Inquiry-Based Learning in Theology and Religious Studies: an Investigation and Analysis: 3.2 Interview with CILASS student ambassador

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The Department of Biblical Studies at Sheffield also boasts a CILASS student ambassador. The role was filled by a level three single honours student at the time I was conducting my research. She told me that her responsibilities consisted of advising students how to use the technical equipment in the CILASS facility and helping to plan the next stages of CILASS' work with Biblical Studies. When I interviewed her on 11.10.07, she told me that Biblical Studies lectures are very small and informal, so tend to be inquiry-based. She suggested that, because Biblical Studies is an emotive subject, especially for religious people-and she estimates that seventy-five per cent of level three students in the department are Christians-students tend to want to speak out in seminars more than they might in other subjects. She talked to me about her personal experience of the difficulties which taking part in PBL exercises involving critical analysis of the Bible can cause religious students.

When I asked her about collaborative inquiry in Biblical Studies, she referred to the Paul and His World module, which includes assessment by group work. She mentioned the sense of dissatisfaction which some students had felt with those less conscientious than themselves, and said that the impetus to engage in productive group work tailed off towards the end of the semester.

Other than Paul and His World and the level three module, The Bible and Field Archaeology, she reported that there is very little group work involved in undergraduate Biblical Studies degrees at Sheffield. For this reason, she did not perceive there to be any reason for Biblical Studies to use the sophisticated technical equipment available at CILASS at present. In her view, the Biblical Studies curriculum would have to be restructured in order for the department to make proper use of the facilities.

Footnotes

- Of course, it is not hard to imagine the opposite being true, with students being less inclined to express their views because of the controversial nature of some of the subjects studied.
- The Bible and Field Archaeology is discussed at length in this report; see 3.4.a.
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

Created on: October 27th 2009