

In-Between Lab

The Importance of Soft Skills Development in Higher Education

High education shouldn't be solely about academic knowledge and technical expertise; developing well-rounded individuals with a diverse skill set plays a significant role too. Beyond traditional subjects, the cultivation of essential life skills is essential for personal growth and success in various aspects of life.

In today's rapidly changing world, the current professional climate seeks candidates with a range of skills that go beyond academic achievements. These skills include emotional intelligence, adaptability, creativity, problem-solving, and effective communication. Such competencies are highly valued as they enable individuals to excel in team dynamics, navigate complex challenges, and contribute positively to society.

The Role of Informal Settings in Skills Development

While formal educational settings are crucial for structured learning, informal environments offer unique opportunities for skill development. Informal gatherings, such as sharing meals and drinks around a table, creates a relaxed atmosphere encouraging genuine connections and open conversations as well as a fertile ground for bright ideas to be shared.

In such settings, individuals are more attuned to emotions and nonverbal cues, fostering emotional intelligence and empathy. The absence of rigid structures allows for creative thinking and problem-solving, as participants feel more comfortable expressing unconventional ideas and exploring innovative solutions.

Informal settings also promote personal reflection and subconscious thinking. With a sense of ease, individuals can freely explore their thoughts and experiences, leading to heightened self-awareness and personal growth.

The Charm of Heritage Buildings and its Impact

Heritage buildings hold a unique charm stemming from their historical significance and the stories they carry. The passage of time and the imprint of past generations create an authentic and nostalgic ambiance that modern structures often lack. Stepping into a historical building evokes a sense of connection to history and a reverence for the space's heritage.

Furthermore, heritage buildings often have a more relaxed approach to upkeep and appearances. Imperfections and wear and tear contribute to the building's character, creating an environment where individuals feel less pressure to maintain a pristine appearance. This informality of imperfection encourages a higher sense of ownership and belonging, as individuals find comfort in the building's familiarity.

The Proposed Living Lab at the Grensen Cluster

The proposal for a living lab at the Grensen Cluster capitalizes on the benefits of informal settings and the potential nested in existing structures to foster skills development. The introduction of a communal kitchen provides a natural gathering space for individuals to share meals, engage in conversations, and build connections. The act of cooking and dining together promotes collaboration, teamwork, and communication skills, fostering a strong sense of community.

Additionally, the incorporation of landscaping and repair amenities creates an inviting and nurturing environment. Green spaces encourage relaxation and reflection, while repair tasks offer opportunities for hands-on problem-solving and resourcefulness.

Beyond the Physical Realm: Creating a Metaphorical Living Lab

The proposed living lab extends beyond the physical environment to create a metaphorical space of continuous learning and growth. Emphasizing a culture of exchanging knowledge and experiential learning, individuals are encouraged to share their diverse skills, experiences, and practical knowledge. This dynamic exchange fosters a vibrant community of learners and mentors.

The living lab becomes a hub for personal and professional development, where individuals can explore various skills, such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, creativity, and stress management. The inclusive and welcoming atmosphere facilitates productive connections, and empowers individuals to embrace new experiences and challenges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed living lab at the Grensen Cluster offers a transformative approach to higher education that prioritizes soft skills development. By leveraging the benefits of informal settings and embracing the charm of heritage buildings, NTNU can create an empowering and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and the broader community. The integration of diverse skills with academic knowledge prepares the

academic community to thrive in the dynamic and interconnected world of the 21st century, equipping them to succeed both professionally and personally. Through the living lab, NTNU can foster a culture of continuous learning and growth, empowering individuals to become lifelong learners and positive contributors to society.