



Rethinking teacher development through Communities Practice

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What are Communities of Practice?

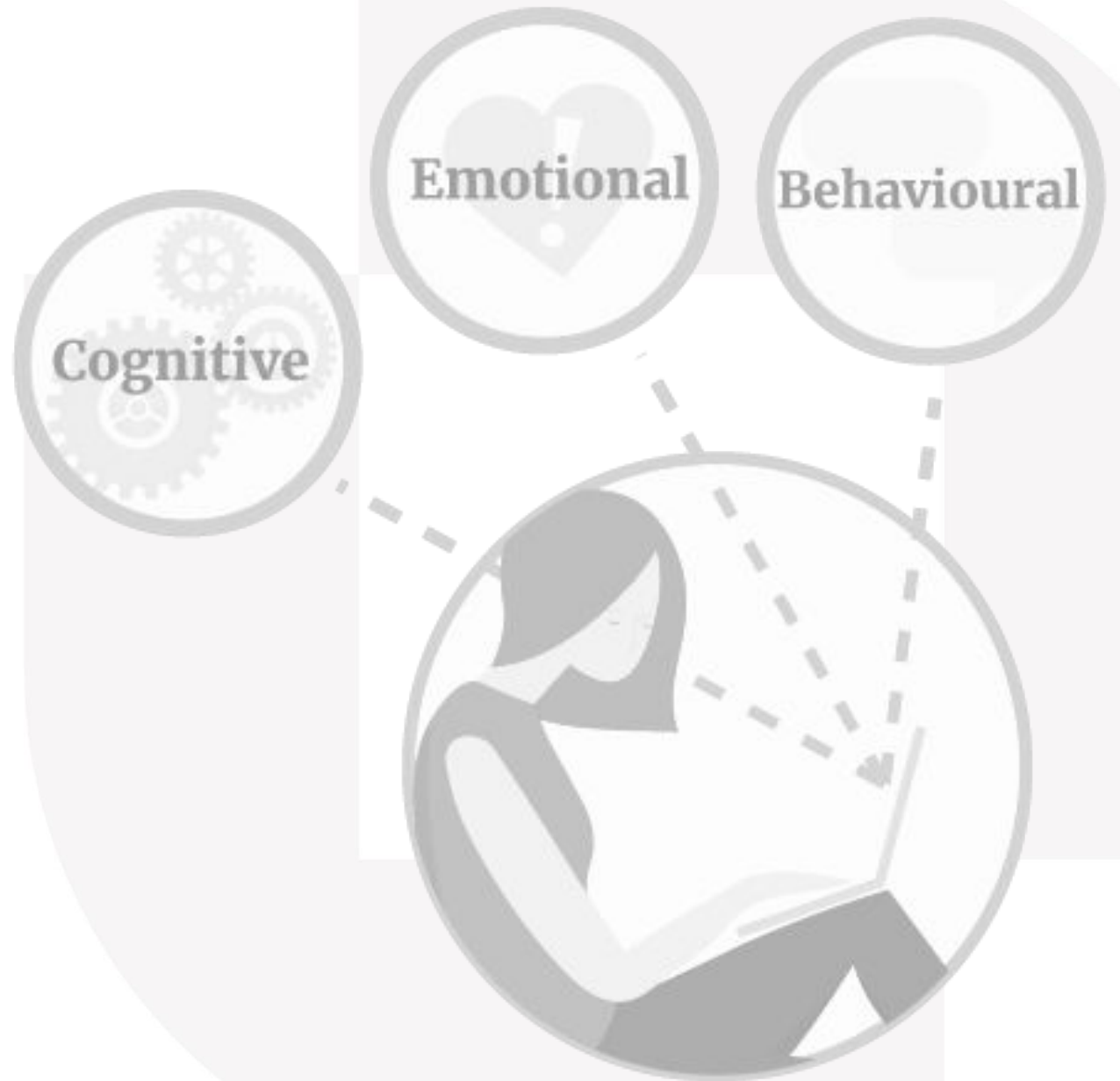
"Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."



