Tamás Kozma et. al.

Learning Regions in Hungary: From Theories to Realities

Abstracts

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Learning Regions in Hungary: From Theories to Realities

Summary of the results of
the LeaRn Project

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Chapter 1
Theoretical Backgrounds

1.1. The Dimensions of Lifelong Learning: The Four Pillars

In the last fourteen or fifteen years education has been extended from elementary education through secondary and tertiary education up to adult education and training. This robust expansion has prepared a shift of paradigm in educational sciences. The shift had both quantitative and qualitative aspects, therefore one of the outcomes of it caused fundamental approach change in the process of knowledge acquisition. This is the situation when in the process of information and knowledge acquisition learning become the main actor instead of and sometimes besides that education. Even if, the institutional bases have implied that education and training is the basis of knowledge acquisition process, but in reality learning become the catalyst. The social, economical and technological changes also supported the alteration from education to learning.

Thus, learning has become a horizontal element of the human kind activities. The immanent human capability (learning) explored in those scenes where formerly learning was not a human activity and social phenomena.

These changes have challenged the local and also the global actors, created some new terms, expressions for this new learning phenomena: lifelong learning, learning through life, life wide learning etc. Global organizations such as Unesco, OECD turn to and tried to analyze this situation from their point of view. At some milestone of this exploration process, the organization (also state and governmental organizations) have tried to grap the meaning of this process. To do this exercise, statistical and territorial data seemed the most appropriate and adequate tools to grab at least some parts of the learning phenomena happening in a very diverse context and variuos forms.

1.2. The Spatial Frames of Lifelong Learning: Learning Regions, Cities and Communities

The history of the term ’learning region’ goes back to the 70’ and to the 90’s of the last century. The interpretation of the term varies according to the professional background of the authors operating with ’learning region’ from different aspects of different sciences. Rooting in various disciplines is leading to the fact that the term covers a variety, a diversity of theoretical concepts of the learning region. The authors of the term are significant researchers and professors of geography, geographic economy and innovation studies. All the different concepts of the learning region theories emphasize the importance of partnership and co-operation between stakeholders in a given region, the key role of universities as innovation partners, the utilization of local knowledge and the support of bottom-up activities, so that the concept of learning region easily became a flagship of the university-based region/city development activities, the lifelong learning movement and offered an appropriate environment for research projects targeting local development with a wide range of regional instruments.

There are certain elements, building blocks of the concepts, even citing learning regions (LR), learning cities (LCi) or learning communities (LCo), which can be considered constant elements and factors. All these concepts emphasize the importance of partnership and co-operation between stakeholders in a given region, the key role of universities as innovation partners, the utilization of local knowledge and the support of bottom-up activities in the development process. At the same time, all these spatial units own special characters which makes possible to distinguish them from each other. In spite of the fact, that the term ’learning region’ was rather flexible since its first appearance, the failure of some large development project and the changing policy environment could not ensure a supporting environment for learning region projects any longer and required a new, more easily ’digestible’, more concentrated spatial approach for the development works,

which led to the emergence of the learning city concepts. A very important policy issue contributed to this shift from the region level to the city level: as the concept of regional equalization has lost its dominance in the regional development process, large cities with strong university connection - like regional poles -, came into the focus of policy interests as the new targets of regional development processes, and as an evidence of this process, learning cities came in place of learning regions both in policy and project level. In recent years, along with the continuation of the discourse on learning regions and learning cities, growing attention is being paid to learning communities, as well. Studying the learning regions the research came to the conclusion that learning erm" to the formation, to the development of learning regions. Based on the presentation of different approaches to the learning communities, research concluded that the existence of learning communities may represent the initial point, the "communities may form a necessary but not sufficient enough condition to the development of a learning region. I suspect that each learning community type - depending on the type - can contribute in varying degrees to the formation of learning regions. According to the latest development plans of the EU, all kinds of learning - from the first steps to the highest standard, from the formal to non-formal and informal learning - is viewed as valuable and which enriches the community. Interest and capacity of citizens related to learning considered as the most valuable resources of the learning community.

1.3. From Theory to Reality: The LeaRn Project

LeaRn (Learning Regions in Hungary) as a research projects aims to describe communities (villages, towns and cities), territories and regions that can be called the spatial centres of learning. (Learning in this sense is meant as lifelong and lifewide learning, see the four pillars of learning above, 1.1.) To do so we used partly the terminology of LLL and partly the terminology of the spatial frames of LLL (regional, territorial and community-based LLL, see above, 1.2).

