

P / REFERENCES OF DESIGN

INTEGRATING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, VALUES, AND SELF-REFLECTION IN DESIGN EDUCATION: A HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR CREATIVE EXCELLENCE.

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ABSTRACT | In the dynamic landscape of higher design education, the traditional emphasis on technical skills and theoretical knowledge often overshadows the essential role of personal development, individual values, and self-reflection. This paper advocates for a paradigm shift towards a more holistic approach, contending that integrating these elements into the curriculum not only enhances the overall educational experience but also cultivates well-rounded, socially conscious designers.

Our reasoning is explained and explored with reference to three aspects, which we believe are essential for creative excellence within the context of design education. Firstly, personal development is integral to nurturing creativity and innovation. By allocating dedicated time to foster self-awareness, resilience, and emotional intelligence, students can harness their unique perspectives and experiences, thus enriching the creative process. This approach empowers students to navigate the complexities of the design world with confidence, adaptability, and a heightened sense of purpose.

Secondly, incorporating core values into design education instills a sense of ethical responsibility and social consciousness. By exploring and understanding individual and collective values, students can develop a framework that guides their decision-making process, ensuring that their designs align with principles that prioritize sustainability, inclusivity, and ethical considerations. This integration not only contributes to responsible design practices but also prepares students to address the societal challenges of our time.

Lastly, self-reflection serves as a crucial tool for continuous improvement. By encouraging students to reflect on their work, experiences, and evolving perspectives, design education can foster a habit of critical thinking and adaptive learning. This reflective practice enables students to refine their design processes, identify strengths and areas for growth, and ultimately evolve into designers capable of making meaningful contributions to their field.

Besides theoretical deepening, the above aspects are also evaluated in teaching practice. This paper describes 3 concrete initiatives within the Product Development programme at the University of Antwerp in which Personal Development was integrated into the curriculum:

- Skillslab, which focuses on the development of supporting and soft skills for designers with the aim of helping them grow as a person, and thus as a designer.
- My designers' values project (pilot), where we integrated a workshop on what values drive you as a designer in an existing design assignment.
- Design professionalization as a separate learning path, from 1 Ba until 2 Ma, in the curriculum, where there is room for self-exploration.

In conclusion, higher design education must evolve to accommodate personal development, values exploration, and self-reflection and foster a more holistic learning experience. This approach not only prepares students with the technical expertise required by the industry but also cultivates empathy, social responsibility, and a commitment to sustainable practices in design. Meeting this challenge requires ongoing innovation, adaptable teaching strategies, and a dedication to collaborative learning. Despite the complexities and demands of the educational landscape, the focus on personal and professional development in design education offers a pathway to cultivating designers who can shape a more inclusive and sustainable future.

1. Introduction

In order to enhance personal growth, improve communication and gain trust when collaborating, educators should foster and stimulate students' interpersonal awareness, identified by Luft and Ingham in the Johari window framework as the arena (Luft & Ingham, 1955). The more people know about themselves and others, the more open and trusting their relationships become. They will be more productive, cooperative and effective when working in a team.

The Johari window framework can be instrumental in integrating personal development, values, and self-reflection into design education. By using this framework as an underlying foundation, educators can create a more holistic and inclusive learning environment that fosters creativity, collaboration, and self-awareness, which are essential for deepening learning (Maher & Root, 2014). This approach aligns with the shift toward a more comprehensive and human-centered paradigm in design education, where students are encouraged to explore their inner selves while engaging with the broader social and ethical context of design.

A range of studies have explored the integration of personal development, values, and self-reflection in design education. Rivard (2012) underscores the significance of reflexive learning in the context of design education to enhance creativity and self-leadership in design practice and positioning it as a pivotal aspect of the learning process.

In the exploration of pedagogical frameworks within design education, Shim (2018) contributes insights into an inclusive framework that can be further enriched by the integration of personal development and self-reflection. This approach aims to foster a more comprehensive and participatory educational experience for students.

Additionally, Tracey (2018) sheds light on the pivotal role of reflective writing in helping students explore their beliefs and experiences. The act of reflecting in writing serves as a mechanism for designers to articulate and refine their evolving professional identities.

