

Creating a Learning Society in the Digital Era: Perspectives from Educational and Community Leaders in Banten, Indonesia

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Abstract

Background: The digital era presents unprecedented opportunities and challenges for establishing learning societies that support lifelong learning, digital literacy, and sustainable human capital development. Educational and community leaders play pivotal roles in this transformation, yet their integrated contributions remain underexplored in emerging regional contexts. Objective: This study aims to develop an integrated understanding of how educational and community leaders contribute to the creation of a learning society in the digital era, with specific focus on lifelong learning mechanisms, digital literacy initiatives, and human capital development pathways. Method: A qualitative descriptive multi-stakeholder inquiry was conducted with 28 participants including school principals, university leaders, community organization leaders, government representatives, and NGO officials from Banten Province, Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (n=18), focus group discussions (n=3), document analysis, and observation protocols. Thematic analysis with source, method, and theory triangulation was employed. Findings: Educational and community leaders jointly establish learning societies through five interconnected mechanisms: institutional learning infrastructure development, digital literacy ecosystems, collaborative knowledge-sharing platforms, civic engagement frameworks, and capability development initiatives. Leaders emphasized the necessity of integrating formal and informal learning, bridging digital divides, and fostering social capital through community engagement. An Integrated Learning Society Development Framework emerged, highlighting the synergistic relationship between educational institutions, community organizations, and government agencies in facilitating sustainable human capital growth. Novelty: This research uniquely positions learning society development as an educational-community collaborative endeavor within the digital era context of emerging regional economies, departing from institution-centric approaches that dominate current literature. Implications: Findings provide strategic guidance for policymakers and institutional leaders in designing integrated learning society frameworks that harness digital technologies while maintaining social cohesion and equitable access to learning opportunities.

Keywords:

community leadership; digital literacy; educational leadership; human capital development; learning society.



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INTRODUCTION

Learning Society in the Digital Era

The concept of a learning society has evolved significantly in contemporary discourse, representing a fundamental paradigm shift in how societies generate, distribute, and apply knowledge for collective advancement. A learning society is characterized by institutional, cultural, and social systems that prioritize continuous knowledge acquisition, skill development, and adaptive capacity across all population segments and life stages. This concept transcends traditional educational institutions, encompassing formal schooling, non-formal programs, informal learning networks, and community-based knowledge exchanges.

Lifelong learning, the cornerstone of learning societies, recognizes that skill development and knowledge acquisition extend beyond formal schooling into adulthood, encompassing professional development, civic participation, and personal growth. The knowledge economy framework

emphasizes that competitive advantage derives not from physical capital or natural resources, but from knowledge creation, innovation capacity, and human capital quality. Digital societies represent social structures fundamentally reorganized by information and communication technologies, enabling instantaneous knowledge access, distributed collaboration, and decentralized learning networks. Together, these dimensions create contexts where human capital development becomes a continuous, dynamic process embedded throughout society rather than a discrete phase during youth.

The urgency of establishing learning societies intensifies within digital transformation contexts where technological disruption accelerates skill obsolescence and creates emerging competency demands. Artificial intelligence, automation, big data analytics, and digital platforms reshape labor markets and professional requirements, necessitating societies capable of rapidly adapting to technological change. Simultaneously, digital technologies create unprecedented learning opportunities through open educational resources, online collaboration platforms, and personalized learning analytics, yet simultaneously risk deepening digital divides and exacerbating educational inequalities in contexts with uneven technology access and digital literacy.

Digital Transformation and Learning

Digital transformation extends beyond technological adoption to encompass fundamental restructuring of social interactions, economic processes, and knowledge systems. Digital learning platforms, online educational delivery mechanisms, and technology-enhanced pedagogies have dramatically expanded learning accessibility, enabling asynchronous, personalized, and globally distributed educational experiences. Artificial intelligence applications in education personalize learning pathways, provide intelligent tutoring systems, enable predictive analytics for student success identification, and automate administrative functions, potentially liberating educators for more strategic pedagogical roles. Simultaneously, artificial intelligence raises profound questions regarding algorithmic bias, data privacy, digital equity, and the potential displacement of human-centered educational relationships.

Digital literacy—encompassing technical competencies (operating devices and software), information literacy (evaluating sources and managing information), creative competencies (producing digital content), and critical competencies (understanding digital systems' societal implications)—has become essential for full societal participation. Knowledge accessibility through digital platforms democratizes information distribution, enabling individuals in geographically remote or economically disadvantaged contexts to access world-class educational content previously restricted to privileged populations. Conversely, digital divides—gaps between those with reliable internet access, device ownership, and digital skills versus those without—reproduce and amplify existing social inequalities, creating new forms of educational exclusion.

Digital learning environments present distinctive challenges including technology fatigue, attention fragmentation, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and the replacement of embodied social interaction with mediated experiences. Educational leaders navigate these complexities by developing digital literacy frameworks, integrating online and face-to-face learning modalities, establishing cybersecurity protocols, and preserving opportunities for meaningful interpersonal engagement within digitalized educational contexts.

Educational and Community Leadership

Educational leadership encompasses formal institutional management combined with pedagogical visioning, curricular innovation, and capacity building within educational organizations. Effective educational leaders cultivate learning cultures emphasizing inquiry, experimentation, continuous improvement, and adaptive capacity. They bridge external knowledge production systems with internal institutional practices, translate policy mandates into operational realities, and mobilize resources toward educational quality enhancement. Educational leaders increasingly operate within complex adaptive systems requiring collaboration with non-educational stakeholders, systemic thinking, and navigation of competing institutional pressures.

Community leadership, rooted in democratic participation and collective action frameworks, mobilizes community members toward shared development objectives through participatory processes, indigenous knowledge systems, and local ownership. Community leaders operate outside formal institutional structures, drawing legitimacy from community trust, cultural authenticity, and demonstrated commitment to community welfare. Religious leaders, youth organization facilitators, NGO representatives, and social movement leaders constitute diverse community leadership forms, each bringing distinctive social capital, cultural credibility, and mobilization capacity.

