PASCAL International Observatory

Building a Culture of Lifelong Learning as a Creative Learning Process

A Response to Embracing a Culture of Lifelong Learning
a contribution by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
to the UNESCO Futures of Education Initiative

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We shall not cease from our exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

T S Eliot, *Four Quartets*

The Creative City balances a dynamic and occasionally tense equilibrium since when the old and new come together there is a creative rub. The stability is provided by an ethical framework that provides the overall guiding principles to the evolving, more creative city.

Charles Landry, *The Creative City*

Preface

Learning cities are challenged by a turbulent environment in which a number of mega changes have interacted to produce an uncertain future. While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is centre stage, the looming impacts of ageing populations and the transition to a longevity society, and the impact on jobs of the technologies of the fourth industrial revolution, including artificial intelligence, have combined to challenge the foundations of our current society.

The pace of change, combined with uncertainty about the future, means that people are confronted by the imperative to adapt to change, and continue learning throughout life in the emerging context of permanent transition.

UNESCO has recognised this imperative and has established the Futures of Education initiative to encourage people to reimagine knowledge, education, and learning in this turbulent environment. As a contribution to this initiative, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has produced a paper titled *Embracing a culture of lifelong learning* which provides a vision of a future where a culture of lifelong learning underpins a just and sustainable society.

This vision merits widespread discussion and opens the question of how learning cities and partners can progress from their present situation on a path to build a culture of lifelong learning throughout society.

This paper is a response to this question based on the thesis that building a sustainable learning culture should be a creative learning process, involving many stakeholders, and directed at clear strategic objectives in a number of stages. The paper draws on my experience with learning cities in Australia, and internationally through the networks of the PASCAL International Observatory, particularly the EcCoWell initiative directed at integrated, holistic development that I founded, with the 2020 EcCoWell Community Recovery Program as the latest iteration.

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The paper *Embracing a culture of lifelong learning* has been produced by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning as a contribution to the UNECO *Futures of Education* initiative. The question of how to build a culture of lifelong learning to underpin a just, sustainable society is an important one that merits widespread discussion. This paper has been prepared as a contribution to this discussion based on my experience with learning cities in Australia and internationally. It is based on the thesis that building a culture of lifelong learning should be a creative learning process, involving many stakeholders, and directed at clear strategic objectives in a number of stages that drive cultural change.

While this objective can be progressed in a number of ways depending on context and the stage of socio-economic development, I have sought to simplify the analysis of this paper by showing my thesis in a three stage process involving:

1. Laying the foundations;
2. Developing the framework with cultural change;
3. Connecting up and consolidating: the art & practice of building a creative learning culture.

I appreciate that in many communities this will involve a larger number of stages.

Stage 1. LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

This stage involves laying the foundations of a new and broader model of partnership, marked by imagination, empathy, and civic responsibility with many groups collaborating, including non-traditional partners.

While the foundations include many of the traditional objectives of learning cities, such as literacy, digital literacy, and inclusion, there will be a stronger link to sustainability, and a sense of co-creating the future in response to the mega challenges noted above. This will bring in the need for new ideas to drive innovation in a range of contexts. I give some examples in Section 5 of STAGE 2 below. The importance of sustainability means that the foundations should include action to build local and global consciousness and citizenship with these qualities progressed through community initiatives.

Developing the individual as a lifelong learner

Building generic skills, such as problem solving, and other capabilities for learning throughout life are important objectives in the foundation stage. While the OECD Key Competencies and its De Se Co project are useful in identifying the essential generic skills to support learning throughout life, OECD has also identified "transformative competencies"

that support learner agency and which enable young peop0le to be innovative, responsible and aware. These transformative competencies were identified by OECD as:

- creating new value;
- reconciling tensions and dilemmas;
- taking responsibility.

The World Health Organisation took a similar approach in its 2015 World Report on Ageing and Health defining functional ability as comprising the ability to:

- move around;
- build and maintain relationships;
- meet their own basic needs;
- learn, grow, and make decisions;
- contribute.

Building these skills and capabilities will support people who are able to thrive as lifelong learners, and function as responsible citizens at local and global levels.

While building the skills and capabilities of the lifelong learner is fundamental, three further important foundations for building a learning culture are:

- building an ethical and moral framework to guide the process of building a learning culture for a just society;
- connecting learning and enterprise in many contexts;
- fostering systems thinking as a gateway to holistic sustainable development.

The interaction of these skills, capabilities, and frameworks will drive the evolution of human consciousness towards a culture where local and global consciousness supports a just sustainable future. We discuss later how systems thinking and increasing connectivity provide the momentum for these cultural shifts.

Building an ethical and moral framework

The pace of disruptive change means that an ethical and moral framework is increasingly important in responding to change, and guiding action taken to a build a just, sustainable future. The humanistic values cited in a range of United Nations and UNESCO statements provide a framework for supporting the complex and difficult path towards a sustainable future. The UIL paper *Embracing a culture of lifelong leaning illustrates the role of values in building a culture of lifelong learning.*

Connecting learning and enterprise in many contexts.

