

# BECOMING A LIFELONG LEARNING CITY: LESSONS FROM A PROVINCIAL CITY IN SOUTH KOREA

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*ABSTRACT:* This paper is designed to explore Jeonju City's strategies to build a successful lifelong learning city by analyzing the practices for the Lifelong Learning City Movement (LLCM) and then draw the limitations and needed tasks for building a Lifelong Learning City at the local government level. As Cunningham (1993) pointed out, we found some gaps between the ideal and the reality for Jeonju LLCM. Accordingly, in order to promote LLCM at the local government level successfully, the city/county should give residents autonomous rights to solve community problems with their collective efforts. It should make full use of the local resident autonomous facilities and organizations in fostering lifelong learning. It needs to place lifelong educators who plan local lifelong education projects at lifelong learning centers and institutions, offer various lifelong education programs to the citizens, and hold various lifelong education events at lifelong education institutions. In sum, Jeonju City's LLCM should provide learning opportunities for adult learners by strengthening administrative organizational structures with regard to citizen education, and allow residents to play an important role in building local learning communities by voluntarily organizing study groups under the support of the city.

*Keywords:* Lifelong Learning City, Lifelong Learning Circle, Vitalizing Local Economy, Regional Human Resource Development, Social Integration

## Background and Purpose

According to much of the literature on lifelong learning, constructing a learning society with an emphasis on citizenship, human rights, and human resource development are crucial to meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Field, 2003; Jarvis, 2006; OECD, 2001; UNESCO, 2015). The establishment of a lifelong learning city would, according to its original intent, contribute to developing regional human resources, expanding learning opportunities of the residents, forming a regional community through small, organized learning study circles, and thus forming a society of democratic citizens (IAEC, 2015).

The European Lifelong Learning Initiative sees the lifelong learning city as a learning community and defines it as "a city, town or region that mobilizes all regional resources to abundantly develop the citizens' potentiality for prosperity, maintenance of a unified society, and to promote personal advancement" (Longworth, 1999, p. 109). The Lifelong Learning City Movement (after here LLCM) in South Korea is one of the regional units of lifelong education organized as a "learning town," "learning region," or "learning community" (Kim, 2004, p. 5).

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Since the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) funded a project to create ‘educating cities’ in the 1970’s (Longworth, 2006), the idea of creating Lifelong Learning Cities has expanded throughout the world. Japan, for example, named Kakegawa as its first Lifelong Learning City (after here LLC) in 1979. Since then Japan has named 140 cities Lifelong Learning Cities. The United Kingdom created a Learning City Network (LCN) by proclaiming 80 cities Lifelong Learning Cities (Longworth, 2006). According to the International Association of Educating Cities (after here IAEC), 487 cities in 37 countries have organized and are taking part in the IAEC (IAEC, 2015). The LLC movement of South Korea has been widely popularized, primarily based on a government-centered approach. By 2015, 136 of 226 cities, counties, and districts have been named Lifelong Learning Cities. Even more impressively, the lifelong learning participation rate of Korean adults aged from 25 to 64 years in 2005 increased by 23.4% to 36.8% compared to 2004 (Korea Labor Institute [KLI], 2005; Ministry of Education [MOE] & Korean Education Development Institute [KEDI], 2014). MOE in South Korea invested a total of \$10,000,000 to fund the Lifelong Learning Cities in 2013 (MOE & KEDI, 2014). One of the Lifelong Learning Cities host national lifelong learning exposition supported by MOE. The exposition held in Seoul, hosted by Kangnam district, on September 6-9, 2015, attracted more than 1 million people to its various activities. Most of the Lifelong Learning Cities held a regional lifelong learning festival every year. It is clear from the above data that the idea of creating a Lifelong Learning City has become a central and vital part of Korean society. According to this context, many studies focusing on LLC practices at the macro level rather than the micro level have been conducted in Korea.

Otherwise, many local areas in South Korea have their own ways of creating LLCs. Findings reveal that the Jeonju City made efforts to connect all related facilities, institutions, and organizations under its own way, sociocultural and historically accumulated in the local area, in order to achieve the four purposes such as improvement of life quality, regional human resource development, vitalizing local economy, and social integration. However, challenges posed by the local area and a government-centered approach for lifelong learning hampered the LLCM by excluding marginalized people as one of the groups of major stakeholders and not achieving the four purposes of lifelong learning successfully.

