of that, special attention will need to be given in the future to increasing the significance and promotion of ALE among the population in order to improve and increase the participation rate of adults in educational programmes. However, this should not be interpreted as referring exclusively to formal educational programmes, but also to non-formal programmes and making adult education widely accessible through innovative learning models.

A special focus must also be placed on establishing a quality assurance system for programmes that are not exclusively accredited by the relevant ministries, as well as creating a system for the continuous professional development of educators, ensuring more practical work, and leveraging opportunities for joint applications to international projects with adult education centres from other countries.

	BiH (2017)	EU-27 (2016)
Formal education	2.2%	5.0%
Non-formal education	6.9%	41.4%
Informal learning	74.7%	59.5%

Illustration 5: Adult education participation rates in BiH compared with EU-27 averages

Source: Study on Adult Learning and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, DVV International, 2022, page 67.

Finally, the ALE system in our country, despite the administrative complexity, is full of potential and opportunities. Its purpose and societal role are increasingly being recognised, and it is certain that more effort and resources will be invested in the future to ensure that adult education fulfils its social purpose. This is reflected in the willingness of all governments and education providers to collaborate closely and further develop this system. We can proudly say that the adult education system, although administratively divided according to administrative regions, has succeeded in overcoming all barriers and facilitating mutual cooperation between entities, cantons and local communities within different administrative areas.

References

Centre for Developmental Evaluations and Social Research – CREDI (2021): Analysis of the local labour market – medium-term forecast of trends by occupations; with findings on the need for the development of employee competencies and readiness for cooperation with the education sector, for the period 2020-2025 in Zenica-Doboj Canton (Analiza lokalnog tržišta rada – srednjeročna prognoza kretanja po zanimanjima; s nalazima potreba za razvojem kompetencija zaposlenih i spremnosti na saradnju s obrazovnim sektorom, za period 2020-2025 u Zeničko-dobojskom kantonu). Sarajevo: Helvetas Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Čerkez, A., Berberović D. (2022): Adults' Attitudes and Opinions Towards Elements of Promotional Mix and Promotion of Adult Education Programs – Journal of Adult Education and Culture. Sarajevo: JU Bosanski kulturni centar.

Isanović Hadžiomerović, A., Pfanzelt A., Pfanzelt, H. (2022): Study on Adult Learning and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo: DVV International Office for BiH.

Official decision – Council of Ministers of BiH (2014): Decision on the adoption of the qualification framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Odluka o usvajanju kvalifikacijskog okvira u Bosni i Hercegovini). Sarajevo: Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Report (2018): Demography and social statistics – Adult education survey. Sarajevo: Agency for Statistics of BiH.

Report (2019): Bosnia and Herzegovina – Review of Efficiency of Services in Pre-University Education. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Report (2019b): Western Balkans Labor Market Trends 2019. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Report (2020): Bosnia and Herzegovina Systematic Country Diagnostic Update. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Report (2021): Information on the implementation of the strategic platform for adult education development in the context of lifelong learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2014 – 2020 (Informacija o implementaciji strateške platforme razvoja obrazovanja odraslih u kontekstu cjeloživotnog učenja u Bosni i Hercegovini za period 2014 – 2020). Sarajevo: Ministry of Civil Affairs.

Report (2023): Country note: Adult Learning and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Brussels: European Training Foundation.

Report (2024): Demography and social statistics – Labor Force Survey for the third quarter of 2024. Sarajevo: Agency for Statistics of BiH.

The Ministry of Science, Education, Sports and Culture of ZDK (2022): The plan of adult education in Zenica – Doboj canton for 2022–2024. Zenica: Government of Zenica – doboj canton.

Links

Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina: https://bhas.gov.ba/Calendar/Category?id=15&page=7&statGroup=15&tabId=0

ALE centre and ALDI Association: https://www.aldi.ba/

Nova zanimanja ALE centre: https://novazanimanja.ba/

Centre for Investigative Reporting: https://cin.ba/en/

Chamber of Economics of Sarajevo Canton: https://pksa.ba/?page_id=17466&lang=en

DVV International, Country Office for Bosnia and Herzegovina: https://www.dvv-international.ba/

Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_aes_100/default/table?lang=en

Nana Chabukiani

From goodwill to policy: The case of adult education centres in Georgia

Adult learning and education (ALE), and lifelong learning (LLL), remain largely unregulated at policy and strategy levels in Georgia. Additionally, the challenging context – including a centralised government, a discrediting discourse, and prevailing mistrust toward the non-governmental sector – creates significant obstacles to advocating for ALE and LLL. Despite the major strides that have been made in recent years, the field continues to be fragmented and underdeveloped. Local adult learning and education centres however persist in promoting ALE and LLL within their communities. This article argues that, in the absence of a national policy, the goodwill and values of individual local authorities are crucial to the success of these advocacy efforts.

Introduction

The Khoni Adult Learning and Education Centre (ALE Centre) is one of 15 ALE centres in Georgia which have been providing non-formal education opportunities since its establishment in 2020. Situated in the centre of Khoni municipality in the Imereti region, the centre offers educational programmes tailored to meet the diverse needs of young people and adults across all age groups. Its primary goal is to empower individuals by facilitating continued education, skill development, and personal growth, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

The centre provides an array of courses and training programmes spanning professional and personal development. Central to its programme is the Adult Learning Pack (ALP), a unified educational programme designed to address the multifaceted needs of adult learners that "'ties up' the adult development chain which encompasses the whole process of inclusion of persons in meaningful activities that help them to benefit financially and psychologically, supports their constant development, and secures a better future." (DVV International's Georgia Country Office, 2020). The ALP is made up of the following components: the personal development programme, vocational education, cultural education, civic education, financial literacy, sport and health education, children's/youth programme, legal literacy, and psycho-social programmes for children and adults. This holistic approach equips learners with diverse skills, supporting both personal and professional growth. Each Khoni ALE centre

Illustration 1. Khoni ALE Center

Source: Khoni ALE Center

offers an average of 7-8 educational courses to its beneficiaries annually. The centre has had a total of more than 5,000 beneficiaries since the day of the establishment. Moreover, as a member of the Georgian Adult Education Network (GAEN), the Khoni ALE Centre actively advocates for and contributes to the development of a systematic approach to ALE in Georgia.

The advocacy work and development of ALE and LLL in Georgia face significant challenges, primarily due to the absence of policies regulating these areas at both central and local levels. This policy gap hinders sustainable progress in advancing ALE and LLL. Additionally, the centralised governance system, societal attitudes that view learning as limited to individuals under 30, and a general mistrust of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), create a challenging environment for local NGOs such as the Khoni ALE centre to promote and advocate for these initiatives. Despite the challenges, the Khoni ALE centre has established strong collaborative ties with the local municipality. As a result of their dedicated efforts, support for the centre will be integrated into the Khoni municipality's 2025-2028 development strategy.

This article examines the policy and societal context in Georgia, highlighting the challenges posed by the absence of a formal ALE and LLL policy framework. Using examples from the three ALE centres – Khoni, Kaspi, and Keda –, the article explores the opportunities and obstacles in collaborating with local municipalities. It argues that, in the current "policy vacuum", informal connections, and the goodwill of individuals, play a crucial role in enabling progress and fostering collaboration. The analysis is based on an extensive desk review, and on five interviews conducted with representatives from the Khoni, Keda and Kaspi ALE centres, as well as with local government officials from Khoni and Kaspi.

Country policy context

Georgia lacks a systematic approach to ALE and LLL, with no comprehensive policy framework in place at either central or local level to support their development. While the country has taken notable steps to advance ALE following the signing of the Association Agreement and the adoption of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, significant gaps nonetheless persist. As a result, progress in the field remains limited and fragmented (Popovic, Kitiashvili, Samkharadze, 2024).

The 2016 Association Agreement was a turning point for Georgia's political and educational reforms, driving significant updates to education legislation aimed at harmonizing terminology and aligning with EU

standards. In 2019, Georgia adopted its National Qualifications Framework, enhancing education transparency and comparability with the European system. Despite these advancements, the terms “adult education” and “lifelong learning” remain undefined in the country’s legislation and policy documents. The absence of such definitions prevents adult education from being recognised as a distinct and integral component of the educational system.

The concept of non-formal education was notably introduced in the Law of Georgia on Vocational Education, positioning it as a component of lifelong learning and emphasising the acquisition of knowledge and skills beyond formal settings. This definition however falls short of adopting the holistic and inclusive approach to ALE advocated by the European Commission. It fails to incorporate ALE into broader strategies that prioritise inclusivity, active citizenship and social participation, thereby limiting its potential to contribute meaningfully to societal and individual development. Consequently, ALE is predominantly perceived through an economic lens, valued primarily for its role in workforce development and employability. This narrow focus overlooks its broader potential as a catalyst for personal growth, social inclusion, and active citizenship. The critical role of lifelong learning in advancing social and civic objectives remains largely underemphasised, limiting its transformative impact on both individuals and communities.

Georgia’s 2022 Education and Science Development Strategy acknowledges adult education, emphasising literacy, digital skills, and participation in both formal and non-formal education. The strategy however lacks a dedicated framework or policy addressing the diverse learning needs of adults at various stages of their lives. Additionally, its accompanying action plan fails to provide detailed, systematic measures to promote ALE across key areas such as civic education, community learning and personal development. As a result, adult education remains primarily focused on vocational education and training (VET), overlooking its broader societal roles and contributions.

Georgia has no policy framework for ALE at municipal level either. Local self-governing bodies have no specific policies addressing ALE or LLL. Municipal economic development strategies primarily focus on formal education, with an emphasis on kindergarten and school-level education, leaving adult education unaddressed.

Challenges to advocate for ALE

Not only is there a lack of policy on ALE and LLL in the country, but the environment is also hostile to advocating for this field. While multiple factors contribute to this situation, this article focuses on three key issues: the centralisation of the government system, widespread misperception of and mistrust towards the NGO sector in Georgia, and societal attitudes towards adult learning.

Centralisation

Georgia's governing structure is divided into three levels: central, regional and municipal. The country comprises nine administrative regions and three autonomous territories, two of which – Abkhazia and South Ossetia – are occupied by Russia. Regional administrations, led by state trustees appointed by the Prime Minister, function as decentralised entities of the central Government. Meanwhile, at local level Georgia has five self-governing cities and 59 municipalities, responsible for local taxation, spatial planning, socio-economic development, and basic public services. Local governments are elected and consist of a municipal council (sakrebulo) and a directly-elected mayor, with powers codified in the Code on Local Self-Governance.

Steps towards decentralisation began with Georgia's ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 2004. A new wave of reforms was launched in 2018, culminating in the Decentralisation Strategy 2020–2025. This strategy seeks to empower municipalities by devolving state competencies, increasing financial resources, and ensuring transparent, accountable local governance. Specific goals include boosting local governments' roles, improving financial autonomy, and fostering inclusive governance (Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe, 2021).

Despite these efforts, Georgia remains highly centralised. Local revenues account for just 4% of the national budget, and autonomous expenditures represent only 17%, far below EU averages (European Association for Local Democracy). Municipalities often act as mere executors of central decisions, lacking genuine decision-making authority (Losaberidze, 2023). Furthermore, political centralisation discourages consideration of local needs, and perpetuates a legacy of top-down governance inherited from the Soviet era. Effective implementation of the decentralisation strategy is crucial for creating more autonomous, capable, accountable local governments.

Mistrust towards NGOs

Another significant issue is existing scepticism towards non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that has long been prevalent among the local population in Georgia. While some recognise the value and importance of NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs), others remain distrustful, closely scrutinising their activities. Local NGOs are often accused of prioritising self-interest over public benefit, earning them the pejorative label of "grantichamia" or "grant-eaters". Recent developments, including the Government's hostile rhetoric against NGOs and the adoption of the Foreign Agents Law, have further deepened this mistrust, thus exacerbating the stigmatisation of the non-governmental sector.

Government representatives in Georgia have increasingly employed hostile rhetoric in recent years to discredit non-governmental organisations, labelling them as politically biased or as serving foreign interests. According to the Council of Europe's Expert Council on NGOs report (2024), the sources of stigmatisation include public authorities or high-ranking politicians from ruling parties, followed by pro-government media outlets or those promoting populist and xenophobic views, traditional churches, religious organisations, far-right extremist groups, and certain segments of the public, including those opposing LGBTIQ+ rights. This deliberate discourse aims to undermine public trust in the NGO sector, portraying these organisations not as essential contributors to democratic governance, but as entities working against the country's sovereignty.

This distrust was institutionalised with the adoption of the Foreign Agents Law, which mandates that NGOs and independent media outlets receiving 20 percent or more of their funding from abroad register as "foreign agents". This legislation stigmatises these organisations by associating them with foreign influence, effectively branding them as tools of external agendas. Together with the hostile discourse, the law has significantly deepened societal mistrust towards the non-governmental sector, framing their activities as contrary to national interests. The analysis of recent data (Caucasus Research Resource Centre, 2024) shows that the percentage of those who trust NGOs has decreased from 46 percent in 2008 to 25 percent in 2024.

In such an environment, local NGOs must invest significant time and effort to build trust among both the local community and municipal authorities. They need to demonstrate that their work is valuable and that the local community stands to benefit from their initiatives.

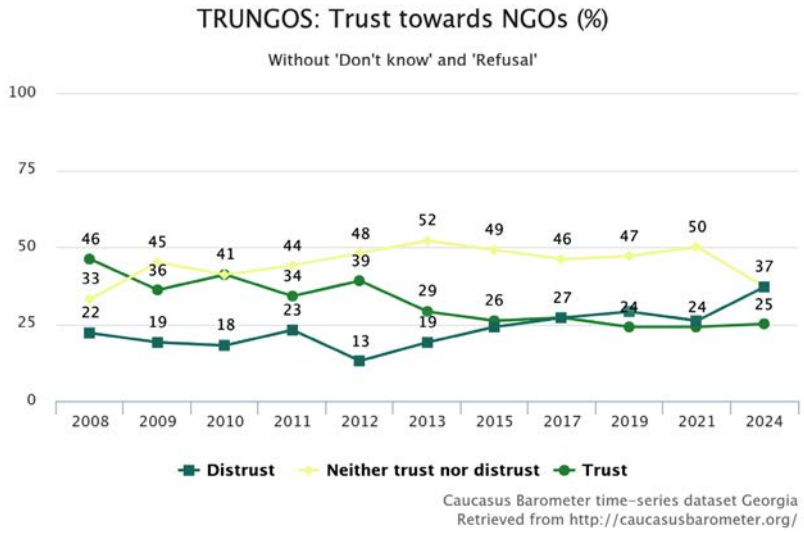

Illustration 2: TRUNGOS: Trust towards NGOs (%)

Attitudes within society

However, the challenge for ALE centres goes beyond trust issues, as there is also a prevailing belief that education is primarily for young people. Despite the pride in the saying "Education until death" (სწავლა სიბერემდე), the concept of adult education remains relatively new in Georgian society. According to the 2020-2021 Adult Education Survey in Georgia, 44% of respondents believe that learning becomes difficult after the age of 30, and 63% agree that individuals over 30 have too many other responsibilities to continue their education (DVV International, 2020-2021).

The absence of a policy and systematic approach to ALE and LLL, coupled with prevailing public attitudes, has resulted in significantly lower participation rates in non-formal education in Georgia. Only 13% of the population have engaged in non-formal educational activities over the past 12 months. In contrast, Eurostat data reveals that 47% of working-age adults in the EU (25-64) participated in education and training in 2022[1],

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Adult_learning_statistics

highlighting a considerable gap in participation levels between Georgia and European standards.

After examining the hostile environment for advocating and developing ALE and LLL, the next section of the article delves into how ALE centres manage to "survive" and operate within this challenging context. It also explores the strategies they employ to achieve their intended outcomes in adult learning and lifelong learning, despite the obstacles they face.

Collaboration in practice: Overcoming challenges in ALE centres

Despite the existing challenges, the efforts undertaken by stakeholders including ALE centres, GAEN and DVV International have significantly contributed to the institutionalisation of ALE in the country. A key step has been the creation of GAEN, a national network that serves as an umbrella organisation for ALE centres, fostering coordination and shared learning. Additionally, the development of strategic plans by ALE centres ensures a structured approach to their growth, and contributes to sustainability. Another crucial aspect is the formalisation of procedures within these centres, which strengthens their operations and reinforces the broader institutionalisation of ALE and LLL.

While these efforts have strengthened ALE's institutional foundation, significant challenges remain. In this complex landscape, ALE centres must be highly strategic in finding ways to collaborate and advocate for ALE and LLL, especially in light of the Foreign Agents Law and state officials' attempts to discredit the non-governmental sector. As the director of Khoni ALE Centre puts it: "Collaboration between local governments and the non-governmental sector has become more difficult in the country. We are also crossing a delicate threshold, investing human resources and carefully navigating the challenges. At times, we have to overlook certain things in order to deliver results for the people."

The examples of the Khoni, Kaspi and Keda ALE centres demonstrate that, in the absence of a state or local policy on Adult Learning and Education, recognition and acknowledgement of the benefits and results of the ALE centres is highly dependent on the perceptions, values and goodwill of the individuals in the local municipalities.

> "Everything happens on a personal level. It all depends on who is involved; if they don't like you personally, they might create problems for you" – said the Director of Keda ALE Centre.

Local authorities do not view supporting ALE as their primary responsibility, as it is not outlined in policy documents. Some however recognise the value of developing the education field in general, and choose to support the work of the ALE centres. The authorities of Keda, Kaspi and Khoni local municipalities fortunately see the importance of education.

> "Education is a top priority for me, as it allows me to help my citizens adapt to today's evolving demands by offering retraining opportunities" said the Mayor of Khoni municipality.
>
> "Anyone who approaches this issue with a clear understanding of the centre's operations will recognise its true importance for our population. From the very beginning, once I understood its potential and explained it to our Mayor, we took action without hesitation and brought it to our community," said the Deputy Mayor of Kaspi municipality.

The authorities of local municipalities in Khoni, Kaspi and Keda recognise the importance of ALE centres and education in general, and provide support for them by contributing in various ways to ensure their sustainability and success. One of the most important forms of support is the free provision of municipal buildings for ALE centres. For example, the Kaspi ALE centre is located in a municipal building under a five-year lease agreement, while the Khoni ALE centre is in a self-government building. The Kaspi municipality took steps to ensure that the building in which the ALE centre was to operate would be easily accessible to the local population, emphasising the importance of accessibility for the centre's success.

Illustration 3. Keda ALE Center

Source: Khoni ALE Center

Beyond offering space, local municipalities also cover utility costs. The Khoni municipality has been covering all utility expenses for the ALE centre since its establishment. Similarly, in Kaspi, the municipality allocated 5,000 GEL (approximately 1,600 EUR) in 2025 to cover heating costs for the ALE centre during the winter months.

The centre in Keda has benefited from co-financing arrangements. While the municipality does not have a separate budget allocation for adult education, it provides funding based on a 50/50% co-financing project, with the amount increasing over time. For instance, in 2023 the municipality co-financed 16,000 GEL (approximately 5,400 EUR), and in 2024, this amount increased to 46,000 GEL (approximately 15,500 EUR). This support has been crucial in enabling ALE centres to continue their work despite the challenges posed by the lack of dedicated funding and policies at national level.

Building partnerships: The benefits of collaboration in ALE

Both ALE centres and local municipalities recognise the mutual benefits of collaboration. The support provided by the local governments to the Khoni, Kaspi and Keda centres is invaluable, particularly for small non-profit organisations with limited resources. This support not only makes the centres more sustainable, but also increases their visibility and popularity among the local population. As the director of the Khoni ALE centre noted, “Having someone from the local government who values and appreciates this work is a significant asset, both for our centres and for the non-governmental sector as a whole.”

A significant challenge faced by these centres is the level of mistrust vis-à-vis the non-governmental sector, and the perception that it is too late for people to learn. “When adult education isn’t being discussed by the government or the community, and only one centre is advocating for it, people may view it as the centre’s goal rather than an opportunity for them,” as the director said. Support from local government is crucial in shifting this perception. It signals that adult education is not just the agenda of a single organisation, but a collective effort for shared goals and the greater good.

The local authorities also recognise the benefits of ALE centres in addressing community needs. Some local officials identify gaps in the education system and view the ALE centres as a solution. For example, the municipality in Khoni faced a lack of educational options, and the ALE centre was seen as a long-term solution, receiving immediate support from local officials. Similarly, in Kaspi, while a state vocational college exists, it mainly serves young people, leaving adults underserved. The Kaspi deputy mayor shared, “I was fascinated by the idea that the age of the learners

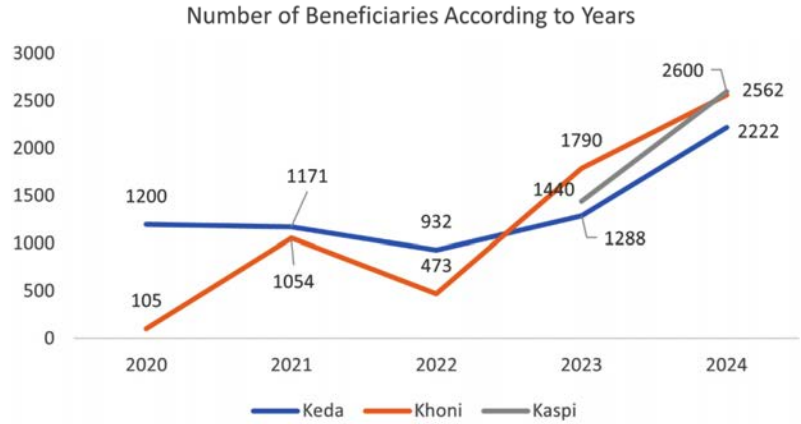

Illustration 4: Number of beneficiaries according to years

was not restricted. We even had a learner who was 80 years old. These courses are shorter and more practical, and the beneficiaries use them in their lives."

Moreover, the ALE centres play a key role in retraining local government staff, such as medical personnel and kindergarten teachers, in essential skills such as first aid. They also enhance employability by helping beneficiaries secure jobs or become self-employed, a critical issue in regions facing high unemployment. In Khoni, the municipality leverages the ALE centre as an asset when attracting potential investors, ensuring a qualified local workforce. ALE centres also help slow internal migration by providing skills, job opportunities, and avenues for self-realisation. Additionally, they serve as spaces for the integration of socially vulnerable groups such as Internally Displaced People (IDP), and empower women by encouraging them to step outside traditional roles and engage in educational activities.

The three centres in Khoni, Keda and Kaspi have jointly served over 16,000 beneficiaries since 2020. The chart below illustrates the number of beneficiaries across the years.

Building ownership and navigating informal support for ALE centres

Both Khoni and Kaspi municipality representatives demonstrate a strong sense of ownership over the ALE centres. It became evident in the course of the interviews that they view the centres as "their own".

As the Mayor of Khoni municipality stated, “I see the success of the ALE centre as my success, because I was involved from the very beginning.” Similarly, the Deputy Mayor of Kaspi highlighted their active role in shaping the programmes offered, noting, “We’re even involved in the process of programme selection. We sit together and discuss what could be most beneficial.”

This sense of ownership extends to the ALE centres themselves, which are equally comfortable with the municipalities perceiving the success as their own. As the Keda ALE centre director shared: “People are employed here at the centre, and the municipality pays for their salary. I don’t mind if the municipality says that they have employed people.” This mutual recognition of success reinforces the collaboration between the ALE centres and local authorities.

The greater the sense of ownership over the centre, the more likely it is that local municipalities will actively seek ways to support ALE centres. A clear example of this is the search for financial support. While adult education is not explicitly included in municipal budgets, local governments have found creative ways to allocate funds to ALE centres. Funding frequently does not come through the education sector, but is redirected from other categories such as youth development or cultural events. On the one hand, this reflects the broader reality that adult education is not perceived as a distinct field, whilst on the other hand, this strategy allows local governments to secure financial support for the centres despite the absence of formal recognition or designated funding streams.

For instance, as previously mentioned, Keda municipality receives financial support for the ALE centre through a co-financing project because there is no separate budget or grants for adult education. Similarly, the local municipality plans to sign a memorandum of understanding to cover the heating costs of the Kaspi ALE Centre. The Deputy Mayor of Kaspi explained, “Financing will be possible under the framework of the memorandum, and the funding will likely come from the youth budget line.”.

Informal arrangements and collaborations also play a crucial role in supporting ALE centres. In Kaspi, for example, when the roof of the ALE centre began leaking, the centre director approached the municipality informally. Based on a verbal agreement, the municipality took action and repaired the building. As the Kaspi ALE Centre director noted, “We try to fix things here internally, so that we don’t have to write to Germany [for support].”

In Khoni, the local municipality does not have an official usufruct agreement with the ALE centre, as the centre operates in a municipal building based on a verbal agreement. The local municipality was reluctant

Illustration 5. Kaspi ALE Center

Source: Khoni ALE Center

to establish a formal usufruct arrangement, which is a temporary agreement requiring bureaucratic renewal. The mayor of Khoni believes that the ALE centre provides valuable services to the entire municipality, and as such the centre should be exempt from additional administrative burdens.

Why formalisation matters

While informal collaboration can be effective, the question nonetheless arises: Why is it important to formalise these efforts? The municipal authorities in Kaspi believe that the definition of adult education at policy level is not essential for them to continue supporting the ALE centre. Regardless of formal recognition, they assert that the local government will provide support. Despite this position, Kaspi municipality has taken a significant step by including the ALE centre in their 2024-2027 development strategy. This document reviews the work of the ALE centre, and acknowledges it as a valuable asset to municipal development. However, it falls short of explicitly committing to structural and consistent support for the centre or adult education as a whole.

In contrast, Khoni municipality has taken this issue a step further. According to the municipality head, it was crucial for them to include support for the Khoni ALE centre in their strategic document. Notably, the director of the ALE centre was directly involved in the development of the strategy. She views this inclusion as a major achievement for the centre, stating: "This represents a significant step forward for our small centre and its activities. It encapsulates our goals and provides a summary of our efforts. Having adult education mentioned, even at the level of a term, in a document of local significance, constitutes meaningful progress. It highlights the recognition of our work and the role of adult education in the community. Moreover, it acknowledges what the local government has achieved in this area and outlines what needs to be done from 2025 to 2028."

The mayor of Khoni municipality believes that formally recognising support for the ALE centre in the strategy is critical, as it ensures that such support is not contingent on individuals. While the strategy document is still being finalised, the mayor pledges that it will explicitly outline the municipality's commitment to the ALE centre, and this commitment will be translated into concrete actions.

Conclusions

The inclusion of support for the ALE centre in Khoni municipality's strategic document marks a significant success in advocacy and in the formalisation of support for the centre. This decision by the mayor of Khoni is particularly notable in the context of a centralised government, where local municipalities often align with the central government's agenda. Once finalised, Khoni will be the only municipality to support an ALE centre at structural level, making the Khoni ALE centre the only one receiving strategic-level support from the local government.

While this may be viewed as a bottom-up approach, given the context of centralisation, it remains uncertain whether this process will truly evolve from the bottom up. However, should other local municipalities recognise the importance of adult education and become willing to support ALE centres, there is potential for this initiative to spread horizontally. In this case, Khoni could serve as a model for other municipalities to emulate, extending the impact of ALE support across the region.