In a period of revolutionary change, the connections between learning and enterprise should be made explicit in policies and strategies to build a just sustainable future. A learning culture should be seen as a necessary underpinning of an entrepreneurial society

able to ride out the waves of change. This nexus needs to extend to many community and business contexts. Management expert Peter Drucker describes this requirement in the following terms.

> *What we need is an entrepreneurial society in which innovation and entrepreneurship are normal, steady, and continuous. Just as management has become the specific organ of all contemporary institutions, and the integrating organ of our society of organisations, so innovation and entrepreneurship have to become an integrating life-sustaining activity in our organisations, our economy, our society.* (Drucker, 1994:236).

This should be one of the strands in the process of building a learning culture.

Foster systems thinking as a gateway to holistic sustainable development

Systems thinking is a way of seeing connections between things and so can serve as an underpinning for holistic sustainable development. Senge has defined systems thinking in the following terms.

> Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than seeing things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static "snapshots".

Systems thinking should be seen as one of the conceptual cornerstones in building a learning culture, and in supporting people to foster local and global consciousness in understanding how things connect to be sustainable.

Viewing learning ecosystems as having social and biological/planetary dimensions should be one of the drivers of cultural change for a sustainable future. There are many activities that communities can undertake in fostering this consciousness, with environmental projects having particular value. Examples from the 2020 EcCoWell Community Recovery Program included the "Seedbed" project of the Harlem New York learning neighbourhood and the "Eco-city and Happy Farm" initiative of the Datong learning district.

Developing these foundations

Developing these foundations is taken up in Part 2 of the paper that follows. A point to note is that while these strands that drive cultural change and contribute to building a learning culture are discussed as discrete dimension of cultural change towards a learning culture, it is the interaction of these strands that makes for a creative process. Putting the strands together in strategies that drive cultural change is where the art of building a learning culture lies.

Stage 2. DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK TO DRIVE CULTURAL CHjkmklhjnANGE

The journey to building a culture of lifelong learning requires rethinking lifelong leaning beyond the conceptual boundaries of education in ways that are responsive to the mega challenges confronting cities that are noted above.

Key themes in this journey are set out in the UIL paper *Embracing a culture of lifelong learning* directed at developing a learner-centric demand-driven approach. This will require substantial cultural change and change processes that are creative and innovative.

In order to make the process o building a learning culture creative and innovative, I am suggesting action in seven areas. As noted above, it is the interaction between these areas that could make the process of change innovative and creative.

Action is discussed in the following areas:

1. Building an enabling environment.
2. Developing active learners who are imaginative and creative.
3. The key role of local communities, networks and organisations.
4. Harnessing and valuing diversity.
5. Seeing things in different ways
6. Harnessing the roles of libraries and cultural institutions.
7. Rethinking the roles of education institutions.

While in some communities other triggers for fostering a learning culture could be suggested, I am suggesting these action areas as a generic set of strategies to illustrate my thesis of building a learning culture as a creative learning process.

1. Building an enabling environment: people and communities

Creating an enabling environment was identified in the UIL paper as one of the key objectives in building a culture of lifelong learning (UIL, 2020:16-19). The action suggested by the Institute such as harnessing multiple spaces for learning, fostering inclusion, critical use of social media, accessible and well-utilized technology, are all important tools in progressing this objective.

Local communities should be seen as the base building block for furthering this objective with the links to civil society, education institutions, business and other stakeholders the vehicles for a two way flow of ideas and experience.

Learning cities can provide a framework for action to build an enabling environment for learning throughout life. Learning neighbourhood pilot projects undertaken by Cork and Limerick illustrate this process while action taken by Harlem New York and Datong Taipei illustrate this process with action taken outside the framework of learning cities (Kearns & Reghenzani-Kearns, 2020)

A key insight from PASCAL experience has been the key role of local community learning centres and colleges in building enabling environments in local communities. These examples include community colleges such as Datong Taipei and Beijing community colleges such as the Chaoyanhd Community College for Seniors (Kearns & Reghenzani–Kearns eds, 2020). In some case community colleges host elderly universities to widen the spread of learning opportunities.

The 2018 PASCAL/PIMA report on Learning in Later Life demonstrated the important role of local community learning centres such as *Volkhochschulen* in Germany, *Kominkan* in Japan, and Australian Neighbourhood Houses. (Kearns & Reghenzani-Kearns, 2018). Modern digital technologies has extended the reach of these institutions so that networks of local community learning centres can have an even greater impact on building an enabling environment for learning throughout life. We discuss in section 3 the roles of local neighbourhoods, networks, and organisations in building enabling environments.

Building enabling environments involves interactions between place and all the drivers of learning throughout life that we discuss in the sections of this paper that follow. The interaction of people and place is of course central, but the other triggers discussed, such as the roles of museums and libraries, all contribute to the evolving enabling environments that drive the building of a learning culture. Connecting up these influences in innovative ways lies at the heart of the art of build a creative learning culture.

