CTL Newsletter

Monthly Newsletter of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at IIM Udaipur

Campus environments and their role in student development

Physical and psychological spaces in higher education are important for holistic development of students. These spaces provide a meeting place and a chance for interacting with like-minded, like-appearing and like-experienced others. These are the spaces where meaning-making conversations about self, others and peer culture take place. Colleges must intentionally create spaces -- physical and psychological, as well as public and private, where students can belong. The first article talks about this role that campus environments play in holistic development.

We also share a brief explanatory summary of another article that elaborates how management schools can play an important role of being identity workspaces for their students.

Welcome to a new volume of the CTL newsletter as we start a new academic year. Happy Reading! Please do share your comments and suggestions!

# Campus environment and their role in holistic student development

Almost every higher education institute aspires that students passing through its portals will experience holistic development and transformation of some nature. Indeed an important objective of higher education is intentional and holistic student development (Brown, 1972). This is often not achieved, and the inability of college students to experience holistic development has less to do with their individual capabilities and more to do with the educational environment in which they exist - one that incentivizes reliance on authority and supports the search for 'right' answers. Educational environments where faculty encourage students to assume responsibility for their thinking and work and encouraged them to develop multiple perspectives were more suited to holistic development (King, 2011) and faculty and academic leaders need to understand the importance of such an environment first.

Physical and psychological spaces are important for the development of identity (Renn, 2004). Public spaces like student organizations gave students an opportunity to be in leadership positions or attend social events. These spaces provided a meeting place and a chance for interacting with like-minded, like-appearing and like-experienced others (King, 2011). Renn (2004) also described private spaces as those where the meaning-making about peer culture, family background and personal views about culture, race, and self, took place. These spaces are accessed through journals, academic assignments, and conversations with trusted people. Colleges must intentionally create spaces -- physical and psychological, as well as public and private, where students can belong. This can be by nurturing new student organizations, and creating an overall atmosphere conducive to open conversations,

with open-minded people, not hesitating from discussing feelings and emotions; giving students the feeling of being heard when they raise concerns (King, 2011)

How can educational institutes create such an environment? By encouraging innovations in curriculum and pedagogy that encourage student development along the cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions by creating dissonance in decision-making at various stages in different aspects of student life. Innovative courses, experiential learning opportunities, exposure to authentic field experiences are some examples. Another area of innovation is academic advising. Students are encouraged to take charge of their lives by developing their goals and values. Advisers engage students in conversations that validate their perspectives and challenge them to make decisions and take responsibility for their academic progress.

The third area is co-curricular innovations. Community building initiatives and honor councils are some of the ways (Magolda, 2007). Another example of a co-curricular innovation that supports holistic development is the institution of awards and recognition for students who demonstrate learning and personal development through their co-curricular and extracurricular experiences (Jackson, 2011).
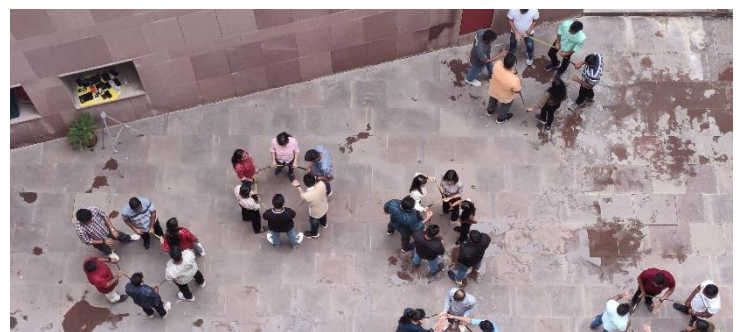
The campus environment is a potent medium through which an institute can create developmentally effective experiences and support holistic development; whether it is by providing for public and private spaces for experiences, or creating innovations that become the experiences, or by just being a backdrop to

such experiences. The educational environment plays a key role in development of non-cognitive skills (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). Research on how the higher education environmental context influences student development suggests introducing additional layers of microsystems in the residential context, and enhancing opportunity for faculty student interactions within the residential microsystems as good practices (Wawrzynski et al., 2012). Research on clubs and club activities suggests that they are important for the development of interpersonal skills (Burggraaf, 1997).

The experiences that propel students along the path of holistic development have been classified into 6 types (Barber et al., 2013a):

1. Experiences that fostered identity development: dissonance in academics, leadership roles, work roles or relationships with others that led to identity exploration and refinement. These experiences could arise in any area from social identity development to career choice.

2. Experiences that forced individuals to evaluate knowledge claims and take ownership of beliefs: such experiences frequently arose in regular and innovative academic work and being questioned and guided by faculty and peers.

3. Drawing support from a sense of belonging, college peers were a major source of support, the critical element in developing self-authorship. These peers could be connected through residences, academic work, sports, members of student organizations, or other groups. Role modeling by faculty, staff and peers within the campus environment as well as the opportunity to be role models themselves have been found to be an important catalyst for student self-authorship (Magolda et al., 2012).