The integration of educational and community leadership creates synergistic potential for establishing learning societies that simultaneously leverage institutional resources and credibility with community mobilization, social capital, and indigenous knowledge systems. Collaborative leadership approaches recognize that sustainable development emerges through partnership between institutions and communities, rather than top-down institutional imposition or isolated community efforts. Educational institutions access community networks, cultural legitimacy, and participation commitment, while communities gain access to educational expertise, institutional resources, and systemic capacity.

Civic engagement—community members' conscious participation in collective decision-making, public discourse, and community welfare advancement—represents a critical dimension of learning societies. Educational and community leaders cultivate civic engagement through deliberative forums, participatory governance mechanisms, youth empowerment initiatives, and community service learning, transforming citizens from passive consumers into active participants in community development processes. This engagement itself becomes a learning modality where individuals develop democratic competencies, intercultural understanding, and systems thinking through participation in real-world problem-solving.

Human Capital and Sustainable Development

Human capital theory conceptualizes investments in education, training, and skill development as capital accumulation generating economic returns through enhanced worker productivity, innovation capacity, and earning potential. Beyond economic instrumentalism, human capital encompasses broader capability development—freedoms to achieve functioning important to individuals and societies, including health, education, civic participation, and self-realization. Sustainable development frameworks integrate human capital considerations with environmental sustainability and social equity, recognizing that inclusive growth requires human capability development distributed equitably across populations and balanced with ecological constraints.

Capability development, articulated in Amartya Sen's capability approach and Martha Nussbaum's human development framework, moves beyond narrow skill acquisition to emphasize substantive freedoms enabling individuals to achieve valued functionings. Learning societies institutionalize capability development through curricula emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, emotional intelligence, and adaptive capacity alongside technical skills. Regional competitiveness increasingly derives from human capital quality, innovation ecosystems, knowledge worker attraction, and inclusive development supporting full population participation in knowledge economies.

Social innovation—novel solutions addressing social challenges through new organizational forms, collaborative processes, or technological applications—increasingly characterizes learning societies. Educational and community leaders catalyze social innovation through innovation labs, collaborative problem-solving forums, and community-engaged research, transforming learning into action addressing local development priorities. This approach positions learning as inherently connected to social problem-solving and community welfare advancement rather than abstract knowledge acquisition.

Banten Province Context

Banten Province, located in western Java and encompassing Jakarta's immediate periphery, represents a strategically significant yet underresearched emerging regional context. The province faces characteristic emerging economy development challenges including rapid urbanization, skill-job mismatches, uneven educational quality, limited digital infrastructure penetration in rural areas, and persistent socioeconomic inequality. Banten's geographic proximity to Jakarta creates distinctive dynamics where rural agricultural communities coexist with rapidly urbanizing industrial zones, creating heterogeneous learning needs and educational infrastructure variation.

Educational development in Banten reflects broader Indonesian patterns: significant improvements in enrollment rates across all educational levels, yet persistent quality gaps particularly in rural areas, uneven teacher capacity, limited technology integration, and curriculum-practice disconnects. Community learning initiatives, including formal non-formal education programs and community-based organizations, proliferate throughout Banten yet lack systematic coordination and resources compared to formal educational institutions. Digital transformation remains unevenly distributed with urban areas experiencing rapid technology adoption while rural regions face infrastructure deficits and digital literacy challenges.

Human capital challenges in Banten include youth unemployment despite educational expansion, inadequate soft skills development among graduates, limited alignment between curricula and emerging labor market requirements, and insufficient lifelong learning opportunities for working-age populations. Regional development opportunities emerge from infrastructure investments, industrial zone expansion, tourism sector growth, and increasing attention to local content creation and creative industries. These opportunities require human capital foundations characterized by adaptability, digital literacy, innovation capacity, and lifelong learning orientation.

State of the Art: Current Research Landscape

Recent international research has extensively documented learning society characteristics, identifying continuous learning orientation, knowledge accessibility, institutional flexibility, and civic participation as defining features. Research on lifelong learning has expanded from adult education contexts to encompass whole-life learning perspectives, recognizing learning as continuous across all age groups and life stages. Community learning literature demonstrates that non-formal and informal learning pathways contribute substantially to human capital development, particularly for populations underserved by formal education systems, yet remain understudied compared to formal education research.

Educational leadership research increasingly emphasizes distributed leadership, collaborative cultures, and systemic thinking, departing from hierarchical command-and-control models. Studies document relationships between educational leadership quality and institutional performance, student achievement gains, and organizational innovation. Digital literacy research has shifted from basic technical skills toward comprehensive digital competencies encompassing critical evaluation, creative production, and ethical digital citizenship.

Digital learning environments have expanded dramatically, with research documenting effectiveness variations across contexts, populations, and implementation modalities. Blended learning combining online and face-to-face instruction has emerged as predominant practice, with evidence supporting effectiveness when implemented thoughtfully with adequate support structures. Human capital development research confirms that learning societies yield competitive advantages and contribute to sustainable development, though mechanisms through which societies transition toward learning orientations remain inadequately understood.

Research Gap and Limitations in Current Literature

Despite extensive literature on individual components—educational leadership, community learning, digital transformation, human capital development—integrative research examining how educational and community leaders jointly establish learning societies remains sparse. Most research concentrates on educational institutions in isolation, formal learning contexts, or digital technology adoption separately, rather than exploring synergistic relationships between educational and community sectors. Few studies examine learning society development in emerging regional economies where resource constraints, uneven infrastructure, and socioeconomic diversity create distinctive contexts differing from developed economy settings.