There is a wide range of placemaking initiatives around the world that contribute to building enabling environments. These include the work of the Bass Centre for Transformative Placemaking which was established by the Brookings Institution, Project for Public Spaces, and National Main Street Center as partners (Project for Public Spaces, 2018). The concept of transformative placemaking has clear links to transformative learning ideas and competencies which have been brought into PASCAL EcCoWell projects. This is an area for further partnership development.

2. **Developing active lifelong learners who are imaginative and creative**

The arrival of the technologies of the fourth industrial revolution, including artificial intelligence, has posed the question of how human intelligence can be distinguished from that of machines, and developed in ensuring a human-centred future (Schwab, 2016; Tegmark 2017, Bostrom, 2014). The prospect of machine superintelligence has given urgency to this question.

The founder and chairman of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab, has answered this question by proposing that we should nurture and apply four different types of intelligence:

- Contextual (the mind) – how we understand and apply knowledge,
- Emotional (the heart) - how we process and integrate our thoughts and feelings and relate to ourselves and one another,

- Inspired (the soul) - how we use a sense of individual and shared purpose, trust, and other virtues to effect change and act towards the common good,
- Physical (the body) - how we cultivate and maintain our personal health and well-being. (Schwab, 2016:106-111).

The capacity to harness and apply such a spectrum of intelligences and capabilities has been noted by a number of leading scholars.

- You cannot solve a problem using the same mode of thinking that gave rise to the problem - Einstein.
- I have never discovered anything with my rational mind – Einstein.
- When you are in the learning/discovery mode, you are open to the unexpected. You accept uncertainty, change, ambiguity, diversity, and lack of structure - Susan Campbell.

The idea of changing modes of thinking and perception has come into the work of some learning communities. An example is provided by the Harlem Seedbed project where the impact of spirituality, the environment, the arts was used to drive transformative learning in addressing inequality (Kearns & Reghenzani-Kearns, 2020:37-42). I discuss in section 3 below the importance of intuition, and other areas of emotional and spiritual intelligence, in driving creativity in business.

The psychologist Abraham Maslow has approached these links between creativity and "the complete person" in the following terms.

> *The concept of creativity and the concept of the healthy, self-actualising, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together, and may turn out to be the same thing.*

Approaching creativity and 'the good life" through a spectrum of intelligences and capabilities also takes us back to the philosophies of the UNESCO Faure (1972) and Delors (1996) reports.

> *Education is increasingly called on to liberate all the creative potentialities of human consciousness. Hundreds of millions of men today are finding the two components of the creative praxis-action and thought- are paralysed. A distorted vision of man and the universe, ignorance, violence and collective psychoses causing it, powerlessness, domination suffered and repressed, and fear of freedom all converge in such a way that action and critical thought destroy each other.* (Faure, 1972:149).

The Faure report added that "Man fulfils himself in and through creation" noting that education "has the dual power to cultivate and to stifle creativity" (Ibid:149-150). This takes us to the central theme of the Faure report - learning to be. Vaill extends this concept with

"learning as a way of being" and with the further dimension of "spirituality as holistic perception" (Vaill, 51,183).

The Delors report took a similar path while elaborating in the implications for education with its well known four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together/learning to live with others, learning to be. (Delors, 1996:86-91)

The Delors report also endorsed a broad concept of human potential ranging across areas such as "imagination, aesthetic sense, memory so as to develop all our talents to the full and realize our creative potential, including responsibility for our own lives and achievement of our personal aims". (Delors, 1996:19)

These calls for the full develop of all dimensions of learning and creativity in people are reflected in calls such as "bringing the whole person to work". While these ideas remain vitally relevant, the challenge is to find ways to progress them in the conditions of the post-pandemic society evolving to a technology-driven longevity society. Building a culture of lifelong learning is inevitably caught up in this challenge. It gives force to my thesis that building a learning culture to express learning throughout life should be seen as a creative learning process that liberates and harnesses the imaginative and creative potential of people in collective action.

Stanford psychologist Ray considered that a shift in sense of self was central to creativity (Senge et al,2004:101). The importance of this capacity has become more significant in the emerging longevity society where people need to re-create a sense of self in the longevity life (Gratton & Scott, Makino). This enhances the significance of qualities variously described as presence, transformative learning, deeper learning, learning ecosystems ,and overall the capacity to understand the nature of wholes and the relationships of their constituent parts. The capacity of people to move from local consciousness to global consciousness is vitally dependent on this capacity. Rifkin describes this transition in the following terms.

> *If we can harness holistic thinking to a new global ethics that recognizes and acts to harmonize the many relationships that make up the life-sustaining forces of the planet, we will have crossed the divide into a near climax world economy and biosphere consciousness (*Rifken, 2009: 600).

3. **The key role of local communities, networks, and organisations**

Learning neighbourhoods, networks, and organisations may be seen as key arenas in which the issues involved in building a culture of lifelong learning need to be clarified, contested, and replaced by strategies fostering a culture of lifelong learning. These are key arenas for driving cultural change.

