

GTIP Think Piece –Secondary fieldwork (Teresa Lenton)

Teresa Lenton (Secondary PGCE Geography Course Co-ordinator) indicates how despite the fact that fieldwork forms an essential element of geography education (and is integral to the national curriculum and many GCSE and AS-/A-level courses) not all trainee teachers will be involved in fieldwork during placements. Teresa indicates how early engagement with this approach will ensure that they understand the significance of effective fieldwork to young people's experience of geographical education.

Key questions that should be considered when planning Initial Teacher Training (ITT) fieldwork sessions are:

-) What is fieldwork?
-) How can we foster an appreciation in geography trainees of the value of different fieldwork approaches?
-) Do trainees already have sufficient practical fieldwork experience from their earlier geographical studies? Is there a need to engage in actual activities in the field?
-) Are the activities inclusive?

Most ITT programmes incorporate elements of fieldwork because it enables:

-) opportunities to be provided for trainees to augment their subject knowledge, understanding and skills
-) the simultaneous enrichment of professional skills, including aspects of curriculum context, planning, health and safety issues, assessment and teaching and learning strategies allows many of the DfES 2002 Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status in England and Wales to be met
-) the development of group coherence and teamwork
-) the creation and sharing of ideas and teaching resources
-) the enhancement of trainee knowledge of the various types and organisation of fieldwork to undertake with school students.

Menu

Other considerations when planning fieldwork experience as part of an ITT programme can be categorised to form the mnemonic:

Funding, p2

ICT? P2

Equal opportunities, p2

Legislation? P2

Design? P3

Where? P3

Organisations? P3

Risk assessment? P4

Kinaesthetic learning, etc. P4

The information below is for use with trainees to analyse issues of fieldwork in relation to school students.

Funding

Possible solutions to this issue are:

-) the use of the local area and local school pupils for nil cost
-) trainees to pay full cost
-) trainees being involved in fieldwork including design and risk assessments on school placement
-) a subsidised Field Studies Council or Youth Hostel Association residential field visit
-) funding from the institution.

ICT

Fieldwork creates a meaningful context for the enhancement of trainees' ICT skills in digital imaging, data manipulation and website review. The leaflet Initial Teacher Training National Curriculum for the Use of Information and Communications Technology in Subject Teaching (DfEE, 1998) are useful sources of ideas.

Equal opportunities

To make provision for trainees with disabilities see the [QAA Code of Practice on Studies with Disabilities](#) (use the search engine for current and archived information on fieldwork and disability) and the [Higher Education Academy](#).

And make sure you create equal opportunity for those with children by providing excursion dates at the start of the course.