Jeonju City as a lifelong learning city and a provincial city, has effectively become one of the most exemplary LLCs in South Korea under the national lifelong education system. This paper pursues drawing lessons for constructing Lifelong Learning Cities into other parts of the globe by analyzing the practices for lifelong learning city movement in Jeonju City. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the city’s strategies to build a successful lifelong learning city by (a) reviewing the history and support systems for LLCM in South Korea, (b) analyzing the practices of Lifelong Learning City in Jeonju City and (c) drawing the limitations and tasks for building LLC at local government level.

## **History and Support System for LLCM**

In order to explore history and support system for LLCM, this section reviews history of LLCM, Lifelong Education Act (LEA), and the national organizational structure for lifelong education.

### **History of LLCM**

In South Korea, the LLCM was first initiated at the local level by city/district and not led by the government at the central level (Kwon, 2004). In 1995, Chang Won City first established 'Regulation of Establishment and Management for Chang Won City Lifelong Learning Institute' but did not use the term of lifelong learning city at that time. In order to meet the residents' learning needs, the city has first established a lifelong learning center in each suburb and supported lifelong learning programs by consigning the management of centers to NGOs in the region (KEDI, 2002). Also, Gwang Myeong City first declared itself the lifelong learning city on March 9th, 1999 before the Korean government introduced and supported the lifelong learning cities project in order to maximize the expected effectiveness for LLCM (Lee, 2002). The Korean government did not regulate the LLCM until the Lifelong Education Act was amended on Lifelong Education Act in February 29, 2008.

The lifelong learning city project supported by MOE in 2001 has policies for supporting LLCM at the level of basic autonomous entities (City/County/District). The Project has provided a solid foundation for local autonomous entities to be able to promote various related activities as follows: (a) to reorganize its legislation like regulations or rules regarding lifelong education, which indicates that local autonomous entities become eligible for conducting various projects relevant to this project by establishing lifelong education ordinances, (b) to set up an organization for administering lifelong learning tasks under its administrative system, (c) to establish and reorganize lifelong learning facilities, and (d) to plan and implement local lifelong education projects for setting up organizations such as lifelong education centers or lifelong learning centers, which undertake survey, planning, and research on community lifelong learning, training employees engaged in lifelong education, lifelong learning counseling and providing information, and managing lifelong learning programs and related events (Byun et al., 2005; NILE, 2008). Like this, the LLCM has made a big contribution to systematically constructing and operating a comprehensive system for residents' lifelong learning on the local autonomous entities level in South Korea (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2015).

The 2008 amendment of the Lifelong Education Act (LEA) regulated the various contents related to the lifelong learning city project. The contents included designating and funding lifelong learning cities under article 15, organizing Lifelong Learning City Association for Cities/Counties/Districts under article 14, and designating regional lifelong learning institution by the mayor of the city/county/district, and the superintendent of local educational office under article 21. The Lifelong Learning City

Association was founded in order to facilitate the network among the lifelong learning cities. Its business office was located in the National Institute for Lifelong Education.

### Law and National Organizational Structure for Lifelong Education

The LEA of 2008 defines lifelong education as "all types of systemic educational activities other than regular school education, which includes education for diploma achievement, basic adult literacy education, vocational capacity-building education, liberal arts education, culture and arts education, and education on civic participation" (LEA Article 2). It consists of 8 chapters and 46 articles concerning general rules, basic lifelong education promotion plan, national institute for lifelong education, lifelong educators, lifelong education facilities, literacy, the management and recognition of the lifelong learning results, etc.

National organizational structures for Supporting LLCM can be divided into administrative and implementation organizations (Kwon, 2006). In administrative organizations, there is a Lifelong Learning Department in the MOE at the central government level, a Lifelong Education Division at the local government level and the District or City level. In the implementation organizations, there is the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) at the central level, sixteen Local Institutes for Lifelong Education (LILE) in each province, and over forty Lifelong Learning Centers in city and district levels. The structure for supporting LLCM is depicted in Figure 1(Kwon, 2015).