International research concentrates predominantly on developed economy contexts where educational infrastructure, digital access, and institutional capacity differ substantially from emerging regions. This geographic bias limits applicability of frameworks and findings to diverse global contexts. Research examining educational-community collaboration in learning society development within the Global South remains limited, particularly in Southeast Asian regional economies. Furthermore, most learning society literature remains theoretical or policy-oriented rather than grounded in empirical investigation of leadership practices and institutional mechanisms through which learning societies emerge.

Research Objective

This study aims to develop an integrated understanding of how educational and community leaders contribute to the creation of a learning society in the digital era, specifically examining leadership practices, institutional mechanisms, and collaborative frameworks that foster lifelong learning, digital literacy, and sustainable human capital development in emerging regional contexts.

Novelty and Contribution Statement

This research offers distinctive contributions through four dimensions: (1) Learning Society Development Framework positioning learning society creation as an integrated educational-community

collaborative endeavor rather than institution-centric approach; (2) Educational-Community Leadership Perspective examining synergistic relationships and complementary roles between formal educational leaders and community-based leaders in fostering learning societies; (3) Digital Era Context investigating learning society development within contemporary technological transformation characterized by digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and accelerated knowledge evolution; (4) Emerging Regional Economy Setting grounding analysis in Global South context with distinctive resource, infrastructure, and socioeconomic characteristics, generating frameworks applicable to diverse global regions beyond developed economy settings.

METHOD

Research Design and Strategy

This study employed qualitative descriptive methodology combined with multi-stakeholder qualitative inquiry design. Qualitative descriptive approaches systematically explore lived experiences, social meanings, and contextual factors without imposing predetermined theoretical frameworks, enabling emergent understanding of complex social phenomena. Multi-stakeholder inquiry deliberately incorporates diverse participant perspectives—educational leaders, community leaders, government representatives—recognizing that learning society development involves multiple actors with distinctive roles, interests, and knowledge systems.

Qualitative methodology aligns with research objectives emphasizing understanding complex social processes, leadership practices, and institutional mechanisms through which learning societies emerge. The approach prioritizes depth over breadth, enabling nuanced exploration of how educational and community leaders interpret learning society concepts, enact leadership practices, and navigate institutional and environmental constraints. Multi-stakeholder design recognizes that learning society development emerges through dynamic interactions among multiple actors and institutions, necessitating deliberate inclusion of diverse perspectives rather than privileging single organizational viewpoints.

Research Location and Context

The study was conducted in Banten Province, Indonesia, a region of approximately 12 million inhabitants encompassing urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. Banten represents a strategic research context as an emerging regional economy with distinctive development dynamics, educational diversity, rapid digital transformation, and significant human capital development challenges and opportunities. The province encompasses diverse institutional types including formal educational institutions (elementary through higher education), community-based organizations, NGOs, religious institutions, youth organizations, and government agencies involved in educational and community development functions.

Participant Selection and Sampling

The study employed purposive sampling, deliberately recruiting participants representing diverse stakeholder categories involved in learning society creation. Purposive sampling prioritizes information richness and diversity over statistical representativeness, aligning with qualitative inquiry objectives. Participant categories included:

Educational Leaders (n=12): - School principals (3) from diverse school types (public, private, urban, rural) - University leaders/administrators (2) engaged in community engagement initiatives - Community learning center managers (3) - Educational foundation leaders (2) - Curriculum developers/educational innovators (2)

Community Leaders (n=10): - Community organization leaders (2) - Religious leaders (2) - Youth organization leaders (2) - NGO representatives (2) - Social movement/cooperative leaders (2)

Government Representatives (n=6): - Education office officials (2) - Community empowerment officials (2) - Digital literacy program coordinators (2)

Total participants: 28 representing balanced representation across educational leaders, community leaders, and government stakeholders. Participant selection criteria included: (1) formal leadership role in educational institutions or community organizations; (2) minimum three years experience in current role; (3) demonstrated engagement with lifelong learning, digital literacy, or community development initiatives; (4) willingness to engage in in-depth inquiry; (5) geographic diversity across urban and rural Banten locations.

Data Collection Methods and Protocols

Semi-Structured Interviews (n=18)

Semi-structured interviews with 18 key informant leaders utilized standardized interview protocols with predetermined question areas combined with flexible probing enabling exploration of emergent themes. Interview protocols encompassed six sections addressing learning society definitions and importance; leadership practices for fostering learning; digital transformation effects on learning; community engagement mechanisms; human capital development contributions; and future policy directions. Interviews were conducted individually, lasting 60–90 minutes, audio-recorded with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim in Indonesian then translated to English for analysis. Interview protocols prioritized open-ended questioning enabling participants to articulate their understandings, experiences, and interpretations rather than responding to researcher-predetermined categories.

Focus Group Discussions (n=3)

Three focus group discussions with 6–8 participants per group enabled exploration of shared meanings, interactive sense-making, and collective perspectives on learning society development. FGDs addressed lifelong learning strategies; digital literacy ecosystem development; community learning institutional arrangements; emerging workforce competency requirements; human capital development mechanisms; supporting policies; and educational-community collaboration approaches. FGD protocols deliberately created space for participants to respond to and build upon each other's contributions, revealing areas of consensus, legitimate disagreement, and unexamined assumptions. FGD duration ranged from 120–150 minutes, with systematic facilitation notes capturing group dynamics and discussion evolution.

Document Analysis

Documents analyzed included educational strategic plans, community empowerment programs, digital literacy initiative descriptions, lifelong learning program documentation, human capital development policies, regional development plans, and community education program materials. Document analysis employed predetermined analytic categories (learning society orientation, digital literacy integration, lifelong learning mechanisms, collaborative frameworks, human capital development emphasis) combined with inductive identification of additional themes. Document analysis provided contextual understanding of institutional policies, program designs, and stated organizational commitments, enabling triangulation with interview and FGD findings and identification of stated-versus-practiced policy gaps.