The concept of learning neighbourhoods was developed as part of the PASCAL EcCoWell approach to integrated development of learning cities, with Cork and Limerick both

undertaking pilot projects, while Harlem New York and Datong Taipei demonstrate initiatives at neighbourhood and district levels.

While the initial learning neighbourhood projects were mainly directed at access and integration objectives, including fostering collaboration between local community organisations, contextual changes, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic , bring a broader challenge in harnessing the potential of local neighbourhoods as a key building block in developing a culture of lifelong learning for a sustainable future.

These changes include ageing societies with a high proportion of older people, mental health and well-being consequences of the pandemic, a general uncertainty about the future of work associated with the growing automation of work, and the need to harness local communities in addressing global planetary issues.

These challenges give a new agenda for learning neighbourhoods that needs to be progressed in building a learning culture in cities and neighbourhoods, and in addressing critical planetary issues

These objectives include:

- fostering global consciousness and citizenship in communities;
- promoting both social and generational coherence with partnerships between generations ;
- action to bring purpose and meaning into lives in ageing communities in supporting mental health and well-being;
- building learning skills and competencies throughout life and provide support at transition points in the longevity life.

Addressing such objectives will require broader partnerships in neighbourhoods, what we have termed "a new model of partnership with imagination and empathy".

Ageing populations in neighbourhoods bring a spectrum of planning issues requiring innovative approaches. One of the responses has been the development of "lifetime neighbourhoods" in the UK by the Department of Communities and Local Government. Research was undertaken for a report in 2011 on experience with the concept from the department. This report recognised the importance of neighbourhood as a determinant of well-being in later life, with action across a range of sectors relevant to well-being in ageing communities (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2011:7). Lifelong learning should be seen as a necessary component in developing lifetime neighbourhood to foster well-being throughout life.

The conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 stimulated a number of innovations in learning neighbourhoods, in most cases using technology. The Limerick City Centre Learning

Neighbourhood ran a "Brag and Borrow" event for sharing initiatives and the South Learning Neighbourhood ran a Readathon for the local schools together with community groups (Kearns & Reghenzani-Kearns eds:17)

The evolving role of networks

While the value of networks of learning cities in supporting lifelong learning objectives is well established, lockdown conditions in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic stimulated considerable innovation in using technology to foster learning interactions between people everywhere. The growth of webinars was one feature, at times connecting people with common interest, while many education courses were delivered online.

While institutions and organisations led much of this development, another feature was the number of initiatives undertaken by individual learning cities. For example, the Cork and Limerick learning cities shared a virtual workshop on their common interest in learning neighbourhoods. With learning festival generally not conducted during 2020, the Melton and Wyndham learning cities inaugurated a Global Learning Festival, using technology, to enable exchanges between participants around the world.

The initiatives undertaken in 2020 point to a growing role in the future for technology-assisted exchanges. This is likely to be a feature of the path to build a culture of learning throughout life, and an arena for innovation and creative ideas.

Fostering learning organisations

Fostering leaning in organisations, both community and commercial, is another key area for development in building a culture of lifelong learning. Good foundations exist through the involvement of civil society in leaning cities, while the concept of the learning organisation is well known in the business world- in big business at least- although small business remains a problem (Kearns, 2002).

Promoting learning throughout life in the business world is an area where learning and creativity need to coalesce with the considerable interest in business in innovation in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic as firms review their business models (Bello et al,2020; Blackburn et al 2020) The impact of an ageing workforce is a further influence on business reviewing their practices.

The concept of a learning organisation was given a considerable stimulus by Peter Senge's "The Fifth Discipline" which highlighted the importance of systems perspectives in building a sense of connection to a larger whole. Senge's learning organisation concept "where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and

where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 1990:3) still is relevant to building a learning culture in organisations in the post-COVID world.

These thrusts of the learning organisation concept have been supported by the interest in creativity in business, heightened by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ray and Myers in articulating the Stanford approach to creativity in business emphasised the "inner creative Essence" of business leaders comprising intuition, will, joy, strength, and compassion (Ray and Myers, 2000:8-9). They argued that this vision of creativity is far wider and deeper than mastery of problem solving techniques. This significance given to "the inner self" has much in common with the framework of four intelligences proposed by Schwab, and the echoes in the UNESCO Faure and Delors reports that I have cited.

The Harvard approach to creativity and innovation in business introduces some further perspectives. Creativity in business is seen as a goal-oriented process for producing innovation with three components: creative thinking skills, expertise, and motivation. (Harvard Business Essentials, 2003). This approach complements the more "inner self" approach of Ray and Myers.

Overall, this look across neighbourhoods, networks, and organisation confirms that these are three of the building block for developing a culture of lifelong learning. The links between learning and creativity need to be strengthened in the process of building a learning culture. Harnessing the inner self is a foundation of both leaning and creative action in a range of contexts. As Delors noted: "learning is the treasure within".

4. Seeing things differently

A key instrument for making a development process creative lies in the capacity to shift perceptions and see things differently, often stimulated by innovative overarching concepts.

