

# Making lifelong learning a reality: A handbook

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## Introduction

The complexities of modern life demand adaptability – populations that are resilient, open to change and willing to engage in learning throughout life. Increased mobility, population displacement, climate and technological change, threats to global health and democratic systems, and new patterns of economic production and consumption affect, in different ways, almost all countries in the world.

Lifelong learning (LLL) represents an effective and potentially transformational means of addressing many of these new challenges. Increasingly, the global community is waking up to the fact that investing in learning throughout life – for everyone – fosters democratic citizenship; improves employability through the promotion of flexibility, creativity and productivity; promotes people's health and well-being; and makes communities more cohesive. In other words, it makes a major contribution to sustainable development across countries, regions and localities. The value of lifelong learning has become still more apparent as the global community tackles the profound, shared challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, which, as well as precipitating an acute public health crisis, has significantly disrupted education. Governments, institutions and individual facilitators have had to adapt rapidly to restrictions in order to ensure continuity of learning and, where more traditional learning programmes in classrooms have not been possible, online alternatives have sprung up. Non-formal and informal learning have come to the fore with a proliferation of more flexible online courses, new communication channels between education stakeholders, and the opening up of vast collections of digital resources.

LLL may help to address problems arising from rapid demographic changes and mass movements of people – whether the result of armed conflict or the climate crisis – and to promote tolerance and democratic values in the face of seismic social and economic changes (see [Singh, 2018](#)), since LLL comprises different models, platforms and interventions aimed at distributing flexible learning opportunities for different populations, regardless of their location, personal characteristics or previous educational experiences.

LLL also mitigates challenges posed by the recent digital revolution: as robotics, artificial intelligence and increased connectivity rapidly transform our world, demands for new skills for workers and different forms of citizenship emerge. All of these factors, among others, are making LLL an economic, political, social and environmental imperative for any

country, as it plays an important role in reducing social and economic inequalities, and enhancing social, civic and community life.

Advancing the adoption of LLL means actively informing and sensitizing decision-makers, as well as developing national and local capacities to better understand the benefits this model can bring to bear. This handbook serves the latter purpose, providing information, evidence and basic conceptual models to facilitate the adoption of LLL in national and local settings. It provides evidence from diverse initiatives and describes some of the contemporary issues to which lifelong learning responds – including how it shapes the sustainability agenda. The aim is to help policy-makers and potential champions identify and create opportunities to communicate the core principles of lifelong learning, and to formulate and implement lifelong learning policies and programmes that are cognizant of contemporary issues. Taking a global, comprehensive perspective, this handbook supports the strengthening of lifelong learning systems in all contexts.

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## Chapter 1 – Lifelong learning: An integrated policy to promote sustainable development

### Guiding questions

What are the core elements of UNESCO's definition of lifelong learning?

What are the most significant issues for sustainable development in today's world?

Why is lifelong learning important? What are its benefits and why should national governments design and implement lifelong learning policies?

How can countries, regions and localities promote lifelong learning, and who should be involved in lifelong learning policy-making?

### Defining lifelong learning

There are five essential elements to the UNESCO definition of LLL:

**All age groups.** Lifelong learning, in other words, is a process that starts at birth and extends across the whole lifespan. It provides people of all ages and origins with learning opportunities and activities, responding to their specific needs in different life and professional stages.

**All levels of education.** Lifelong learning is about linking all levels and types of education, building adaptable pathways between them. This includes early childhood care and education (ECCE), primary and secondary school education, higher education, adult and non-formal education, as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

**All learning modalities.** Lifelong learning recognizes all modalities of learning: formal (institutionalized, leading to recognized qualifications), non-formal (institutionalized, alternative or complementary to formal education, usually not leading to recognized qualifications) and informal (not institutionalized, on a self-directed, family-directed, community or socially directed basis).

**All learning spheres and spaces.** Schools are just one part of a wide learning universe, a space which also includes families, communities, workplaces, libraries, museums, and other online and distance learning platforms. Promoting lifelong learning means effectively to build bridges between the formal education sector and

the diverse non-formal and informal learning environments in order to create new opportunities for very diverse learning needs.

**A variety of purposes.** Lifelong learning is both people-centred and human rights based. Providing equitable and inclusive lifelong learning opportunities means responding to the needs of very different learners, irrespective of age; sex; ethnicity; and national, economic or social origins, while including persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and every community living in vulnerable situations.

The first chapter of this handbook presents lifelong learning as an integrated policy to promote sustainable development. The term 'lifelong learning (LLL) policy' is used to refer to any kind of policies which governments and international agencies design and implement to create learning opportunities 'rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and the elderly, girls and boys, women and men), in all life-wide contexts (family, school, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal, and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands' ([UIL, n.d.](#)).

### **Why countries, regions and localities should promote LLL**

Emerging economic, technological, environmental and social changes signal the need to foster capacities for adaptation, creativity and, most importantly, learning that continues throughout life. It is vital to remember that people are no longer able to manage and navigate their way along their life course using only the skills and knowledge acquired at school, college or university.

A number of countries have put LLL at the heart of their national plans for economic, social and political transformations, while others simply have ambitions to become learning societies or to be part of learning regions. Hundreds of cities around the world are striving to adopt the learning city model to their specific context as part of the [UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities \(GNLC\)](#). As part of this network, cities promote inclusive learning in their education systems, revitalize learning in families and communities, encourage effective learning for and in the workplace, extend the use of modern learning technologies, enhance quality in learning, and promote a vibrant culture of learning throughout life, making LLL the guiding principle in securing the prosperity and

sustainability of their communities. Policies implemented in different regions of the world confirm that lifelong learning is being embraced as a key guiding principle for national and local educational and social planning.

### **Transformations in the world of work**

The reasons for promoting LLL are several. First and foremost, there is a growing demand for advanced skills, creativity and adaptability in the workplace, as well as for the development of global citizenship and democratic attitudes in different regions across the world. In addition, there is increasing recognition that the cultivation of key cognitive and socio-behavioural skills depends on a complex array of factors, including early childhood education, the development of self-confidence and self-efficacy, good mental and physical health, and the willingness to continue learning regardless of age or economic activity.

The need to develop national LLL agendas is also prompted by an acknowledgement that the pace and nature of technological changes – in the form of artificial intelligence and automation – make it difficult to predict the skills that will be needed in the future. The emergence of new technologies in a wide array of organizations is fuelling changes in the world of work and tends to transform its fundamental nature ([ILO, 2019](#)). It has been estimated, for example, that, by 2030, automation will change more than 60 per cent of occupations, and between 75 million to 375 million workers will need to quickly adapt their skills ([McKinsey Global Institute, 2017](#)). With technology developing so rapidly, the likely impact on national economic systems is hard to predict; however, it is anticipated that people will remain in the workforce longer, and an increasing proportion of the workforce of the future will be made up those already in employment. Workers in our societies are also likely to move between jobs more often, and to be subject to role changes that require constant upskilling or retraining.

Forward-thinking solutions to work-related and other social challenges presented by technological change must be taken into account beyond issues related to employability. For instance, in 2013, the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported a global youth unemployment rate of 12.6 per cent, or 73 million young people unemployed; the rate is estimated to have stood at a slightly higher rate of 12.8 per cent in 2018 ([World Bank, 2019](#)). In 2020, with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent impact of restrictions on economic activity, unemployment has risen sharply and hundreds of millions of jobs are at risk: ILO estimates that, in the second quarter of 2020, there would be a loss of global working hours equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs, with nearly half the global workforce



at [risk of escalating job losses](#). Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of young people around the world were trapped in an unfair cycle of unemployment and informal, unpaid or low-paid work, yet education can improve their chances in the labour market by providing them with relevant skills ([Hutchinson and Kettlewell, 2015](#)). While unemployment has been proven to have long-term negative effects on individuals' well-being, and hold implications for welfare costs to society, LLL policies targeting labour-market activation and skills enhancement may help to tackle unemployment and its psychological impacts ([Mousteri et al., 2018](#)).

### **Demographic changes shaping countries' populations**

In many countries, people are living longer, there are fewer young people entering the labour market, and the age profile of the population is becoming progressively older. According to estimates from the United Nations, in 2017 the global population of people aged 60 or older numbered 962 million – more than double the total recorded in 1980 ([UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2017](#)). In fact, this age group is the most affected by the technological gap: according to figures from the Association for the Research of the Media, 79 per cent of 16- to 55-year-olds have internet access, yet this decreases to 29 per cent among 56- to 70-year-olds, and falls even further to 5 per cent for the 71- to 80-year-old age range ([Díaz-López et al., 2016](#)). Older people are particularly at risk of being left behind by advances in digital technology; LLL policies can support them in living longer active lives, enabling them to continue to contribute economically and socially.

In addition, promoting healthier lifestyles is another pressing demand for any government and international agency. As pointed out in the third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* ([GRALE 3](#)), participation in learning as an adult leads to improved health behaviours and attitudes, higher life expectancy and a reduction in lifestyle diseases, with a commensurate reduction in healthcare costs ([UIL, 2016](#)). New evidence on these effects is included in the fourth *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* ([GRALE 4](#)), which found that adult education also has health-related advantages for families, as in the case of mothers who participate in literacy programmes, benefiting their children's health ([UIL, 2019](#)).

## LLL in practice

### Monitoring participation in adult learning and education (ALE)

The focus of *GRALE 4* is on participation, equity and inclusion. Drawing on a monitoring survey completed by 159 countries, the report found that:

- Participation in ALE is uneven. While participation in ALE has increased overall since 2015, rates of participation vary considerably and progress has been uneven not only between regions but also within regions, with many vulnerable groups excluded and seemingly off the radar of policy-makers. Thus, in one-third of countries, fewer than 5 per cent of adults participate in ALE.
- Changes in participation vary: the largest increase in participation since 2015 is for women (59 per cent of 139 Member States), followed by unemployed adults (54 per cent of 134 Member States) and adults with lack of education and skills (48 per cent of 136 Member States). Even if women's participation is growing, in some parts of the world, especially in poor rural areas, they still have no access to education and, with the majority of these women having low levels of literacy, they engage less in programmes for professional development.
- A major constraint in participation in ALE is the scarcity of data. This hinders efforts to improve participation rates, and to understand who is not participating and why – both essential undertakings in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education and advancing towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Progress in policy and governance is insufficient.
- ALE is underfunded. Unfortunately, only 28 per cent of Member States responding to the survey reported that ALE spending as a proportion of public education spending increased, 41 per cent reported no progress since 2015, and 17 per cent said that they did not know whether there had been a change to ALE spending in the past three years;
- Quality is improving but not enough.
- Deep inequalities in participation persist; vulnerable groups are still excluded. This constitutes a concern for their participation in the labour market. Migrants and refugees, older adults, adults with disabilities, those living in rural areas, and adults with low prior educational attainment are among the groups facing the greatest barriers to participation in ALE.

*GRALE 4* underlines that the SDGs will only be met when ALE is central to countries' efforts to achieve a better and more sustainable future.

Source: [UIL, 2019](#)

Another reason for countries, regions and localities to consider the adoption of LLL lies in the fact that populations across the world are becoming more diverse. This is in part because of greater numbers of people migrating between countries, but also moving between rural and urban areas within a country with the intention of accessing new educational opportunities ([UNESCO, 2018d](#)), consequently increasing demands for effective government intervention. Greater diversity also results from the forced displacement of large numbers of people because of conflict or natural disaster. The crisis in Syria, for example, has led to more than 6.1 million internally displaced people ([Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2019](#)), while the the worsening political, economic, human rights and humanitarian situation in Venezuela has resulted in the migration of over 4.8 million people ([UNHCR, 2020](#)). Countries facing these humanitarian crises are challenged to rapidly develop strategies to recognize and accredit formal and non-formal learning, skills and competences that refugees bring with them, and to find ways to incorporate these programmes into their own comprehensive national strategies for education and lifelong learning.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **Initiatives to integrate migrants**

Recent legislation in Ethiopia called the 'Refugee Proclamation' makes provision for giving refugees access to schools. In Iran, a 2015 decree supported the acceptance of Afghan children to schools, even in the absence of proper documentation. LLL has an important role to play both in helping refugees to integrate into their host societies and make a full economic and social contribution, improving their employability and knowledge of local rules and customs. It can break down cultural and linguistic barriers, support informed, intelligent debate about migration flows, and create pathways to further learning. In addition, LLL initiatives may help to promote tolerance and appreciation for diversity, while strengthening democratic attitudes.

Source: [UNESCO, 2018d](#)

### **Digitalization and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI)**

Having looked specifically at technological change and automation in the workplace, it is important to recognize that digitalization more broadly has the potential to transform learning around the world. Without targeted policy intervention based on a lifelong learning perspective, however, there are several limitations to reaching vulnerable groups such as

older people and residents in remote or rural areas. In addition, a lack of digital literacy skills is often connected to poverty, which may restrict access to and the efficient use of new technologies.

Meanwhile, because of developments in AI and robotics, whole industries are changing, making many jobs which, until recently, only humans could do, obsolete. Phone manufacturing, for example, is a trade that has been exceptionally transformed by robotics, and soon many other industries are likely to be reconfigured. These challenges highlight the importance of initiatives that guarantee the inclusion of information and communication technology (ICT) in lifelong learning.

Initiatives and policies that promote ICT for lifelong learning tend to address one or both of two areas: digital infrastructure and digital skills. Digital infrastructure establishes the foundations for digital skills to thrive and, though it often does not fall within the remit of education policy, stakeholders and policy-makers in the fields of education and lifelong learning should advocate it, as good digital skills development is dependent on high-quality digital infrastructure ([UNESCO, 2018a](#)).<sup>1</sup> This need has never been more pronounced, with the COVID-19 pandemic upending traditional educational provision and workplace activity, leading whole industries and sectors of the education system to shift their operations online. ICT can and has been used to respond to the necessity of physical distancing during the pandemic and can further be used to improve the data management of LLL so that interventions are evidence-based. (The use of evidence in LLL is further explored in [Chapter 2](#).) Digitalization and artificial intelligence are not only demand-driven issues: governments are responsible for mapping out their utilization in line with national priorities, rather than simply responding ad hoc to apparent trends.

To emphasize a recurring theme of this handbook, government-led policy-making on using ICT to enhance LLL should be collaborative and cross-sectoral in order to harness the technological resources and learning expertise that already exists in the private and voluntary sectors. It must also, however, foster local, bottom-up solutions, as they are better able to support sustainable ICT use than a purely top-down approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa's mobile phone penetration rate reached 43 per cent in 2016, rising quicker than any other world region. Across the wider African continent, on average 25 per cent of the population had internet access ([UNESCO, 2018b](#)). Despite progress, internet accessibility in Africa still lags behind the world average. The uneven accessibility and lack of electricity, equipment and technical personnel, among other things, continue to be major challenges for many parts of Africa. The widespread differences in digital infrastructure and digital skills across the world point to the 'digital divide' across social class, age, religion, gender, geography, and physical and learning abilities.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **How African countries address digital gaps**

A recent study of lifelong learning in five African countries shows that governments are investing in ICT infrastructure. Kenya has seen ICT investment in schools, as well as electrification to rural areas. In Namibia, there is good coverage for mobile technologies, which are being used in education programmes. In the United Republic of Tanzania, every district has been connected through fibre-optic cabling, though more computers in community learning centres are needed. Rwanda has placed ICT at the core of its education programme, with the aim that every schoolchild should have a computer. In Ethiopia, the development of ICT is focused on secondary schools; ICT for primary and adult education is still scarce.

Source: [UIL, 2018](#)

#### **The urgency resulting from climate change**

Another relevant issue is climate change, one of the most important problems to be addressed as a matter of priority around the world, and particularly in the Global South, where its impact, thus far, has been felt disproportionately. LLL and the development of civic competences have a major role to play here too. The creation of learning opportunities in towns, cities and villages is a crucial support in empowering people to address the challenges posed by climate change in their localities and to find ways to manage their own resources sustainably. It may also lead to the organization of community initiatives to raise awareness on this challenge, and to prepare and enable people to adapt to changes in their environment, motivating other populations to change their own behaviour and make better decisions compatible with sustainable development. This is important at every level of education, and it is a responsibility of governments to ensure that people are informed about issues such as the effects of climate change, its impact on food security, and how to promote a sustainable use of resources, so that they can make decisions informed by scientific proof. This, in turn, increases the chances that public debates on this topic will be fair, constructive and evidence-based.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **How Cape Town faced its severe water crisis**

Cape Town, a city of 3.7 million people, has been experiencing the worst drought in over a century. The drought experience has changed the way the citizens of Cape Town think

about water and how it can be managed. Lifelong learning has been fundamental in helping people of all ages respond to the crisis. For example, a drive led by city water officials has equipped citizens with strategies to halve their water usage. These include taking shorter showers, only flushing the toilet when absolutely necessary, washing clothing less frequently, not watering the garden, and collecting clean water at natural springs in the area. In addition, a strict limit of 50 litres of water from municipal supplies per person per day was introduced and grey-water systems have been installed along with large water tanks for those who can afford them.

The drought requires the collective efforts of all sectors and from all levels of society to produce innovative and realistic solutions to enable people to get by with less and reinforce their hope for a sustainable future. Lifelong learning is taking place in various sections of society through initial education, adult learning and education, and within diffuse learning environments such as the media, faith-based organizations and civil society.

Source: [Walters, 2018](#)

### **Global citizenship education**

The role of citizenship education is very relevant to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The three areas of sustainable development – economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection – rely on the contribution of informed citizens. Citizenship education requires a lifelong learning perspective, beginning in early childhood and continuing through all levels of education into adulthood, including both formal and informal approaches. While focus has been given to citizenship education in schools and formal education, further efforts are needed to raise awareness. This topic requires a lifelong learning perspective and plays a key role in adult learning and education (ALE), as adults need to be active in society as a whole.

*GRALE 4* ([UIL, 2019](#)) found very low participation in citizenship education in ALE. Some 36 per cent of 132 countries reported no participation in citizenship education. The report stressed that greater acknowledgement of the role of citizenship education in ALE is essential for realizing the 2030 Agenda. It is against this background that UIL together with [UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding \(APCEIU\)](#) published a summary report in 2019, [Addressing Global Citizenship Education in Adult Learning and Education](#), aiming to raise awareness of the potential of ALE in promoting

global citizenship education (GCED). The report – a summary of commissioned papers – underlines that GCED is not a stand-alone subject and does not only belong in school curricula. It stresses that without sustained investment in human resources to build professional capacity, integration of global citizenship within ALE and adult literacy cannot succeed. The quality of such processes relies on a range of professionals with the capacities to develop and implement policies and programmes, design curricula and learning materials, train and supervise educators, build and coordinate partnerships and collaboration initiatives, develop quality assurance strategies and criteria, and conduct research on good practice and innovation, among others. In addition, the summary has shown that educators are at the forefront of the learning process and that high-quality curricula for adult educators in GCED are essential.

### **Lifelong learning and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The growing prominence of LLL in education and social policy debates is supported by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ([United Nations, 2015](#)), which confirmed lifelong learning's status as a recognized ingredient of planning for sustainable and participatory development in the world. This agenda demands that, by 2030, all citizens, youth, women and men, have opportunities to achieve literacy and numeracy and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable development. Adopted in 2015 by heads of state, government leaders, and high-level UN and civil society representatives, the 2030 Agenda expresses a global undertaking to promote sustainability in all societies. Its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets address shared challenges at global, national and local levels. Importantly, the goals and targets are intended to represent an integrated solution to these urgent challenges. This means that the key dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – should be considered holistically, as interconnected and of equal importance. Failure to progress in one area of the agenda will hamper progress in the others.

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### **Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals**

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Source: United Nations, 2015

The capacity of LLL to build bridges between different types and levels of education and learning, between different actors and institutions, and, crucially, between different life spheres and policy contexts, becomes particularly relevant. Education is widely recognized as a main driver of sustainable development and as crucial to achieving all of the 17 SDGs, in particular SDG 4, which enjoins countries to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ and accords lifelong learning a central role in the development of education policies for sustainable development.

The *Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4* stresses the need to embed learning opportunities for all ages in the education system and to provide ‘multiple and flexible learning pathways and entry points and re-entry points at all ages and all educational levels, strengthened links between formal and non-formal structures, and recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning’ ([UNESCO, 2016d](#)).

Emphasizing the development of sound and transformative policies based on evidence and inclusive dialogue, SDG 4 draws on, but goes significantly beyond, previous international commitments to LLL and education. It prioritizes early childhood, universal completion of primary and secondary education, equal access to post-secondary education and promotes the inclusion of marginalized populations. It focuses on relevant learning outcomes, including foundational skills and competences for rapidly shifting labour markets, and highlights knowledge, values and skills that foster gender equality, global citizenship and environmental protection. The education of youth and adults feature



in the goal itself ('lifelong learning opportunities for all') and in five of the 10 targets: 4.3 (on access to technical and vocational education and training [TVET] and tertiary education); 4.4 (on skill acquisition for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship); 4.5 (on gender disparities); 4.6 (on literacy and numeracy); and 4.7 (on knowledge and skills for sustainable development).

While the importance of lifelong learning is captured in SDG 4, it has a wider relevance. The intersectoral characteristics of lifelong learning can strengthen the links between SDG 4 and other SDGs, thus helping to ensure high-quality development on a wider scale, since the other SDGs include numerous direct and indirect references to education and lifelong learning ([ISCU and ISSC, 2015](#)). To conclude, significant progress in the 2030 Agenda depends on lifelong learning.

### **How countries, regions and localities can promote LLL**

While the importance of lifelong learning is usually recognized in international development agreements, for most countries a thorough implementation of LLL remains an aspiration. In many regions, LLL gets far too little attention, at least in comparison to other policies, such as early childhood care and basic education. LLL frequently remains in the margins of national policies in spite of its potential positive effects on under-served populations. While some countries have recognized LLL as a relevant policy (e.g. Cabo Verde and Myanmar), most countries construe it more narrowly, translating LLL objectives mostly as the development of basic adult skills (e.g. literacy) or the implementation of continuing education programmes. This might be explained by the fact that countries tend to focus their efforts either on improving the basic skills of their population through formal education programmes exclusively, or on improving the skills of their workforce, missing opportunities to diversify their interventions through the implementation of LLL.