Observation Protocol

Research team members conducted structured observations during community learning activities, educational innovation programs, digital literacy workshops, knowledge-sharing events, community engagement initiatives, and educational-community collaboration practices. Observation protocol utilized predetermined categories (participant engagement, learning modality, technological integration, community involvement, leadership practices, collaborative mechanisms) combined with open-ended observation field notes. Observations totaled approximately 40 hours across 12 events, providing direct evidence of leadership practices, community participation patterns, and educational-community collaboration mechanisms in authentic contexts.

Data Management and Quality Assurance

All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent, transcribed verbatim, and verified against recordings for accuracy. Interview transcriptions were conducted by trained research assistants with verification spot-checks by principal investigator. FGD recordings and transcripts followed identical protocols. Document analysis systematically coded documents using matrix displays capturing thematic content across documents. Observation notes were typed immediately following observations with review and elaboration within 24 hours while observations remained cognitively fresh. Data management maintained participant confidentiality through coded identification (E1-E12 for educational leaders, C1-C10 for community leaders, G1-G6 for government representatives).

Data Analysis Methodology

The study employed thematic analysis using systematic procedures across seven stages:

Stage 1: Familiarization. The principal investigator read interview transcripts, FGD transcripts, observation notes, and document abstracts multiple times, developing comprehensive familiarity with data content, diversity, and patterns.

Stage 2: Open Coding. Research team members independently coded data segments with thematic labels, identifying concepts, phrases, and ideas present across data sources. Initial coding generated 127 open codes capturing data diversity.

Stage 3: Axial Coding. Open codes were reorganized into hierarchical relationships, identifying parent categories and subcategories capturing conceptual relationships. Axial coding reduced 127 open codes to 34 focused codes through systematic categorization.

Stage 4: Theme Development. Focused codes were synthesized into coherent themes reflecting core patterns across data sources. Consensus discussions among research team members refined theme definitions, boundaries, and evidence base, culminating in seven major themes: (1) Learning Society Conceptions; (2) Educational Leadership for Learning; (3) Community Leadership for Learning; (4) Digital Transformation Effects; (5) Digital Literacy Initiatives; (6) Human Capital Development; (7) Collaborative Mechanisms and Barriers.

Stage 5: Stakeholder Comparison. Each theme was analyzed within educational leader, community leader, and government representative subgroups, identifying similarities and distinctions in how different stakeholder groups understood and enacted themes.

Stage 6: Cross-Level Analysis. Patterns were examined across individual participant perspectives, organizational levels, programmatic initiatives, and institutional contexts, identifying how themes manifested across analytical levels.

Stage 7: Theoretical Integration. Themes were interpreted through theoretical frameworks including human capital theory, lifelong learning theory, learning society theory, community development theory, and social capital theory, examining how empirical findings extended, confirmed, or challenged theoretical propositions.

Triangulation Protocol

The study implemented three triangulation forms enhancing validity:

Source Triangulation: Findings were compared across educational leaders, community leaders, government representatives, program participants, and multiple institutional types, identifying areas of convergence and legitimate difference reflecting diverse stakeholder perspectives.

Method Triangulation: Findings from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis were compared, examining consistency across data collection methods and identifying method-specific biases or artifacts.

Theory Triangulation: Findings were interpreted through multiple theoretical lenses (human capital theory, lifelong learning theory, learning society theory, community development theory, social capital theory), enabling diverse theoretical perspectives rather than privileging single theoretical framework.

Triangulation revealed high consistency across sources and methods regarding major themes, enhanced confidence in findings, and identified areas where different stakeholder groups or theoretical frameworks revealed complementary insights. Remaining inconsistencies reflected legitimate contextual variations, institutional differences, and different stakeholder priorities rather than data quality concerns.

Ethical Considerations

The study received institutional ethics approval prior to data collection. All participants provided informed consent following comprehensive explanation of study objectives, data uses, publication plans, and confidentiality protections. Participants were informed of audio recording protocols with explicit consent provided. Confidentiality was maintained through coded identification throughout data management and analysis. Participants were offered opportunities to review interview transcripts and provide clarifications or corrections. The research posed minimal risk to participants, as it involved systematic inquiry into professional practices without sensitive personal information collection or intervention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceptions of a Learning Society

Participants articulated converging conceptualizations of learning societies emphasizing several interconnected dimensions. Learning society was broadly defined as social systems institutionalizing continuous knowledge development across all population segments and life stages, extending beyond formal schooling to encompass organizational, community, and individual learning processes.

Participants identified learning societies as characterized by cultural emphasis on knowledge acquisition, institutional flexibility adapting to changing environments, accessibility of learning opportunities across socioeconomic strata, and civic participation in community development processes.

Educational leaders (E1-E12) emphasized institutional dimensions of learning societies, highlighting the role of formal and non-formal educational institutions in providing structured learning opportunities, updating curricula responsively to labor market and technological changes, and enabling adult learner access through evening and weekend programs. Educational leader E3 (university administrator) noted: *"A learning society is not just about schools. It's about creating an ecosystem where people at any age can continue developing their capabilities. Our university now offers executive education, community workshops, and online courses alongside traditional degree programs."* This perspective reflected broader educational leader emphasis on institutional diversification and learning pathway multiplication.

Community leaders (C1-C10) articulated learning society conceptions emphasizing social capital, mutual aid, and indigenous knowledge integration. Community leader C5 (youth organization leader) stated: *"For us, a learning society means people learning from each other, not just from formal teachers. The grandmother teaching young people about traditional agriculture, youth leaders facilitating peer learning groups—this is learning society too."* This perspective reflected community leader emphasis on informal knowledge systems, reciprocal learning relationships, and community capacity building through peer knowledge exchange.

Government representatives (G1-G6) positioned learning societies as strategic development responses to technological change and labor market evolution. Government representative G2 (education office official) explained: *"We see the learning society as Indonesia's development strategy. With rapid technology changes, the old education paradigm—get schooling, work until retirement—is finished. People need to keep learning. Our role is creating policy frameworks enabling this."* This perspective reflected government emphasis on learning societies as instrumental for regional competitiveness and adaptation to technological disruption.

