Abstract

Encountering emotions during international fieldwork: developing emotional intelligence and resilience to support innovative pedagogies

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International fieldwork offers significant physical and socio-psychological challenges as well as opportunities. Students are confronted with unfamiliar environments, mild culture shock, challenging physical and climatic conditions, the stresses of group work and intensity of field presentations, or fatigue during field trips. Such challenges may affect students’ resilience to cope with the demands as well as opportunities encountered doing the field trip. As tutors, we must not underestimate nor ignore how fieldwork can influence the affective domain of students or indeed staff (Marvell & Simm, 2018). However, pedagogic trends such as inquiry-led primary research (cf. McGuinness and Simm, 2005) or engaging with the emotional geographies of a place (cf. Simm and Marvell, 2015) result in new sets of challenges for students and staff. As tutors, we need to be mindful that developing new pedagogic and power relations through innovative pedagogies do not deliberately or inadvertently burden students with additional stresses that may compromise students’ resilience to cope with challenges in-the-field. In this paper, the authors reflect on their combined 50 years of international fieldwork experiences to identify how and why students’ emotional resilience can be compromised during fieldwork, examine some of the potential causes and, using the lessons gained from hindsight, suggest strategies for proactively as well as reactively responding to issues. We examine how an understanding of emotional intelligence can help to structure, support and resolve issues that arise during international fieldwork. We conclude that not only must field tutors carefully monitor and facilitate emotional resilience amongst our students, but tutors also need to be aware of how their own emotions and experiences affect students’ experiences and behaviour on field trips. Being aware of the risks and providing a supportive framework are essential, but we also need to challenge students, which in turn helps to develop greater emotional resilience and to present them with potentially transformative experiences.
What feelings and emotions do students (and staff) experience during fieldwork?

How do these affect their teaching and learning experiences?

Don’t just think about students; staff have feelings too!

As tutors we often forget or undervalue the feelings and emotions encountered during fieldwork and how it can affect how we do field research and teaching.

We need to consider emotional intelligence.

In particular, we examine how more innovative teaching and learning practices offer challenges and opportunities.

Reflecting on this will help us to become better teachers in-the-field, devise more appropriate and improve learning and teaching strategies, and develop the emotional intelligence of students (and staff).
Introduction

• “Learning itself is an intrinsically emotional business” (Claxton, 1999:15)

• “We have no choice but to recognise the emotional contours of teaching and learning. Ignoring these dimensions won’t make them go away. In learning and teaching, emotions are ever present. Ignoring or supressing these emotions harms students and teachers alike.” (Liston, 2018: 115-116)

• Domains of learning: cognitive; psychomotor/ kinaesthetic; affective; conative (Bloom et al., 1956; Krathwohl, 1965)

• Fieldwork strongly influences the affective domain (Boyle et al., 2007)

• We all intuitively know that emotions are bound up with learning.
• We strive to motivate and stimulate our students cognitively, but rarely do we consider what and how we teach affects their feelings and emotions, which in turn influences their motivation, engagement and performance levels.
• We need to consider all teaching environments, including fieldwork.
• Krathwohl (1965) recognises that an individual’s perception will affect their approach to learning.
• So we need to recognise the influence of the affective domain on student learning and how it can then affect students’ responses and behaviour (the conative domain).
Often students will be unaware or at best uncertain or even confused by how their emotions may be affecting their experiencers and productivity during fieldwork.

So we need to acknowledge and integrate emotional intelligence into our curricular (and assessment) design and planning.
Emotional geographies of international fieldwork

- Emotional experiences are heightened during (international) fieldwork.
- Experiencing place is integral to learning (Simm & Marvell, 2015).
- Everyone will react and respond differently - different motivations and behaviours (conative domain).
- Strongest emotions stimulated by physical and/or socio-psychological challenges – both place and field activities.