References

Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) (2024): Caucasus barometer. Retrieved from https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb-ge/TRUNGOS-withoutdkra/

European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA): Challenges and Opportunities. A Brief Study on Local Governments in Georgia. Retrieved from https://www.alda-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/D-7.2-D17_compressed.pdf

Expert Council on NGO Law (2024): Stigmatisation of Non-Governmental Organisations in Europe. Retrieved from https://rm.coe.int/study-on-stigmatisation-of-ngos-in-europe-en/1680af95df

DVV International Georgia Country Office (2020): Adult Education Centers in Georgia. Tbilisi. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Georgia/Resources/20210517_AECs_in_Georgia.pdf

DVV International Georgia Country Office (2020-2021): Adult Education Survey in Georgia. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.ge/fileadmin/files/caucasus-turkey/Georgia/Resources/Raodenobrivi%20kvleva%20_GEORIA%20-%20English.pdf

Losaberidze, D. (2023): Self- Government in Georgia – Imitating Change Without Purpose? Retrieved from https://ge.boell.org/en/2023/05/15/self-government-georgia-imitating-change-without-purpose

Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) (2021): Decentralisation and local public Administration Reform in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Learning from the Past – preparing for the future. Retrieved from https://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Decentralisation-Reform-in-EaP-Preparing-for-the-Future.pdf

Popovic, K., Kitiashvili, T., Samkharadze, T. (2024): Enhancing Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Georgia. A Road-map for Policy and Practice. Tbilisi

Vullnet Gusia

Youth and Adult Learning and Education Centre (YALEC) in Peja, Kosovo – cooperation between the people, local authorities and international partners

This article shares the journey of establishing the Youth and Adult Learning and Education Centre (YALEC) in Peja, Kosovo. It highlights how local authorities, international partners, and the people of Peja, worked together to make lifelong learning accessible to everyone. With practical examples and a focus on human connections, this story demonstrates how education can empower individuals and strengthen communities. Inspired by Germany's Volkshochschule (vhs) model, the article explores challenges, solutions and the impact of ALE policy development in our city.

Introduction

A new chapter in education has begun in the heart of Peja, surrounded by Kosovo's beautiful mountain landscapes. What was once a youth centre has now been transformed into the Youth and Adult Learning and Education Centre (YALEC), a centre for lifelong learning. As someone deeply involved in this initiative, I have seen first-hand how collaboration and determination can turn a simple idea into a valuable resource for the community. This article reflects on my experience as a representative of Peja's local government, from organising the youth centre through, to building YALEC in Peja. The journey was challenging, but through partnerships with DVV International and inspiration from best practices in Germany, we created a space that meets both the educational and the professional needs of young people and adults. I hope this story inspires other communities to see education as a lifelong journey.

The History of the Peja Youth Centre

The story of the Peja Youth Centre began years ago with a simple idea from a group of young people. They dreamed of a space where they could gather, share ideas, and work on projects that mattered to them. At first, they had no resources, but with the support of the Municipality of Peja, they secured an abandoned building – a neglected venue that had lost its purpose. Together, they brought it back to life.

Initially, the centre operated informally, run by young people, for young people. They organised events, held workshops, and welcomed anyone who wanted to contribute. Over time, they realised the potential of this venue. What if it could be more than just a meeting place? What if it could become a hub for creativity and activism?

With this vision, the group formalised their efforts. They registered as an NGO, and expanded their operations. Recognising their initiative, the municipality granted them official office space in the venue. Over the years, the youth centre became a platform for civic engagement and youth empowerment.

The programmes offered at the youth centre reflected the energy and aspirations of Peja's young people. Environmental workshops taught participants how to protect their natural surroundings. Public art initiatives encouraged self-expression and beautified the city. More than 300 young people took part each year, bringing fresh energy and ideas to the community.

The context of Adult Learning and Education in Kosovo

Kosovo is a young nation of 1.8 million people in the Western Balkans, and operates a decentralised governance system. The national Government, led by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), sets education policies, while 38 municipalities, including Peja, manage local implementation, giving us flexibility to address community needs. The municipality of Peja is surrounded by the Albanian Alps, and today it is one of the most attractive touristic areas and one of the most developed economic centres in Kosovo.

Peja is a city with a population of around 100,000. It is one of Kosovo's largest municipalities, and is known for its tourism and cultural heritage. Our local government, through directorates like Education and Culture, Youth and Sports, oversees schools, youth programmes and non-formal education, collaborating with MEST to align with national goals.

Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in Kosovo has historically been informal, relying on NGOs and international partners such as DVV International for literacy and vocational programmes.

For a long time, adult learning and education (ALE) in Kosovo has been informal and fragmented. ALE relies heavily on the efforts of community groups, NGOs and international organisations to provide basic literacy classes and vocational training. However, the passage of Kosovo's Law on Adult Education (2013) has provided a framework for transforming lifelong learning, particularly through ALE Centres.

The law, formally known as Law No. 04/L-143 on Adult Education, regulates non-formal education to enhance employability, social inclusion and civic engagement (MEST, 2013: 2). The Law establishes a structured system for adult education, mandating municipalities to develop non-formal programmes aligned with the National Qualifications Framework. It regulates: (1) the accreditation of adult education providers, ensuring quality standards, (2) certification of courses, allowing participants to earn recognised credentials, (3) inclusive access, prioritising disadvantaged groups such as women, minorities and the unemployed, and (4) coordination between MEST, the municipalities, and vocational training centres, to address labour market needs (MEST, 2013: 3–5). It also encourages partnerships with NGOs and international organisations to fund and design programmes.

Despite progress, challenges remain. Many adults did not participate in learning programmes due to a lack of awareness, time or resources. Unemployment rates were high, particularly among young people and women. Many adults also lacked the skills needed to compete on the

labour market. Addressing these challenges required not only new policies, but also a shift in attitudes toward lifelong learning.

A study in 2023 revealed that "72% of adults in Peja reported never participating in any non-formal education programmes", highlighting the pressing need for increased awareness and accessibility in adult education initiatives." (Survey Regarding the Needs for Adult Learning and Education Centres in the Municipality of Peja, 2023).

The municipality of Peja embraced this challenge. This 2023 survey, conducted by Link-B and supported by DVV International, was the cornerstone of YALEC's development. It provided valuable insights for Peja's needs by revealing community demands. The survey's purpose was to assess the state of ALE and identify non-formal programmes in order to bridge labour market gaps (Link-B, 2023: 5). It employed a mixed methodology combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component surveyed 598 adults aged 18–65, stratified by place of residence (43.2% urban, 56.8% rural) and gender (51.1% men, 48.9% women), ensuring representativeness with a ±5% margin of error at 95% confidence (Link-B, 2023: 8, 9).

Key findings shaped YALEC's strategy. Education levels showed that 46.6% had upper secondary education, but higher education (26.1% Bachelor's, 10.2% Master's) was often misaligned with market needs (Link-B, 2023: 12). Most adults expressed a strong demand for non-formal courses: 74.2% for English, 67.7% for digital marketing, 67.3% for business management, and 65.5% for Microsoft Office, while traditional craft training programmes such as tailoring, carpentry, welding and electrical installation were less popular, attracting around 20% of respondents (Link-B, 2023: 20). Additionally, 38% believed that local centres and NGOs should provide ALE (Link-B, 2023: 18).

These insights directly impacted YALEC's programmes, which is why we prioritised free courses in English, digital marketing and business management.

Learning from Germany: vhs as an inspiration

Visiting Germany to learn about the Volkshochschule (vhs) system was an unforgettable experience for us. Thanks to an invitation from DVV International, we spent ten days exploring how these centres operate and why they are so successful. They offer a wide variety of programmes, from language lessons and job training to art workshops, all designed to meet the needs of the local population.

Illustration 1. Adult Learning and Education as a Responsibility of Local Authorities, Bonn, Germany.

Source: DVV International Kosovo

A major highlight of the visit was attending the conference "Adult Learning and Education as a Responsibility of Local Authorities in Bonn.

The event brought together people from municipalities, ALE centres and government offices to talk about Germany's ALE system. We learned how local governments can help by making policies, giving funding, and making ALE programmes easier to access. A key lesson was that ALE centres should work closely with local governments to make sure their programmes meet local needs. During our visit to the ALE Centres in Bonn, we saw how these ideas are used in real life and how they help people.

Our team also spent several days in Bingen, hosted by the remarkable vhs team led by René, alongside Maria and Yannik. Their warmth went beyond a professional exchange; they welcomed us like family, sharing not only their expertise but also Bingen's rich history and vibrant culture. They guided us through the city, showing us landmarks such as the Rhine river.

In Bingen, we saw how education can bring people closer. The programmes were open to everyone, from retired workers discovering new hobbies, to immigrants improving their language skills. For example, intergenerational art classes united participants across backgrounds, a model that resonated with Peja's diverse population.

The warm and welcoming atmosphere was inspiring. We also learned about Hildegard of Bingen, a historical figure from the area whose ideas about holistic learning have also influenced the town's educational philosophy. Her teachings focused on balancing intellectual growth with emotional well-being. This made the experience even more beautiful.

What truly strengthened our bonds was discovering shared ties. René and his team had previously visited Prizren, Bingen's twin city in Kosovo.

During our visit to Germany, we understood the importance of training educators; vhs staff regularly receive professional development to meet the diverse needs of their participants. This inspired us to focus on training for YALEC's educators, ensuring that they have the skills and knowledge to provide high-quality programmes tailored to our city in Peja.

Finally, we witnessed the collaborations between vhs centres and local governments. By funding their programmes to promoting them, those partnerships demonstrated how local authorities can play a role in sustaining lifelong learning initiatives.

The most important lesson we learned, however, was that vhs is not just about classrooms, it is about building a learning culture that includes everyone.

Developing policies and promoting lifelong learning

The opening of YALEC didn't happen by chance. It was the result of careful planning and thoughtful policies. Before the centre became a reality, DVV International in Kosovo conducted a study to understand what the people of Peja really needed. This research revealed gaps in key skills and highlighted areas where training could make the biggest impact. These findings shaped the programmes that YALEC now offers.

Another important step forward was integrating lifelong learning into local development strategies. The municipality of Peja made lifelong learning a priority because we understood that it could help people acquire the skills they need to improve their lives. Whether it is finding a better job, or maybe starting a business, or just building self-confidence, providing lifelong learning courses gives everyone the chance to grow.

Partnerships were key in turning this vision into reality. Working closely with DVV International brought in valuable expertise and much-needed financial support. This collaboration strengthened our efforts and helped us design a centre that could truly meet the community's expectations.

When plans for creating YALEC were underway, the municipality of Peja wanted to make sure the process was simple and effective. Instead of letting bureaucracy slow things down, we chose to involve the Local Youth

Illustration 2. Signing of the memorandum of understanding, DVV, LYAC and Municipality of Peja

Source: DVV International Kosovo

Action Council (LYAC), an NGO that represents youth organisations in Peja.

To make this partnership official, the municipality, DVV International and LYAC signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU). This agreement clearly outlined the roles and responsibilities of each partner: It also granted LYAC the right to manage and use the centre's facilities, ensuring that the community's voice remained at the heart of this project.

The involvement of LYAC with its connections in the youth community helped us reach people who might not usually join such programmes. One of our biggest challenges was raising awareness about the importance of adult education. Many people were unfamiliar with the idea of lifelong learning and were hesitant to take part. Traditional views about education, often seen as something only for children and young adults, were dominant among Peja citizens.

We recognised that launching YALEC was only half the battle – getting people to embrace lifelong learning was and still is the real challenge. To change this, we launched a series of awareness campaigns to promote YALEC's courses. We used flyers, local radio and social media to share messages; we held three events in Peja's main square, with booths explaining courses.

Our flagship campaign "Skills for Tomorrow" used a mix of radio and social media to reach Peja's diverse population. These ads, broadcast daily for one month, reached 10,000 listeners. We posted videos of YALEC classes on Facebook and Instagram, gaining 3,000 engagements and 200

direct inquiries. It drew 500 attendees across events, with 60 enrolling in courses.

The campaigns were organised by Peja municipality's directorate for Culture, Youth and Sports, in partnership with the LYAC. Youth volunteers distributed 500 flyers in urban and rural areas. Challenges remain, with some rural areas being hard to reach, but we are planning mobile campaigns to visit villages, ensuring YALEC helps everyone.

Looking back, the process of building YALEC taught us many valuable lessons. It showed us the importance of listening to the community, of being adaptable, and of always keeping the bigger picture in mind. The challenges we faced helped us grow and create a centre that can really make a difference.

Now, as YALEC moves forward, we hope it will not only serve as a model for other municipalities in Kosovo, but also inspire communities everywhere to invest in lifelong learning.

Establishing the framework of YALEC Peja & local-level developments

As chief of youth in the municipality of Peja, I have been deeply involved in shaping YALEC in Peja. After the results of the survey by DVV International revealed critical gaps in Peja's adult education landscape – with 72% of adults never having participated in non-formal education –, we realised that we needed to change our focus. I will outline our approach to addressing these challenges through strategic measures in the municipality of Peja.

In response to these findings, we as local authorities created YALEC Peja in partnership with DVV International and a local civil society organisation. Our first priority was to make education accessible to everyone. We launched free courses focused on the skills most needed in the local economy. Since opening, YALEC has trained around 200 adults, ensuring that 50% of the places are reserved for women and minorities to promote inclusivity. To address the fact that 45% of adults cited lack of time as their biggest barrier, we introduced flexible evening and weekend classes.

We also recognised that for YALEC to succeed, it needed stable support. That is why the municipality increased funding for vocational training and committed 20,000 euros annually to cover YALEC's utilities and staff salaries. Together with DVV International, we renovated the former youth centre, equipping it with new computers and technology to support IT and vocational training. This ensured both the quality and the sustainability of YALEC's operations.

YALEC expanded its capacity by 20% in just three months. We hired four new trainers, and developed online learning modules to reach rural

communities. Through civic education workshops, we engaged 100 participants from the Albanian, Serbian and Roma communities, thus helping to foster social cohesion in Peja.

Building YALEC was a collective effort. DVV International provided funding and expertise, LYAC mobilised young people, “Haxhi Zeka” University supported curriculum development, and local NGOs offered training for trainers.

To guarantee YALEC’s future, we also created an ALE Council, led by the Directorate for Culture, Youth and Sports, to oversee funding and policy development. In 2024, we passed a municipal ordinance that officially integrated adult learning and education into Peja’s development strategy.

Through this collective, strategic approach, we are not just offering courses – we are building a more inclusive city. By listening to our people and responding to their needs, we are laying the foundation for a more connected, skilled, hopeful future.

The impact of YALEC in Peja’s community

The opening of YALEC in Peja marked a new chapter for the community. Its inauguration symbolised a commitment to creating opportunities and fostering growth. With YALEC now open, its true impact will unfold in the coming years.

The centre aims to make education accessible to everyone, whether young adults starting their careers, or older residents looking to learn new skills. YALEC Peja offers a welcoming environment where individuals can gain practical knowledge, build confidence, and connect with others in their community.

This centre is already beginning to redefine education in Peja. For some, it will be their first step back into learning since leaving school. For others, it will be a chance to develop advanced skills to grow their careers. The centre’s goal is clear: to ensure that education is accessible to everyone, regardless of their age or background.

Bringing people from different backgrounds together in a shared space encourages collaboration, mutual understanding, and the exchange of ideas. Over time, this could lead to a stronger and more cohesive community, where people work together to overcome challenges and seize opportunities.

The municipality of Peja, with support from DVV International, is committed to making YALEC a long-term success. By regularly assessing community needs, the centre will remain relevant and impactful, adapting its programmes to meet the community’s changing needs.

Illustration 3. The opening ceremony of the YALEC Peja

Source: DVV International Kosovo

YALEC's success will not only benefit individuals, but also strengthen the community as a whole, fostering unity and collaboration. By bringing together people of different ages, backgrounds and experiences, it fosters a spirit of unity and collaboration. The centre will be a space where ideas are exchanged, support is offered, and relationships are built. Over time, this could lead to a more cohesive and vibrant community, with education as its unifying thread.

References

Danuza, T., Pfanzelt, A. & Pfanzelt, H. (2021): Adult learning and education in Kosovo. DVV International.

DVV International (2023): Research Regarding The Needs For Adult Learning And Education Centers In The Municipality Of Peja, DVV International.

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2013): Law No. 04/L-143 on adult education and training in the Republic of Kosovo. Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo.

Peja Municipality (2024): Youth and Adult Learning and Education Centre (YALEC) programme report. Unpublished internal document.

Daniela Munca-Aftenev

National policy development enables local authorities and activities of ALE Centres – the case of Chișinău municipality, Republic of Moldova

Chișinău's membership in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities in 2020 marked a turning point in fostering lifelong learning and sustainable development. Through collaboration with DVV International, the city established Moldova's first Adult Learning Centre, offering formal, non-formal and informal education to thousands of adults. The 2024 revision of the Republic of Moldova's Code of Education provided a robust framework for ALE, enabling diverse learning formats, certification of competencies, and municipal funding for tailored programmes. Chișinău leveraged this to develop a comprehensive strategy, centralise ALE initiatives, and enhance accessibility through distance learning and infrastructure improvements. The Municipal Centre for Adult Learning and Education (CMIEA) became a cornerstone, offering over 50 courses and prioritising disadvantaged groups, fostering inclusivity, personal and professional growth, and community engagement. Chișinău's efforts serve as a replicable model for advancing adult education through strategic planning, partnerships and innovation.

Beginnings

In 2020, Chișinău became a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. This milestone marked a significant step in the city's efforts to align with UNESCO's goals of fostering lifelong learning and sustainable development. The collaboration between the Chișinău municipality and DVV International exemplifies these efforts, showcasing how resources can be mobilised across sectors to promote inclusive education at all levels, from basic to higher education, while revitalising family and community learning, facilitating workplace learning, expanding the use of modern educational technologies, enhancing quality and excellence in education, and nurturing a lifelong learning culture.

A notable achievement in this context is the establishment of the first adult learning centre in the Republic of Moldova. This centre provides formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities for adults, serving as a tangible outcome of coordinated efforts between local public authorities and DVV International. These efforts combined resources, budgeting, staffing, and logistical support, to create a space where adult learners can thrive. The centre demonstrates how Chișinău is advancing individual empowerment, social inclusion, economic growth, cultural enrichment, and sustainable development, thus embodying a progressive approach to the implementation of adult learning policy.

Illustration 1. Open dialogue session.

Source: The Municipal Centre for Adult Learning and Education (CMIEA)

Revision of the Code of Education

The revision of the Republic of Moldova's Code of Education in April 2024 marked a significant milestone for Adult Learning and Education (ALE) at national level. These policy and legislative changes created a robust framework for expanding and improving ALE practices, which had a direct and positive impact at local level, particularly in Chișinău municipality. The revised Code introduced a comprehensive regulatory framework for adult education, ensuring that all ALE providers align their activities with the newly-established regulation. This framework replaced Government Decision No. 193/2017 on adult education, which had become outdated and fell short of addressing the evolving needs of the adult population.

The revised Code strengthened the recognition of different types of education: formal education, referring to structured programmes leading to recognised qualifications, non-formal education, based on organised learning activities outside formal systems, such as workshops and community training sessions and informal education – learning gained through daily activities, experiences, or self-directed efforts.

This change provided Chișinău municipality with the legal foundation to diversify its ALE offerings, catering to a wider range of learning needs and preferences. The revision legalised multiple organisational formats for adult professional training, including full-time programmes, part-time programmes, and distance learning programmes. The formal recognition of distance learning in particular expanded opportunities for online education, which had not been regulated before 2024. This development allowed Chișinău municipality to include online learning as a formal component of the programme offered by its municipal Centre for Adult Education.

One of the most impactful changes was the establishment of mechanisms for certifying professional and functional competencies acquired through formal, non-formal or informal education. These certifications can now be issued by authorised structures, based on regulations approved by the Ministry of Education and Research. This provision enabled Chișinău to integrate competency-based certifications into its municipal adult education initiatives, adding value to learners' efforts and enhancing their employability.

The revised Code made local public authorities at the first and second administrative levels responsible for financing adult education programmes that address specific local development needs. This critical modification allowed Chișinău municipality to allocate local budget funds for the operation and programmes of the Chișinău Municipal Centre for Adult Education (CMIEA).

The revised Code of Education therefore created favourable conditions for advancing adult education at municipal level. These include the development of a Municipal Strategy, as the municipality utilised the strengthened legal framework to create its own strategy for promoting formal, non-formal and informal education. This strategy reflects the specific needs and aspirations of Chișinău's adult population, a diversification of adult learning programmes, which offered greater flexibility in recognising non-formal and informal education, and enabled CMIEA to design diverse, tailored programmes for citizens, as well as increasing accessibility by incorporating distance learning into its offerings. The centre thus made education accessible to individuals who face barriers such as time constraints or physical disabilities to attending in-person programmes, and enhanced recognition of learning outcomes, whilst at the same time the certification of competencies acquired through various learning contexts added a new dimension of credibility and utility to the centre's programmes, aligning with both local labour market needs and individual career aspirations.

The 2024 revisions to the Republic of Moldova's Code of Education have thus created a supportive national policy and legislative environment for ALE, fostering significant progress at local level. Chișinău municipality has leveraged these changes to establish a more inclusive, flexible, impactful ALE ecosystem, better addressing the diverse educational needs of its citizens.

Municipal Department for Lifelong Learning

It is obvious that Chișinău municipality has taken significant steps in recent years to widen access to ALE, improve the policy environment for lifelong learning, and enhance cooperation with local authorities. These measures reflect a comprehensive approach to addressing the educational needs of adults across various demographics, ensuring inclusivity and fostering a culture of continuous learning.

To address lifelong learning and adult education on a broader scale, Chișinău municipality has restructured its Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sports. This department oversees a range of educational institutions, including kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, youth centres, sports schools, and after-school centres. While these institutions previously offered lifelong learning opportunities independently, a centralised framework was absent.

The creation of a dedicated Department for Lifelong Learning marked a pivotal step toward centralising and streamlining ALE efforts. This

department is tasked with centralising adult education initiatives across the municipality, planning and securing an annual budget for ALE activities, and developing municipal strategies for lifelong learning opportunities targeting adults.

Establishing the Chișinău Municipal Centre for Adult Education

The Municipal Centre for Adult Learning and Education (CMIEA) in Chișinău represents a pioneering effort in the Republic of Moldova to advance Adult Learning and Education (ALE). The centre prioritises inclusivity, ensuring that vulnerable groups have access to free educational opportunities. CMIEA was established in 2023 as a collaboration effort with DVV International Moldova. The municipality provided a 700-square-meter facility free of charge, and employed full-time staff, while DVV International covered trainers' fees, teaching materials and equipment.

The infrastructure includes a space for hosting large-scale events and lectures, a computer lab equipped with modern technology to facilitate digital literacy courses, a sewing room designed for practical skill-building in clothing design and tailoring, multipurpose classrooms adaptable for a variety of learning activities and group sizes, and free wi-fi ensuring connectivity for both learners and trainers. The centre offers over 50 formal, non-formal and informal courses and programmes which are facilitated by expert trainers and tailored to meet diverse community needs across three

Illustration 2. Digital workplace basics

Source: The Municipal Centre for Adult Learning and Education (CMIEA)

main pillars: personal development, where courses include healthy nutrition, parenting strategies and public speaking; professional growth, including topics such as digital literacy, project writing, entrepreneurship, and social media management as well as civic engagement; education on topics such as leadership, community participation and special educational needs. The centre's team includes 12 dedicated staff members and 32 expert trainers. Collaborations with local and international organisations enhance the quality and diversity of offerings. In addition to formal courses, CMIEA's clubs create an environment for informal education, fostering lifelong learning and community bonding.

Beneficiaries are aged 18 to 80, which promotes intergenerational learning and inclusivity. Among the most sought-after courses are English and Romanian for beginners, digital literacy and advanced Microsoft Office skills, practical courses such as tailoring, photography and healthy cooking, as well as specialised events including leadership training and managing daily activities for children with special needs. CMIEA fosters informal education through interest-based clubs, providing a platform for social interaction and skill development. Key clubs include the Leadership Club focused on personal growth and leadership skills, meeting twice monthly, the Senior Club dedicated to promoting active aging and lifelong learning among senior citizens, with sessions twice monthly, the Trainers' Club aiming to enhance teaching methods and collaboration among educators, meeting monthly, and the Fathers' Club, which promotes gender equality and active fatherhood, supported by EU-funded programmes.

Illustration 3. Self-Awareness & Communication Through Metaphoric Cards

Source: The Municipal Centre for Adult Learning and Education (CMIEA)

This centre has served over 4,000 adults in less than two years, offering a wide range of learning opportunities tailored to their needs. In addition to existing initiatives, the Chișinău Department of Education, Youth and Sports undertook significant efforts to enhance access to ALE opportunities by investing in infrastructure improvements. Specifically, during 2024 and 2025, the department allocated resources for the following upgrades to CMIEA: Comprehensive insulation work was carried out, ensuring better energy efficiency and a more comfortable learning environment throughout the year, regardless of seasonal weather conditions. New windows and doors were installed, improving the facility's security, accessibility, and overall functionality for hosting classes and educational programmes for adults. These infrastructure enhancements have significantly improved the quality of the learning environment, making the centre more appealing and accessible to adult learners. This investment reflects the municipality's commitment to fostering lifelong learning opportunities by addressing both structural and logistical barriers to participation.

In 2024, Chișinău municipality, in collaboration with DVV International, engaged an external expert from Germany to help with designing a visionary document for ALE and CMIEA. This will form the basis for a five-year-strategy which aims to define the regulations governing how municipal structures address adult education programmes, establish clear roles and responsibilities for municipal institutions in implementing ALE initiatives, outline funding mechanisms, including partnerships with international organisations and local stakeholders, develop evaluation frameworks to monitor and assess the impact of ALE programmes, and foster inclusivity by addressing the specific learning needs of diverse adult populations, including marginalised and underserved groups. By formalising a central body for ALE, Chișinău municipality has ensured sustained support for adult education. The establishment of annual budgets and municipal strategies provides a stable policy framework, facilitating consistent programme delivery and long-term planning.

Survey and review of data

CMIEA's priority enrolment system ensures that disadvantaged groups, including unemployed individuals, single parents, families on a low-income, and persons with disabilities, receive educational support. Creative outreach strategies, such as public transport flyers and online campaigns, have attracted over 8,000 registrations since the centre's inception. A pre-launch survey with 4,000 respondents allowed CMIEA to develop a learner-

centred curriculum aligned with current community demands. The courses emphasise practical hands-on learning.

Meanwhile, more data are available from a survey (so far unpublished) which provided information from 487 participants in programmes provided by CMIEA. A first finding details the current age range, whereby 47.2% are in the group aged between 36-45, 23% between 46-55, and 18.7% in the 26-35 age range. Only few are younger than 26, but those beyond 55 may soon also be a growing target group.

The majority of participants are women, at a level of 91.2%, and 8.8% are men.

Looking at the socio-economic status of participants, so far the majority of 67.6% are employed, and 13.8% are unemployed. 10.3% are mothers on maternity leave, and 6.4% are retired.

About one-third, i.e. 34.7%, stated that they were socially or economically vulnerable, citing a variety of reasons.

The participants provided interesting perspectives on why they took part in the courses, events or other activities. Respondents could select answers from 15 priority areas, and these four received the highest votes:

- 66.7% - I was curious about how to develop my professional and personal skills.
- 49.3% - I really liked the classes.
- 49.3% - The classes were free of charge.
- 37.8% - I urgently needed to improve my professional/personal skills.

Answering the question: “How many courses have you attended?” participants answered:

- 48.7% - 1 course
- 28.3% - 2 courses
- 13.8% - 3 courses

So far, all the courses have been free of charge. When participants were asked whether they would be willing to pay reasonable fees (below market prices), almost half (48.9%) said that they would, while 46.6% were not sure.

Finally, participants were invited to state their opinions on the teaching and content quality, the schedule and location, as well as the administration. They answered as follows:

- How do you evaluate the teaching quality? 75.6% awarded 5 points out of 5.
- How do you evaluate the teaching content? 68.7% awarded 5 points out of 5.

- How do you evaluate the schedule? 52.16 % awarded 5 points out of 5.
- How do you evaluate the location? 39.4% awarded 5 points out of 5.
- How do you evaluate the administration? 73.9% awarded 5 points out of 5.