Three examples of this capacity are:

- the doughnut concept of sustainable development;
- the circular economy approach to linking the great natural cycles to economic and social development;
- the virtuous circle.

The doughnut approach

The doughnut approach brings planetary objectives together with social objectives so that the space between is seen as "a safe and just space for humanity" (Raworth,2012,Time February 8 2021). This innovative way of connecting social and economic development within planetary boundaries to provide a safe and just space for human development is being tested by Amsterdam and Rotterdam with the support of C40, a network of 97 cities

focussed on climate action. Amsterdam drew up a circular strategy combining the doughnut's goals with the principles of a "circular strategy." This approach involves policies to protect the environment and natural resources, reduce social exclusion and guarantee good living standards for all.

The circular economy

The circular economy concept connects the great natural cycles – carbon, water, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulphur to economic and social development in a sustainable way (Australian Circular Economy Hub). The approach requires that we see systems as a whole rather than focussing on particular parts such as manufacturing, farming, design, materials. This builds cross-disciplinary perspectives in fostering a holistic sustainable approach. There are many community projects that learning cities can undertake that develops this awareness such as the Datong Taipei Eco-city and Happy Farm initiative and the New York Harlem Seedbed project. Environment projects offer a good starting point in exploring sectoral connections in systems terms.

The virtuous circle

This is a recurring cycle of events the results of each one being to increate the beneficial effect of the next. While this concept is similar to the circular economy, with both applying systems perspectives in addressing issues such as those resulting from an ageing workforce. For example, community action to address mental health and well-being issues can have productivity benefits for business, and hence motivate stronger business support for community action across a spectrum of issues.

Connecting up and exploring systems in working towards a sustainable future

The Doughnut ,Circular Economy and Virtuous Circle examples illustrate the importance of adopting systems perspectives in connecting social, economic, biological and planetary aspects of life in working towards a sustainable future. Adopting systems perspectives in navigating a path through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is a useful exercise for learning cities in looking to adopt cross-sectoral perspectives in building a culture of lifelong learning to underpin a just and sustainable future.

Innovators who explore innovative approaches to these critical issues for the future of humanity take the position that the current economic model with its devastation of the planet is unsustainable. This position was also argued cogently by the Common Worlds Research Collective in a paper – Learning to become with the world, prepared for the UNESCO Education Future initiative.

As in the Doughnut and Circular Economy concepts, this approach goes beyond education's previous humanist mission with an exclusive human or social framework to an approach grounded in ecological consciousness (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020:2-3). This

dissolves the boundaries between the natural and social sciences in an approach without boundaries. This brings the important implication for education that "agency is relational, collectively distributed, and more than human". (Ibid, 2020:4)

This shift in consciousness poses major challenge for learning cities, and for government policy for lifelong learning. However, innovations adopted in the 2020 PASCAL EcCoWell Community Recovery Program demonstrated that a number of learning cities, districts, and neighbourhoods are looking to develop ecological consciousness. This is an area for creative ideas in developing this necessary sense of agency to guide the work of education institutions, and the development of learning cities generally. I wonder if an Australian version of the Doughnut and Circular Economy might be possible to fit a range of contexts, including small communities in rural areas?

5. The diversity challenge

In a world of ever increasing diversity with increased flows of migrants and refugees, responding to the diversity challenge is an important staging post on the journey to building an inclusive culture of lifelong learning. Whether this leads to a diversity deficit or dividend is a central challenge for learning cities, and government policies.

The reality is that many cities around the world are on the journey to becoming inclusive intercultural cities. This has been a feature of learning city development in Australia where small cities such as Melton, Hume, Brimbank, and Wyndham show what can be achieved through active learning city policies. However, the challenge remains of extending these features to larger cities such as Melbourne, Sydney, Chicago, New York, London where racial divisions remain. The challenge remains in many cities of showing that cultural diversity is an asset, and not a liability.

Wood and Landry in their work on the intercultural city assert that "intercultural exchange is vital to encouraging cross-fertilization from which innovation can proliferate" (Wood & Landry, 2008:11). This has been a feature of the small Australian learning cities I have cited, usually with the library having a key role in fostering cross-fertilization between ethnic communities.

This challenge is more complex in large cities so that the case exists for the role of small societies in large cities in building harmonious relations and strategies leading to diversity advantage. Active learning neighbourhoods in large cities can undertake this role as may be seen, for example, in the role of the Datong learning neighbourhood in Taipei city.

In the same way, international collaborative networks such as the UIL Global Network of Learning Cities and PASCAL networks can build relationships and exchanges between diverse communities that add value to participants. Such networks can foster local and

global consciousness building on diversity. This is a fertile area for creative ideas in building on diversity as a key foundation of a culture supporting learning throughout life.

The growing role of learning technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 pointed to innovative ways of linking diverse communities to share ideas and address common problems. These strategies can be taken further in building a culture of lifelong learning.