- Emotional experiences are heightened during fieldwork.
- Experiencing Place on fieldwork is an important aspect with opportunities and challenges.
- Other places will be different and unfamiliar in terms of climate, terrain, society, culture, etc.
- Typically our senses are heightened and we are more stimulated on fieldwork.
- On fieldwork we experience a mix of emotions from excitement, fatigue, frustration, uncertainty, etc.
- So the environment and place have a strong influence on the affective domain.
- But everyone reacts and responds differently.
- The strongest emotions typically occur during times of physical or socio-psychological challenge, stress and pressure.
- So the field teacher has a role in shaping and managing these field experiences.
• First, we will consider emotional intelligence (alternatively known as emotional labour) and its application to (field) teaching.

• We need to recognise the experiences of students and staff on the affective domain for their wellbeing, behaviour and performance on the fieldtrip (and beyond).

• How students (and indeed tutors) respond to field experiences and behave can be related to personal character, prior experiences, knowledge, and so on.

• Here is a definition of emotional intelligence.

• We need to help our students to effectively manage their emotions, particularly when strongly negative. Everyone is different, so react differently to the same stimuli or experience.

• In doing so we will develop resilience, the ability to deal with and move on through the experience for positive gain, whether personal or academic.

• Ultimately, if we understand our students (and our own) emotions better, our field teaching and students’ learning will be more effective.

• The benefits will be: (i) better teaching; (ii) we will be better equipped to deal with students’ challenges; (iii) improved wellbeing, engagement and retention; and, (iv) a foundation for reflective learning.

• As tutors we need to, firstly, become aware of what emotions students have on fieldwork, and to better understand how emotions affect our students. Secondly, to become aware of own emotions whilst teaching and our positionality. And, thirdly, to devise effective ways of managing EI in pedagogic

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**Emotional intelligence (or labour)**

• Emotional intelligence (EQ) is “the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.” (Goleman, 1998: 317)

• Important to be aware, acknowledge and develop EQ and encourage resilience in our students (and tutors)

• In our teaching, we need to:
  
  (1) Understand how emotions affect students
  
  (2) Become aware of our own emotions whilst teaching and positionality
  
  (3) Devise effective ways of managing EQ for L&T
ways in our learning and teaching – we need to think more carefully about how our L&T pedagogies used on fieldtrips affects students.
Emotional intelligence and resilience
(from Hill et al., in press)

- **Resilience** – ability to adjust to adversity, to maintain equilibrium, retain some control over environment and continue on in a positive manner (Jackson et al., 2007)
- **Self-efficacy** – a person’s perception that they have got the skills and capacity to undertake a particular action or task (Bartimote-Aufflick et al., 2016)
- **Self-regulation** – ability to control one’s behaviour or thoughts appropriate to given context or situation (Cook & Cook, 2014)
- **Wellbeing** – sustained positive mood and attitude, health, resilience and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences encountered (DEECD, 2010)

- Jenny Hill et al. (in press) provide some useful definitions and ideas about resilience and self-efficacy.
- The capacity of an individual’s EQ depends on a wide variety of factors, drivers and influences, including personal background, personality traits, personal circumstances, preconceptions and prejudices, as well as their current situation.
- The alternative term ‘emotional labour’ suggests an endeavour, implying that EQ is not purely predetermined by character, but can be developed as a skill.
Here is a brief review of the L&T approaches we’ve adopted on international fieldwork over the past 20 years or so, and hopefully there may be wider applications to other situations and your teaching.

We have been involved in designing and running trips to Sorrento (Italy), Boston (Massachusetts, USA) and Barcelona (Spain):

- **Sorrento (undergraduate Year 2/Level 5)** – this fieldtrip module focused on tourism geographies – students undertook group presentations in situ in-the-field in typically unfamiliar and even challenging locations, e.g. crater edge of a volcano, noisy urban environment, etc. (see Marvell, 2008).

- **Boston (undergraduate Year 3/Level 6)** – student groups designed their own research projects and collected primary data in-the-field (see McGuinness & Simm, 2005) to subsequently present at a departmental conference (see McGuinness & Simm, 2003).