While all areas in fact received a relatively positive percentage, almost 40% were somewhat critical of CMIEA's location, as they find the current location less satisfactory. This seems to be primarily attributed to the centre's location in Riscani, which is situated approximately 20-30 minutes from the city centre. This means that a significant proportion of participants have expressed a preference for a more central location. It may also be helpful to better understand why half of the participants seem to opt for greater scheduling flexibility, but CMIEA finds it difficult to respond easily, as the scheduling limitations stem from the fixed capacity of the facility, which comprises seven classrooms available for concurrent use. This constraint dictates a somehow more rigid schedule that may not accommodate the diverse availability of our participants. A significant proportion of our attendees are working professionals who express a preference for evening sessions. While morning slots remain available, participant demand during these hours is substantially lower. The survey responses indicating inconvenient scheduling are thus likely to reflect this discrepancy between available times and participant preferences.

All in all, it seems a very constructive procedure to evaluate early, and perhaps regularly, whether the provision achieves the expected quality level, and thereby meets the interests and needs of current and potential participants.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

The Municipal Centre for Adult Learning and Education (CMIEA) in Chișinău has successfully demonstrated the transformative power of ALE through innovative programming, robust infrastructure, and inclusive practices. Its learner-centred model, supported by strong partnerships and municipal funding, serves as a replicable framework for other cities and countries. By addressing the educational and social needs of diverse populations, CMIEA has become a beacon of empowerment and lifelong learning in Moldova. Recommendations for replication in other cities could include a participatory design process. Involving communities in course development ensures alignment with local needs and strong municipal support. As

seen in Chișinău, dedicated resources are crucial for sustaining ALE initiatives, maintaining the focus on inclusivity by prioritising enrolment for underrepresented groups to maximise social impact, and using diverse methods of instruction to combine formal, non-formal and informal approaches to cater for varied learner needs and creative outreach. Innovative promotion strategies should be used to increase awareness and engagement.

The collaboration with DVV International exemplifies effective partnerships between local authorities and international organisations. DVV's financial and logistical support was instrumental in launching and sustaining CMIEA. The centralised approach promotes cooperation among various educational institutions under the municipality's administration, creating synergies, and ensuring resource optimisation. The active involvement of local communities, reflected in the high participation rates at the Municipal Centre, highlights the importance of aligning ALE initiatives with the needs and interests of residents.

Chișinău municipality's concerted efforts to broaden access to ALE, strengthen policy frameworks, and foster collaboration with local authorities and international partners, serve as a model for advancing lifelong learning. The initiatives undertaken demonstrate the transformative potential of strategic planning and partnership in addressing the diverse educational needs of adult populations.

Victoria Furhalo

Bottom-up initiatives: How communities develop adult learning and education in the absence of a national law in Ukraine

Adult education thrives in Ukraine thanks to local initiatives, despite the lack of a dedicated Law on Adult Education. This article examines the role of local self-governance in driving adult learning and education (ALE) in this context. NGOs, supported by local authorities, offer a variety of non-formal programmes that address various adult learning needs. Case studies in Poltava and Lviv demonstrate how municipal programmes support vulnerable populations, promote professional development, and foster civic engagement. These programmes are crucial in the face of the ongoing war, providing pathways to reskilling, psychological support, and reintegration. Survey data highlights the positive impact of these initiatives, with high participant satisfaction and increased civic activity. Despite funding challenges, the resilience of local actors and international support demonstrate the potential for a robust ALE system in Ukraine.

Background and introduction

The development of adult education in Ukraine has a long history. Scientific and educational centres known as "Prosvita" operated in Ukraine more than 100 years ago, serving as the adult education hubs of their time, with a strong focus on fostering civil society. Unfortunately, due to periods of occupation, Ukraine returned to developing the concept of adult education only after gaining independence. This development continues to evolve in the modern era, adapting to contemporary challenges and needs.

According to the study on State Policy in the Field of Adult Education (Andreev, Bakhurin, Lukyanova and Panich, 2021), adult education programmes in Ukraine are primarily implemented by three main entities:

- **Formal education institutions**: vocational and technical education institutions or establishments that provide postgraduate education and professional development.
- **Specialised state and municipal postgraduate education institutions**: training and qualification centres for professionals in specific fields, such as teachers, doctors, cultural workers, civil servants, and others.
- **Civil society organisations**: Implement non-formal adult education programmes, following the demand of learners, and are market driven.

A large number of adult education programmes which are regulated by the Government focus on various forms and types of professional training. Learners are required to undergo such training by the legislation regulating their professional activities. State and municipal institutions are responsible for developing these programmes. The State Employment Service implements professional training most actively in Ukraine; around 23,000 people per year receive vouchers to attend educational courses.

Civil society organisations, often in cooperation with local authorities, voluntarily implement non-formal adult education programmes, or help international donor organisations respond to the existing demands and expectations of potential learners. As providers, NGOs are institutionally capable of developing innovative programmes and implementing cutting-edge teaching methods. However, they do not have guaranteed financial support from the State, and are fully market driven, relying on demand from learners.

This situation in Ukraine is largely due to the lack of legislative regulation of adult education. Adult education providers and local authorities are currently guided by the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (2017). The Law does not include a clear definition or regulations for

adult education; it mentions it mainly as a component of postgraduate education, advanced training and professional development. This narrows the understanding of adult education, limiting it only to the professional and career aspects.

Draft law "On Adult Education"

The absence of a dedicated legislative framework for adult education in Ukraine has resulted in its development primarily occurring at the level of civil society organisations and local governmental bodies within individual communities. Funding for these initiatives is often derived from local programmes. This lack of centralised legal norms has led to a non-systematic approach to adult education, with communities independently seeking diverse support mechanisms. This decentralised development has however also yielded unique and often non-replicable outcomes, fostering the emergence of original adult education institutions. Examples include the proliferation of adult education centres operating within municipal library systems, the establishment of universities for senior citizens, and the growth of youth centre networks.

Before reviewing the practices of local self-government and public organisations in ALE, it is worth noting that the Ministry of Education and Science, with the help of DVV International in Ukraine and together with representatives of adult education providers and local authorities, has been working to develop a draft law on Adult Education since 2018. This draft was approved by Parliament at its first reading in January 2023. After approval, more than 1,100 amendments to the draft law from various institutions, deputies and parliamentary committees were collected and processed within two weeks. The updated law must be approved at second reading by the relevant committee and voted on by Parliament, but the latter has unfortunately yet to take place. There is a lack of political will. The absence of a dedicated law for ALE in Ukraine hinders its development due to several key factors:

- **Right to lifelong learning:** The lack of legislative recognition of the right to lifelong learning for adults creates obstacles to its practical implementation. Adults lack guaranteed access to quality, affordable education throughout their lives.
- **Inconsistent development:** The absence of a legal framework leads to a fragmented approach, with diverse community-led initiatives lacking standardisation and systemic coherence.
- **Limited funding:** Without legislative recognition, adult education struggles to secure consistent funding, thus relying heavily on limited

local resources and international donor support.

- **Narrow understanding:** The prevailing view of adult education often focuses solely on professional training, neglecting its broader potential for personal growth and social inclusion.
- **Lack of established centres:** Communities lack the legal basis to formally establish adult education centres, thus hindering the development of local infrastructure and access points.
- **Absence of support mechanisms:** There are no approved funding mechanisms or designated responsible bodies to ensure the sustainable development and oversight of adult education.

The draft law "On Adult Education" significantly expands the powers of local self-government bodies in adult education. This will allow them to participate in the formation of state policy, taking into account the needs of their communities, promote the development of a network of educational service providers, determine the amount of funding, conduct research on the needs of adults, and create municipal adult education centres. Thanks to these powers, local authorities will be able to better respond to the community's needs, ensure access to education for all, and promote the development of the community as a whole.

The proposed law empowers local governments to financially support specialised adult education programmes and related activities. Beyond funding, it establishes a framework for the growth of civic education, fosters the digitalisation of learning opportunities, and facilitates retraining initiatives that align with current workforce needs. A key focus is placed on ensuring territorial accessibility to education, and addressing the particular challenges faced by residents of remote communities. Further innovations include creating the National Council for the Development of Adult Education, a collaborative body representing key stakeholders, including local authorities, within the adult learning ecosystem. Remarkably, the bill's implementation is projected to be budget neutral. It also introduces the individual learning portfolio, a comprehensive record of an individual's academic achievements, as well as documented learning outcomes from formal, non-formal and informal educational experiences.

To summarise, the development of adult education in Ukraine, despite the legislative gap, demonstrates a remarkable spirit of collaboration between local governments, civil society organisations and educational providers. The emergence of diverse local initiatives, from library-based learning centres to universities of the third age, highlights the untapped potential of adult learning and the strong community demand for accessible, lifelong education. The anticipated adoption of the Law "On Adult Education" promises to solidify

these grassroots efforts, providing a robust framework for a comprehensive and inclusive adult education system that empowers individuals and strengthens communities across Ukraine.

Practices of local authorities

Adult education in Ukraine is at a crucial stage of development. Despite the absence of a law on adult education, significant progress has already been made in creating and supporting a variety of ALE initiatives, especially with the support of local authorities.

The development of adult education at municipal level mainly takes place through the approval of relevant statutory documents or municipal programmes. In communities where adult education is developing, lifelong learning is mentioned mainly in municipal programmes or development plans, and separate strategies for the development of adult education are approved less often (Anishchenko, 2021). Thus, a fully-fledged strategy for the development of adult education in the community was completed only in the Yavoriv municipality, and programmes and development plans for adult education were approved in six municipalities, namely Nikopol, Lviv, Melitopol, Halychynovo, Vinnytsia and Poltava.

The challenges that Ukraine faces today require new approaches to adult education. The war, economic instability, forced displacement of the population, the need for reintegration of veterans, and the growing demand for digital skills, define the themes of educational programmes aimed at supporting citizens in this difficult time. In this regard, the directions that have been approved in municipal programmes are aimed at overcoming the challenges faced by Ukrainian society.

In response to these challenges, for example, targeted programmes are being implemented in the cities of Poltava and Lviv that not only promote skills development but also help to adapt to new social and economic conditions. Their structure takes into account both national priorities and local community needs, offering learning opportunities for veterans, internally displaced persons, people from vulnerable groups, entrepreneurs, and all those who seek personal and professional development.

The example of Poltava

In Poltava, the municipal programme “Development of Adult Education in the Poltava City Territorial Community for 2021–2025” plays a vital role

in the city's socio-economic development by focusing on enhancing the knowledge, professional skills and social adaptation of its adult population. The programme prioritises equal access to lifelong learning through a diverse range of educational events, courses and training opportunities tailored to various adult groups. Key programme areas include:

- **Equal access to education:** The programme provides targeted educational courses for vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, senior citizens, veterans and their families, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and residents on a low income. It promotes inclusive learning environments, exemplified by initiatives such as the "University of the Third Age", which offers cultural and professional development opportunities specifically for older adults.
- **Professional development and employment promotion:** The programme supports professional growth through educational programmes designed for entrepreneurs, self-employed individuals, representatives of small and medium-sized businesses, and local government employees. The "RapidSkills" project offers intensive vocational training in high-demand sectors such as hospitality, retail and gastronomy.
- **Language and digital literacy:** Free Ukrainian and foreign language courses (English, German, Polish) are available to adults, with specialised groups for IDPs, veterans, and their families.

Illustration 1. ALE Center in library, Lviv

Source: Roman Bulibruk

Recognising the growing importance of digital skills, the programme also offers computer literacy courses, particularly in rural areas.

- **Social and psychological adaptation and civic education:** The programme addresses social and psychological well-being through training in areas such as emotional intelligence, anti-bullying strategies, stress management, and crisis response. Specialised programmes support the social integration, mental health and professional rehabilitation of veterans and IDPs. Furthermore, training in conflict resolution and media literacy empowers citizens to critically evaluate information, recognise disinformation, and enhance their communication skills.
- **Health, safety and environmental awareness:** The programme promotes well-being and community safety through courses on first aid, tactical medicine and emergency response. It also encourages healthy lifestyles through activities such as yoga and Nordic walking, and raises environmental awareness through dedicated workshops.

The programme benefits from a diverse funding model, drawing support from the Poltava community budget, international partners and grants. The total funding for the Adult Education Development Programme in Poltava in 2024 was 12,675,660 UAH (€ 291,800). Of this, 1,548,600 UAH (€ 35,650) came from the city budget, while 11,127,060 UAH (€ 256,150) was sourced from external funds. Thus, the programme's funding consists of 12.2% from the municipal budget, and 87.8% from other sources. In 2024, educational activities involved around 3,600 participants and were set up in learning spaces in the community.

The example of Lviv

Lviv has also had an approved municipal programme since 2020 that is aimed at developing adult education. This programme is unique in that it supports the creation of ALE centres based in libraries. The prerequisite for the programme was a joint pilot project of the Municipal Institution City Institute together with the Office of Culture of the Lviv City Council. With the support of DVV International in Ukraine in 2019, they created a network of adult education centres based on three municipal libraries – Network of Education Centres (Merezha Tsentriv Edukatsiyi – in Ukrainian).

In the first year of its existence, the Network of Education Centres in libraries demonstrated a significant demand for non-formal education courses among the adult population. Thus, over 3,000 residents registered for training in just six months, while the capacity to train was only 400 people.

Due to the significant demand among the local population for non-formal education courses, a municipal support programme “Non-Formal Adult Education Programme at the Lviv Municipal Library” was created to support the Network of Education Centres in libraries. The NGO “Network of Education Centres” was founded in 2021, and in 2024 an adult education coordination centre was opened on the basis of the library which is also equipped with a modern kitchen for cooking courses. Thus, there are ten modern adult education centres operating in libraries in various districts of the city, providing access to education for everyone. From 2019 to 2024, more than 17,000 people took part in educational events from the Network of Education Centres in libraries, and seven city educational participatory festivals were held, at which people learned competencies, from first aid skills, to tango dancing with visually impaired people, to self-defence courses.

Key points of the municipal Non-Formal Adult Education Programme at the Lviv Municipal Library: The programme aims to create accessible lifelong learning opportunities by integrating educational activities into the city’s public libraries. These libraries are transformed into ALE centres, providing knowledge and skills to adult residents. Special attention is given to socially-vulnerable groups, including people on a low income, the unemployed, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and veterans.

Illustration 2. Gardening course near the library – IDPs and local people create a common public garden

Source: NGO Network CE

The programme focuses on key areas such as language learning, psychological support, creative skills development, civic education and entrepreneurship. It includes regular courses, training sessions and workshops held at library branches. Additionally, it provides specialised training for librarians, equipping them with the skills to manage educational initiatives.

Funding comes from the **Lviv municipal budget**, international grants and partner support. The programme is expected to strengthen the role of libraries as modern learning spaces, ensure access to quality education for adults, and support the social reintegration of veterans, IDPs and other community members.

Unfortunately, due to the war in Ukraine, local budgets have limited funding. In 2024, the programme received only UAH 100,000 (approximately EUR 2,300) of the planned UAH 400,000 (EUR 9,200). However, the NGO "Network of Education Centres" consistently secures funding from international donors, thus supplementing adult education in Lviv with UAH 7,000,000-10,000,000 (EUR 161,000-230,000) annually from these partners.

The **diverse range of educational programmes** organised by the Network of Education Centres in libraries, designed to enhance professional skills, encourage personal development, and support social integration.

Professional development is one of the priority areas of the Network's activities. Within this area, courses in marketing and sales are offered, such as SMM, copywriting, graphic design, Internet marketing, PR, and others. These courses help adults gain up-to-date knowledge and skills necessary for a successful career in today's labour market. Special attention is also

Illustration 3. A content creation course in a library

Source: Julia Sahno

paid to IT courses, in particular in Project Management, QA, and HR, which corresponds to the growing demand for IT professionals. In addition, the Network offers business courses that help start-up entrepreneurs and veterans develop their businesses, as well as courses in accounting and finance, which are important for successful business management.

The **psychological direction** of the Network's activities is aimed at supporting the psychological health and emotional well-being of adults. Courses in relationship psychology, practical psychology, stress and resilience psychology, child psychology, art therapy, psychosomatics, and others, are offered within this direction. Particular relevance attaches to psychological support groups during the war, courses in the psychology of communication with the military, and courses in sleep psychology. These programmes help adults overcome stress, anxiety, and other psychological difficulties associated with the war and other life circumstances. The psychological area is one of the most popular in the city.

Personal development is another important area of the Network's activities. Courses in financial literacy, first aid, investment, the history of Ukrainian culture, drawing, and others, are offered within this area. These courses help adults develop their talents and abilities, broaden their horizons, and improve their quality of life. Special attention is also paid to learning foreign languages, developing personal effectiveness, leadership and communication, as well as civic education and volunteering.

In addition to training courses, the Network of Education Centres also offers a variety of **cultural and artistic events** such as lectures and

Illustration 4. Psychology course in library

Source: NGO Network CE

master classes. These events contribute to the cultural development and enrichment of adults' spiritual world.
Surveys carried out among participants in the Network of Education Centres' programmes demonstrate a significant positive impact on the lives of Lviv's adult population (2024). The survey results indicate a high level of appreciation of the quality of education and its influence on various aspects of participants' lives.

92% of respondents rated the courses 5 out of 5 possible points, which indicates the high quality and relevance of educational programmes. 88% of participants hoped that the skills acquired would help them in finding new jobs, upgrading their qualifications, or starting their own businesses. This underlines the practical focus of training and its importance for the economic activity of the population.

It is particularly important to note that these courses were the first experience of long-term non-formal education in the lives of 63% of the respondents. This fact suggests that a contribution is being made to the formation of a culture of lifelong learning in the city, involving in the educational process even those who previously did not have the opportunity or motivation to learn.

It is also interesting that 73% of participants stated that they had become more active in the life of the city, regardless of the topic of the course they took (be it accounting, foreign languages, or other). They began to attend other city events, participate in public initiatives, and show a greater interest in the life of their community. This means that attending non-formal educational events has a positive impact on the development of civil society, and contributes to citizens adopting an active, responsible position.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, local self-government plays a key role in the development of adult education in Ukraine, even in the absence of nationwide legislation. Municipal programmes, while not always formalised into fully-fledged strategies, are an important tool for implementing local initiatives and meeting the needs of the community.

It could be shown that the adult education programme in Poltava serves as a comprehensive tool for human capital development, addressing today's challenges and improving the competitiveness of the community's residents. The results obtained testify to the significance and effectiveness of the activities of the Network of Education Centres in Lviv. Non-formal education

programmes not only provide adults with the necessary knowledge and skills, but also contribute to their personal development, increased economic activity, and greater involvement in the active life of the city.

The experience of Poltava and Lviv demonstrates how local authorities create diverse and effective lifelong learning programmes, whilst taking into account the challenges of the times and the needs of the population. These practices are a valuable contribution to the development of adult education in Ukraine, and create a foundation for the formation of a national strategy in this area.

References

Andrieiev M., Bakhurin V., Lukyanova L., Panich O. (2021): State Policy in the Field of Adult Education in Ukraine. Kyiv: DVV International (in Ukrainian).

Андреєєв М., Бахрушин В., Лук'янова Л., Паніч О. (2021): Державна політика у сфері освіти дорослих в України, Київ: DVV International.

Anishchenko O. (2021): Adult education in the regional documents of strategic planning: On the way to sustainable society development in Ukraine. In: Lukyanova L., Anishchenko O., Babushko S. (eds.): Adult Education: Theory, Experience, Prospects. Vol. 1 (19), Kyiv, 19-36 (in Ukrainian).

Аніщенко О. (2021): Освіта дорослих у регіональних документах стратегічного планування: на шляху до сталого розвитку суспільства в Україні. Ред: Лук'янова Л., Аніщенко О., Бабушко С. , Освіта дорослих: теорія, досвід, перспективи. Вип. 1 (19), Київ, 19-36. Retrieved from http://www.adult-education-journal.com.ua/index.php/aej/issue/view/19/20

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2017): Law on Education (2017). Retrieved from https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/law-education

Smirnov O., Andrieiev M. (2021): Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Ukraine. In: Duke, C., Hinzen, H. & Sarrazin, R. (eds.): Public financing of popular adult learning and education. Bonn: DVV International, 214-231. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.de/fileadmin/files/Inhalte_Bilder_und_Dokumente/Materialien/Analysis/DVV_International_Analysis_Financing_Popular_ALE_Web2.pdf

Reflections from other countries in Europe, Asia and globally

Ulrich Klemm

Adult education as a factor for local development and locational determinant – Volkshochschulen in Germany as an element of services of general interest at local level

Adult education is a comparatively recent phenomenon in Germany, both historically and pedagogically. The saying "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" applied for many centuries. It was not until voices called for personal responsibility and emancipation during the 18th century's Enlightenment era, and in the wake of the social developments in the context of industrialisation and democratisation in the 19th century, that adult education gradually developed and an awareness of lifelong learning came about. Adult education centres (vhs) in Germany, alongside other institutions, have played a prominent role in general continuing education at local level since the early 20th century, and they have enhanced local network structures. This is explained below using five examples, and leads to the conclusion that the vhs are a local location factor for lifelong, networked learning processes, and offer institutionalised structures for these processes.

A concise history

In historical terms, the German vhs movement arose as part-and-parcel of social and political democratisation processes (Hinzen & Meilhammer, 2021). The gradual institutionalisation of adult education from the mid-19th century onwards, influenced as it was by the Danish home folk high school movement, by the Society for the Dissemination of Popular Education from 1871 onwards, and by the movement to expand the universities starting in the 1890s, led to a new understanding of popular education in Germany, which saw it as a lifelong task for emancipation and personal responsibility for all. In this sense, the first adult education centres founded at the beginning of the 20th century were an expression of social change and of a reformist educational renewal movement. The cultural-historical significance of understanding education as a service of general interest still applies to vhs today. It is symptomatic of this development that, during Germany's historical transformation phases, that is from 1918 (end of the First World War), through 1933 (when Hitler and the NSDAP seized power), and 1945 (end of the Second World War) to 1990 (reunification of the two German states), the vhs have constantly put their self-image to the test and sought to meet new social needs and requirements.

The vhs is not a rigid system. On the contrary, the last 100 years have shown that it is itself a learning organisation and reacts to new individual

Illustration 1. Inge Scholl (centre back), the sister of the students Hans and Sophie Scholl from the resistance group "White Rose", who were executed by the Nazis, and the designer Otl Aicher (not in the picture) founded the Ulm Adult Education Centre (vhulm) in 1946. The photo from the 1950s shows participants in a working group.

Source: vhulm archive

and social challenges. The German vhs can certainly see themselves as forming part of an international movement to strengthen municipality-centred adult education through community-based institutionalisation such as the Community Learning Centres (CLC). From this perspective, the vhs can certainly be regarded as the German version of CLCs (Belete et al., 2022).

Adult education centres as continuing education centres

An important distinction must be made in Germany between *general adult education* and *vocational and in-house continuing education*: A line is drawn between *in-house continuing education*, which is organised or commissioned by companies, *individual work-related continuing education*, which takes place outside of companies and under personal responsibility, and *non-work-related continuing education*, which includes health prevention, cultural and political education, or foreign languages (BMBF, 2024).

Adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*) belong within the framework of an important, nationwide non-vocational continual education institution in Germany. For over 100 years, they have been organised as local community providers, offering comprehensive basic education

Illustration 2. Since 1967, the Ulm Adult Education Centre (vhulm), founded in 1946, has had an educational centre in the centre of the city centre, specially designed for adult education in the style of the Bauhaus tradition, the "Einstein House", which is still considered a model for adult education centres today

Source: vhulm archive

to all population groups (Lattke & Ioannidou, 2021). With currently 870 independent institutions (figure from 2020), and 2,800 branch and satellite centres, they are a fundamental part of the local educational infrastructure for lifelong learning in Germany.

In *terms of education policy*, the vhs form part of the *quaternary sector* of the German education system, which is divided into four pillars: The *primary sector*, which includes primary schools with initial school attendance of up to six years, is followed by the *secondary sector* in schools which lead up to a school-leaving certificate, or to three years of dual vocational training (= vocational school + in-house training). The *tertiary sector* describes higher vocational training, with specialised vocational schools, specialised academies, as well as higher education institutions/universities. Finally, there is the *quaternary sector*, which includes all general, vocational and academic continuing education, and therefore encompasses the vhs.

In this federative education structure, educational policy responsibility for the four educational pillars lies primarily with the sixteen federal states (*Länder*) of the Federal Republic of Germany, which each enact their own school and education laws. The Federal Government, or federal legislation, only plays a subordinate role in many areas, and has primary responsibility for vocational (continuing) education. Unlike compulsory schooling in Germany, which is enshrined in the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) and covers nine years for all children, there are no "compulsory years" for continuing education in adulthood. Continuing education is a private matter, and is therefore also not usually free of charge.

In terms of organisation, the vhs are broken down into sixteen state associations, corresponding to the sixteen federal states (or *Länder*), in line with the federative political structure. These vhs state associations, which are predominantly organised as non-profit associations, act to coordinate the work of the vhs on the ground at state level, political lobbying vis-à-vis the state government and the federal government, as well as the personnel development and professionalisation of the individual vhs.

Legislation on continuing education and financing

Each federal state has a legal framework for this that is enshrined in "continuing education laws", but these are not uniform, and contain organisational and financial regulations that differ from one federal state to another.

Local authority involvement has been placed on a legal footing since the 1970s – and since the 1990s in the new federal states (Saxony,

Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) – in the shape of the federal states' continuing education laws (Dobischat, Fischell & Rosendahl, 2015). These aim to guarantee basic financial security and basic institutional provision. On the one hand, this process of *giving adult education a legal framework* has become an important foundation for general and political adult education. But that having been said, it does not guarantee a compulsory task for the State. General adult education in Germany is a voluntary service provided by the federal states and local authorities, despite the existence of legislation at federal state level.

As municipal continuing education centres, the vhs are primarily active in the local and regional environment, so that their andragogical orientation is aligned with local educational needs, as well as with municipal policy and local labour market structures.

This is significantly reflected in their *funding*, the majority (46%) of which comes from institutional funding via municipalities, districts and federal states (Echarti, Huntemann, Lux & Reichart, 2022). 20% comes from participants' fees/charges, and 24% of the funds are from projects acquired in the tendering procedure, of which the largest share (13%) is made up of federal funding. The remaining 10% of institutional funding comes via other income. This funding structure makes it clear that the vhs is very much integrated into a local structure, is financially dependent on this structure, and is subject to a local political rationale.

This dependence on funding is also reflected in the *legal structure* of the vhs: 63% of adult education centres are publicly funded by municipalities, districts or special-purpose associations, 32% are organised as registered associations, and 5% are privately funded (e.g. as a "non-profit limited liability company – gGmbH").

In terms of content, all vhs are structured along similar lines, and they are categorised into eight subject areas according to the vhs statistics kept by the *German Institute for Adult Education (DIE)* (Echarti/Huntemann/Lux & Reichart, 2022)

- Politics – society – environment
- Culture and design
- Health
- Languages
- Qualifications for working life – IT – organisation – management
- Vocational training/EDP/digitalisation
- School-leaving qualifications – access to higher education and support
- Basic education.

More than 385,000 courses with 9.7 million teaching hours (45 minutes each) and 3.7 million enrolments/participants were held at all the vhs in Germany in these eight programme areas in 2020. The largest programme areas here are foreign languages and German courses, with 36% of all courses, and health courses accounting for another 33%. These programme areas also dominate in terms of participant attendance, with 37% for health and 35% for languages. These two subject areas form a central profile of the vhs in the public eye.

Significant features of the participant structure of the work done by the vhs are, firstly, the high proportion of women attending courses, coming to 75% in 2020, and secondly the proportion of people aged over 50, at 53% in the 2020 survey year (Echarti, Huntemann, Lux & Reichart, 2022, pp 37-38).

In terms of methodology and didactics, the vhs primarily focuses on seminar, workshop and lecture formats. The *programme planning* process currently takes place in a half-yearly semester rhythm in most cases, although a trimester programme rhythm and year-round programme planning can also be found. Until the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, publication of and *advertising* for vhs programmes were primarily characterised by print formats (programme booklets). Since then, and due to the digitalisation of everyday processes, many vhs have switched to parallel or even exclusively digital programme advertising, and have supported this with a presence on social media. At the same time, print media are not completely dispensed with for programme advertising, as a considerable proportion of participants at German vhs are over 60 years old, for example, and this target group often has only limited access to the digital world.

