



Identify the Native Components of the Learning City of Ahwaz from the Perspective of Elites and City Managers

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ABSTRACT

Learning city uses lifelong learning and all resources to promote citizens situation and increase social cohesion and create success for the citizens. The purpose of this study is to identify indicators of learning city in Ahwaz. In this study, viewpoints of 16 managers in Ahwaz have been investigated using qualitative and semi-structured interview tools. Findings show that Ahwaz requires special indicators in the three pillars of learning city (a) the infrastructure to build a city of learning, (b) the main block to build a learning city (c) extended advantages to build a learning city.

KEYWORDS: Learning City, Lifelong Learning, Ahwaz

INTRODUCTION

The numbers of countries which enter to knowledge field are increasing. So, "brain power" is replaced by "arm strength" and "hertz power" is replaced by "horse power". Someone believes these changing toward societies based on knowledge are same as a historical evolution from agricultural period to industrial age. When this evolution is happening, focus and main concerns of societies as training is based on continuous changing. In the knowledge society, learning and knowledge creation are main focus in the training activities and professional innovations. Societies are changing toward learning societies increasingly to empower their citizens in the global economic field and activate social, cultural and public associations (Thrilling, 2005). Learning city is a new and ongoing thought. Although there have been urban and regional studies in several decades, but learning city term has been emerged in the late of 20th century. Today, most of cities in the world use learning city idea to deal with their challenges in a correct way. Each city needs specific components and indexes based on social, economic, cultural, political and geographical features to achieve learning city. The purpose of this study is to identify local indexes of Ahwaz city to change it to a learning city. First, concept of learning city and related concepts and elites prospective are discussed and then managers and scientist opinions of Ahwaz city are analyzed. Then, some indexes are provided to change Ahwaz city to a learning city.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology of this study is applicative in term of purpose criterion and is descriptive-survey in term of methodology. Statistical societies in this study included all managers and elites of Ahwaz city and are selected using clustering. Ahwaz municipality and Shahid Chamran elites are two clusters. Samples had experienced administrative management in the city or manage and study about the topic and related researches. All members were invited to participate in the interview and finally 16 persons announced their agreement to participate in the interview. Semi-structured interview tool was used to gather view points of samples. Guidance was prepared to implement interview and validity of interview was approved by researches and several professors of educational science in Ahwaz Shahid Chamran University. Finally, interviews were organized by selecting coding.

Evolution of learning city concept

Learning society concept has been discussed at the late of 1960. In 1972, this concept has been introduced by international education commission report by Faure as "learning to live: today and tomorrow education world" in UNESCO. It has been interpreted that education is not allocated to rich population and specific age; therefore, it is necessary to be included in all society and individuals life. Faure wanted UNESCO membership to review training structures: first, a learning society is a society in which all public and private institutes and organizations are training provider and second, all citizens are involved in the learning process and use provided opportunities in the learning city (Mehrali Zadeh, 1: 2012)

In 1995, an article has been published by European Union as "training and learning: toward a learning society". Learning society thought has been reminded again after several years. Faure report about UNESCO has been published in 1972 and is considered as one of most important training reform documents in 20th century. (Those were in the training department in 1970 and were familiar to lifelong learning (learning to be), have heard the concept). In this decade, this concept has been entered to lifelong learning terms by UNESCO, while declined in several years later.

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Learning society approach in the Faure report and the literature which is emerged this concept is defined as a philosophical and ideal concept. In other hand, theoretical approach of lifelong learning has been analyzed after Faure pragmatism (Wain, 2007)

If learning is included in all life of individual, “training systems” should go beyond to receive a step to form a learning society. (Faure, 1972)