- **Barcelona (undergraduate Year 3/Level 6)** – this fieldtrip involves student-led teaching - students groups design projects to research, to reconnaissance in situ, and to present as an extended talk and activity (1.5 hours) in-the-field (see Marvell et al., 2013).
Here are the underlying principles behind our field teaching strategies:

- By **ENCOUNTERING** liminal/borderland learning spaces (unfamiliar field location, environment/landscape, society/culture) cf. Hill et al. (2016)
- By being given **RESPONSIBILITY**, control and power to determine field activities – choosing and designing own projects, identifying geographical locations to visit, basically running part of the fieldtrip, including travel (to/from sites by Metro) and navigation (leading the group through streets on walking tour) and health and safety (looking after everyone).
- By handing over some **CONTROL** (and **POWER**) for teaching and learning to students – own decision-making, teaching peers through student-led teaching (Marvell et al., 2013)
- **REFLECTION** – helping students to make sense of what they’ve seen and learned.
- Enabling **CO-PARTNERSHIP** and **CO-PRODUCTION** between students and staff (cf. Hill, Walkington & King, 2018)
- Responsibility for not only own but others (within group and rest of field cohort) in terms of logistics and learning
- **SHARING TEACHING WITH PEERS** – group work is important, but also sharing with peers through field (or departmental) presentations
- Taking possession of own learning and that of other students
- **Empowerment** – students grown/mature academically.
• **Changing staff-student power relations** – students start to become the ‘experts’ potentially taking tutors to new localities and teaching new topics

• Developing **academic scholarship**

• Hope to achieve **transformative learning** – being challenged by new places and things, particularly through reflection
Experiencing fieldwork: (A) Place

(1) Preconceptions of place and initial reactions

- “Wrongly, I now appreciate, I started to form my first impressions ... early on during the bus ride from the airport. How disappointing – just like any other European city.” (student notebook, Barcelona)
- “I didn’t feel particularly different being in Spain ... as the surrounding area did not feel, look, or smell in a way that could conjure up the thought of Barcelona in my head” (student reflective essay, Barcelona)
- “I felt conscious of my safety at all times as I was entering a foreign environment and had perceived notions ... it was hard to take in all the events and culture.” (student notebook, Barcelona)
- “The little alleys [and] buildings were typical of what I had expected but was slightly annoyed by the fact they were now home to some tackie [sic] tourist shops and bars.” (student notebook, Barcelona)

- So how does international fieldwork influence the affective and conative domains? There are many opportunities but also challenges facing students on international fieldwork; we mustn’t forget that we demand a lot of our students.
- Tutors can act as facilitators to structure activities designed to help students to approach and overcome the challenges and thresholds of learning.
- We firstly have to consider what we do and what our students experience.
- **Experiencing place:** Where we take students – and the geography of being there, encountering a place and people – is important in influencing what students feelings and emotions and how react and respond.
- **Preconceptions of place and initial reactions.** Prior experiences and expectations typically cloud experiences of fieldwork. Initial negative responses may be triggered by travel fatigue, disorientation, and even disappointment when coupled with preconceptions.
- So we need to try to prepare our students as best we can with preparatory lectures, guided reading, getting them to explore localities with photographs, maps and Google Streetview.
Experiencing fieldwork: (A) Place

(2) Engagement with place

• “From the first day of being in situ, I was overwhelmed by what I saw.” (student notebook, Barcelona)

• “I felt myself feel out of place, and even a little embarrassed about looking like a tourist, which seems an unusual notion as I was surrounded by tourists.” (student notebook, Barcelona)

• International fieldwork will put students into new, unfamiliar and challenging situations.

• Even if a student has travelled to a particular place before, what you do on a field trip will be significantly different – in terms of activities and expectations.
As students become immersed in the field location, they may have different responses that create strong positive or negative memories, as the first quote shows.

In the next two quotes, sometimes students felt uncomfortable and unwanted – perhaps there was genuine hostility, or they were just an irritation - but the students had a strong response drawn from feelings that they were intruding into an unfamiliar locality.

