

## **Dr. Jennifer Charteris: Building a community of practice**

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Hello, my name is Dr. Jennifer Charteris and I'm going to talk about building a community of learners in an online context.

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My background is in high school teaching and I ran a blended classroom using a learning management system.

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I'm going to talk about three particular aspects associated with building a community of learners online.

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I'm going to be talking about affective dimension, emotions, and interactive dimension where you build collegiality and connection between the students and the importance of cohesion where there is a sense of belonging.

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Firstly, an affective dimension is very important if students are going to feel safe in an online environment.

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If they're going to take risks as learner-driven learners, they need to know that the posts that they make are valued and respected.

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And so, building a respectful environment online is very, very, very important.

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So, you have to ensure that you provide very strict guidelines around what is appropriate in an online context with your students.

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I use a co-constructivist approach, so I negotiate with them the sort of conduct that you would expect to see online and we actually write up a set of protocols for online conduct.

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So, through that, students are ensured emotional safety and the affective domain is acknowledged and valued.

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The second aspect that I want to talk about is an interactive part and that is associated with a co-constructivist approach to learning.

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If students are going to post quality, quality thoughts online, they need to know that others are rating them and that they have a purpose.

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So, a dialogic approach where there is dialogue online really provides a context where there is an audience for the posts that students make.

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I also ask students to provide evidence as well for the comments that they make.

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I taught in an English context, so I used to ask students to produce textual evidence from the textbooks that we use from the place that we are reading or if they're actually lodging an argument, they can actually provide evidence from their own experience.

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But posts become substantive and not just superficial ??? communion.

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So, to create an interactive environment, students need to recognize that they need to post and respond to each other. I use a rubric so that students can gauge the level of interaction I expect of them so that I can discredit the notion of lurking pretty early on.

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The third aspect I want to speak about is the notion of cohesion or belonging.

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And this is a very important part of building a community of learners.

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Students need to feel that they are a part of the site, part of the class and that their contributions are important there.

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To do this, you may like to set up a social environment, a social site where students can use text-speak.

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You may like to use icebreakers in that forum where they post images that they like, that they value.

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If you can actually migrate those powerful learning cultures, not learning cultures, powerful cultures from Instagram, powerful visual cultures into your learning management system, you're going to solicit engagement in the sense of belonging and connection with your students.

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So, that's very-very important to try to establish early on so that you actually have the traffic in the site.

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Thank you.