LeaRn as a research project followed two main models. They are the German Learning Atlas (Deutscher Lernatlas, sponsored by the Bertelsmann Foundation) and the Canadian Composite Learning Index, the product of the Canadian Council of Learning. Both have the ambitions of 'making learning tangible', since learning is a social process which embraces the entire human life. Both projects followed the aim the compare territorial units of the given societies by using statistical indicators of the territorial units, their populations and their learning activities. The German Learning Atlas suggested us to develop a geographical map of learning in Hungary. The Canadian Composite Learning Index, the model also for the German Learning Atlas guided us to the learning indicators and helped us developing geographical units of learning in the broad sense.

We followed the models mentioned in three steps. a) We searched information on LLL in four dimensions: formal learning (learning in school activities), non-formal learning (learning activities outside the school), cultural learning (learning in leisure time activities), community learning (learning in social and community activities). b) On the basis of the research in those four dimensions, indicators have been developed and collected for statistical analyses. c) The results of statistical analyses have been represented on geographical maps.

The major findings of the LeaRn Project is a new 'Geographical Atlas of Learning' in Hungary. Former maps of education usually covered the figures of the system (the network of schools and institutions), the schooling of the population, the qualification of the labour force and the like. The LeaRn project, however, produced a more embraced 'atlas of learning' which presents the different learning activities in the society and which, therefore, highlights the various connections learning and the socio-economic development in the country.

Chapter 2
Pillar I: Formal Learning
Learning in the school system

2.1. Pillar I and the Learning Region: Theoretical Considerations

The formal learning includes all types of learning which take place in the educational system within an organized framework and which end with a state recognized certificate. In this part of the LeaRn research will present the structure of the Hungarian educational system with data. From this structure is highlighted two educational degrees: secondary and higher education. The reason is that the strongest relationship between the formal learning and the learning region are at this two degrees. (The vocational educational training is meant training exclusively for school teaching in our study.) The traditional and the non-traditional students at the secondary and tertiary level of educational system will be examined.

2.2. Traditional Learners

We try to give an overview about students' academic values, career-paths and educational plans. This phenomena can be interpreted in the world of mass higher education. Used techniques are clusters, crosstabs and means. The results show that the patterns of the academic values are more pragmatic and there is a contact between the educational plans and the HE-conceptions.

The compulsory education age is 6 to 16 years in Hungary. The learners of the educational system attend the kindergarten first, the pre-school year is obligatory. There are different types of the primary schools with 4, 6 or 8 years. The secondary schools: high school, vocational school with baccalaureateor without baccalaureate. There are state schools, religious schools, foundation school and private school. The students can choose according to their abilities and opportunities. At this part of the study we try

to follow the educational system from the state of an traditional (common) student.

At the level of higher education the following stand points were used: the mass higher educational system in Hungary, pragmatic/practical approach to the HE system, presence of non traditional students. The effects of this procession HE-conceptions, attitude to learning.

We try to give an overview about students' academic values, career-paths and educational plans, we try to map the patterns of the motivation in HE institutions. This phenomena can be interpreted in the world of mass higher education. Used techniques are clusters, crosstabs and means. The results show that the patterns of the academic values are more pragmatic and there is a contact between the educational plans and the HE-conceptions.

2.3. Non-traditional Learners

Theory and statistics: adult learners, motivation for learning in adulthood, reasons for the drop-out rate, part-time students, heterogeneity in Higher Education. The number of participants in formal education by level of education, the ratio of adult learners according to the qualification and to the economic activity, the ratio of full-time students in Higher Education. Empirical research: primary and secondary motivations of re-entry students, obstacles and difficulties in learning, regional bonding of the adult learners according to the results of cluster analysis,

We present the most important tendencies of migrant and roma students' participation in public and higher education. We apply Tinto's and Hurtado's theory about integration of migrant (international) and roma students for our qualitative research.

First of all there will be defined the concept of non-traditional learners. There will be examined the NT learners in all level of the Hungarian educational

system with special focus on migrant and roma students and on there-entrant students (adult learners).

We present the most important tendencies of these students' participation in education. We examine their motivation for learning, obstacles and difficulties in learning, the reasons for the drop-out rate. We present the number of participants in formal education by level of education, the ratio of learners according to the qualification and to the economic activity.

2.4. Learners in the VET System

Nowadays vocational education is the main field of LLL, because everybody needs to renew his/her vocational knowledge to save his/her position on the labour market. According to statistical data most of inhabitants in Hungary mainly learn for a new vocation or new labour market competences. Not only people can improve their position in that way, but vocational learning occasion can also give new possibilities to the cities and regions: the economy demands well-educated workers, experts, they offer them well-paid jobs, and so both industry and services and of course the whole region can develop. In Hungary, there are big differences between the regions in possibilities to give vocations or vocational competences to their inhabitants. There are small-regions which have traditions in VET outside the schools, and there are other ones, which are very weak on this field and their inhabitants look for education in other cities, other small-regions, and at the end they look for a job and living outside their own regions, which became retarded regions both economically and sociologically. This chapter analyses effects of vocational education on regions in Hungary, and point out some interesting correlation.

