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香港地理學會

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NOTE:

Part I of the Hong Kong Geographer will report the activities of the HKGA and hopefully to inform members of other activities related to geography in Hong Kong sponsored by other institutions. Part II of the Hong Kong Geographer will include short feature articles for general readers. These features do not reflect the views of the Hong Kong Geographical Association. The contributors are solely responsible for their papers.

PART I ACTIVITIES

Coming Events

On 26th November 1983, the HKGA will offer its first Field Study Day of this year to its members and friends. This time, the area around The Chinese University of Hong Kong is selected. Whilst the electrified train, and many bus routes enable all participants to come to the field easily, the different ecological systems, and the great variety of rocks outcropped in this small area provide the participants an ideal site for field training. Apart from field training, the area chosen is ideal for taking photos, hiking and is a place backed up by inexpensive canteens, museum and other cultural and educational facilities. Take the chance and familiarize yourself the geography of Chinese University Campus. For other details, see the attached sheet.

On 21st January 1984, there will be another Field Study Day co-sponsored by the HKGA and the Education Department, Hong Kong. The theme will be on the impact of urbanization and the site is ^{the} area around Sai Kung. Since there will be only a limited number of places available, members, who are interested, please apply and reserve your place now.

PART II ARTICLES

The Role and the Characteristics of Fieldwork in Geography Education*

Chan Pui Kai**

Geography education has been undergoing rigorous changes during the past two to three decades throughout the world. Fieldwork techniques are among the many techniques involved in the evolution of Geography methodology. In this essay, the relationship of Geography and fieldwork, the characteristics of fieldwork and its value in education are briefly discussed.

Geography and Fieldwork

More traditional view on the nature of geography dominated the scene from the last century till the 1950s. Representative view of this period can be well illustrated by Hartshorne's that

"Geography is concerned to provide an accurate, orderly and rational description of the variable character of the earth surface."

(Hartshorne, 1959, p.21)

Associated with this "descriptive" view of Geography, Wooldridge and East also expressed that

"Real field work is the close examination and analysis in the field of an accessible piece of country, showing one or more aspects of areal differentiation."

(Wooldridge & East, 1958, p.161)

* Revised and expanded text of an address given to H.K.G.A. at the Forum on "The Role and Application of Fieldwork Techniques in the Teaching of Geography at the Lower Secondary Level in H.K.", 19 Feb., 1983.

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Geographical fieldwork was then regarded as "a regional synthesis" and the role of fieldwork was more on field teaching.

By 1960s, changes in the philosophical and the methodological bases of Geography began to gather momentum in U.K. (Chorley and Haggett, 1965) Geography has been viewed as

"a science concerned with the rational development, and the testing of theories that explain and predict the spatial distribution and location of various characteristics on the surface of the earth."

(M. Yeates, 1968, p.1)

Thus fieldwork is also influenced by this shift in emphasis of methodology to a more scientific mode of organization in which hypothesis setting and testing are the main activities involved beside the data collection process (ref. Fig. 1).

Local geographers in Hong Kong also share views with Cole:

"Geography begins with the study of the local environment. It is thus relevant to children of quite a young age. In this study children are trained to learn through direct observation and experience. They are directed not only to observe exceptional facts, but also ordinary things and scenes of everyday life. In the study of Geography they are not to take things for granted. They must look for evidence, find out the cause of things, identify and recognize correlations, set up hypotheses, reason not the possibilities of each hypothesis and judge for themselves which one is most likely to apply. Students can thus have the training to approach problems and they are encouraged to tackle each and every problem in the classroom and in life in the same way."

(Educators' Social Action Council, Pamphlet No.5, p.29)

Fieldwork can thus be more appropriately regarded as a planned discovery through which the teacher prepares the situations