Collectively, these studies underscore a shared perspective on the imperative for a holistic approach to design education. This approach, integrating personal development, values, and self-reflection, emerges as a vital framework for nurturing a well-rounded and reflective educational experience within the field of design.

The traditional focus on technical skills and theoretical knowledge in higher design education has been critiqued for overshadowing the importance of personal development, individual values, and self-reflection (Salmon, 1992; Peruccio, 2019; Doorn, 2008; Meyer, 2020). These elements are crucial for cultivating well-rounded, socially conscious designers. Salmon (1992) and Peruccio (2019) advocate for a more holistic approach, emphasizing the integration of liberal arts, social sciences, and transdisciplinary knowledge into the curriculum. Doorn (2008) and Meyer (2020) further stress the need for the development of designers' attitude and the inclusion of practical, real-world experiences in design education. These perspectives collectively support a paradigm shift towards a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to higher design education.

Research consistently supports the idea that personal development is crucial for nurturing creativity and innovation. Stolk (2009) and Hargrove (2012) both emphasize the importance of self-directed learning and metacognitive abilities in fostering creativity. Danko (2003) and Ulibarri (2014) further highlight the role of emotional intelligence and resilience in this process, with Danko specifically noting the use of narratives to enhance emotional development. These findings collectively underscore the need for dedicated time to develop self-awareness, resilience, and emotional intelligence, as these are key factors in harnessing unique perspectives and experiences to enrich the creative process.

Design education plays a crucial role in instilling ethical responsibility and social consciousness in students, as it equips them with the skills and mindset needed to address societal challenges (Zande, 2011). This is

particularly important in the context of design responsibility and sustainability, where students are encouraged to adopt sustainable design thinking (Ashour, 2020). The integration of core values into design education is further enhanced by the incorporation of scientific knowledge, which enriches the design process (Zubrowski, 2002). This approach is exemplified in the Industrial Design Program at the University of New South Wales, where students are immersed in projects that highlight design's potential as a catalyst for social change (Ramirez, 2011).

As design education navigates the complexities of the 21st century, the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030 initiative offers a visionary blueprint. At its core lies the Learning Compass 2030, a guiding framework that underscores the multifaceted nature of learning.