This was last strategic idea of Faure about lifelong learning and implementing training system to receive learning society. It means, when learning is involved in the society, all financial and human resource should be cooperated for learning. “Training systems” is placed in a citation, because learning society is not considered as a “system” in the report. Its purpose for the learning society is not just imagination of formal training systems in the extended form to involve whole the society as learning society (Similar: 52), it means creating a thing which is defined as contemptuous by Verne and Illich 1976 as ‘Global Classroom’. This kind of learning is broadcasted to whole life and included extended fields like home, neighborhood, work place and social spaces in the short-time and lifetime and is not just included formal aspect (under teachers control by training in specific place). This kind of learning is included non-formal and informal aspects and these aspects are known as learning society aspects and their importance have been approved. In this kind of learning, government is considered as a partner to other departments, representatives, economic beneficiaries and social and cultural departments and in the Faure report is considered as a strategic device which promotes learning society by human, political and cultural procedures. (Wain, 2007)

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) has supported lifetime learning approach for long time. Although this was recurrent education at first and its specific sign was a lifetime strategy for learning. This report has been interested by governments and non-government organizations and education system in 1973.

European commission announced 1996 year as European lifelong learning and has provided a document. This document has been followed by factory owner and European industries owners to define “Learning society”. Then, phrases, words, actions and innovations have been increased (Longworth, 2003:9)

In 1973, OECD was pioneer to create “Learning city” and seven cities (Edmonton Canada, Edinburgh Scotland, and Petersburg America, KaGiGava Japan, Gothenburg Sweden, Vienna Australia and Adelaide Australia) have been participated in this innovation. This concept has been developed in the first international congress about training city by Barcelona in 1990 and training has been progressed and several principles have been specified by training city. These principles in this congress include:

- Needs to integrate programs
- Relationship between training and cultural development
- Need to deal with inequalities and request for training during life
- In 1996, importance of learning has been highlighted:

UNESCO: Learning: The treasure within

OECD: lifelong learning for all individuals

European Union announced 1996 as European year for lifelong learning (Yang, 2010)

In the recent action for learning city and supporting China education ministry and Beijing municipality, UNESCO organized first international congress for learning cities and held in Beijing China from 21 to 23 of October in 2013. Host of this congress were UNESCO lifelong learning institute (UIL), China national commission in UNESCO and Beijing municipality.

Topic of this congress was “lifelong learning for all: success and sustainability in all cities which have three sub topics

- Creating a framework to establish a learning city
- Creating departments of a learning city
- Main strategies to build a learning city

This congress has some administrative commitment for municipality training department:

1. Empower individual capacities and social integration
2. Developing cultural and economic success and development
3. Broadcasting sustainability development
4. Broadcasting comprehensive learning from basic to superior
5. Surviving learning in the families and society
6. Facilitate learning in the work climate
7. Develop and utilize technologies of modern learning
8. Increasing the quality of learning
9. Building a learning culture in the life
10. Increasing commitment and political desire
11. Improving supervision and participation of all beneficiaries.
12. Empowering and utilizing resources

This statement stated that, UNESCO tries to create an international network of learning cities (statement of learning city international congress, 2013)

Formal Learning, Non-Formal Learning, Informal Learning

All learning is not in training field. European commission notes about lifelong learning highlights three purposeful learning activities:

Formal learning: is located in educational institutes and leads to awarding certificates and documents.

Non-formal learning: is placed beside education systems and generally doesn't lead to award formal certificates. This kind of learning is occurred in work climates by civil social groups and organizations (like youth organizations, business departments and political meetings). This kind of learning could be occurred by services or organizations which is established for complete formal systems (like sport classes, art, music or private coach to be ready for exam)

Informal learning: is supplement of daily life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessary for deliberate learning and is organized by individual to help self knowledge and skills (Longworth, 2003:44)

Concept of Lifelong Learning

Gardiner (1998) defined lifelong learning as "lifelong learning is a multidimensional approach of self-education which flows throughout individual life and depends on individual motivation. This kind of learning is influenced by private resource, work resource and self-efficiency. Lifelong learning could be derived many forms and methods and maximize individual capacities directly using studies and projects".