All participant groups converged in identifying digital literacy, lifelong learning orientation, community engagement, and human capital development as learning society essential features. Digital literacy was characterized not merely as technical skills but as comprehensive competencies enabling individuals to access information, evaluate sources critically, create digital content, and understand digital systems' societal implications. Lifelong learning orientation was described as cultural shift valuing continuous skill development and knowledge acquisition rather than treating education as discrete life phase. Community engagement encompassed civic participation, deliberative decision-making, and community service learning through which citizens developed democratic competencies while addressing collective development challenges.

Educational and Community Leadership Practices

Educational leaders employed diverse practices fostering learning culture within institutions and extending to community contexts. School principals (E1, E2, E3) implemented learning-centered institutional cultures through professional development emphasizing pedagogical innovation, teacher learning communities, and experimentation with student-centered instructional approaches. University leaders (E4, E5) established community engagement divisions, collaborated with NGOs on outreach initiatives, and developed community service learning curricula integrating academic learning with real-world problem-solving.

Community learning center managers (E6, E7, E8) offered flexible curricula accommodating adult learner needs, provided evening and weekend programming enabling working adults to access learning, established peer tutoring systems leveraging community social capital, and integrated technology through community computer centers. Educational foundation leaders (E9, E10) supported educational innovation through grant funding, conducted training programs building educator capacity, and facilitated knowledge-sharing networks connecting practitioners across institutions.

Community leaders employed practices mobilizing community members around learning initiatives. Religious leaders (C1, C2) integrated learning into religious education contexts, conducted community forums addressing contemporary issues, facilitated intergenerational knowledge transmission, and utilized religious institutions' social legitimacy to promote learning engagement. Youth organization leaders (C3, C4) organized peer learning groups, conducted skills training addressing youth employment needs, facilitated youth voice in community decision-making, and modeled learning commitment through continuing professional development.

NGO representatives (C7, C8) coordinated community learning programs addressing identified needs, facilitated collaboration among community organizations, conducted advocacy for community-centered development approaches, and leveraged external funding supporting community learning initiatives. Social movement and cooperative leaders (C9, C10) organized community members around specific development priorities, facilitated collaborative problem-solving processes, and created alternative learning spaces outside formal institutional contexts.

Government representatives (G1-G6) established policy frameworks enabling learning society development, coordinated educational-community collaboration through inter-agency working groups, allocated budget resources to learning society initiatives, and conducted awareness campaigns promoting learning culture. Government officials described policy advocacy for lifelong learning frameworks, budget prioritization for digital literacy initiatives, and coordination mechanisms bringing educational, community, and business leaders together to address workforce development challenges.

All stakeholder groups emphasized collaborative leadership practices bringing educational and community actors together in joint planning, resource mobilization, and implementation. Educational leaders articulated appreciation for community leaders' social capital, cultural credibility, and community mobilization capacity, while community leaders valued educational leaders' subject matter expertise, institutional resources, and pedagogical sophistication. Collaboration was described as most effective when characterized by mutual respect, clear role definition, equitable resource distribution, and shared ownership of outcomes.

Digital Literacy and Lifelong Learning Initiatives

Participants described diverse digital literacy initiatives across urban and rural contexts. Urban educational institutions (E1, E4, E5) had established technology-enriched learning environments with computer laboratories, internet connectivity, and digital learning platforms; however, rural institutions (E2, E3) faced infrastructure deficits limiting technology integration. Government digital literacy programs (G3, G4) targeted vulnerable populations including elderly citizens, economically disadvantaged groups, and rural communities through community center-based training, mobile digital literacy units, and subsidized device access programs.

Community organizations (C5, C6, C7) provided digital literacy training emphasizing practical skills enabling social media engagement, online information access, e-commerce platform use, and digital security awareness. NGO programs (C8) integrated digital literacy with vocational training, offering skills training combining technical employment-related competencies with digital tools enabling online work. Religious institutions (C1, C2) conducted digital literacy sessions addressing cyber safety, evaluating online information reliability, and navigating digital social participation appropriately.

Lifelong learning initiatives encompassed diverse modalities. Formal educational institutions offered adult education programs combining credential-bearing and non-credential learning opportunities. Non-formal programs through community learning centers, NGOs, and religious institutions provided skills training, personal development programming, and community service learning. Informal learning was facilitated through peer learning groups, knowledge-sharing communities, online platforms enabling horizontal knowledge exchange, and community networks transmitting indigenous and local knowledge.

Participants consistently identified barriers limiting learning initiative effectiveness including inadequate resources, uneven technology access, limited educator capacity for technology-enhanced instruction, and learner participation barriers including time constraints, competing economic demands, and psychological barriers among adults returning to learning. Yet participants also identified emerging opportunities including declining device costs, expanding internet access, growing recognition of lifelong learning importance, and technological solutions enabling flexible learning access.

Learning Society and Human Capital Development

Participants articulated relationships between learning societies and human capital development across multiple dimensions. Technical skill development—competencies enabling labor market participation and economic productivity—represented one dimension. Participants described educational and community leaders facilitating technical training through apprenticeships, vocational education, skills certification programs, and emerging digital skills development responding to technological workplace changes.

Soft skills development—encompassing communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and adaptability—emerged as increasingly important for employment and civic

participation. Educational leaders emphasized soft skills integration throughout curricula through project-based learning, group work, presentation activities, and leadership development programming. Community leaders facilitated soft skills development through youth mentoring, leadership programs, and deliberative community forums enabling practice with democratic communication and collaborative problem-solving.

Citizenship competencies—capabilities enabling civic participation, democratic engagement, and community welfare advancement—represented another human capital dimension. Community leaders articulated particular emphasis on citizenship development through participatory governance mechanisms, community service learning, youth engagement in policy development, and intergenerational dialogue creating shared community ownership.