4. Experiences with diverse others and new cultures that made individuals re-evaluate perspectives; these experiences of direct interaction with diverse others in various contexts were important in reevaluating perspectives. This included study abroad programs, community participation, and interactions with local communities outside the campus.

5. Tragedy/intense personal challenges: such experiences disrupted participants' way of looking at the world, at themselves and their relationships. Deaths, health issues, relationship breakups, injuries, accidents, etc. led students to reevaluate knowledge, identity, and relationships in the context of the situation.

6. Working through complex personal relationships: these experiences are about evolving relationships in the long term ranging from friendships, family, housemates, etc.(Barber et al., 2013a).

The intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of holistic development and the development of non-cognitive skills is an emerging area for research in higher education. Non-cognitive skills include the set of attitudes, behaviors, and strategies that form the basis of success in educational and work settings, such as motivation, perseverance, and self-control (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). These have also been referred to as mindsets, essential skills, and habits (MESH)(Gabrieli et al., 2015). From a career perspective, studies suggest that employers seek these skills in employees, the presence of these skills predict a higher likelihood of being employed, higher adult earnings, and greater financial stability (Gabrieli et al., 2015). Non-cognitive skills are considered as important as or more important than cognitive skills or tests of intelligence in explaining academic or employment outcomes (Heckman et al., 2006). Also, positive health effects of MESH skills include reduced rates of mortality, obesity, smoking, substance abuse, and mental health concerns (Gabrieli et al., 2015).

Robust evidence on causal relationships between non-cognitive skills and long-term outcomes is limited (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). Research on leadership does show some evidence of influence of non-cognitive skills in leader effectiveness. In today's fast changing work environment where ability to work in small project teams is desirable, MESH skills like team-building, communication and ability to motivate are essential for leaders (Zimmerer & Yasin, 1998). Aspects of emotional intelligence like influence, motivation, and conscientiousness are indispensable in all project leadership settings (Müller & Turner, 2010). While having intentional and holistic student development as an objective is vital for any higher education institution, it is essential to look beyond the curriculum and understand the role played by the campus environment in achieving this objective. A nuanced understanding of how the various elements of the campus environment that a student is a part of and the experiences that shape their personal development is key to achieving holistic development.

- Joel Xavier

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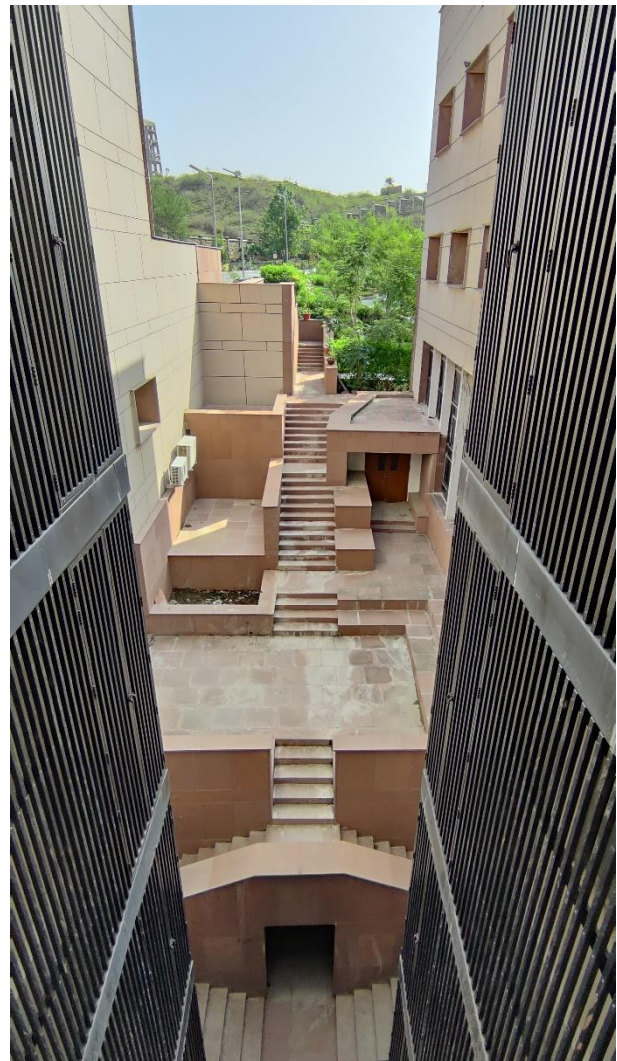
Brief notes from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Identity workspaces: The case of business schools

GIANPIERO PETRIGLIERI and JENNIFER LOUISE PETRIGLIERI *(2010).*
Academy of Management Learning & Education, 9(1), 44–60.

The formation, consolidation, and changing of individuals' identities are increasingly studied in the field of organization studies. Traditionally, psychologists focused on identity development throughout the lifespan and the influence of social factors on identity. However, organizational scholars have recently examined identity unfolding in professional settings, emphasizing the concept of identity work. Identity work involves the activities individuals undertake to create, maintain, and display personal and social identities that contribute to a coherent and desirable self-concept. It encompasses both intrapsychic and social processes and includes crafting, protecting, modifying, and gaining social validation for one's self-views.

