BOOK REVIEW

High-Impact Practices in Online Education: Research and Best Practices

Kathryn E. Linder and Chrysanthemum Mattison Hayes, *editors*
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What are the potential benefits of high-impact practices (HIPs) for online education? That is the key question addressed in this well-researched collection of essays. Whether the reader is new to innovative theory and techniques in online education or an experienced distance educator, they will find a valuable resource here. Each contributor provides a helpful short list of key takeaways and a solid bibliography at the end of their chapter. The introduction and conclusion by the editors, Linder and Hayes, set the framework for the discussion and aptly describe possible future directions for teaching online, blended, or face-to-face courses.

High-Impact Practices in Online Education reads like a dynamic conversation on research with practical recommendations for how to strengthen a variety of teaching contexts. Each topic selected for inclusion covers a specific high-impact educational practice. That list was largely identified in 2008 by George D. Kuh as ten critical components of undergraduate education. First-year seminars, learning communities (LCs), writing-intensive courses, and internships were among those featured components. These practices are still considered high-impact, but newer practices, such as ePortfolios, have been added in subsequent years. All have become part of developing educational strategies to impact student retention and graduation rates.

So, where will readers find what they most need in this collection? For some, a particular topic will draw their attention. My suggestion is to resist that impulse. Try, instead, reading the introduction and conclusion before sampling individual chapters. Understanding the context for the conversation about HIPs matters. The research and literature in this emerging field has been somewhat scattered, but a representative sample is nicely gathered and incorporated into this single volume.

There are no chapters specifically on theological education or religious studies. That said, there is much of worth to educators in those disciplines. For example, June Griffin's "Writing-Intensive Classes" or Pamela D. Pike's "Internships" speak directly to theological and religious educators. The same can be said about Stefanie Buck's "High Impact Practices and Library and Information Resources." No doubt other readers will discover other favorites as well. Remember that any one of these chapters could make a dramatic difference in most teaching and student learning.

Is there one overarching idea offered as a takeaway? Yes, and it is that best practice principles are, in the end, more important than modalities. That is a valuable point to have in mind as exciting new technologies continue to emerge.