2.5. Learners in Formal Education: Statistical Indicators

The following statistical indicators are recommended:

- number of educational degree have been completed,
- student-teacher ratio,
- drop-out rates and the availability of institutions,
- rate of compulsory school graduates in the total population,
- number of people in each age cohort

Chapter 3
Pillar II: Non-formal Learning
Learning outside the school

3.1. Pillar II and the Learning Region: Theoretical Considerations

Non-formal learning covers a wide field of learning outside the school system. It does not mean only vocational education, but several type of general education forms (eg. competence developing courses, hobby courses, etc). It is understanding between experts, that the last ones also have importance, because they can either base vocational education, that they can it facilitate, or they can effect on life quality: people can be rather satisfied, if they can do, what they want to do. There are differences in the countries, what types of them are financially supported by the state and what ones are not. National statistical data collections act on these supports systems. This chapter presents the background of Hungarian non-formal learning system, included its development, its organisation system, the role of state in it, and its legislative background.

3.2. Non-Vocational Adult Learning

The aim of this sub-chapter is to reveal the situation of the Hungarian non-vocational adult learning, both at institutions' and programmes' ends. Principally it concentrates on analysing data of our own data base made from registrations. First of all, we analyse supply; what the potential institutional- and programme supply for adults is, and what differences and deviations can be found in regions with various social and economic backgrounds.

3.3. VET Outside the School System

Nowadays vocational education is main field of LLL, because everybody needs to renew his/her vocational knowledge to save his/her position on the labour market. According to statistical data most of inhabitants in Hungary mainly learn to get a new vocation or new labour market competences. Not only people can improve their position in that way, but vocational learning occasion can give new possibilities to the cities and region: the economy demands well-educated workers, experts, they offer them well-paid jobs, and so both industry and services and of course the whole region is going to develop. In Hungary there are big differences between regions in possibilities to learn vocations or vocational competences. There are small-regions which have traditions in VET outside the schools, and there are other ones, which are very weak on this field and their inhabitants look for education in other cities, other small-regions, and at the end they look a job and living outside their own regions, and it became retarded regions both economically and sociologically. This chapter analyses effects of vocational education on regions in Hungary, and point out some interesting correlation.

3.4. Non-Formal Learning: Statistical Indicators

The statistical indicator of non-formal learning can be difficult to catch, because they cannot be classified into a unified system, like ISCED in the education system. Despite of it, we have many indicators of non-formal learning. In Hungary there is a data collection system, called OSAP 1665, which gives us relatively reliable data, so we can use relevant indicators to describe our non-formal learning system and its functioning. This chapter is about our indicators: which and why they were used, and what do they show us. We know, eg.:

- how many people took part in it,
- how many courses started,
  how much they were etc.

Chapter 4
Pillar III: Cultural Learning

4.1. Pillar III and the Learning Region: Theoretical Considerations

The subchapter on theoretical background presents our definition and the major areas of cultural learning: the forms of cultural learning in cultural institutions, by media devices and sports activities. Subsequently the main theoretical approaches to the three areas are summarized making use of Hungarian and international professional literature as well as statistics. When presenting the three fields special attention is given to those studies that utilize research methods similar to learning region research.

4.2. Cultural Learning by Music Activities

Of the areas of cultural learning in cultural institutions we present cultural learning by musical activities. First we outline the possible areas of musical activities (music schools, cultural centres, music associations, etc.). This is followed by the presentation of transfer effects of musical activities and learning music on the individual's life with regard to learning performance, physical activity, and labour skills.

4.3. Cultural Learning by the Media

Of the areas of cultural learning by media devices we present cultural learning through television. First we outline the areas of learning through television (school TV, thematic channels, spontaneous learning, etc.). Thereafter the impact of television on the individual's inquiry and learning is detailed, as well as the connections between education, social standing, and the consumption of television. This abstract has to be broadened by a sentence introducing different types of media, first of all, the internet.

4.4. Cultural Learning by Sports Activities

Of areas of cultural learning by sports activities we present cultural learning performed in sports associations. First we outline ways of learning in sports associations (organized learning, spontaneous learning, indirect education, etc.). This is followed by the presentation of transfer effects of sports activities as regards the individual's life in connection to learning performance, health, and labour skills.