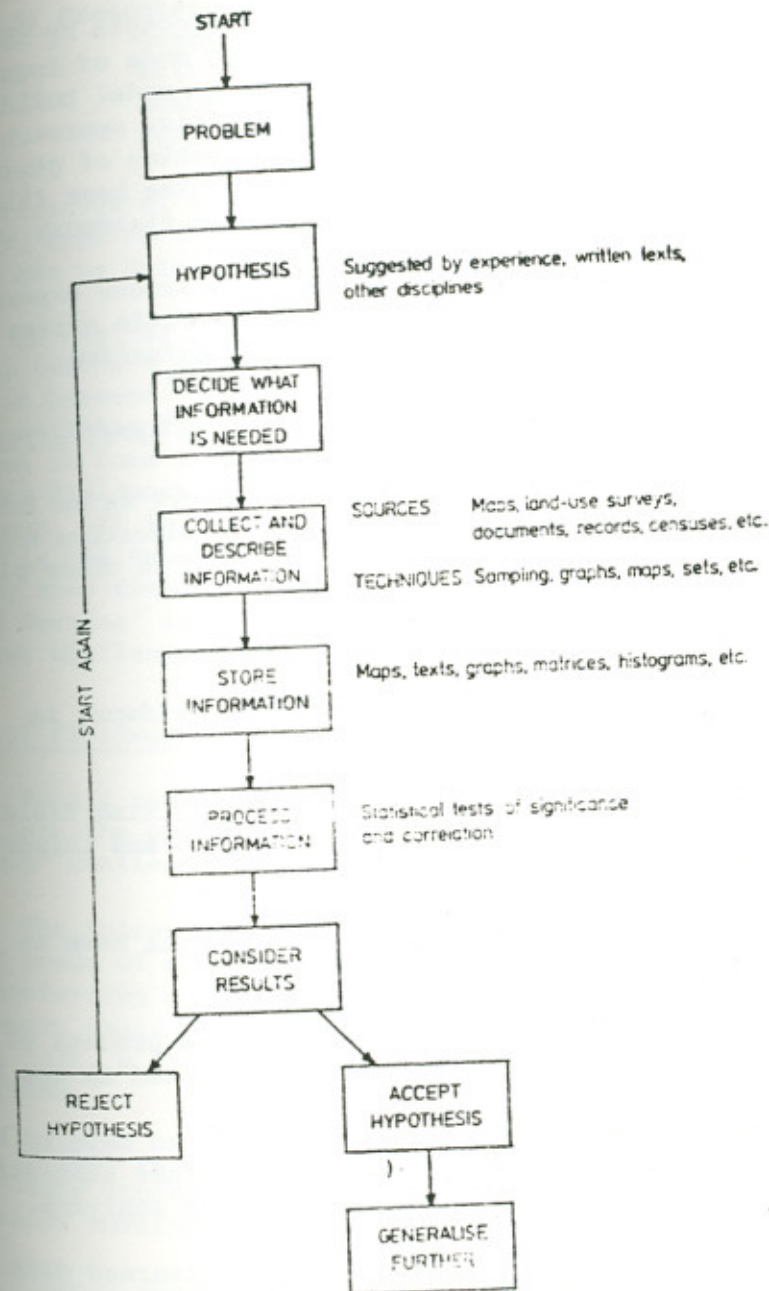


Fig. 1 Suggested organization of fieldwork (after an idea of J. P. Cole)

(Bales et al, p.200, 1973)

such that the students learn geographical concepts by themselves. In contrast with rational/analytic mode of inquiry in modern geography education which based on model building and theory formulating, the empirical/intuitive approach is of no less importance especially in the teaching of geography at the lower secondary level (Hall, 1976). The best illustration for the empirical search for data is fieldwork and

"Younger children will seek wider vicarious experience to underpin concept formation, with little stress on formal reasoning other than an imaginative flexible exercises without region"

(Hall, 1976, p.251)

It is highly desirable to deem fieldwork as an integral and indispensable method in modern geography education especially at the lower secondary level in Hong Kong and in other places.

Characteristics of Fieldwork

The general procedure in conducting fieldwork is fivefold:

- 1) Preparation -- setting objectives, fixing field sites, briefings, points to note and things to bring, etc.

Broadly speaking, teacher and students have to prepare thoroughly before-hand.

- 2) Data Collecting -- this includes the process of data recording which are to be conducted in the field
- 3) Data Summarizing -- all data collected have to be summarized through mapping or other statistical techniques so as to be ready for analysis.
- 4) Data Analysis -- based on theories learned data summarized are to be analyzed. Hypotheses are then rejected or accepted.

- 5) Presentation -- as an evaluation data gathered, summarized and analyzed have to be presented either orally or in written form for the other members of the class group or even the general public for comments.

Classification of fieldwork according to the criteria of process, type of structure, teacher/pupil relationship and result can be detailedly illustrated in Figure 2.