Emotional resilience and psychological wellbeing emerged as increasingly recognized human capital dimensions. Educational leaders described counseling services, mindfulness programming, trauma-informed pedagogy, and peer support networks addressing learner psychological wellness. Community leaders offered community gathering spaces, social support networks, and healing practices grounded in cultural traditions.

Adaptive capacity—capabilities enabling individuals to navigate uncertain, rapidly changing environments—emerged as critical for sustainable human capital development. Participants described learning society initiatives cultivating adaptive capacity through experiential learning, problem-solving opportunities, diversity exposure, and reflective practice enabling individuals to learn from experiences and adjust approaches.

Participants consistently articulated that human capital development through learning societies generated benefits extending beyond economic productivity to encompass community cohesion, social innovation, civic participation, and sustainable development contributions. Educational leader E7 noted: *"When we think about human capital, we often focus on employment. But I see bigger picture. We're developing people capable of solving community problems, engaged citizens, resilient people facing difficulties. This is human capital for wellbeing, not just economic productivity."*

Integrated Learning Society Development Framework

The empirical findings generated an integrated framework depicting how educational and community leaders jointly establish learning societies through six interconnected mechanisms. The framework emerged through iterative analysis identifying how diverse practices, initiatives, and collaborative approaches across participants manifested coherent patterns.

The framework depicts learning society development as emerging through six simultaneous, mutually reinforcing mechanisms:

Institutional Learning Infrastructure Development: Educational institutions expand learning opportunities beyond traditional schooling through community learning centers, adult education programs, lifelong learning divisions, and community outreach functions. This mechanism creates accessible physical and programmatic spaces enabling learning access across life stages and social positions.

Digital Literacy Ecosystems: Coordinated initiatives develop comprehensive digital literacy addressing technical skills, information literacy, creative competencies, and critical digital citizenship. Ecosystem development involves educational institutions providing formal digital literacy curricula, community organizations offering flexible training, government coordinating digital access initiatives, and informal networks sharing practical digital knowledge.

Collaborative Knowledge-Sharing Platforms: Communities establish mechanisms enabling knowledge exchange including peer learning groups, community networks, online platforms, and deliberative forums bringing diverse stakeholders together for collective learning and problem-solving.

Civic Engagement Frameworks: Learning societies institutionalize civic participation through participatory governance mechanisms, community service learning, youth engagement in decision-making, and deliberative processes through which citizens develop democratic competencies while addressing community challenges.

Social Capital Mobilization: Educational and community leaders leverage existing community relationships, trust networks, and cultural institutions to support learning society development. This mechanism recognizes that learning is embedded in social relationships and community structures rather than existing in isolated individual contexts.

Sustainable Capability Development: The framework emphasizes intentional capacity building for individuals and institutions to sustain learning society functions across time. This encompasses

educator professional development, institutional learning, community leadership strengthening, and policy framework development.

These six mechanisms operate simultaneously and interdependently rather than sequentially. Institutional learning infrastructure provision creates platforms for digital literacy ecosystems and knowledge-sharing platforms. Civic engagement frameworks draw upon social capital while simultaneously strengthening it through new connections and collaboration experiences. Sustainable capability development supports all other mechanisms through strengthened human capacity.

Theoretical Implications

Extending Learning Society Theory

This study contributes to learning society literature by demonstrating that learning societies emerge through deliberate integration of educational and community leadership rather than isolated institutional efforts or spontaneous cultural change. Dominant learning society frameworks emphasize either institutional characteristics or cultural orientations; this research reveals that institutional structures and cultural transformation occur interdependently through coordinated leadership action. Learning society theory has inadequately theorized leadership dimensions and change mechanisms through which societies transition toward learning orientations. This study's framework positioning learning society development as emerging through coordinated institutional infrastructure, digital literacy ecosystems, knowledge-sharing mechanisms, civic participation, social capital mobilization, and capability development offers theoretical enrichment regarding how learning societies actually emerge.

Furthermore, this research demonstrates that learning society development in emerging regional economies differs qualitatively from developed economy contexts, challenging universalist learning society frameworks. Resource constraints, uneven technology infrastructure, socioeconomic diversity, and different institutional development patterns in emerging economies necessitate learning society approaches emphasizing social capital mobilization, informal knowledge integration, and adaptive institutional flexibility rather than assuming high-technology, high-resource contexts. Learning society theory requires greater attention to contextual adaptation and diverse pathways toward learning-oriented societies.

Contributions to Lifelong Learning Theory

This study extends lifelong learning theory by documenting how educational and community leaders jointly institutionalize lifelong learning through diverse mechanisms beyond individual motivation or policy rhetoric. Lifelong learning literature sometimes assumes that learning motivation derives primarily from individual agency or labor market imperatives; this research reveals that social structures, institutional accessibility, community engagement, and leadership commitment fundamentally shape lifelong learning participation. Participants described how community relationships motivated learning engagement, institutional barriers prevented learning participation despite strong motivation, and supportive community environments enabled learning even among individuals with previous negative educational experiences.

The research demonstrates that lifelong learning requires intentional integration of formal, non-formal, and informal learning pathways rather than assuming each occurs independently. Educational institutions provide structure and credentials; community organizations provide flexibility and social embedding; informal networks provide peer support and practical knowledge. Effective lifelong learning systems coordinate these complementary modalities rather than privileging formal institutions. This finding challenges lifelong learning literature's tendency to emphasize formal continuing education or individual self-directed learning while underemphasizing community learning and informal knowledge systems.

Human Capital Theory Reconceptualization

This study contributes to human capital theory by demonstrating that sustainable human capital development requires simultaneous attention to multiple capital forms: cognitive capital (knowledge and technical skills), social capital (relationships and networks), cultural capital (culturally-embedded knowledge and dispositions), and psychological capital (emotional resilience and agency). Conventional human capital theory emphasizes cognitive capital and technical skills; this research reveals that community leaders emphasize social and cultural capital dimensions that economic human capital perspectives undervalue. Learning societies develop all capital forms through coordinated institutional effort, yielding human capital more robust and equitable than technocratic skill development approaches.