4.5. Cultural Learning: Statistical Indicators

In the final subchapter of the study we present the indicators of cultural learning compiled by us as well as the questionnaire serving the assessment of such. Our empirical research findings are represented by the main results of the research conducted in the public education institutions, television stations and hiking associations of the North Great Plains region, including altogether 112 institutions. As a final summary of the research we present the connections between the region's social and economical development and cultural learning, thus shedding light upon the role of cultural learning in the development of the learning region.

Chapter 5
Pillar IV: Community Learning

5.1. Pillar IV and the Learning Region: Theoretical Considerations

Pillar IV (community learning) also contributes to the development of a learning region. To understand and discover its contribution, a theoretical model of 'community learning' is presented here. The model consists of four steps of community learning.

- Step 1 is a challenge from outside that hits the community (e.g. a flood or a sudden modernisation effect etc., see illustrations in part 2).
- Step 2 is the run for new knowledges by which the community could meet the challenge (e.g how to renew the old dam around the town).
- Step 3 is a competition among representatives of old and new knowledges, that is, groups holding various knowledges and competencies.
- Step 4 is the trial of these competeing groups with their competing knowledges. The proof of the knowledge is the successful meeting of the challenge (that is, protecting the community from the flood).
- Step 5 is the restructurisation of the power system in the community: the successful group (holding the successful knowledge and competencies) would take over the power within the community.

Case studies are used to illustrate how community learning contributes to the development of a learning region.

5.2. Community Learning in Small Towns

Small towns in the Trans-Tisza Region with state subsidised collective farms were challenged by the political turn and the new market economy. They turned into stagnation. Those who found new ways from the stagnation became successful and are growing even today. Those who tried to avoid the

new market forces still remained in stagnation and lose population and economic importance's.

5.3. Community Learning in Immigrant Communities

Foreign immigration to the Transdanubian Region. The Transdanubian part of the country used to have traditionally (historically) mixed ethnic (national) communities. After the turn (1989/90) this part of the country has become attractive to various Western immigrants. Their appearance challenged the communities. Communities learned from them and became more successful. In case the new population remained segregated from the majority, the communities remained stagnating.

5.4. Community Learning in Civic Organisations

Civic organisations were challenged by a centralisation policy as the new government came to administration after the parliamentary election of 2010 in Hungary. A traditional policy of the civic organisations was to protest against the new policy which led to less activities and less government supports. An innovative policy of civic organisations was to redirect their activities and participate in programmes organised and subsidised by the central government and the EU (e.g. 'tanoda program', after-school clubs).

5.5. Community Learning: Statistical Indicators

On the basis of the cases of community learning, some indicators are suggested. These indicators emerged from the theoretical considerations as well as the empirical evidences. They are as follow:

- personal income tax, 1 % for civil organisations
- personal income tax 1% for religious organisations
- volunteer fire associations (numbers)
- red cross associations (numbers)
- participation in parliamentary election

- membership in political parties / organisations
- civic organisations (numbers)
- participation in civic organisations (membership)

Chapter 6
The Territorial Characteristics of the Four Pillars

6.1. Territorial Characteristics of Lifelong Learning: History and Methodology

Regional differences can be revealed with the help of the complex index presenting the approach to the various forms of learning and with the representation of the values on the settlement level. If nearby located settlements, or settlement groups, have a positive attitude towards learning (having values better than the national average) then those should be interpreted as the traces of the Hungarian "learning regions". The purpose of the processing of the settlement level statistical data for Hungary and the attempt of creating an index was to present the relation of the Hungarian settlements to learning. Those settlements, settlement groups and regions were searched and mapped where the results (e.g. educational level) and opportunities (e.g. institutional network, accessibility) of the widely interpreted learning are better (or worse) than the national averages. The indicators selected by the study groups were standardised, ratios were calculated in relation to the population of the settlements which were then converted into percentages and illustrated on maps. Five indicators were selected for each pillar (formal, non-formal, cultural and community learning) to demonstrate their relationship with the settlement hierarchy.

6.2. Territorial Characteristics of Pillar I: Formal Learning

In the case of formal learning, the educational level of the population, expressed by the highest educational level achieved in formal education, mostly portrayed the settlement hierarchy.

We used five indicators to create the index: four indicators were used for the demonstration of the educational level using the Census data (2011) exclusively. The characteristics detected in the case of these four indicators coincide with the expectations resulting from the regional differences.

Relying on the CLI experiences, the accessibility element was also included in the analysis of formal learning providing the fifth indicator. The composite index related to formal learning mostly portrayed the settlement hierarchy.