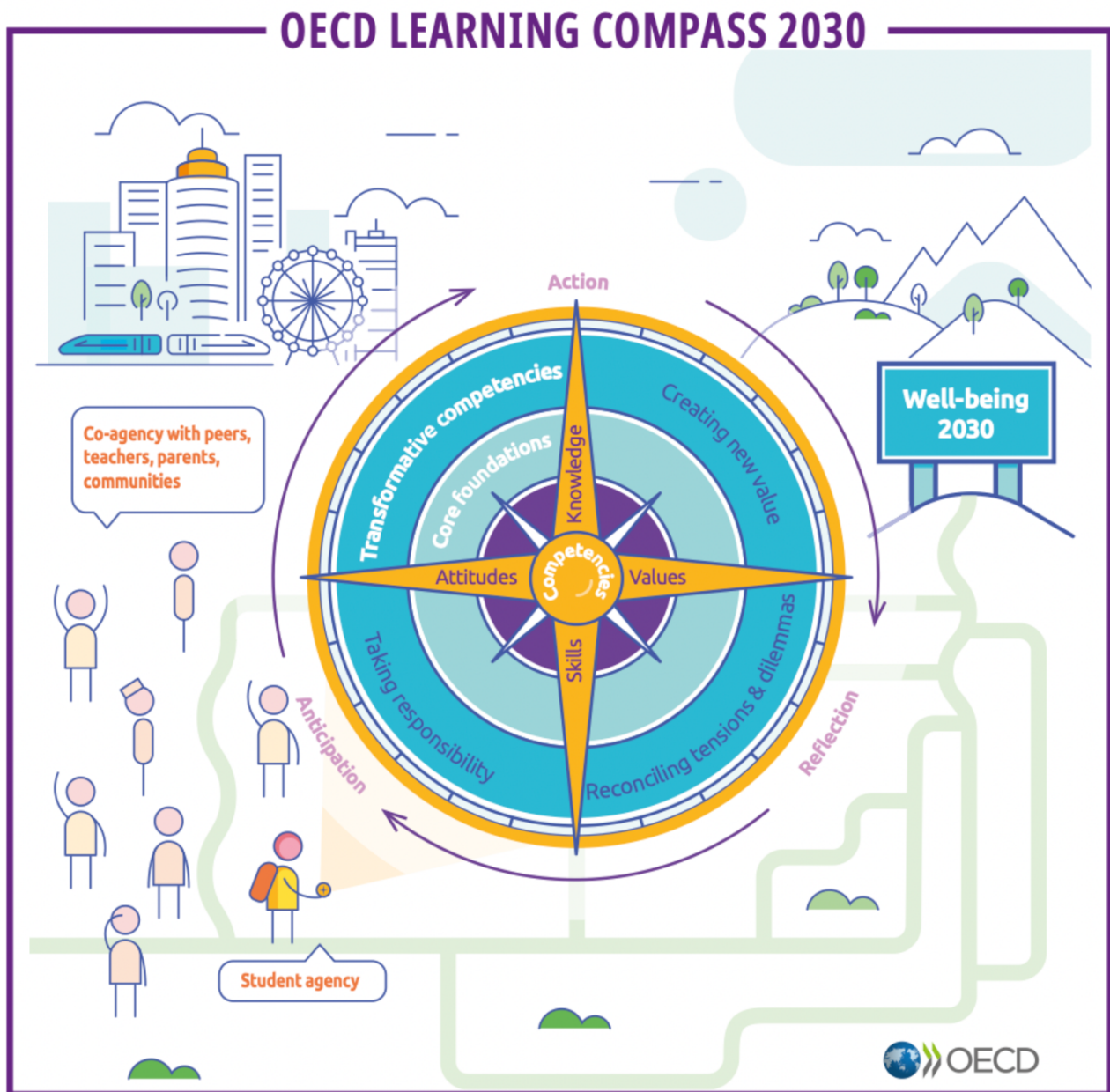


Figure 1. The Learning Compass 2030, a guiding framework that underscores the multifaceted nature of learning. (OECD, 2023).

The Learning Compass 2030 (OECD, 2023) underscores the importance of fostering values as one of the key domains alongside Knowledge, Skills, and Meta-Learning. The integration of values in education aligns with several crucial aspects that are relevant to personal development:

- **Ethical Decision-Making:** Values are foundational in cultivating ethical decision-making skills among learners. The Learning Compass 2030 acknowledges the significance of values in shaping attitudes and behaviors. By instilling a strong ethical foundation, education contributes to the development of responsible and conscientious individuals capable of making ethically sound decisions in diverse contexts.
- **Social and Emotional Competence:** Values are integral to fostering empathy, cooperation, and cultural understanding. Education that incorporates values contributes to the creation of socially aware individuals who can navigate and contribute positively to diverse social settings.
- **Global Citizenship:** Values are central to the cultivation of global citizenship. In an interconnected world, learners must develop values that promote tolerance, respect for diversity, and a sense of global responsibility. The integration of values in education aligns with the vision of producing global citizens capable of engaging with and contributing to the international community.
- **Lifelong Learning and Adaptability:** The Learning Compass 2030 places emphasis on Meta-Learning, which involves learning how to learn and adapt. Values such as curiosity, resilience, and a growth mindset contribute significantly to an individual's ability to navigate lifelong learning. Integrating values into education promotes a holistic approach, preparing learners not only with knowledge and skills but also with the values that foster adaptability and continuous self-improvement.
- **Personal Development and Well-Being:** The OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030 recognizes the importance of holistic development, including well-being and personal fulfillment. Values play a crucial role in guiding individuals toward a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Education that integrates values supports learners in developing a strong sense of self, contributing to their overall well-being.

Values are not just a component but a cornerstone in the development of learners who are not only knowledgeable and skillful but also ethically grounded, socially aware, and prepared for a future characterized by complexity and rapid change.

