Inquiry-Based Learning in Theology and Religious Studies: an Investigation and Analysis: 5. Analysis

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The case studies in this report indicate that there is significant interest in, and enthusiasm for, IBL amongst TRS academics and students. Overall, I feel confident in asserting that there is a considerable amount of IBL being practised in TRS departments in the UK which is not being flagged as such. When I first began interviewing staff, I started by asking if they used IBL in their teaching. Most said that they did not, and then went on to describe their teaching activities in terms which left me in no doubt that they were using IBL. (This raises questions about whether IBL can be defined straightforwardly and whether it must be named, or whether because it already forms a part of TRS curricula, it would not benefit from a label in this context. The Department of TRS at York St John University, for instance, uses considerable amount of IBL in its modules, especially placement-based learning, but it does not name it IBL.)

The case studies, and evidence that came to light about IBL activity in other institutions, suggest that IBL works well within the disciplinary context of TRS, but that notes of caution, some of which are necessary precisely because of this disciplinary context, are required.

My research suggests that, in general, two different types of IBL are being practised in TRS communities:

- entire modules based on IBL;
- hybrid IBL, where discrete IBL exercises/resources are integrated into traditional curricula.

Having explored the practice of inquiry pedagogies in TRS departments in case study UK HEIs, and having established that these practices are relatively common when they are named, and more so when they are not, I will turn now, as a theologian, to reflect on the results of my case studies with the following question in mind: do epistemological and methodological affinities exist between IBL and TRS which make IBL a particularly appropriate pedagogy for TRS?

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