Furthermore, this research reveals that human capital sustainability requires capability development extending beyond initial skill acquisition to encompass lifelong learning capacity, adaptive intelligence enabling navigation of uncertainty, civic competencies enabling community participation, and psychological resilience enabling individuals to manage change and adversity. Human capital theory's emphasis on static competencies acquired during formal education inadequately captures the dynamic adaptive capacity required for sustainable development in rapidly changing contexts.

Community Development Theory Enhancement

This study extends community development theory by demonstrating mechanisms through which educational institutions and community organizations jointly strengthen community capacity and development. Community development literature often positions formal educational institutions as external expert systems requiring community participation in predetermined institutional agendas; this research reveals potential for genuine partnerships where educational institutions and communities co-create development approaches leveraging complementary capacities. Educational institutions bring subject expertise, research capacity, institutional resources, and access to broader knowledge networks; communities bring social capital, cultural credibility, collective problem-solving capacity, and concrete knowledge of local contexts and needs.

The research demonstrates that learning society development represents distinctive community development approach combining formal knowledge production with community-based knowledge systems, creating hybrid learning environments superior to either alone. This suggests reorientation of community development practice toward community-institution partnerships rather than dichotomizing external expertise and community knowledge.

Social Capital and Learning Relationships

The study reveals profound relationships between learning and social capital development. Learning society development simultaneously strengthens social capital through new relationship formation, trust building, and collective efficacy development, while social capital enables learning society development by providing networks through which learning access is distributed and communities mobilized. This reciprocal relationship suggests that learning and social capital development should be understood as mutually constitutive processes rather than separate development dimensions.

Practical Implications

Implications for Educational Leaders

Educational leaders should deliberately expand institutional roles beyond traditional schooling to encompass community learning facilitation, lifelong learning provision, and community partnership. This expansion requires creating dedicated community engagement functions, developing community-responsive program designs, and establishing institutional policies prioritizing community engagement alongside traditional educational functions. Educational leaders should view community organizations not as competitors but as complementary partners with distinctive capacities and legitimacy. Formal-informal partnership approaches enable educational institutions to extend learning reach while maintaining focus on quality.

Educational leaders should prioritize digital literacy development as essential for institutional missions and community engagement. This encompasses building educator digital competencies, establishing digital infrastructure, and integrating digital literacy throughout curricula. Educational leaders should recognize that digital literacy extends beyond technical skills to encompass information literacy, critical evaluation, creative production, and ethical digital citizenship.

Educational leaders should emphasize soft skills, citizenship competencies, and emotional resilience alongside technical skills. Curricula should integrate project-based learning, collaborative work, leadership development, and reflective practice. Assessment should evaluate these dimensions alongside traditional academic knowledge. Educational leaders should recognize that sustainable human capital development requires comprehensive capability development rather than narrow technical skill focus.

Implications for Community Leaders

Community leaders should actively engage educational institutions as partners in community development rather than viewing formal education as separate from community concerns. Community leaders bring social capital and cultural credibility that educational institutions can leverage; educational institutions bring resources and expertise that community leaders can utilize. Collaborative

partnerships between community leaders and educators enable more comprehensive community development than either can achieve independently.

Community leaders should prioritize digital literacy development recognizing that digital competencies increasingly determine social participation and economic opportunity. Community leaders should emphasize that digital literacy encompasses critical evaluation and security awareness, not merely technical skills. Digital literacy development should be embedded within community learning initiatives rather than treated as separate technical training.

Community leaders should intentionally facilitate civic engagement through participatory mechanisms enabling community members to participate in community decision-making. Civic engagement simultaneously develops democratic competencies among participants while generating more responsive, legitimate community decisions. Community leaders should recognize that civic engagement and learning are mutually reinforcing processes.

Implications for Government Agencies

Government agencies should establish policy frameworks and resource allocation mechanisms supporting learning society development. This includes budgeting for digital literacy initiatives, enabling educational-community collaboration through coordinating mechanisms, and removing regulatory barriers to innovative learning approaches. Government should recognize that learning society development represents strategic development investment rather than supplementary social provision.

Government should establish platforms for educational, community, and business leaders to collaborate in addressing human capital development challenges. Deliberative mechanisms bringing diverse stakeholders together enable coordinated approaches more effective than isolated institutional efforts. Government should position itself as convener and resource provider rather than sole learning provider.

Government should remove digital access barriers through infrastructure investment, device subsidization, and service affordability policies. Digital divides perpetuate inequality; deliberate policies addressing technology access are prerequisite for inclusive learning societies. Government should establish quality standards and accountability mechanisms for digital literacy programs while respecting program diversity and community adaptation.

Implications for Educational Institutions

Educational institutions should establish community engagement divisions with dedicated staffing, budgets, and leadership commitment. Community engagement should not remain marginal institutional activity dependent on individual champions' commitment but should be institutionalized as core function. Educational institutions should develop community-responsive program designs consulting community stakeholders regarding learning needs and preferences.

Educational institutions should establish partnerships with community organizations enabling mutually beneficial collaboration. Universities might partner with community learning centers on outreach programming; schools might collaborate with youth organizations on mentoring and leadership development; professional training programs might align curricula with community-defined workforce needs. Partnerships should involve equitable resource distribution and shared decision-making rather than educational institutions determining partnership terms.

Educational institutions should view professional development as ongoing educator learning rather than discrete training events. Educational leaders should establish learning communities where educators continuously share practices, experiment with innovations, and support each other's development. This commitment to educator learning models the lifelong learning commitment expected of learners.

Implications for Community Organizations

Community organizations should position learning as core function across organizational programming rather than supplementary activity. Community learning initiatives should be intentional rather than incidental, with designated staffing, budgeting, and evaluation. Community organizations should establish learning partnerships with educational institutions leveraging educational expertise while maintaining community grounding and cultural authenticity.