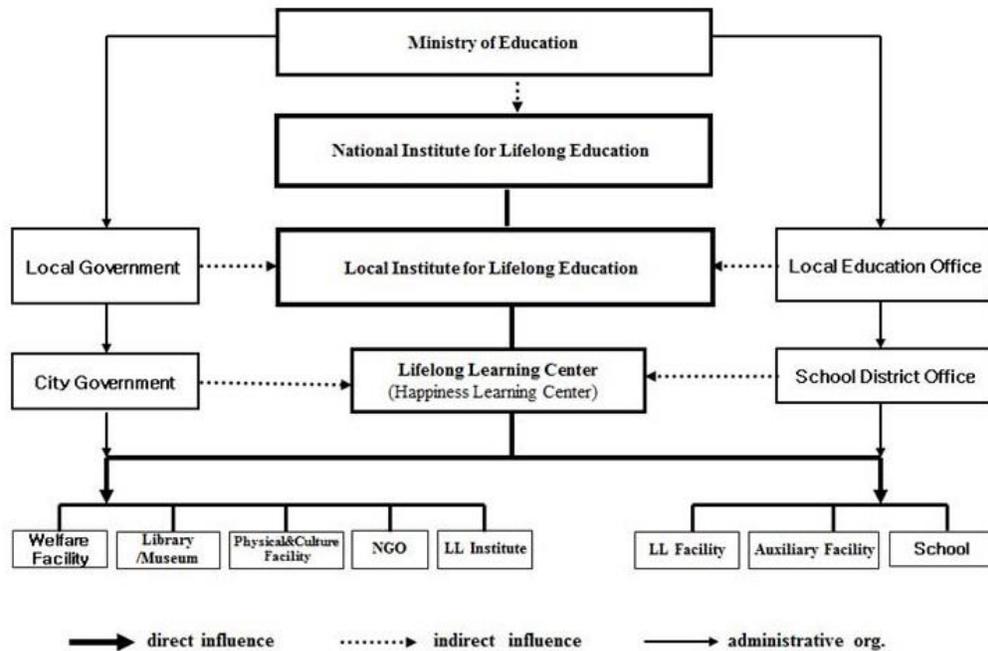


Figure 1. The national organizational structure for lifelong learning in Korea

## **Projects and Programs Supported by the MOE**

The MOE has provided the designated lifelong learning cities with generous and comprehensive support. Cities/counties/districts operate various projects and programs by using the fund of MOE.

### **Initial Project and Maintenance Fund Support for Building LLC**

In order for designated lifelong learning cities to promote their LLCM, the MOE not only supports an initial project promotion fund, but also aids needed budgets for managing public subscription programs. In addition to this, the MOE operates a lifelong learning city consulting project for counseling the lifelong learning city movement, and the regional lifelong learning information system construction project for building a regional lifelong learning information support system.

### **Happiness Learning Support Center**

By 2013, the MOE supported the Happiness Learning Support Center project by way of showing an example in order to support residents-friendly learning with residents' lives in the local region. The MOE selected 95 of 226 city/county/districts to support the operation of this center. The center has been operated at several lifelong learning institutions or community centers within the regions of local autonomous entities (cities/counties/ districts). It hired lifelong learning coordinators or managers and operated customized education programs demanded by residents. It provided learning information to residents by operating a learning cafe.

### **Operating Credit Bank System (CBS)**

CBS-accredited institutions include both informal and formal educational institutions. Individuals can receive degrees if they have obtained enough credits from them. Some lifelong cities including Chilgok County, Gwangmyeong city, and Yeongin city are offering credit courses and operating lifelong learning colleges affiliated to them by CBS. Residents who have finished their courses can receive a bachelor's degree or associate degree from the MOE.

### **Lifelong Learning Account System**

The system is a system that aims to expand the foundation for the social utilization of learned skills and knowledge by cataloging and managing people's various experiences in online learning accounts and then connecting them to academic careers and opportunities, or using them for employment information. LLC helps adult learners register their learning experience into the lifelong learning account system. The number of learning account was 47,826 and learning registered programs were 2,352 in 2014.