A key condition to promote the inclusion of LLL in national plans is to identify proper political conditions to support policy changes; in other words, to be able to detect and benefit from 'policy windows' or a combination of favourable factors for the adoption of LLL policies. While the existence of policy windows depends on uncontrollable conditions, policy champions may engage in four main activities to create favourable conditions for the inclusion of LLL in national plans: (1) identify public problems where adoption of LLL represents significant comparative advantages to other policies; (2) communicate expected benefits resulting from the implementation of LLL to address public problems;

(3) create a favourable policy environment to promote LLL; and (4) engage different stakeholders in the discussion of a comprehensive lifelong learning vision.

### **Identifying public policy issues to be addressed by LLL**

LLL integrates and distributes multiple and flexible learning opportunities for all, for almost any context, age and need. Therefore, it is uniquely positioned to address complex issues situated at the intersection of different public policy domains. An example is found in countries where climate change is creating water-related risks, and many agricultural jobs are threatened and, in some cases, lost. As it is described in a recent report published by the UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme ([Miletto et al., 2017](#)), an association between youth unemployment with immigration, water scarcity (caused by climate change) and gender inequality exists, particularly in developing countries where agriculture is the dominant sector of employment. Since unemployment is a proven contributory factor to migration, and many of those who migrate are men, this may lead to increased workloads for women in their countries of origin, often without an accompanying increase in rights, deepening gender disparities. This is an example of how LLL may address public problems with interrelated causes demanding comprehensive interventions to better distribute learning opportunities. A more sensitive and planned response to migration, such as this, is usually based on non-formal and informal learning programmes and helps to respond in a timely fashion to complex and interconnected challenges.

### **Raising awareness of the benefits of LLL**

Formal education – from primary school to university – is important, but so is less formal learning that precedes, accompanies and follows this initial phase. Lifelong learning involves all areas of life, including health, environment, justice, family, citizenship, cultural participation, and leisure. Therefore, LLL can contribute to improved living environments, better health and well-being, more cohesive communities and enhanced civic engagement, as well as to better employment outcomes and economic development.

LLL has a particularly crucial role to play in engaging and motivating those adults and young people furthest from the classroom. Non-formal learning provides them with safe, accessible local spaces in which to develop psycho-social qualities such as self-esteem and self-efficacy, communication and collaboration, which are crucial both to their future work and learning and to their own health, well-being and resilience. Helping people at risk of exclusion move into productive, healthy adult lives can yield a range of benefits, ensuring cost savings in areas such as health and welfare, while promoting people's

capacity to take an active part in work, family and civic life. Because lifelong learning is centred on the principle that learning should extend throughout life and across all spheres, its wider benefits overlap with those of learning in general. [Schuller et al. \(2004\)](#) have talked in particular of social outcomes, identifying the positive influence of learning on human, social and identity capital and how these outcomes can benefit the individual as well as their community.

As well as having non-economic benefits, lifelong learning can improve job opportunities by fostering the acquisition of vocational skills. For instance, a study from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) found that the pursuit of LLL opportunities led to an increased likelihood of subsequently finding employment (Jenkins et al., 2003). Furthermore, collaboration with the private sector to boost employee training benefits not only the employer but also the wider economy ([Hoeckel, 2008](#); [Falch and Oosterbeek, 2011](#)).

In addition, participation in lifelong learning has been found to help citizens become more active in civil society and political life, more tolerant of diversity and more aware of social and political issues, including, importantly, environmental issues. LLL promotes social cohesion and cultural understanding and supports the creation, at a local level, of learning communities that can address challenges such as low literacy levels, intergenerational poverty and environmental sustainability. In fact, learning communities can offer a means of managing and resolving conflict through mediation and dialogue, raising awareness about the causes of displacement, and shape public attitudes, which, in turn, impact migrants' and refugees' well-being ([UNESCO, 2018d](#)), thus having potential political implications.

LLL aims at creating learning opportunities for very different populations during different stages in their lives. This flexibility and comprehensive perspective may result in a perception of general benefits without a clear link to specific policies. It is important to engage decision- and policy-makers in the adoption and implementation of LLL policies through a clear explanation of how, under different political and policy contexts, LLL may support populations usually under-served by other educational policies.

## LLL in practice

### Showcasing the benefits of LLL

The third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* ([GRALE 3](#)) showcases – from a lifelong learning perspective – the positive impact of learning opportunities for adults. To make the case for adult learning and education (ALE) as part of a larger set of social, cultural and economic practices linked to sustainable development, it addresses and advocates for ALE in three main areas: (1) health and well-being; (2) employment and the labour market; and (3) social, civic and community life. The report makes key arguments for each.

- (1) **Health and well-being** – With many countries experiencing unprecedented population ageing, spending on health and health-related issues is becoming a contentious policy issue. ALE could be a smart long-term investment that may ultimately help reduce health-related expenditure. Understanding how ALE promotes better health and well-being is therefore becoming increasingly important.
- (2) **Employment and the labour market** – In sub-Saharan Africa, much has been written about a youth bulge and demographic dividends. For the countries concerned, ensuring that young women and men have opportunities for decent work will undoubtedly become an increasingly urgent task. These countries will need to develop a solid understanding of how ALE can help citizens enter and remain in labour markets.
- (3) **Social, civic and community life** – ALE can help countries promote social cohesion and greater understanding between citizens of different cultural backgrounds. It can also address growing concerns over voter apathy, declining trust in political institutions and increasing community fragmentation.

Source: [UIL, 2016](#)

### Creating a favourable policy environment

LLL policies are inherently linked to participatory planning. In addition, given that LLL policies aim to achieve comprehensive goals, governments must adopt a holistic and sector-wide approach involving all sub-sectors and levels to ensure the provision of learning opportunities for all individuals. These conditions result in a more complex implementation environment, since the number of stakeholders is increased, and it requires a different type of accountability system, since shared responsibility across different agencies is required. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that LLL is regarded in many contexts as part of an empowering tradition in adult education, which sees its role not merely as an intervention to promote economic growth and development,

but as a promoter of democratic deliberation and public debate, not least about what it means to be a citizen in a democratic society.

Due to these characteristics, adopting LLL initiatives demands a favourable political setting to guarantee an effective collaboration. A positive setting comes to pass when different political stakeholders value LLL as an effective and financially feasible intervention, and when beneficiaries are convinced lifelong learning interventions will mean clear benefits for them. If these conditions are met, the probability of successfully adopting and implementing LLL will be higher.

### **Creating a shared vision of LLL**

Communicating a shared vision is a necessary step towards engaging policy-makers and local stakeholders in the adoption and implementation of LLL. An example of a shared vision is the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning of 2000, articulated by the European Commission, based on the Delors report's language of 'learning throughout life' while noting that 'lifelong learning must accompany a successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society' ([European Commission, 2000, p. 3](#)). This memorandum acknowledged the breadth of the concept, its complexity, and the need to move from conceptual debates towards concrete policy interventions in different countries. It recognized LLL as 'no longer just one aspect of education and training' but 'the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts' ([ibid.](#)), depicting one of the key aspects of LLL.

Once this vision was defined, a number of policy-oriented papers followed with recommendations to Member States about how to address lifelong learning, including *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* ([European Commission, 2001](#)), which offered a broader definition of LLL unlike the more economically oriented definition from the previous year. Subsequently, as part of its 'Education and Training 2020' framework, the European Commission adopted the *Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning*, which connected LLL with adult education, defining its purposes broadly as including 'personal and professional development, empowerment, adaptability, employability and active participation in society' ([European Commission, 2011](#)). Another example of an LLL vision that might be used as an example is the definition published in 1996 by the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#), adopting the goal of 'lifelong learning for all' and, in 2001, elaborated to include 'all purposeful learning activity, from the cradle to the grave, that

aims to improve knowledge and competencies for all individuals who wish to participate in learning activities' ([OECD, 2001](#)). In an update to its definition, in 2005, the OECD's language on lifelong learning mirrored that of the European Commission, but went further by naming 'active citizenship, personal fulfilment, social inclusion and professional, vocational and employment related aspects' ([OECD, 2005](#)) as further benefits of LLL.

These examples reflect different orientations, and describe different expected outcomes and characteristics of LLL interventions. Regardless of this, it is important to promote the adoption of a shared LLL vision with common goals and expected outcomes, and highlight the importance of creating LLL opportunities for all. Adopting an LLL vision, whether at international, national or local level, will represent an initial step and a clear statement from decision- and policy-makers about their commitment to LLL.

### **Who to involve in LLL policy-making**

Managing the disruption and uncertainty resulting from technological, demographic and environmental changes is not just the responsibility of national and local governments. Civil society, the private sector, scholars, and multilateral organizations and agencies all have a part to play. National governments do have a particularly important role: they must create a framework and conditions for meaningful partnerships and the fostering of skills across all ministries, departments and local governments, while building capacities and attitudes through which challenges can be actively met at different levels. In addition, governments have a critical role in ensuring greater coordination within and between departments and in creating the conditions for improved synergy between government and partners from different sectors. This is essential in ensuring that the diverse places and spaces in which learning takes place are properly utilized and the resources necessary to allow women and men to develop the capacities and competences they need to survive and thrive in a world characterized by rapid technological, environmental, social and economic change are fully mobilized.

Limiting the focus of lifelong learning policy and planning to the formal education system, to the development of skills or competences related to work or employability, or to a single sector, will certainly reduce its potential social impact substantially. LLL covers a wide array of policies in very different governmental activities, including employment, health, environment, agriculture, housing, culture, economic development, justice and prison, tourism, safety, leisure, social affairs, citizenship, and even regulation of professions. The

decision of ministries and departments of government to invest in interventions such as health literacy, prison education or second-language learning for migrants reflects a growing acknowledgement among policy-makers in different sectors that a future-focused investment in lifelong learning can yield important social and economic benefits and result in substantial cost savings.

New forms of governance are required to capture the cross-sectoral benefits of lifelong learning. First, within the education domain itself, a comprehensive approach to lifelong learning policy and governance is essential, involving all areas of education systems, from early childhood care to higher education, including technical and vocational training, and adult and continuing education, encompassing all modes of learning. In addition, better governance requires a higher level of inter-departmental collaboration and the development of education and social policy systems to provide flexible learning pathways, a strong articulation between formal and non-formal education, frameworks and operational mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, and cross-sectoral collaboration, even across countries and regions.

In most cases, LLL will necessitate a major shift in current governance mechanisms for education and social systems. This means taking an **intersectoral approach** and encouraging **collaboration and coordination across different areas, sectors, agencies, organizations, and levels of government**. To develop and create synergy based on this governance model, it is essential to establish inter-departmental/inter-ministerial policy frameworks that set priorities, provide coordination mechanisms, create alternative pathways between programmes, and regulate and correct any disparities with regard to gender, age, and socio-economic status. In some cases, governments have created oversight bodies to ensure greater coordination and to overcome the silo thinking that occurs within government departments. It can be difficult for governments to manage this complexity centrally and, in these cases, governments might opt to devolve more responsibility to a city or sub-regional level. In addition, devolving power to a local level is often the best way to improve coordination between government, the education sector and a range of other partners from business, civil society and the community.

It is important that cooperation also crosses the boundaries between formal, non-formal and formal education, involving the private sector and civil society, different levels of



government, and often demanding international cooperation. Collaboration is required to realize fully the potential of lifelong learning to areas such as health, climate change, safety and justice. Private stakeholders, cultural institutions and civil society, alongside ministries and local governments, have important roles to play in integrating lifelong learning into the daily life and work of citizens and in ensuring their learning demands are expressed, heard and met. Their involvement is crucial in ensuring connections are made between different settings and modes of learning. Decentralization of education governance is a significant challenge that is being met in different ways, for example through the emergence of learning cities and the development of community learning centres (CLCs). In an increasingly diversified delivery context, it is critical that central government provides resources to support local initiatives and help learners access the services they need, such as in the case of partnership-based governance approaches used for learning cities.

Adopting LLL policies also requires having mechanisms in place for the recognition and transfer of skills and competences, particularly those acquired through non-formal education, and clear pathways and articulation through and between different parts of the education system. Entry points should be flexible and varied, offering learning opportunities at all ages and at all educational levels, with particular emphasis on the needs of the most disadvantaged population groups. Lifelong learning, seen from this perspective, is not only a response to emerging socio-economic challenges, but is also a principle of educational reform.

The potential cross-sectoral benefits of adopting lifelong learning as the organizing principle in the development of strategies to respond to current social challenges are significant, as research amply demonstrates. Their cross-cutting nature makes them difficult to quantify, but they are evident, for example, in the US State of Texas, where the provision of adult education programmes in prison significantly reduced recidivism through a focus on reintegration into the labour market ([Lockwood et al., 2012](#)). Or in the case of Uganda, where the promotion of knowledge and competencies in the adult population dramatically cut HIV infection through accidental blood transfer during baby delivery ([Amamukirori and Nahabwe, 2017](#)).

#### **LLL in practice**

#### **Intersectoral collaboration**



Government should recognize the important contribution of non-governmental entities, including national and international development organizations, businesses, unions, libraries and cultural institutions, and facilitate their involvement. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can be important partners, particularly in providing community education. In Viet Nam, for example, the Vietnam Association for Learning Promotion (VALP) runs a network connecting central-level organizations to provincial, district and commune levels and to grassroots activity. The mission of VALP is to promote and facilitate learning for all, with the ultimate goal of building a learning society, implementing local projects and activities and strengthening community learning centres.

Regional-level organizations also have an important role to play. In southern Africa, for example, the [South African Development Community \(SADC\)](#) and the [East African Community \(EAC\)](#) are creating new opportunities for the development of regional and local lifelong learning qualification frameworks to facilitate cross-border labour mobility. It is important that national government recognizes and supports NGOs as important partners in the development of national lifelong learning policy.

Another example is the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#). Since the adoption of the [1986 Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion](#), the [WHO has repeatedly asked UNESCO](#) Member States to dedicate part of their health spending to prevention and promotion through health education to reduce the growing and potentially unsustainable demand for curative health services. However, despite clear evidence of the long-term benefits and cost savings of investment in health promotion and education, most countries still fall some way short of the suggested allocation of between 3 and 4 per cent of total health spending. This represents a missed opportunity to enable citizens to play an active role in improving their own health, engage in community action for health, and press elected officials and governments to meet their responsibilities in redressing health inequalities. Meeting the health literacy needs of the most disadvantaged and marginalized societies, in particular, will accelerate progress in reducing inequities in healthcare and prevention.

The following chapters will provide more insights as to how policy-makers can respond to the challenge of lifelong learning governance through the development of policies and their effective implementation.

## **In your context: LLL as an integrated approach to sustainable development**

In light of complex issues emerging around the world, Chapter 1 looked at the relevance of lifelong learning. By defining why, how and who should transform the concept of lifelong learning into reality, it identifies opportunities to expand the adoption of LLL policies across different regions. This chapter also emphasized the need for promoting intersectoral collaboration and the participation of multiple stakeholders. Furthermore, it suggested activities to be conducted by policy-makers to promote the adoption of LLL policies in their education systems.

Before proceeding to the next chapter, which will provide a guide to policy-making with a lifelong learning perspective, it is important to reflect on how the information presented here relates to your own national context: while much of this chapter is universally applicable, certain aspects will have particular relevance to your country. Please consider the points, questions and possible actions below.

### ***Key points:***

- Issues emerging in countries around the world are varied, and there are many that are unique to particular national contexts, but many of the most pressing challenges pertain broadly to demographic shifts, political changes, technological transformation and climate change.
- As these issues are rapidly emerging, their impacts are not yet fully known; it is therefore necessary to respond to the current situation while anticipating the needs of future generations.
- This simultaneously present- and future-oriented task depends on sustainable development and, because lifelong learning is all-encompassing, it is uniquely positioned to respond to issues in a manner that recognizes how they interconnect.
- Lifelong learning involves all areas of life, including health, environment, justice, family, citizenship, cultural participation and leisure; therefore, lifelong learning-oriented policy requires prioritization by ministries and government agencies at all levels.
- Because lifelong learning encourages engagement, self-esteem and cooperation, it enhances well-being, which improves people's capacity to respond to current issues.
- Adult education, as part of lifelong learning, empowers adults to democratically participate in society and contribute to solutions by engaging with issues affecting them individually, as well as those that will impact their family and community.

- Lifelong learning recognizes the importance of formal learning, but it also broadens the scope of learning to include non-formal and informal opportunities: all three modalities are vital.
- For lifelong learning to become a reality, stakeholders at different levels and in different sectors become necessary collaborators. Governments can lead the way, but success also depends on commitment from the private sector and civil society.

**Questions for reflection:**

- ❖ Do any of the emerging issues mentioned in this chapter particularly resonate in your national context?
- ❖ How is lifelong learning conceived in your country? Is there an official definition? A national or regional vision? If so, to what extent does it reflect this chapter's key points?
- ❖ Can you already identify cases of cross-sectoral collaboration in the provision of learning opportunities?
- ❖ Are there certain sectors and stakeholders requiring further engagement?

**Possible actions:**

To identify how lifelong learning for sustainable development relates directly to your context, try this step-by-step activity before moving on to the next chapter.

1. Start by pinpointing issues of particular importance to your national context at the present time, as well as those that might emerge in the coming years. Think about how they relate to the themes introduced during this part of the chapter, including changes to demography, technology and climate.
2. Reflect on which areas of life these challenges impact the most; for instance, employment, health, or environmental conservation.
3. Look ahead and consider what LLL initiatives or policy interventions might help to address the issues you have identified, and where responsibility for solutions should lie. Try to define or adopt a vision.
4. Having previously identified issues facing your country, choose one or two, and carefully analyse their possible causes, reflecting on how LLL policies may address these issues.
5. Identify the modality/ modalities of learning that may apply (formal/ non-formal/ informal) to design and implement LLL initiatives aimed to address the problems you identified.
6. Identify the likely benefits of adopting LLL policies.
7. Try to list the governmental ministries or departments whose activities are related to the design and implementation of LLL initiatives. Consider the limitations of those ministries' mandates.
8. Where there are limitations, think about important actors in other sectors and how they could work in collaboration with your government to address the selected challenge.

## Chapter 2 – Designing effective LLL policies

### Guiding questions

What are the key characteristics of LLL policies?

Which contextual factors influence LLL policy-making?

What does the policy-making process look like?

### Introduction

[Chapter 1](#) introduced some of the emerging challenges any society will face in the coming years, and how these challenges create a context where flexible and comprehensive educational policies like LLL are needed. It also helped us to learn to identify adequate conditions to promote the adoption of LLL policies, and how these policies require alternative governance models that include public and private organizations, academic institutions, international agencies, regional and local governments, NGOs and firms.

[Chapter 1](#) also described the characteristics of public problems to be addressed through LLL policies and programmes, and how promoting the implementation of LLL demands sharing a comprehensive vision, promoting participatory planning, and designing effective implementation strategies. This chapter aims to offer a general overview of the policy-making process, with specific emphasis on some of the challenges associated with the design and implementation of LLL strategies and plans that cut across sectors, with a wide range of policy agendas and potential effects. It will also describe fundamental features of LLL visions and policies, pointing out factors that can help or hinder its adoption and implementation.

The importance of creating a shared vision will be examined, as well as the need to understand the context and have access to reliable information and data to design policies grounded in evidence. Also, it will be explained how effective coordination across agencies and the provision of adequate funding are important elements of effective LLL policies. By taking all these concepts on board, readers will have a preliminary understanding of factors that influence lifelong learning policy-making, and a basis on which to begin developing their own LLL plans.

## Characteristics of effective LLL policies

Adopting lifelong learning as the main organizing principle for national education systems requires defining a comprehensive national vision. It also means promoting a multi-stakeholder process of policy-making based on platforms to enable constructive, informed and efficient policy dialogues with experts and stakeholders, all to ensure that visions will be **comprehensive**, aligned with both **national and local contexts**, and **supported by the most recent and solid evidence**. In addition, LLL policies must be **politically feasible** and **financially viable**. All these characteristics will increase the probability of designing effective LLL policies and programmes to solve public problems.

### LLL supported by a comprehensive vision

Governments play a critical role in setting the tone for the adoption of any national vision later supporting the design and implementation of policies. Governments of all levels are crucial in stimulating the inclusion of an LLL vision into the national education, economic and social policy and legal frameworks. Any national LLL vision needs to be clear, coherent, comprehensive and compelling, since a well-articulated definition facilitates widespread support for policies, helps to secure the commitment of all stakeholders, and provides guidance on the challenges to be achieved, and the overall goals to be defined.

A comprehensive LLL vision should be human-centred and consider going beyond the formal education system to include early childhood education and care, as well as youth and adult learning, in a variety of non-formal and informal contexts. It should also aim to make the most of human potential in pursuit of a higher quality of life, improved social cohesion and a more sustainable future.

It is advisable that a national LLL vision helps policy-makers to rethink how to articulate LLL as a basic parameter within national development strategies and legal frameworks, and how to translate these definitions into specific policy frameworks across different sectors and institutions. To ensure relevance and broad political support, any national LLL vision should also be aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which promote lifelong learning opportunities that reflect national contexts, traditions and political perspectives.

### LLL in practice

#### National visions

Several countries have developed a national vision of lifelong learning through dedicated policies and strategies. The Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Norway ([Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007](#)) aims to develop a coherent and comprehensive way forward for LLL. Lifelong learning is viewed as an ongoing educational process, from childhood to adulthood and old age. It is considered to be essential for individual development and the development of democracy and social life, and it ensures the creation of values in working life. The concept takes into account all forms of learning throughout the lifespan, including not only formal education but also everything that lies beyond. This implies an acknowledgement of the value of all the knowledge, skills and experiences an individual has gained through education and training, through paid or unpaid work and through active participation in social life. Among other things, Norway's vision emphasizes a need to improve collaboration between the education system and working life, to increase participation in learning among older workers and people with limited past experience of education, and to improve documentation and validation of people's non-formal and informal learning.

Other countries have included a national vision of lifelong learning in their legislation. For example, the [constitution of the Republic of Korea \(2012\)](#) acknowledges that all citizens 'shall have an equal right to receive an education corresponding to their abilities' and gives the state a duty to 'promote lifelong education'. The term 'lifelong education' denotes non-formal learning processes that people engage in after, or in parallel to, formal schooling, vocational study and higher education. It refers to all types of systematic educational activity other than regular school education, 'including schooling supplement education, adult basic and literacy education, career competency development education, general arts/ humanities education, culture/ arts education and citizenship education'. Lifelong education is implemented across national and local levels, and the 1999 Lifelong Education Act ([Republic of Korea, 2017](#)) established that all levels of government are responsible for promoting lifelong education policies that provide all citizens with opportunities to participate in lifelong education. The Act also requires the Ministry of Education to develop a comprehensive lifelong education promotion plan every five years at the national level, setting mid- and long-term policy objectives and the basic direction of lifelong education promotion.