Concept of Learning City

As international congress in Beijing in China on 2013 October, learning city is defined as a city which integrated all resources for below purposes in per department

Promote comprehensive learning form basic to superior education

Activate learning in family and societies

Facilitate learning in work climates

Development use of modern learning technologies

Increasing quality and superiority of learning

Promote learning culture throughout the life

If above purposes met, individual capacities and social integration is empowered and cultural and social successes are provided.

In short, learning city is a city or region which use all resource in all urban departments to promote individuals, social, cultural, political and economic opportunities and provide success for citizens (Longworth, 2011)

Concept of learning city should not be interpreted as technology or industry tendency, while technology plays important role, but there are many factors in the city structure or learning society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learning city is a continuous process and there is no magical way to recognize on city as learning city. There are features to recognize learning. In this study, key features of learning city are placed in three categorization or main base. These three bases include infrastructure to build a learning city, main blocks to build a learning city and extended advantage to build a learning city. Then main and local components for Ahwaz city are identified. In this way, the study tries to respond three below questions:

1. What are local components of learning city for Ahwaz city in infrastructure situation to build a learning city?
2. What are local components of learning city for Ahwaz city in main blocks to build a learning city?
3. What are local components of learning city for Ahwaz city in extended advantages to build a learning city?

First Question: Infrastructure Situation to Build a Learning City

Interviewees believes each society and city encounters to specific challenges which some of them are related to that city or society. To implement each idea, some studies should be done in the society.

Strategies and infrastructures vary for different regions.

one of problems in the developing countries is that follow developed countries. For example, learning city in developed city is based on social, cultural, political and technologic history. We just see final results and don't see infrastructures of this idea and decided to implement it. We have started such way in industry and technology discussion. If we want to start activities in a correct way, first infrastructures should be created. Correct attitudes and basics are needed to build a learning city.

Local components and indexes of learning city in infrastructure basic are categorized in three dimensions:

A. Government and beneficiaries participation

Almost, 81% of interviewees didn't accept current management structure to build a learning city. Also, 75% of interviewees believe that aware and empathy managers are need. They believes firs, managers should be trained to facilitated citizens awareness.

Person No. 2 (April 2014) stated that individuals and specially managers should feel necessity of this work before anything. First, managers should be justifies and should be learned from up to low. Ahwaz city needs to a basic change; it means, changing urban management structure. There are not suitable cooperation among different departments and instituted in the city. Therefore, policies and trainings are not equal and consistent. This work needs to a power more than ordinary people. So mangers should be justified and trained (person No. 3, April 2014) because they have administrative and financial ability. I believe training should be done form up to low; it means, first manages should be informed and then this information should be transformed to people (person No. 10, May 2014)

Also, person No. 4 (April 2014) stated that municipality is responsible to create culture position for people. In developed countries, municipality is responsible for the city. Municipality has comprehensive management and all service organizations are working under municipality control. But we could act better and provide better services.

Learner thought is so important. Other activities are not run without thought (Person No. 12, May 2014). Basic of learning city should be created in thinkers. Someone who is interested to work in this field should be linked to municipality (Person No. 4 April 2014). First, managers should be learner thought because they influence on planning. Always, individual works are done, but supporting by powerful resources like administrative and financial supports are so important. So, learner thought should be created in the managers first and they should be justified and inform about importance of this issue to support this idea (Person No. 10 May 2014)

Training, research and information to people are underlying factor of learning city. Integration of training and activities is more important. Departments and institutes should be correlated to work coherently (Person No. 1 April 2014)

Totally, interviewees believe that government participation and all beneficiaries are needed to create infrastructure to build a learning city. Also, urban comprehensive management, skillful managers, correlation between departments and different institutes, government support, interaction between managers and citizens, learner thought in the city, comprehensive training and activities and consistent policies facilitate this action.

B. View point, Political Desire and Commitment

Almost 94% (15 persons) of interviewees believed that learning city should be investigated in Ahwaz city and required actions should be used based on the challenges. Also, 37% (6 persons) of interviewees believes that political desire and public commitment is needed to reform a structure and local of city. 81% (13 persons) of interviewees believes that Ahwaz resident's fixation is low and should be mentioned in citizens training.