## **Literacy Education for Adult Learners**

MOE supports improvements in basic livelihood and social participation to design new opportunities for the illiterate and low-educated adult learners by providing literacy education programs and the academic credential recognition system. In order to support literacy education institutes and their programs, MOE selects and fosters regional literacy education institutes and supports the cost of program operation. They develop instructional materials through LLCs. Specifically; an academic credential recognition system helps the illiterate and low-educated adult learners receive primary and middle school diplomas through participation in literacy programs designated by the provincial superintendents of education. In order to support academic credential recognition system through literacy education, it also cultivates literacy education teachers who will manage designated literacy education courses

### **Practices for LLCM in Jeonju City**

#### **Background and Objectives**

Jeonju City was designated by MOE as an LLC in 2004. Education has been selected as one of the three major city policies due to several reasons: (a) mayor's ambition and willingness for pursuing lifelong learning, (b) the citizens' high needs for participating in the lifelong learning, and (c) the education environment that reconciles both traditional culture and modernity. The purposes for building an LLC are improvement of life quality, regional human resource development, vitalizing local economy, social integration, and building a traditional cultural city (Kwon, 2005). The promoting sub systems includes a lifelong learning center, a lifelong learning institutional council, a lifelong education division within the city as an administrative organization, and an education support division within Jeonju Educational Support Office. The major projects were establishing the foundation of the lifelong learning, practicing the high quality citizen education, connecting the lifelong learning with schools, and supporting education for the neglected class.

#### **Practices and Current Status for Lifelong Learning**

Jeonju lifelong learning city is led by city hall and the Jeonju educational supporting office. The promotion body is the lifelong learning center of Jeonju City. It established partnership through the conference between lifelong learning institutions. It is operating lifelong learning webpage, various lifelong learning programs, and multiple conferences and forum by lifelong learning professionals. According to the implementing system of the lifelong learning city in Jeonju City, outcomes of the program and projects practiced for lifelong learning in 2014 can be categorized by the four major areas such as improvement of life quality, regional human resource development, vitalizing local economy, and social integration (Jeonju Lifelong Learning Center, 2015). The next section illustrates the outcomes of these four areas.

## **Improvement of the Life Quality**

In order to improve Jeonju citizens' life quality, there are projects and programs such as participation in the national lifelong learning exposition, organization and activation of lifelong learning circles, operation of reading circles, humanity courses, generation unification courses, and leisure and hobby courses. First, the major lifelong learning institutions in Jeonju City participate in a national lifelong learning exposition every year. The program example is providing promotional booth and gallery; moreover, they operate an experiential program that publicizes special regional program. Second, new lifelong learning circles are being organized and activated every year. For this, Jeonju City financially supported 38 lifelong learning circles in 2014. Third, Jeonju City supports the unification and activation of book clubs and reading circles. In order to activate activities of reading circles and facilitate communication between them, the city supported various activities of reading circles in 64 local areas. Examples of the major activities include newspaper, forum, debate, institutional assembly that supports the budget, book clubs, and reading circles. Fourth, the city offered courses for humanity academy such as history or traditional subjects open to citizens. In 2014, humanity academy offered 35 courses in five subject fields. Fifth, the city operated humanity academy to promote generation unification. In 2014, about 400 adults and 200 schoolers attended the academy. Sixth, non-formal lifelong learning programs such as leisure and hobby courses were offered at the city's lifelong learning center. In 2014, 32 courses were taken by about 2000 people.

## **Regional Human Resource Development**

In order to develop local human resources, the city is supporting programs such as education courses for Korean traditional culture for elementary students, networking opportunities for those employed in lifelong educational institutions and groups, courses for bringing up and training Lifelong Educational Instructors, and training leaders for Lifelong Learning Circle. First, the city opens courses for traditional cultural experience in order for young schoolers to learn historical figure's spirit. To train a person who can love both local city and country, the traditional culture courses were offered for local elementary students at the Traditional Culture Training Center. Second, the city hosted and supported Jeonbuk Provincial Network for employees of lifelong educational institutions and groups. Third, the city operated courses for educating Lifelong Educational Instructors. They offered courses in different levels such as basic courses, professional courses, and special courses for Lifelong Educational Instructors. Fourth, the city educated the leaders for organizing and operating Lifelong Learning Circle. They have performed the roles of coordinator for a lifelong learning circle and manager for multiple learning circles. The training period was 6 months. In 2014, 60 students were trained and appointed as lifelong learning leaders.

## **Vitalizing Local Economy**

Jeonju City held the lifelong learning products display and exhibition for local economic activation during the Jeonju Lifelong Learning Festival. First, Jeonju City held the Lifelong Learning Festival composed of about 100 lifelong education institutions and lifelong learning circles. The main focus was to promote each institution's and group's activities in general. Second, the city displayed the products about lifelong learning and provided exhibitions to make products commercialized. Examples are chinaware products, paper art, western art, and eastern art. The samples of the displayed products were sold in the traditional crafts exhibit hall in Jeonju City.