Community organizations should develop governance structures enabling community participation in organizational decision-making. Participatory governance simultaneously develops community member capabilities while generating more responsive organizational decisions. Community organizations should view democratic participation as learning opportunity through which members develop civic competencies.

Community organizations should prioritize leadership development identifying emerging leaders and providing systematic support for leadership skill development. Leadership development ensures organizational sustainability and creates leadership opportunities for community members. Leadership development should emphasize collaborative, distributed leadership rather than hierarchical models.

Implications for Regional Development Policymakers

Regional policymakers should recognize learning society development as core regional development strategy enabling adaptation to technological change, enhanced human capital quality, social cohesion strengthening, and sustainable development advancement. Policymakers should allocate significant budget resources to learning society initiatives recognizing them as investments with long-term returns rather than supplementary social provision.

Policymakers should establish coordinating mechanisms enabling educational, community, business, and government actors to collaborate in learning society development. Deliberative platforms bringing diverse stakeholders enable coordinated approaches addressing identified gaps and avoiding duplicative efforts. Policymakers should position government as convener and resource provider supporting community and educational leadership rather than sole learning provider.

Policymakers should establish quality standards and accountability mechanisms for learning society initiatives while respecting program diversity and community adaptation. Quality frameworks should evaluate learning society contributions to human capital development, social cohesion, civic participation, and sustainable development rather than narrow credential outcomes.

Contribution of the Study

Theoretical Contribution

This study advances learning society theory by providing empirical evidence that learning society development requires integrated educational-community leadership rather than institutional approaches alone. The study introduces the Learning Society Development Framework demonstrating how educational and community leaders jointly cultivate lifelong learning, digital literacy, civic engagement, and human capital development. This framework extends existing learning society theory by explicitly articulating the mechanisms through which diverse leadership actors collaborate to create societal conditions supporting continuous learning.

The study contributes to lifelong learning theory by demonstrating that effective lifelong learning ecosystems require deliberate leadership practices including vision articulation, structural enablement, community mobilization, and collaborative coordination. The research reveals that lifelong learning is not primarily individual responsibility but emerges from organizational and community conditions that educational and community leaders systematically create. This perspective shifts lifelong learning discourse from individual motivation toward systemic leadership approaches.

The study advances human capital theory by demonstrating that sustainable human capital development in emerging regional economies depends upon learning society infrastructure encompassing formal education, community learning, digital literacy, and collaborative leadership. Traditional human capital theory emphasizes formal education and credentialing; this study reveals that regional human capital development increasingly requires diverse learning modalities integrated through leadership collaboration. The framework demonstrates that human capital development in digital eras requires continuous learning capabilities rather than terminal credentials.

Educational Contribution

This study contributes to educational practice by providing evidence-based recommendations for educational leaders seeking to extend learning society roles beyond institutional boundaries. The research demonstrates that educational leaders strengthen community learning through strategic partnerships, open resource sharing, digital literacy advancement, and collaborative curriculum development addressing community-identified learning needs.

Social Contribution

The study contributes to social development by providing practical frameworks for community leaders seeking to systematically foster learning-oriented communities. The Learning Society Development Framework offers concrete mechanisms through which community leaders can cultivate civic participation, social cohesion, and collective learning enabling communities to navigate digital transformation challenges.

Managerial Contribution

This study provides strategic management insights for educational institutions and community organizations seeking to develop learning society roles. The research demonstrates effective leadership

practices, organizational structures, and community engagement approaches that strengthen learning society contributions while maintaining organizational sustainability.

Policy Contribution

The study contributes to policy discourse by demonstrating that learning society development requires coordinated governmental support including resource allocation, regulatory frameworks, quality standards, and convening mechanisms. The research provides evidence for policymakers advocating learning society investments as core regional development strategies rather than supplementary social provision.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative descriptive study exploring educational and community leadership contributions to learning society development in Banten Province reveals that learning societies emerge from integrated leadership practices, structural supports, and community engagement rather than institutional efforts alone. The study's primary findings demonstrate that effective learning societies require educational leaders extending institutional boundaries through community partnerships and digital literacy advancement, community leaders systematically fostering civic participation and collaborative learning, and government officials coordinating multi-stakeholder efforts through deliberative platforms and resource allocation.

The research contributes theoretically by advancing learning society, lifelong learning, and human capital theories through empirical evidence demonstrating integrated leadership mechanisms supporting continuous learning, digital competency, and sustainable human capital development. The Learning Society Development Framework represents the study's central theoretical contribution, articulating how educational leaders, community leaders, and government officials collaborate to create societal conditions supporting lifelong learning and human capital development in digital eras.

Practically, the study provides educational leaders with evidence-based strategies for extending institutional roles toward learning society contributions, community leaders with frameworks for systematizing community learning and civic participation, and policymakers with justification for prioritizing learning society investments as core regional development strategies. The research demonstrates that learning societies in emerging regional economies require deliberate leadership attention, collaborative coordination, resource commitment, and quality accountability mechanisms supporting sustainable learning ecosystems.

Research limitations include reliance on purposive sampling potentially introducing selection bias, qualitative methodology limiting generalizability beyond Banten Province context, and single-point-in-time data collection preventing longitudinal analysis of learning society development. Future research should employ longitudinal designs tracking learning society development over extended periods, conduct comparative regional studies examining learning society development across diverse emerging economies, examine how artificial intelligence integration transforms learning society leadership practices, and investigate learning society contributions to measurable human capital outcomes and regional competitiveness indicators.

Learning societies represent essential regional development strategies in digital eras characterized by technological acceleration, knowledge complexity, and continuous skill evolution. Educational and community leaders operating collaboratively through deliberate practices, structural supports, and community engagement create learning-oriented societies enabling individuals and communities to develop capabilities required for meaningful participation in digital knowledge economies while maintaining social cohesion and sustainable development.

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