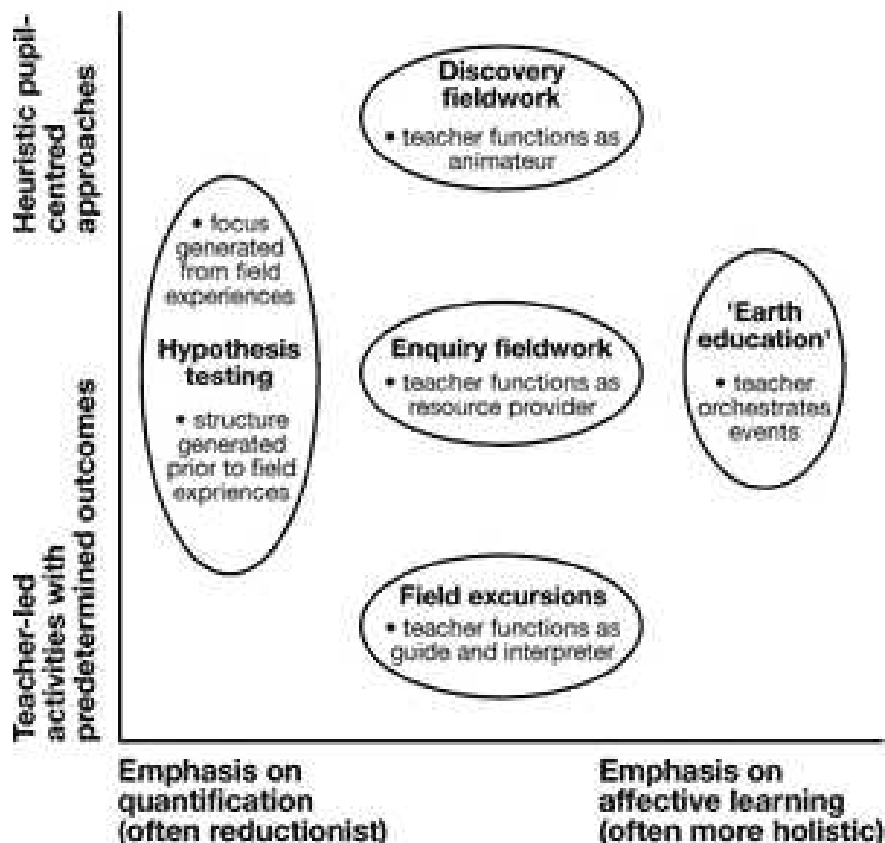
Legislation

It is essential for everyone involved in fieldwork to have a detailed awareness of the legal dimensions to statutory legislation and responsibilities. These include health and safety legislation, DfES, local authority and school policies. A three-part supplement to the good practice guide was produced in 2002:

Legal judgements and commentary useful for debate can be found in online news sites – look in the archives.

A new publication by Zimmerman et al. (2003) Quality, Safety and Sustainability in the delivery of Learning Through the Environment provides up to date 'good practice guidance for all staff working in outdoor centres, school and college staff seeking to use outdoor centres'.

Some types of fieldwork:



Design

Trainees need to adopt a critical perspective on fieldwork strategies. Job (1996) (Figure 1) illustrated the variety of approaches and their relationship to affective learning. ITT fieldwork can provide the opportunity to broaden trainees teaching skills beyond the observational and hypothesis-testing format towards student-initiated problem-solving work.

Figure 1: Some types of fieldwork. Source: Job, D.A. (1996) *Environmental Education in Kent, A. et al. Geography in Education*, p. 34. Reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press.

Where?

Use of local or distant locations and venues across the geographical spectrum can enhance trainees' sense of place and subject knowledge. The GA's Classic Landform Guides and Discovering Cities series offer ideas for this area (see guides listing in out [shop](#)).

Organisations

Specialist companies offer tailored packages (look at advertisements in *Teaching Geography* and the *Geographical Magazine*).

The network of 17 [Field Studies Council](#) centres and the [Youth Hostel Association](#) can devise a subsidised tailor-made package.

Use of school field centres or [RentaHostel](#) can offer insights into alternative management strategies for visits with school groups.

Risk assessment

The [Field Studies Council](#) can provide knowledge and practise of the conduct of risk assessments. The HSE has created a [School Trips](#) website which offers advice to all those running educational visits.

Kinaesthetic learning

Fieldwork can be a vehicle for a variety of approaches to learning. Practical activities enhance previous knowledge and enable trainees to develop work for pupils. Equipment can be purchased, loaned from other departments, local schools or base fieldwork at a centre.

The fieldwork activities for trainees on one ITT course comprise six activities as follows (all timings are approximate):

1 (three days) Introduction to fieldwork perspectives risk assessment and the organisation of fieldwork at an FSC centre and in ITT sessions	2 Fieldwork involvement during two school placements	3 (two days) Trainees plan, design and run an urban fieldwork exercise, the use of ICT and create displays with local key stage 3 students
4 (three days) Residential fieldwork based in youth hostel in Lake District enhancing subject knowledge and designing A2 fieldwork exercises	5 (one day) Assessment of A2 fieldwork exercises by examination moderator and revision by trainees	6 (one day) Visit to examine school use of either National Park

During the first phase of this ITT course, Job's (1996) model is utilised to provoke critical reflection by trainees on their personal previous experiences of fieldwork.

Trainees also design a poster for school use using their own mnemonic of 'fieldwork'. It must emphasise the value and fun of fieldwork to students.

Bibliography

Calhoun, E., Hopkins, D. and Joyce, B. (2002) *Models of Learning – Tools for Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (provides a concise and readable discussion of the psychology of learning alongside practical ideas for teaching for visual, audio, kinaesthetic and deeper learning).

Hall, T., Healey M. and Harrison, H. (2002) 'Fieldwork and disabled students: discourse of exclusion and inclusion', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 27, pp. 213-331 (the authors take a critical perspective on fieldwork in the UK and examine the different ways in which fieldwork can be made more inclusive).