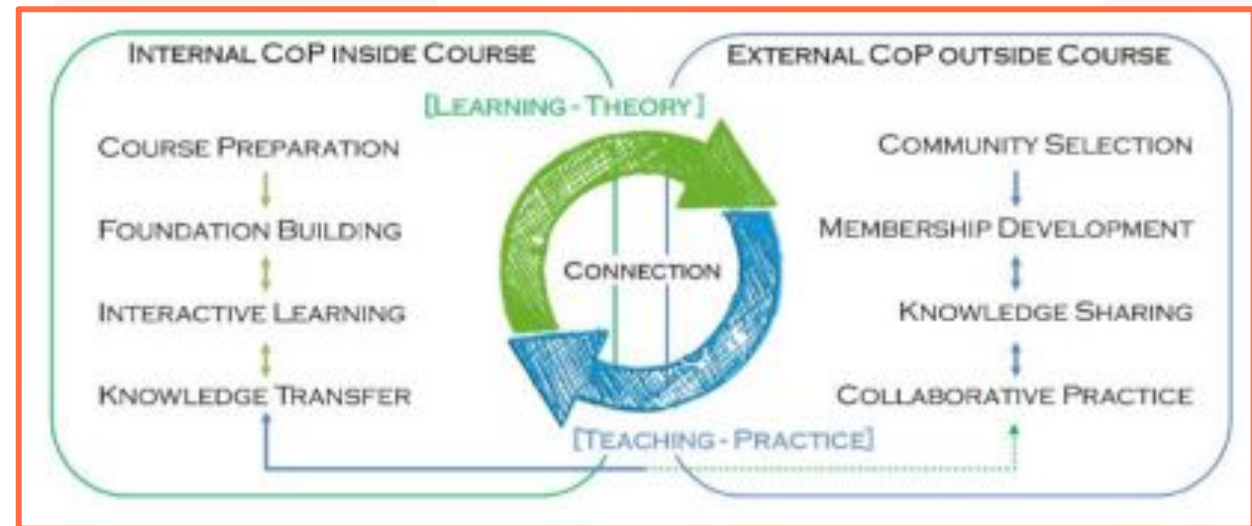
Etienne and Beverly
Wenger-Trayner

Source: <https://www.wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

Engagement **is more than** Behaviour

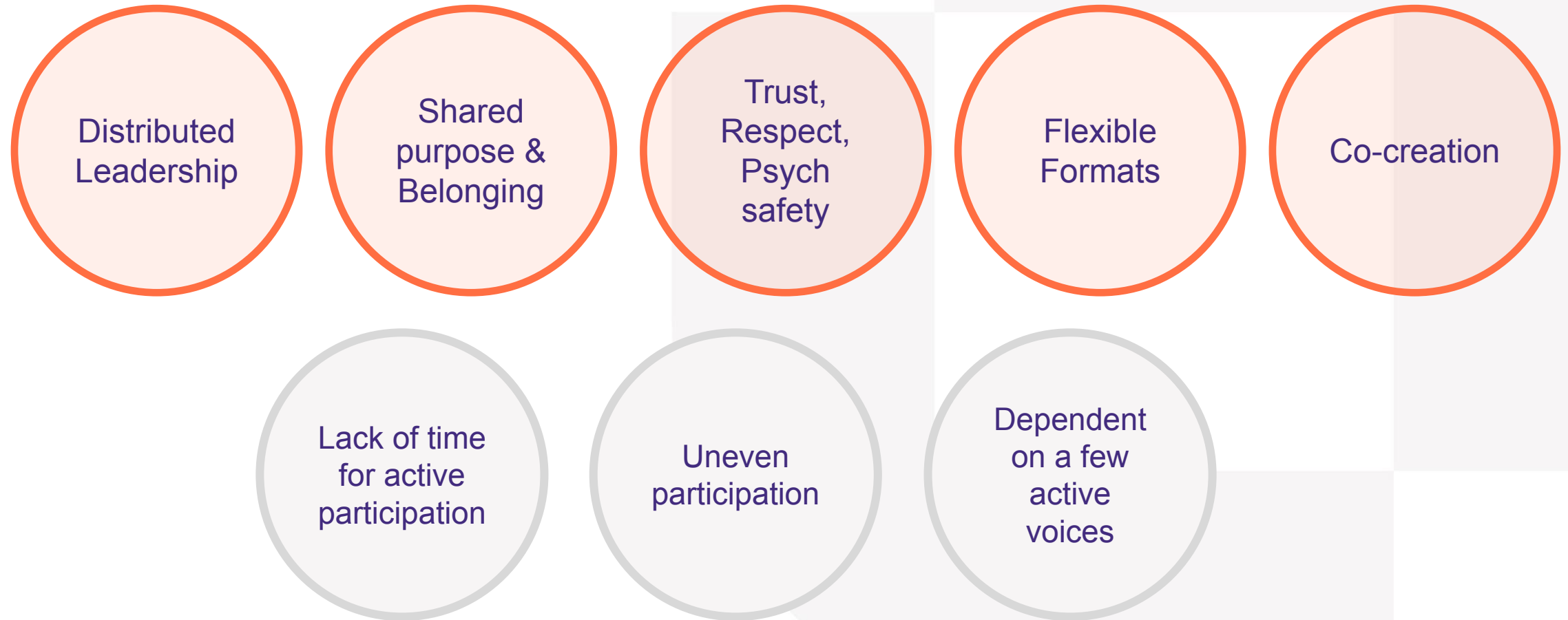


Communities extend beyond platforms

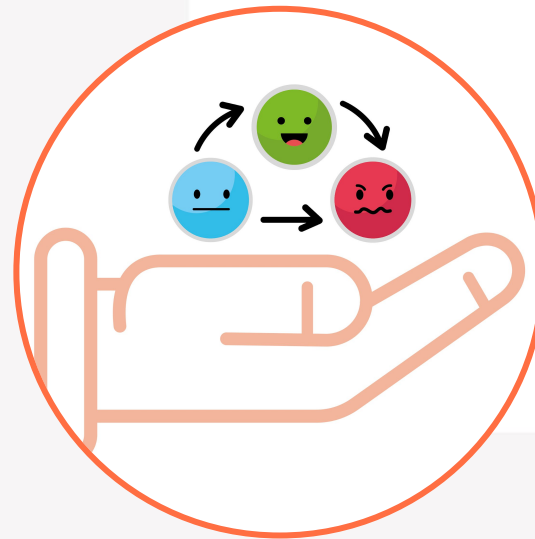
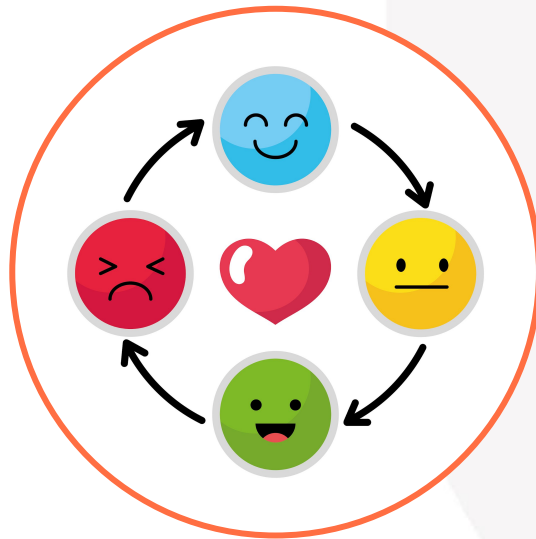


The double-layered CoP Model, Lee and Brett, 2015

Success factors repeat across contexts



What does this mean for practice?





Concrete strategy for educational practice

Hibernia College Introduction



EST.MM

Founded: 2000

Employees: Staff 120, Adjunct Faculty 500+

Partnership with 800+ schools

Headquarters: Dublin, Ireland



- Founded in 2000, Hibernia College has developed a model of online education that continually builds on the interactions of students and faculty and helps people meet their academic and professional goals
- Known especially for our teaching programmes, we are the largest provider of teachers to the Irish education system with more than 15,000 teacher graduates.
- We are a leader in pioneering new education technologies and embracing change in the ever-evolving world of education.



The background

In 2019, we began a series of workshops to explore the future use of digital technologies in the college. We asked two questions:

- What will teaching and learning look like in Hibernia College over the next 5 to 10 years?
- What digital architecture will we need to put into place to support this?

One of the outcomes of this work was the decision to introduce a collaboration platform for staff and students - this is the Hibernia College Cohort app.

The app was launched with staff in January 2021 and went live with the first group of students in April 2021.



Why build collaborative workspaces?



What are the benefits?

Encouraging collaboration in an online environment helps with learner **motivation & engagement** in the learning experience.