Sources: [Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007](#); [Republic of Korea, 2012](#); [Republic of Korea, 2017](#)

Adopting an LLL perspective to guide any education policy-making process requires understanding the opportunities learners should have to acquire fundamental competencies during their entire lives; the opportunities they need to acquire advanced competences; defining pathways through formal and non-formal learning; creating accessible educational opportunities and learning environments for every learner (particularly those affected by poverty and conflict); and defining a broad spectrum of learning purposes going beyond skills development for the labour market. LLL policies should also respond to individual learning requirements regarding sustainable development, peace-building, health protection, global citizenship and social engagement, among others.

Relevant and inclusive LLL opportunities should also reflect people's learning needs and aspirations, particularly those of vulnerable populations, and respond to the demands of the labour market (including informal and subsistence economies). LLL resources must be learner-centred and flexible to respond to different perspectives and public demands, and should identify the best means to promote a constant intersectoral dialogue across ministries, agencies and NGOs. All of these factors will increase the likelihood of formulating a distinctive LLL vision to engage and command the support of all government ministries and agencies, employers and civil society organizations, as well as learners and the wider public.

### **LLL aligned to national and local contexts**

Contextual factors are critical in formulating national lifelong learning policies, since these must explicitly relate to national development priorities and ensure coherence to other related government and public strategies. Each contextual factor must be assessed and understood as part of a policy-making process aimed to guarantee technical soundness and political feasibility, and this analysis must be used to enhance the design and implementation of contextually sensitive LLL interventions.

Analysis of the local context will help to identify overall parameters and potential orientations for LLL policies. A more fine-grained analysis at provincial, local and community levels will also yield insights into the kinds of interventions that are likely to result in viable, relevant and accessible learning opportunities for learners of all ages and circumstances.



It is important to remember that the stronger and more detailed the contextual analysis, the greater the likelihood of designing an appropriate, effective and successfully implemented LLL policy. Any problems to be solved, the type of beneficiaries the LLL policy is intended to support, and how the LLL policy will be implemented needs to be taken into consideration. To conduct this analysis, it is recommended to include the following factors:

- i) **Demographic trends**, since these provide information on the size of the different age groups which may need specific types of educational opportunities. National census data, organized by age, gender, household and location, constitutes the main source of information, supplemented by other sources pertaining to migration.

### LLL in practice

#### A case of an LLL policy responding to demographic changes

In Chapter 1 it was noted that, in many societies, people are living longer, and populations are gradually getting older; policies with a lifelong learning perspective can only be demography-sensitive if they respond to such changes. In Luxembourg, the Ministry of Education supports learners at risk of being excluded by the digital divide – including older people as well as low-income groups – by issuing diplomas to those who opt to pursue an *Internet-Führerschein*. This is a 20-hour intensive course facilitated by trainers who are available for one-to-one and group sessions at low cost. Refresher courses are also available and allow learners to improve their knowledge of particular forms of ICT, such as communications software or internet shopping. A programme with similar aims is offered in Singapore, though, in this case, older people are the sole target group. ‘Silver Infocomm Junctions’ are digital learning centres where two courses are offered along similar lines to those in Luxembourg. These junctions are products of the wider ‘Silver Infocomm Initiative (SII)’, a policy that was launched in 2007 with the aim of extending digital inclusion to older demographic groups.

Source: [UNESCO, 2018b](#)

- ii) **Characteristics of educational systems**, since LLL policies must take full account of the prevailing educational situation in a country. Any policy or educational development should be based on a systematic and in-depth analysis of the realities and challenges different education systems deal with, using data available from education management information systems



(EMIS) to capture the state of formal and informal learning systems.

Analysed figures should provide an important foundation for the design of LLL policies aimed to respond to the current and future learning demands of adolescents and youth, as well as the demand for basic competencies among the adult population.

- iii) **Local economic conditions**, given that income distribution is perhaps the main factor explaining the lack of access to learning opportunities for adults. This analysis will provide information to support LLL interventions aimed to reduce the negative effects of economic inequalities. Data from national economic and labour censuses may also support this analysis, as will surveys on other related topics.
- iv) **Unemployment and its causes**, since policies aimed to improve employability by adopting an LLL perspective must strengthen existing links across all government agencies, and support education and economic development. In the design of LLL policies, analysts should take into account the country's employment profile and estimate the potential effects of LLL interventions. In addition, analysis must be conducted to understand conditions of the young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), information on the uptake of professions (including existing and potential skills gaps), and gaps regarding educational qualifications among the employed and unemployed.
- v) **Gender equity** is another factor to be considered, since LLL policies should focus on issues related to differentiated access to education, to work, freedom of decision-making and movement, discrimination, gender-based violence and personal security. These issues deserve consideration to understand whether LLL policies may or may not promote equality of opportunity, and how far socio-economic opportunities are equally open to women and men.
- vi) **Minorities and indigenous groups** deserve special attention for the design and implementation of LLL policies, since they are usually in a less powerful and more disadvantaged position. Surveys at the appropriate level (regional, local and community) can be used to better understand the learning needs of minorities and indigenous groups, and then factored into the development of lifelong learning policy. Minorities may be identified by ethnicity, socio-economic status, lifestyle, religion, culture or location, among other factors.

- vii) **Physical and social environment**, since living in a rural, urban or peri-urban setting has an impact on people's choices to learn or continue learning, and also on how learning is provided, from early childhood to adult learning. Statistical data on the proportions of the population living in various conditions must be studied to ascertain the particular learning and occupational needs in each context.
- viii) **The interaction of all these factors** given that issues outlined above interrelate in different ways, affecting how learning opportunities are distributed. A comprehensive analysis and understanding of these interactions will enable policy-makers to assess which factors may have the greatest influence on educational access, participation and completion, and how LLL policy should be oriented.

### **Evidence-based LLL**

Relevant data on lifelong learning opportunities and participation rates can help policy-makers focus their efforts to effectively support under-served populations, understand where – and ideally why – implementation has been complete or partial, and identify any prevalent synergy or where interventions are most needed. Adoption of a 'problem-solving' approach regarding the use of empirical evidence ([Weiss, 1979](#)) is recommended, as the collection and analysis of information on lifelong learning are vital for LLL policy-making, implementation and evaluation.

Information on lifelong learning policies and their effects can be found from different data sources. These include national censuses and regional statistical units; administrative data reported by schools and other education institutions; specialized surveys of aspects of lifelong learning based on individual, household or school samples; reports by non-governmental providers or private-sector companies; and analyses found in peer-reviewed publications. The main challenge, however, is to identify relevant and solid evidence pertaining to different aspects of lifelong learning: provision, access, participation, completion, quality, funding, learning processes and learning outcomes.

#### **LLL in practice**

##### **International data sources**

Several composite indices of lifelong learning have also emerged in recent years. The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) developed the Composite Learning Index (CLI), an annual measure of progress in lifelong learning, conceptualized in terms of the four

major dimensions of learning identified in the [Delors report \(1996\)](#): learning to know, to do, to live together and to be. The CLI classified 17 indicators and 25 statistical measures, which were meant to reflect the many modalities in which Canadians learn: in school, at home or work, or within the community ([UNESCO, 1996](#)).

The European Union also developed the aggregated [European Lifelong Learning Indicators \(ELLI\) Index](#) based on the four pillars of the Delors report. The ELLI-Index describes levels of lifelong learning among European countries, combining 36 variables to reflect a wide range of lifelong learning activities, including participation rates in formal education and training, literacy skills (PISA), employees participating in continual vocational training (CVT) courses, labour market policies expenditure, and community engagement through cultural activities, among others. The ELLI-Index stresses the known economic and social outcomes of learning – for example, income, employability, population health, and social cohesion and democracy – and aims to be accessible to a wide audience, including policy-makers, education researchers and practitioners, individual students and parents.

The Institute for Adult Learning in Singapore is developing an elaborate index of lifelong learning that consists of six dimensions: formal (learning to know), work related (learning to do), social (learning to live together), personal (learning to be) and technologies for learning and learning to learn. The Singaporean LLL index includes both international and locally derived measures related to lifelong learning. Using a similar four-pillar framework of learning, [Kim \(2016\)](#) constructed a global lifelong learning index (GLLI) more suited to developing countries, based on an array of educational, economic, social and political measures – mostly quantitative, some qualitative – available from international sources with information for a significant number of countries in the world.

Sources: [UNESCO, 1996](#); [Kim, 2016](#)

Given the intersectoral reach of lifelong learning policy, information throwing light on the interrelationships between the education sector and other sectors is also needed. Such information might focus on how adult learners apply their learning to healthcare, childcare, job seeking, increased productivity, and other aspects of life and work, which may be invisible to policy-makers. Both quantitative and qualitative information are needed to

ensure effective policies of lifelong learning, and expertise is needed to ensure the careful processing and analysis of data and its visualization in different formats.

A critical aspect for the successful adoption of an evidence-based model is establishing mechanisms that systematically monitor and evaluate LLL policy implementation on an ongoing basis. Monitoring lifelong learning opportunities not only enables countries to better meet the lifelong learning needs of all groups, especially those for whom current or past educational provision has failed, it also contributes to country commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which stresses the influence of lifelong learning on sustainable development, and reinforces efforts to monitor lifelong learning and assure its quality. Monitoring and evaluation of LLL policies should build on existing data collection and monitoring activities, yet in many countries the existing provision of lifelong learning is incredibly diverse and does not easily lend itself to monitoring. A periodic report presenting data on key measures of lifelong learning ‘at a glance’ should be considered and, at later stages, the analysis of trends and patterns should be carefully conducted in order to identify and synthesize existing challenges and to prioritize recommendations for improvement.

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**General recommendations on the process of monitoring (adapted from [Weiss, 1998](#))**

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- a. **The design of monitoring and evaluation** systems must consider not only the production of information, but how to promote the instrumental use of evidence.
  - b. **The design of a monitoring and evaluation system** must be a continuation of previous stages of a policy-making process. It must capture orientations adopted in previous decisions, particularly in the problem definition and policy design stages.
  - c. **Monitoring and evaluation systems** require the development of local capacities, like information literacy and policy-making.
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**LLL in practice**

**LLL monitoring activities**

Monitoring processes and methods adopted by nation states vary. In Cyprus, for example, a lifelong learning committee composed of different stakeholders is responsible for examining the national lifelong learning strategy and issuing progress reports. Monitoring is carried out at different levels and by different bodies, while the

implementation of major policy documents is regularly reviewed at national level, and priorities adjusted accordingly. In Slovenia, a consultative body is mandated to monitor and evaluate the country's annual plan for adult education, drawing on data submitted by seven ministries.

*GRALE 3* reported that 70 per cent of the 139 surveyed countries had collected information on certificates and qualifications issued, as well as completion rates in adult learning programmes, while 40 per cent had collected information on employment outcomes and only 30 per cent on social outcomes. This trend continued, as *GRALE 4* points out that 'knowledge about participation in ALE, particularly in low-income countries and among disadvantaged and low-participation groups, remains insufficient. More than a third of countries (37 per cent) reported not knowing the ALE participation rates of minority groups, refugees and migrants.'

Sources: [UIL, 2016](#); [UIL, 2019](#)

### **Participatory LLL**

LLL policies need to be politically feasible in order to ensure the support of relevant stakeholders and the general public, and to increase the likelihood of its enactment, opportune implementation and evaluation. Policy-making thus needs to follow a participatory process that emphasizes constant consultation and dialogue with all relevant stakeholders. Effective LLL policy-making must reflect a well-organized process, during which roles and responsibilities, coordination arrangements, and working structures are made clear. An important step in this process involves setting policy priorities and developing a coherent proposal on which to consult relevant stakeholders. Identifying, involving, and securing the support of key stakeholders contributes to successful policy development and effective implementation. Key stakeholders for lifelong learning usually include:

- Ministry of Education, its departments and affiliated agencies;
- Ministry of Finance;
- legislative branch;
- other ministries and departments such as the Ministry of Social Affairs or Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender Equality or Women's Affairs, Ministry

of Employment or Labour, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Science and Technology, and Ministry of Culture;

- national statistical institute/ agency;
- national validation and accreditation agency;
- national agency for vocational education and training
- agencies for teachers' professional development
- provincial and district governments and municipal councils;
- trade and teachers' unions, labour organizations;
- representatives of the private sector;
- researchers in the field of lifelong learning, ECCE, TVET and adult education;
- national youth council, women's associations, representatives of minority groups;
- non-governmental and civil society organizations active in the field of education and social affairs;
- international development partners;
- providers of formal and non-formal education.

Identification of interested parties and their priorities are necessary steps in deciding potential roles to be played by stakeholders in the policy process. To constructively engage key stakeholders in a participatory process, a culture of democratic and open debate should be fostered. Additionally, the existence of formal structures (e.g. a consultative committee with representation from different stakeholders), traditions (e.g. similar processes observed in the past) and tools (e.g. a draft with policy proposals on which stakeholders can comment) for a policy dialogue may result into a more efficient participatory approach.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **Politically feasible LLL policy**

The [Austrian strategy for lifelong learning \(2011\)](#) was developed and launched by four federal ministries: the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture; the Ministry of Science and Research; the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection; and the Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth. To coordinate the implementation process, a taskforce was established, comprising a representative of each involved ministry. In addition to the taskforce, a national platform, LLL: 2020, has been established to ensure a wide involvement of relevant stakeholders at multiple levels in the implementation

process. Members of the national platform include representatives of all involved ministries, the social partners, state and municipal governments, universities and adult education institutions, the unemployment service, as well as researchers in relevant fields.

Source: [Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture et al., 2011](#)

### **Financially viable LLL**

Turning a lifelong learning vision into policies and effective programmes requires an efficient planning process of financial investment in education and learning. If learning is to continue throughout people's lives, it is essential to establish financial incentives to mobilize greater and broader participation in LLL policies. Innovative financing strategies are required to secure the necessary resources to achieve policy goals included in any LLL national plan. To be credible and useful, a policy needs to be accompanied by a proper cost and financing framework, based on which detailed financing strategies and incentive mechanisms will be developed in the implementation plan.

When developing financing mechanisms for LLL policies, it is crucial to keep in mind that lifelong learning is offered by a broad range of providers catering to very heterogeneous populations of learners. Therefore, financing policies must cover both how financial resources can be mobilized and how they can be effectively spent by different agencies in a timely and efficient manner. By mobilizing finance from all possible sources, countries can ensure better levels of investment in lifelong learning; and through the fair and effective utilization of financial resources, they can ensure that their societies reap the wider benefits that lifelong learning can deliver ([UIL, 2013](#)). For any kind of LLL and education scheme, a crucial question is who pays or should pay for it. While there is great diversity in the range of provision, education services can be costly, and it is important to consider which parts can be financed by the government and for which programmes other sources are needed. In most countries, funding for lifelong learning is provided by several different sources ([UIL, 2016a](#)).

The ways in which learning activities are financed vary greatly but, by looking specifically at formal and non-formal education and training, it is possible to identify some typical financing instruments. Types of non-formal education and training include provision within the voluntary sector, community and workplace, as well as that organized by individuals. Public financing tends to be distributed through a limited range of instruments: formula



funding, programme funding, project funding, direct grants, tax incentives, levy grants, training leave, loans, and individual learning accounts.

### LLL in practice

#### Individual learning accounts

Sometimes referred to as ‘voucher systems’, individual learning accounts provide targeted individuals with an entitlement to access specified learning activities from a range of approved providers. Vouchers are commonly distributed through an active labour market programme which provides supporting advice and guidance services. Individual learning accounts are also used to support individuals to access both non-vocational and vocational learning of their choosing. In France, training is an ‘individual right’: it is framed in this way to promote social progress and reduce inequality in access. Its two main components are individual training leave (CIF) and, implemented more recently, the personal training account (*compte personnel de formation*, or CPF). This personal account allows individuals – employed or unemployed – to review career-relevant information, training opportunities, unemployment assistance and other social protections. Formulated as an ‘individual right’ scheme, the personal account is portable and can move with the individual as they gain or change employment. It was reported that, in 2016, almost 500,000 requests pertaining to the CPF system were approved, with 65 per cent of the total being made by job-seekers and 35 per cent by employed workers.

Sources: [Cedefop, 2016](#); [Cedefop, 2018](#)

Several of these instruments of public financing are in fact dependent on private-sector collaboration, and it should be noted that, as well as instruments favoured by the state, there are various forms of employer-led (e.g. on-the-job training), collective (e.g. public subsidies and shared contributions) and learner-managed (e.g. student loans and individual savings) financing instruments ([Schuetze, 2009](#)). A policy should therefore provide an indication of how the funding instruments will contribute to achieving the aims of the policy and list the key policy factors that need to be considered in designing the funding instruments, aligned with the main policy issues.

It is important to remember that access to formal education is expanding and, as a consequence, public finances are placed under strain. In developing countries, this



exacerbates an already challenging situation. There are several responses available to countries: more effectively harnessing existing resources; enhancing measures of accountability for public investments in education; and, perhaps most importantly, exploring and implementing new ways of mobilizing resources for education, including through arrangements with stakeholders operating outside the public sector ([UNESCO, 2015](#)). Alternative approaches to resource mobilization can lead to new opportunities for education by reducing the sector's dependence on national wealth. Moving beyond the boundaries of formal education, activities that fall within the remit of lifelong learning are almost countless and so, while it is valuable to consider the typical funding instruments previously detailed when formulating lifelong learning policies, there is significant scope for innovation. Depending on the programme or activity, financing measures can involve legal changes to national and local budgets, cross-sectoral cooperation and partnerships, grassroots fundraising, competition and incentives for providers, reconfigurations of existing learning facilities and more, but measures should always be context-sensitive.

Sub-national measures for resource mobilization can also be characterized by innovation and need not rely solely on monetary funds, as shown by initiatives in some UNESCO learning cities. In Contagem, Brazil, resource mobilization for lifelong learning involves repurposing learning spaces and the roles of learners and educators. For the city's Community Speaker Project – part of its In-Service Training Programme – local universities make rooms available for workshops and conferences, while psychology students take on a supportive role in helping community speakers ([UIL, 2017](#)). In Espoo, Finland, initiatives to create networks and promote the sharing of resources have been prioritized over additional financing. As part of this approach, Espoo invites and pays civil society organizations to provide services to learners, including sports, music and after-school activities ([UIL, 2015](#)). These two cases demonstrate how resource mobilization for lifelong learning is not dependent on large amounts of financial investment and can be oriented more towards maximizing the potential of existing learning institutions and the capacities of local people.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **Financing adult education**

In Serbia, the Law on Adult Education was amended so that finances for adult education feature in national, provincial and local budgets. UNESCO's Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education suggests that Member States set incentives to facilitate learning

([UNESCO, 2016a](#)), and there are examples of countries adopting innovative measures to finance ALE that focus on incentivizing the private sector. In China, the national government has promoted the establishment of private-sector adult education centres and a greater degree of collaboration between private organizations and schools, while Poland's National Training Fund was founded in 2014 to incentivize employer-led training by offering funding to cover most or all associated costs. Other national initiatives have sought to facilitate a more bottom-up approach to financing ALE: a competitive funding system in Indonesia invites non-formal educational institutions to individually apply for government grants, while 'Bottom-Up Budgeting' in the Philippines refers to an innovation to provide local government bodies and civil society organizations with opportunities to propose activities and participate in the budgeting process ([UIL, 2016](#)).

Sources: [UIL, 2016](#); [UNESCO, 2016a](#)

These five policy features are simply an initial set of aspects to be considered while designing LLL policies. It is not an exhaustive list, but a basic guidance on the different aspects to be considered by decision- and policy-makers interested in the design and implementation of LLL policies. Once a national or regional vision is defined, priorities and goals should be defined as a result of a LLL policy-making process. Strategies and plans can be developed to specify the targets, timeframe, implementers, and allocated budget for any intervention.

It is important to bear in mind that while the development of a comprehensive LLL vision is a significant step towards systematically integrating lifelong learning as a guiding principle in the education sector and beyond, significant challenges remain to ensuring a broad impact in practice. On the other hand, since there are multiple stakeholders interested in the promotion of LLL, successful practical initiatives and local programmes for lifelong learning are not always preceded by policy. **Vision development and policy design and implementation will not follow a linear process towards making lifelong learning a reality**, but can be thought of, rather, as **two dimensions that enrich and strengthen each other**.

It is important to remember that the design of LLL policies is frequently considered to be a prerogative of government authorities. However, this does not imply that policy-making for

LLL necessarily concerns only the crafting of a single statement or directive, thus ignoring other perspectives and interests. As LLL takes place across life and cuts across very different sectors and agencies, it can well fall within the responsibility of different ministries and governments at different levels, with direct and indirect benefits corresponding to a wide range of policy and political agendas. Hence, any LLL policy-making is **participatory by design**, demanding the adoption of a particular systemic and cross-sectoral approach. In addition, their **targeted populations are significantly variable and dynamic**, with **ample – and sometimes scattered – expected results to be achieved, difficult to isolate and estimate**, since the expectation is to observe changes during a long period of time and in several dimensions.

These three important characteristics demand a particular design, implementation, and evaluation process. The identification and study of different policies or cases may help to analyse and understand differences in the policy process. A classification of these policies and cases will be provided in Chapter 3.

### The policy-making process

Any policy represents a system of principles or directions agreed by different stakeholders to guide actions and decisions across different fields of societal activity. While each policy ideally expresses the settled intent, goals and priorities of governments and other organizations, the process through which it is developed is complex and subject to a range of direct and indirect influences representing different perspectives and interests. These influences will determine its feasibility and potential effects.

A policy may emanate, then, from a number of sources, for example ministries, agencies, academia, and private- and public-sector partners. It may also be shaped by consultation exercises organized by government agencies or based on the views of national and international non-governmental organizations, advocacy groups, experts or private lobbyists. Also, it could respond or address national, historical and political contexts, including current or earlier policies in the area under review, cultural and economic constraints, as well as current or former social, political and economic agendas. A policy should also draw on the best information available as to what previous interventions and practices have been effective, and where more attention is required. In order to be effective, however, it is important that policies reflect a good understanding of circumstances and needs, political contexts and available institutional capacities.