One dominant theme surfaced in the Global Youth Talks report, conducted by Higher education for good in 2022 is the emphasis young people are placing on understanding, debating, and prioritizing values and virtues. They want this to be core to the education they receive, which is quite different from what they are currently getting (Higher education for good, 2023). Youth Talks is the largest-ever global consultation inviting people aged 15-29 to share their opinions, concerns, and aspirations for the future. 45000 participants in 212 countries and territories participated.

In a survey conducted among graduates of the Product Development program at the University of Antwerp, encompassing Personal Development in 2020 (N=282), participants suggested that our attention should be directed towards the following areas:

- 86% on soft skills (like communication, teamwork...);
- 86% on sustainability;
- 82% on systems thinking;
- 77% management and entrepreneurial skills.

Note that they could select from a list of themes and more than one selection was possible.

When asked if they would choose the same program again, 89,7% responded with “Yes”. The main reasons why mentioned for this were:

- The versatility;
- The generalistic character;
- The multidisciplinary;
- The atmosphere of one big happy family;
- The balance between theory and practice;
- It enabled and strengthened their problem-solving and pragmatic approach;
- The different profiles emerging from our program;
- The emphasis on the role of bridge builder that we cultivate in the program.

Which implied that we should not lose these aspects when reforming our curriculum.

This was confirmed by a focus group of 15 Alumni in 2023, who added leadership, ethics, lifelong learning, and a holistic approach to the list of themes that our product development program should prioritize.

This culminated in the creation of 3 initiatives: Skillslab, My Designers' Values Project, and the Professionalization Learning Path. These 3 initiatives, which we believe are essential for creative excellence within the context of design education, highlight our ambition for the integration of personal development, values exploration, and self-reflection in our educational model,

1. **SkillsLab:** Via extracurricular workshops we aim at cultivating soft skills align with the Johari Window framework (Luft & Ingham, 1955), where greater interpersonal awareness leads to improved communication and collaboration. This initiative supports students' personal development and promotes self-directed learning, as advocated by Stolk (2009) and Hargrove (2012). By fostering skills such as communication, teamwork, and emotional intelligence, SkillsLab contributes to expanding self and interpersonal awareness, creating an environment conducive to effective collaboration and a stronger sense of community.
2. **My Designers' Values Project:** This initiative, part of the Sustainable Design course, encourages students to explore their values and reflect on the question, "Which designer do I want to be(come)?" This aligns with the emphasis on self-reflection and personal development in design education discussed by Rivard (2012) and Shim (2018). By integrating reflective writing and values exploration, as noted by Tracey (2018), this project facilitates students' personal growth, ethical decision-making, and commitment to sustainability. It also contributes to building a sense of identity and purpose among design students, promoting a more comprehensive approach to design education.
3. **Professionalization Learning Path:** Running across five cohorts, this initiative helps students grow in a structured manner, promoting continuous improvement and adaptability. The framework aligns with the OECD's Learning Compass 2030, emphasizing lifelong learning and adaptability, as well as Maher & Root's (2014) holistic approach. This learning path encourages self-awareness, ethics, and (self)leadership, connecting with the focus group feedback from alumni in 2023, which emphasized these themes for a successful career in product development.

Together, these three initiatives illustrate a multi-faceted approach to design education, incorporating personal development, values exploration, and self-reflection to create a collaborative and innovative learning environment. By embracing these elements, educators can foster well-rounded, socially conscious

designers equipped to address the complex challenges of the contemporary world. We believe this initiative will deepen the close connections we have with our students in the Department of Product Development. We anticipate that it will enhance their confidence, encourage greater boldness, foster a visionary mindset, and promote ownership in their design processes. This initiative should also support the transdisciplinary bridge-building role our graduates play in the job market. Most importantly, we believe it will contribute to their overall well-being.

2. Initiatives

2.1 SkillsLab

2.1.1 Setup

Commencing in 2020, the Department of Product Development within the Faculty of Design Sciences at the University of Antwerp made a strategic decision to intensify its emphasis on cultivating supporting soft skills and to proactively engage students in their personal development and growth trajectory. This initiative involves affording students the opportunity to choose, acquire, and apply various supporting skills, thereby augmenting the richness of their educational journey, elevating their academic outcomes, and bolstering their employability prospects.