As Wood and Landry observed:

> *The creative challenge is to move from the multicultural city of fragmented differences to the co-created intercultural city that makes the very most of its diversity.*

Many learning cities are already on this journey, but much remains to be undertaken in addressing diversity in very large cities so that diversity becomes a core feature of a an inclusive learning culture that supports a just sustainable future.

6. The key role of cultural institutions and libraries

Cultural institutions and libraries have a key role in building a creative learning culture. This role can range across fostering global and multicultural perspectives,   supporting social and generational coherence, and fostering a sense of a shared living heritage that evolves with cultural change, and overall celebrating and progressing learning, creativity, and community.

Landry notes the value of these roles in the following terms:

> *Consciousness of culture is an asset and a driving force in becoming a more imaginative city "The Creative City" approach is based on the idea that culture as values, insight, a way of life and form of creative expression, represents the soil from which creativity emerges and grows, and therefore provides the momentum for development* (Landry, 2008: 173).

The roles of these institutions were explored in the report of the 2010 PASCAL conference held at Östersund Sweden (Kearns, Kling, Wistman eds, 2011:6) which observed:

> *Cultural institution, such as museums, often stand at the intersection of competing values and stories so that their role in learning throughout life, progressing social agendas, and building cohesive communities is an important one, and likely to be increasingly important into the future.*

These institutions should be seen as connectors in linking cultural dimensions to socio-economic development, and hence have a key role in building a learning culture that underpins a just sustainable future.

The Internet has extended the reach and power of these institutions so that they can be vehicles for disseminating innovative ideas widely. This role in regional collaboration may be seen, for example, in the work of the Nordic Centre for Heritage Learning which operates across a number of Nordic countries. Rathje gives the example of regional growth based on cultural and natural heritage (Rathje, 2011:88-92). Connecting cultural and natural heritage with economic growth has much value in progressing towards holistic approaches to building a learning culture to underpin a sustainable future.

The integrating role of cultural policies, seen broadly, was brought out in the Preamble to the Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies.

> *In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellect and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.*
> (Commonwealth Foundation, 2009:12).

Building a culture of lifelong learning needs to be seen in these broad terms of culture so that the challenge needs to be seen as one of connecting up these dimensions of culture in a creative learning process. A current example of good practice may be seen in collaboration between PASCAL, the European Museum Academy, and Sophia (Social Platform for Holistic Heritage Impact Assessment). More cross-sectoral partnerships such as this are needed.

Libraries have a complementary role to that of museums, and can be partner institutions in harnessing heritage (both human and natural) in progressing a culture of lifelong learning. Their role has often been an active one serving as the hub of lifelong learning in building learning cities and communities. The Australian examples I gave (Melton, Hume, Brimbank, Wyndham, Townsville) show this role in action.

While the local library role is important, regional and international associations of libraries add to the value of the library role in spreading new ideas and promoting learning throughout life. Romer in a lifelong learning blog notes the role of libraries as an infrastructure for learning throughout life including "as partners and platforms for others', and looks at how to make the most of the unique characteristics of libraries as public, non-commercial, well-known and trusted community spaces (Romer,2021).

The value of international networks of libraries may be seen, for example, in the International Federation of Library Associations Library Map of the World which features all types of libraries. The metrics derived from this initiative will enable correlations at the macro level between libraries and key learning indicators such as literacy performance.

A similar role in building networks of public libraries may be seen in the role of State Libraries in Australia. For example, the State Library of Queensland provides library services and partnerships with over 340 public libraries across Queensland.

While libraries have traditional seen their role as promoting learning throughout life, the present context of disruptive mega changes, including ageing populations, suggests that this would be an opportune time to explore ways in which the library role could be strengthened in building a culture of lifelong learning, perhaps with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) as a partner.

A joint IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifest, enacted in 1994, already exists to articulate the role of public libraries in educational and cultural objectives shared with UNESCO. The shared vision includes the following:

> *The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.*

This Manifesto proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and an essential agent for fostering peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.

The 1994 Manifesto goes on to include a number of objectives that are relevant to building a culture of lifelong learning as AGHBGHB creative learning process. These include:

- Providing opportunities for personal creative development;
- Stimulating the imagination and creativity of young people;
- Fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity.

While such objectives remain relevant, the mega changes mentioned in this paper, the UNESCO inquiry into Education Futures, the UIL paper on a culture of lifelong learning, the 2020 Confintea Review of adult education all point to the view that it would be timely for a joint UNESCO/IFLA review of the existing Public Library Manifest with a view to updating and strengthening the public library role in building a creative culture of lifelong learning.

While libraries have traditionally been central in building learning cities, the need exists to strengthen the roles of cultural institutions generally in the process of cultural change directed at building a culture of lifelong learning. This is a prime area for new forms of non-traditional partnerships so that the potential of heritage and culture in building a culture of lifelong learning becomes a key driver of these developments.