6.3. Territorial Characteristics of Pillar II: Non-Formal Learning

For the non-formal learning indicators, the institutional system of the adult education served as a basis where the access to the educational infrastructure was a determining factor. For the non-formal learning indicators, the institutional system of the adult education served as a basis where the access to the educational infrastructure was a determining factor. Some of the five indicators used for the creation of the index were related to the location of the institutional system of adult training (NIVE database), while the rest were related to the participants in adult training (OSAP 1665 database). We also found it important to portray the motivation for learning through the financing of the trainings. The indicators characterising the institutional system of adult training give a mosaic picture. The indicators of the population appearing in the adult training confirm the learning tendency. The index characterising the pillar is rather diffused.

6.4. Territorial Characteristics of Pillar III: Cultural Learning

With respect to the indicators of cultural learning, the traces of the settlement hierarchy disappear. In the case of the five indicators presenting the regional differences, most of them give a mosaic picture, and one-third of the settlements cannot be evaluated in this respect. The smaller settlements were most likely to get into position due to the cultural institutional network created in the near past. Some of the data were provided by a governmental database (kultsat.emmi.gov). The other group of data was the result of the analysis of the local media per 1000 inhabitants, in addition to the number of Internet subscriptions. The fifth indicator was related to the participation at events. The index of the pillar reflected the advantages of the smaller settlements most probably resulting from the cultural institutional network

created in the near past. With respect to the indicators of cultural learning, the traces of the settlement hierarchy disappear.

6.5. Territorial Characteristics of Pillar IV: Community Learning

Depicting the indicators of community learning on maps, there is a clear differentiation between the large settlements and the small settlements on the Great Plain. The indicators used were related to the fields of migration balance, religious activity, non-profit organisations, minority self-governments and political activity. The migration balance reflects the economic situation of the settlements, while there are characteristic differences in the values related to religious activity. The picture is made even more interesting when the number of non-profit organisations and minority self-governments per one thousand inhabitants are included. With respect to political activity there is a distinct line on the map with extreme high values in the Northern Transdanubian region. Depicting the indicators of community learning on maps, there is a clear differentiation between the large settlements and the small settlements on the Great Plain.

6.6. Territorial Characteristics of the Four Pillars: The 'LeaRn Index '

The complex indicator was created by averaging the partial indices of the pillars which was named *LeaRn Index* (LI), and proved that it is statistically suitable for demonstrating the phenomenon. Besides, we also made a cluster analysis (using six elements) to confirm the territorial correlations which provided an even more definite picture of the territorial characteristics. The complex indicator was created by averaging the partial indices of the pillars which was named *LeaRn Index* (LI), and proved that it is statistically suitable for demonstrating the phenomenon. The first and the fourth pillars seem to be the most stable and less scattered from among the complex index components. The values of the settlements were depicted on a five-point scale using the “natural break” grouping automatism of the MAPINFO Program. Besides, we also made a cluster analysis (using six elements) to

confirm the territorial correlations which provided an even more definite picture of the territorial characteristics. The neighbourhood analysis was intended to see the territorial relations. Applying the LI we were looking for the answer to the question whether the values of the complex index “move together” or are “independent” from one another. With the help of territorial autocorrelation we also presented the territorial “moving together” of the values received. We found that detailed case study analyses are necessary for the understanding of the components of the territorial characteristics.

Chapter 7
Learning Regions in Hungary: Summary

The main result of the LeaRn Project is the description of three types of spatial frames of LLL in Hungary.

- *Learning regions*. Budapest, the capital of the country, together with its urban area emerge as the leading LR of Hungary. Three sectors--starting from Budapest and leading to the Western, to the South Western and the South Eastern parts of Hungary--could also be called the LRs of Hungary.

- *Learning cities.* Besides those LRs, further parts of the country emerge on the map as smaller or larger individual territories (Debrecen, Miskolc, Szolnok and to a lesser extent, also Pécs). They are typical urban centres with their vicinities. We suggest the label 'learning cities' to them. The meaning of this label is miscellaneous. In any case, however, these territories offer a 'climate' with densed communication networks, more instensive community life and stronger social interactions. Among other, they offer a better infrastructure for all these actions. The 'learning cities' of Hungary offer more jobs, a wider selection of jobs and a differentiated service sector. Last but not least they are the administrative centers of the Hungarian government administration.

- *Learning communities.* The emergence of 'learning communities' are also visible on the map (points in red). These 'points' are communities--mostly separated from one or the other 'learning cities'--still showing signs of economic, political and cultural activities. They can attract their surroundings and could be (at least some of them) the starting points of future 'learning cities'. A future socio-economic developmental policy may concentrate on them.

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