Within the first year, the SkillsLab sessions are structured as concise, hands-on modules scheduled during the lunch break. Each session has a duration of 90 minutes, comprising a 20-minute introduction followed by interactive and practical exercises. The session's format is tailored to meet its specific objectives. Typically, 6 to 8 students gather around a table, forming a group that encourages peer learning dynamics among individuals from both similar and diverse academic cohorts.

Illustratively, the interactive session centered around 'giving and receiving feedback' adopted a speed date format. In this configuration, each participant engaged in giving and receiving feedback on a design project within the allotted timeframe. The initial 20-minute introduction clarified the guidelines and best practices for effective feedback exchange.

Notably, one weekly session has the capacity to engage an audience of approximately 400 students, spanning three Bachelor and two Master years. The workshop accommodates a maximum of 25 students per session, ensuring an optimal balance between interactive engagement and effective facilitation.

2.1.2 First Observations and Evaluation

Within the academic year 2021-2022, we conducted a voluntarily survey among our students. The participating students (N=87) exhibited high enthusiasm and regarded SkillsLab as a valuable resource providing practical insights and skills for their personal development. The workshops received positive evaluations for being clear and tailored to participants' needs, maintaining a well-balanced mix of theory and practice. The average score, based on a ten-point scale, was 9,05 (Van Dyck, Mestdagh, Vaes, & Jacoby, Van Dyck, H. Mestdagh, E., Vaes, K., & Jacoby, A.2022). Starting in 2022, we rescheduled all courses for all students, allocating free time to enable participation in SkillsLab on Tuesday afternoons. For 2nd and 3rd-year Bachelor students, we introduced a requirement for three mandatory SkillsLabs to actively engage more students and enhance awareness across all students. By applying a pass rate based on their attendance, we uphold a safe and conducive trial and learning environment within the SkillsLab format.



Figure 2, 3. A SkillsLab about the basics of brainstorming. Figure 2 shows random stimulation technique. Figure 3 shows an energizer.

The inception of the SkillsLab program involved a meticulous delineation by the faculty, seeking advanced themes aligning with one of the five foundational pillars: teamwork & leadership, creativity, self-management & well-being, communication, and the application of supporting tools & techniques. A pertinent topic for inclusion in the program is one that is extracurricular and amenable to introduction within the interactive context of a 'SkillsLab setting,' affording students the opportunity to experiment and swiftly assimilate knowledge following a brief introduction. In instances where relevance dictates, a supplementary SkillsLab session may be devised to build upon preceding sessions, enabling a more profound exploration of a specific topic. The overarching objective is to facilitate the internalization of these specific learnings by students during their routine curricular project work.

2.2 My Designers' Values Project

2.3.1 Setup

To commence our designers' values project, we sought to implement a modest experiment within a design exercise. This approach ensured the experiment's manageability and immediate applicability, avoiding unnecessary complexity. During the academic term of 2023-2024, specifically in the Sustainable Design course (3 ECTS, spanning 6 weeks) of the 2nd year (2Ba), we embarked on our first exploration of the question: 'Which designer do I want to be(come)?'.

Aligned with the theme of sustainable design for the year 2023-2024, focusing on climate action, students were tasked to select a small-scale, targeted climate action in everyday life. Their objective was to design a product facilitating this chosen climate action.

Upon receiving the design brief, we introduced the concept of “my designers’ values”. We prompted students to reflect on their aspirations as designers and emphasized the significance of contemplating this aspect early

in their academic journey. We showcased exemplary and suboptimal designs, manifestos, and instances illustrating the driving forces behind a designer's work, highlighting the enduring impact on their identity, whether consciously acknowledged or not.

Following this introduction, students were provided with a set of values (Brown, 2020). They were tasked with selecting values that resonated with them and then organizing these values based on their interconnections. This mapping process facilitated the identification of core motivating values, providing a foundation for their design principles. Students were encouraged to delve deeper, selecting 1 to 7 values—considered 2nd tier values—and ultimately narrowing down to 2 primary drivers shaping their designer identity.

