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**Abstract**

In a university environment dominated by a traditional way of understanding knowledge, we argue that it is possible and necessary to foster capabilities among engineering students. Capabilities are understood as reasoned and substantive freedoms to lead the kind of life that people value, within a framework of respect for the core values of human development. In this sense, enhancing capabilities means fostering pro-public-good professionalism. With insight from an interview study conducted at the Universitat Politècnica de València, in Spain, we will argue how formal and informal spaces have the potential to foster capabilities such as participation, commitment, empathy, intercultural respect, critical thinking and self-reflexivity. These kinds of learning could be understood as a mixture of procedural know how and personal know how (Muller, Higher Education 70(3):409–416, 2015); as we will discuss in the last part of this paper, this kind of knowledge is difficult to assimilate within the framework of the terminology of skills and competences. Some recommendations for a

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capability-oriented curriculum are presented in the final section. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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