Inquiry-Based Learning in Theology and Religious Studies: an Investigation and Analysis: 3.4.a.ii Fieldwork recording: staff and student interviews

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As Hugh Pyper explained during my interview with him specifically on the Fieldwork Recording project, conducted on 13.12.07, The Bible and Field Archaeology was not designed as an IBL module, although it happens to be a brilliant example of IBL. During our first interview on 11.10.07, he told me that what makes this project particularly innovative is its allying of the disciplines of Biblical Studies and Archaeology, giving rise to a form of inquiry which one does not typically associate with TRS, which tends to be text- rather than field-based. Hugh described the project as PBL.

Hugh also spoke about the problems which the students on this module overcame. He said that they were unhappy about workload at first, but now report a sense of achievement and satisfaction.

I interviewed Diana Edelman, the leader of the Fieldwork Recording project, who also attends the dig with students, on 13.12.07. She told me that, before cameras were taken on the dig, students were assessed by the talk plans and dig diaries they kept during the dig, and by a written assignment which allowed her to judge how well they had grasped the dig technique and how curious they were in the field. She also assessed the students' notes from the dig and from the lectures they attended in Israel. Finally, the students were marked on their attendance at pottery washing sessions and their participation in pottery reading and bagging.

Diana was concerned that when the cameras were taken on the dig for the first time, the video recording would make the students' workloads unmanageable. The students start work every day at 4.30am, and attend evening lectures, which means that they finish work at 9pm. In response to this, Diana adjusted the assessment methods. She decided that the students should spend less time doing talk plans, and that the time which was freed up as a result (a week) could be used to make the videos, which should include interviewing the dig director and other members of staff on the dig. She also reduced the number of field trips the students had to go on.

In terms of assessment, Diana and the students agreed a mark for the videos between them. The students were allowed to take advantage of the confidential 'ratting out' option Diana has devised.36 They also voted to allow other students in their year group, to whom they showed the videos when they returned to Sheffield, to fill in feedback forms and assign marks to the videos. These marks were not taken into account, the point being to give the students the opportunity to receive wider feedback. The students then wrote their written assignments.

Diana told me that both she and the year group had been amazed by the quality of the students' videos. During our
interview, she reflected on the transferable skills and the confidence the students have developed as a result of making the videos, and about the positive effect this will have on their employability.

I asked Diana what the most challenging aspects of the exercise had been. She agreed with Hugh that the students had found the experience of editing the videos stressful, but reported that they were very proud of themselves at the end of the process and had given positive feedback on the module. Finally, building on what one of the students had said during the focus group about this module being, to all intents and purposes, restricted to students with access to their own computers, I asked Diana whether the video making part of the module undermined the inclusiveness of the module as a whole. She did not agree that the students had to own their own computers, arguing that they could have edited their videos on campus.

As well as talking to staff, I had a useful conversation with the CILASS student ambassador for Biblical Studies about the module during our interview on 11.10.07. She had not taken the module but has friends who did, and reported that one of the problems they had complained of was that they had not been trained to use the video editing software. This problem was compounded by the fact that they were not able to access technical equipment at the University over the summer vacation, and had to finish their videos in a rush when the University re-opened in the autumn. This contrasts with Diana Edelman’s views on the subject.

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**Footnotes**

- See 3.3.a.
- See 3.4.a.iv.iv.
- See 3.2.

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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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