2.3.2 First Observations and Evaluation

Three weeks after the unveiling of my designers’ values, students were invited to voluntarily participate in a questionnaire. Out of the 90 students, 56 engaged in the questionnaire. Analysis of the responses revealed that 60.7% of the participating 56 students perceived the introduction of my designers’ values as an added value, with 21.4% expressing a desire for adjustments (table 1). Notably, 76.8% successfully identified personal values through the value exercise (table 2), and 30.4% referenced these values while working on the sustainable design assignment (table 3). An insightful observation emerged, as one student acknowledged that the questionnaire served as a reminder to revisit her listed values.

The open-ended query addressing potential areas for improvement unveiled recurring suggestions related to the physical setting. A notable proposal was to relocate the exercise to a more "open" space or an outdoor environment, emphasizing the significance of the exercise's context. Multiple respondents highlighted the spatial aspect, reinforcing the idea of enhancing the exercise's effectiveness through a different and more conducive location.

Table 1. Did the introduction of the designers' compass during the introductory days add value to you?

Answer	#	%
Yes	22	39,3
Yes, subject to adjustments	12	21,4
No	22	39,3
Total	56	

Table 2. Were you able to determine some values for yourself during the values exercise?

Answer	#	%
Yes	43	76,8
No	13	23,2
Total	56	

Table 3. Did you refer to the values or designers' compass while working on your sustainable design assignment?

Answer	#	%
Yes	17	30,4
No	39	69,6
Total	56	

2.3 Professionalization Learning Path

2.3.1 Setup

Within the Product Development program at the University of Antwerp, a comprehensive framework for Personal Development is established through the incorporation of six distinct learning paths spanning five academic years. These learning paths include:

- Design
- Research
- Economic sciences
- Human sciences
- Technological sciences
- Professionalization

A learning path, also referred to as a learning journey or educational pathway, is meticulously designed to provide learners with a structured and sequenced series of educational experiences. These paths guide students from initial points of knowledge acquisition to the mastery of specific competencies. They serve as a systematic approach to enhance the cohesiveness and purposefulness of the educational experience, ultimately optimizing the learning process.

Over the past five years, a dedicated curriculum committee and working groups for each learning path have collaborated to refine and optimize these learning experiences. Initially, the professionalization learning path was perceived as a collection of residual components that did not neatly align with other paths. Courses such as Portfolio & Orientation, Minors, and Professionalization in 3Ba, along with the International Design Workshop Week in 1Ma, were the primary components. From 2016 we added a 10-week internship in 1Ma. However, there was a limited presence of activities within this learning path for 1Ba, 2Ba, and 2Ma, apart from portfolio development. This was not considered problematic, given the primary focus on training designers for their professional careers.

To address this, the learning path was rebranded as the self-development path and underwent expansion to become a more comprehensive and mature learning journey. The refined structure includes:

- **1Ba:** Introduction of the 16personalities.com test to form diverse groups for the Product & Analysis design assignment. This test is closely linked to The Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator (Briggs, 1995) and serves to categorize individuals into 16 distinct personality types.
- **2Ba:** Introduction of the designers' values within sustainable design, fostering personal and professional growth.
- **3Ba:** Introduction of a new merged course called Portfolio & Professionalization (6ECTS), encompassing portfolio creation, self-exploration, and the development of the first version of 'my design compass'. Additionally, students educate each other on themes such as ethics, self-

awareness, ownership, agility, and resilience, ... while exploring the three minors offered in the master's program: Interactive, strategic and technology-driven design, in order to make a choice that suits the student best.

- **1Ma:** Through a group Product Service System (PSS) design assignment, students explore their group dynamics and preferred roles. Reflections are facilitated using Aalto's reflection cards, and a 10-week internship emphasizes reflective reports.
- **2Ma:** The master thesis becomes the focal point for second-year masters, preparing them for the professional environment. An innovation week and a portfolio course further encourage students to update their portfolios.