Current challenges for the vhs

The vhs is facing the following *social challenges* today, amongst others:

- Long-term funding security via the municipalities, the federal states and the federal government is diminishing.
- Quantitative developments and expansion (participants, teaching hours, educational events) are highly laborious and cost intensive. More than 50% of all adults nationwide currently take part in at least one further education activity per year.
- Qualitative developments in terms of structures, content and staff skills are gaining in importance, and are being expanded.
- The middle-class audience which makes up around two-thirds of all vhs participants, will shrink in size. Target groups in precarious financial situations will grow.

- Continuing education in the third stage of life is gaining in importance, and requires a combination of education and social policy.
- Project-orientated content and supra-regional programmes (e.g. basic education and integration courses) will increase.
- Digitalisation complements and makes lasting changes to the didactics and methodology, as well as to the marketing of educational offers.
- The social, professional and technological pressure coming to bear on informal, incidental and self-directed learning is changing the didactic approach adopted by adult education centres vis-à-vis *community education*, and generating a gradual de-institutionalisation of adult education.
- Political and religious radicalisation leads to social divisions, and creates a need for increased education for democratic citizenship.

Communal character as a strategic orientation of the vhs

Local orientation and networking are an essential condition for the success of adult education at adult education centres. Local anchoring in a city or region is the common thread running through their work: “Think globally

Illustration 3. The "EinsteinHaus" of the Ulm Adult Education Centre (vhulm) is a house of encounter and education and, in addition to seminar rooms, spacious foyers with seating and its own café with outdoor seating, has a permanent exhibition on Albert Einstein, who was born in Ulm, and documentation on the youth resistance against the Nazi regime in Ulm from 1933 to 1945.

Source: vhulm archive

and act locally" is the maxim. Educational work is decided locally, and is seen by the vhs as a service of general interest. In this sense, the vhs is not merely a venue where education takes place, but also an educational principle which has a close relationship with the community through its strategic focus on communality, and is therefore also a direct or indirect component of local self-government.

In order to understand the work of the vhs in Germany as an educational principle, it must not only be categorised in terms of educational policy and pedagogy, but also in terms of constitutional law at the level of municipalities and rural districts (= regional territorial entities in rural regions). The Federal Republic of Germany with its sixteen federal states exists as a parliamentary democracy with a federative structure, with the party system taking up a strong position at all levels of the federation, the federal states, and the municipalities/districts.

The 870 vhs, 702 of which are managed by full-time staff and all others on a voluntary or part-time basis, are located at the level of the municipality or district – the territorial entities – in terms of education policy. These territorial entities are, on the one hand, the central places where citizens' livelihoods are secured, and at the same time the lowest administrative unit in the State. They are territorial entities under public law of varying sizes that cover a limited area with its inhabitants and organise a public administration to this end. They consist of a *decision-making body*, the municipal council, which is elected by the citizens, and the *executive body*, the local administration in the town hall. The latter is headed by a mayor who, depending on the federal state, is either elected directly by the citizens, or indirectly by the municipal council. Municipalities form part of the state executive.

The principle of *local self-government* plays a decisive role in German municipal policy, and means that all vhs – even if their programming may be very similar – have special features that are linked to local traditions, political circumstances, and differing administrative structures.

Local self-government is a fundamental democratic principle that is enshrined in Article 28 para (2) of the German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), and has constitutional status. It enables the municipalities and districts to carry out public/state tasks on their own responsibility. This is also known as *universal responsibility*. A distinction is made in this regard between *voluntary self-administration tasks* (e.g. theatres, museums) and *mandatory self-administration tasks* (e.g. water and electricity supply, construction and maintenance of general education schools).

Depending on the federal state, vhs and general adult education can either form part of the compulsory area of responsibility (e.g. in North Rhine-Westphalia), or may fall within the voluntary domain (e.g. in Bavaria).

What is essential here – and this is where vhs differ significantly from other education providers – is their intermediary character, i.e. their role as a mediator between different social contexts. It responds to different educational needs and requirements, brings them together, and creates interfaces between the State, policy-makers and municipalities on the one hand, and civil society and households on the other, and finally also with industry and with companies.

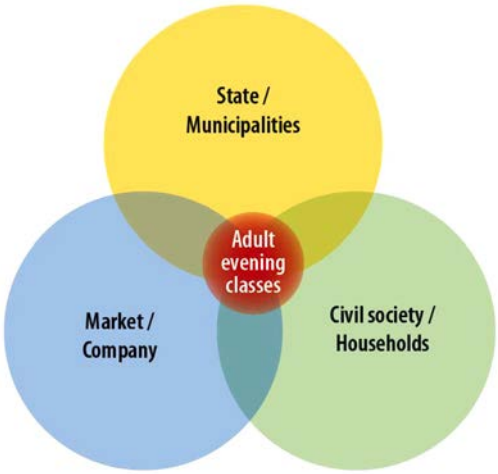

Illustration 4: The intermediary function of the vhs

Illustration 5. In addition to the seminar and office rooms, there is a permanent exhibition in the ground-floor foyer of the "EinsteinHaus" on Ulm's youth resistance against National Socialism. The vhulm has its roots in political education work, which is still profile-building today and gives it the character of a place of discourse for democracy.

Source: vhulm archive

This educational policy interface function between different social institutions, all of which follow different rationales – and which are often difficult to reconcile with each other – requires particular networking expertise in the municipal domain. Intermediary institutions such as the vhs thus become networked enabling spaces for collective learning, democratic development, as well as urban and village development.

The social and educational significance of networks

Since the beginnings of the vhs movement in Germany, local networking has been a central strategic focus of its work, and a fundamental educational principle. As a component of operational education management, the "network" becomes an important metaphor. Networks are understood here as non-hierarchical, mostly voluntary, and often temporary (self-)organised cooperation mechanisms between different state, private and civil society institutions at local level. Since the 1920s, the vhs in Germany have thus been reacting to an increasingly dynamic social transformation process of differentiation in private, political and economic living conditions. Three contexts of meaning are key to the functioning of vhs networks:

(1.) The idea of networking takes on a macro didactic significance as a strategy against the *increasing complexity* and *confusion* of our everyday lives. Complexity in educational work means

- that decisions depend on a large number of different influencing factors on which the vhs have only limited direct influence (e.g.

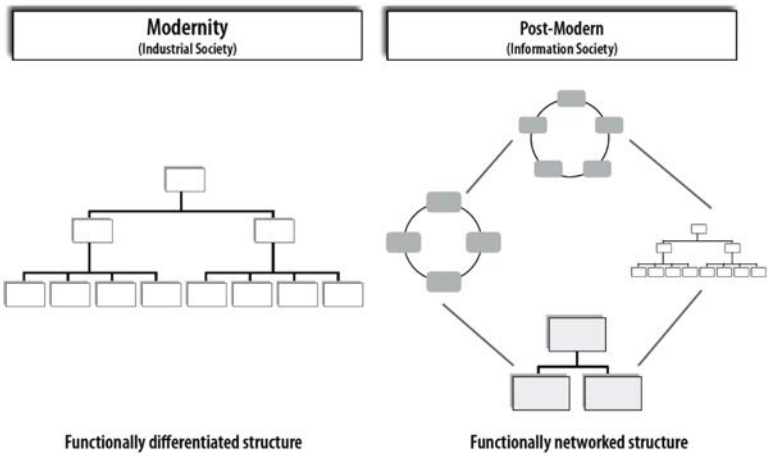

Illustration 6: Functionally-networked complexity in the information society

financial support, digital infrastructure, political changes),
- that educational needs are subject to constant change and economic cycles that often have a momentum of their own which is difficult to regulate (e.g. coronavirus pandemic or migration),
- that future developments are increasingly difficult to predict, and stand in the way of medium- and long-term (financial) planning, or mean that incalculable residual risks in programme planning are becoming commonplace (e.g. lack of course instructors, changing educational needs, lack of funding). Dealing with such a *contingency* in post-modern information societies is becoming a new key skill that is required when planning educational programmes.

(2.) In addition to this level of organisational and strategic significance attaching to networking, there is also the secondary political context. Networking is a *democratic principle*, standing in opposition to the hierarchisation and segmentation of society, which at the same time constitutes a strategy for social integration, inclusion and emancipation. The idea of a democratic civil society equals the idea of a networked society. "Get networked" was the message of the opposition movement of the "Arab Spring" in North Africa in 2010, when the aim was to overthrow dictatorships. Social networks are the humus and the binding agent of everyday social relationships. As the basis of a democratic society, however, they require intensive "nurturing", and thus also become an educational subject. Democracy is a learning process that does not "fall from the sky", but has to be fought for. The idea of a social network was (re)discovered in Germany especially in the 1980s as a means of shaping the future in the face of fast-paced globalisation (Vester, 1988). The complexity of global conditions and the helplessness of traditional (international) political styles make a civil society network strategy a beacon of hope for sustainable quality of life.

(3.) Finally, *digitalisation* has brought about completely new forms of networking in recent years, and has led to an acceleration and dissolution of boundaries in communication and interaction. This became particularly apparent during the lockdown phases of the coronavirus pandemic, and has also left a lasting mark on educational work. The relationship between the analogue and digital worlds of education has become a question that is relevant to the future of the vhs.

From the perspective of cultural evolution and educational philosophy, the question is whether a "homo digitalis" will replace "homo oeconomicus" (Adam Smith) and "homo sociologicus" (Ralph Dahrendorf) in the future. The question is whether a human being networked with digital machines (AI) will one day become the alternative to a human being who acts rationally and in a benefit-orientated way, and thinks in a value-orientated way in various social roles.

Against the background of these three levels of significance, it should become clear that networked thinking and action are not only individual key competences for the future, but at the same time also an organisational strategic competence for educational institutions as a development and location factor.

Civic education as a place of empowerment – examples and concepts from municipal practice

Using practical examples, successful educational formats will be elucidated below that demonstrate the idea of networked, community-orientated community education in the context of lifelong learning:

Example 1: "Long Night of Democracy – concerted action at local level

The *Long Night of Democracy* has been held every two years since 2018 in Bavarian municipalities and districts before the *Day of German Unity*[1] (Boeser/Wenzel, 2022). This campaign was developed by *Wertebündnis Bayern* and the University of Augsburg under the patronage of the President of the Bavarian State Parliament Ilse Aigner, and has a municipal focus. In the meantime, similar campaigns are also taking place in other federal states such as Baden-Wuerttemberg, Schleswig-Holstein, Rhineland-Palatinate and Lower Saxony in which the vhs and its state associations play an important role. As an example of low-threshold, locally-networked political education campaigns with supra-regional support structures such as the *Landeszentralen für politische Bildung (State Agencies for Political Education)* and universities,

[1] The *German Democratic Republic* (GDR) acceded to the *Federal Republic of Germany* (FRG) on 3 October 1990, and this date became the public holiday "Day of German Unity" for reunited Germany.

these *Long Nights* bring people from companies, politics, the public administration, associations and civil society together to discuss the topic of democracy. These encounters take place in both the public and private domain, and connect organisations and institutions that would otherwise have relatively little in common. Such activities play a strong intermediary role, as they bring different people together in the context of democracy development. Educational work and cultural work are combined, and develop an intercultural and intergenerational character. The public space of the activity is particularly important. Democratic commitment is brought into the light, and participation is made possible. Experience shows that educational institutions such as the vhs play an important coordinating role in these concerted actions.

Example 2: The "Mehrgenerationenhaus" (Multi-generation House, MGH) run by the vhs

The concept of multi-generation houses was launched in 2006 as part of an action programme initiated by the *Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth*. There are currently around 500 MGHs in Germany, the majority of which are located in rural areas. They are financed by federal and municipal funds, as well as by the providers' own contributions, which can be structured as municipal or private-sector organisations. In terms of content, the focus is on the areas of *ageing and care*, *integration and education*, *household-related services* and *voluntary civic engagement*. However, MGHs are not intergenerational housing projects; they are public meeting places with a local grounding, aiming to enhance civil society.

The *MGH Markranstädt* has been operated by the vhs in the district of Leipzig since September 2008 (Egler/Karnstädt/Müller, 2020), and is located in the small town of Markranstädt (Saxony), which has a population of 15,000. The MGH is seen as a low-threshold, barrier-free meeting place for educational work that operates with a high degree of self-determination on the part of the participants. The educational staff working at the MGH Markranstädt is made up of permanent employees of the vhs, alternating freelance staff, and volunteers.

The programmes are open to all interested parties at any time. The largest part of the programme structure lies in the area of *politics, society and the environment*, with 32%. The area *of young people and young adults* accounts for 21%, and the area of *culture and*

design makes up 20% of the programmes. 15% of the programmes are aimed specifically at older people. The MGH Markranstädt has a total of around 10,000 visitors a year.

Although the vhs and the MGH are two different educational formats, their strength lies in the combination of the two. The following synergy effects between vhs and MGH are revealed:

- A concept of services of general interest, understood as lifelong learning at a meeting place of civic engagement, municipal tasks and individual life management, is emerging;
- *Education, counselling and encounters* are seen as a macrodidactic unit, and require low-threshold venues where they can be facilitated;
- The link between *formal, non-formal and informal learning*, i.e. institutional and everyday learning, is strengthened;
- Educational institutions are becoming "learning organisations", i.e. they must constantly evolve and be agile.

Example 3: Citizens' trialogue in Leipzig – on an equal footing with policy-makers and public administration representatives

Another example of an innovative form of political education work is the *"Forum Bürgerstadt Leipzig"*, which has been organised by vhs Leipzig together with the city of Leipzig since 2007. The focus is on promoting civic engagement. In the tradition of a "civic city", the focus is on democratic and civil society *participation structures* in the community by citizens (City of Leipzig, 2015). The vhs becomes an intermediary between policy-makers, administrators and citizens, and works according to the *trialogue principle* (citizens – policy-makers – administrators). A new municipal action platform for civic engagement has been created with the "*Forum Bürgerstadt Leipzig*", aiming to set in motion an urban development process that is defined and taken seriously as a joint learning process between policy-makers, administrators and citizens. The aim is to initiate low-threshold participation processes in a municipality. Several forum meetings are organised each year on this topic in Leipzig which are prepared by a coordination group made up of vhs employees and citizens.

Example 4: The "village dialogue" – developing democracy in rural areas

Rural areas pose particular challenges for adult education: low population density, structural deficits, poor local public transport, a lack of jobs and low economic innovation potential. In view of

such living conditions, there is a great need for social participation and to shed light on existing skills and talents. A key question here is how to strengthen coexistence and cohesion among people. The question is how the endogenous potential of a region can be promoted and activated. This idea of *independent regional development* is to be promoted with the methodological approach of *village dialogues* (Wenzel/Boeser, 2022).

The village dialogue concept was developed in Bavaria in 2017-2019 as part of a pilot project of the *Federal Agency for Civic Education*, and has since been implemented in 50 municipalities across Germany. A village dialogue brings together people in a village who in many cases do not (or no longer) actively meet in everyday life, and who often live in different settings. At its core, it is about renewing the village on the basis of the needs and requirements of its inhabitants. It is about economic, architectural, infrastructural and social developments. Village dialogues focus on the people with their talents and skills. They identify key figures in the village as drivers of change, and aim to change perspectives. The village becomes a learning community.

Volunteer *village moderators*, who guide and accompany the village dialogues and receive continuing training for this in advance, are an important prerequisite for success in this process.

The concept is based on the following basic assumptions:

1. The values, relationships and conflicts of those involved are the starting point,
2. Existing power and dependency structures must be made visible,
3. Creating a new “sense of unity” is a priority,
4. Strengthening political awareness and motivation for active participation on the ground,
5. Barrier-free, low-threshold didactic formats must be used to reach as many people as possible.

The central starting point is personal encounters serving as a foundation for a dialogue that is not only rational, but also value-orientated and emotional. The focus is on people, and not on their institutions. The aim is to strengthen the ability to build relationships for change in the village community.

The process of a village dialogue covers a timeframe of six to nine months:

- One month of planning; the key is to set up a group of process owners, moderators and “door openers”,

- One to two months of stakeholder interviews and definition of success criteria,
- One month of public relations work,
- 2-3 dialogue evenings for the village community over a period of two months with the aim of meeting, discussing and clarifying. What is needed is low-threshold spaces and times for listening and negotiation as well as the concrete development of projects,
- Two months of implementation of detailed projects and stakeholder meetings for initial results,
- This is followed by the realisation of the goals set for village renewal, which are integrated into everyday life.

The success of a village dialogue stands and falls with the commitment of those involved. It is not a "top-down" process in which a few experts and political decision-makers implement plans for everyone. It is a collaborative participation process. This requires moderators who have the appropriate methodological and didactic toolkit at their disposal.

Example 5: Activating survey – enabling local participation

The activating survey approach (Stoik, 2009) stems from community work, and is suitable for the expansion and intensification of educational projects at local level, e.g. the establishment or further development of a vhs. It is the method for a specific form of household survey relating to needs and requirements, using an interview guide. The aims are (1.) to obtain meaningful information for planning and development processes within a neighbourhood or village. In addition, (2.) residents are to be encouraged and persuaded to participate in regional development processes. The spatial prerequisite is a coherent area that is manageable and enables identification. Such a region should ideally comprise up to 1,000 households. That said, an activating survey is not a representative survey, or a survey to collect sociological or personal data. It seeks to learn about people's quality of life and the changes that they would like to see happen, as well as their personal willingness to get involved and contribute. In methodological terms, non-directive, open questions are used. The survey is also intended to arouse curiosity and motivate people to get involved. Four phases take centre stage in methodological terms:

(1.) Preparation

This first phase serves to clarify the research question, gather information on the survey area, and seek cooperation partners. It is

also crucial to look for a survey team that is at home in the region to be analysed, which should be trained in the methods of conducting interviews and interview techniques. The interview guidelines for the interviews are developed, and they should contain both open-ended and predetermined questions. It is also important to define a masterplan for the entire process in terms of time and content. It makes sense to involve local politicians, representatives of the administration, and leaders from associations and (educational) institutions.

(2.) Conducting the surveys

The second phase, the actual survey, takes place within a fixed timeframe. All eligible citizens are informed in good time and asked for their consent. The survey is conducted with the help of an open-ended interview guide. The majority of the questions used are open-ended, and are also intended to find out about the respondents' commitment potential. Problem-solving questions ("How do you assess ...?") and reflective, open questions ("Assuming that ...?") are used. It is important to avoid an "interrogation"-type atmosphere. The discussion follows a guideline, and should last approx. 30 minutes.

(3.) Public meeting and formation of project groups

Following the survey phase, the results are evaluated promptly, priorities are set and decisions are taken as well as conclusions drawn. This is presented and discussed in a public meeting. It is vital in this phase to form project groups to address detailed questions in the following months as well as specify and implement the objectives. These advanced working groups also set interim goals and define a time horizon. The public meeting also decides what approach is to be taken towards policy-makers and administrators.

(4.) Implementation and testing in project groups

This stage focuses on implementing the change processes identified through the survey. The most important instrument for realisation is project groups, which meet regularly and report to the public, e.g. in public meetings, in the local press or in the municipal council. It is particularly important to involve policy-makers and the representatives of public administration, who should take responsibility and transfer the implementation into a political-administrative process that is also placed on a financially-sound footing.

Conclusion – Functions of adult education in the community

Community-orientated adult education institutions see lifelong learning as an integral part of coping with current and future challenges within society. In this sense, with their programme architecture as a development and location factor, they are systemically relevant for municipalities and regions, and form a link between the State/administration, civil society and industry. They are not only *providers* of education, but also become *service-providers*, *moderators*, *initiators* and *supporters* for civil society (see examples) and for the local administration when it comes to lifelong learning:

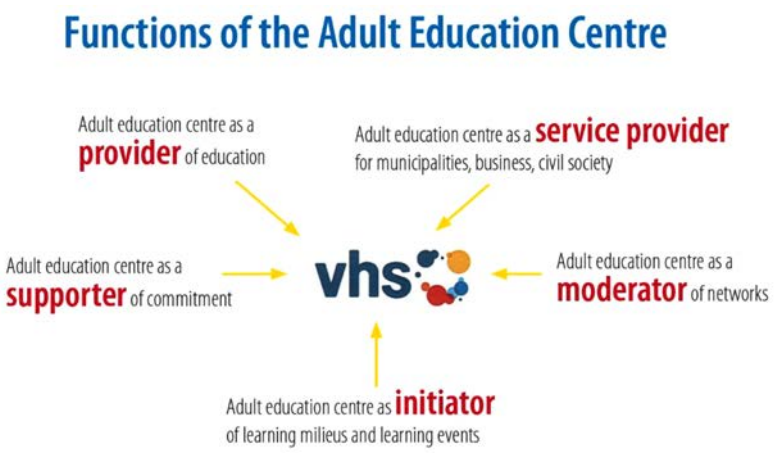

Illustration 7: Functions of the vhs as a local education provider

Perspectives and outlook

There is currently a very great deal of reflection going on with regard to the future of adult education and the vhs. A central aspect of this debate is the relationship between adult education centres and local authorities?: How can this relationship be strengthened and rendered sustainable? What expectations does the local authority have of the vhs, and what structural and personnel requirements do the adult education centres have in order to realise sustainable services of general interest locally?

Although adult education centres have a somewhat conservative structure today, for example with the division into semesters, the differentiation between various subject areas, and the specialisation of

tasks between full-time planning staff and part-time course instructors, they have survived repeated economic crises and political changes, and have been able to adapt. The orientation towards social change is a significant constant in the work of the German vhs, and currently leads to three fields of activity:

1. *More networking:* vhs can generate synergy effects through civil and political networking of existing resources and capacities from different areas. Networking means both between institutions in one sector, e.g. between educational facilities, and between different sectors, e.g. between an adult education centre, a sports club, cultural institutions, a church community, or a company.
2. *More participation:* vhs enable people to participate more in society and the community. A crucial question in structural change is the question of participation in political, social and economic decisions and their acceptance. vhs get people on board, and lend a voice to the expression of their talents and skills.
3. *More education:* The question is not only what a person should and must learn, but above all how they can be enabled to learn, i.e. what kind of environment do they need? This requires educational institutions that are accepted by the population, that are continuously and reliably available to all involved, and that can recognise and implement needs and requirements locally. They must be low-threshold. In didactic terms, this a mix of welcoming and outreach structures, i.e. outreach and community-orientated formats should be more closely combined with conventional seminar formats.

The adult education centre landscape will not lose its importance in the 21st century if it manages to provide structures as an *educational principle* and as a municipal location factor for lifelong networked learning processes.

References

Belete, S., Duke, C, Hinzen, H., Owusu-Boampong, A. & Huu Phuoc, K. (2022): Community Learning Centres (CLCs) for Adult Learning and Education (ALE): development in and by communities: International Review of Education (2022) 68, 259-290. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-022-09954-w

Boeser, C. & Wenzel, F. (2022): Long Night of Democracy. Ulm: Klemm+Oelschläger.

Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) (2024): Continuing education behaviour in Germany 2022. Results of the Adult Education Survey – AES Trend Report. Berlin: BMBF. Retrieved from https://www.bmbf.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/de/bmbf/1/26667_AES-Trendbericht_2022.pdf

Dobischat, R./ Fischell, M. & Rosendahl, A. (2015): Introduction to the law of continuing education. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Echarti, N./Huntemann, H./Lux, Th. & Reichart, E. (2022): Adult education centre statistics. 59th instalment, reporting year 2020. Bielefeld: wbv publication. Retrieved from http://www.die-bonn.de/id/41524

Egler, R., Karnstädt, K. & Müller, H. (2020): Multigenerational house as a place of civic competence development conducive to learning. In: B. Käpplinger (ed.): Neue Häuser der Erwachsenenbildung 1959 und 2019 (pp. 153-175). Berlin: Peter Lang.

Hinzen, H. & Meilhammer, E. (2022): 100 years of Volkshochschule in Germany – 50 years of DVV International: Signposts for local and global comparative perspectives on adult learning and education. In: International Review of Education, 125-154. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-022-09944-y

Lattke, S. & Ioannidou, A. (2021): Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Germany. In: Duke, C., Hinzen, H. & Sarrazin, R. (ed.): Public Financing of Popular Adult Learning and Education (ALE). Bonn: DVV International, 56-76. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.de/materialien/publikationen/analysis

City of Leipzig (ed.) (2015): Adult education centre in the civic city. Leipzig: City of Leipzig.

Stoik, C. (2009): Activating questioning/Activating dialogue. In: sozialraum.de (1) Issue 2/2009. https://www.sozialraum.de/aktivierende-befragung-aktivierendes-gespraech.php

Vester, F. (1988): Leitmotiv vernetztes Denken. Munich: Heyne.

Wenzel, F. & Boeser, C. (2022): Village dialogue. A contribution to the development of democracy in rural areas. Bonn: Stiftung Mitarbeit.

Balázs Németh

Pécs Learning City as a model for community development in Hungary: A case of good practice based on partnership amongst municipal authority and collaborative stakeholders

This case study will analyse the history and current arrangements of the Pécs Learning City model, especially in light of the activities and cooperation between partners in the community. The case study will certainly pay attention to relevant measures for widening access to adult learning and education (ALE), improving the ALE policy environment in the communities, and cooperating with local authorities. The study will try to demonstrate how the local centre of ALE, known as the House of Civic Communities, and its partner institutions, can benefit as providers from these developments, together with participants. Relevant partners, stakeholders and other bodies also will be mentioned to claim a special role for them, and finally a specific mechanism will be reflected upon as important for local authorities supporting stakeholders as partners to promote ALE with quality concerns.

The background of the Learning City/Region initiative in Pécs to support participation in adult and lifelong learning in the community

Right after the millennium, researchers at the University of Pécs joined the PASCAL International Observatory, a think-tank group of researchers on place management, social capital and lifelong learning, in several EU-funded projects in order to analyse characteristic elements of, and trends in, learning cities and regions, referring to social capital, lifelong learning and place management, and also to capture some identical characteristics of communities of adult learners. PASCAL's EU-funded projects such as Learning in Local and Regional Authorities (LILARA), and the European Network of Learning Regions (PENR3L), were active in the first decade after 2000, and provided clear intentions and recommendations to understand the nature and positions of stakeholders such as municipal leadership, educational providers, economic organisations, cultural and educational entities, etc., in formulating urban collaborations across Europe to reach for better economies and social cohesion through effective knowledge transfer and skills development.

Those projects helped by collecting and sharing examples of good practices and identifying stakeholders' choices and limitations to effectively analyse learning city developments and models, roles and responsibilities of municipal leadership and of relevant stakeholders, but also generated intentions to try out and develop learning cities based on the realities and interests of potential partners. Those projects were also primarily based on comparative studies and reflective focuses carried out by universities to signal concerns about effective knowledge transfer, community development combined with social inclusion, and citizens' involvement in responsible actions for smart developments, creative solutions and quality education advancements to reflect the number of urban and regional/sub-national stakeholders in partnerships. In order to better support local-regional collaborations for lifelong learning, PASCAL partners created a particular toolkit on how urban communities could build their own learning city/region (Eckert et. al, 2012). Such measures became influential not only in developing learning cities, but also to get them to collaborate at national and international levels. (Irish Learning Cities, German Lernende Regionen and Learning Cities in the UK).

By making use of the PASCAL partnership and project-based experience, the University of Pécs contacted the current municipal leadership and several stakeholders to develop Pécs into a learning city by using results of urban and regional development plans of the city and its region in formulating clusters, according to French models of regional

development, on health, the environment and culture (Németh, 2016a). Although this period was referred to by Norman Longworth as the 'Age of Understanding', referring to the period of 2003 to 2009 (Longworth and Osborne, 2010), it was PASCAL's Universities in Regional Engagement (PURE) project which showed a clear path to extend the vision to practical collaborations with city/region dimensions and to connect social and economic aspects (Németh, 2013).