One of problems in the developing countries is that follow developed countries. For example, learning city in developed city is based on social, cultural, political and technologic history. We just see final results and don't see infrastructures of this idea and decided to implement it. We have started such way in industry and technology discussion. If we want to start activities in a correct way, first infrastructures should be created. Correct attitudes and basics are needed to build a learning city (Person No. 7 April 2014).

One of most important factor to categorize component in Ahwaz is geographical factor. If we want to establish safety in Ahwaz for learning and live, first ecology like (dust, hot weather, industrial pollution etc ...) should be investigated (Person No. 11 May 2014)

Desire of citizens is most important infrastructure factor to build a learning city. This commitment leads to develop a city (Person No. 5 May 2014). Every person should be supply some services. This needs to desire in the city (between managers and citizens) (Person NO. 13, May 2014). Managers and citizens should be integrated and cooperated to do any actions (Person No. 6, April 2014)

Fixation in Ahwaz is low for many reasons. One of most important reason is that more than 50 % of people are immigrants and have strong cultures. In the conducted studies, fixation to the city is not regarded (Person No. 3 April 2014). Ahwaz citizens didn't train well about fixation and this is due to bad performance of cultural institutes like education systems, universities, Islamic guidance, advertisement organization and municipality (Person No. 9, May 2014). More than 50% of urban populations in Ahwaz are emigrants, so fixation to Ahwaz is so low. In the conducted training, fixation issue was not mentioned well. City has been converted to work city and this is clear in the weekend. Khuzestan is a job attraction (Person No. 16 May 2014). First, citizen's fixation should be promoted and this is done by holding festivals and meeting (Person No. 13, May 2014)

Totally, interviewees believe that appropriate attitude and basics should be implemented in Ahwaz to increase view points, political desire and commitment. Modification of biological structures and creates a suitable environment; fixation of residents is investigated to build a learning city and commitment of managers and citizens in Ahwaz.

C) Providing and using resources and potentials

Interviewees believe that Ahwaz has been converted to a threat due to weak planning. All interviewees mentioned industry of Ahwaz city as a biological threat and believes main potential of Ahwaz has been converted to a threat. Main potentials include industry and diversity of subcultures.

Person No 7 (May 2014) believes that industry of Ahwaz is most important potential and unfortunately converted to a threat for biological environment. Industries don't service to people for the loss for people. For example, in the oil industry VAT on oil sales or a percentage of the amount of pollution produced in the province should be paid to Khuzestan, but this action is not done (Person No. 11 May 2014)

One of most important factors in Ahwaz is that a lot of industries exist. These industries create employment and motivation to growth Ahwaz youth (Person No. 5 April 2014). Industries cause pollutions, but have strengths like employment and motivation to growth youth, so is strongly potential in economic field (Person No. 3 April 2014). Industry is considered as a potential when is used correctly. When we are applying opportunities, all departments and institutes are integrated to work. Otherwise, these opportunities are changed to a threat (Person No. 8 May 2014). Although most wealth in the country is supplied by Khuzestan, but there is unemployment problem in this city (Person No. 8 May 2014)

Other important component in Ahwaz is converting subcultures to opportunities and this facilitate by holding festivals and presenting customs of each race (Person No. 4, April 2014). People understand subcultures by these festivals, museum etc... (Person No.9, April 2014). Citizens in Ahwaz have high acceptance ability and accept other cultures easily. High acceptance and subcultures are factors which help learning city by focusing it (Person No. 10, May 2014)

Escape phenomenon elite in Ahwaz is very high. Elites, economic, scientific, cultural, and rarely live in Ahwaz and this could be one factor in learning. There are non-local managers in Ahwaz. Environmental factors and climate

affect the people's collective life. For example, most of the daily activities are outside of the circle, which is usually after 5 PM (Person No. 3 May 2014)

Totally, Ahwaz should use economic and industrial potential to improve public situation, utilize diversity potential and increase citizen's ability, employment. Using citizen ability and managers is useful to increase social coherent.