In Fig. 2, "Field Demonstration" is the type most widely used by teachers in the lower forms or even up to post-secondary level at present. For Form 1 or 2 pupils, "Field Demonstration" can be suitable for them as beginners in geographical fieldwork. But even in Form 1 some brighter pupils would be willing to initiate fieldwork which allow them freedom to find things on their own. It is more so for F.2 and 3 students. "Field Study" is the type of fieldwork for those students who have already some fieldwork experience. For seniors in secondary, "Field Testing" is more challenging and "Field Discovery" is the most challenging even for university students.

Value of Fieldwork

Pupils can get rid of the confined classroom environment to go into the open environment meeting "unpredicted" or "unknown" challenges through carefully planned fieldwork.

The thirst for "extra-mural experience is expressive of the needs of children to construct their own environment by transferring materials to their own use and satisfaction, to convert their imagination of things into personal reality." (Hall, 1976, p.251). Fieldwork in this sense is the "adventure playground."

Recent research findings suggest that teacher should try to take students on field trips which provide moderate amounts of novelty and

"Short forays from classroom may most efficiently accomplish this objective, but as students gain

Figure 2 A SIMPLE FIELDWORK CLASSIFICATION IN GEOGRAPHY

(Hall, 1976, p.250)

	Process	Type of Structure	Teacher/Pupil	Result	
FIELD DEMONSTRATION	(a) Teacher reinforces	In (a) previous classwork is followed up including simulated fieldwork skills (i.e. orientation of map to ground, slope and contours, intervisibility)	Tightly structured linear programme prepared by teacher: 'pause and move on' by foot or vehicle	Close supervision of class as a class teacher - busy leading and talking; pupils - passive in (a) and imitative in (b)	Convergent and closed
	(b) Teacher confronts	In (b) new phenomena and new skills are introduced in the field for the first time. Students record what teacher observes for future classwork or exam study			
FIELD STUDY	Directed exploration	Pupils highly circumscribed by directives but considerable autonomy of movement. What is discovered, measured, etc., is by teacher intention, but the process is pupil-centred	Can be fairly tight (i.e. work-sheet of questions) or more loosely phased around a series of guidelines. 'Colonial elephant hunt' where pupils placed advantageously to fall over their own environment but shoot their own quarry	Open supervision with pupils working in groups or individually. Teacher control by effective preparation	Convergent and closed but room for a margin of personal inference and error
FIELD TESTING	Controlled inquiry	Research into a specific hypothesis or model along carefully controlled lines in accordance with the conventions of deductive science. Problem-solving dominant	Operationally tight (accuracy essential in recording data). Degree of structure and amount of computation a function of hypothesis and techniques employed	Pupil as researcher and teacher as laboratory supervisor with duty to safeguard data from contamination by irregularities of conduct in research and miscalculations in computation	Open, unless previously worked out by teacher, or the hypothesis overcontrived by him
FIELD DISCOVERY	Open inquiry	Journey into the unknown, where theme, guidelines, hypothesis, mode of working are the choice of the pupil. 'Discovery, Exploration, Creativity' possible in the widest sense	Loose, lightly constrained to random.	Only responsibilities of pastoral care, subject consultant by pupil request. Main work is to provide the possibility and encourage inquiry	Divergent and unpredictable

experience, more elaborated and longer trips may be required."

(Falk and Balling, 1982, p.27-28)

Conclusion

Balchin and Coleman (1965) initiated the quality of "Graphicacy" as another important quality of an educated person besides Literacy, Numeracy and Articulatory to form the new four "Aces".

"Graphicacy" is defined as "the communication of spatial information that cannot be conveyed adequately by verbal or numerical means" (Balchin, 1972).

By 1981, graphicacy was reaffirmed as a response to the curriculum debate in U.K. (Boardman, 1983). Fieldwork which is an integral and indispensable part of development of graphicacy must also be reaffirmed and integrated into the school geography curriculum.

Progress along similar trends is expected in the new syllabus in geography for Forms One to Three in H.K. so as to catch up with the recent development in geography curriculum planning in other more advanced countries.

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Some Difficulties Encountered in Fieldwork

To Kan Yan*

1. When to carry out field study?

There is no "spare time" to carry out fieldwork since the teacher has been preoccupied with finishing the content area of the syllabus within a limited time span.

2. What to look for and where to go to?

a) Field study topics and sites relevant to the syllabus content and manageable within the capacity of the students and teachers are difficult to decide upon, particularly with reference to content areas outside Hong Kong (e.g. Australia, N. America).

b) Safety in the field is a major concern of teachers, parents and principals, and at the same time, a hindrance to fieldwork outside the school.