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) incorporated the movement of learning cities into its lifelong learning (LLL) agenda by 2010 by generating collaborations and stakeholder partnerships to improve both participation and performance in learning for stronger, equitable and inclusive communities (UNESCO UIL, 2013). The establishment of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities helped learning city developments in Pécs to construct a large coalition of organisations and institutions, initiated by the University of Pécs in 2010, in the Pécs Learning City/Region Forum with thirteen partners (Németh, 2016a), and join the Global Learning City initiative (GLCI) and its comparative survey in 2011. Those efforts energised the municipality of Pécs and the county council of Baranya under the Pécs Learning City/Region Forum to create a format of planning and establish the Pécs Learning City in association with economic and social stakeholders and civil society organisations immediately following on from the establishment of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) in 2013.

While the formation of the learning cities is generally triggered by changing policy concerns around lifelong learning (Yang, 2012), Pécs became strongly influenced by having been involved in some PASCAL projects to discover the roles of stakeholders in the making of learning cities. This means that a combination of models can be observed in Pécs with regard to community engagement and recognition (Tibbit, 2014). It is also important to bear in mind Oksanen's claim for the necessary application of a sector-wide approach (Oksanen, 2000). In this respect, Pécs would represent a "rainbow model" of a learning city, using bits and pieces from almost all available models.

Moving forward with a combined model of a learning city

Those abovementioned turbulent changes around 2010 and the years after that drove several learning city/region initiatives revert to socially-driven models, and thus to reconfigure plans in order to strike a balance between employment-orientated priorities of local and regional development and socially-driven actions, whilst making digital and

technological advancements (e.g. the case of Espoo in Finland, Korean Learning Cities), combined with environmental orientations to balance social, economic and ecological realities (Erkkilä, 2020 and Sangok Park, 2020). Learning city advocates and researchers in Pécs tried to make use of these examples, and combined that with current needs of stakeholders in a three-dimensional framework for the Pécs learning city model:

- Culture
- Environment
- Education

Those focuses already clearly incorporated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and environmentally-focused initiatives to encourage the citizens of Pécs and its region to continue with participatory actions for environmental protection, green economy and energies, more conscious consumption, social care and inclusion through quality education and LLL to develop the knowledge and necessary skills among people with difficulties and living marginalised lives (Németh, 2016b). We must however say that it was highly influential that UIL provided several guiding documents and publications on how to build a learning city (UIL, 2015a) and how to relate to and bridge to the SDGs (UIL, 2017a) and to the UNESCO 2015 Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (UIL, 2015b). Those documents influenced the model used in Pécs to combine matters of environmental orientations, sustainable economies with socially-driven health, well-being, education and skills focuses to step towards a more resilient community, based on equity and inclusion.

Illustration 1: Learning City/Region stakeholders

Source: from Learning City presentation of Longworth, N., 2006

Within just five years from 2010 to 2015, the Pécs Learning City/Region Forum evolved into a platform of stakeholders to rely on the collaboration of the municipality of Pécs, the University of Pécs, the Janus Pannonius Museum, the Zsolnay Cultural Quarter, the Pécs-Baranya Chamber of Commerce and Industry, providers of public education and vocational education and training (VET), local and regional organisations for environmental education and sustainable development, undertakings (e.g. Körber, BIOKOM Waste Management, Pécs VEOLIA-Powerplant, Tükebusz – Public Transport Co.), sport organisations and clubs, senior citizens' organisations, the Third Age University Foundation, the House of Civic Communities, Pécs Philharmonic Orchestra, and several communities and neighbourhoods from various districts of Pécs. The impact and power of collaboration strengthened the initiation and development of bottom-up goals and programmes, such as the initiation of the 2016 learning city framework and the UNESCO GNLC application, supported by the annual learning festival to start from 2017. Those steps further strengthened the formation of the Learning City/Region Platform and its international partnerships through the PASCAL International Observatory and its Learning City Network (Németh, 2016b). Pécs ultimately became a city combining educational orientations, based on its many schools, VET formations and the university, as well as cultural and community organisations represented by museums, galleries, minority and religious groups and civil society organisations (CSO) to reflect citizens' and communities' voices (UIL, 2017b).

Several local governments and stakeholder groups became interested in supporting the development of learning cities to offer a balanced, integrative model of LLL education and skills at the level of the city/region and neighbourhoods, signalled by a series of biannual International Conferences of Learning Cities (ICLC conferences from 2013 to 2024). 2015 brought about a significant change by moving from the planning stage to the realisation of a living learning city model. The 2015 ICLC event in Mexico City, and the newly-outlined UN Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015), influenced the University of Pécs and its partners in the Pécs Learning City/Region Forum to reconfigure this platform and get itself turned into a declared learning city-based partnership according to the UNESCO guidelines in order to apply for GNLC membership and for the title of 'UNESCO Learning City'.

Another significant influence for Pécs came from Cork Learning City, since Cork was becoming a model to successfully connect matters of place management, lifelong learning and sustainable futures. The city was considered as a "testing city" of the PASCAL-driven model of EcCoWell (Kearns and Reghenzani-Kearns, 2019) to combine economic, climate, community and well-being dimensions of urban communities. Cork's

University College was able to convince the city leadership to integrate this model into the goals of Cork Learning City (O'Tuama, 2016 and UIL, 2015c). One particularly valuable element of the Cork Learning City is the framework of the 'Learning Neighbourhood' to stand as a community platform in parts of the city where local collaboration is combined with intercultural and intergenerational approaches and practices to reflect claims and practices of understanding, respect, care and solidarity within the community (O'Tuama, 2020).

The intention was to promote and develop an integrative structure to emphasise collaboration among learning providers to offer opportunities for learning in community formations with intercultural and intergenerational focuses (Neylon and Barret, 2020). The application of the municipality of Pécs was formally initiated and supported by a declaration that the city and the University of Pécs would work closely together with designated stakeholders to develop the goals and initiatives of Pécs Learning City as a platform for community-driven LLL, and hold annual learning festivals as part of the city's annual autumn festival, known as "Days of Pécs", to respond to challenging dimensions of adult education and LLL, with intergenerational and intercultural approaches referring to the SDGs (Németh, 2022a).

The House of Civic Communities, a major adult learning provider and community centre, and its socially-driven partners, became strongly engaged in the promotion of mutuality, trust and equity as basic principles in shaping learning city activities to balance economic, social, community and well-being dimensions. This example was a reliable reference to help develop an innovative model capable of engaging main stakeholders and their members as civic activists, such as senior citizens, building bridges between learning, smart and creative aspects of the learning city, and enhancing the focus on citizenship, social inclusion and well-being through inclusive adult learning (Németh, 2022b).

It should however be emphasised that the impact of smart city/region approaches and initiatives, creative focuses and increased attention to local and regional ecosystems has shifted the discourse to recognise the economic realities of skills development, effective knowledge transfer, and a more competitive workforce, in response to digital and technological challenges, artificial intelligence (AI) and aspects of sustainable environments and communities (Singapore's Skills Future Priorities, 2025). These considerations have served as innovative inputs to transform the Pécs Learning City to strike a better balance between economic realities and socially-driven challenges, in order as a result to provide accessible learning opportunities for adults with vulnerable backgrounds and to develop the skills they need in order to find jobs, or to keep their current jobs.

Collaborative lifelong learning initiatives and practices in Pécs Learning City

The integration of the Cork "Learning Neighbourhood" model into international learning city developments through UNESCO's GNLC made it possible for Pécs to learn from good practices and adapt these to the development of potential learning opportunities offered by local community groups dedicated to intergenerational learning, social inclusion, equal opportunities and active citizenship. These concerns have influenced the House of Civic Communities to address and organise learning city-orientated adult and LLL with intergenerational and community aspects, in association with its partner organisations in ALE, as necessary to transform Pécs' learning city/region model into a collaborative format so as to demonstrate equity, care, solidarity and respect among community citizens.

Cases of collaborative adult learning organised by the House of Civic Communities signal the innovative practice of the learning city of Pécs which have helped in joining the GNLC cluster of health and well-being to connect well-being and social inclusion-centred actions to those of socially-driven demands of people from smaller communities with learning difficulties. Examples of ALE programmes promoting health and well-being have included the formation of a 'kiddy-ladder' of family learning activities, expanding health learning opportunities for members of the Association of Parkinson's patients or healthy living programmes for young mothers with the label of 'Conscious Way of Life'.

Illustration 2: 'Kiddy-ladder' of family learning activities

Illustration 3: Expanding health learning opportunities for members of the Association of Parkinson's patients,

Illustration 4: 'Conscious Way of Life'.

These examples reflect particularly sensitive forms of community-based engagement and collaboration among learning providers, shifting citizens' needs into the axis of actions and reflections of the learning city and its annual Learning City Festival.

Another recently identified collaborative learning model that reflects innovative practice is the 'Creative and Experience-based Space'.

Illustration 5:'Creative and Experience-based Space'.

This model offers action-orientated learning for members of the community by offering creative steps in arts and crafts in community spaces through reflective forms of drawing and painting to help develop mental health and well-being. Several other neighbourhood-based initiatives have also become successful through generating action-based learning to facilitate understanding, respect citizens' diversities, and address community problems referring to challenges such as environmental issues, social exclusion, deprivation, poverty, homelessness and unemployment. Moreover, these initiatives have been successful in emphasising effective actions to tackle issues with community collaboration, resulting in creative and innovative models of adult education and LLL (Németh, 2023). In this respect, the Learning City Programme and the Pécs Learning City Festival have demonstrated the importance of ALE in facilitating diversity and inclusion, and have initiated the combination of smart, creative and learning-city-composite factors to further develop and promote the Learning City/Region by the House of Civic Community, based on UNESCO guiding principles (UIL, 2015a). The Pécs Learning City has therefore incorporated the Senior Academy of the University of Pécs to help support active ageing for improved identity, belongingness and trust as an effective community form of LLL in the learning city. This model integrates intergenerational capacities and intercultural orientations based on the learning needs of senior citizens, and consequently is connected to several types and forms of learning under the model of active ageing for better health and well-being.

Community development has always stood as a composite dimension of these events, not just in 2017 but in every year that followed. This is not simply because of several SDGs having been integrated, but is a natural consequence of growing concerns among citizens and in the community as to what issues to address, and how to do so. Eight Learning City Festivals have been thematised by the House of Civic Communities and collaborative stakeholders around the following topics and sub-topics, where one can easily detect community orientations (in bold) to transfer innovative practice from micro to meso levels of adult education and LLL in local and regional settings in comparison to international trends:

- (2017): Culture – Environment – **Knowledge and Community Skills Development**
- (2018): Experiential Learning: Environmentally-conscious? Sustainable Pécs and its Region – Place and Values/Cultural Heritages of Pécs – **Easier Together? Intergenerational Learning and Collaborations for Skills-Development**
- (2019): **Learning Community and Community Learning: Art and Culture Get People Together** – Learning through Sports for Health – Learning Environment/Learning and Environment
- (2020): Learning Together: Culture and Community: TECH-good Smart City – **City, Space and Environment: Learning Culture of Active and Sustainable Communities** – Intergenerational and intercultural Learning
- (2021): **Connections in and through Learning: Communities, Culture and Values** – **Environment, Settlement and Community** – Space, Form and Meaning – Jobs, Performance and Skills – Voluntary work, Inclusion and Aid – Teacher, Learner and Community
- (2022): **Inspiring Each Other with Learning: Value, Tradition and Identity in Learning -** Exchange between Environment, Culture and Economy
- (2023): **The Joy and Benefits of Learning: Transforming the Learning City into a Smart and Creative Community** – Identity/ Belongingness and Tradition – Environment and Healthy Living
- (2024): **Pécs - the Sustainable Learning City: Green City - Sustainable Knowledge Transfers and Skills Development**

The Pécs Learning City Programme, coordinated by the House of Civic Communities, has organised not only the annual Pécs Learning City

Festivals, but also six thematic conferences, talks and webinars. These international events have been held in association with the European University Continuing Education Network (eucen), PASCAL, UIL and several GNLC partners to help better understand and effectively reflect collaborations between local citizens, supported by international examples and models of good practice. UIL framed these upcoming challenges to LLL within an inspiring handbook to encourage cities and regions to respond to human ways of learning in adulthood through inclusive collection and sharing of knowledge (UIL, 2022).

As for the developments of adult and LLL for members of the community in Pécs, the House of Civic Communities has done its utmost to help its partners in ALE, and to provide organisational support in engaging adults with vulnerable backgrounds in learning, but has also paid significant attention to generating programmes in supporting the skills of adults who have learning difficulties, or who may have a hard time gaining access to quality LLL in their own communities or neighbourhoods. Representative organisations of groups such as the elderly, people with either physical or mental disabilities, those who are marginalised and living in depressed conditions, help in providing support through better outreach and inclusion towards community learning based on the needs of citizens. (Illustration 6)

Illustration 6: Intergenerational Learning at the Pécs Learning City Festival 2024

Conclusion

The Pécs Learning City Programme and its Pécs Learning City Festival, well-established as they are through a bottom-up approach and developed on the basis of mutuality, have engendered trust and collaboration through being co-ordinated by the House of Civic Communities, and have formulated and developed a Learning City to promote adult and LLL programmes. This has been delivered mainly through local and regional partners in adult and community education to reflect equity, inclusion and resilience among the citizens of Pécs. It is hoped that this will help the Pécs model to successfully combine social/cultural, economic/technological and environmental/green aspects of a city to work for a creative, smart learning community.

References

Eckert, T., Preisinger-Kleine, R., Fartusnic, C., Houston, M., Jucevicienė, P., Dillon, B., Németh, B., Kleisz, T., Ceseviciute, I., Thinesse-Demel, J., Osborne, M. & Wallin, M. (2012): Quality in Developing Learning Cities and Regions. A Guide for Practitioners and Stakeholders. Ludwig-Maximilians University, Munich.

Erkkilä, K. (2020): The City of Espoo Develops as a Sustainable Learning City. Studies in Adult Education and Learning, 26(1). 85-96. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.4312/as.26.1.85-96

Kearns, P. & Regenzhani-Kearns, D. (2019): Building Good Sustainable Communities through the Learning City EcCoWell Approach. CR&DALL Working Paper Series WP501/2019. Retrieved from https://cradall.org/workingpapers/building-good-sustainable-communities-through-learning-city-eccowell-approach

Longworth, N. & Osborne, M. (2010): Six Ages Towards a Learning Region – A retrospective. In: European Journal of Education. 45(3). 368-401.

Németh, B. (2013): The Pascal Universities in Regional Engagement (PURE) Project and its Hungarian Universities Contexts. In: Kálmán, A. (eds.): 8th Hungarian National and International Conference on Lifelong Learning. Competition and Co-operation: Innovative Higher Education. Debrecen: MELLearN. 181-187.

Németh, B. (2016a): New Perspectives for Community Development and Co-operative Learning through Learning Cities and Regions. In: Personal-

und Organisationsentwicklung in Einrichtungen der Lehre und Forschung, 11(3–4). 67–77.

Németh, B. (2016b): Challenges and Opportunities for Innovations in Learning City – Region Developments in Pécs, Hungary. New Perspectives for Community Development and Co-operative Learning. In: A. Pejatović, R. Egetenmeyer & M. Slowey (eds.): Contribution of Research to Improvement of Adult Education Quality, 195–212. Belgrade: Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.

Németh, B. (2022a): Challenges of Internationalisation of Adult Learning and Education through Learning Cities and its Global Networking: Perspectives and Barriers. In: A. Grotlüschen, B. Käpplinger, G. Molzberger & S. Schmidt-Lauff (eds.): Erwachsenenbildung in internationaler Perspektive, 128-142. Berlin, Toronto: Verlag Barbara Budrich.

Németh, B. (2022b): Changing Roles of Universities in the Development of Learning Cities into Smart and Creative Communities. In: European Journal of University Lifelong Learning (2789-4029): 6 2, 15-27. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.53807/0602lds5.

Németh, B. (2023): In the Making of Learning Cities into Smart and Creative Communities. Is there a Role for HEIs? In: K. Fodorné Tóth (ed.): Felsőoktatási LLL: új kihívások és megoldások – A modellváltás és COVID pandémia hatásai. Pécs: MELLearN/Milton Friedmann University, pp. 143-155.

Neylon, T., Barrett, D. (2020): How Cork applied the EcCoWeLL approach to developing holistically as a learning city? Retrieved from https://www.corklearningcity.ie/media/cuzfpgfk/how-cork-applied-the-eccowell-approach-to-developing-holistically-as-a-learning-city.pdf Oksanen, R. (2000): "Sector-wide Approaches as a Framework for Development Partnerships." In: The International Forestry Review 2 (3). 232-35.

Ó Tuama, S. (2020): Learning Neighbourhoods: Lifelong Learning, Community and Sustainability in Cork Learning City. Studies in Adult Education and Learning, 26(1). 53-65. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.4312/as.26.1.53-65

Park, S. (2020): Where do lifelong learning cities in Korea stand? From the perspective of a learning society orientation. In: Studies in Adult Education and Learning, *26*(1). 15-33. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.4312/as.26.1.15-31

Singapore's Skills Demands for a Future Economy (2025). Retrieved from https://jobsandskills.skillsfuture.gov.sg/sdfe-2025

Tibitt, J. (2014): Why Learning is Central to City Futures – A Policy Briefing from PASCAL International Observatory. Retrieved from https://eprints.gla.ac.uk/316964/

United Nations (2015): Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

UIL (2015a): UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities – Guiding Documents Hamburg: UNESCO UIL. Retrieved from UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities: guiding documents - UNESCO Digital Library

UIL (2015b): Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education Hamburg: UNESCO UIL – Retrieved from Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, 2015 - UNESCO Digital Library

UIL (2015c): Unlocking the potential of urban communities, Volume I: Case studies of twelve learning cities **–** The Case of Cork. Hamburg: UNESCO UIL. Retrieved from Unlocking the potential of urban communities: case studies of twelve learning cities - UNESCO Digital Library

UIL (2017a): Learning cities and the SDGs: a guide to action Hamburg: UNESCO UIL – Retrieved from Learning cities and the SDGs: a guide to action - UNESCO Digital Library

UIL (2017b): Unlocking the potential of urban communities, Volume II: case studies of sixteen learning cities **–** The Case of Pécs, pp. 92-102. Hamburg: UNESCO UIL. Retrieved from Unlocking the potential of urban communities, volume II: case studies of sixteen learning cities - UNESCO Digital Library

UIL (2022): Making lifelong learning a reality. A handbook. Hamburg: UNESCO UIL. Retrieved from Making lifelong learning a reality: a handbook - UNESCO Digital Library

UIL website for International Conferences of Learning Cities. Retrieved from International Conference on Learning Cities | Institute for Lifelong Learning

Yang, J. (2012): An Overview of Building Learning Cities as a Strategy for Promoting Lifelong Learning. Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 18(2), 97-113. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.7227/JACE.18.2.8

Un Shil Choi

Good governance at national level supporting successful experiences of local authorities in ALE developments and learning cities in Korea

Korea's Adult Learning and Education (ALE) initiatives have evolved into a robust national framework, fostering inclusive and sustainable learning cities. With 198 lifelong learning cities, policies focus on expanding accessibility through national networks, digital platforms, and targeted programmes for marginalised groups. The '1 Village 1 Campus' project in Eunpyeong exemplifies innovative local ALE, integrating universities and communities. Government-led efforts, including financial support, legislative advancements, and digital learning expansion, enhance lifelong learning opportunities. Korea's ALE model, recognised internationally, strengthens community engagement, workforce reskilling, and digital literacy, establishing a benchmark for sustainable, lifelong education ecosystems worldwide.

Introductory notes

The Republic of Korea is well known for the establishment of a robust education system which through the years transformed towards comprehensive lifelong learning components (Han, S., 2011). The Constitution and the Lifelong Education Act provide a strong legal background for these developments.

The understanding of the importance of adults learning throughout life has grown over the past decades, and institutional arrangements of lifelong learning centres as well as learning cities are key features in this respect. Fortunately, the developments in policy and legislation receive financial backing that enables their implementation (Choi, U. S. & Lee, S., 2021).

The literature on education in the Republic of Korea has grown tremendously in recent years. Of course, most of it is in Korean, but there is also a solid English-language debate on findings from research and development in adult and lifelong learning. These include the publication of *Lifelong Learning in Korea* as a sort of newsletter published by the National Institute of Lifelong Education (NILE), where the fourth National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan (2018-2022) is presented together with experiences from other Asian countries (NILE, 2018). A follow-up was provided when analysing from a comparative perspective the fourth and fifth lifelong learning promotion plans to draw some conclusions for future strategic developments (Jeong et al., 2023).

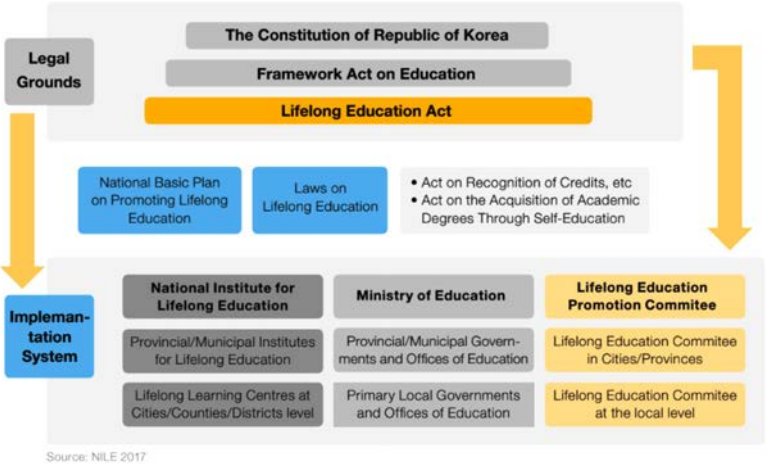

Illustration 1: Systematic approach to lifelong learning of the Republic of Korea

Source: NILE 2017, presented in Choi, U. S. & Lee, S., 2021, p. 137

Illustration 2: Korean ALE Hub Institute NILE (National Institute for Lifelong Education)

Source: NILE 2025, https://www.nile.or.kr/index.do?lang=en

However, concentrating on the importance of ALE and learning cities in this process, it may be helpful, at the beginning of this case study, to present a graphic which captures the framework of the Constitution, the Education Act, as well as the legal provisions on lifelong learning and their impact at national, provincial and local level, and how the Ministry of Education, NILE and Lifelong Education Promotion Committees at each level support each other.

At the heart of the matter for the implementation of lifelong learning, and especially the development of learning opportunities for adults, is the NILE. It is established and grounded at national level, but the system of Provincial and Municipal Institutes for Lifelong Education ensures that there is close cooperation with stakeholders at local level and their Lifelong Learning Centres. A very important feature is also the connection between NILE and the many universities in the country.

For a better understanding of NILE, its mission and vision, but also of the areas in which it works and what NILE does, the following figure is provided (see *Illustration 2*).

1. Current local ALE trends and policies for expanding accessibility

1.1. Expanding ALE accessibility through the national learning cities ecosystem

As of 2025, the 198 lifelong learning cities across the country are implementing locally-tailored ALE policies to safeguard adult learners' right to education, and to expand learning opportunities. These cities are strengthening the local community ALE infrastructure based on the lifelong learning perspective through local government networks and initiatives. Some of the major policies and projects are:

- **Lifelong Learning City Capacity Building Policies**, which include developing master plans, roadmaps and networks for sharing best practices.
- **Strengthening local ALE networks and creating a learning ecosystem** to develop and enhance community-based ALE networks to foster inclusive, sustainable learning.
- **Support for community learning groups and study circles:** Provides resources and capacity-building programmes for local learning communities and grassroots learning groups to encourage active participation in ALE.

- **Establishment of learning consultation and mentoring system for adult learners:** Implements personalised learning consultation and tutorial mentoring services to support adult learners in their lifelong learning journey.
- **Creation of a digital-based smart ALE learning platform:** Establishes an integrated digital platform to provide smart learning opportunities, real-time learning support, and a comprehensive ALE-resource information archive.
- **Strong lifelong learning support system for marginalised groups and persons with disabilities:** Expands inclusive learning opportunities by building a specialised support system for disadvantaged learners with disabilities.

1.2. Unique example of expanding ALE accessibility in Korea: UNESCO Award City Eunpyeong, Seoul Metropolitan Area

1.2.1. Overview of the 1 Village 1 Campus project

Eunpyeong has initiated the "1 Village 1 Campus" project to expand ALE opportunities for local citizens and establish an educational model where villages and universities grow together. This initiative operates specialised programmes for each of the 16 Dong (village) neighbourhoods within the city, fostering customised learning environments in collaboration with local universities and institutions.

1.2.2. Specialised village college model and partner universities

Eunpyeong has entered into 16 partnerships with different universities in the city, amongst which are:

- **Nokbeon Village Campus: Net-Zero Environmental College** with Seoul City University Environmental Graduate School
- **Bulgwang 1 Village Campus: Creative Storytelling & Picture Book College** with Anyang University
- **Galhyeon 2 Village Campus: Music Therapy & Guitar Performance College** with Baekseok University Arts Cooperation Institute
- **Daejo Village Campus: Traditional Korean Painting & K-Dance College** with Dongguk University Future Convergence Education Institute

Illustration 3: City of Eunpyeong, Project 2024 Performance Sharing Conference

1.2.3. Achievements

Eunpyeong received the UNESCO GNLC Award at the 6th UNESCO Learning Cities Conference in Jubail, Saudi Arabia, in December 2024. It was also honoured by the Grand Prize in the Education Innovation category at the 2024 Korea Local Government Innovation Awards. The reasons include:

- **Over 1,500 residents** participated across the 16 village programmes.
- Achieved over **90% citizen satisfaction** in learning experiences.
- **Strengthened community engagement** and created local learning models.
- Integrated some programmes into **long-term local policy initiatives**.

1.2.4. Future plans

- **Expansion of learning topics**, including digital technology and environmental sustainability.
- Identification of additional university partnerships and **exploration of international collaborations**.
- Strengthening the **integration of online and offline learning experiences**.
- **Exploring nationwide expansion** of the customised local learning model.

1.3. Unique example of expanding ALE accessibility in Korea: UNESCO Learning City GNLC Gongju, Chung Nam Province

1.3.1. Overview of the flagship project: "One Thousand Heritage-Based Community Learning Centres"

Gongju City received the prestigious Prime Minister's Award at the 2024 Republic of Korea Lifelong Learning Grand Awards for its innovative, inclusive approach to adult education. Gongju's flagship project strategically integrates the rich historical and cultural heritage of the Baekje Dynasty, promoting lifelong learning through community-focused education initiatives. Some of the key features are:

- **Heritage-integrated learning**: Utilising Baekje's historical legacy, Gongju promotes heritage-based learning programmes that enrich community identity and strengthen civic pride.
- **Citizen-centric engagement:** Active citizen participation fostered through customised programmes designed around residents' interests and needs.
- **Inclusive learning platform:** Comprehensive initiatives targeting marginalised populations, including older adults, persons with disabilities, multicultural families, residents on a low income, and illiterate adults, ensuring equitable access to lifelong education.

1.3.2 Specialised flagship projects

- **Happiness Nuri Multipurpose Community Complex:** Serving approximately 3,000 residents monthly, this integrated facility provides lifelong education programmes, childcare, eldercare, health services, recreational activities, and spaces for community gatherings, fostering holistic community well-being.
- **Baekje Humanities Citizen College:** Structured humanities courses accessible to all socioeconomic groups, with over 500 residents participating annually. Courses cover local history, philosophy, literature and the arts, encouraging community-driven learning and critical thinking.
- **Gomanaru Youth Culture Learning Centre:** Annual participation by over 1,200 young people engaging in workshops, seminars and cultural events highlighting local heritage, modern arts and creative expression. Activities include traditional music and dance workshops, heritage storytelling competitions and contemporary art exhibits.

- **Citizen Learning Circle:** Gongju actively supports more than 65 learning clubs, such as the “Gyeryongsan Guitar Club”, which boasts 150 active members, and “Gongju History and Culture Lovers”, with regular participation by over 200 community members. These clubs encourage peer-led, interest-based learning experiences, significantly enhancing community bonding.

