A Pattern Language for Tacit Knowledge

Supporting the validation of informal learning through pattern mining and writing

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Abstract:

In a fast-changing society, which is challenged by demographic changes, the integration of large numbers of refugees and on-going technological developments, it is necessary to support people in becoming autonomous, lifelong learners in order to participate in society. Higher education institutions need to take this trend into account. People not only learn at university, but throughout their whole lifespan and need ways to measure their learning against common standards as to communicate the level of their expertise and to design their further learning pathway. Professionals develop their expertise only through experiential learning and their abilities are tacitly embedded in daily routines at work. They often cannot explicitly communicate their learning to laypersons and most experts are even unaware of the significance, the depth and variety of their competences and skills.

Christopher Alexander's pattern theory provides the chance to document this experiential learning and make it explicitly approachable. This is an important prerequisite for the validation of informal learning. Pattern languages for tacit knowledge have the potential to ensure the transparency of validation procedures in higher education institutions. Through patterns and pattern languages, the gap between theory and practice, which is immanent in validation procedures in higher education, can be closed. The pattern approach can act as a communication strategy between validation candidates and facilitators/assessors.

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