The Second Question: Main Blocks to Build Learning City

87.3 % (14 persons) of interviewees believe that citizenship training is required in these programs. Marginalization is one of challenges in Ahwaz is, so these training is required for migrants. They believes, Ahwaz citizens need to an active culture for learning throughout their life

Increasing level of public awareness is required to create learning city. This is possible by building cultural place and programs (Person No. 8, April 2014) but cultural investment is done slowly. There are good actions in the mosques, but courses like reading books are needed. There are some program like training calligraphy and religious issues in the mosque too. These actions increase interaction and awareness in the society (Person No. 5, May 2014). There are some program like training calligraphy and religious issues in the mosque too. These actions lead to promoting these activities (Person No. 12, May 2014)

There is no cultural center in Ahwaz, while it is required in the city. Culture is a set of beliefs that shows citizen's life style. Holding festival and celebrities is well, while financial support is not sufficient in this field. Citizens learn to live happy, religious training help people to solve their problems and strength life of families. In order to reduce immigration, managers should be trained and training should be done in the city (Person No. 5, April 2014)

Ahwaz has marginalization life and many villages are in the city. Marginalization is challenges facing the city. (Person No. 9 May 93). Living in big cities needs to some components. Immigrants should be trained who arrived in the city (Person No. 4, April 2014)

House hold women should understand national books like Shahnameh, Masnavi etc.... this is so simple in the first glance, but its impact will be revealed in the long-term. Women in Ahwaz should be understood Iranian cultures and read book (Person No. 1, April 2014)

Activities like holding exhibitions like book exhibition in the park, museum, family participation, social –cultural place and revival of public libraries are so important to receive learning city (Person No. 7 May 2014)

There are Intensive Park and shop center in Ahwaz and this causes cooperation. Citizens could be trained through indirect training and cultural activities (Person No. 9, May 2014). Ahwaz needs to high quality transportation system and more tourism and entertainment. These activities increase respect sense in the citizens (Person NO. 3 April 2014)

Training programs for vulnerable people like disabled should be increased and retired persons should be mentioned (Person NO. 8, May 2014). House hold women have high potential but they are not applied in any work. At the moment, their hobbies are going out and purchase. This hurts economy and families. Activities and programs should be implemented in the parks or public places to entertain them or employ them (Person No. 13 May2014). At the moment, there are celebrities in the city which is not used for citizen skill training (Person No. 7 April 2014)

Totally, to create main blocks in the learning city, actions like increasing level of awareness in citizens, facilitate cultural investment, using cultural activities in the mosques, using Islamic training, exist of sufficient institute, exist of suitable program for families, empowering society, training to vulnerable people and increasing their spirit, using women capacities, direct and indirect training, suitable programs in the parks and museum for retired, revival of public library, suitable transportation in the city, holding annual festival and congress should be done to increase citizens skills in this city.

The Third Question: extended advantages to build a learning city

87.5% (14 persons) of interviewees believes that learning city cause to comprehensive development. They believe that learning city increase sustainable development, social –cultural success and economic success. This action leads to sustainable development and social inequality is reduced. Suitable environment is created and in short, leads to comprehensive development (Person No. 3 April 2014). When members in the society are working together, fixation is increased and more than sustainable development is created. Sustainable development is one so important today. This is an ideal. This ideal means breathing necessity. You know advantages of breathing. These advantages are good (Person No. 7 April 2014). This idea is knowledge based, so leads to comprehensive development. (Person No.4 April 2014). When all people in the society are noted, this leads to increasing participation and spirit. For example, running match in the park for a retired person could prevent depression (Person No. 11 May 2014)

One of result of such idea is to that citizen supply services to the society. Disappointing is reduced in the society and citizenship right is understood in the society. Level of hygiene is increased and damages like accident, addiction and crime are reduced. Public culture is increased and local economy is improved (Person No. 8 April 2014). The first effect is promotion of culture level in the society and level of welfare is increased too. Promotion of hygiene level is so important in Ahwaz due to hot climate (Person No. 10, May 2014)

There are advantages in creating learning city. These advantages include promoting culture level and improving economic situation, sustainable development, increasing welfare level and hygiene, reducing social disorders, equality, decreasing deprivation, fixation, increasing self-confidence, social coherence, increasing citizens ability, correlation between different organizations and institutes in the society and finally citizens participation about future.

