Inquiry-Based Learning in Theology and Religious Studies: an Investigation and Analysis: 3. Case Study institution A: University of Sheffield

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Case Study Institution 1: University of Sheffield

The University of Sheffield is home to CILASS CETL and a Department of Biblical Studies, so it was an obvious place to begin my research. Using the methodologies outlined previously, I set about finding an answer to one of the key research questions for this project: how is the Department of Biblical Studies at Sheffield working with CILASS?

The results of this enquiry are covered here in two main areas. The first outlines the results of my general investigations into IBL in the Department, and the second looks at the six projects, funded directly by CILASS, on IBL, and focussing in greater depth on the Department's flagship IBL module, The Bible and Field Archaeology.

I wanted to talk to students and staff at Biblical Studies at Sheffield generally about their teaching and learning experiences in relation to IBL, and specifically about the delivery and reception of modules explicitly flagged as IBL. In order to find out about the ‘Sheffield experience’ in general, in addition to consulting CILASS publications, the websites of both CILASS and the Department of Biblical Studies, and talking to CILASS staff about their work with the Department, I conducted a series of interviews. I interviewed individual staff members and the CILASS student ambassador for Biblical Studies, and I also organised focus groups of undergraduate students.

The student focus groups were conducted by Julie Gallimore, the SC for PRS’ employability consultant and an experienced focus group facilitator. Julie conducted focus groups with two groups of students from the Biblical Studies. One group had taken the IBL module on The Bible and Field Archaeology, which was developed with CILASS funding. This group were recruited to talk specifically about this module. The other group consisted of a general sample of students from the Department, who provided an overview of their learning experiences; the only condition for participation in this group was that the students had not taken The Bible and Field Archaeology module.

I also consulted the CILASS student ambassador for Biblical Studies, who was then a Level 3 single honours Biblical Studies undergraduate at Sheffield. As CILASS student ambassador, she worked with staff and students in Biblical Studies to promote and develop inquiry approaches in the Department.

Finally, I interviewed five members of the teaching staff at Biblical Studies about their teaching practices, with particular reference to inquiry pedagogies. My sample included staff working on CILASS projects and staff without
any formal connection to CILASS. My results indicate that a high level of IBL is being practised in the Department, via both CILASS-funded projects and other projects and modules which do not label themselves as IBL, but which are underpinned by inquiry approaches.

The results of the investigations can be found on the following pages.

Footnotes

- See section 2 above.
- See Appendix C for a sample of the questions I asked.

1. Introduction to the research project

2. Introduction to Inquiry Based Learning and its potential benefits

3. Case Study institution A: University of Sheffield

3.1 Generic student focus group

3.2 Interview with CILASS student ambassador

3.3 Staff interviews

3.4 Formal IBL provision

3.4.a Fieldwork recording project

3.4.a.i Fieldwork Recording: the videos

3.4.a.ii Fieldwork recording: staff and student interviews

3.4.a.iii Fieldwork recording: student focus group 1

3.4.a.iv Fieldwork recording: student focus group 2

3.4.b Other IBL projects

3.4.c Tandem learning at the University of Sheffield

4. Case Study institution B: University of Manchester

4.1 Students Facilitating and Validating Peer Learning

4.2 Engaging with Early Christian Communities: An IBL Approach

4.3 The Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology
5. Analysis

5.1 TRS and the CILASS framework for IBL

5.2 The disciplinary culture of TRS

5.3 Pragmatic considerations: employability, IBL and TRS

5.4 Conclusions and notes of caution

Bibliography

Appendices

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