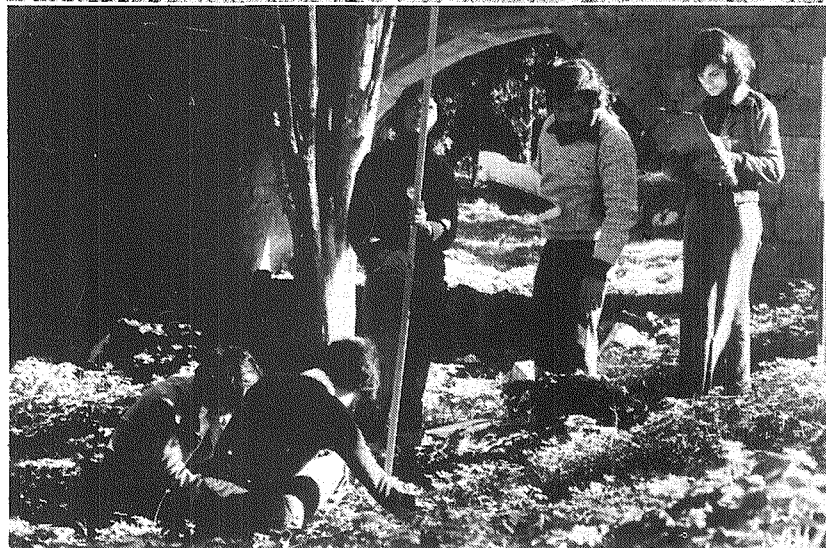


Stimulus & Response: Fieldwork in Science

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From time to time students at the faculty of Education are asked to air their views on particular educational topics which the editors propose to them.

In this issue of the journal we reproduce the ideas of two students about the value of fieldwork in science.



What advantages do you see in making secondary school students undertake fieldwork in science?

The advantages of fieldwork in science largely depend on what we as teachers understand by the term. Fieldwork may simply be taken to imply the casual excursion trip to a museum, industry or a natural track where students just walk around the exhibits or the industrial plant without deriving any truly educational benefit.

On the other hand if fieldwork is presented in such a way that it allows the science student to put theory into practice, to relate those basic principles acquired from school to realistic situations occurring in his every day life, then the advantages of such an exercise are of utmost importance. Thus for example, a biology student will be able to see and study animals and plants in their natural habitats, this helping to put science in its true perspective namely, that theoretical principles which usually stand as a set of simplified generalizations are given a realistic global perspective of their high complexity and diversity. These principles do not apply only to biology but also to physics and chemistry where students often find themselves deluded by theoretical simplicity when they come to apply these in industrial field work or life in general.

Another advantage of the organized fieldwork is its social training; fieldwork gives the students an opportunity to work as a team, learning to share ideas, help each other, understand and accept the limitations and differences of other individuals – factors with a vocational importance which cannot be overstressed. Finally, the well organized field work allows the student to put the scientific approach of problem solving, to practice under the direction of the teacher. Such a practical approach helps the student to see its relevance in the field, acquire it as an inbuilt skill and apply it in his post-school life to gain a better understanding of the world around him.