Simm & Marvell (2015) provide other examples.

So getting to know the place and environment can have positive as well as negative emotions.

Jenny Hill (Hill et al., 2016) describes such an environment as a borderland learning spaces - which is a liminal space of unfamiliarity that will initially be disruptive, but which students are expected to quickly acclimatise to in order to progress with the field activities.

Thus we can’t take anything for granted about how students feel and react to what they are experiencing.

So clearly as tutors we need to talk to our students about their experiences.
It is not only about where we go with students, but it is also about what we do with them. Students will have emotional responses to what they do as part of their field learning, dictated by tutors.

Emotions are most acute during times of stress and pressure, such as group work, oral presentations, and this is exacerbated by the unfamiliar place. The result is that students feel a mix of conflicting emotions – they feel challenged, anxious, excited, apprehensive, stressed, and so on.

We need to recognise that this is emotionally challenging and tiring, and to make allowances when appropriate to do so.

In addition, the overhanging spectre of summative assessment, in particular, heighten the sense of anxiety and stress that students will naturally feel.

Such challenges test the character of each student, and each will react and respond differently. And so, as tutors, we need to be manage individuals and situations carefully.

When emotions are heightened, tutors need to be more sensitive to how feedback, in particular, is given to students.

So we need to recognise the physical, mental and emotional demands on students of our L&T strategies; we need to monitor and carefully intervene if/when necessary.

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**Experiencing fieldwork: (B) Learning and teaching strategies**

**(3) Types and format of field activities**

**Group projects:**

“Unexpectedly, preparing for this talk put a strain on previously formed relationships as stress built up within our group as some members felt others ... were not contributing fully.” (student reflective essay, Barcelona)

**Field presentations:**

“When it came to our presentation I recall a ... sense of trepidation ... I was out of my comfort zone.” (student reflective essay, Barcelona)

- Unfamiliar place + L&T activity + (summative) assessment + feedback = strong emotional response and often reaction

**(4) Feedback and formative/summative assessment**

- Appropriate and tactful feedback needed
• However, it is important to continue to challenge our students through fieldwork.

• But it is important to adopt appropriate L&T approaches and support students through the process.

• As the quotes reveal this can have various benefits: motivating students, enriching their geographical understanding, and so on.

• Tutors can structure the support through: (a) regular dialogue with students collectively; (b) impromptu informal chats with groups and individuals, and (c) reflective field diaries are a particularly good way of getting students to verbalise and try to make sense of their emotions.

• Thus with appropriate support and facilitation by tutors, and encouraging students to reflect on their experiences AND emotions, students can develop strategies for dealing and overcoming with the challenges that they face on the fieldtrip.

But it can be transformative!

• “Looking back on my time... before the fieldtrip, I can see how closed-minded I was. I had not anticipated how enlightening the fieldtrip would be, or how much my knowledge and skill range would expand.” (student notebook, Barcelona)

• “There was a time during the field trip where one member let their anxiety get to them, their confidence fell... The rest of us leaped to our friend’s aid to reassure them... Our patience levels were tested but it was a moment of personal growth for all of us.” (student notebook, Barcelona)

• “I noticed that students somehow were more engaged with the presentations when their fellow students were doing them ... I felt that I wanted to listen what other students had found out about that certain place.” (student reflective essay, Barcelona)

• The importance of regular collective dialogue, informal chats with groups and individuals, and reflective field diaries (Marvell et al., 2013)

• Reflecting on and sharing experiences AND emotions
It’s not just for students, tutors have to develop their emotional intelligence too!

Rebecoming an emotional intelligent teacher (Mortiboys, 2012): acknowledgement, listening, dialogue, responding

(1) Being self-aware
   – The hidden curriculum (Cotton et al., 2013)

(2) Aware of others
   – personal circumstances differ (Glass, 2014)
   – (Un)familiarity with Place - different experiences of students to staff

(3) Relating to our students - empathy

(4) Creating environment - openness, trust and mutual respect

(5) Responsive L&T strategies – reflective practitioner

- But it’s not just what the students’ perceptions and experiences; as tutors, also need to think carefully about what we do and say. As tutors, we need to be self-aware.

