

# CANADA

## LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY FOR THE CITY OF VANCOUVER

Vancouver Learning City Initiative, 2006

### Rationale of the strategy

This urban strategy is based on several local and national studies, and was developed by diverse organizations and initiatives in collaborative partnership. It uses a holistic approach to build a learning city that addresses the learning needs of all citizens at all stages of life, paying particular attention to adult literacy. A lifelong learning framework with an inclusive, progressive approach to learning is at the heart of the strategy, and is supplemented by two models illustrating different learning environments.

Seven strategic areas to improve access to literacy and lifelong learning opportunities in Vancouver have been defined. These are: inspiration and motivation; early childhood; late childhood to early adolescence; late adolescence to early adulthood; adulthood; the workforce; and later life. It is hoped that, by focusing on these areas, Vancouver will create a culture of learning that meets the challenges of the twenty-first century.

### Concept of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is defined as a process that 'results from a continuously supportive system which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire the knowledge, skills, understanding and values they require throughout their lives' (Longworth and Davies, 1996).

### Main challenges and targets

Vancouver's population dynamics – in particular its ageing workforce and increasing immigration – necessitate a learning city initiative that targets people at all stages of life. By offering lifelong learning opportunities to all of its citizens, the city seeks to tackle the following specific challenges:

- Developmental vulnerability in early childhood development: Ensuring that children are cognitively, emotionally, physically and socially ready for school and life.
- Limited reading comprehension during childhood and early adolescence: Enhancing competences that promote learning and contribute to confidence and resilience; adapting learning methodologies to the learner; and improving parental education and out-of-school care.
- High rates of school dropout, a lack of support services and limited career counselling during later adolescence and early adulthood: Helping youth to make a successful transition to post-secondary education or employment and equipping them to participate in all facets of community life.
- Low levels of literacy and numeracy, inadequate outreach services and limited public access to computers and the internet during adulthood: Increasing access to financial aid, one-on-one learning assistance and flexible childcare; supporting immigrant and refugee learners.
- Limited awareness of learning opportunities in the workplace, low levels of literacy limiting the potential for further training, lack of qualified trainers, large untapped workforce (particularly with regard to aboriginal people, youth-at-risk, homeless people): Developing a workplace culture that embraces continuous improvement and lifelong learning.
- Limited awareness of the benefits of lifelong learning in later life and fear of institutional settings: Supporting learning in later life; enabling older people to be healthier and more active while providing them with opportunities to share their experiences and knowledge.

Issues affecting all of the challenges outlined above include:

- Cultural, linguistic and financial barriers to participation
- Limited awareness of educational provision and learning opportunities

### **Particular feature of the strategy**

The main strength of the strategy lies in its concerted and collaborative development process; however, this very strength can occasionally present its own set of challenges. For example, the diversity in partners both in the development process and in funding negotiations can make it difficult and time-consuming to reach a consensus.

The strategy's funding scheme is based on four columns: (1) the federal government; (2) the provincial government; (3) the Vancouver Public Library; and (4) a consortium of public and private higher education institutions. The organizational framework also comprises four components:

- Coalition for action
- Executive committee of the working group
- Co-chairs for the coalition (made up of retired representatives of Literacy BC and the Vancouver Public Library)
- Project coordinator (position could not be filled due to lack of funds)

Due to the lengthy process of development, some funds were allocated to other projects or events, including the 2010 Winter Olympics.

The strategy was not planned for large-scale projects; instead it was designed as a 'kick-off model' for other learning initiatives, like the Vancouver Healthy City Strategy.

#### *References to other relevant documents:*

- Canadian Council on Learning. 2010. *The 2010 Composite Learning Index: Five years of measuring Canada's progress in lifelong learning.* [http://css.escwa.org.lb/sd/1382/Canadian\\_Learning\\_Index.pdf](http://css.escwa.org.lb/sd/1382/Canadian_Learning_Index.pdf) (Accessed 13 October 2016.)

#### *Stakeholders involved in the development of the strategy:*

- Vancouver Learning City Working Group members, which include:
  - The BC Association of Family Resource Programs
  - The Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC)
  - Vancouver Community College
  - The Vancouver School Board
  - The BC Council for Families
  - Literacy BC
  - Vancouver Public Library

#### *Stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the strategy:*

- Coalition for Action, Canada
- Executive Committee of the Vancouver Learning City Working Group

#### *Further readings and web links:*

- City of Vancouver, 2016. *Lifelong Learning.* <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/lifelong-learning.aspx> (Accessed 13 October 2016.)

- Hanemann, U. 2015. Lifelong literacy: Some trends and issues in conceptualising and operationalising literacy from a lifelong learning perspective. *International Review of Education*, Vol. 61, No. 3, pp. 295–326.
- Longworth, N. and Davies, W K. 1996. *Lifelong Learning*. London, Kogan Page.
- Singh, S. and Whitney, P. 2014. La Ciudad del aprendizaje de Vancouver. *Decisio*, No. 39, pp. 63–66.
- Vancouver Learning City, 2016. *Vancouver Learning City*. <http://www.vancouverlearningcity.ca/> (Accessed 13 October 2016.)

**Keywords:** urban areas; urban education; universal education; adult literacy; early childhood education; youth, transition for school to work; human resources development; industry and education; educational cooperation; educational finance; public private partnership; libraries; ethnic minorities