## **Social Integration**

For social inclusion, Jeonju City implemented several initiatives for social integration. Those were special courses for networking regional lifelong education institutions, providing lifelong learning information, neglected classes for lifelong learning, and Hope School for resolving adults' illiteracy. First, for special courses for networking among regional lifelong education institutions, for example, the city provided supports for several areas in retired citizens' social participation, local community problem solution, and sharing the results for institutional coexistence. Second, the city offered comprehensive information about citizens' lifelong learning to its citizens. For instance, those were e-newsletter, lifelong learning webpage, lifelong learning exhibit through social network services, and lifelong learning light board. Third, the city supported neglected classes due to regional, educational, and age differential problems. Support of the neglected classes program was focused on fixed and visiting programs and 30 institutional programs were funded in 2014. Fourth, adults' literacy education and basic education diploma could be obtained through the adult Hope School. Major institutions and groups of this program include evening schools, elder welfare programs, social welfare programs, and prisoner programs. About 200 people have been benefiting from this program.

## **Limitations and Tasks for LLCM at Local Government Level**

### **Limitations of Jeonju LLCM**

It has been 11 years since Jeonju City was selected by MOE as a lifelong learning city. Accomplishments and limitations for LLCM are discussed in this section. In view of limitations of adult education, as Cunningham (1993) pointed out, Jeonju City's LLC has a gap between its ideal and reality that needs to be addressed for improving its current practices. First, Jeonju City's lifelong learning city policy is humanism oriented, but in reality, it is not. According to Cunningham, the myth for adult education is to help adult learners achieve self-actualization to be a better person and a better societal member; however, in reality the city's practices in adult learning are oriented toward and for the sake of learning city policies. Second, the city's policy on lifelong learning is insufficient to reduce the gap between the educated and the non-educated. Based on Cunningham, the main goal of adult education is to reduce the gap between those who learned and those

who are neglected for educational opportunities, but more chances for lifelong learning were given to the educated in Jeonju City. As an example, the lifelong learning for Jeonju citizens indicated high participation from middle to high class citizens and low participation from low class citizens (in terms of annual income level). Third, Jeonju's lifelong learning city was not centered on learners and did not empower adult learners. Cummingham (1993) emphasized that adult education practices should be learner oriented and should enlighten learners to become knowledge workers. Jeonju City's lifelong learning initiative seemed to not center on individual learners but on teaching practices and program implementation matters. Also, it lacked empowering of adult learners by excluding learners from the practice. Fourth, Jeonju City lifelong learning policy was weak in pursuing social equity. According to Cunningham (1993), adult education may fail in pursuing social equity due to racial, sexual, and class discrimination. Some of the Jeonju City's lifelong learning programs are considered inappropriate in the areas of multi-cultural education, elderly education, and neglected classes. Fifth, the policy for developing lifelong learning city was not consistent and sometimes biased. The goals of developing Jeonju lifelong learning city included improvement of life quality, regional human resource development, vitalizing local economy, and social integration. Many programs were developed to accomplish these purposes, but programs for vitalizing local economy were a few. Sixth, since 2007, the government budget for lifelong learning cities has been reduced. To overcome this issue, Jeonju City government tried to raise a fund to support its programs, but a failure to expand the fund slowed the development of new lifelong learning programs. Seventh, lifelong learning networks and partnerships between institutions and learners have been superficial and weak. Eighth, it has been more than 10 years since Jeonju City was appointed as a lifelong learning city, but the lifelong learning infrastructure including lifelong learning implemented? organizations, human resources, and finances is still not complete and in process. Ninth, in improving the lifelong learning city, an evaluation system for monitoring the feedbacks from citizen and stockholders does not exist.

### **Accomplishments for of Jeonju LLCM**

There are, however, several accomplishments of the Jeonju City's lifelong learning initiatives including improvement in the recognition of lifelong learning, diversification and extension of regional lifelong learning program, building networking for regional community, improvement of professionalism for regional lifelong educators, expansion of local government's investment, and building legal and institutional bases for lifelong learning.

