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Book Review: *Integrative learning: Mapping the terrain* by Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2004)

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Abstract

Excerpt: In my own past public school teaching experiences, interdisciplinary learning, thematic instruction, and inquiry approaches all provided ways for students to mesh ideas across disciplines and sign systems with a complex gelling of ideas and knowledge building. Taking these ideas another step further, *Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain* offers detailed suggestions for how integrated knowledge building could look in the college or university setting. Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings are scholars at The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. In this work, they offer a plausible and viable argument for college and university faculties who believe integrative learning is an important consideration for the complex curricular changes higher education faces in the coming century.

Keywords

Integrative learning, Mary Taylor Huber, Pat Hutchings

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Book Review

Integrative learning: Mapping the terrain
Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings
(Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2004)

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In my own past public school teaching experiences, interdisciplinary learning, thematic instruction, and inquiry approaches all provided ways for students to mesh ideas across disciplines and sign systems with a complex gelling of ideas and knowledge building. Taking these ideas another step further, *Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain* offers detailed suggestions for how integrated knowledge building could look in the college or university setting. Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings are scholars at The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. In this work, they offer a plausible and viable argument for college and university faculties who believe integrative learning is an important consideration for the complex curricular changes higher education faces in the coming century.

This monograph is one of nine publications in The Academy in Transition series published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The series looks specifically at ways liberal arts education has changed over time with the intent of offering illustrations of “the directions and destinations” of the academy as it shifts and changes in the hopes of encouraging a meshing of understanding between disciplines and ultimately learning. In this specific work, Huber and Hutchings expand the concept of integrative learning and provide suitable ideas about how universities could embrace new thinking and more intentional learning. Their hope in this endeavor is unique and purposeful learning by every student to provide better thinkers and problem solvers for the vast and ever-changing technological world of the 21st century. As these authors suggest, learners will no longer work in the same positions for a life-time; and, all workers must become more adaptable and able to think responsibly as citizens of the world. According to Huber and Hutchings, everything that happens in cities around the world has a direct impact on everyone else, so the decisions we make as we problem solve are important for all citizens around the world.

Integrative learning offers learners the opportunity to make connections across experiences, studies, and knowledge in order to more easily problem solve and meet the needs brought by challenges in the complex world in which we live. Drawing on past work of the Association of American Colleges and Universities and an assortment of other scholars, Huber and Hutchings expand the definition of integrated learning in this publication by suggesting pedagogies, tools, and ways of learning that provide a suitable context for undergraduate institutions wishing to pursue the idea of making learning more student-centered and purposeful.

Huber and Hutchings call for dramatic changes in the ways academia organizes itself for teaching and learning in order to achieve true “integrated learning.” As the authors attest, the ideas in this monograph will be unfamiliar to many college-educated adults. Specifically, Huber and Hutchings encourage a restructuring of assessment and more diverse or individual instruction to ensure “intentional learning” by students. Rather than just assuming students will automatically be able to mesh thinking across courses and disciplines, the authors suggest a rethinking of ourselves as a community of scholars and an organization of the curriculum that ensures potential conversations between courses and disciplines that will be certain to become real conversations about the world in which we live. Teaching is about building relationships; integrated learning, as described in this publication, will require the strong collaboration of all educators and administrators if it is to become a reality.