Job, D.A. (1996) 'Geography and environmental education: an exploration: an exploration of perspectives and strategies' in Kent, A. et al. (eds) *Geography in Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 34.

Kent, M., Gilbertson, D. and Hunt, C.O. (1997) 'Fieldwork in geography teaching a critical review of the literature and approaches', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 21, pp. 313-32 (give a critical perspective of geography fieldwork).

Powel, C. (2002) 'The Siren's voices? Field practices and dialogue in geography', *Area*, 34, 3, pp. 261-72 (reconceptualises modes of fieldwork).

Zimmerman, P., Nundy, S., Flagg, A. and Williams, D. (2003) *Quality, Safety and Sustainability in the delivery of Learning Through the Environment*. Peterborough: National Association of Field Study Officers.

The following texts examine the history of conceptual ideas and the practicalities of organising fieldwork from the school viewpoint:

Bland, K., Chambers, B., Donert K. and Thomas, T. (1996) 'Fieldwork' in Bailey, P. and Fox, P. (eds) *Geography Teacher's Handbook*. Sheffield: GA, pp.165-76.

Foskett, N. (1997) 'Teaching and learning in fieldwork' in Tilbury, D. and Williams, M. (eds) *Teaching and Learning Geography*. London: Routledge, pp. 189-201.

Lambert, D. and Balderstone, D. (2000) *Learning To Teach Geography in the Secondary School*. London: RoutledgeFalmer (especially pages 26-31).

The [Geographical Association](#), the [Field Studies Council](#) and others have published resources which will assist both you and your trainees with the planning and execution of successful fieldwork. A selection is given below:

Ashby, M. (1999) 'The educational role of expeditions', *Teaching Geography*, 24, 3, pp 122-4.

Black, K. (2001) 'Saltmarshes: fieldwork opportunities for geographers', *Teaching Geography*, 26, 1, pp. 10-11.

Barratt, R., Burgess, H. and Cass, D. (1997) 'An enquiry approach to geography fieldwork', *Teaching Geography*, 22, 2, pp. 77-81.

Bowles, R. (1997) 'Teaching about the local community: using first-hand experience' in Tilbury, D. and Williams, M. (eds) *Teaching and Learning Geography*. London: Routledge, pp. 218-30.

Countryside Agency (2000) *The Country Code*. London: Countryside Agency.

Desforges, H. (1999) 'Inclusive geography fieldwork', *Teaching Geography*, 24, 1, pp. 14-16.

Fisher, C. and Norman, M. (2000) 'Fieldwork in geography at key stage 3', *Teaching Geography*, 25, 2, pp. 75-9.

Hall, T., Healey M., Harrison, M. (2002) 'Fieldwork and disabled students: discourse of exclusion and inclusion', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*.

Holdich, K. (1998) 'Using fieldwork equipment', *Teaching Geography*, 23, 3 pp. 129-32.

Job, D., Day, C. and Smyth, T. (1999) *Beyond the Bkesheds: Fresh approaches to fieldwork in the school locality*. Sheffield: GA.

Nowicki, M. (1999) 'Key skills through geography at GCSE', *Teaching Geography*, 24, 1, pp. 17-23.

Nowicki, M. (1999) 'Developing key skills through fieldwork', *Teaching Geography*, 24, 3, pp 116-23.

Pratchett, S. (1999) 'Investigating riverbeds', *Teaching Geography*, 24, 2, pp. 82-84

Ross, S. (2003) 'Interpreting the Eden Project', *Teaching Geography*, 28, 1, pp. 15-17.

St John, P.R. and Richardson, D.A. (1997) *Methods of Statistical Analysis of Fieldwork Data*. Sheffield: Geographical Association.

St John, P.R. and Richardson, D.A. (1997) *Methods of Presenting Fieldwork Data*. Sheffield: Geographical Association.

Teaching Geography (April 2000) is devoted to the fieldwork in geography. It includes articles on 'Fieldwork and the development of thinking skills', 'Fieldwork and geography on the big screen', 'Wall posters from fieldwork', 'Fieldwork and risk management', 'Year 9 students design fieldwork' and 'Planning a personal investigation'.

Walford, R (1995) 'Fieldwork on parade', *Teaching Geography*, 20, 3, pp. 112-17.

Walford, R. (1995) *Geographical Data Analysis*. London: Wiley.