Illustration 4: City of Gongju, Joy of Life Community Learning Complex, Learning Class for Korean Folk Art Painting Seniors Class, 2025

- **Intergenerational learning project:** Promoting meaningful connections between elderly residents and younger generations through joint educational and cultural activities, addressing Gongju’s significant elderly population and enhancing mutual understanding across age groups.

Illustration 5: City of Gongju, Traditional Art Printing Master's Learning Circle, 2024

- **Comprehensive lifelong learning portal:** An online platform receiving approximately 10,000 monthly visits, offering inclusive, barrier-free access to a wide array of educational resources, course information, online lectures and community announcements, thus significantly reducing barriers to participation.

1.3.3. Efforts to enhance learning for marginalised groups:

Special literacy programmes and tailored educational workshops for senior citizens, illiterate adults, multicultural families, and individuals with disabilities, to ensure inclusive participation.

- **Learning city branding and recognition:** Designated as a Special Educational Development Zone by the Ministry of Education, reinforcing Gongju's reputation and branding as an innovative educational city.
- **Gongju Lifelong Learning Festival:** Engaging all demographic groups citywide, encouraging active participation, and celebrating educational achievements.

1.3.4. Key achievements:

- Approximately 30% increase in participation among traditionally marginalised groups, demonstrating effective inclusivity
- High participant satisfaction rate, consistently surpassing 90% according to annual surveys
- Strengthened intergenerational relationships and community identity through shared cultural and educational experiences

Illustration 6: City of Gongju, 2024 Gongju Lifelong Learning Festival with Citizens

1.3.5 Future plans

To sustain and expand its success, Gongju City plans to:

- **broaden heritage-focused humanities learning** to reach wider audiences and foster deeper community engagement
- **enhance digital infrastructure** to support hybrid learning models, combining online and offline learning environments effectively.

Illustration 7: Traditional Korean Art Park Dong-jin Pansori Class, City of Gongju, 2024

1.4. Expanding adult literacy education and strengthening support for ALE among vulnerable groups

Policy trends and major projects: To enhance learning accessibility for educationally-marginalised groups, literacy education, **life functional literacy, and digital media literacy for senior citizens**, are being particularly expanded in cooperation with local governments, with customised support programmes. Literacy programmes that **grant formal academic recognition that is equivalent to primary and secondary school attainment** are currently very popular. Here are some of them:

- **Outreach literacy education class:** Expands access to ALE by providing outreach mobile learning services for people such as senior citizens and persons with disabilities who have mobility difficulties or live in areas with limited transportation access.
- **Korean-language education programme for multicultural families:** Enhances ALE support for foreign residents and multicultural families.
- **Digital literacy education for socially-deprived individuals:** Enhances digital literacy for digitally-excluded groups, including senior citizens, people living in remote areas, and persons on a low income.

1.5. Barrier-free movement for promoting ALE for persons with disabilities

Policy trends and major projects: To guarantee the right to learning and improve ALE accessibility for persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Education, and local governments, have expanded the **"Lifelong Learning City for Persons with Disabilities"** initiative, and the **"Lifelong Learning Voucher for Persons with Disabilities"** has been introduced to provide educational funding for **individuals with developmental disabilities** and **borderline intellectual functioning**. Here are some of them:

- **Barrier-Free Learning City Movement:** This movement aims to eliminate social exclusion and constraints for persons with disabilities, thus ensuring equal access to lifelong learning. By removing physical, digital and systemic barriers, the initiative promotes inclusive educational environments where all individuals can participate fully. It seeks to build a more inclusive society where lifelong learning is a right for everyone, regardless of disability.
- **Designation of disability-friendly lifelong learning cities:** Some 60 local governments (as of 2024) have currently been selected as lifelong learning cities for persons with disabilities.
- **Lifelong learning voucher for persons with disabilities:** Expands financial support for education costs (https://www.lllcard.kr/main/mainView.do).

1.6. Establishing university-local government collaboration on ALE systems through LiFE (Lifelong Education at Universities for the Future of Education) 2.0 Initiative Project

Policy trends and major projects: The LiFE 2.0 initiative project supports universities as **ALE platforms by fostering collaboration between universities and local governments**. This programme facilitates local revitalisation, and enhances the living conditions of local communities, thus ensuring the mutual growth of universities and localities.

- **Establishing ALE-friendly infrastructure within universities**: Develops dedicated ALE units and learning support centres.
- **Adult-friendly flexible academic systems:** Implement **recognition of prior learning (RPL) systems** and develop adult-friendly curricula.
- **Support for customised degree and non-degree programmes for adult learners**.

- Development of **university-local government collaboration programmes:** Provides learning opportunities in connection with local communities.
- Expansion of **hybrid learning programmes**: Establishes a flexible learning environment.

1.7. Expanding ALE accessibility through the digital lifelong learning system

Policy trends and major projects: In response to the digital transformation, Korea is enhancing ALE accessibility by strengthening **digital literacy capacities**. Key initiatives include the expansion of the Korean Massive Open Online Course (**K-MOOC**), the development of the **Online Lifelong Learning Portal (Neulbaeum)**, and the implementation of the **Short-Term Job Competency Qualification Programme (MatchUp)**, which is tailored to industry needs in collaboration with local governments.

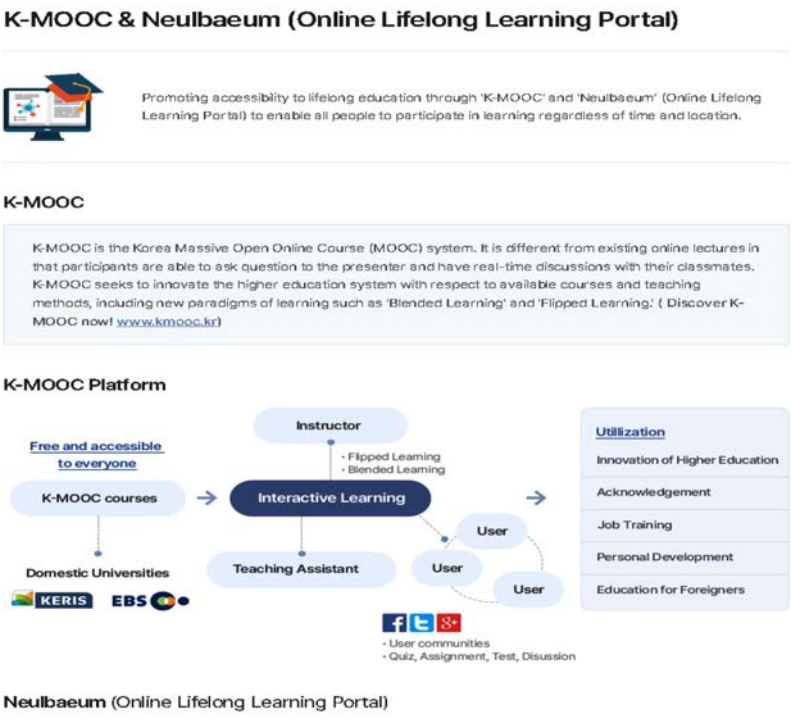

Illustration 8: K-MOOC Platform lifelong learning of the Republic of Korea

Source: https://www.nile.or.kr/usr/wap/detail.do?app=13309&seq=621&lang=en

- Expansion of **K-MOOC with universities**: Strengthens online learning opportunities through cooperation between local governments and universities.
- **National Lifelong Learning Portal connected by local government:** Expands regional digital learning infrastructure and delivery systems.
- Development of **AI-based personalised learning support systems:** Provides customised ALE consulting for adult learners.

2. Development of national policies, legislation and financial support for ALE and its impact on local governments

2.1. Development and revision of policies and legislation

Korea's policies on ALE for persons with disabilities have been developed under the advocating initiatives of NILE and the Ministry of Education, with a continuous strengthening of the legal framework.

- **Revision of the Lifelong Education Act:** The 2022 revision of the Lifelong Education Act reinforced the responsibilities of local governments in lifelong education, and explicitly guaranteed educational accessibility for learners with disabilities.
- **Development of the National Basic Plan for Lifelong Education (2023–2027):** This policy integrates adult learning and vocational education while aiming to promote local development through lifelong learning.
- **Development of the Lifelong Education Promotion Plan for Persons with Disabilities:** In 2023, the Ministry of Education announced a fundamental master plan to strengthen the lifelong learning rights of persons with disabilities, and launched projects to designate and support the nationwide **lifelong learning cities specifically for persons with disabilities**.

2.2. Expansion of financial support

The national government has strengthened financial support to ensure that local governments can continuously implement lifelong education policies.

- **Financial support for local government initiating lifelong learning cities:** The national government provides financial support

annually for the establishment and specialisation of 198 lifelong learning cities.

- **Financial support for lifelong learning cities for persons with disabilities**: The government supports the development of lifelong learning cities for persons with disabilities through national funding, and **collaborates with local governments to provide lifelong learning vouchers.**
- **Financial support for local government and universities initiating the LiFE (Leading Innovative for Future Education) project:** To expand higher education opportunities for adult learners, the government has allocated a total of **50,000,000 Euro (KRW 72 billion)** for the first and second phases of the LiFE project, promoting cooperation between universities and local governments.
- **Financial support for the K-MOOC (Korean Massive Open Online Course) and digital learning portal:** Investments are being made to expand online education and establish digital learning centres to enhance accessibility for adult learners. As of 2023, the annual budget for the operation of the K-MOOCs is 1.6 billion euros (NILE, 2023. Lifelong learning White Paper)

2.3. Impact on local governments

National ALE policies and expanded financial support have enabled local governments to manage lifelong education in a more structured manner.

- **Establishment and expansion of dedicated lifelong education departments in local government:** Among the 228 local governments, at least 198 lifelong learning cities have established dedicated lifelong education departments, facilitating the development of local-specific learning policies.
- **Activation of locally customising unique lifelong learning project**s**:** Local governments are leading initiatives that reflect local characteristics such as job-linked learning programmes, support for multicultural families, and lifelong learning opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- **Development of digital learning infrastructure:** Utilising national support, local governments have expanded smart learning centres and digital literacy education, improving learning accessibility for local residents.
- **Strengthening lifelong education cooperation systems:** Collaborative models involving the national government, local

government, universities and industries have been expanded, fostering the establishment of a sustainable national and local learning ecosystem.

3. Additional measures implemented by local government to enhance ALE accessibility

3.1. Improvement and expansion of smart learning infrastructure

Local governments are enhancing learning infrastructure to make adult education more accessible.

- **Establishment of smart learning centres:** Metropolitan and local governments have established smart learning centres to support digital literacy education. Local governments and cities such as Seoul and Gyeonggi Province have integrated AI and VR education spaces within public libraries and lifelong learning centres.
- **Enhancement of digital learning environments:** Many of the learning cities have created a 'digital learning hub and archive', and have expanded online smart learning portals and created learning platforms, in particular for digitally-marginalised groups.

3.2. Provision and maximisation of the utilisation of community learning spaces

Local governments are securing and diversifying learning spaces to ensure accessibility for adult learners.

- **Expanded access to public institutions:** Many local governments have increased accessibility by expanding the use of public libraries and welfare centres, allowing access on evenings and weekends.
- **Utilisation of unused vacant spaces:** To utilise unused, closed school buildings and public properties to create additional learning spaces for adult learners.
- **Support for community learning networks:** Learning cities support community-based learning initiatives where local citizens manage and design learning programmes autonomously.

3.3. Public utility and financial support

Local governments have introduced financial aid and utility support programmes to reduce economic barriers for adult learners.

- **Educational fee assistance programmes:** Many local governments provide financial aid for adult learners on a low income, and offer learning vouchers specifically for persons with disabilities and senior citizens.
- **Reduction of public utility costs:** Many local governments also subsidise electricity, water and operational costs for community ALE institutions in the same way as for public utilisation.
- **Expansion of lifelong learning vouchers:** The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with local governments, has recently increased the availability of lifelong learning vouchers, with a focus on disabled and elderly learners.

3.4. Workforce allocation and enhancement of educational services

To improve the quality of education, local governments are expanding professional workforces and enhancing education services.

- **Deployment of professional instructors and learning coordinators:** The local governments have assigned learning coordinators in lifelong learning centres to provide personalised learning consultations.
- **Volunteer learning support:** Most local governments deploy volunteers such as retired professionals and university students to provide one-on-one learning mentorship.

4. Benefits for local ALE centres and institutions, and impact on adult learners

4.1. Impact and transformations in local ALE centres and institutions

4.1.1. Expansion of learning cities and establishment of a sustainable learning ecosystem

- Korea has actively promoted the **learning cities initiative** since the enactment of the **Lifelong Education Act** in 2001.
- **198 local governments** have been designated as learning cities, forming a **sustainable, community-based learning ecosystem**.
- The **Lifelong Education Voucher** programme has been implemented since 2017 to provide **greater learning opportunities for people on a low income and vulnerable groups** by offering personalised education support.

4.1.2. Expansion of inclusive learning programmes for marginalised groups

- Customised lifelong education programmes have been strengthened to serve **people with disabilities, immigrants, older adults, and populations of people on a low income**.
- **Outreach education services**, Korean language programmes **for immigrants, and digital literacy education for the elderly**, have been expanded to enhance accessibility.

4.1.3. Establishment of a community-based learning model

- **Community-driven learning models** have expanded nationwide, leading to the activation of citizen-led learning communities.
- **Collaboration between enterprises and companies, NGOs and public learning institutions** has resulted in the implementation of problem-solving-based education linked to regional development.

4.1.4. Development of digital learning environments using technology

- Korea has **greatly expanded online and remote learning systems** since the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to the enhancement of **national digital learning platforms such as K-MOOC (Korea Massive Open Online Course).**
- The integration of **EdTech, AI-based personalised learning, smart learning centres, and mobile lifelong learning support services**, has helped bridge digital learning gaps across different regions.

4.2. Substantial changes and impacts on adult learners

4.2.1. Expansion of vocational retraining and economic independence opportunities

- Adult learners have gained access to vocational retraining and career transition programmes, leading to **increased employment** and entrepreneurship opportunities for middle-aged workers, retirees and women whose careers have been interrupted.
- **Participation of middle-aged and older adult learners** in lifelong education has a positive impact on career transitions and employment stability (KEDI, 2023).
- **Middle-aged and older adults successfully started their own businesses**, or created new jobs after participating in the job programme (Seoul 50 Plus Foundation, 2020).

4.2.2. Improved mental well-being and quality of life

- Lifelong learning plays a critical role in **enhancing mental health and emotional well-being**, as continuous education contributes to personal development and life satisfaction.
- The report from NILE and National Commission for UNESCO in 2022 showed **increased self-efficacy and a stronger sense of belonging** as a result of lifelong learning engagement.

4.2.3. Strengthened intergenerational exchange and social networks

- With the growth of intergenerational learning, **educational models promoting interaction between older and younger generations** have gained traction.
- These initiatives have led to **greater social connectivity and the development of community-based support systems**.

4.2.4. Enhancement of digital competencies and bridging the digital divide

- **Digital learning has become more widespread**, leading to the expansion of digital literacy education for marginalised populations.
- Online learning opportunities have **removed time and location barriers**, empowering adult learners with **stronger technology utilisation skills**.

5. Key stakeholders and partner organisations supporting ALE

5.1. Government ministries and public institutions

Various government ministries and public institutions play a crucial role in supporting and expanding ALE initiatives:

- **Ministry of Education & NILE:** Oversees holistic ALE policy, funding and national programmes, including the promotion of lifelong learning cities.
- **Ministry of the Environment:** Supports sustainability education in learning cities through programmes on climate action, eco-friendly practices, and environmental literacy.
- **Ministry of Employment and Labour:** Implements vocational

training and job-related ALE programmes, including the **National Tomorrow Learning Card**, which offers training for unemployed and employed adults.

- **National Centre for Lifelong Education for People with Disabilities & National Institute for Special Education:** Develops and implements lifelong learning programmes tailored to people with disabilities, including customised curriculums, braille literacy, and digital accessibility training.

5.2. Local governments and lifelong learning cities

Local governments are the backbone of ALE implementation, coordinating infrastructure, funding and community-based learning programmes:

- **Metropolitan & municipal governments (17 provincial lifelong education institutes):** Play a strategic role in regional lifelong learning policies and ALE centre expansion.
- **226 local governments and 198 lifelong learning cities:** Develop local policies supporting diverse adult education programmes, including literacy, vocational training and cultural learning initiatives. They operate community learning centres and programmes, including outreach mobile education services for marginalised groups.
- **Korean National Association for Lifelong Learning Cities:** Facilitates collaboration among lifelong learning cities, shares best practices, and provides a network for regional development.

5.3. Universities and research institutions

Higher education institutions contribute to ALE by designing adult-centred curricula and offering flexible learning options:

- **Universities participating in LiFE project:** Provide specialised programmes for adult learners, including degree courses, professional certificates, and vocational training.
- **Universities participating in K-MOOC:** Offer online educational content for adult learners with national accreditation.
- **Research institutes and academic societies:** Initiated by the NILE, KEDI (Korean Education Development Institute) and many of the Municipal Policy Research Institutes initiate policy research on lifelong learning, evaluate the effectiveness of ALE programmes, and contribute to policy recommendations.

5.4. Industry and private sector collaboration

The private sector plays a vital role in providing career-orientated adult education and fostering workplace learning opportunities:

- **Corporations and industry associations:** Implement vocational training programmes, reskilling initiatives, and on-the-job learning opportunities in collaboration with local governments.
- **EdTech and digital learning platforms:** Partner with ALE centres to expand access to digital education resources, AI-driven personalised learning, and virtual training.
- **Social enterprises and NGOs:** Focus on marginalised groups by offering literacy education, social inclusion programmes, and community-based learning initiatives.

5.5. International organisations and global networks

Korea actively participates in international lifelong learning networks to benchmark best practices and advance ALE policies:

- **UIL:** Provides research, policy guidance and technical support for lifelong learning strategies.
- **UNESCO GNLC:** Facilitates global collaboration on lifelong learning city development under the UIL.
- **DVV International:** Provides expertise and policy recommendations for ALE enhancement and consultation through ALE networks which are well known the world over.
- **WHO Academy:** Engages in capacity-building for lifelong learning, particularly in health-related education and professional development.

6. Mechanisms implemented by project partners to institutionalise and professionalise ALE advocacy

To ensure the institutionalisation and professionalisation of ALE, project partners, including government agencies, local governments, universities, industries and international organisations, have implemented various strategic mechanisms. These mechanisms have reinforced ALE governance, improved educational quality, and expanded accessibility.

6.1. Legislative and policy development

- **Lifelong Education Act expansion:** Strengthened legal frameworks ensure ALE sustainability and alignment with international standards.

- **Integration into development plans: ALE is embedded in national and local policies**, reinforcing its role in lifelong learning and economic development.
- **Recognition of lifelong learning cities:** Certified cities receive official status and funding to enhance local ALE implementation.

6.2. Strengthening governance and coordination

- **National and regional ALE committees:** Ministries, local governments and universities coordinate policies and execution.
- **Public-private partnerships (PPP) for ALE:** Collaboration with corporations, universities and NGOs secures financing and curriculum development.
- **Decentralised Policy Implementation:** Local governments develop ALE programmes suited to their regional needs, thus increasing efficiency.

6.3. Capacity building for educators and ALE professionals

- **National certification for ALE educators:** A structured programme ensures professionalisation and standardisation of ALE instruction.
- **Training for ALE staff and managers:** Specialised courses equip local coordinators with the skills to effectively operate learning centres.
- **International exchange programmes:** Collaboration and strong partnerships with UIL, DVV International and OECD facilitate training and knowledge sharing.

6.4. Sustainable financing and funding models

- **Government funding for ALE Centres:** Programmes such as the National Tomorrow Learning Card provide financial support for learners and institutions.
- **Corporate investment in workforce education:** Industry-sponsored training and upskilling programmes enhance ALE sustainability.

6.5. Technology integration and digital learning

- **AI-based learning platforms:** K-MOOC offers personalised and adaptive learning experiences.

- **Smart learning cities:** IoT-based education infrastructure expands access to digital learning resources.
- **Hybrid and mobile learning:** Mobile learning labs and hybrid models improve outreach to underserved communities.

6.6. Public awareness and community engagement

- **Lifelong learning campaigns:** Governments promote ALE participation through events and awareness campaigns.
- **Community-based learning:** Initiatives such as neighbourhood learning circles foster inclusive participation.
- **Digital outreach strategies:** Social media and online platforms enhance ALE engagement.

Korea's ALE ecosystem is strengthened through legislative frameworks, governance models, funding strategies, and technological integration. These initiatives expand learning access, improve quality, and establish Korea as a leader in lifelong learning policy. **Multi-stakeholder partnerships ensure ALE continues driving social and economic development, making lifelong learning accessible for all**.

Concluding remarks

The Republic of Korea presents a powerful example of how strong national governance can effectively drive ALE through local innovation. A solid legal foundation, dedicated funding, and strategic coordination within Korea's national ALE model, also embraces digital transformation, equity, and public-private partnerships. Initiatives such as K-MOOC, the LiFE 2.0 programme, and disability-inclusive voucher systems, ensure access for all, and for marginalised groups in particular.

Through these efforts, Korea has advanced a dynamic and inclusive learning ecosystem that enhances community resilience, workforce adaptability, social cohesion, and local authorities. Korea has institutionalised lifelong learning as a public right and societal priority. The government's support has enabled 200 K-lifelong learning cities to develop inclusive, community-based learning models as of 2025. Notable examples include Eunpyeong's "1 Village 1 Campus" project, which fosters university-community collaboration to deliver tailored learning across all neighbourhoods, as well as Gongju's "One Thousand Heritage-Based Community Learning Centres" which integrates cultural heritage

into accessible, intergenerational education. These cases demonstrate how local creativity flourishes when backed by national policies and financial support.

As global interest in lifelong learning grows, Korea's experience underscores a critical lesson: Sustainable ALE requires both visionary national leadership, and empowered local action. When national frameworks align with local needs, lifelong learning becomes not only possible, but in fact transformative.

References

Choi, U. S. & Lee, S. (2021): Public financing of popular adult learning and education in Korea. In: Duke, C., Hinzen, H. & Sarrazin, R. (eds.): Public Financing of Popular Adult Learning and Education (ALE). Bonn: DVV International, 132-146. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.de/materialien/publikationen/analysis

Han, S. (2011): Introduction to Building a Learning City. In: J. Yang & R. Valdes Cotera (eds.): Conceptual Evolution and Policy Developments in Lifelong Learning Cities. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED540500.pdf

NILE (2018): Lifelong Learning in Korea, Vol. 1. Seoul: NILE. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2023/05/2018_lifelong_learning_in_korea_vol.1.pdf

Jeong, J., Hong, D., Chang, J., Youm, S. (2023): Future Strategy of Lifelong Education through Systems Analysis in Republic of Korea: Long-Term Research Conducted Based on Two Surveys in 2016 and 2023. In: Systems 2023, 11(12), 557. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.3390/systems11120557

KEDI (2023): Lifelong Education Support Strategies for Middle-Aged Adult Learners in Career Transition: Ages 40-50.

Seoul 50 Plus Foundation (2020): A Study on Successful Cases of Entrepreneurship and Job Creation among Participants in the Boram Job Program. Retrieved from https://50plus.or.kr/upload/im/2017/12/ad5e75e3-9839-44f0-b05b-39fc8c926c6f.pdf

Khau Huu Phuoc

Community learning centres in Vietnam as spaces of lifelong learning practices – embedded in top-down and bottom-up governance

With two community learning centres (CLCs) piloted in 1998 in response to the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL), Vietnam quickly developed this model of community-based learning spaces in almost all communes and wards. As the movement was supported by the State, it inherits some coherence across the country. At the same time, the rapid increase in the number of CLCs poses some challenges to the current operation for the benefit of grassroots people because insufficient resources are provided.

Introduction

UNESCO initiated the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) in 1987 with the financial assistance of the Japanese and Norwegian Funds-in-trust to promote human development by providing opportunities for lifelong learning to all people, especially marginalised people in the local community.

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) was a key strategy within the APPEAL framework in response to the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, to provide community-based, non-formal education and lifelong learning opportunities. They were positioned as grassroots institutions that could address the diverse educational needs of communities by being flexible, inclusive and responsive.

CLCs were in fact not a new concept. APPEAL aimed to assist participating countries through the regional CLC project to develop an old concept of community-based learning similar to that in Japan or Germany, and transform it to suit the new context for improving the quality of people's lives.

The establishment of Vietnam's first CLCs

Vietnam joined the Programme in 1998 with the project known as "Promoting CLCs in Vietnam", initiated by UNESCO/PROAP and implemented by the Research Centre for Literacy and Continuing Education (RCL&CE), the National Institute for Education (NIES), and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Two pilot CLCs, one in Cao Son, Hoa Binh Province, and the other in Pu Nhung, Lai Chau Province, were established (MOET et al., 1999) (Appendix 1: Pictures of Cao Son and Pu Nhung CLCs in 1998).

Under the Communist Party's directive to provide learning opportunities to all, the Ministry of Education and Training encouraged the establishment of CLCs in all rural communes and urban wards. The number quickly rose to 155 in 2001, then to 9,990 in 2010, and peaked at 11,081 in 2017, covering 98.93% of all communes and wards in Vietnam (MOET, 2018). The number subsequently levelled out at around 10,000 due to the consolidation of administrative divisions and the merging of CLCs with local houses of culture (Appendix 2: Pictures of activities at Ho Nai CLC in 2023; Appendix 3: Numbers of CLCs from 2010 to 2020).

The presence of a CLC in almost all rural communes and urban wards makes it the most easily accessible learning venue for the community. "You learn what you need" is the regularly-repeated slogan

Illustration 1: Pictures of Cao Son and Pu Nhung CLCs in 1998

Illustration 2. Cultural activity in Pu Nhung CLC

Source: The pictures of Cao Son and Pu Nhung are from: Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), National Institute for Education (NIES) and Research Centre for Literacy and Continuing Education (RCL&CE) (1999). APPEAL Pilot Project on Promoting Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in Vietnam. [Final report].

Illustration 3. Life skills for children at Ho Nai CLC in Dong Nai province (photo courtesy of Mr Nguyen Quang Tuyen, Director of the CLC)

Illustration 4. Healthcare for the community (photo courtesy of Mr Nguyen Quang Tuyen, Director of Ho Nai CLC in Dong Nai Province)

of CLCs within the non-formal education sector in Vietnam. CLCs are indeed "an enabling instrument, a multi-purpose venue for individual and community development built on a humanistic approach to development" (Khau & Duke, 2023: 284).

The legal position of CLCs in Vietnam's education system

Following the outcomes of the pilot programme, and in response to the increasing number of CLCs, the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam issued Decision 09/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT in 2008 stipulating regulations for the organisation and activities of community learning centres in communes, wards and towns. The document was amended in 2014 by Document 10/VBHN-BGDĐT to reflect socio-economic changes in the country (MOET, 2014).

Today, CLCs are recognised as an integral component of Vietnam's education system, which consists of two strands running in parallel, namely formal education and continuing education, to which CLCs belong (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2019).

There are two *firsts* related to continuing education in the 2019 Law on Education.

1. Continuing education is regulated in one dedicated section in the Law. Section 2 on continuing education (CE) comprises six articles (Articles 41 to 46), which outline the objectives of CE, the tasks of CE, the programmes, forms, content and methods of CE, CE institutions, the evaluation and recognition of learning outcomes, and policies for CE development. These six articles reflect strategic innovations regarding the scope, nature, authority and mission of CE in the new phase.
2. The Law also allows for the first time non-public (private) models of continuing education institutions, including CLCs. This newly-added engagement of the private sector is to meet the needs of learners, align with the current conditions of localities, and facilitate effective management.

Box 1: More legal status for continuing education

According to the 2019 Law on Education, "Continuing education is education that follows a certain educational programme and has flexible organisation regarding programme implementation formats, time,

methods, locations, satisfying the learners' need for lifelong learning" (Chapter I, Article 5). This framework highlights the pivotal role of CLCs in promoting lifelong learning opportunities tailored to the diverse needs of learners.

