

Concluding comments

Learning communities are all about fostering the development of whole people in whole communities. We all learn *in situ* - initially in the settings of our homes, our schools, our workplaces, and the places that we socialize, play, and re-create in the wider community. The settings of our learning are crucial as learning is essentially a social process embedded in community. Most of the valuable learning we gain throughout our lives is with and from others. Healthy, learning families and healthy, learning communities are the building blocks of a learning society and nation.

In our era of failed states and failed markets the last refuge and defence of humanity is its communities. A community in which all share the basic literacies is essential to more effectively play our adult roles as active community members and citizens, caring parents and family members, productive workers and wise consumers, and creative lifelong learners is a robust, resilient community worthy of our aspirations and efforts.

Learning communities build on many of the positive initiatives that already exist in our communities. A learning perspective can add value to most of our existing activities. Basic literacy for all ensures that all can participate in, and contribute to, their communities.

Basic literacy enables us, as Paolo Friere has said, to “name” our world rather than to have it defined for us by others in the media and other institutions of the dominant society. It empowers all human beings not as isolated individuals but as active members of a community which reflects the best of our values and virtues. Together, we can learn to sculpt the communities to which we aspire.