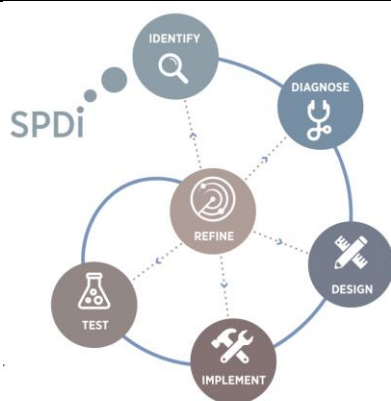
Policy analytic models have been usually intended to examine decisions that different stakeholders and policy-makers may take to propose and advance policies, in different stages and settings, thus informing how policies emerge, are implemented, and how likely it is to achieve expected changes. Despite the abundance of models, similarities persist among them, particularly on the characteristics and the overall objectives to be achieved in different stages included in the policy process.

A useful example of these tools is the Smart Policy Design and Implementation (SPDI) model. This is a representation of an evidence-based policy process designed by the Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD) group ([Harvard Kennedy School, Evidence for Policy Design, n.d.](#)). This model, represented in **Figure 2**, helps to visualize six different stages of a policy-making process (identification and diagnosis of problems, design of potential interventions, implementation of interventions, testing, and refining). As expected, this tool helps to analyse specific steps, to identify some of the potential issues any policy-maker or analyst has to address at different moments, the decisions to be taken and supported, and how these responses may determine the implementation results and the future versions of any policy.

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Figure 2. Smart Policy Design and Implementation (SPDI) model

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Source: [Harvard Kennedy School, Evidence for Policy Design, n.d.](#)

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The stages suggested in this model are described in **Table 1**. Understanding the different decisions taken in each of these stages helps to point out some of the challenges to be addressed to design effective policies.

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**Table 1. Description of stages of the SPDI model**

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Identify	Identification of the policy problem requires that ‘involved stakeholders come together with researchers to combine information on policy priorities and opportunities’. This activity will determine questions or issues to be addressed by public agencies, becoming a fundamental process to design relevant policies.
Diagnose	Diagnosis requires that ‘researchers work closely with policy partners, [...] to diagnose’ the conditions explaining the emergence of the public problem to be addressed. In this stage, ‘descriptive data and existing research’ helps to identify potential ‘causal factors’, as a necessary step to design policies.
Design	In this stage, the ‘collective expertise [allows] to design policy innovations that are financially, administratively, and politically feasible’, supported also by evidence. A result from this stage is the intervention to be implemented, a description of relevant processes to achieve expected results, and the definition of the main changes to be observed.
Implement	This is the most complex stage of the process, since ‘the solution is delivered to target beneficiaries’. Several decisions and processes must be monitored to provide timely information to policy-makers regarding the operation of programmes and how this operation may affect results.
Test	Once the intervention is implemented, ‘rigorous testing at relevant scale, with scientific methods of evaluation’ should be used ‘to measure impact [...] and provide key information on how best to improve and refine the policy’. In other words, this stage provides relevant information to assess whether the assumptions supporting the selection of any given policy were valid, and if the expected results were achieved. If expected changes were not achieved, this stage will help to provide evidence to reorient or redesign interventions and policies.
Refine	This stage is part of an adaptive process where lessons from the policy design and implementation process are used to ‘decide that it would be most advantageous to return to a previous point in the process to solve problems or integrate new knowledge’. Therefore, a

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**Table 1. Description of stages of the SPDI model**

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policy process will need to engage in ‘continuous policy improvement’, considering that public problems and contextual factors are constantly changing.

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Source: [Harvard Kennedy School, Evidence for Policy Design, n.d.](#)

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As a dynamic, non-linear process, each of the stages in the policy process may include numerous decisions and potential factors that may affect results, as it is represented in **Table 1**. For example, the ‘identification of the public problem’ to be addressed is a particularly sensitive and complex process in the case of the design of LLL policies, given that (a) there is a wide array of target populations (e.g. youth, adults, older people, immigrants, women, minorities, among others); (b) multiple potential problems have to be addressed (e.g. unemployment, developing global citizenship, promoting democracy, assimilation, peace, financial, health and environment education, information literacy, illiteracy, entrepreneurship, among several others); and (c) the multiple modalities, based on formal, non-formal, and informal learning models. A similar situation is observed in the diagnosis stage. Even though data on adult learning and education is currently available (see *GRALE 4*, [UIL, 2019](#)), there is still limited evidence on the impact of interventions in the field of LLL.

The design and implementation processes in the case of LLL policies present additional challenges, mainly because of the commonly adopted participatory planning and intersectoral approaches suggested to increase the effectiveness of LLL policies. Evaluation and redesigning of LLL policies, as described in the last two stages (‘test’ and ‘refine’), are also contingent on a deep understanding of causal effects, contextual and political factors influencing policies, stakeholders’ interventions, available policy options, technical viability and political feasibility. As expected, these are particularly demanding stages for policy-makers, given the consequences this analysis may have regarding the continuation, redefinition or termination of policies – issues addressed in the final two stages of this process.

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**Table 2. General recommendations on policy design**

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- a. **A clear identification of the causes** of the problem to be addressed is fundamental to guide the policy design process.
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- b. Instrumentation is a fundamental process**, since it is important to ‘understand the array of instruments available’ to implement the solution to the problem.
  - c. A clear sense of the expected changes to be evaluated**, since it is necessary to keep always present the pursued objectives.
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Source: [Peters and Rava, 2017](#)

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In addition, it is important to keep in mind the different political and institutional contexts, as well as the variations across LLL legal and policy frameworks affecting policy processes in different regions, to guarantee a better identification and comprehension of the characteristics of LLL policies. Regardless of the context, objectives and type of policies to be implemented and different models of policy-making processes, as the one explained here, are helpful tools to understand, visualize, and analyse the different factors explaining the final characteristics of policies, as well as the possible results that can be achieved.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **A national policy framework in Colombia**

Colombia provides a good example of integrating a lifelong learning perspective into a national public policy, in this case for ECCE. *De Cero a Siempre* (From Zero to Always) promotes the comprehensive development of children from birth until the age of six. The implementation of the policy follows an integrated approach, including the coordination of different sectors (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture, Colombian Family Welfare Institute) and stakeholders such as families, communities, civil society, academia, the private sector and NGOs. In addition, the policy involves territorial coordination at national, departmental and municipal levels.

Recognizing the role of families in the development of children, *De Cero a Siempre* has developed several strategies to change patterns and practices of child-raising through the provision of training for families. Through this programme, almost 11,000 tutors have been trained, who, in turn, have provided training to more than 150,710 families, improving care and child-raising capacities for girls and boys under the age of 6 years.

Another strategy includes the creation of reading rooms: cosy and friendly spaces designed to promote reading, literature and language development. Since 2013, over 300 of these freely accessible and inclusive spaces have been established in 145 municipalities in Colombia through public–private alliances.

Sources: [High Counselling for Special Programmes, Office of the President, Republic of Colombia, 2013 and 2018](#)

DRAFT



## **In your context: Designing effective LLL policies**

This chapter gives a brief introduction to policy-making to foreshadow a detailed exploration of key criteria for policy with a lifelong learning perspective. These criteria have been presented to show that, whether it assumes the form of a single, organizing document to place lifelong learning on the national agenda by establishing a collective discourse and series of priorities, or fragmented initiatives to address specific issues, policy is made more effective by adopting a lifelong learning perspective. You are now encouraged to make connections between the ambitious criteria featured here and the reality of policy-making in your national context; doing so will help you to identify areas of strength and weakness with regard to a lifelong learning perspective.

### ***Key points:***

- Lifelong learning should be integrated as a guiding principle in diverse policy documents from ministries, agencies or partners – each of which expresses the place of lifelong learning as part of their particular sector’s mandate.
- Therefore, policy development and practical implementation should not be understood as a linear process of making lifelong learning a reality, but rather as two dimensions that enrich and strengthen each other.
- Lifelong learning policy should meet the following criteria: overall vision, appropriate level, context sensitivity, evidence-based, political feasibility, participation and coordination, and resource mobilization.

### ***Questions for reflection:***

- ❖ Does your country have a national lifelong learning policy?
- ❖ Is lifelong learning embedded in specific policies of importance to your sector?
- ❖ To what extent do existing national policies reflect the criteria detailed in this chapter?

### ***Possible actions:***

It is recommended that you undertake a short, practical exercise to apply the information provided in this section of the chapter. The exercise involves a quick analysis of a single policy document to determine the presence of a lifelong learning perspective.

To do this, first find out whether your country, region or local government has a national lifelong learning policy and acquire a copy. Alternatively, find a recent flagship policy for your sector or sub-sector that could be considered as an LLL initiative. Go through the document and critically evaluate whether the following criteria are evident:

- Supported by a comprehensive vision;
- Aligned to local/ national contexts;
- Evidence-based;
- Politically feasible;
- Adequately funded.

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## Chapter 3 – Implementation of LLL policies

### Guiding questions

- Why it is necessary to develop an implementation strategy, and at what levels?
- What are the main factors to be considered in the design of an implementation strategy?
- How can an implementation strategy take into account formal, non-formal and/or informal learning opportunities?
- What role does ICT play in the implementation of LLL?
- How can the implementation of LLL support flexible learning pathways so that learners can transition into and between learning programmes, within and across different learning modalities?

The last two chapters introduced the concept of lifelong learning and described ways to identify potential opportunities to promote the adoption of national LLL agendas. This chapter will focus on the implementation of LLL policies, since the intersectoral approach, participatory planning and numerous types of expected outcomes may create a particularly complex environment. It will present a basic model to analyse and proceed with the policy-making process, and examine different LLL interventions to identify different factors for consideration in the design of implementation strategies.

### Translating policies into implementation strategies at different levels

[Chapter 2](#) introduced the Smart Policy Design and Implementation (SPDI) model as an evidence-based policy process applicable to lifelong learning. We have already seen how lifelong learning policies can be built around the identification of a policy problem (the first stage of the model), followed by a diagnosis of the problem's causes (second stage) and the design of feasible policy innovations to address the problem (third stage). Examples have primarily shown how this sequence can lead to national policies that have a lifelong learning perspective and are characterized by a number of key features. Such policies articulate priorities broadly enough to retain national relevance; however, for priorities to translate into practical and effective learning interventions, they need to be well implemented (the fourth and most complex stage of the SPDI model). Successful implementation relies in large part on a carefully formulated implementation strategy and,

later in this chapter, we will see how, for different forms of lifelong learning, an implementation strategy can be shaped by specific considerations. Nevertheless, it is important to first understand that strategies can target different levels of implementation, including but not limited to regions, cities, villages and institutions.

### **Learning cities**

While cities differ in their cultural composition, as well as in their social, political and economic structures, many characteristics of a learning city are common to all of them. Learning cities facilitate lifelong learning for all; they help to realize the universal right to education, promote education for sustainable development, establish flexible learning pathways and support skills development for employment. The learning cities concept is a people-centred and learning-focused approach, which provides a collaborative, action-oriented framework for working on the diverse challenges that cities increasingly face. Learning cities put people in the centre of development. They promote education and lifelong learning for all – and, with this, facilitate individual empowerment and social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity, and sustainability.

In 2012, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning brought the discourse on learning cities to the international level and established the [UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities \(GNLC\)](#). The UNESCO GNLC opened to membership application in 2016 and has now engaged more than 200 learning cities from all over the world. The network supports cities in developing holistic and integrated approaches to lifelong learning, recognizing the needs of all learners, enhancing access to learning for marginalized and vulnerable groups. It further promotes policy dialogue and peer learning among its members, fosters partnership, provides capacity-building, and develops instruments and resources to encourage and recognize progress in building learning cities. In 2015, the UNESCO GNLC published the *Guidelines for Building Learning Cities*, which contains a set of actionable recommendations in six areas that can be referred to at every stage of the process of becoming a learning city: planning, involvement, celebration, accessibility, monitoring and evaluation, and funding ([UIL, 2015a](#)).

### **Learning regions**

In addition, the concept of learning regions is closely associated with learning cities, as well as other city-oriented ideas that have received focus in recent years, such as resilient cities, sustainable cities, cities of opportunity and sanctuary cities ([Longworth, 2018](#)).

Learning regions can be defined as ‘a region, city, urban or rural area, regardless of whether its identity is defined in administrative, cultural, geographical, physical or political terms’ which must have ‘sufficient size to encompass and mobilize the key players for the purpose of developing lifelong learning as an important factor in promoting regional and local development, social cohesion and the fulfilment of personal potential and aspirations of its citizens’ ([European Commission, 2002, p. 7](#)). Within the European Union, learning regions have been endorsed as a way to develop regional networks for lifelong learning to promote active citizenship, economic growth, social inclusion and cultural diversity, to enhance the use of ICT, and provide better support services for communities. By moving beyond a single city, learning regions constitute a wider area in which lifelong learning opportunities are promoted to foster sustainable regional development and innovation. A learning region may in fact exist as a network of cities situated in close proximity to each other; in such cases, cities work together to identify areas in which more joined-up thinking and planning can benefit their inhabitants.

### **Learning villages**

A learning region can also include rural areas and, therefore, learning villages as well as learning cities. A learning village is a rural community in which learning is pursued both collectively and individually using a variety of methods. Just as learning cities are organized around the principle of sustainable transformation, learning villages strive for the sustainability of rural living by bringing together local people of all ages to develop skills and knowledge required to address local challenges, as well as providing opportunities for innovative transformation leading to more green jobs. Rural lifelong learning can therefore contribute the achievement of the SDGs at a sub-national level. There are also opportunities within learning villages for adults to undertake learning to improve their own situation, pursue an interest, increase their awareness of health issues or identify new ways of supporting their children’s learning. The principle of cross-sectoral collaboration applies to learning villages, with programmes delivered by providers working within the public, private and voluntary sectors, and programme flexibility is necessary for all members of the community to access lifelong learning opportunities alongside other commitments. Crucially, lifelong learning in rural communities should respond to the particular needs of rural populations (INRULED, 2015).

### **Learning institutions**

Lifelong learning acknowledges all learning spheres and spaces and, though it is a misconception that learning spaces and institutions are synonymous, institutions are

indeed organized spaces that provide many and varied learning experiences. Even spaces ordinarily classed as cultural institutions, such as museums, stimulate learning for diverse groups of visitors; museums, theatres, concert halls and other cultural spaces are, therefore, lifelong learning institutions. In the case of museums, organized learning activities have expanded in their scope so that they target adults of all ages, rather than maintaining a narrower focus on pupils and students, as may have traditionally been the case. As adult learners have more autonomy, they more consciously engage in the learning process and bring their rich life experiences to bear upon it. By catering to adults through an approach more oriented towards lifelong learning in exhibitions and activities, museums can promote opportunities for visitors to question, experiment and challenge their contents ([NEMO, 2008](#)).

Of course, educational institutions are also lifelong learning institutions, including early childhood centres, primary and secondary schools, community colleges, rural development institutes, universities, adult education centres, community learning centres and community libraries, among many others. Some are government-run, others are private non-profit or for-profit organizations, and there are institutions set up, run or to some extent supported by civil society organizations. Whether they specialize in formal education or offer non-formal learning programmes, educational institutions are important pillars of lifelong learning for wider society. To fulfil their role as such, they should widen access to maximize participation, respond to the needs of society and collaborate with other institutions.

Throughout the rest of the chapter, we will focus on how implementation strategies are integral to the translation of lifelong learning policies ([Chapter 2](#)) into interventions to improve the availability and quality of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Implementation strategies may variously address the levels detailed here, though some of the information provided will be specific to, for example, a particular type of institution or a certain mode of delivery; the purpose is to show how taking into consideration concrete learning activities strengthens a policy's implementation.

### **Designing an implementation strategy**

As we have seen, LLL initiatives can take many forms in order to respond to very different contexts, public problems and expected outcomes, and so effective implementation depends upon a well-devised strategy targeting the appropriate level(s). It also requires

the organization of permanent informed dialogues between stakeholders, including ministries of education, other national agencies, organizations active in the field of lifelong learning, local authorities, education and research institutes, enterprises, and community organizations.

An efficient collaboration during the implementation of LLL initiatives stems from a strategy that features a definition of responsibilities, identification of local capacities, and the opportune detection of potential alternatives, since shared policy objectives will be achieved through different interventions. Based on an overarching vision of LLL, it is necessary to design implementation strategies for each stakeholder, as each of them has different priorities. For instance, an education ministry may focus on expanding formal and non-formal education programmes to better distribute learning opportunities, while a labour or social welfare ministry may stress flexible learning pathways to improve employability of under-served communities. A ministry responsible for family affairs may design and implement programmes focused on supporting women's learning needs evolving over their life courses, while a health ministry will be concerned about how to promote preventive medicine or modify parenting practices.

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**General recommendations for implementation (adapted from [Odden, 1991](#))**

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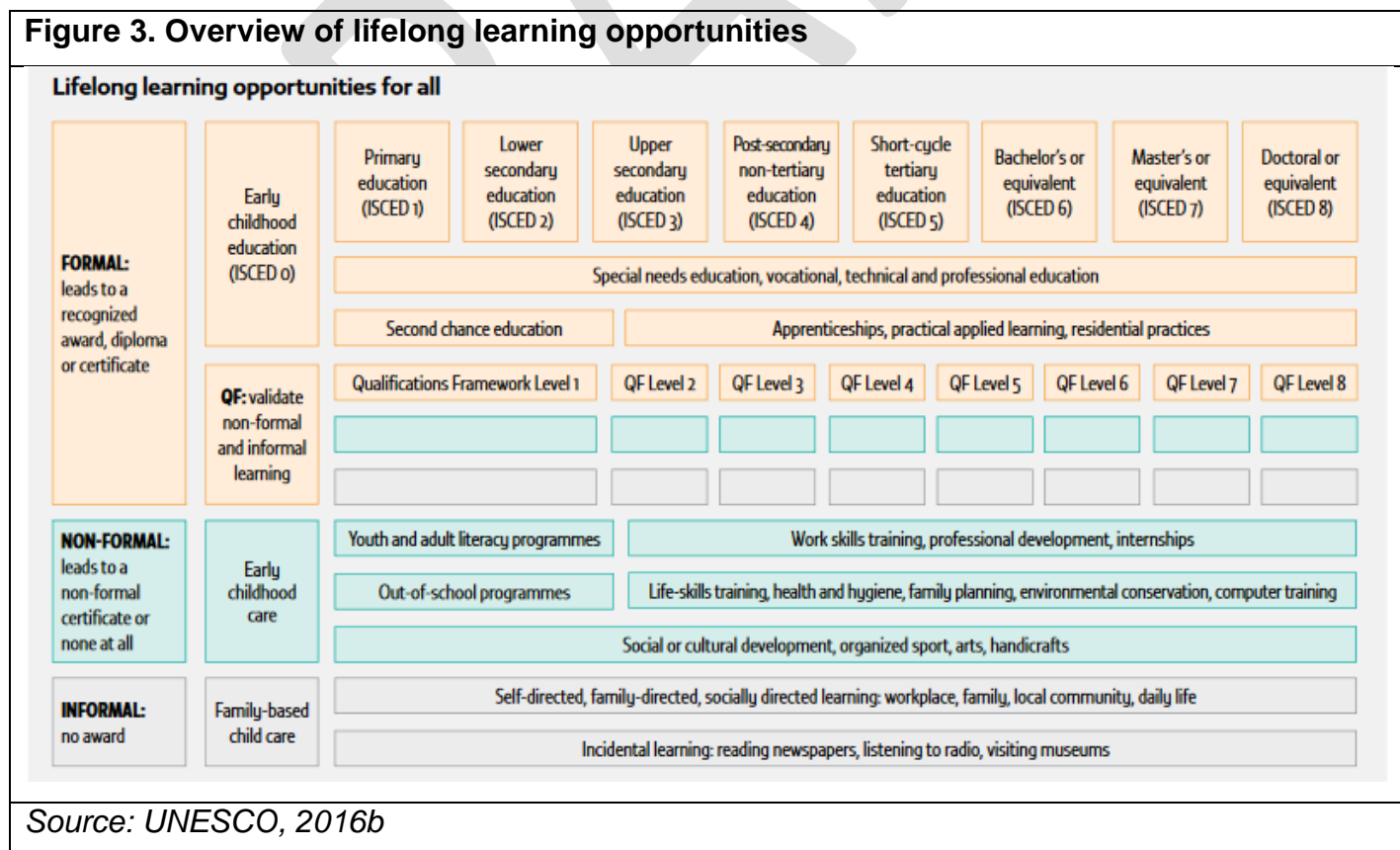
- a. Verify the alignment between available local capacities and demanded local capacities**, since this might be a possible source of conflict and delays in the implementation of the learning city model.
  - b. Define incentives for local practitioners**, since their collaboration is a key component for a successful implementation process.
  - c. Consider capacity-building activities at local level**: since the learning cities model is demanding, it is necessary to consider developing capacity among local practitioners to inform, raise awareness and increase effectiveness.
  - d. Promote a permanent collaboration across government levels**, since this will be a key component of effective adoption of a learning city model.
- 

With this complex picture in mind, adopting a common conceptual map to facilitate the comparison across different interventions may help to identify and design effective implementation strategies. LLL initiatives are usually based on formal, non-formal or informal modalities, although some initiatives may intentionally consider more than one modality, as in the case of the implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), or flexible learning pathways. It is important to remember that lifelong learning initiatives are not based exclusively in non-formal or informal modalities. A good example



is LLL initiatives enriching learning opportunities within ‘traditional’ educational institutions such as universities. Although these institutions are usually well established and oriented towards achieving specific learning outcomes, through a series of policy and institutional changes they can be transformed into learning institutions, increasing the number of policy options and interventions to create new lifelong learning opportunities in any country or region. In summary, it is important to consider the classification between formal, non-formal, and informal learning not as a rigid and prescriptive definition of any LLL initiative, but as a useful classification for analytical purposes, particularly to support the design of implementation strategies.

The model represented in **Figure 3** can be used to identify and classify different characteristics of LLL policies that may affect implementation. By showcasing a spectrum of learning across age groups, levels of education and learning modalities (found in different spheres and spaces), and for a variety of purposes, the model serves as a visual representation of the five essential elements to the UNESCO understanding of LLL introduced at the beginning of Chapter 1.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> All age groups, all levels of education, all learning modalities, all learning spheres and spaces, and a variety of purposes.