2.3.2 First Observations and Evaluation

The introduction of the 16personalities test in 1Ba helps the students to get to know themselves better and form groups based on their different profiles. This approach enables them to appreciate their differences right from the beginning when collaborating. The self-development learning path is still evolving, and the first edition of the Portfolio & Professionalization course is scheduled for the upcoming semester, starting February 2024.

The incorporation of the 16personalities test during the 1Ba design assignment facilitates a deeper understanding of oneself among students, enabling them to form groups characterized by diverse personality profiles. This intentional grouping strategy fosters an early appreciation for individual differences, laying the foundation for collaborative efforts within the cohort.

The self-development learning path is currently in a developmental phase, marked by ongoing refinement and expansion. An inaugural iteration of the Portfolio & Professionalization course is slated to commence in the upcoming semester, commencing in February 2024. This course represents a significant stride in the maturation of the self-development path, emphasizing the integration of portfolio creation and professionalization components into the educational framework.

In addition to these structured components, design educators are encouraged to incorporate reflection into their deliverables. Students are motivated to engage with SkillsLab and attend Inspirational Sessions (InsPO's), where alumni share insights into their professional experiences, offering a realistic view of the possibilities post-graduation. This comprehensive approach ensures that the educational experience extends beyond traditional boundaries, nurturing holistic development and lifelong learning skills.

3. Conclusions

3.1 SkillsLab

Although SkillsLab is a tremendous success, continuous improvement is essential. Therefore, conducting surveys on a regular base is relevant to identify needs and opportunities.

Encouraging active participation in SkillsLab poses a challenge for first-year undergraduate students who are navigating the initial stages of their academic journey within the faculty. The demands of mandatory coursework can be overwhelming for these newcomers, making it challenging for them to prioritize additional sessions. Establishing heightened awareness among other students within the academic community may, over time, positively influence the engagement of first-year students, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment. Awareness of SkillsLab among practicum teachers can act as a catalyst to alert first-year students, of a specific SkillsLab that might be relevant to them, which results in an increase of 1Ba participants.

Similarly, students in the second year of the master's program, immersed in the demands of their master's thesis, display a tendency to be less involved in SkillsLab sessions. A thorough examination is required to discern strategies that could motivate their participation in the future, as their involvement is perceived as integral to the peer learning process. Identifying the factors influencing their engagement and tailoring interventions accordingly will be instrumental in enhancing the overall effectiveness of SkillsLab sessions for students at different stages of their academic journey. Since 2022, we have established some SkillsLabs exclusively for 2Ma students, focusing on subjects relevant in time and subject to their master thesis which has resulted in filled sessions. For example, topics include "How to facilitate a brainstorm with your target audience or stakeholders?" and "Systemic design deep dive: how do I move from systemic analysis to the design phase?".

SkillsLab significantly enhances the establishment of a cross-year community among students in the department. In conjunction with various initiatives led by both students and staff, this project uniquely fosters connections among students in a relatively novel learning environment. Moreover, it introduces additional avenues for cross-year collaboration within the framework of design projects.

We are actively pursuing fresh collaborations with our student and alumni association to elevate this project in the upcoming academic year. Simultaneously, we are exploring the possibility of extending session accessibility to alumni. Recognizing the increasing demand for specialized skill development in the professional arena, particularly in addressing larger, more intricate, and frequently intangible tasks within the future landscape of design (Swanson, 2020), we aim to tailor certain SkillsLab sessions to accommodate broader applications across various departments or faculties. This endeavor involves investigating opportunities to forge connections and collaborations with other educational programs.

3.2 My Designers' Values

The integration of my designers' values will be a recurring element in the Sustainable Design course for 2nd-year students specializing in product development at the University of Antwerp in the upcoming academic year. To enhance the effectiveness of this exercise, there is a deliberate decision to allocate more physical space and time.

Building upon this initial exposure, students will delve deeper during their 3rd year (3Ba) in the Portfolio and Professionalization course, crafting the first version of their individual design compass. As they embark on the search for a suitable internship in their 1st master's year (1Ma), my design compass (version 1.0) will serve as a guiding tool. It will aid them in choosing and reflecting upon their internship experiences, acting as a North Star aligned with their evolving design aspirations.