Collaboration, particularly in an online setting where isolation can be an issue, can also support learners' social, emotional, and psychological **well-being**.

Online students with a stronger sense of community can perceive greater **satisfaction** with their academic programs, thus resulting in **fewer dropouts**.

Why build collaborative workspaces?

What are the challenges?

It should also be noted that learners (and tutors) can have competing **perspectives**, diverse **background** knowledge, and a variety of learning **strategies** and **beliefs**, which need to be taken into account when setting up a collaborative space.



Our Cohort App



- Very rich feature set:
 - Text, audio, video chat
 - Audio and video conferencing
 - Ability to create private sub-groups
 - Document sharing with native viewers
 - Document markup
 - Powerful search, including inside documents

Staff

- Lots of discussion needed before final decision to deploy
 - Content Moderation
 - Group structures
 - Increased workload?
 - Out-of-hours concerns
 - Giving voice to the student
 - Dealing with potential improprieties
- Giving time to allow staff to become comfortable with the technology
 - Training
 - Lots of support
 - Brought staff live 3 months before students
- In the flow of work
 - Collaboration tools only work if they are an integral part of the programme



Students

- No such concerns for students!
- Transitional issues:
 - Trust & Privacy
 - Establishing new patterns
 - How long does it take?
- Email usage
 - Collaborative workspace is the correct structure for ongoing educational dialogue
- Training is needed!





Communication & Cohort

Communication policy in relation to the Cohort app is governed by the guideline “ENGAGING IN ONLINE COMMUNICATION” in the HCQF

- What happens if something inappropriate occurs in a particular group/workspace?
- Escalation procedure

Treat the conversations in the Cohort app as professional discussions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJHGNdR4aDE>





Thank you!