- Firstly, the hidden curriculum (Cotton et al., 2013) - as tutors we influence students either deliberately or inadvertently. Often what we say or imply without realising it. There are subconscious or inadvertent messages we give to students either in body language or content of our teaching.

- Secondly, awareness of others (Mortiboys, 2012). We mustn't forget that for each student cohort the trip is new and unfamiliar. We mustn’t overlook the personal stresses and pressures felt by students as these may have an influence on how students react and behave.

- As tutors need to be aware of our own ‘staleness’ – risk of ‘samey-ness’ with repeated visits – becoming blazé, losing freshness and immediacy in delivery because of repeat visits, and thereby forgetting that this is new for our students.

- As tutors we should perhaps be continually looking for ways of to keeping the trip fresh, e.g. different projects, or students finding their own new locations (and teaching the tutors), updating projects is important to be topical and fresh.

- Dealing with learners’ expectations – we need to acknowledge feelings, get familiar with their perspectives. But acknowledgement of the individual can often be missed in large classes or groups.

- Thirdly, relating to our students - we need to relate to our students, and get
better at doing so. In particular, important to listen to our students. Open, honest and frequent dialogue is important, find out what our students have experienced, and to share the process of making sense of what observed and experienced. This encourages trust and mutual respect, and it develops a good relationship.

• Fourthly, **creating the right ‘emotional environment’** (Mortiboys, 2012). We should strive to create an open, honest and approachable environment to enable dialogue to happen.

• Finally, **L&T strategies** – we should examine how our L&T approaches, what we do and how we do with students, accommodates EQ. Plus feedback is important too - we need to read and respond to feelings, and offer tactful feedback, and so we need to think before we act!

• Basically we are developing ourselves as reflective practitioners. Once we, as tutors, develop these attributes, we can then start to encourage our students to display them too!
• Moving away from traditional modes of fieldtrip delivery (especially stop-and-look) and developing innovative forms of field activity offer challenges but can also be an opportunity can be a useful way for introducing higher level skills, including self-reflection and developing emotional intelligence/labour, as a learning outcome as well as enhancing wellbeing of all involved.

• Based on personal experience and practice, here are some suggestions which can be easily adapted for your own purposes and situations:-

  • **Familiarisation** – don’t just throw students in the ‘deep end’ on a fieldtrip without advance preparation.

  • **Exploration** – we mustn’t undervalue free time to explore the city for themselves is important. It is a chance for students to discover things and places for themselves, gain confidence, etc.

  • **Changing staff-student power relations** – by developing co-partnership initiatives this changes the dynamics, empowers students and gives them confidence to build on and develop their skills and address their fears.

  • **Knowing when to intervene** is an important skills of the tutor. We need to employ soft skills to resolve conflict, knowing when how and when to give appropriate critical feedback.

  • **Dialogue** needs to be open, honest, approachable.

  • **Self-reflection by staff as well as students** is important. For instance, a daily reflective entry into field notebook helps students to make sense of their experiences and helps to link to academic perspectives.

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**Conclusions**

- Innovative modes of fieldwork can be conducive to integrated emotional intelligence/labour as a learning objective

**Strategies:**

1. **Familiarisation** – pre-departure, arrival *(Simm & Marvell, 2015)*

2. **Exploration** – free time to explore *(Simm & Marvell, 2015)*

3. **Changing staff-student power relations** – co-partnership *(Marvell et al., 2013)*

4. **Gentle critique** *(Hill et al., in press)*

5. **Open dialogue and rapport**

6. **(Self-) reflexivity** *(Marvell & Simm, 2018)*
• In conclusion, for more innovative L&T approaches the risks are greater but the opportunities for EQ to be accommodated, for instance using reflective activities, encouraging open dialogue with tutors and each other.
Selected References