Looking over the model makes it possible to identify commonalities across programmes, potential interactions, complexity levels to be expected, potential stakeholders' engagement, as well as other factors possibly affecting the implementation process. For instance, differences in modality may determine the types of stakeholders involved in the implementation of LLL programmes (e.g. implementing formal education programmes in universities will be different than non-formal or informal learning programmes implemented in community learning centres). In a similar way, an early childhood programme aiming to improve parenting practices has a different learning purpose to a vocational learning programme, while learning purposes related to informal LLL initiatives (e. g. engaging in cultural activities in museums) will substantially vary compared to those defined for non-formal work skills programmes.

The model featured here, with its coverage of the five essential elements of LLL, may provide a starting point for the identification of both commonalities and specificities of lifelong learning opportunities – a vital step in designing any implementation strategy. However, it is also important to anticipate other factors that may arise as barriers and challenges. With this in mind, **Table 3** describes some additional factors to be considered during the design of implementation strategies. Although this is not an exhaustive list, these may exemplify the type of information, topics and analysis required to anticipate some of the conditions that may affect the implementation of LLL initiatives, and to inform decision processes demanding prompt responses.

<b>Table 3. General issues to be considered for implementation strategies</b>	
Learning goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity of goals</li> <li>• Balance between individual or social benefits</li> <li>• Existence of competing or complementing policies</li> <li>• Delivery methods selected</li> <li>• Complexity of measurements</li> </ul>
Delivery options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of delivery methods</li> <li>• Characteristics and variation of stakeholders</li> <li>• Competing policies and delivery methods</li> <li>• Acceptance of delivery method by government agencies, NGOs and universities or education institutions.</li> <li>• Differentiated perception of quality across delivery methods.</li> </ul>

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**Table 3. General issues to be considered for implementation strategies**

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Target populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clarity of target populations</li><li>• Process to define target populations</li><li>• Do programmes promote universal access policies?</li><li>• Are target populations defined by open call? Self-selection?</li><li>• Are target populations mostly under-served communities?</li></ul>
Expected effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Timing of expected effects (short or long term)</li><li>• Outcomes measurability</li><li>• Impact evaluation</li><li>• Clarity of expected benefits</li><li>• Balance between individual and social effects</li></ul>
Possible interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interactions with other policies and programmes</li><li>• Coordination with other agencies</li><li>• Effects of interactions (positive or negative)</li><li>• Influence of interactions in the redesign of policies</li><li>• Perception on the effects of interactions</li></ul>

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### **LLL initiatives through formal, non-formal and informal learning**

In this section, different LLL initiatives will be described around two modalities – formal and non-formal learning – to facilitate a classification of influencing factors and potential difficulties to be considered in the design, implementation and evaluation of LLL.

#### **LLL initiatives through formal learning**

The first learning modality is one to which policy-makers are commonly accustomed: formal learning or, more specifically, the formal education system. While this chapter (and the handbook as a whole) demonstrates that lifelong learning means a diversity of learning that goes beyond formal education, it does not overlook the opportunities provided by formal education. As the lifelong learning category often most familiar to policy-makers, it is a viable starting point before exploring other modalities. Though lifelong learning should not be limited to formal learning, traditional institutions such as schools and universities can diversify, adapt and broaden the scope of their activities to facilitate lifelong learning, as various examples here indicate.

## Schools

Before exploring some of the many ways in which schools can contribute to lifelong learning, it is important to consider the stage of learning which precedes it: early childhood care and education (ECCE). ECCE is diverse and refers to the incredibly rich learning experienced early on in life. It can denote programmes to educate and support parents and all types of pre-school activities, as well as initiatives centred on cognitive development and healthcare ([UNESCO, 2013](#)). When considering the implementation of lifelong learning, ECCE covers some of the earliest learning experiences an individual encounters.

Schools are uniquely positioned to support lifelong learning to the advantage of society, by widening access beyond traditional cohorts of children and youths. As the most recognizable educational institution, and with roots embedded in local communities around the world, schools can support LLL in different ways. For instance, as every wider school community includes the families of children who attend, schools can cater to the needs of local adults as well as children, by making their facilities available for adult learning and education. Traditionally, the use of schools' facilities is limited to mornings and afternoons in the working week. The same facilities – books, computers, learning spaces and sports equipment – are, in such cases, neglected during the evenings and weekends, when adults are most likely to have the time to take advantage. In addition, schools can inform and teach members of the family about issues related to health (e.g. nutrition or preventive care), finances (e.g. financial literacy) or personal safety (e.g. cyberbullying). Furthermore, as well as physically opening up, schools can enhance learning in the local community by broadening the objectives and target groups of their educational activities, particularly by supporting family literacy, citizenship education, or community engagement to develop learning communities.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **Basic education schools**

In Turkey, the Let the Schools Become Life project, run by the Ministry of Education General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, aims to transform schools into centres of lifelong learning by making their facilities accessible to parents and other members of the local community. This involves, in part, an extension of opening hours, for example making the school library and ICT facilities accessible into the evening, as well as

providing space for a range of vocational, cultural and social activities, such as sports events, music and language classes, and computer skills courses ([Karatas, 2015](#)).

In Contagem, Brazil, schools are also providing locals with access to school facilities, including libraries, halls and sports grounds ([UIL, 2017](#)). By opening up to the local community, schools are no longer places where parents drop off their children; rather, they become integral community institutions supporting the learning endeavours of children and adults alike.

In Hamburg, Germany, the Family Literacy Project (FLY) is an intergenerational family literacy programme that targets parents, children at pre-school, kindergarten and early primary school, as well as children with special learning needs. Many of the targeted are from socially disadvantaged communities. The project endeavours to develop the literacy skills of parents and their children. It also seeks to promote strong linkages between the kindergarten or school and home-based learning processes by supporting parents to carry out literacy activities at home and enabling them to help with their children's schoolwork, as well as training schoolteachers how to deal with and instruct children from diverse cultural backgrounds ([Hanemann, 2017](#)).

In Cork, Ireland, home/school/community-liaison teachers working for schools in disadvantaged areas have set up a family reading project called One Book, One Community, which involves the cost-free distribution of books to schoolchildren who are then asked to read the books with family members. Furthermore, a number of activities are arranged with the purpose of engaging both children and parents, including arts-and-crafts tasks and quizzes ([UIL, 2015](#)).

Sources: [Karatas, 2015](#); [UIL, 2017](#); [Hanemann, 2017](#); [UIL, 2015](#)

In addition, the use of ICT has become a more integrated feature of formal schooling and in many parts of the world is now employed to complement a variety of subjects, topics and learning projects, both in primary and secondary schools. PCs, laptops, tablets and smartphones are some of the most common forms of technology that have made their way into classrooms and the hands of a growing number of school pupils. Though these devices should not be seen as a replacement for trained practitioners, they can enrich learning when used for carefully planned activities, as shown by several examples

observed in the American Institute of Monterrey, Mexico. There, tablets have been used to create quizzes and virtual bulletin boards to quickly assess pupils' learning, to support cooperation in the creation of songs, drawings and stories, and to store educational materials including dictionaries and digital books. Tablets have also helped pupils to create photos and flashcards to aid their memorization of new learning ([UNESCO-IITE, 2014](#)).

### LLL in practice

#### ICTs at work in Uruguay

In Uruguay, Plan Ceibal (Educational Connectivity in Basic Computing for Online Learning) was first implemented in 2007. Its underlying principles trace back to the non-profit organization One Laptop per Child (OLPC) but have been adapted and developed by Uruguayan stakeholders to complement the national context. The plan has three main components: an **educational component** promoting innovation in education centres and classrooms with the guidance of a broadly defined education project published in 2007; a **social component** shaped by the principles of social inclusion and equity; and a **technological component** centred on increasing access to internet-connected laptops. For the technological component of the plan, Plan Ceibal freely supplies internet-ready laptops with wireless technology to students and teachers across Uruguay; the aim is to provide universal access. Now, all children enrolled in the public education system in Uruguay are equipped with a computer, and Plan Ceibal continues to offer educational programmes, resources and teacher training opportunities.

Implementation of the plan has been supported by a network of institutions, including the Presidency of the Republic. Plan Ceibal's subsequently successful implementation demonstrates the value of collaboration in providing opportunities for lifelong learning.

Source: [Plan Ceibal, 2019](#)

The use of ICT in schools can also enhance literacy and language learning, as seen in Beacon Primary School, Singapore, where digital storytelling was promoted as a new form of pedagogy. Through digital storytelling, pupils use ICT to create their own narratives by using a combination of images, text and sounds, including recordings of their voices. This process is applied in pupils' native languages as well as foreign languages ([UNESCO-IITE, 2014](#)). Additional benefits of ICT to foreign-language learning flow from the online availability of countless resources produced in the authentic context from which the

language originates. For almost any topic that might be taught, a language teacher can find supportive videos, audio clips and texts to share with pupils and use for activities, leading to greater familiarity with the target language and associated culture. These experiences can be facilitated by tablets and other personal devices or, more simply, by a teacher's laptop and an interactive whiteboard, television or other type of projector. School-based ICT can therefore develop from a base of only a few devices and is not immediately dependent on huge amounts of expensive equipment.

### **Higher education institutions**

Universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs), such as universities of applied science, polytechnics and technical institutes, have a distinct role in providing lifelong learning opportunities. While, traditionally, universities' mandates have been defined in terms of teaching and research, an increasing number of universities now recognized a third mission: to provide opportunities for continuing education, to collaborate with businesses and to engage with their local communities. Lifelong learning in the higher education sector should not be reduced to skills development to address the needs of changing labour markets and economies, but importantly it should, and often does, involve widening access to produce more equitable educational opportunities for all. While 20 years ago, higher education thought of a 'typical student' as someone between the ages of 18 and 25, nowadays HEIs increasingly reach out to so-called non-traditional learners such as working professionals, older people, people with low socio-economic status, migrants and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and those living in remote areas, among others. These changing target groups for higher education require the development of flexible, part-time and distance-study programmes, following pedagogical concepts which consider the work experiences and life situations of diverse groups of learners.

In addition, HEIs are called on to provide alternative pathways – the enabling of entry and re-entry points at all ages, strengthening of links between formal and non-formal structures and between vocational and academic-oriented education, and offering of mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning ([UNESCO, 2016d](#)). Procedures for the RVA of prior learning facilitates access for those who may lack conventional admission requirements or those who may want to re-enter higher education at a later stage in life. Special admissions, university entrance testing and preparatory programmes are further ways to widen access to higher education.

Access to higher education can also be enhanced through alternative university models such as 'free universities', which are built on egalitarian foundations and refer to institutions neither supported by nor affiliated with the state, open to the free attendance of anyone wishing to participate and learn ([Thompsett, 2017](#)). These institutions have been established in parts of North America and Europe, and are characterized by study plans with a more critical edge. Another model oriented towards widening access is that of the 'open university'. Inspired by the Open University UK, education in these institutions is provided through distance learning, leading to new opportunities and qualifications for people who might face obstacles in accessing a physical university location. 'Community universities', meanwhile, are founded by local people who want to access higher education but are currently unable to do so.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **Universities and LLL**

Challenging the convention that access to these higher education institutions must succeed secondary schooling, The Children's University develops programmes planned by academics to engage children in science learning through interactive workshops and tutorials in the afternoons and evenings, at weekends and during holidays.

Moving to the other end of the age spectrum, academic staff working within university faculties specializing in adult education in Thailand during the 1990s began to advocate for new learning opportunities for older people. With approval from the Ministry of Education, some of these academics formed consultative taskforces for the development of Active Aging Learning Centres (AALCs). These centres are now some of the most prominent settings in which older people learn in Thailand and, in addition, have become local community centres that support social interaction. Similarly, Universities of the Third Age, which originated in France during the 1970s, provide social spaces where older people can strengthen existing knowledge and access new learning.

These examples demonstrate how staff working within higher education institutions can utilize their academic expertise to identify the needs of young and old target groups and support the development of new institutions and programmes to address those needs.

Sources: [Gary and Dworsky, 2013](#); [Wang, 2017](#); [Formosa, 2014](#)



Open universities benefit greatly from the potential of ICT for lifelong learning, enabling them to make a range of formal education courses available to learners through distance and online learning. The Open University UK is the original and perhaps the most famous educational organization founded on the concept of distance learning. Its modus operandi is 'supported open learning', which has four basic principles: 'flexible' means that students can study whenever and wherever, alongside other commitments; 'all-inclusive' refers to the availability of high-quality resources for all; 'supportive' describes the capacity of personal tutors to teach and provide feedback; and 'social' in part denotes online study networks for students. Most of its undergraduate courses have no formal entry requirements, although an undergraduate degree is required for postgraduate courses. Learners must pay fees to enrol onto courses. The Open University has also launched an online learning platform with a variety of interactive materials freely accessible to everyone, including non-students ([The Open University, 2019](#)).

For universities and other HEIs to become lifelong learning institutions, fundamental transformations are needed, both at institutional level and in terms of policy frameworks and support. During the past 15 years, several international and regional frameworks and recommendations have been developed which emphasize the important role of universities in promoting lifelong learning and outline major areas for transformation. Examples of these are the *European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning* ([European University Association, 2008](#)), which called on universities to make 10 clear commitments to lifelong learning and recommended concerted action from governments in providing the appropriate legal and financial frameworks to promote lifelong learning widely. A year later, the 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education stressed the role of higher education in lifelong learning and stated 'the knowledge society needs diversity in higher education systems [...] promoting research for the development and use of new technologies and ensuring the provision of technical and vocational training, entrepreneurship education and programmes for lifelong learning' ([UNESCO, 2009](#)). And, in 2015, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically SDG 4, further emphasized the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, advocating that all women and men should have access to affordable and high-quality tertiary education, including university ([United Nations, 2015](#)).

The process of applying and implementing the principles of lifelong learning within higher education institutions can be divided into three main stages: adaptation, the organizational stage and the cultural stage ([European University Association, 2008](#)). The adaptation stage takes place when a university has recently adopted a LLL strategy but not yet developed a comprehensive understanding of what lifelong learning entails. LLL is then often equated with continuing education operating on the sidelines of regular university activities. At the organizational stage, universities have an LLL strategy in place, which is often based on a long experience in continuing education, but goes further beyond it. Official internal documents and strategic plans of the university refer to its LLL strategy. Finally, at the cultural stage, universities have adopted a new way of thinking about education; there is a new institutional culture where all education offered by the university is viewed as contributing to lifelong learning. This also means a broad buy-in of LLL across the whole institution, importantly putting the learners – whoever they are – at the centre of the strategy. At the cultural stage, universities actively engage in research on lifelong learning and provide lifelong learning opportunities to their staff. Through adopting and implementing a lifelong learning strategy, universities are expected to realize their fundamental missions – teaching, research, and service to society.

### **Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions**

UNESCO's 2015 *Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training* ([UNESCO, 2016c](#)) reconceptualises TVET in the context of lifelong learning and sustainable development.

TVET, as part of lifelong learning, can take place at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels and includes work-based learning and continuing training and professional development which may lead to qualifications. TVET also includes a wide range of skills development opportunities attuned to national and local contexts.

Learning to learn, the development of literacy and numeracy skills, transversal skills and citizenship skills are integral components of TVET ([ibid., p. 5](#)).

Because TVET is found at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels of education, it is often provided in formal schools and universities; in addition to schools and universities, there are formal learning institutions that specialise only in TVET. The range of TVET providers varies from country to country. For example, Australia's National Centre for Vocational Education Research ([NCVER, 2013](#)) points to how, in that national context,

‘VET providers comprise the state and territory TAFE [technical and further education] systems, adult and community education providers, agricultural colleges, the VET operations of some universities, schools, private providers, community organisations, industry skill centres, and commercial and enterprise training providers.’

With so many providers, TVET tends to fall under the jurisdiction of multiple ministries. In Egypt – where TVET is provided by secondary schools, universities, middle technical institutes (two-year courses) and higher technical institutions (four-year courses) – the Ministry of Education oversees technical and vocational schools, while the Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for middle technical institutes ([UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012](#)). In Nigeria, TVET is overseen by the Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity, though there is also a bespoke organizing authority for TVET: the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) coordinates all TVET institutions in the country ([UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2019](#)). Given the diversity of institutions in every national context, the establishment of a coordinating body can improve the consistency of learners’ and workers’ experiences, and so a cross-sectoral model of governance (see [Chapter 1](#)) is highly relevant to TVET.

### Implementation strategies for LLL interventions based on formal education systems

Elementary, secondary and tertiary level institutions can be actively engaged in the design and implementation and adoption of new LLL initiatives, largely for three reasons: availability of facilities, existent networks (parents and extended families), and their capacities to adapt relevant instructional programmes to support under-served populations (adapted and expanded academic programmes). However, beyond these connections and opportunities, there are several considerations to take into account in the design and implementation of LLL initiatives in formal education institutions; some of these considerations are included in **Table 4**.

**Table 4. Issues to be considered for implementation strategies – formal education**

Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential increases in school expenditure as a result of additional use of facilities, and who will pay;</li> <li>• Stakeholders responsible for modifying the school’s governance model to monitor the use of facilities (e.g. PTAs or school boards);</li> <li>• Possibilities of other schools’ involvement and how this might be coordinated;</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking support from the ministry of education/ school district;</li> <li>• Acquiring parental approval for the use of school facilities by external learners, particularly if parents contribute to the school budget.</li> </ul>
Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying stakeholders responsible for engaging parents and families;</li> <li>• Initiatives to prevent the exclusion of parents and families most in need, perhaps through the implementation of subsidiary policies;</li> <li>• Mitigating potential conflict with local or community organizations;</li> <li>• Securing the sustainability of these policies, considering sources of support and perhaps criticism.</li> </ul>
Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support of local schoolteachers for the pursuit of additional learning outcomes associated with LLL activities;</li> <li>• Stakeholders responsible for determining the content of new programmes, such as head teachers, local communities and school boards;</li> <li>• Relevance of LLL activities and their alignment with parental needs;</li> <li>• Measurement of results and recognition of schools' achievements.</li> </ul>

**Table 4** is a reminder of how the engagement of local schools and other educational institutions is a condition to be encouraged by local authorities and education ministries – that implementation of this type of initiative demands not just a simple redefinition of goals, but an institutional alignment. As the table suggests, benefits associated with these policies will likely exceed potential costs. However, it is important that, beyond the desirability surrounding these policies, implementation strategies address different concerns and questions regarding conditions and factors that may affect how an LLL initiative is implemented and, therefore, how potential barriers or problems may be anticipated.

### LLL initiatives through non-formal and informal learning

Non-formal learning often – though by no means exclusively – occurs in what may be termed ‘non-formal learning institutions’. Such institutions vary more in their structures than those where formal learning takes place. While variety has led some to question, and occasionally criticize, the quality and consistency of these institutions’ curricula, teachers/ facilitators and learning outcomes, processes are being developed in many places to better regulate non-formal learning. Flexibility, however, is more of an attribute than a flaw: non-formal learning institutions’ sizes, locations and activities are more adaptable and, as

subsequent examples will show, they can be organized by the community itself in order to fill a perceived gap. When established with such a purpose, they are often effective at responding promptly to local needs. There are some common – if loosely defined – types of non-formal learning institutions; they will be described prior to an overview of some small-scale, community-based initiatives characterized by non-formal and informal learning.

### **Community learning centres**

The idea of the community learning centre (CLC) already has a rich history in many parts of the world. Particularly in Asia, CLCs have long served as focal points of learning activities but have more recently begun to embrace the concept of lifelong learning and embed its principles into everyday activities. Depending on the country or sub-national region, CLCs are set up and administered by bodies representing different sectors and consequently have a variety of funding structures, programme types and target groups. Increasing numbers of CLCs are now exploring ways of ensuring the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of their learning activities, so that participants gain access to new pathways between and within both the formal and non-formal sub-sectors.

CLCs exist and are important to implement lifelong learning both in urban and rural contexts but, in a rural context, where access to educational opportunities is limited, CLCs are of particular relevance. In Myanmar, for example, the relative flexibility of CLCs' curricula has allowed for the adaptation of opportunities to agricultural workers' needs by providing farmers with relevant knowledge and skills ([Ai Tam Pham Li, 2018](#)). In Bangladesh, the main focus of CLCs' activities is establishing a connection between literacy learning and skills training for youth and adults, with the objective of supporting sustainable local development. Activities therefore cover themes of income generation and basic literacy, as well as health, sanitation and early childhood care, and social events are organized for the promotion of literacy skills, such as the publication of local magazines, theatre shows and writing competitions. Various NGOs have contributed to CLC development: *ganokendra* ('people's centres' in Bengali) have been overseen by the Dhaka Ahsania Mission and BRAC – the largest NGO working in the field of development in the world – since the 1990s; CLCs were then opened in the northern part of Bangladesh by Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) and the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) during the 2000s ([UIL, 2015b](#)).

Community learning centres can be found all around the globe. In Germany, *Volkshochschulen* (VHS) are adult learning centres founded on principles of liberal education and offering a range of programmes, including languages, general education and cultural learning. In addition, these centres increasingly provide vocational courses ([EAEA, 2011](#)). Though all Volkshochschulen are overseen by the German Adult Education Association (DVV), they assume different structures and sizes as well as levels of activity and authority, depending on the state or municipality in which they operate, with over 900 schools across Germany. In the same way as CLCs, they are positioned as institutions that bring local people together to learn and, though there are course fees for participants, costs are kept relatively low to try and maximize participation and support the interaction and shared experiences of people from different social backgrounds ([Wulff, 2011](#)).

A similar system is in place in Denmark, where *Folkehøjskole* provide adults with non-formal educational opportunities in academic subjects, such as religion and philosophy, as well as creative courses in arts, music and more. As in Germany, there is an effort to minimize costs, and some courses include accommodation for participants.

Volkshochschulen, Folkehøjskole, CLCs and other, similarly community-based institutions of non-formal learning can respond effectively to the needs of local people, as long as they are well supported and organized.

