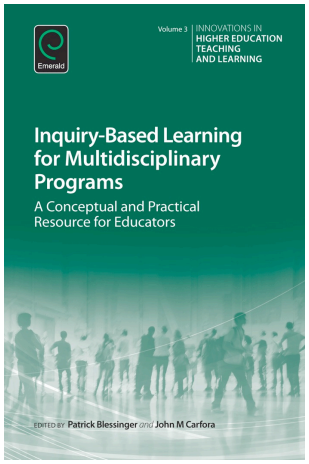


Inquiry-Based Learning for Multidisciplinary Programs: A Conceptual and Practical Resource for Educators

Blessinger, Patrick; and Carfora, John M., eds.
Emerald Group Publishing Limited , 2015

Book Review

Tags: inquiry-based learning | student learning | student learning goals

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Inquiry-Based Learning for Multidisciplinary Programs is the third volume in this series that addresses inquiry-based learning (IBL). Appropriate to its subject of multidisciplinarity, this book's contributors are from a wide variety of academic disciplines, work in different institutional contexts, and approach IBL in different ways. The strength of collecting together such variety is that almost any teacher interested in IBL can find inspiration and practical resources for teaching that empowers students and connects to their experiences outside the classroom.

In introducing IBL, Blessinger and Carfora write, "IBL, as an approach instead of a specific method, is a cluster of teaching and learning strategies where students inquire into the nature of a problem(s) or question(s). The problem or question scenario thus serves as a mechanism and catalyst to engage actively and deeply in the learning process" (5). Ways to implement IBL include "case analysis or case creation, research projects, field word investigations, laboratory experiments, and role-play scenarios" in which students collaborate and become self-regulated learners (7). Readers who are unfamiliar with IBL can quickly grasp the concept, thanks to the editors' opening chapter and to the other authors who explain the meaning of IBL in relation to other pedagogical concepts and movements. Readers who are familiar with IBL will find the case studies interesting because they show a common approach used in different countries, in undergraduate and graduate education, and in online and face-to-face education.

Instructors of religion will find several ideas of interest here, especially but not only if they teach in interdisciplinary programs. For instance, William E. Herman and Michele R. Pinard

point to how IBL connects with environmental and gender issues (51). The perspective on folknography illustrated by David M. Lucas and Charles W. Jarrett will be relevant for some courses in religious studies (67). Nicholas J. Shudak develops an approach of resonances for students learning about another culture, which would be applicable to learning in religious studies. He explains how finding connections between students' own context and another helps them to develop a deeper understanding but also may water down some differences (91-98). Alia Sheety and Nicholas Rademacher, from departments of education and religious studies, describe their use of a flipped classroom, off-campus experiences, and student research projects for a collaborative course on social justice (124-130).

After reading about the variety of approaches to IBL in different contexts, it is striking how many different learning activities fall under IBL. The editors point out that the case studies show how IBL in multidisciplinary programs enhances both student learning and instructor teaching (9). Indeed this book gives the impression that IBL is very appropriate for multidisciplinary teaching and learning, since its use of real world or multi-faceted problems necessarily asks students to learn outside the confines of one discipline. The book would have been enhanced by adding a conclusion in which the authors respond to each others' analyses since, despite their different contexts, they offer an interlinking set of insights for contemporary higher education.

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