7. Reimagining the role of education institutions.

The vision of a culture of lifelong learning set out in the UIL paper *Embracing a culture of lifelong learning* has major implications for all sectors of education. This vision may be summed up as building a learner-centric demand-driven education system. A further key shift was described in the following terms:

Rethinking lifelong leaning beyond the conceptual boundaries of education make it possible to reconnect learning with larger societal spheres.
(UIL, 2020:10)

This paper supports these themes and has sought to connect them to a creative process of cultural change with close links between learning and creativity throughout this development.

I have emphasised the role of systems thinking in connecting traditional education objectives in learning ecosystems that link socio-economic objectives to wider biological and planetary objectives. This will be a key feature of the path to building a sustainable learning culture.

Examples I have given in this paper such as the Doughnut vision and the Circular Economy show systems thinking being applied to broad learning ecosystems that connect key social, economic, and cultural dimensions for a sustainable future.

The transition to a longevity society with ageing populations presents a particular issue in reimagining the roles of the education sectors, as does the future of work with the looming challenge of the technologies of the fourth industrial revolution, including artificial intelligence and the prospect of machine superintelligence.

These challenges confront the reality that the education sectors must adapt to producing students who have the skills, competences, motivation, and other attributes to thrive in this environment, and contribute as citizens in local and global environments.

Schools

The UIL paper notes that the cultural shift has "transformed the school-centred education culture, acknowledging and articulating the value of different learning systems by ensuring necessary coordination and synergy at all levels (UIL:13).

While this is the case, schools still need to produce students with the skills, competences, motivation and other attributes necessary for continuing to learn throughout life. A particular theme in this direction has been the growing interest in what has variously been called "deep learning" and 21st century competencies".

OECD has been a leader in this field from its groundbreaking De Se Co initiative to the more recent *Education 2030: The future of education and skills* (OECD, 2018). OECD work has shown the need for broader education goals directed at individual and collective well-being (Ibid:2). I have listed the OECD list of "transformative competencies" in section 2 above (Ibid:4). OECD also recognises the need for people "to learn and think in a more integrated way, taking into account the interconnections and inter-relations between contradictory or

incompatible ideas, logics, and positions from both short-and long-term perspectives. In other words, they have to learn to be systems thinkers" (ibid:4).

A further important theme in adapting the work of schools to the challenges of the 21st century, has been for schools to build foundations for entrepreneurship by fostering "an individual's ability to actualize his own ideas through a combination of creativity, innovation, risk taking, management, opportunity seeking and striving for sustainable development in different aspects of life" (You and Lee, 2017). In a labour market of fewer jobs, these are important attributes for personal and community thriving in this environment.

Some school systems are already adapting to these requirements. Singapore provides a good example with the 2015 OECD PISA assessment noting the top performance of Singapore schools which included the Singapore Framework for 21st Century Competences and Student Outcomes.

This framework included the following developmental rings.

- Outer ring-confident person, self directed learner, concerned citizen, active contributor.
- Inner ring 1 - communicator, collaboration and information skills, civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills, critical and inventive thinking.
- Inner ring 2 - self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, relationship management. (Kearns, 2018:3).

Such changes in schools will lead to schools producing students who have the skills and capabilities to be lifelong learners, and local and global citizens. These shifts will require considerable changes in the ways many schools operate, so that producing these cultural changes in school systems will be a prime area for creativity and innovation in the pedagogies adopted.

Universities

While the concept of lifelong learning universities has been around for some time, including the open university concept, progress overall has been slow marked by incremental changes rather than a cultural shift in the concept of the university role. Despite this overall situation, the lockdown conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic gave a considerable boost to off-campus delivery of university courses, and pointed the way to a more flexible university system focussed on the needs of lifelong learners in a demand-driven system adapted to a dynamic context of permanent transition.

Henkel in 2001 observed that the concepts of the learning society, knowledge society and lifelong learning "had been slow to emerge as significant influences in UK national goals for higher education" (Henkel, 2001:2). The slow progress overall was further noted when Emerson concluded, from the perspective of American experience, that "the four-year

university model needs a lifelong learning overhaul" (Emerson, 2020), and observed that universities were belatedly introducing new ways of learning.

While the COVID-19 impact gave a boost to off-campus learning, it remains to be seen whether this will lead to structural change in university programs. In some case continuing education departments have been broadening their role to provide greater flexibility in access to higher education.

Melbourne university has innovated in such directions in establishing a Melbourne School of Professional and Continuing Education which is directed at going beyond the "single shot of university at the beginning of life" to "innovate with new models, strategies and programs that meet the specific needs of lifelong learners in the context of significant societal change" (University of Melbourne, 2021). It is reasonable to expect that such innovations will spread more widely through university education in the direction of lifelong learning in a rapidly changing society with new demands on universities.

One of the influences towards lifelong learning universities is international with regional collaboration between universities through organisations such as the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) which includes leading universities, for example, Oxford and Cambridge, among its members. UALL provides a forum for exchanges of ideas and good practice, while also undertaking research

While the pace of change has been slow, it is reasonable to assume that socio- economic and demographic pressures, along with competition, will lead to more change in universities directed at lifelong learning opportunities for students and their communities.