Because CLCs are so diverse, ensuring educators are able to provide a consistently high quality of learning constitutes a major challenge. With this in mind, there have been attempts in recent years to create curricula for educators working in non-formal education.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **The training of adult educators**

While there tend to be well-established teacher training programmes in formal education, the training of non-formal or adult educators has traditionally been less systematic. With such a diversity of non-formal learning programmes and institutions, a standardized approach is problematic; nevertheless, high-quality learning opportunities rely on skilled and knowledgeable professionals, and so there are attempts to raise teacher standards in non-formal as well as formal education.

Curriculum globALE is one such attempt. It was developed by DVV International, DVV's institute for international cooperation, in cooperation with the German Institute for Adult



Education Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning and is built on three general principles: competency orientation; action orientation and participant orientation; and sustainability of learning. Curriculum globALE provides an introductory module, five thematic core modules (approaching adult education; adult learning and adult teaching; communication and group dynamics in adult education; methods of adult education; and planning, organization and evaluation) and between one and three elective modules. The introductory module and the five thematic core modules touch upon the relevant topics and key facets of the professionalization process. The order of completing the modules is not fixed (apart from starting with the introductory module). There are some issues that are cross-cutting: gender sensitive approach, sustainable development and climate change, and humanistic and democratic values. With regard to the learning formats, taught sequences, individual self-study and practical work alternate for the participants to ensure a strong linkage between theory and practice, knowledge and doing.

Source: [DVV International, 2020](#)

## **Local learning communities**

### ***Learning neighbourhoods***

Agenda-shaping, self-organized learning communities are found in Cork, Ireland, where the Learning Neighbourhoods project extends the learning city concept to local neighbourhood level. Included in associated programmes are activities such as promotional awareness-raising for learning opportunities, the development of new learning projects, and support and guidance for the sustainability of learning in the neighbourhood. The whole Learning Neighbourhoods endeavour is rooted in grassroots activity, collaboration and local engagement and consultation, promoted by 'neighbourhood workshops', so that there is a sense of community ownership of lifelong learning ([O'Sullivan and Kenny, 2016](#)).

### ***Study circles***

The study circle is another example of a learning community in action; often hosted by a community centre, it embodies principles of lifelong learning. A study circle is a small collective of individuals who regularly meet to debate or discuss an issue of relevance to their community. Rather than organizing around a hobby or activity, as a club might, a



study circle organizes around a problem, opportunity or issue that they wish to understand and engage with for the benefit of the local area. The idea is rooted in a democratic understanding of self-directed learning and has long been associated with social movements. Study circles are increasingly recognized as a means of organizing lifelong learning within a locality, and feature in a growing number of policies formulated by governments, international bodies and civil society organizations. Founded on the principle of voluntary participation, they constitute one of the most fundamental, locally based forms of community-oriented learning. As such, they may contribute to civic education in the community or support projects to improve local infrastructure ([Duke and Hinzen, 2020](#)).

### **LLL in practice**

#### **Study circles in the Republic of Korea**

Two cases of study circles in the Republic of Korea show how this small-scale form of lifelong learning implementation may meet different learning needs. The first is taken from Uijeongbu City, where the Uijeongbu Mom Sam Atelier learning club brings together mothers who want to learn more about good parenting. It was formed in 2006 and pursues 'pleasurable childcare and happy education' by organizing social activities and fostering a culture of community learning. As part of the Uijeongbu Lifelong Learning Exhibition, the group organizes a family play camp, which involves games as well as lectures on parental mentoring. The group also reaches out to the community and voluntarily services including cooking and childcare ([Yoon, 2020](#)).

In Osan City, a study circle has been established to support those with low levels of literacy skills. The Osan City Literacy Workshop aims to help people from this target group become passionate about learning by providing them with experiential learning opportunities. The principles of lifelong learning are reflected in the workshop's recruitment of participants: those who benefit range in age from their thirties to their sixties and come from different backgrounds. Organizers of the study circle bring their practices and experiences to the National Literacy Teacher Conference each year, as well as collaborating with adult literacy instructors in other cities to share effective methods ([Moon, 2020](#)).

Sources: [Yoon, 2020](#); [Moon, 2020](#)

### ***Family learning***

Reducing the organization of learning to a unit smaller than the study circle, the 'learning family' exists at an even more local level. This concept is centred on intergenerational communication and is, therefore, complementary to lifelong learning. It recognizes that learning-focused interaction between members of the same family or community can support the development of life skills, particularly literacy ([Hanemann, 2015](#)). The example of the learning family – in addition to the learning neighbourhood and study circle – shows that lifelong learning does not only stem from the policies and strategies of local governments but is also cultivated at the micro level amongst small groups of individuals.

### **ICT for non-formal and informal learning**

Non-formal learning is an ideal modality for the creative use of ICT for lifelong learning. In response to the work-related, economic needs of individuals and local communities, ICT can support the delivery of non-formal TVET. This is the case for the CommUniversity initiative developed by the University of Technology in Jamaica (UTech). Over recent decades, UTech has developed into a leading technological university in the Caribbean region and offers formal programmes for TVET learners. In addition, it has developed an outreach initiative to support non-formal TVET with a community-based approach: CommUniversity establishes and maintains networks between the university and the community through partnerships with organizations belonging both to public and private sectors ([Latchem, 2017](#)). Target groups have included mainly unemployed adults and youths considered 'at risk', with programmes emphasizing community ownership by participants themselves determining which vocational skills they wish to develop, as well as the technical expertise of core team members involved in the initiative. Planning sessions have invited the involvement of community representatives in an attempt to maximize the relevance of programmes to local participants ([Bartley-Bryan, 2013](#)).

Furthermore, adult literacy and basic education programmes have used different technologies for decades to support ALE. These include radio, television and audio and video cassettes. More recently, digital ICT such as computers, tablets, e-readers and smartphones have spread at great speed and also found their way into the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy skills. The large spectrum of ICT, which can be applied to different contexts, includes satellite systems, network hardware and software as well as video-conferencing and electronic mail. Each one of these technologies opens up new

possibilities to develop literacy skills from the safety of one's home and offers virtually unrestricted access to learning materials.

[Advancing Mobile Literacy Learning \(AMLL\)](#) is a recent UNESCO project funded by the Microsoft Corporation and developed collaboratively by UIL and the UNESCO field offices in Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia and Mexico. It focused on digital learning strategies for teaching and learning by bringing together technology and non-formal curricula to respond to needs specific to each context. In Egypt, the project capitalized on the Al Mar'ah Wal Hayah (woman and life) curriculum, which is designed to help women and girls develop both literacy and life skills in the areas of communication, health, and community participation. As part of the project, a literacy- and numeracy-supporting app was created to complement the already established curriculum, with positive outcomes: participants reported that the app increased their capacity for independent learning ([UIL, 2019](#)).

In Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, the Talking Book project, led by the NGO Literacy Bridge, has been implemented among communities of farmers and focuses on the provision of low-cost, programmable audio-computers. These computers are designed to be simple to use and contain over 100 hours of audio content, including instructions, interviews, stories and songs that share knowledge about agricultural productivity, and pass on tips for healthy livelihoods, all expressed in a locally and linguistically adaptable and engaging way. The devices are powered by long-lasting batteries and feature indentations to guide visually impaired users. Importantly, the whole Talking Book concept is underpinned by the idea that content must be relevant to users' lives and must respond to their needs ([UNESCO and Pearson, 2018](#)).

ICT-based non-formal educational programmes can also address emerging issues and respond to demographic change. In Spain, senior educational programmes were developed in the computer classrooms of Active Participation Centres. An initial block of activities focused on content related to smartphones and were carried out in small groups, pairs and individuals, whereby participants had to, for example, take a photograph and send it via Bluetooth to a colleague. They also learned to use applications to contact and communicate with others free of charge. The second block consisted of the use of credit cards, bank operations and purchases over the internet, and the final block focused on computer-related activities, including basic computer use, file organization, word processing and internet navigation. Research on the impact of this programme and others

shows great satisfaction among participants, who report the usefulness of learning new technologies. Older people indicated that participation helped them maintain their mental activity, believing it to be a means of social participation and lifelong learning ([Diaz-Lopez et al., 2016](#)).

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are another example of non-formal learning. MOOCs are intended to accommodate unlimited participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as filmed lectures, readings and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive courses with user forums to support community interactions among students, professors and teaching assistants, as well as immediate feedback to quick quizzes and assignments. MOOCs are a recent and widely researched development in distance education. They were first introduced in 2006 and emerged as a popular mode of learning in 2012. Early MOOCs often emphasized open-access features, such as the open licensing of content, structure and learning goals, and promoted the re-use and remixing of resources. Some later MOOCs used closed licenses for their course materials while maintaining free access for students. MOOCs can address issues that have a direct impact on learners' lives. For example, the University of the South Pacific offered a MOOC on the significance of climate change for Pacific Islands (<http://www.uspmoocpacc.org/>). There are, however, limitations to MOOCs, including low retention and completion rates. Furthermore, with the growing tendency of providers to charge fees, the idea of extending free learning opportunities to large numbers of learners – the original *raison d'être* of the MOOC – has been compromised. Attention has recently shifted somewhat towards the small private online course (SPOC), which has been regarded by some institutions as a more manageable alternative to the MOOC ([Symonds, 2019](#)).

As the increasing ubiquity of technology encourages more and more people to make regular use of technological devices, ICT shapes informal, everyday learning in constantly expanding ways. Popular ICT-based informal learning includes podcasts and online encyclopaedias, which offer new ways of accessing information and knowledge. Mobile technology is also stretching understandings of literacy in informal contexts. For example, in a fishing community along the West Coast of South Africa, where fishers have low educational levels, a special mobile telephone app is being used to facilitate communication with buyers about the 'fish of the day'. Fishers are also using the app to gather scientific data to monitor the movement of fish populations.

ICT for informal learning may also include technological developments that support TVET in the informal labour market, which covers casual, temporary and unpaid work in addition to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Collectively, these forms of work constitute up to 95 per cent of all labour. ICT provides a medium through which those wishing to start, or already running, MSMEs can learn about good business practices. One example of this is the [SME Toolkit](#), provided by the International Finance Corporation and IBM, which is home to a wealth of information, resources and tools to boost productivity and efficiency. By March 2015, it was used by 6 million users annually and offered content in 16 languages ([Latchem, 2017](#)).

For refugees who have been forced into ever-changing, uncertain circumstances, ICT in the form of mobile technology carries invaluable advantages due to its portability: it can accompany refugees as they transition between locations and, in the process, provide them with opportunities for informal learning. Mobile technology supports refugees' development of basic skills, including literacy, by providing access to a wealth of digital resources in situations where the transportation of printed materials is not feasible. Worldreader – an international NGO – collaborated with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) Innovation Service to make 30,000 books available on e-readers shared with 2,300 refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania, including textbooks and stories by international and local writers. At the same time, teachers working in these refugee camps were trained to take advantage of the e-readers in their lessons.

Another benefit is seen in the capacity of mobile devices to support refugees in learning the language of their host country. For example, Duolingo, which is a language-learning application popular around the world, now offers English, German, French, Spanish and Swedish courses for [Arabic-speaking refugees](#), an initiative launched during the Syrian crisis. ICT can therefore make a life-changing impact to refugees' experiences by facilitating both their literacy and language development despite insecure living conditions ([UNESCO, 2018c](#)).

ICT can also support refugees in dealing with the psychological impact of their experiences by helping them to process traumatic events and enabling their expression of identity. Ideas Boxes are portable multimedia centres that contain a multitude of digital and non-digital resources and serve as a safe space where refugees can receive guidance in

articulating trauma through images to reach a more positive self-image. In Palestinian refugee camps, the Voices Beyond Walls programme, aimed at marginalized youth, was a digital storytelling project that saw young refugees produce story-driven video clips centred on their own perspectives and aspirations. An evaluation of the project found that a sense of shared identity and recognition resulted from the creativity and engagement promoted by the project (ibid.). As we can see through all of these projects, ICT – and, more specifically, mobile technology – is often a lifeline for refugees when it comes to informally learning basic skills and forms of self-expression.

### ***Open educational resources (OERs)***

[Open educational resources](#) (OERs) are defined by UNESCO as ‘teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions’. They are a form of technology-enhanced learning which can mitigate the attendance requirements of full-time study at universities by allowing people to follow a formal course while working; enables easier delivery of materials from lecturers to students and vice versa; and connects learners to people and resources that can support their educational needs online.

Technology helps colleges and universities to extend their traditional campus-based services to distant (off-campus) and online modes and has formed the basis of distance education for many years. A common approach is ‘blended learning’, whereby physical attendance and online learning complement each other, increasing the number of learning opportunities available to different communities.

The Vision for a Health OER Network in Africa is an OER featuring materials for health education. It was established by health experts and, through this digital resource, institutions working in the field of health science in Africa can upload various materials, which support health professionals, students and educators in their learning, thus helping practitioners and researchers advance their knowledge (Hezekiah University, 2018). Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands has developed an OER similarly aimed at health-related education but with a focus on sanitation and clean water: through this OER, courses on clean water technology have been implemented, targeted at developing countries, and subsequently updated with context-specific information on water treatment by universities across Indonesia, South Africa, Singapore and the Antilles (ibid., 2018).



OERs make an important contribution to opening up lifelong learning opportunities: they enable people of all ages to access tools to enrich their lives and find out more about the world ([UNESCO, 2019](#)).

## **Libraries**

For centuries, libraries have existed as hubs of local and lifelong learning, providing equal and free access to materials and literacy services to all age groups. In addition to and in cooperation with local museums, they preserve and provide access to local and the world's culture and heritage. They also advance digital inclusion through shared and cost-effective access to information and communication technologies. Libraries are part of a local community's social fabric, they are meeting places that forge connections between people, and they are institutions integral to the promotion of lifelong learning ([Field and Tran, 2018](#)).

The community library is an alternative library model that has been mobilized, without public funding, in marginalized areas. It is best described as local people establishing their own libraries to serve the community. More often than not, community libraries are small institutions that aim to respond to the specific needs of the people who might use them and can particularly benefit marginalized groups. By welcoming people of all literacy abilities through relevant materials and outreach activities, they improve people's quality of life while protecting local, indigenous knowledge. Whether organized by a community group, church or school, community libraries all prioritize the needs of local people, meaning that no two community libraries are exactly the same ([Shrestha and Krolak, 2015](#)).

### **LLL in practice**

#### **Rural and prison libraries**

In the United Republic of Tanzania, rural community libraries have received renewed support. Many of these institutions, established in the 1970s, fell into neglect over subsequent decades, but are now receiving more attention as part of a national initiative to promote adult literacy. In addition to mobile libraries, community libraries are playing a role in the national Yes, I Can campaign, which originated in Latin America before being rolled out across the United Republic of Tanzania and into rural areas. Yes, I Can sees the delivery of pre-recorded literacy lessons through mass media, with accompanying teaching materials and textbooks; rural libraries can

support learners by housing these resources and holding classes. Similar campaigns have been implemented in Timor-Leste and Aboriginal Australia, enabling lifelong learning for rural populations with low levels of literacy.

In prisons, libraries provide spaces for people to engage in lifelong learning; activities include reading, participating in organized activities, borrowing books and other resources, and carrying out research. Ultimately, the prison library is an environment conducive to literacy and, so, over the often-long periods of time at their disposal, prisoners can advance their literacy skills. Commonly, there are efforts in prison libraries to target activities and resources at prisoners who have low levels of literacy or are from non-native language backgrounds. By promoting a culture of reading and learning, prison libraries provide opportunities to people typically with low levels of education to become lifelong learners.

An example can be found in Bastøy prison, a minimum-security prison in Norway, whose library allows prisoners to borrow books from any library in the country. In Norway, prison libraries are branches of local public libraries and therefore are professionally organized. In addition, inmates at Bastøy prison have limited access to online educational resources as part of the prison's educational programmes. Bastøy prison is designed to prepare inmates for everyday life outside of prison, and the prison library works towards this principle. Before being incarcerated, many prisoners will never have used a public library before. It is therefore the desire of the prison librarian to show inmates how to use a library so that they can continue to take advantage of this public service once they are released.

Source: [UIL, 2018](#); [Boughton and Durnan, 2014](#); [Krolak, 2019](#); [Bolt and Ra, 2018](#)

## **Implementation strategies for LLL interventions based on non-formal and informal learning**

Non-formal and informal learning interventions represent additional opportunities to reach under-served communities, to promote relevant learning outcomes, and organise flexible and efficient programmes. These three expected outcomes enable improvement in access to learning opportunities for under-served populations, although the interventions' flexibility may present particular challenges to be taken into account in the definition of



implementation strategies. As in the preceding section, some of these considerations are included in **Table 5**, to point out the context that influences the decision process regarding potential costs and necessary institutional adaptations to support these types of policies and interventions.

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**Table 5. Issues to be considered for implementation strategies – non-formal and informal learning**

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Under-served populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining which communities to support;</li> <li>• Expected contributions from beneficiaries and accountability for these contributions;</li> <li>• Bringing current users of libraries or community centres on board with the inclusion of different communities and the adoption of a new orientation;</li> <li>• Generating enthusiasm among under-served communities for new programmes;</li> <li>• Engaging these communities in decision-making and planning.</li> </ul>
Relevant learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders responsible for defining learning outcomes for different programmes;</li> <li>• Stakeholders responsible for designing learning activities, the potential involvement of external experts, and the need to consider associated costs;</li> <li>• Gauging demand for defined learning outcomes and potentially involving local businesses in planning;</li> <li>• Measurement of results, attribution of credit for learning achievements and the role of an academic credits system;</li> <li>• Guaranteeing the relevance of learning opportunities to local communities.</li> </ul>
Flexible and efficient programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential need for additional funding as a result of including new communities – identifying who will pay;</li> <li>• Securing the sustainability of these policies, considering sources of support and perhaps criticism;</li> <li>• Processes for the selection and enrolment of participants;</li> <li>• Necessity of hiring new personnel;</li> <li>• Availability of other programmes in the region that aim to support the same populations, and the advantages of cross-agency collaboration in the implementation of new programmes (including local governments).</li> </ul>

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## Flexible learning pathways

Since LLL includes a wide variety of learning opportunities, it is important to acknowledge policy options that may represent more than one modality – any combination of formal, non-formal or informal learning. This is the case for interventions aimed to promote flexibility to engage learners on different learning options, as in the case of flexible learning pathways, implemented to enable learners to transition into and between learning programmes within and across different learning modalities.

Learning pathways denote the ways in which we navigate and sequence our learning, skills development, education and training to attain competency towards a qualification or part-qualification within an occupational or academic context ([Lotz-Sisitka and Ramsarup, 2017](#)). These pathways are numerous, multifaceted and inherently unique to each individual. Enabling a seamless learning pathway is complex and dependent upon a number of systems, including schooling, career guidance, post-school opportunities, training opportunities, workplace learning and work experience, as well as the formal system of skills provisioning. Most people's learning pathways are not straightforward.

At the policy level, flexible learning pathways also refer to the possibilities that learners have to transition between different stages and programmes of formal and non-formal learning, while acknowledging the importance of informal learning. Moreover, they exemplify the growing complexity of the learning landscape as education providers shift from highly demanding (both in terms of time and resources) credentials and certifications to macro-degrees and micro-credentials that enable the development of field-specific skills in a lifelong learning perspective.

The lifelong learning approach to education incorporates multiple and flexible learning pathways, entry and re-entry points at all ages, and strengthened links between formal and non-formal structures, including accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning ([UNESCO, 2016d](#)). These holistic systems should be made up of various 'building blocks' that meet the needs of different learner groups, including the most disadvantaged, and are essential for the operationalization of lifelong learning.

Learning pathways rely on 'articulation', which assumes 'vertical', 'horizontal' and 'diagonal' forms within an education system; this can be visualized in national qualifications frameworks and, if applicable, between associated sub-frameworks. Articulation is an essential principle for an integrated system ('articulation' is the set of actual connections between different learning pathways at the horizontal level, and the vertical transitions from one level to the next; [Hoppers, \(2009\)](#)). These are the 'bridges' and 'ladders' that allow people to move through the system in accordance with their (changing) circumstances and needs. Central to a unifying definition of articulation is the recognition of systemic and specific articulation. Systemic articulation involves the joined-up systems incorporating qualifications, professional designations and other elements central to work and learning pathways. This must be understood within a historically and geographically specific context, including the material conditions and power relations at play. Systemic articulation involves joined-up qualifications and/or professional development.

Through flexible learning pathways, links between formal and non-formal learning are intentionally promoted to ensure openness and flexibility, for example through second-chance schooling, equivalency programmes and alternative learning pathways. Regional and national qualifications frameworks, by constituting a levels-based articulation of learning qualifications that should include formal, non-formal and informal learning, can support flexible learning pathways. Furthermore, integral to flexible learning pathways is the RVA of non-formal and informal learning outcomes; lifelong learning policies and plans should include RVA mechanisms. Supported by RVA and NQFs, among other policy initiatives, flexible learning pathways lie at the heart of lifelong learning: by facilitating the interconnectedness of initiatives across formal, non-formal and informal learning modalities, they make learning systems more comprehensive, so that they are better able to meet the needs of learners.

### **Regional and national qualifications frameworks**

In the twenty-first century, with globalization, technological advancements, migration and other trends affecting the world around us, relations between education, training and work have evolved and become increasingly complex. National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) have been developed globally in response to this and classify qualifications by level, based on learning outcomes. Regional qualifications frameworks (RQFs) are regional equivalents to NQFs in the Asia-Pacific region, the Caribbean and Africa. RQFs simplify the process of linking countries as they act as a common reference for the

classification of qualifications across a number of countries. This classification reflects the content and profile of qualifications – that is, what the holder of a certificate or diploma is expected to know, understand, and be able to do. The learning outcomes approach also ensures that education and training sub-systems are open to one another: this allows people to move more easily between education and training institutions and sectors ([Cedefop et al., 2017](#)).

NQFs are a global phenomenon concerned with global knowledge governance. They are located in the industrialized and economically developed countries of the European Union, in fast-developing economies in Asia and in developing countries in Africa. In most cases, NQFs not only classify qualifications: they invariably imply a vision that aims to redefine the way qualifications relate to one another and how they are applied and valued in societies. In many cases, they are seen as drivers of reform, most often in vocational education and training. [Chakroun \(2010\)](#) summarizes the distinctive features of NQFs: qualifications are independent of institutions; complex quality assurance systems are foreseen to validate qualifications, accredit institutions and ensure quality assurance in assessment leading to the award of qualifications; and they make it easier to validate prior learning and to put value on learning programmes that allow for credit accumulation and transfer to assist with the achievement of lifelong learning.