Vietnam's definition of continuing education differs from UNESCO's broader concept. While UNESCO views continuing education as encompassing formal, non-formal and informal learning (UNESCO, 1984), in Vietnam, "continuing education" specifically refers to non-formal education that runs parallel to formal education, with some equivalency programmes.

CLCs, which are institutions of continuing education, offer learning programmes at basic level, including literacy, basic vocational skills, and primary education equivalency. They also disseminate information, knowledge and experience in production and life, thus contributing to poverty alleviation, increasing productivity, and creating jobs (Fig. 1) (MOET, 2008).

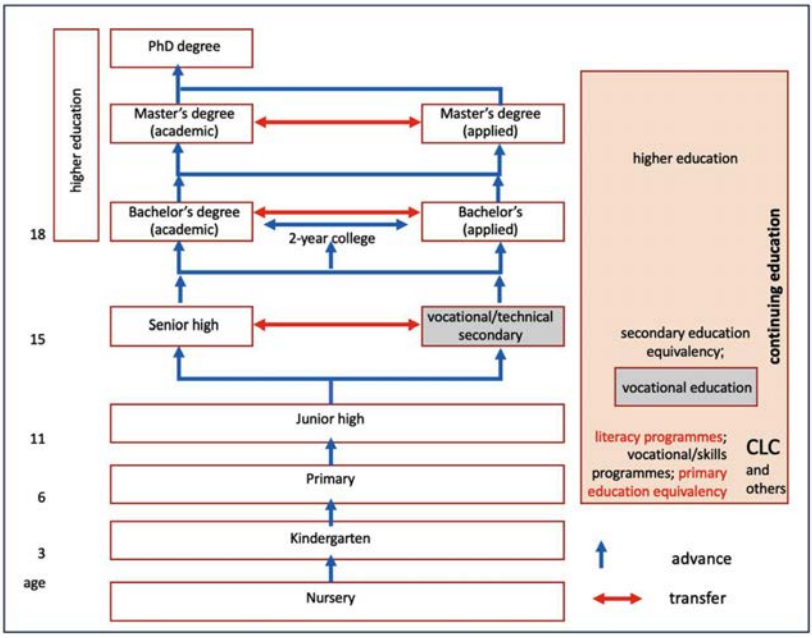

Illustration 5: Vietnam's education system

Source: Adapted from Vietnamese Prime Minister's Decision No. 1981/QĐ-TTg on the National Education System, the 2019 Law on Education, and MOET's 2008 Regulations on CLCs Organisation and Operation

Continuing education in Vietnam is delivered through a variety of institutions, including continuing education centres, foreign language and computer studies centres, life skills centres, soft skills centres, and CLCs, with CLCs being the most widely established. The governance of these institutions is shared among different ministries. Academic programmes normally fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Training, whilst vocational programmes are overseen by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, and some specific (short-term) programmes are managed by other ministries. For example, healthcare-related thematic sessions are sometimes organised by the Ministry of Health, while the Ministry of Defence organises the yearly summer "Military Semester", designed to instil discipline and structured living in young participants.

Governance

CLCs are governed and managed by a synergy of several entities: the local government (People's Committee), the district Department of Education and Training, and indirectly the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Finance (Fig. 2). Each of these governmental bodies operates under its own Communist Party Committee, which plays a central role in setting the strategic direction and guiding all aspects of the organisation's operations.

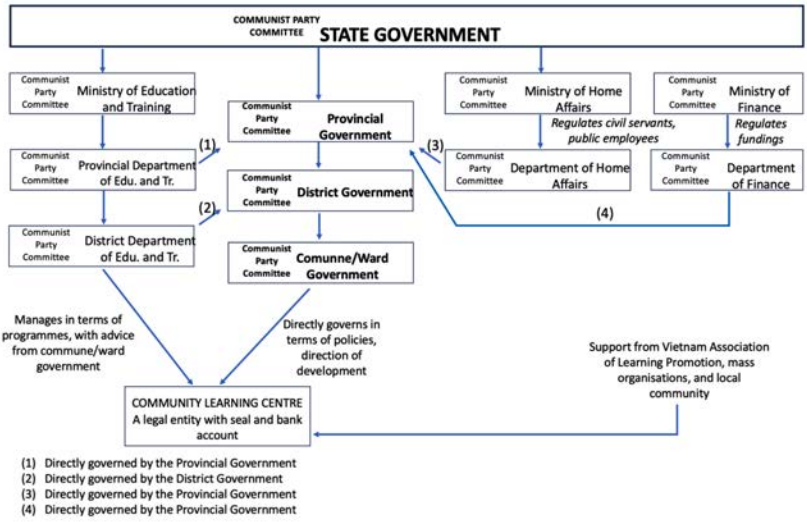

Illustration 6: Governance of CLCs (diagram provided by the author)

The commune/ward people's committee plays a direct, comprehensive leadership role in the operation of the CLC in its locality, ensuring legal compliance, providing the location for establishment and facilities for the CLC's operations, allocating operational funding for the CLC from the local budget as regulated by the Ministry of Finance, and providing orientation for activities.

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) plays a pivotal role in managing CLCs. It issues legal documents, regulations, circulars and guidelines on the organisation and operation of CLCs, develops general learning programmes and content, and provides professional and technical training for CLC staff in collaboration with the local People's Committee.

The Ministry of Home Affairs regulates civil servants and public employees. As CLCs have staff who are civil servants or public employees seconded from local government agencies and schools (see The Triangular Model of CLC Management below), their employment policies and conditions are governed by legal documents on civil servants and public employees issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Ministry of Finance issues legal documents on financial management, regulating the state budget (both central and local), as well as donations and contributions from organisations, individuals and communities. It guides local authorities and CLCs in implementing financial management regulations, ensuring that funds are used appropriately and effectively.

In this coordinated mechanism, however, the Department of Education and Training at provincial and district levels are directly governed by the corresponding People's Committee, as are the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Finance at provincial level.

CLCs are also supported by the Vietnam Association for Learning Promotion (VALP), and various mass organisations such as the Youth Union, Women's Union, the Farmers' Association and the Veterans' Association. These may partner with CLCs to conduct activities aligned with their specific functions and missions, encourage their members to actively participate in CLC activities, offer resources such as personnel (e.g. inviting experts and volunteers who are members of these organisations to teach or provide guidance) and materials.

Functions and duties of CLCs

CLCs are continuing education institutions within the national education system, operating at the rural commune and urban ward levels, **under the management and support of the State** [emphasis added] (MOET, 2014).

Their primary mission is to create accessible opportunities for people of all ages to study at their convenience and throughout their lives. CLCs have three functions: information and consultancy provision, education and training, as well as community development. They aim to disseminate knowledge, promote initiatives, and share experience in production and life, contributing to poverty alleviation, increasing productivity, creating jobs, and thereby improving the quality of life of individuals and the whole community. They are places where new policies, laws and guidelines are disseminated to all local people. They are also sites for community gatherings (SEAMEO CELLL, 2017; Pham, 2024).

CLCs are directly managed by the commune-level People's Committee, and are under the professional direction of the District Department of Education and Training (MOET, 2014).

The triangular model of CLC management

Established on the principle "of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Duke & Hinzen, 2016), CLCs are community-based institutions, and have no payroll in the regime of civil servants and public employees. Their management structure is formed by a triumvirate of three leaders who work on a concurrent job basis.

In the top corner is the director, who is the head of the local government; in the bottom-left corner is the first deputy director, who is a leader of the local branch of the Việt Nam Association for Learning Promotion[1] (VALP); in the bottom right corner is the second deputy director, who is a (vice)principal of a local primary or secondary school. These three are entitled to allowances funded by the State's supportive budget to support their "additional" role (MOET, 2014). The People's Committee's accountant is appointed to be in charge of the CLC's financial bookkeeping.

This triangular management model offers several advantages. As heads of local government, CLC directors are well informed of the country's policies and developmental priorities, thus being able to steer the CLC in alignment with the country's strategic goals. In their position, they can also mobilise different resources in the communes or wards for programmes conducted by the centres.

As leaders of the VALP local branches, which are strong in fund raising, and in coordinating activities among the business sector and mass organisations for community learning, the first deputy directors

[1] https://vietnamnews.vn/society/1635983/comprehensively-innovating-education-training-through-study-promotion.html

can foster local engagement and increase participation in CLCs' learning activities.

The Việt Nam Association for Learning Promotion (VALP), established in 1996, is a social organisation that brings together social forces and Vietnamese citizens living both at home and abroad who are passionate about education, learning promotion, and talent cultivation, thus contributing to the development of a learning society.

The association functions to support teaching and learning activities within the formal education system, encourage people to pursue education through its role in connecting, coordinating and broadly mobilising various social classes, organisations, institutions and individuals involved in the promotion and development of education.

Additionally, the association is tasked with making recommendations to the Party, the Government, and the relevant educational authorities on policies, strategies and measures for educational development and the establishment of a learning society.

Box 2: What is VALP?

As leaders of schools, the second deputy directors are experienced in academic matters, assisting directors in planning and developing learning programmes and activities for local people.

While this triangular model promises the making of programmes and organising of activities that are in line with the country's vision of lifelong learning and a learning society, it also presents challenges. Many directors find the dual responsibilities overwhelming, as their main duties in local government already take up the majority of their time and effort, limiting their capacity to fully dedicate themselves to CLC leadership (PTV Online, n.d.; MOET, 2018).

CLC programmes

CLCs were initially tasked with mainly providing literacy programmes, but there has been a gradual shift of focus to income-generating programmes since primary education was universalised when the second phase of

the Scheme for Building a Learning Society of Vietnam was concluded in 2020. Today, programmes offered by CLCs are sub-divided into four main categories: economic development and income generation, healthcare and health protection, environmental protection, and politics and understanding the law, the first of which received the greatest attention as well as learner satisfaction, followed by healthcare and health protection (Fig. 3). In places where the management committees are proactive, CLCs have become a tool of inclusive education for many locals, especially the underprivileged and the marginalised when their programmes have enabled these people – mostly self-employed – to know how to take better care of their health, and to learn or improve their skills to become more productive.

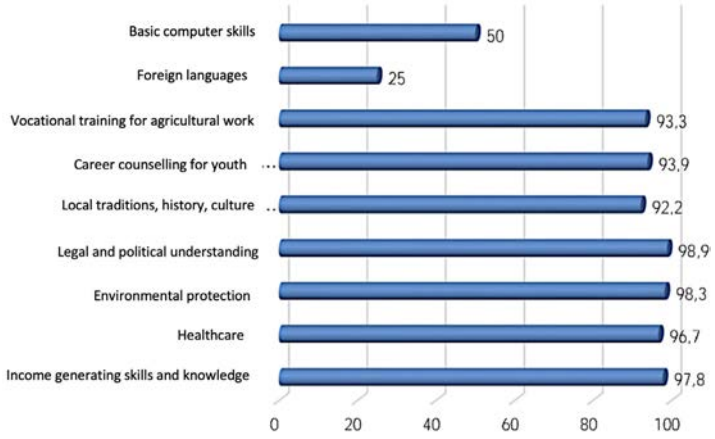

Illustration 7: Percentages of common courses offered at CLCs

Source: Nguyen, M. T. (2020): Phát huy vai trò của trung tâm học tập cộng đồng trong việc xây dựng xã hội học tập và xây dựng nông thôn mới [Promoting the role of community learning centres in building a learning society and developing new rural areas]. Journal of Education, 486(2), 1-6.

Financing

As CLCs are established on the premise that they are of the people, by the people and for the people, the State limits its financial support to only two expenditure items.

Circular 96/2008/TT-BTC, released by the Ministry of Finance (2008), provides guidance on financial support for CLCs from the state budget. It maintains that CLCs will receive one-time financial support of 30

million Vietnam dong (approximately 1,200 US dollars) per establishment to procure equipment, and annual support to pay allowances to management members who take on concurrent jobs, and to provide for CLC programmes. The allowance is decided by the local government's finance department, so that it varies widely across the country. In places such as Gia Dien Commune, Phu Tho Province, the monthly allowance has always been 150,000 VN dong (approximately 60 US dollars) for the director, and even less for the deputy director (PTV Online, n.d.; Van Hoa, 2023). CLCs in mountainous areas and in areas where ethnic minorities live also receive annual support. In addition, CLCs can receive funding for specific projects. No new document has been issued by the Ministry of Finance that overrides or amends Circular 96. CLCs currently receive virtually no funding from the private sector, except in rare cases where there is a good connection between the management committee and businesses.

This funding mechanism requires considerable financial autonomy. As CLCs, by the Regulations on Organisation and Operation, do not charge learners for tuition, they can only rely on the scanty funding that the local government can squeeze out from its tight operational budget. Despite the good will of the management committee, many intended programmes are therefore put on hold due to a lack of funding.

Teachers are either seconded from local schools or invited by the CLCs. In the former case, they are paid by the school where they work. However, ministerial policy conflicts have impeded the secondment of teachers. In the latter case, they receive payment as agreed between the centre and themselves; some will work on a voluntary basis. On the tight annual budget, only those with pro-active management that can tap into social financial resources from local businesses can remain active and be able to develop (DVV International and Chulalongkorn University, 2019).

Quality

Learning programmes and activities at many CLCs are currently not as effective as they could be due to several challenges. The greatest of these is a lack of programmes that meet people's needs, which have grown to encompass a huge diversity of topics and themes, inappropriate teaching methodology, insufficient resources and equipment (VTV1 online, n.d.), and a shortage of seconded teachers from schools. Just above 45% of the centres have *one* seconded teacher each, whilst the other 55% have to look around for instructors (Pham, 2024). According to Nguyen (2021), only 31.7% of all the CLCs have offices, whilst 60.2% have bookshelves, and another 56.7% have computers connected to the Internet.

Most CLC instructors, including seconded teachers, were not trained in andragogy, and are thus unable to deliver knowledge and skills effectively to learners who are adults. Where CLC management committees are proactive and reach out to the communities for their learning needs, there are still obstacles in providing the requisite programmes due to a lack of appropriate equipment. Some CLCs do not have a physical building and are hosted in an office of the local government with virtually no learning facilities, and when they need a room for learning activities, it may have been reserved by the local government for its own meetings. CLCs in rural areas seem to perform better than those in cities in this regard because hands-on lessons can be delivered in the field, on the farm, or handicraft skill transfer can be carried out with learning materials that are readily available.

Is the Vietnamese CLC similar to the German vhs?

Vietnamese CLCs and German vhs (Volkshochschule, folk high school) are both institutions of adult learning and education. As such, they share similarities but also exhibit differences.

CLCs belong to the portfolio of the Ministry of Education and Training, and operate according to the Regulations of Establishment and Operation stipulated by the Ministry. The Ministry's Department of Continuing Education is responsible for continuing education provision and promotion, a large proportion of which is constituted by CLCs. They are governed by a combination of top-down guidance from the government and bottom-up participation from local communities, with directors being leaders of the local government. German vhs do not directly belong to a ministry, but are semi-autonomous and operate with support of the State Association (*Landesverbände der Volkshochschulen*) and the Federal Association (*Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband*) for cooperation and marketing on a paid membership basis (Hinzen, 2024). vhs hire directors or executive teams on their own through a formal selection process which includes interviews and evaluation (Kettelhut, 2024).

Both CLCs and vhs provide programmes that enable individuals, especially adults, to develop and self-actualise, thus contributing to community development. They are located at a convenient travelling distance from people's homes. They have a wide coverage. There are 900 vhs with 3,000 sub-centres situated in each village, town and city in Germany (Hinzen & Meilhammer, 2022), and one in almost every commune and ward of Vietnam (MOET, 2018). They both offer programmes in basic education, political and civic education, vocational training, health and wellness, technology and digital skills, cultural and

creative arts, and languages. They do however have different focuses. CLCs concentrate more on literacy, crafts and basic vocational training, as well as policy dissemination (MOET, 2018); vhs are more orientated towards language courses, as Germany is a country with a large number of immigrants, and social integration is one of the latters' highest priorities (Kränke, Luck & Meisel, 2017), but also health and nutrition, arts and crafts, the environment and skills.

Another major difference is the courses that are on offer. Operating on the principle of "of the people, by the people and for the people", CLCs rely heavily on the state budget to offer all free programmes. A second source of funding is donations, but this is sporadic. Where the local governments are visionary and committed, they will allocate reasonable funding and coordinate CLC programmes with their "political duty" assignments when they can. Unlike CLCs, vhs programmes charge fees, although these fees are kept reasonable through a system of subsidies to ensure the ideology of democracy, which embraces the emphasis on learning and education for all.

Vhs are funded from three roughly equal sources: the state education budget (required in many states by laws on adult education such as in North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate, and by other laws such as in Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein), municipal tax revenue, and learners' fees. However, the share input from learners' fees is on the increase, and varies. "[D]epending on the *Land*, between 19.2 and 58.3 per cent of the cost of Volkshochschulen courses (especially general continuing education) was covered by course fees in 2020" (Eckhardt, 2021).

Finally, there is a difference in the teaching personnel. CLCs will have a few seconded teachers from schools in the locality, but the majority of teaching personnel is made up of retired professionals such as doctors, engineers and teachers who receive some remuneration for their teaching, or just work on a voluntary basis. These CLC teachers are not strictly required to hold a qualification. Teachers at German vhs, on the contrary, are generally hired and paid, and are required to have relevant professional qualifications.

Conclusion

In conclusion, CLCs are vital to the promotion of lifelong learning in Vietnam and the development of a learning society. While their autonomy and local leadership offer some advantages, challenges such as limited funding, insufficient resources, and untrained instructors, hinder their effectiveness. The triangular management model, though making it

possible to mobilise local resources, often overburdens directors with dual responsibilities. Financial constraints and reliance on scarce local funding limit the scope and quality of the programmes.

To maximise their potential, CLCs require increased financial support, professional training for instructors, improved infrastructure and stronger partnerships. Experience from German vhs in financial matters can be adapted. Addressing these challenges will enable CLCs to better serve their communities, advancing Vietnam's goal of becoming an inclusive and equitable learning society. As Vietnam is preparing to draft the Law on Lifelong Learning, these critical points could be incorporated to ensure the effective development and sustainability of CLCs.

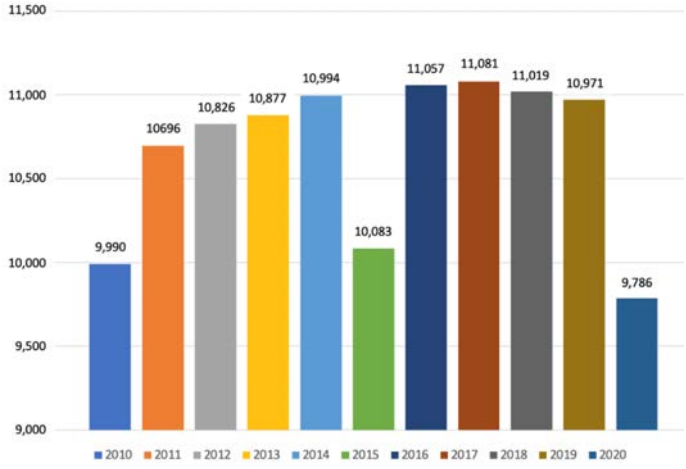

Illustration 4: Numbers of CLCs from 2010 to 2020

Source: Pham, T. D. (2024). Phát triển trung tâm học tập cộng đồng theo chương trình chuyển đổi số [Develop community learning centres in line with the digital transformation programme]. [Paper presented at Dong Nai Province's workshop on capacity building for organising activities at CLCs].

References

Duke, C. & Hinzen, H. (2016): Synthesis Report on the State of Community Learning Centres in Six Asian Countries: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. UIL. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247555

DVV International and Chulalongkorn University (2019): The Role of Adult Learning and Education in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Thailand.

DVV International. Retrieved from https://www.dvv-international.la/fileadmin/files/south-and-southeast-asia/documents/Final_Version_ALE_within_LLL_Southeast_Asia.pdf

Eckhardt, T. (ed.) (2021): The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany 2019/2020. Bonn. Retrieved from https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Eurydice/Bildungswesen-engl-pdfs/dossier_en_ebook.pdf

Hinzen, H. & Meilhammer, E. (2022): 100 years of Volkshochschule in Germany – 50 years of DVV International: Signposts for local and global comparative perspectives on adult learning and education. International Review of Education, 68(1), 125–154. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-022-09944-y

Hinzen, H. (2024): Interview at International Conference on Lifelong Learning Policies and Best Practices in Lao PDR.

Kettelhut, C. (2024): Welcome to the Service Centre of the Berlin Adult Education Centre. Presentation at meeting between the Service Centre of Berlin Adult Education Centre and SEAMEO CELLL.

Khau, H. P. & Duke, C. (2023): Community Learning Centres in the Asia Region: Popular Education and Community Transformation. In Gareth, P., Michael, O. & Peter, S. (eds.), Access, Lifelong Learning and Education for All. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kränke, S., Luck, G. & Meisel, K. (2017): Adult education in social transformation – development of the Volkshochschule (VHS) landscape after German unification. In: DVV International. IPE 78.

MOET (2018): Capacity Building for Managerial Officials of CLCs. Workshop materials.

MOET, National Institute for Education (NIES) & Research Centre for Literacy and Continuing Education (RCL&CE) (1999): APPEAL Pilot Project on Promoting Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in Vietnam. Final report.

Ministry of Finance (2008): 96/2008/TT-BTC Hướng dẫn việc hỗ trợ kinh phí từ ngân sách nhà nước cho các Trung tâm học tập cộng đồng [Circular 96/2008/TT-BTC on Guide to financial support from the state budget for Community Learning Centers].

MOET (2008): Quyết định 09/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT Ban hành Quy chế tổ chức và hoạt động của trung tâm học tập cộng đồng tại xã, phường và thị trấn [Decision 09/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT. Regulations for the organisation

and operation of community learning centres at commune, ward and town levels].

MOET (2014): 10/VBHN-BGDDT Quy chế tổ chức hoạt động Trung tâm học tập cộng đồng [Document 10/VBHN-BGDDT on the organisation and operation of community learning centres].

MOET (2018): Thực trạng trung tâm học tập cộng đồng và định hướng phát triển [Current status of community learning centres and development orientation]. Paper for capacity building workshops for CLC management organised by MOET in three regions of Vietnam in 2018.

National Assembly of Vietnam (2019): Law on Education.

Nguyen, D. M. (2021): Operational status of community learning centres. Journal of Educational Sciences of Vietnam. Vol. 47. Nov. *2021*. 1-7. Hanoi: VNIES.

Nguyen, M. T. (2020): Phát huy vai trò của trung tâm học tập cộng đồng trong việc xây dựng xã hội học tập và xây dựng nông thôn mới [Promoting the role of community learning centres in building a learning society and developing new rural areas]. Journal of Education, 486(2), 1-6. Hanoi: MOET.

Pham, T. D. (2023): Xu thế phát triển các trung tâm học tập cộng đồng và tiêu chí đánh giá giai đoạn 2021-2030. [Current trend of CLC development, and assessment criteria for 2021-2030]. Công dân và khuyến học [Citizens and learning promotion]. Retrieved from https://congdankhuyenhoc.vn/xu-the-phat-trien-cac-trung-tam-hoc-tap-cong-dong-va-tieu-chi-danh-gia-giai-doan-2021-2030-179231005124508342.htm

Pham, T. D. (2024): Phát triển trung tâm học tập cộng đồng theo chương trình chuyển đổi số. [Developing community learning centres in line with the digital transformation programme]. Paper presented at Dong Nai Province's workshop on capacity building for organising activities at CLCs.

Prime Minister (2016): Quyết định 1981/QĐ-TTg Phê duyệt khung cơ cấu hệ thống giáo dục quốc dân [Decision 1981/QĐ-TTg (2016). Approving the national education system].

PTV Online (Truyen hinh Phu Tho) (ed.): Thực trạng hoạt động của các Trung tâm học tập cộng đồng. [Current status of operation of community learning centres]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XocPKcgDUKk

SEAMEO CELLL (2017): Xuat Hoa community learning centre. Video presentation of good CLC practices at Workshop on CLC development: Mutual exchange of good practices of CLC in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Japan, 2017.

UNESCO (1984): Terminology of Technical and Vocational Education. Retrieved from https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/lang=en/filt=all/id=122

Van Hoa [Culture] (2023): Trung tâm học tập cộng đồng tại TP.HCM: Thiếu thầy, thiếu lớp, thiếu kinh phí. [Ho Chi Minh City's CLCs: Lack of teachers, classrooms, fundings].

VTV1 (2023): TP Hồ Chí Minh: Khuyến học từ mô hình trung tâm học tập ở cộng đồng. [Ho Chi Minh City: Learning promotion at CLCs]. Retrieved from https://vtv.vn/video/tp-ho-chi-minh-khuyen-hoc-tu-mo-hinh-trung-tam-hoc-tap-o-cong-dong-644576.htm

Katie Jones

Learning cities at the helm of lifelong learning for climate action – What does this mean for ALE and local authorities?

This article will explore how learning cities are fostering lifelong learning (LLL) for climate action worldwide, in light of global challenges. It will zoom in on three pertinent cases illustrating how local authorities are promoting climate learning among adults and others through strategic policy approaches and targeted initiatives. It will conclude by examining the value of the learning city model in addressing key climate challenges through harnessing lifelong learning. It will also look ahead to steps learning cities will continue to take to further strengthen their work in this area, in the context of the Jubail Commitment to Climate Action in Learning Cities. In short, this article posits that learning cities have a crucial role to play in driving forward learning opportunities for individuals of all ages through policy development and tailored programmes, including where fostering climate action is concerned.

1 Planting the seeds for change – What is a learning city, and why are they key players in lifelong learning for climate action?

In an era where lifelong learning is essential for personal growth, economic resilience, and equipping individuals to respond to today's most pressing global challenges, learning cities are acting as dynamic urban hubs driving forward adult learning and education around the world.

A learning city can be defined as a city that promotes lifelong learning for all (UIL, 2025). UNESCO learning cities across the globe are committed to effectively mobilising resources across sectors to foster inclusive learning opportunities from basic to higher education, and beyond. They are on a mission to revitalise "learning in families and communities", facilitate "learning for and in the workplace", and expand "the use of modern learning technologies" (ibid). In this context, they are taking steps to improve quality and excellence in learning, while promoting a culture where opportunities to learn throughout life thrive.

Today, 356 learning cities in 79 countries form part of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) (UIL, 2025). Together, they are making lifelong learning a reality for over 390 million citizens (ibid). Since the network was established by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in 2013, it has continued to grow as a driving force for the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local level, through supporting cities in their efforts to develop and implement learning opportunities for individuals of all ages.

Illustration 1: UNESCO GNLC Membership

As we approach 2030, stakeholders in learning cities are undertaking tangible actions to address a wide range of issues through a lifelong learning approach. In the framework of partnership-based governance and the development of learning city policies/strategies, they are building resilience through lifelong learning for health, preparing for the twin transition through spearheading inclusive learning opportunities, and nurturing greener communities via the provision of climate learning initiatives (UIL, 2022).

Learning cities at the forefront of climate action

Indeed, addressing the climate crisis and building regenerative communities through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) activities that are open to everyone – from small children to older learners – is a key area of focus for many learning cities. With 2024 confirmed to be the hottest year on record, and the effects of climate change becoming all the more apparent, such efforts are crucial. As urban communities are being devastated by natural disasters and extreme weather events encompassing droughts, intense heatwaves, floods, tornadoes and tropical cyclones, it is perhaps unsurprising that equipping citizens with the tools to mitigate, adapt and build back better is becoming an increasing priority for local stakeholders.

Given that cities account for 75% of greenhouse gas emissions, and by 2050 close to 70% of the world's population will live in urban areas, they have both a key role and responsibility in our global mission to address climate change and construct regenerative communities through lifelong learning (UIL, 2024a).

Already, a wide range of endeavours are underway to accompany local stakeholders in building greener localities through learning – from the Greening Education Partnership's pillar on "Greening Communities", to the work of networks such as C40 Cities. Nonetheless, in light of its scope, this article will focus on efforts being advanced by learning cities, in particular, to proactively respond to the climate crisis.