First, after the Jeonju City was selected as a lifelong learning city, the recognition of citizens' lifelong learning and motivating their participation for learning have been improved to a significant degree. The citizen's pride in loving one's city leads to increase in the participation for lifelong learning, feelings for settlement, and established identity of the region. Second, through the analysis of citizen's need, lifelong learning programs could identify learning needs for the program clients. Due to this effort, various lifelong learning programs could be developed and supported by a city. Third, the city has been improving the quality of learning service through forming a network between lifelong learning institutions, reframing institutions for lifelong learning, and reinforcing lifelong

learning educators' ability. The city is also leading the unification of lifelong learning service for citizens by forming the network between educational institutes and the local government. Fourth, the city launched a lifelong learning center. They hired lifelong education experts and also trained public officials, leaders of each learning circle, NGO leaders for understanding the importance of lifelong learning. Furthermore, the city strengthened professional lifelong education by expanding the placement of experts in lifelong education institutions. Fifth, the city has been securing and increasing the budget for lifelong learning education through annual provincial assembly meetings to support lifelong educational institutions and expand the citizen's opportunity for lifelong learning. Sixth, the city has been enacting rules and its ordinances to support citizen's lifelong learning consistently, and forming a promotion institution called lifelong learning center to improve communication between lifelong learning institutions.

### **Tasks for LLCM at Local Government Level**

On the other hand, from the analysis of the practices of Jeonju LLC, tasks for building a lifelong learning city in South Korea seemed to successfully meet the need for vitalizing regional lifelong learning such as modifying laws for supporting lifelong education administration, securing at least 1% of national budget for lifelong education, setting clear purpose and direction for regional lifelong learning, structuring provincial lifelong education organization, actualizing lifelong education promotion system, introducing recognition systems for monitoring lifelong learning city policy, educating lifelong learning professionals, arranging them and enhancing their abilities, operating bottom-up lifelong learning systems on behalf of citizen, organizing and vitalizing learning circles, and separating and networking local lifelong education implementation systems between city government and local education support.

### **Conclusion and Suggestion**

Although the achievements of nationwide LLCM have contributed in building local learning communities, social integration, and local development in South Korea, the political, social and economic rationales for the Korean LLCs movement have not been adequately addressed. Nor has the impact on society been adequately dealt by the LLCM at the city government level. This paper explored Jeonju city's strategies to build a successful lifelong city by analyzing the practices for LLCM and then provide the limitations and tasks for building Lifelong Learning City at local government level. As a conclusion, we found a gap between the ideal and the reality for Jeonju LLCM as Cunningham (1993) had pointed out. First, LLCM in Jeonju city is targeting for lifelong learning from a humanitarian perspective, but in reality it is not practicing the philosophy. Second, it failed to reduce the gap between the educated and the non-educated. Third, it is not centered on the learner and not empowering adult learners. Fourth, it is insufficient in pursuing social equity. Fifth, policies for building a LLC in Jeonju City are not consistent and unbalanced in order to overcome the gap between ideal and reality for LLCM. Sixth, Jeonju City government tried to sustain an appropriate level of operation fund, but the effort was not effective compared to other cities. Seventh, lifelong learning networks and partnerships are superficial in nature. Eighth, lifelong

learning infrastructure is immature. Ninth, a monitoring system for improving LLC through getting feedbacks from citizens and stockholders does not exist.

In order to promote LLCM at the local government level successfully, the city/county should give residents autonomous right to solve community problems with their collective efforts. It should make a full use of the local residents' autonomous facilities and organizations in fostering lifelong learning. It should place lifelong educators who plan local lifelong education projects at various centers and institutions, offer various lifelong education programs, and hold various lifelong education events at lifelong education institutions. In sum, Jeonju's LLCM should provide learning opportunities for adult learners by strengthening administrative organizational structure with regard to citizen education, and encouraging residents to play an important role in building local learning communities by voluntarily organizing study groups under the support of the city.

Lastly, as a suggestion for the Korean lifelong education policies for building LLCM successfully, LLCM needs to be implemented vertically from the central government to local regions and at the same time, horizontally integrated through cooperation between local and regional agencies in order to embed lifelong learning in the whole life of the people. Also, lifelong education should be recognized as a key strategy in building a national safety guard and to increase social investment. Moreover, the immediate future will call for increasingly creative humans, so flexible lifelong education systems need to be established in order to foster a learning environment at workplaces. In an increasingly globalized marketplace, national competitiveness can be equipped through lifelong education. Therefore, an active global network should be created in order to establish an internationally adaptable system for networking and educational accreditation.

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