The number of NQFs has grown rapidly. An overview of national and regional frameworks is captured in the *Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks* ([Cedefop et al., 2019](#)). In the 2017 report for this global inventory, it was confirmed that ‘more than 150 countries worldwide are now developing and implementing qualifications frameworks’ ([Cedefop et al., 2017](#)) and, in 2019, ‘numbers of frameworks, national and regional, remain stable, while implementation of most frameworks has deepened and widened since 2017’ ([Cedefop et al., 2019](#)). Their initial emergence was informed by perceptions of fundamental changes in the global economy, which had implications for the traditional divide between education and training and for the formal recognition of workplace and life experience. These views complemented those of business and government, which saw qualifications frameworks as a means to make education more relevant to the workplace and as a steering mechanism by which the state could achieve social objectives such as educational reform and equity.

Despite the fact that the NQF has developed as a relatively uniform policy movement and, thus, NQFs around the world share similarities, it is possible to identify different types by analysing two criteria: objectives and scope. Depending on their objectives, NQFs may be classed as one (or a hybrid) of the following, as defined by [Raffe \(2013\)](#):

- A **communications framework** – its main aim is to improve the transparency of an existing system and make it more coherent through the identification of potential pathways for learning progression, without directly trying to change the system itself.
- A **transformational framework** – at the other end of the spectrum, this type of NQF aspires to establish a new qualifications system by envisioning how things should be, rather than how they are, in an attempt to move the existing system in that direction with a tighter, more centrally led, outcomes-based design.
- A **reforming framework** – this type lies somewhere between the previous two by pushing for changes to the existing qualifications system by, for example, increasing regulation, improving the consistency of standards and/or plugging current gaps in learning provision.

It is also possible to differentiate NQFs according to scope. Many NQFs are *comprehensive* frameworks, which capture qualifications belonging to all parts of the education and training sectors in that country and often seek to integrate a variety of sub-frameworks, even if they feature different designs ([Raffe, 2013](#)). Alternatively, some NQFs are *non-comprehensive* and address only one sub-sector of education and/or training in the country. This is the case in Ghana, where the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework (NTVET) is the only NQF and, as its name suggests, covers only the TVET sub-sector. A limited scope does not, however, preclude an NQF from accommodating non-formal and informal learning outcomes: the second *Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks* ([Cedefop et al., 2017a](#)) explains that Ghana's NTVETQF supports the 'validation of informal and non-formal learning' and promotes 'access to lifelong learning for all, especially those working in the informal economy'.

### LLL in practice

#### The National Qualifications Framework in Portugal

Portugal has a long-established system for the RVA of learning outcomes.

Reconhecimento, validação e certificação de competências (RVCC) was first introduced in Portugal in 2001; it was overhauled during 2012/13 to support a more lifelong learning-oriented identification of outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Because the RVCC system is linked to Portugal's national qualifications framework (Quadro Nacional de Qualificações, QNQ), it has played a more effective role across different sectors and learning levels. Learners who make use of the RVCC system may acquire basic certificates that correspond to the first four levels of the QNQ. These levels denote qualifications for three progressive cycles of basic education, with a fourth level equating to a basic education diploma. This has created opportunities for learners outside the formal system: crucially, these qualifications are of equal worth to those acquired through formal education and training.

Since 2017, *qualifica* centres have been responsible for implementing RVA in Portugal. This network superseded the New Opportunities Initiative (NOI), which previously spearheaded the RVCC system. At *qualifica* centres, learners' portfolios are evaluated by panels, which results in qualifications equivalent to school certificates and professional credentials. In recent years, RVCC training opportunities have been implemented to improve learner support throughout the process.

Sources: [Guimarães, 2019](#), and [Cedefop, 2019](#)

Of the three learning modalities detailed in this handbook (formal, non-formal and informal), formal learning is more oriented towards certification and the awarding of qualifications. In recent years, qualifications from formal learning have been systematically classified and harmonized through NQFs in countries around the world. This is useful for learners who are enrolled in, or have already completed, formal learning programmes and are seeking further learning opportunities. However, the primary objective of an NQF is to assist the transitional processes between learning modalities and learning programmes. A major challenge in the ongoing formulation and reform of NQFs worldwide is thus the integration of qualifications or credentials that may be acquired, to at least some degree, through non-formal and informal learning. For this to happen – for such learning to be made visible – non-formal and informal learning outcomes require recognition.

## Recognition, validation and accreditation of learning outcomes

The RVA of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning is one of the pillars of any lifelong learning policy. The UNESCO guidelines on RVA ([UIL, 2012](#)) define it as a 'practice that makes visible and values the full range of competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that individuals have obtained in various contexts, and through various means in different phases of their lives'. *Recognition* is a process of granting official status to learning outcomes and/or competences, which can lead to the acknowledgement of their value in society. *Validation* is the confirmation by an approved body that learning outcomes or competences acquired by an individual have been assessed against reference points or standards through pre-defined assessment methodologies. *Accreditation* is a process by which an approved body, on the basis of an assessment of learning outcomes and/or competences according to different purposes and methods, awards qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles), grants equivalences, credit units or exemptions, or issues documents such as portfolios of competences. In some cases, 'accreditation' applies to the evaluation of the quality of an institution or a programme as a whole.

### LLL in practice

#### Overarching approach to validation in France

In France, the Validation of Experience (VAE) system has been established and maintained through the passing of national legislation and decrees since 2002. It thus has a clearly defined legal framework and exists as a legal right of the individual. The French system facilitates the RVA of non-formal and informal learning outcomes by providing a route towards qualification acquisition for individuals who have engaged in and completed a learning experience without receiving some form of certification. Therefore, instances of previous learning in a range of contexts can, through the VAE system, result in the achievement of part or all of a qualification.

As a legal right, individual employees may take training leave in order to pursue recognition through the VAE system, while employers can initiate collective VAE processes for groups of employees. Such processes may also be implemented with individuals seeking employment. VAE in France applies to many different types of qualification, whether they are more vocationally oriented or products of general education, including qualifications given or accredited by government ministries and sectoral qualifications such as Certificats de Qualification Professionnelle (CQP).



The VAE system connects individuals with the wider European education system and labour market: the qualifications it leads to are found in France's national qualification directory (RNCP) and correlates to levels three to eight of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Furthermore, VAE is widely regarded as a strong system because its qualifications are equal in value to those achieved by participants of formal vocational education and training (VET) programmes. The validation procedure is comprehensive and includes the identification, documentation and assessment of learning outcomes, followed by an official certification of learning awarded by a jury. By 2017, more than 307,000 qualifications had been awarded as a result of VAE, and approximately 1,300 qualifications were accessible through the system.

Source: [Cedefop et al., 2017](#)

The RVA of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, as a crucial step towards the realization of lifelong learning, has many advantages for learners. At its core is the principle that there is value in providing visibility to previously unrecognized learning, not least because it may boost learners' self-esteem and motivation to continue learning, in turn leading to greater well-being and potentially more job opportunities ([UIL, 2012](#)). RVA may also help to integrate broader sections of the population into an open and flexible education and training system and thus contribute towards building an inclusive society.

Many countries have started the process of developing mechanisms for RVA, though the ways in which they are established vary widely across the world at national, regional and local levels. Influencing factors include national contexts and the degrees of involvement of government bodies, private sector organizations and individuals. Consequently, different forms of governance are evident in different countries: examples include social partnership models, stakeholder models and RVA coordination through NQFs. Some countries, such as Norway, the Netherlands and Denmark, have established national institutes under their respective ministries of education, which cooperate with trade unions, enterprises, colleges, universities and others. Some of their roles include developing guidelines for validation towards enrolment in tertiary vocational education and exemption in higher education.



Linking the efforts of all stakeholders and national authorities is essential for delivering access to education and recognition of a wide range of competences. RVA demands that systems work together to allow learner mobility between different programmes associated with education, training and work. Building the professional expertise and capacities of educators, assessors, counsellors and administrators involved in RVA is another important dimension of assuring the quality of RVA processes and procedures ([Cooper and Ralphs, 2016](#)).

Additionally, financing and legislation to incentivize RVA varies widely among countries. In France, for example, the recognition of prior learning is a constitutional right, which in turn secures basic funding. In other instances, RVA is an unfunded mandate which institutions choose to cross-subsidize. While different lifelong learning elements may lend themselves to shared financing across business, individual tuition fees, donor grants and public partnerships, allocation of real public funding to support RVA is essential in most national contexts. Achieving adequately funded and coordinated RVA mechanisms takes dedicated political, pedagogical and organizational work by lifelong learning champions and advocates.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **RVA for migrants and refugees**

The RVA of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (including recognition of prior learning and prior learning assessment) is a critical element of lifelong learning. [Singh \(2018\)](#) highlights the value of RVA to refugees, explaining that it is a 'means of empowering them, for example to gain a qualification, to enter employment or to escape poverty and social exclusion'. Currently, however, recognition systems are in many cases too underdeveloped or fragmented to meet migrants' needs. In a survey of 13 European countries, only a minority of highly educated migrants had applied for recognition; they may be unable or unwilling to invest the resources required by complex, time-consuming and costly processes. Furthermore, the procedures and agencies involved in official recognition and validation vary between regulated and non-regulated professions. Identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying skills and competences involves multiple government departments and sub-national authorities and recognition bodies are frequently disconnected from bodies responsible for integration and employment.

In 2012, Germany passed a federal law to streamline recognition of professional qualifications. Foreign nationals can gain recognition regardless of residence status or citizenship. They can make a legal claim for recognition and receive a decision within three months. Professional qualifications obtained abroad are checked for compatibility with German professional requirements. In addition to passing laws to improve RVA systems, national and regional governments can introduce measures to ensure assessment agencies, licensing bodies and academic institutions harmonize requirements and adhere to best practices. For example, Ontario (Canada) introduced a ‘fairness commissioner’ in 2007 to ensure fair access to regulated professions for those with foreign qualifications. In four countries hosting Syrian refugees – Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey – processes are under way for the development of national qualifications frameworks, so that qualifications based on learning outcomes and competences across all learning modalities – formal, non-formal and informal – are recognized.

Sources: [Singh, 2018](#); [Lodigiani and Sarli, 2017](#); [OECD, 2014](#); [Cedefop, 2016](#); [Owen and Lowe, 2008](#)

### **Implications of flexible learning pathways for implementation strategies**

Flexible learning pathways, facilitated by NQFs and RVA, are designed to provide different learning options to communities either needing to achieve relevant knowledge, recognize previous experiences, or to benefit from a transition into and between learning programmes within and across different learning modalities. By design, they also aim to reach under-served communities emerging due to specific characteristics (e.g. technological changes, migration, devaluation of knowledge), to increase relevance of learning outcomes, and distribute flexible and adaptable learning options across educational systems and regions in a timely and efficient manner. These expected outcomes represent additional challenges for decision-makers and policy-makers due to the very nature of flexible learning pathways, offering, as they do, to maintain flexibility and opportune adaptability, their main advantages compared to other policies. As in previous sections, some considerations are included in **Table 6**, to emphasize aspects to be reflected in the design of these initiatives and the definition of an implementation strategy.

**Table 6. Issues to be considered for implementation strategies – all modalities and flexible learning pathways**

Under-served communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying how flexible learning pathways, RVA systems and/or NQF initiatives can respond to the interests of the individual citizen;</li> <li>• Local institutions' decision-making processes in choosing which learning demands to support;</li> <li>• Likelihood of under-served communities participating in the programme;</li> <li>• Capturing the learning demands of specific communities;</li> <li>• Availability of additional funding for specific populations.</li> </ul>
Relevant learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the purposes of flexible learning pathways, RVA systems and/or NQF initiatives have been clarified;</li> <li>• Taking steps to coordinate and target guidance, counselling and assessment services;</li> <li>• Designing quality assurance arrangements to increase trust in these initiatives;</li> <li>• Maintaining relevance and potentially seeking the participation of businesses in governing/planning boards;</li> <li>• Determining whether the measurement of outcomes will be aligned with standards used for formal education, and what value and currency they have.</li> </ul>
Flexible and adaptable programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of mechanisms for coordination of relevant stakeholders to avoid fragmentation and ensure a coherent approach;</li> <li>• Steps to strengthen the professional competencies of RVA practitioners;</li> <li>• Potential increase in costs with the inclusion of new communities, and who will pay;</li> <li>• Processes for the selection and enrolment of participants;</li> <li>• Securing efficient collaboration across regulating agencies.</li> </ul>

*Source: Some questions are adapted from [Cedefop, 2015](#)*

This type of initiative may represent a good example of the level of complexity that may result from the flexibility promoted in several LLL initiatives. Although its implementation may require a methodical design, this is one of the policy options where benefits and advantages associated with the adoption of LLL policies are more evident, particularly as an innovative intervention aimed to address some of the public problems traditional formal approaches have not been able to address.

## In your context: Implementation of lifelong learning policies

This chapter addressed the major question of how lifelong learning policies lead to lifelong learning opportunities for all. Its main focus was implementation, namely how the design of implementation strategies can respond to the characteristics of formal, non-formal and informal learning modalities and address different levels (e.g. cities, villages, regions and institutions). For example, an implementation strategy may clear the way for the opening up of schools' facilities and expertise to the wider community, in alignment with a pre-determined lifelong learning policy priority. The chapter also highlighted the value of establishing national qualifications frameworks and procedures for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning activities. Ultimately, the information provided was brought together to demonstrate how – in addition to addressing specific learning interventions – strategies for the implementation of lifelong learning can look across learning modalities and encourage the creation of flexible learning pathways. For any implementation strategy, measures should also be taken to ensure its feasibility.

### **Key points:**

- Lifelong learning policies are effective only when translated into practice; the formulation of implementation strategies makes this more likely to happen.
- Strategies may be targeted at different levels of implementation, such as in particular geographical areas or types of learning institution.
- Regardless of the level of implementation, a series of general considerations should be taken into account, including learning goals, delivery options, target populations, expected effects and possible interactions.
- An implementation strategy may focus on improving formal learning institutions' capacities for lifelong learning by targeting, for example, learning opportunities in schools, universities, ECCE or TVET; facilities, networks and learning outcomes are to be considered in implementation strategies for formal learning.
- National qualifications frameworks have created some pathways for learners who are enrolled in, or have already completed, formal learning programmes, but they can also assist the transitional processes between learning modalities as well as learning programmes.
- An implementation strategy may also target non-formal and/or informal learning by detailing measures for community learning centres, libraries, ICT and more for non-formal and informal learning interventions. Important considerations include under-served populations, relevant learning outcomes and flexible and efficient learning programmes.

- Learners who have already or will in future benefit from non-formal and informal learning are supported by measures for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.
- If implementation strategies are formulated with a cross-cutting awareness of different learning modalities (formal, non-formal and informal), they can lead to the creation of flexible pathways from which all learners can benefit.

**Questions for reflection:**

- ❖ What is the value of an implementation strategy to a lifelong learning policy?
- ❖ For what levels of implementation might a strategy be devised? Which stakeholders will need to be involved?
- ❖ How can an implementation strategy take account of the characteristics of – and support pathways between – formal, non-formal and informal learning?

**Possible actions:**

Identify a lifelong learning policy according to the characteristics presented in Chapter 2. Begin to sketch out an implementation strategy for the policy by completing the following process:

1. Clarify which levels of implementation will need to be addressed by the strategy (i.e. the levels where change needs to happen for the policy to meet its objectives).
2. For each of the levels identified, create a list of stakeholders who will need to be engaged for the implementation strategy to have an impact.
3. With specific levels and groups of stakeholders in mind, recognize whether the relevant learning opportunities are formal, non-formal and/or informal.
4. In light of this determination, try to directly address the issues to be considered for respective learning modalities in the design of an implementation strategy (refer to points in **Tables 3 to 6**).
5. Take into account any other policy tools found in your national context (i.e. determine whether there are qualifications frameworks, established procedures for the recognition of learning, and any other initiatives that may facilitate lifelong learning implementation).
6. Review the initial details you have sketched out for the implementation strategy and highlight any areas where there could be scope to support pathways to other forms of implementation (other learning modalities and/or specific programmes).
7. For each of the three factors of feasibility presented, plan some initial steps that would need to be taken for the implementation strategy to be effective.

## Chapter 4 – Illustrating a lifelong learning policy approach: Lessons from learning cities

### Guiding questions

- How can this handbook's guidance on LLL policy design and implementation be applied to learning cities?
- Which public policy issues are of particular relevance to learning cities?
- What are the alternatives for policy design to tackle public policy issues?
- What are the main characteristics of policy implementation using the learning city model?
- How can monitoring and evaluation support the implementation of an LLL policy in a learning city?

In the first three chapters of this handbook, different models and examples of LLL initiatives were presented to highlight the main factors to be considered during the design and implementation of lifelong learning policies. Country-specific cases about national visions and LLL policies, a more general model for the design and implementation of policies, and specific considerations about how to outline implementation strategies for a variety of lifelong learning opportunities were provided in different sections. The information, models, and examples were all included to encourage reflection about the expected benefits, possible orientations, and main challenges associated with the adoption, design and implementation of LLL policies. Now, we will put all this information into practice by applying it to one example of a lifelong learning policy. Key decisions for the design and operation of the UNESCO GNLC will be presented to show how to address complex implementation environments resulting from processes associated with LLL such as the participatory planning, establishment of long-term goals, and demanding by design an intersectoral collaboration.

The [UNESCO GNLC](#) was established in 2012 by UIL. The network supports cities in developing holistic and integrated approaches to lifelong learning, recognizing the needs of all learners, and enhancing access to learning for marginalized and vulnerable groups. It further promotes policy dialogue and peer learning among members, fosters partnership,

provides capacity-building and develops instruments to encourage and recognize progress in building learning cities.

### Identify and diagnose a public policy issue

As explained in [Chapter 3](#), a key initial process in the design of any public policy is the identification and definition of the issue to be addressed. This is a fundamental process to identify and communicate the reasons supporting the implementation of a programme or intervention, as [Bardach \(2000\)](#) points out. This stage implies expressing conditions to be changed, and this description will determine the characteristics of any policy to be implemented. Having a clear problem definition implies awareness of its causes, the expected changes to be pursued, and the potential characteristics of any intervention. Therefore, the definition of any public problem to be addressed must help one to understand why any given situation should be of public concern, and why a response from governments or other organizations is needed.

Since governments face a multiplicity of challenges associated with contexts and characteristics of their communities, defining specific problems to be addressed by the learning city model could be a complex task. Local governments, being the closest level of government to people, are best placed to link global goals to local communities, thus explaining why the problem definition originally adopted by the UNESCO GNLC is focused on global issues, although completed and adapted by local governments.

Three specific public problems could be used to exemplify some of the goals to be achieved by learning cities through the implementation of LLL policies: (1) pollution, climate change and health risks; (2) the deepening of social inequalities; and (3) unemployment and lack of economic development.

#### **Climate change, pollution and health risks**

The rapid expansion of cities will represent new problems regarding sustainable development. Since it is estimated that by 2030 the proportion of the world's population living in urban areas will increase to 60 per cent, compared to 53 per cent in 2015, it is important to anticipate and design effective interventions to reduce the impact this may have in the daily life of the population.<sup>1</sup> The trend of urbanization is not only reflected in the

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that in some countries, the rates of urbanization were even much higher in 2015, e.g. Qatar (99%), Belgium (98%), Uruguay (95%), Japan (91%), and Western Sahara (87%) (UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2018).



rising number of people living in urban areas, but also in the increase in the number of mega-cities with 10 million inhabitants or more, which is expected to rise from 28 in 2014 to 41 by 2030. This expansion will result in particular challenges regarding hazards to be addressed by local governments, particularly those related to pollution and health. In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) has stressed the need to invest in health and well-being as a precondition for equitable, sustainable and peaceful societies, with particular attention to gender inequalities and the groups at highest risk of vulnerability, children’s health, and linking good health to optimal social functioning ([WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2017](#) and [2018](#); [Watson and Wu, 2015](#)). **Table 7** presents some of the pollution, climate, and health conditions to be faced by local communities. As is pointed out, different sources of potential risks are present, all of them demanding specific interventions from local governments.

<b>Table 7. Potential environmental problems to be addressed through a learning cities approach</b>		
<b>Level</b>	<b>Type of risk</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>City or municipality</b>	Pollutants	Ambient air pollution (mostly from industry and motor vehicles; motor vehicles’ role generally growing); water pollution; hazardous wastes.
	Hazards	Traffic hazards; violence; ‘natural’ disasters and their ‘unnaturally large’ impact because of inadequate attention to prevention and mitigation.
	Climate change	Higher temperatures a health risk, especially for vulnerable groups (e.g. older people, very young); air pollutants may become trapped, increasing their concentration and the length of time people are exposed to them.
<b>Regions</b>	Resource degradation	Soil erosion from poor watershed management or land development or clearance; deforestation; water pollution; ecological damage from acid precipitation and ozone plumes; loss of biodiversity.
	Land-water pollution	Pollution of land from dumping of conventional household, industrial and commercial solid wastes and toxic/ hazardous wastes; leaching of toxic chemicals from waste dumps into water; contaminated industrial sites; pollution of surface water and groundwater from sewage and surface runoff.
	Loss of resources	Fresh water required for city pre-empting its use for agriculture; expansion of paved area over good-quality agricultural land.
<i>Source: <a href="#">Satterthwaite, 1999</a></i>		

Any of these examples represents an opportunity to promote educational interventions to raise awareness, inform, and develop capacities in local communities to reduce the described risks. For instance, actions that cities can take include promoting health education in schools and offering non-formal health-related workshops for vulnerable

groups. Indeed, as a result of the [COVID-19 outbreak, many of the 174 UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities \(GNLC\)](#) members around the world have faced severe challenges, including a record number of children and youth not in school or university because of temporary or indefinite closures mandated by governments in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus. Innovative measures have been quickly implemented in response to these challenges. Further possibilities to enhance awareness and create knowledge on sustainable living would be setting up sanitation committees to inform the community about hygiene and health issues, or organizing learning activities on recycling ([UIL, 2017a](#)). Another policy option to ensure green and healthy living environments is raising awareness of climate change, pollution, mental and physical health risks and the need for environmental protection. For instance, the development of green and healthy cities has also been promoted through the EcCoWell Approach, described by [Kearns \(2012a and 2012b\)](#), which brings together ecology and economy, community and culture, and well-being and lifelong learning as its major intertwined goals.