Learning cities are particularly well placed to nurture climate action through lifelong learning for a number of reasons. First, their action-orientated approach and implementation of targeted learning programmes allows them to foster tangible differences on the ground that are in tune with localised climate challenges (UIL, 2022, p. 135). Secondly, their proximity to local residents allows them to directly engage with the learning needs, concerns and talents of a given community, tailoring people-centred initiatives accordingly – particularly where members of

traditionally underrepresented learner groups are concerned. Thirdly, their potential for bringing diverse stakeholders together can create cohesion between different climate learning efforts (UIL, 2022). This helps to ensure that relevant expertise and experience are brought to the table during planning, implementation and improvement. Finally, learning cities are able to tap into diverse resources – both monetary and non-monetary – and utilise a wide variety of spaces including classrooms, parks, shopping centres, libraries, museums, workplaces and community learning centres (CLCs), among others, to make lifelong learning for climate action a reality for individuals of all ages.

Illustration 2: Main features of a learning city

ALE for climate action in learning cities

Where ALE is concerned, while they may differ in their political, economic and social structures, learning cities are optimally situated to engage adults and young people from a wide range of backgrounds in their work to advance climate learning. This can be particularly relevant for adults who may not have had opportunities to learn about climate change at school, or who hold onto negative experiences of formal education. Learning cities can help to fill this gap through targeted programming underpinned by intersectoral policies and strategies.

Additionally, their scope to make use of public spaces for learning (such as CLCs, malls, parks, libraries, museums and others), and public events to raise awareness around issues like the climate crisis, can bring them closer to adults. That is to say, rather than adults in the community having to actively sign up to pursue a dedicated learning opportunity focused on sustainable waste management or energy efficiency in the local area, sometimes they might just happen to stumble upon such possibilities as they go about their daily business or come across a local learning festival on social media, for instance. This, too, speaks to the power of the learning city model for engaging adults who may not be proactively pursuing opportunities to learn more about climate change, but end up discovering top tips, picking up green skills and developing values that, in turn, contribute to creating regenerative communities. Learning city strategies and policies can, of course, help to structure this work and ensure that adults from traditionally underrepresented groups are actively reached and included.

The approach of this article

In this framework, this article will unpack three key cases that illustrate the power of learning cities in promoting climate learning for individuals of all ages through strategic policy approaches and targeted initiatives. When taken together, the cases of Hamburg, Germany, Okayama, Japan and Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco, illustrate how learning cities have a crucial role to play in driving forward adult learning and education through policy development and tailored programmes, including where promoting climate action is concerned.

Following a close snapshot of each case, a number of key elements will be considered with a view to exploring the value of the learning city model in addressing climate challenges through harnessing lifelong learning.

It is important to note that the information featured below is largely drawn from a UNESCO GNLC online collection on lifelong learning for climate action, which was coordinated by Raúl Valdés Cotera, Coordinator of the UNESCO GNLC, and Edith Hammer, Programme Specialist at UIL (UIL, 2024b). The development of this collection rested on cities contributing information on relevant policies, and initiatives being implemented in their local contexts.

While ALE is actively promoted, it is key to note that the mission of learning cities is to promote learning opportunities for individuals of all ages. Their focus is on lifelong learning, which in turn is a powerful force for (re) engaging adults in formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities.

2 Nurturing climate action – Inspiring cases from learning cities across the globe

Hamburg, Germany: A strategic ESD masterplan underpins dynamic activities for local people across the city

Beginning in Europe, the city of Hamburg in Germany offers a compelling case of how strategic policies and plans can underpin and structure climate learning opportunities for individuals of all ages.

As sea levels rise and extreme weather events become more and more frequent, this port city is adopting a proactive approach to climate action, with an emphasis on harnessing learning to advance this (UIL, 2024c). Through a basket of dedicated policies, strategies and education plans, local institutions are being inspired to address climate change.

One key policy informing the city's work is the Hamburg Climate Plan, which offers concrete steps towards climate change adaptation and reducing emissions. Outlining savings targets, it covers a range of sectors – from trade to transportation and more. Other notable elements include the city's climate adaptation strategy, which focuses on monitoring, regional cooperation and research to protect critical infrastructure and quality of life. In addition, the Climate Protection Strengthening Act underscores the role of training and education in raising awareness around climate change (ibid).

Beyond this, Hamburg counts on its own ESD Master Plan (UIL, 2021). This cuts across all areas of education, and includes ESD-related goals pertaining to vocational training centres, universities, kindergartens, schools and other local organisations. In short, it seeks to foster ESD among learners of all ages, across Hamburg's seven districts – from toddlers to older people.

But what do these policies and plans translate into in practice? In short, they offer a basis for the city to tackle climate change in a broad sense (i.e. through promoting careful water management in urban planning and extending dykes to mitigate storms, for instance) (UIL, 2024c). In tandem with this, they provide a foundation from which to respond to the climate crisis through learning opportunities for individuals of all ages. From rain playgrounds that welcome families, to the provision of online learning resources to climate schools and more, the city's efforts to promote ESD, and lifelong learning for climate action more specifically, cover a wide range of spaces and learning settings across the community.

The city's Volkshochschulen (adult learning centres that offer a wide variety of courses and learning activities) play a key role in fostering

climate learning. Children and their parents can sign up to take part in "weather experiments" to learn more about climate change; visits are organised for local residents to illustrate the impacts of the climate crisis on German coasts, and workshops are arranged on solar panel installation, as well as treating plant diseases/pests in an environmentally-friendly way, for example (Hamburger Volkshochschule, 2025).

One notable initiative led by the Hamburg Ministry for the Environment, Climate, Energy and Agriculture (BUKEA) in collaboration with the Hamburg Climate Protection Foundation is the "Hamburg Climate Scales Project" (UIL, 2024d). This too targets local people of all ages, helping them to understand their carbon footprints in an interactive, dynamic manner. Beyond this, it aims to equip individuals with concrete ways to lower their carbon emissions day to day.

The climate scales "consist of a simple set of mechanical kitchen scales designed to weigh food, as well as several pairs of models representing a range of consumer goods and individual behaviours" (ibid). Their use sparks exchange on climate impacts linked to nutrition, consumption, waste management and other areas, along with sustainable ways of living. Local residents learn to estimate the carbon emissions associated with various behaviours and products, allowing them to compare different options and consider choices they might make to live more sustainably. The scales are used in a hands-on way in a range of settings, including "schools, environmental education institutions, universities, companies and community events" (ibid).

In short, the efforts of Hamburg illustrate how a robust basket of policies and plans can underpin climate learning opportunities that are open to individuals of all ages in the community. Interactive, hands-on, dynamic, creative learning activities such as the Hamburg Climate Scales Project enable adults to learn from and with others (including potentially their children, friends and neighbours) about their carbon footprints, while sourcing possible alternative choices they might make to live more sustainably. In practice, through close cooperation with diverse local stakeholders, ESD activities take shape in a variety of settings across the city, speaking to the practicality and efficacy of the learning city model.

Okayama City, Japan: A whole-community approach to climate action that harnesses the role of Community Learning Centres (CLCs)

In the learning city of Okayama, Japan, a whole-community approach that counts on contributions from a wide variety of stakeholders is being advanced to foster ESD and lifelong learning for climate action, more

specifically. Kominkans – or Community Learning Centres (CLCs) – play a key part in this mission, acting as hubs of ESD, while providing older individuals with a space to make friends and learn (UIL, 2021). Typically funded and administered by local governments, Japan's Kominkans act as local community learning centres that host a variety of voluntary, public learning activities for residents linked to skills development, education, sports, arts and culture. These include specialised courses or workshops, but also citizen-led learning initiatives, which may be related to climate action, among other areas.

In Okayama City, local people are becoming engaged in ESD and lifelong learning for climate action in a wide variety of spaces, through an approach that counts on the involvement of the whole community. This has rested upon strategic collaboration with diverse stakeholders and the integration of ESD in learning spaces that individuals of all ages may enjoy.

Notably, since 2005, the Okayama ESD Promotion Commission – which is a secretariat at Okayama Municipal Office – has championed ESD through the Okayama ESD Project (UNESCO, 2022). This is underpinned by the Okayama ESD Project Fundamental Plan. Building on this, in 2007, the city started to include ESD in the framework of activities led by Kominkans, when this thematic area of learning was integrated into its Kominkan policy.

In practice, Okayama's ESD Project counts on formal and non-formal learning opportunities that are available for individuals of all ages to benefit from. Within the city's Kominkans, educational courses are offered, and residents are encouraged to set up their own local learning programmes. This collaborative approach – through which learners themselves are directly involved in planning, implementation and determining which issues should be incorporated into learning activities – has seen Kominkans organise numerous workshops and lectures (UIL, 2021). These have tended to focus on establishing projects that are locally relevant and/or respond to regional issues (UNESCO, 2022). Given that each city district faces its own unique challenges, each Kominkan counts on specially-trained staff (ESD coordinators) who accompany residents in building a sustainable community (UIL, 2021).

Beyond the Kominkans, ESD initiatives cut across a wide range of spheres in Okayama – from activities in parks and shopping malls, to elementary school students learning from "human treasures" (older people with special knowledge of the local area) (ibid).

In this context, the Okayama School for Climate Change Countermeasures initiative – which is led by the Okayama City administration, in collaboration with several key partners – offers a

particularly interesting case (UIL, 2024e). The city hall and another accessible location have been used to support its implementation. With a view to building a network of climate-conscious leaders through learning, this project targets "business owners, corporate sustainability officers, staff members of NPOs, college students, educators and other stakeholders invested in the future of Okayama City" (ibid). Participants have had the opportunity to attend lectures, to dive into measures to address climate change. Subsequently, they have gone on to engage in workshops to take stock of current climate initiatives and identify next steps for putting strategies into practice within their own organisations. This has led to some individuals pursuing further courses, to more deeply explore the topic at hand.

In sum, the case of Okayama speaks to the power of the learning city model to foster intergenerational learning between the youngest and oldest generations in society, but also its scope to make use of public spaces, to engage adults working in diverse sectors in lifelong learning. Activities in Okayama's Kominkans also point to the value and possibilities that may emerge when learners are directly brought on board in both the planning and implementation of citizen-driven learning opportunities.

Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco: Family learning for greener futures

Finally, in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco, a collaborative approach has also been advanced to promote ESD and lifelong learning for climate action, more specifically in the context of its work as a learning city. In the framework of its Territorial Plan to Combat Global Warming (PTRC), the city has been advancing community education on climate change, covering areas such as energy efficiency, water conservation and sustainable mobility, with a strong emphasis on partnerships.

One example of community learning in practice in Marrakech comes in the form of its "Water Family Competition" (UIL, 2024f). Led by the Association of Life and Earth Sciences Teachers (AESVT-Maroc) – a national non-profit association with 18 environmental education centres across the country – in partnership with Tensift Hydraulic Basin Agency and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the initiative has sought to help members of urban households save water. With the assistance of pedagogical experts and educators, 200 families in the Saiss district of the Mhamid 5 neighbourhood have been equipped to reduce their water consumption over the course of six months (ibid).

Focused on daily water-saving actions, each participating family received tailored guidance and the chance to engage in training/workshops, where videos and interactive games were used to foster learning. Individuals picked up practical skills and knowledge to decrease their use of water in a sustainable manner, in the framework of a local "competition" judged by a jury of governmental and non-governmental representatives. This learning has fed into broader water conservation efforts and environmental stewardship in the city, while illustrating how governmental and non-governmental stakeholders may work together to foster more sustainable living through learning in local communities (ibid).

Such activities may be replicated, adapted and held in CLCs across the globe. By inviting local community members to training/workshops or interactive games implemented in local centres, they may pick up water-saving tips to take back home with them, illustrating how efforts in such spaces can feed directly into family learning. In addition, contest results could be monitored and celebrated in local CLCs, which may act as arenas for bringing families together to share their own water-saving journeys. Local authorities may set up such initiatives in direct collaboration with CLC managers. Alternatively, CLC managers may take the lead, engaging with local government authorities to support resource mobilisation and outreach to potential participants.

In this sense, the work done in Marrakech points to the scope of learning cities to actively foster family learning through dynamic, interactive approaches, and in turn address localised environmental challenges through lifelong learning.

Ongoing challenges

While these short cases illustrate the steps some learning cities are taking to ensure they are at the forefront of lifelong learning for climate action in a way that caters to the needs of diverse adult learner groups among others, it is important to note that a number of key challenges continue to be faced by local stakeholders.

Financial and non-financial resources are key to introducing, maintaining and upscaling learning initiatives. In a competitive funding landscape, financial resources may be difficult to obtain, may come in the form of short-term grants, or may be inaccessible due to lengthy bureaucratic processes. A lack of sustainable financing could lead to the potential exclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups from local learning initiatives, possibly through costs being passed on to individuals

from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. A targeted approach to resource mobilisation that counts on the consistent involvement of learning city partners is key to addressing this.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) – which can be complex, costly and time-consuming – pose another challenge (UIL, 2022). In some cases, data on the progress and impact of local learning initiatives may be unavailable, complicating efforts towards ongoing improvement. In others, a clear M&E strategy for learning city development may yet have to be developed. Importantly, the efforts of learning cities can take years to build up, making M&E a key component.

Reaching members of traditionally underrepresented learner groups and engaging them in lifelong learning activities can also be challenging, particularly where language, gender, cultural and socio-economic barriers persist.

While much work remains to be done in the lead-up to 2030 and beyond, the action-orientated approach championed by learning cities that counts on inputs and buy-in from a wide range of stakeholders is helping to address these obstacles, to build greener communities to which adults can actively contribute.

3 Growing green communities – Looking ahead to the future

In sum, learning cities have a vital role to play in championing lifelong learning for climate action through tailored programming and strategic policies.

Going beyond rhetoric, as we have seen in the three cases explored in this article, learning cities across the globe are taking action-orientated, tangible steps to address climate challenges through harnessing lifelong learning, in the framework of wider climate action and education strategies (UIL, 2024b).

In the context of the UNESCO GNLC, tailored learning programmes focused on addressing climate challenges are engaging adults from different walks of life – from “human treasures” and business owners in Okayama, through parents in Marrakech, to friends and neighbours in Hamburg. The range of learning initiatives that learning cities might offer – encompassing festivals, competitions, hands-on activities and more – have the potential to reach a wide diversity of adult learners, including those who might not have had positive experiences of formal education, or have restricted schedules due to work and family commitments. Scope to use existing city platforms, including regular public events, social media pages, local government websites, newsletters and more, may

also help to promote these activities among members of traditionally underrepresented adult learner groups.

Resources and public spaces like parks, shopping malls, city halls, companies, libraries, museums, arenas for public events and others are being used strategically to host learning activities for individuals of all ages. Whether adult learners arrive there intentionally or by chance, the wide variety of spheres of which learning cities make use can help to ensure lifelong learning is an engrained part of daily life for local people.

The needs and desires of residents are being directly considered through tailored programmes that address climate challenges which are already having localised impacts. Whether through participating in hands-on learning to understand their carbon footprint, designing their own community learning initiative at a CLC, or getting involved in a family-focused competition to dive into water-saving, such an approach can help to engage adults in local LLL opportunities in a meaningful way. The agility of the learning city model permits new projects to be established, or existing ones updated, as local challenges evolve.

Importantly, this model is adopted in different ways between contexts. In most cases, top-down efforts to develop learning city strategies are spearheaded by local governments, giving rise to concrete initiatives that count on collaboration with key partners (UIL, 2022). Elsewhere, local educational institutions, civil society organisations, and others, start the work by developing inspiring learning initiatives that later inform learning city policies. In some cases, a hybrid blend of both approaches is adopted. While approaches may differ, it is important to note that, although learning cities are key players in advancing learning opportunities for adults, the work they promote caters not just to one cohort, but to the whole of society.

These facets reflect the power of the learning city model in strengthening lifelong learning in a way that is contextually sensitive and action-orientated, and truly resonates with citizens.

Following on from the sixth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 6), which took place in December 2024 in Jubail, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, members of the UNESCO GNLC will continue to propel climate learning for individuals of all ages across diverse settings. Having adopted the Jubail Commitment to Climate Action in Learning Cities, they will work to ensure that “learning opportunities address the needs of all segments of society and empower individuals to become agents of change, with particular emphasis on marginalized groups, including low-income populations, women and girls, Indigenous peoples, slum dwellers, persons with a disability, refugees, older adults, children and youth” (UIL, 2024g). To do so, they will develop “targeted climate change education

programmes [to] equip all citizens to understand and mitigate risks, adopt preventive measures and advocate for climate resilience" in tandem with other measures (ibid).

While the global challenges we face today and will face tomorrow are sizeable, lifelong learning can offer a suitable response, equipping all citizens with the tools to thoughtfully respond, and ensuring that it is never too late to become an agent for change.

Given their resources, action-orientated focus and close relationship with individuals, learning cities are optimally placed to act as urban hubs that champion learning from life's first breath to its lasting impact.

References

Hamburger Volkshochschule (2025): Klima. Retrieved from https://www.vhs-hamburg.de/suche?q=Klima

UNESCO (2022): Okayama: A city united for education for sustainable development. Retrieved from https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/okayama-city-united-education-sustainable-development

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2021): ESD implementation in learning cities. Hamburg: UIL. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379535

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2022): Making lifelong learning a reality: a handbook. Hamburg: UIL. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381857

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2024a): UNESCO learning cities take climate action. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-learning-cities-take-climate-action

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2024b): Global Network of Learning Cities Collection on Lifelong Learning for Climate Action. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/global-network-learning-cities-collection-lifelong-learning-climate-action

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2024c): Hamburg, Germany - Hamburg's strategic approach to climate action. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/articles/hamburg-germany

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2024d): Hamburg Climate Scales project. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/articles/hamburg-climate-scales-project

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2024e): Okayama School for Climate Change Countermeasures. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/articles/okayama-school-climate-change-countermeasures

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2024f): Water family competition. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/articles/water-family-competition

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2024g): Jubail Commitment to Climate Action in Learning Cities. Jubail: UIL. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/jubail-commitment

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2025): UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. Retrieved from https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/learning-cities?hub=38

Abbreviations

AE	Adult Education
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AEC	Adult Education Centre
ALE	Adult Learning and Education
BFA	Belém Framework for Action
BiH	Bosnia & Hercegovina
CG	Curriculum GlobALE
CLC	Community Learning Centres
CMIEA	Municipal Centre for Adult Learning and Education (Moldova)
CONFINTEA	Conférence internationale sur l'éducation des adultes
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
DVV	Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband
DVV	International Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association
EAEA	European Association for the Education of Adults
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GAEN	Georgian Adult Education Network
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
GNLC	Global Network of Learning Cities
GRALE	Global Report on Adult Learning and Education
ICAE	International Council for Adult Education
IACE	Hall of Fame International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame

IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MFA	Marrakech Framework for Action
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RALE	Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United National Children's Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VHS	Volkshochschule (vhs), Adult Education Centre (Germany)
WEF	World Education Forum
YALEC	Youth and Adult Learning and Education Centre (Kosovo)

Authors and editors

Nana Chabukiani is a social researcher with ten years of experience in the field. She has research experience in both academic and applied settings, encompassing policy research, public attitude studies, needs assessments, project evaluations, etc. Her main interests include gender equality, intersectionality and non-formal education. Additionally, Nana is actively engaged in academic activities. At various points, she has taught at Tbilisi State University and Caucasus University. In 2017, she became one of the co-founders of the WeResearch organisation.

Un Shil Choi, Prof. Dr, currently serves as an Emeritus Professor at Ajou University in Korea, Chair of the Future Planet Foundation, Korea Foundation for Lifelong Education, Chair of the UNESCO Expert Advisory Committee for Learning Cities, and as Emeritus Professor of Midwest University in USA. Earlier she served as a Chair of the KCEF (Korea Community Education Foundation), is the former President of NILE (Korea National Institute for Lifelong Education), Vice-Chair of UIL (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning) and President of the Korean Society for Lifelong Education and the Korean Federation for Lifelong Education. She is an IACE Hall of Fame inductee (2010 Class).

Ravshan Baratov has been active in the field of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) since 2009, beginning his career at the country office of DVV International in Uzbekistan. In 2019, he moved to Kyrgyzstan to assume the role of Regional Programme Manager at DVV International's Regional Office for Central Asia. Since July 2022, he has been based in Moldova, where he leads DVV International's Continental Exchange project *Europe*, which focuses on cooperation with countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, including Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Vullnet Gusia has extensive experience in the civil society sector and project management. Currently, he serves as Chief of Youth in the municipality of Peja, where he leads teams, develops departmental policies, and designs strategies for community development. Previously, as Head of the Youth Centre in Peja, he focused on project development, identifying areas for growth, and implementing innovative solutions. His scientific background complements his public service work, offering a perspective that drives his commitment to empowering youth and fostering lifelong learning in his city.

Victoria Furhalo is the programme manager of the Municipal Institution City Institute, governed by the Lviv City Council. She is a social project manager with over a decade of experience, specialising in adult education since 2019. As the co-founder and director of the Network of Education Centres based in Lviv's libraries, she has spearheaded the development of accessible lifelong learning opportunities for the community. She also serves as the responsible party for Lviv's membership in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. As a frequent speaker at international conferences on adult education, her recent engagements include presentations at events in Chisinau (2022), Pécs (2024), Aarhus (2024), and Al Jubail (2024).

Ester Hakobyan is a development professional who currently leads DVV International's Armenia Country Office. For over two decades, she has managed donor/NGO programmes in community development, education, reconciliation and others. She also has extensive experience as an evaluation consultant, trainer and professional translator. Ester holds a Master's in Public Policy and Management from the University of Pittsburgh (US) and a Kandidat Nauk (PhD) in Pedagogy (Armenia).

Heribert Hinzen, Prof. (H) Dr Dr h.c. mult., is a senior consultant on adult education and lifelong learning for sustainable development. He has worked for DVV International for almost four decades, both at headquarters and in offices in Sierra Leone, Hungary and Lao PDR. He is an Honorary Professor at the Universities of Pécs, Bucharest and Iasi, a Visiting Professor at the University of Glasgow, and teaches comparative adult education at the University of Würzburg. He has served as Vice-President of EAEA, ICAE and PIMA. He is an Honorary Fellow of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and a member of the Editorial Boards of the International Review of Education, CONVERGENCE, and Bildung und Erziehung. In 2006 he was inducted into the IACE Hall of Fame.

Ulrich Klemm, Prof. Dr phil., has been working in adult education in various functions for 40 years, most recently from 2013 to 2021 as Managing Director of the Saxon Adult Education Association. In research and teaching, he has been working as a lecturer and substitute professor at several universities since the 1990s, most recently from 2021–2024 at Chemnitz University of Technology. Since 2006, he has been an honorary professor of adult education at the University of Augsburg. His research topics are the history of adult education, progressive education, global learning, political education, rural adult education and research on adult education centres. He is also the manager of a publishing house by the name of Klemm & Oelschläger, with priorities on biographies, history and regional studies.

Avetik Mejlumyan, PhD in Social Philosophy, MA and BA in Social Work. He is the author of three dozen research reports, policy papers and publications, mostly related to the field of education. Avetik is the co-founder and director of the “Institute of Public Policy” think tank, which has been active in the implementation of non-formal educational programmes for young people and adults. He is also a Director of Yerevan State University’s Sarkis and Marie Izmirlian Library.

Adnan Mević has worked in different domestic and international organisations over the past fifteen years. Although he holds a Master's degree in Traffic Engineering, his career path led him into the field of adult education, where he has taken on multiple roles, including those of ALE Centre Manager, educator, consultant and project manager. He is actively involved in contributing to the creation of legislation in the field of adult education.

Daniela Munca-Aftenev, Dr, is the Deputy Chief of the Chisinau Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport. She is an accomplished scholar-practitioner with over two decades of distinguished leadership in Moldovan cross-cultural education and exchange, specialising in the strategic management and development of educational initiatives. Her expertise encompasses lifelong learning paradigms, pedagogical innovation in online teaching methodologies, project-based inquiry frameworks, global classroom development, educational diplomacy, service-learning models, alumni network cultivation, and the advancement of English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) pedagogy. She is a national trainer certified by the Ministry of Education and Research, with proficiency in educational software development, and has extensive experience in non-governmental and public institutional management, grant proposal development and public policy formulation.

Balázs Németh, Dr habil., is a researcher on European adult and lifelong learning policy development and comparative adult education. He is an associate professor and reader in ALE at the University of Pécs. His research topics include Politics and Adult Education, Comparative Adult Education, History of Modern European Adult Education, and Learning City/Region Developments. He has published extensively on adult education, community development and learning cities. Balázs Németh is a EUCEN Ambassador and Board member of EAEA and PIMA. He was inducted into the IACE Hall of Fame in 2017.

Khau Huu Phuoc is the Manager of Research and Training of the South East Asia Ministers of Education Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning (SEAMEO CELLL). He has conducted regional workshops for master trainers and non-formal educators, coordinated Southeast Asian countries in a UNESCO UIL lifelong learning project, and developed a curriculum for adult education managers for DVV International. He has contributed as a speaker and author to various UNESCO, DVV International, SEAMEO and ASPBAE events and publications.

Katie Jones is a consultant at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. She works on the recognition, validation and accreditation of prior learning and Education for Sustainable Development in local communities. Katie collaborates with colleagues to conduct research, foster knowledge exchange and develop capacity-building activities for key stakeholders to promote lifelong learning worldwide. She has an MSc from the University of Oxford and a BA from the University of Warwick.

Titles of volumes available

International Perspectives in Adult Education (IPE)
Published by DVV International

69 Tania Czerwinski / Eva König / Tatyana Zaichenko (Eds.): Youth and Adult Education in Prisons. Experiences from Central Asia, South America, North Africa and Europe (English)
70 Balázs Németh (Ed.): Research and Development in Adult Learning and Education in Hungary (English)
71 Uwe Gartenschlaeger / Esther Hirsch (Eds.): Adult education in an interconnected world. Cooperation in lifelong learning for sustainable development. Festschrift in honour of Heribert Hinzen (English)
72 Thekla Kelbert / Emir Avdagić (Eds.): 1914–2014 – Remembering the past to live the present and shape the future (English)
73 Anja Thöne (Ed.): Digital Adult Education – A Key to Global Development? (English)
74 Matthias Klingenberg / Arne Segelke (Eds.): 20th Century Mass Graves (English/Russian)
75 Heribert Hinzen / Sylvia Schmitt (Eds.): Agenda 2030 – Education and Lifelong Learning in the Sustainable Development Goals (English/French/Spanish)
76 Matthias Klingenberg/Sascha Rex (Eds.): Refugees: A challenge for adult education (English/German)
77 Uwe Gartenschlaeger (Ed.): Rethinking adult learning and education – Asian perspectives (English)
78 Maja Avramovska / Esther Hirsch / Beate Schmidt-Behlau (Eds.): Adult education centres as a key to development – challenges and success factors (English/Spanish)
79 Bettina Brand / Beate Schmidt-Behlau (Eds.): The contribution of adult education to active participatory citizenship (English)
80 Britta Schweighöfer (Author) / Uwe Gartenschlaeger / Anja Thöne (Eds.): Citizenship education and ALE (English)

81 Anke Grotlüschen / Alisa Belzer / Markus Ertner / Keiko Yasukawa: Adult Learning and Education within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (English)

82 Heribert Hinzen / Ravshan Baratov (Eds.): Reflections on developments in adult learning and education in the context of the CONFINTEA process and the SDG agenda: Findings from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (English)

83 Heribert Hinzen (Ed.): Local policies and practices of adult learning and education: Best practices from Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, and Ukraine

More information: *www.dvv-international.de*

DVV International
Königswinterer Straße 552 b
53227 Bonn
Germany

Phone: +49 (0) 228 97569-0
info@dvv-international.de
www.dvv-international.de

DVV International is the Institute for International Cooperation
of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V.,
the German Adult Education Association.