Cross-sectoral collaboration

One of the influences for change has been the growth of cross-sectoral collaboration involving universities and other education sectors. Learning city initiatives have at time driven such developments. An example is provided by the Beijing learning city where universities such as Beijing Normal and the Beijing Academy of the Educational Sciences have collaborated with community colleges and elder universities across the districts of Beijing in furthering the Beijing learning city objectives (see, for example, Min Gui, 2020). Similar collaboration may be seen in South Korea and Taiwan.

A different model exists in the Glasgow University Centre for Sustainable, Healthy Leaning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC) where Glasgow University collaborated with nine research partners in eight countries in Asia and Africa to study the challenges of social and economic unsustainability in fast growing urban centres in these countries (Osborne and Nesterova, 2020). Cross-sectoral collaboration such as these examples will contribute to the evolution of lifelong learning universities.

Part 3. CONNECTING UP AND CONSOLIDATING : THE ART & PRACTICE of BUILDING A CREATIVE LEARNING CULTURE

Peter Senge gave his landmark book on the learning organisation a title that connects to the main themes of his paper.

The fifth discipline
The art and practice of the learning organisation

Senge saw systems thinking, which he named the fifth discipline, as the centrepiece in building a learning organisation. I have also taken the view that systems thinking, with broad cross-sectoral learning ecosystems, should be seen as a key driver in building a culture of lifelong learning through a creative learning approach.

The UIL paper *Embracing a Culture of Lifelong Learning*, and this paper, both comment on practices and principles that need to be brought into strategies for building a culture of lifelong learning.

The art lies in the ways the various practices and principles are connected up to build, over time, a culture of lifelong learning marked by qualities such as imagination, curiosity, empathy, compassion, intuition, idealism and creativity. The path for building a culture of lifelong learning should be seen through a lens of imagination and creativity.

I have suggested in this paper that innovative learning cities, addressing the mega challenges to build a sustainable future, have much in common with creative cities.

Landry described creative cities in the following terms:

> *The creative City balances a dynamic and occasionally tense equilibrium since when the old and new come together there is a creative rub. The stability is provided by an ethical framework that provides the overall guiding principles to the evolving, more creative city* (Landry, 2008)

The process of developing a culture of lifelong learning, with the clash of the old and new, will inevitably throw up critical points where the rub can be destructive or creative. For this reason, this paper has taken the position that steps need to be taken to build a predilection to seeing things in innovative terms along with attributes that foster enterprise, innovation and community.

I have seen an enabling environment for building a culture of lifelong learning as a creative environment where "certain environments have a greater density of interaction and provide more excitement and a greater effervescence of ideas" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). This should be the story of learning cities.

The critical process of connecting up the triggers for creativity and innovation discussed in this paper involves a keen sense of relationships supported by systems perspectives. Such learning ecosystems connect social/economic and biological planetary dimensions of life, for a sustainable future.

Senge and associates described this critical requirement for building a sustainable future in the following terms:

> *Connectedness is the defining feature of the new worldview, connectedness between the "outer world" of manifest phenomenon and the "inner world" of lived experience, and, ultimately connectedness among peoples and between humans and the larger world* (Senge et al, 2004:188).

Adopting systems perspectives with multiply points of intersection will lead towards deeper and richer partnerships and learning experiences in the process of cultural change . This process is intimately connected with the evolution of human consciousness that connects local and global consciousness so that "human life will achieve a new level of freedom and consciousness (Arrison,2011:xi)

The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of the theory of flow as a source of creativity, has observed that "the origins of culture can easily be explained by necessity" Csikszentmihalyi, 1996:341) with continued human evolution, well-being, and survival "requiring this capacity to increase creativity" (Ibid: 322).

His thesis that to be human means to be creative, brings the perspective that learning and creativity should be seen as insoluble partners in building a just sustainable future. The conjuncture of the mega challenges discussed in this paper poses a threat to human survival where necessity will require further cultural change and creativity.

While necessity, driven by the critical need to respond to global challenges such as pandemics, climate changes and destruction of the planet, ageing populations, fewer jobs with the evolving impact of automation and artificial intelligence may lead to policy frameworks for lifelong learning, cultural change needs to happen at the grassroots of communities where the innate human qualities of creativity will drive cultural change.

To simplify this analysis, I have suggested three stages to drive cultural change towards a culture of lifelong learning. In many communities, more stages will be involved. The QATAR Foundation WISE program in a report by its Learning Ecosystem Lab (2020) identified four stages in learning ecosystem development:

1. hypothesis and visioning,
2. catalysing and initiating,
3. dynamic experimentation,
4. mainstreaming and sustaining.

More research and sharing ideas between networks is needed.

From a learning city perspective, building and sustaining an inclusive learning city should not be seen as a mechanical process, but rather as an art form where interaction between partners, guided by cross-sectoral learning ecosystems with an appropriate ethical framework, leads to creative outcomes that benefit all partners.

Building a culture of lifelong learning should be developed as a creative learning process that disseminates, and enhances, the joy of learning for all.

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