### **Social inequalities**

As a recent UN-Habitat *World Cities Report* found, ‘too many cities today fail to make sustainable space for all, not just physically, but also in the civic, socio-economic and cultural dimensions attached to collective space – spawning slums, informal settlements, informal businesses and jobs, hand-to-mouth livelihoods, destitution and disenfranchisement’ ([UN-Habitat, 2015](#)). Furthermore, the report highlights, ‘75 per cent of the world’s cities have higher levels of income inequalities than two decades ago’. To ensure equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for all, learning cities must address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, and inequality in education in terms of access, participation, retention and completion. Furthermore, learning cities need to take concrete actions to end all forms of gender discrimination.

In response to the diverse demands of all learners, there is a need to redesign and implement transformative public policies aimed to better distribute educational opportunities. Therefore, ensuring flexible learning opportunities and alternative pathways is of particular importance for those who are disengaged from traditional schooling. Second-chance schools and other collaborating social structures can provide vulnerable groups with the opportunity to obtain necessary skills and knowledge. In addition to national frameworks for the recognition, validation and accreditation of the outcomes of prior learning, steps can be taken at the local level to promote skills development and flexible learning pathways. For example, providing opportunities for vulnerable groups to

acquire literacy, professional qualifications and knowledge about cultural values and the political system can ease their integration into the labour market and support their social inclusion. In particular, people with insufficient basic education, many of whom work in the informal sector, often lack basic civil rights. Concrete measures cities can take to address these challenges include the establishment of vocational colleges addressing the needs of vulnerable groups.

Another issue for cities related to demographic change is the ageing of society, particularly in developed countries. Intergenerational exchange is important to ensure social cohesion across all ages. Common learning activities among school children, adults and older citizens can enrich learning processes and help fight isolation and exclusion. In any of these cases, involvement of local governments and communities through the adoption of the learning cities model presents an opportunity to address prevailing social inequalities.

### **LLL in practice**

#### **Intergenerational learning**

In Malta, an agreement made between day centres – invariably attended by older people – and a vocational college has seen young people conduct placements there, with evidence of outcomes to the advantage of both groups. Those attending the day centres found that they benefitted emotionally from the encouragement visiting students provided, as well as information to support their independence in the modern world; similarly, students felt that the experience had helped them to connect better with the older generation ([Spiteri, 2016](#)).

Advantages to intergenerational learning were also identified in projects coordinated by early-years and eldercare institutions in a rural town in Ireland. Old and young people participated together in prearranged activities in both types of institution, including arts and crafts, conversational exchanges, storytelling and gardening. An immediate impact of the collaboration was that institutions traditionally restricted to a specific, age-defined target group became accessible to others in the local community, thus supporting the principle that learning does not need to occur in settings delineated by generation. It was also found that intergenerational learning is more likely to be sustainable if it is supported by good pedagogical practices and well-established institutions. Sustainable intergenerational learning leads to better social inclusion in the long term ([Gallagher and Fitzpatrick, 2018](#)).

Sources: [Spiteri, 2016](#); [Gallagher and Fitzpatrick, 2018](#)

### **Unemployment and lack of economic development**

One of the main challenges for local and national governments is guaranteeing access to employment opportunities. Several factors are commonly cited as explaining unequal distribution of labour opportunities, although two conditions are particularly relevant to the role of cities as fundamental actors in addressing unemployment. First are the different opportunities rural and urban populations face, since 'the majority of the global poor live in rural areas and are poorly educated, employed in the agricultural sector, and under 18 years of age' ([World Bank, 2020](#)), thus increasing incentives to migrate to urban regions.

Second, in order to strengthen the local economy and ensure decent work and entrepreneurship opportunities, it is essential for learning cities to provide targeted skills development, enhancing citizens' chances for meaningful and secure employment. To achieve coherence between skills development and employment opportunities, it is also important to establish strong partnerships with various governmental departments (such as those responsible for economic development, the labour market and social affairs), education and training institutions, and the private sector. At local level, a wide range of activities can support prosperous communities: encouraging the production and selling of local products, creating on-the-job training opportunities, promoting entrepreneurial projects among children and youth, and providing mentoring programmes for vulnerable groups. The measures that a learning city takes to support economic development and employment opportunities will depend on the specific challenges the city faces.

The three problems described represent an example of the conditions to be changed through the adoption of the learning cities model. As an LLL policy, this model aims to create learning opportunities for all, at every level, engaging different stakeholders and exploring the participation of different agencies and organizations. It is important also to emphasize the relevance it has to support disadvantaged communities, and to adopt global goals at the local level.

## Design: What are the policy alternatives?

Once a public problem has been defined, the next step is to identify different interventions. This stage demands the definition of specific policy goals, and the identification of different components that may help to achieve these objectives while considering the context and potential reactions and interactions that may result from their implementation. From a procedural perspective, this stage represents an opportunity to select policy 'alternatives' that address an identified problem ([Bardach, 2000](#)). These alternatives may arise as the result of repeated interactions between experts and stakeholders acknowledging the existence of dynamic environments and varying priorities (including the redefinition of the public problem itself).

In the case of the learning cities model, based on the detection and definition of problems, six different interventions or 'areas of focus', listed below, have been promoted, capturing the broad understanding of lifelong and life-wide learning. They include several learning environments (educational institutions, family, community, workplace, online learning), aim to increase accessibility to and participation in learning for all groups of society ('inclusive learning'), and address the conditions and motivation for lifelong learning ('culture of learning'). It is worth noting that while these areas constitute the major building blocks of learning cities, they are also relevant for rural contexts and can provide guidance for implementing lifelong learning in remote villages.

### **1. Promoting inclusive learning from basic to higher education**

Cities can promote inclusive learning in the education system by helping to expand access to education at all levels, from early childhood care to primary, secondary and tertiary level, including adult education and technical and vocational education and training. Furthermore, cities can support flexible learning pathways by offering diverse learning opportunities that meet a range of proficiencies. To ensure access for all inhabitants of the city and its surroundings, support should be offered, in particular, to marginalized groups, including migrant families, since all citizens should have equal access to learning opportunities to overcome social inequalities.

### **2. Revitalizing learning in families and communities**

The family is an especially important setting for informal learning, a key activity to modify some of the social behaviours affecting communities. In addition, learning in families and local communities builds social capital and can improve the quality of life for all members

of society. Lifelong learning should, then, not be confined to educational or business settings, and particular attention should be given to vulnerable groups, including those affected by poverty, people with disabilities, and refugees and migrants, among others. An example of expected interventions may be observed in N'Zérékoré, Guinea, where city-led initiatives have fostered learning in the community by providing inhabitants with opportunities to learn more about how they can protect their environment and preserve public hygiene: a wide-reaching waste management project has engaged with local people through 'activity zones' and the creation of job opportunities for vulnerable groups ([UIL, 2017](#)).

### **3. Facilitating learning for and in the workplace**

Providing appropriate learning opportunities for all members of the workforce as well as unemployed youth and adults is of particular importance for any learning city. Due to globalization, technological advancement and the growth of knowledge-based economies, most adults need to regularly enhance their knowledge and skills. In turn, private and public organizations need to embrace a culture of learning, to respond to specific demands from different populations looking to improve their employability.

### **4. Facilitating and encouraging the use of modern learning technologies**

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have opened up many new possibilities for education and learning, in particular by widening access to learning materials, enhancing the flexibility of when and where to learn, and meeting learners' needs. Learning cities should, therefore, promote the use of these technologies for learning and self-empowerment.

### **5. Enhancing quality and promoting excellence in learning**

In developing learning cities, emphasis should be placed on enhancing quality in learning. This can be achieved through a paradigm shift from teaching to learning and by moving from the mere acquisition of information to the development of creativity and learning skills. It also relates to raising awareness of shared values and promoting tolerance of difference. Employing appropriately trained administrators, teachers and educators is another key element, particularly in ensuring adequate support for learners with special needs.

### **6. Fostering a culture of learning throughout life**



Cities can foster a vibrant culture of learning throughout life by organizing and supporting public events that encourage and celebrate learning, providing adequate information, guidance and support to all citizens, and stimulating them to learn through diverse pathways. Importantly, cities should also recognize the role of communication media, libraries, museums, religious settings, sports and cultural centres, community centres, parks and similar places as learning spaces. The city of Tunis, Tunisia, coordinates socio-cultural events during the month of Ramadan and promotes them through different media, including newspapers, radio, television and the internet; cultural centres such as cinemas, music venues and local theatres are also involved ([UIL, 2017](#)).

These six interventions are examples of the different alternatives any policy-maker may identify once a problem has been identified and are usually the result of a dialogue or an interaction between experts, policy-makers and different stakeholders. In the particular case of the learning cities model, the above six suggestions are an established roadmap based on experience and the observation of multiple interventions in different regions of the world.

### **Implementation: The learning city model**

Implementation 'is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, [...a decision...] that identifies the problem(s) to be addressed and stipulates the objective(s) to be pursued' ([Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983](#)). Although there are multiple approaches to the implementation process, it is important to remember that, beyond a chain of decisions and actions, the interpretations and reactions from different stakeholders will determine the orientation of any policy or intervention. Learning cities depend on the development of communities that learn, adapt and innovate on a continuous basis in response to the dynamics of different public problems to be addressed. Recognizing the importance of this dimension, the UNESCO concept of learning cities identifies three fundamental conditions for the implementation of the learning city model: (1) strong political will and commitment by the local government; (2) a participatory governance model involving all relevant stakeholders; and (3) the mobilization and use of resources.

#### **1. Strong political will and commitment**

To build a learning city and to ensure that its vision will become a reality and be sustained over time takes strong political commitment. Local governments have the primary responsibility for committing political resources to realize a learning city vision. This



involves demonstrating strong political leadership in the developing and implementing of well-grounded and participatory strategies for lifelong learning, and consistently monitoring progress towards becoming a learning city. In many learning cities, such as Mayo-Baléo in Cameroon, local government representatives oversee the organization of projects linked to the learning city strategy yet, in the process, cooperate closely with stakeholders from the private sector and civil society ([UIL, 2017](#)).

### **LLL in practice**

#### **Learning city charter of Gwangmyeong, Republic of Korea, 1999**

Strong political will in a learning city can foster the establishment of a shared vision for lifelong learning. This vision may be conveyed through the adoption of a learning city charter to guide stakeholders, which has been the case in the city of Gwangmyeong in the Republic of Korea. Below is an extract on lifelong learning taken from the charter:

Realising lifelong learning is critical for living a happy life in our community, we will endeavour to learn throughout our lives. In our home, schools and community, we, as the subjects of lifelong learning, learn how to love and live with neighbours, creativity and knowledge. Gwangmyeong City will endeavour to become a self-reliant, green and historical city in which citizens can demonstrate their abilities in their workplaces while enjoying green and convenient living spaces, and a unique cultural city in which citizens realize the common good. Every corner of Gwangmyeong City will serve as classrooms so every citizen can learn to live together throughout their lives. Believing this is critical to live happily and gracefully, we declare Gwangmyeong City is a lifelong learning city.

*Source: Learning city charter of Gwangmyeong, Gwangmyeong City, 1999*

Ideally, the learning cities approach will not only benefit cities themselves but also promote lifelong learning and sustainable development throughout the whole country. The spirit of learning cities can spread as a best-practice from one city to another and so lead to a country-wide initiative. Also, national and provincial governments can actively promote and steer development of learning cities in their country through national policy-making, research support and dedicated resource-allocation to learning cities. Whatever way is chosen, it is clear that achieving the wider benefits of learning cities needs strong political commitment not only at the local level, but also by regional and national decision-makers.

## **2. Participatory and multi-level governance**

To reiterate, building learning cities requires a multi-level governance approach founded on the strong political will of national, provincial and local governments. Based on the steadfast commitment of politicians and administrators, cities should enforce a participatory approach and include different voices in public decision-making, particularly by engaging in a continuous and open dialogue with civil society. Many local governments have developed strategies to enhance citizens' participation in the decision-making and implementation processes, including participatory budgeting, neighbourhood committees, youth councils and e-governance solutions, among others ([UN-Habitat, 2015](#)).

In general, the concept of governance comprises the legislative frameworks that determine the general scope of action, political and administrative procedures as well as institutions with the capacity to respond to the individual's needs. In the context of public policy, governance refers to a coordination and decision-making system, which helps to define strategic goals and to develop and implement policies, produced by collaborative groups of stakeholders. The relations between stakeholders can be vertical (between different levels of government, referred to as multilevel governance), horizontal (within the same level, for example between ministries or between local governments, referred to as cross-sectoral governance) or both. Partnerships with non-state actors, such as civil society organizations and the private sector are also considered necessary for the achievement of common goals. Further, urban governance should be gender-responsive and facilitate the inclusion and participation of youth and minorities. This requires the empowerment of women and minorities in local leadership and public affairs to ensure a stronger representation of their priorities in decision-making processes. Stakeholders and citizens are more likely to contribute to building a learning city if decisions are made in a participatory way. A continuous and structured dialogue, as well as platforms for consultations between local institutions and non-state actors, are valuable tools in achieving long-term civil empowerment. Social media can support involvement by bringing together the voices of many groups of society and engaging them in discussions on popular reforms.

## **3. Mobilization and utilization of resources**

Developing learning cities requires the boosting of resource mobilization and utilization. Cities and communities that invest in lifelong learning for all have seen significant improvements in terms of public health, economic growth, reduced criminality and

increased democratic participation. Encouraging greater financial investment in lifelong learning by government, civil society, private sector organizations and individuals is a central pillar to securing the means to build and sustain learning cities. This can be achieved through multi-stakeholder funding partnerships, cost-sharing mechanisms, match funding, sponsorships, and linking to philanthropic or private-sector partners.

Yet the possibilities for mobilization and utilization of resources go far beyond that, to include non-financial means, such as making effective use of the learning resources of all stakeholders, for example by using cultural venues, libraries, restaurants and shopping centres, and so on, as educational sites. This can bring learning closer to the people, ensuring that learning opportunities are easily reached by everyone. Another way to use non-monetary resources is to invite citizens to contribute their talents, skills, knowledge and experience on a voluntary basis and to encourage the exchange of ideas, experiences and best practice between organizations in different cities. For example, the city of Contagem in Brazil has introduced a 'community speaker' project, which encourages community leaders to work together with staff from different city departments and private-sector bodies to promote the concept of lifelong learning. To support the dynamic use of resources, universities share the cost of the community speaker project and provide rooms for conferences, meetings and workshops for public servants who are members of management committees ([UJL, 2017](#)).

### **Build a monitoring and evaluation system**

Monitoring is an 'ongoing, systematic collection of information to assess progress towards the achievement of objectives, outcomes and impacts' ([Mcloughlin and Walton, 2012](#)), while evaluation is the 'systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results' with the aim 'to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability' ([OECD-DAC, 2013](#)). The main expectation associated for these activities is, as [Weiss \(1998\)](#) explained, 'to produce findings that influence what programme and policy people decide to do next'. Designing a monitoring and evaluation system for policies aiming to achieve multiple goals, as in the case of learning cities, is certainly a complex task. While some monitoring models have been developed for learning cities, this is one of the areas where more comparative research on good practices is still needed.

Since it is expected that collected information will inform decision-makers for planning, decision-making and accountability purposes, it is important to point out the importance of representing key processes and goals in reliable indicators and similar measurements. Furthermore, it is necessary that monitoring and evaluation systems, correspond to considerations and goals defined in previous stages of the policy design process. **Figure 4** is a list of key features and measurements developed by UIL ([2015a](#)) as an example of a monitoring and evaluation indicators system for a learning city. Although it includes basic measurements on potential outputs, it helps to identify how broad goals are disaggregated into specific actions, and how these actions are translated into specific goals to be achieved.

**Figure 4. A monitoring and evaluation indicators system designed for a learning city** Source: [UIL, 2015a](#)

<b>1.1 Empowering individuals and promoting social cohesion</b>	1.1.1 Ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to become literate and obtain basic skills	<b>Adult literacy rate:</b> Total number of literate persons aged 15 and above, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group	Official data provided by city authorities	Male	%
				Female	%
				Total	%
	1.1.2 Encouraging and enabling individuals to actively participate in the public life of their city	<b>Participation rate in election:</b> Participation rate of population of eligible age in the most recent major election in the city	Official data provided by city authorities		% (Year)
		<b>Participation in volunteering and community activities:</b> Percentage of citizens involved in unpaid volunteering and community activities in the 12 months preceding the survey	Survey results		%
	1.1.3 Guaranteeing gender equality	<b>Gender equality in politics:</b> Percentage of seats held by women in city council/congress	Official data provided by city authorities		%
		<b>Gender equality in business management:</b> Percentage of seats held by women in boards of top 10 enterprises	Survey results		%
	1.1.4 Creating a safe, harmonious and inclusive community	<b>Crime level:</b> Number of recorded crimes per 100,000 inhabitants	Official data provided by city authorities		
	<b>Social mobility:</b> Percentage of citizens with disadvantaged social background who believe that their children will enjoy higher social status than themselves	Survey results		%	

Beyond the availability of information, it is important to create conditions to promote the instrumental use of monitoring and evaluation – that is, to guarantee that any information can be used to support decisions. Furthermore, for policy-makers, it is important to consider interventions to encourage changes that may help to institutionalize the use of evidence and information in decision-making processes ([Weiss, 1998](#)).

Policy-makers should consider how the information collected might be used by champions or advocates who can encourage widespread understanding and ownership of lifelong learning as a philosophy and as an approach. Lifelong learning champions need to take a critical stance with regard to lifelong learning initiatives in order to identify gaps or issues to which insufficient attention has been paid. These could include ensuring safe learning environments for everyone, the digital divide (which can lead to the exclusion of some learners), the learning needs of people with disabilities, ensuring gender-sensitive teaching and learning modalities, and pointing out the difference between urban and rural access to learning. Champions and leaders within educational institutions should work to produce, as a document, an institutional strategy for lifelong learning, succeeded by a collective effort to ensure that strategy's implementation.

In addition, policy-makers must consider how to increase research activities focused on lifelong learning by becoming more collaborative and cutting across different disciplines, reflecting how the interconnectedness of learning transcends traditional categories and boundaries. By actively supporting and disseminating research into lifelong learning, universities are able to reinforce its main principles not only locally, within the institution itself, but also nationally and internationally.

### **Learn by doing: Continuously improving as a learning city**

Earlier, we looked at how a policy process means engaging in 'continuous policy improvement', i.e. learning lessons from policy design and implementation and taking account of how public problems and contextual factors are constantly evolving. In the case of the learning city model, this means retaining the idea that 'learning city status' is not reached by a prescribed list of interventions. As explained in the network's Guiding Documents ([UIL, 2015a](#)), building a learning city 'is a continuous process; there is no magic line over which a city will pass in order to become known as a learning city'. For stakeholders involved in the implementation of the learning city model, recognizing this 'continuous process' fundamentally underpins the stage of policy refinement. Finally,

remembering that the policy process is dynamic and nonlinear, steps to 'refine' a policy do not mean the cycle's completion: revisiting previous stages is always advisable.

## Final comments

The learning city model is an LLL initiative with a complex implementation environment. Described only briefly in this chapter, it is important to identify some of the potential challenges to be faced in each of the different stages of learning city development and, by extension, any other LLL policy-making process.

This chapter is a succinct exercise to help to identify possible decisions regarding the identification of a public problem, the selection of policy alternatives that might contribute to address a public problem, as well as how a policy could be implemented. In addition, a brief description of some of the tools to guide decision-making during the policy-making stage was provided. As a simple representation of a policy-making process, it provides a basic foundation with which to develop potential solutions to some of the challenges associated with the implementation of LLL initiatives.

## Conclusion

This handbook has attempted to condense the holistic, all-encompassing phenomenon of lifelong learning into practical guidance for education stakeholders. Rather than providing an exhaustive account of lifelong learning in its countless forms, its purpose has been to articulate what lifelong learning is so that it may be understood, recognized, promoted and applied in concrete terms, through national policy-making with a lifelong learning perspective and the development of implementation strategies for lifelong learning at national, regional, local and institutional levels.

The first chapter set out what lifelong learning is – how it has been understood by UNESCO and other international organizations and what its key dimensions are. The case was then made for the promotion of lifelong learning, equipping the reader with a series of evidence-based arguments for how lifelong learning can ameliorate some of the large-scale and often drastic challenges facing the world. With a rationale established, focus shifted to how lifelong learning can be promoted and who should be involved along the way. Chapter 1 thus provided the starting point for a policy-maker, government official,

institutional leader, facilitator or researcher to advance lifelong learning as a policy response to immediate challenges as well as long-term deficiencies in learning systems.

For lifelong learning to move from being a concept, or an ideal, to a catalyst for transformations in people's learning opportunities and experiences, it requires attention at the policy level. The [second chapter](#) of this handbook therefore presented the characteristics of effective lifelong learning policies to show that, fundamentally, they should have comprehensive national visions, aligned with both national and local contexts, and should be supported by the most recent and solid evidence, while being politically feasible and financially viable. Chapter 2 also connected lifelong learning to the policy-making process. With the [justifications and definitions of Chapter 1](#) and the characteristics of lifelong learning policies established, Chapter 2 closed with practical steps required to make a policy for lifelong learning.

To conclude the main body of the handbook, Chapter 3 focused on the implementation of lifelong learning, addressing diverse forms of implementation – across various spaces and learning modalities – through the prism of the implementation strategy. In cities, regions, villages and institutions, national lifelong learning policies are translated into action, and this chapter demonstrated how implementation strategies can accommodate and strengthen lifelong learning opportunities in formal and non-formal learning institutions, as well as through ICT. Finally, to create links between all these forms of implementation, guidance was provided on flexible learning pathways and how surrounding policies such as national qualifications frameworks and measures for the recognition, validation and accreditation of learning outcomes help create such pathways. To illustrate how the cycle for lifelong learning policy-making and implementation exists in practice, the final part of the handbook applied the content of previous chapters to the UNESCO learning city model.

This handbook can be used by anyone tasked with, or interested in, the promotion and facilitation of lifelong learning. It can be followed systematically – from start to finish – or compartmentally to support lifelong learning in a specific form or context. Ultimately, this handbook serves as a resource through which the ideals of lifelong learning can be translated into lifelong learning opportunities for all.



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