As the current 2nd-year students progress into their 2nd master's year (2Ma) in the academic year 2026-2027, they will be invited to revisit and update their portfolio. This process will involve the creation of my design compass 2.0 within a similar portfolio-focused course.

The overarching objective is to seamlessly integrate this exercise into their educational journey, encouraging regular engagement. By maintaining this connection throughout their academic endeavors, we hope that students will continue to reference and derive value from their design compass in their professional work, providing a consistent guiding framework for their ongoing development.

The conceptualization of 'My Design Compass' as an instrument for aiding personal development, evolving in tandem with a designer, will be subject to further research.

3.3 Professionalization Learning Path

To reinforce the self-development and growth dimension of SkillsLab, we aim to investigate (software) tools that both students and coaches can utilize for tracking individual competence development. The selected tool should empower students to take charge of their growth process, fostering essential self-reflection and self-understanding to discern a personalized direction. This capability will be a valuable asset in structuring and advancing the SkillsLab workshop program and enabling a student to create their own design compass to navigate the future.

3.4 The Evolving Role of the Educator

The evolving role of educators involves acknowledging personal development and values exploration as integral components of design education. Educators are called upon to guide students in self-discovery, helping them identify their values, aspirations, and ethical frameworks that will shape their design philosophies.

The holistic approach in design education aligns with the broader societal shift towards sustainability and inclusivity. Educators play a pivotal role in instilling in students a sense of social responsibility, empathy, and an understanding of the environmental impact of their designs that is no longer optional.

The Educator's Evolving Role:

- **Facilitator of Holistic Learning:** Educators are transitioning from traditional instructors to facilitators of holistic learning experiences. They guide students in integrating technical skills with personal development, fostering an environment that nurtures creativity and self-discovery.
- **Mentorship in Values Exploration:** Educators serve as mentors in values exploration, encouraging students to critically examine their beliefs, ethical considerations, and the societal implications of their designs. This mentorship extends beyond the studio to prepare students for their roles as socially responsible designers.
- **Navigating Interdisciplinary Collaborations:** The evolving role involves navigating interdisciplinary collaborations to expose students to diverse perspectives. Educators facilitate collaborative projects that challenge students to consider the broader societal and cultural contexts of their designs.

More than ever, it is imperative that educators step out of their silos and consult and align sufficiently as a team to create the ideal climate in which students can discover and flourish. Continuing education and even retraining of educators, lifelong learning is key.

Day (2000) and Domik (2011) both stress the importance of investing in teachers' intellectual and emotional well-being, with Domik specifically highlighting the need for transdisciplinary collaboration and the development of lifelong learning skills.

Learning can no longer be dichotomized into a specific place and time designated for acquiring knowledge, such as school, and another place and time solely for applying that knowledge, typically the workplace. In the contemporary educational landscape, it is imperative to recognize that educating students extends beyond this traditional demarcation. To truly prepare students for the challenges of the future, we must go beyond imparting information; we must equip them with opportunities and essential soft skills that cultivate the mindset of lifelong learners.

In this context, educators must continue investigating how to evolve the learning experience. This entails creating dynamic educational environments that transcend the boundaries between academic settings and professional contexts. By integrating opportunities for continuous learning and emphasizing the

development of soft skills, we empower students to adapt and thrive in a world where knowledge acquisition and application are seamlessly intertwined. The goal is not just to provide them with knowledge but to instill the capacity for ongoing self-directed learning, fostering a commitment to knowledge acquisition and application throughout their personal and professional lives, aligned with their values and desires.

In forthcoming research endeavors, our aim is to continuously advance awareness, foster soft skills, and actively involve students in their journey of personal development and growth by empowering them. Through student agency, we provide them with significant autonomy to determine what and how they learn.

In the upcoming academic year, we will plan a study day to disseminate the insights gleaned from Portfolio & Professionalization, and to collaborate with educators and researchers in co-creating initiatives for other courses. This approach seeks to enable students to assume control of their developmental process, fostering vital self-reflection and self-awareness to chart their individual paths.

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