



Character Formation in Online Education: A Guide for Instructors, Administrators, and Accrediting Agencies

Jung, Joanne J.
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Book Review

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Joanne Jung’s overview of character formation in online education serves as an introductory resource for the topic. It is primarily intended to be a practical and accessible guide for faculty and administrators at religious institutions that offer online courses. Throughout the book Jung tackles the “skepticism among educators about character formation in online education” (15). The book examines various aspects of online learning and how it contributes to character formation.

In the beginning section, Jung addresses the purpose of online education alongside best practices for online pedagogy. She provides an overview of Learning Management Systems, which house online classes, as well as an overview of the course design process, which involves working as a team with a curriculum and instruction expert. The second section discusses best practices of pedagogy within online courses, focusing on a holistic view of human personhood that drives one’s approach to character formation. Jung discusses practical means for using discussion forums, hybrid classroom formats, and social media toward the end of character formation, including an important chapter on integrating faith and learning. The final section addresses assessment and improvements that administrators and faculty can make to online courses in order to achieve learning outcomes for character formation more consistently. Jung also includes an accessible and informative glossary of terms relevant to online education.

Faculty who are unfamiliar with teaching online courses will find this book a valuable help in beginning to teach and form character in online modalities. Administrators and accrediting agencies will find many sections useful for their purposes as well, especially chapter three on

course design teams, chapter seven on the integration of faith and learning, and chapter nine on assessment. As Jung writes, her purpose in the book is to give “practical ideas for customizing your online courses and improving your pedagogical methodology, irrespective of your discipline” (9).

One concern with the text is its basic, introductory approach. For faculty and administration who are experienced with online education, the book will be primarily review, albeit with a clear focus on character formation. Chapter seven on the integration of faith and learning and chapter nine on assessment are important exceptions, and they present insights for any institution concerned with character formation in education. Additional studies could help supplement and add insight to some of the essential points that Jung makes, particularly studies that focus on the creation, delivery, and assessment of learning outcomes specifically designed for the purpose of character formation. Such studies could engage resources on moral or character education and focus on the application of character formation research to online modalities. If one is looking for an introductory guide to forming character in the world of online education, this book provides resourceful and insightful suggestions toward best practices.

In order to delve deeper into character formation for online education, there remains a need for further pedagogical study regarding the application of character formation research in general to online education in particular and regarding the means of facilitating character growth in the learning environments of online education.

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