Conclusion

Urban life and following challenges are increasing in the cities. Government, managers and coaches try to find solutions to solve these challenges. One of new solution is learning city. Ahwaz needs to create component and indexes to build learning department. The most important components are appropriate planning and using resources to promote and develop it. Most highlighted potential in this city is economic potential, variation of industries and sub cultures in the city. These indexes and component are summarized in the tables 1 to 3.

Table 1 -The Required Indices and Components to Build the Infrastructure of Learning City in Ahwaz

A) partnership of government and stakeholders
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Urban Integrated Management 2. Having a knowledgeable and caring staff and managers 3. The relationship between the various city departments and agencies 4. Government support of non-governmental organizations and associations 5. Communication between authorities and citizens 6. The thinking learner in the city 7. The alignment and coherence of institutions and departments of education and activities 8. The alignment of policies and features of the city with its cultural goals
B) View point, Political Desire and Commitment
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Correct administrators and citizens' attitudes and bases in Ahwaz 2. The city of Ahwaz in the context of learning and implementing local projects studied in the context of the city 3. Modification of biological structures and create a suitable environment for the citizens 4. Sense of belonging and citizenship for residents of the city of residents in Ahwaz 5. Fixation of Ahwaz citizens to create a learning city 6. The commitment and loyalty of officials, managers and residents in Ahwaz
C) Providing and using resources and potentials
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of the economic potential of the industry to improve the city 2. Making use of the potential ability of citizens to increase ability in subcultures 3. Employment Given the number of Industry in City 4. Acceptance of the citizens of the city of Ahwaz in order to promote social cohesion 5. The deployment of managers and local authorities in Ahwaz

Table 2 -The Required Indices and Components to Build Learning City in Ahwaz in the building block fields

Building blocks to create learning city in Ahwaz
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High level of awareness of Ahwaz citizens 2. Accelerating cultural investments 3. Use of cultural activities in mosques in Ahwaz 4. Adequate place for community and cultural centers in Ahwaz 5. There are programs and training for the position in the dynamics of families 6. Empowering marginalized people in society 7. Appropriate training to vulnerable people and boost morale and ability 8. The potential use of housewives 9. The performance and applicability of courses and in-service training for employees (effective learning environments for work) 10. Citizenship education in the public places of the city 11. Suitable programs in parks and cultural centers, and museums for pensioners 12. There are ethnic museums, parks, suitable and adequate recreational space in city 13. citizens familiar with National and Religious Figures 14. The revival of public libraries 15. Transport fit in and make sense of the dignity of citizens 16. The holding of annual festivals and fairs, in order to restore social learning 17. Access to learning opportunities for all citizens 18. Use of religious and cultural celebrations and events to enhance the skills of citizens

Table 3-The Required Indices and Components to Build Learning City in Ahwaz in the extended advantages fields

extended advantages to create learning city in Ahwaz
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Of sustainable development (economic development and welfare, cultural and social development, environmental development) 2. The empowerment of individuals and social cohesion 3. Economic Development and Cultural success 4. Knowledge of and respect for the rule 5. Flexibility and ability to extension 6. Employment 7. Increase empathy and cooperation between authorities and citizens 8. Rise in the standard of living and health 9. Reduced social damage 10. increase their sense of belonging to the city of Ahwaz

Elites and managers of Ahwaz city believe, potential in the city is not used to develop and promote the city at the moment. Economic potential (industry) has been converted to a threat for environment. This city is converted to a work and economic utilization is without correct planning and managers attention.

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