Identity work is an ongoing process but is particularly intense and conscious during transitional periods. It is observed when individuals transition into new roles or organizations, negotiate the balance between their occupational and personal identities, exit a role, or experience identity threats. Fast-changing social contexts, such as contemporary work environments, increase the need for identity work as individuals face constant pressure to conform or adapt their self-concepts.

This study introduces the concept of an "identity workspace" as an institution that provides a holding environment for identity work. It is based on two assumptions: identity work cannot occur in isolation, and it is stimulated by moments of identity destabilization and experiences of uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety. An identity workspace supports individuals' cognitive, emotional, and social processes in elaborating, experimenting with, and consolidating the meanings associated with their self-identity.

The term "workspace" refers to both physical and social-psychological spaces, and it emphasizes that the function of an identity workspace is not inherent to the institution itself but rather depends on individuals investing the institution with this function. An institution may intend to serve as an identity workspace, but its effectiveness depends on individual members' trust and reliance on it for soothing distress and facilitating sense-making. Social defenses, sentient communities, and rites of passage are identified as components that make an institution more likely to be invested with the function of an identity workspace.

Social defenses

The skills and knowledge acquired within an MBA are often presented as universally applicable across different corporations, social groups, and cultures. This commodification and decontextualization of management and leadership contribute to their use as social defenses. Managers can acquire and hold onto their identities even if corporations are no longer a reliable source, trusting the skills and identities acquired in the business school course to support their careers wherever they go next. Business school courses can be used as social defenses to avoid addressing challenging issues, reinforce managerial identities, and stabilize identities in times of organizational change. The commodification of management and leadership in these courses contributes to managers' identity work and reduces the potential fragility of their managerial identities.

Sentient communities

These communities can be micro-communities, such as close groups of classmates, or macro-communities, such as organized alumni networks. They offer a sense of belonging and sustain social defenses that are initially constructed in the classroom and then reinforced through ongoing events, reunions, and other activities.

These sentient communities within business schools serve as cross-organizational "career communities" that support individuals' career progress. They shape individuals' expectations about their careers and provide reassurance, feedback, and social comparison targets to help stabilize their identities. Moreover, these communities can also motivate individuals to pursue identity transitions and explore alternative career paths.

The authors emphasize that the development of a sense of community in the classroom is a crucial factor for the success of a program. The existence of these sentient communities within business schools enhances the identity work of individuals and contributes to their personal and professional growth.

Rites of passage

There are many similarities between business school courses, particularly long residential ones, and rites of passage described by anthropological scholars. These courses encompass elements of separation, transition, and reintegration, allowing individuals to experiment with their identity and form new connections as they enter a new stage in their lives or a different social group.

Participants often approach business school with a mix of awe, uncertainty, and anticipation, similar to individuals entering an initiation rite. They attend business education primarily for personal reasons, hoping to gain acceptance into a select community, boost their confidence and vision, and transform their professional and personal lives. The outcomes valued by participants are not just theories and tools learned but also fluency in the language of management and increased self-confidence, which legitimize their adoption of a managerial identity.

Business school courses are experienced as vital rites of passage, reflecting the contemporary business community's "mythology." They facilitate identity transitions by providing a space for participants to experiment and reflect on the meanings associated with themselves. For example, some students explore various job opportunities during their MBA, engaging in experimentation and reflection during the middle stage of the rites of passage.

In some cases, management education programs explicitly incorporate the timeless sequence of rites of passage into their design. For instance, a leadership development program includes pre-program preparation focused on personal and professional identity narratives. The program itself involves orientation, exploration of leadership through case studies and role plays, experimentation through problem-solving activities, video review and reflection, and integration to make sense of participants' experiences and connect program learning to their home situations.

Overall, business school courses provide individuals with a structured and transformative experience akin to rites of passage, allowing them to navigate identity transitions and develop their managerial identities.

Updates from CTL

IIM Udaipur welcomed its 13th cohort of the flagship 2-year MBA program on 26th June 2023. This cohort comprises 360 students from all over the country.

The first week saw them participate in various activities as part of their orientation. After their registration on 26th June, they were addressed by the Director and Mr. Alpesh Shah - Managing Director & Senior Partner, BCG, Mumbai. The new cohort also witnessed the awards ceremony for Director's Award for Scholastic Merit for the class of '24.

As part of Orientation – CTL conducted the Learning at IIMU – Session 3 for each section. The focus of this session was to help the new students understand how they need to discard their old muscle memory about the way of learning at UG level and adapt to a new way of participant-centered learning at IIMU. Other academic skills covered in the session included how to prepare for cases, working in groups, taking systematic notes, reflection, metacognition, etc. The students also discussed and understood the nuances of what it really means to undergo transformation at IIM Udaipur.

Feedback

Please click on the link below to share your feedback and comments and to let us know what kind of content you would like to read about in future newsletters.

https://forms.gle/oT73PwW9tafiTmXb7

For queries or for making a guest contribution, please contact the Centre for Teaching and Learning at ctl@iimu.ac.in