3. How to organise and lead field trips?

a) A class size of 40 students aged between 11 to 14 is difficult to handle in the field.

b) Some teachers teaching Fl geography may not have any formal geographical field training at all.

Some Suggestions

1. a) Allocation of time for fieldwork depends on how one views the role of fieldwork in the study of geography. Fieldwork should be regarded as an integral and indispensable part in geographical learning at all levels.

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- b) Fieldwork does not necessarily require long hours from school. Some can be done in a 40-min lesson, or by students themselves during school holidays.
 - c) School pinics could be arranged in such a way as to incorporate both recreation and field study.
2. a) Problems of time and safety could be solved if the school site and its neighbourhood are used as field study areas. e.g.
- i) Measurement and mapping of the school playground enable students to learn concepts of scale, direction and size.
 - ii) Road cuttings and outcrops in the school surroundings and even ornamental stones of the school foundation stone afford opportunities for students to acquaint themselves with the types of rocks.
 - iii) Concepts of map reading could be reinforced through identification of features in the field (e.g. in the surrounding areas of the school).
 - iv) Survey of commercial activities along a nearby road may reflect some aspects of urban land use.
- b) Try to make use of the guided visits offered by the government, e.g. visit to government farms, country park, educational trails, reservoirs, etc.
 - c) Bear in mind that although it is impossible for students to carry out fieldwork in an Australian farm, field study of a local farm still serves the purpose of illustrating concepts of a farming system.
 - d) It should be clearly stated to the principal, students and parents that the field is the laboratory, and fieldwork a "must" for geographical study.
3. a) Fieldwork does not necessarily mean that the teacher has to point out every item of interest and to talk all the time in the field. Careful preparation and detailed briefing before fieldwork, well-structured methods of enquiry through questionnaires, and division of the class into groups together with pre-trip training of group leaders may help release the teacher's burden.

- b) With suitable training and guidance, active members of the school geography society and geography students of senior forms (F.6) may act as group leaders in the field.
- c) Fieldwork could be planned to fit with school activities like exhibitions on the open day or parent's day. Support from the principal and other teachers could then be obtained. Display of fieldwork results also provides a sense of achievement to the students.
- d) The panel chairman has to take the initiative to encourage, help and even to lead his/her colleagues to carry out fieldwork. Relevant materials or journals related to fieldwork like Teaching Geography should be introduced to panel members.

Report on the Forum on the Role and Application of Fieldwork Techniques in the Teaching of Geography at the Lower Secondary Level in Hong Kong.

The H.K.G.A. organized a forum on the "Role and Application of Fieldwork Techniques in the Teaching of Geography at the Lower Secondary Level in Hong Kong" on 19 February, 1983 from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong as part of the activities of the annual Hong Kong Geography Day.

The Forum was chaired by Mr. Chan Pui-kai, the vice-chairman of H.K.G.A. (1982-83). Three guest speakers were invited to give brief introduction on the topic from different perspectives.

Mr. Chan Pui-kai, lecturer of Geography Department at Northcote College of Education, discussed on the role and characteristics of fieldwork in the study of geography.

Mr. To Ka-yan, the geography panel chairman of Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Chang Ming Thien College, elaborated on the difficulties and the possible solutions for fieldwork to be conducted in the lower forms and senior forms as well.

Mr. Lai Kwok-chan, inspector of Geography Section, Advisory Inspectorate, E.D. explored the role and application of fieldwork in school geography in Hong Kong and introduced the elements of fieldwork in the old and new geography syllabuses for the lower forms.

Detail versions of the above speeches would be found in separate sections in this and next issue of the Hong Kong Geographer.

About seventy teachers and guests attended the forum. Many expressed their opinions upon the practical difficulties and suggestions on fieldwork for Forms One to Three in Hong Kong.

Members who would like to order plastic maps (凹凸地形圖), the following address will be useful:

Defence Mapping Agency
Topographic Command
6500 Brooks Lane
Washington, D.C., 20315
U.S.A.

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Members who are interested to purchase a computer cartographic software (choropleths) compatible to APPLE II or similar system can now write to the Hon. Secretary, HKGA, c/o Geography Department, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The Software is now stored on floppy disc (5¼") and sold to HKGA members at \$50.00 (price includes a Datalife floppy disc, a user-guide and postage). The price for non-members and institutions is \$150.00

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