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The emotional geographies of place: Developing innovative learning and teaching strategies for international fieldwork

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Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Netværk

Læring i Laboratorie- og Feltarbejde

'Competence development from lab work and fieldwork'

08 March 2021

Structure of talk

- Introduction – the emotional geographies of undergraduate fieldwork
- What are emotional intelligence and resilience?
- Developing international fieldwork practice – adopting innovative field L&T practices
- What are students' and tutors' experiences of fieldwork and how do they affect L&T?
- Supporting innovative pedagogies





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)

Emotional geographies and emotional intelligence of international fieldwork

- The importance of relationality - not just to explore the self or the emotion of others but how feelings might connect with those of their subjects (Bennett, 2004; Bondi, 2005)
- Blackman (2007) discusses a hidden ethnography that plays a key role in the production of knowledge.
- The researcher cannot fully understand the impacts of their emotions on the collection of fieldwork and the creation of knowledge (Punch, 2012)

Can fieldwork experiences help develop an emotional intelligence, deepen a sense of understanding and promote resilience?



Emotional geographies of international fieldwork

- Emotional experiences are heightening during (international) fieldwork
- Experiencing place is integral to learning (Marvell & Simm, 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 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

Emotional intelligence and resilience (Hill *et al.*, 2020)

- **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)



The Barcelona field work module

Aims and learning outcomes

- attain a geographical sense of 'place'
- actively involved in logistical planning
- each group delivers a student-led field presentation and field activity
- conduct independent and advanced research
- teamwork and project management skills
- confidence and ability to cope with unfamiliar environments
- critical self-appraisal of field experience and performance

Background to the module

Structure:

- Lectures and workshops before fieldtrip
- 5-day fieldtrip to Barcelona: 1.5 days staff-led, 0.5 day reconnaissance, 2 days student-led
- 30 students, 6 groups of 5 students
- [Video](#)

Assessment:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Group pre-placement project report | Pass/Fail |
| Group field presentation and activity | 40% |
| Field notebook and self-reflective essay | 20% |
| Essay: 'Transformation of Barcelona' | 40% |





Characteristics of our fieldwork pedagogy

- **Encountering** liminal/ borderland spaces
- **Responsibility**, control and power
- **Co-partnership** and **co-production** – teaching peers (and tutors)
- Working and **sharing** with peers
- **Empowerment**
- Changing **staff-student power** relations
- Developing academic **scholarship**
- **Transformative** learning, through experience and **reflection**

- *For more details see: Marvell et al. (2013); Hill et al. (2016); Marvell & Simm (2018)*

Experiencing fieldwork: 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.”* (field notebook)
- *“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’* (reflective essay)
- *“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.”* (field notebook)
- *“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.”* (field notebook)

Experiencing fieldwork: Place

(2) Engagement with place

- *“From the first day of being in situ, I was overwhelmed by what I saw.”* (field notebook)
- *“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.”* (field notebook)



Experiencing fieldwork: Place

- *“I remember the Boqueira market as an assault on the senses, of smells, taste and noise related to feelings of joy.”* (reflective essay)
- *“After touring El Raval on one group's presentation, I felt my eyes were opened to a whole new side of the city – darker, more dangerous and more conflicting.”* (field notebook)
- *“I felt a heightened level of hostility ... our group were heard discussing together by a local in their residence who peered out over their balcony and abruptly slammed closed their window. This made me slightly edgy.”* (field notebook)



Experiencing fieldwork: 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.” (reflective essay)

Field presentations:

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

- 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



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."* (field notebook)
- *"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."* (field notebook)
- *"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."* (reflective essay)
- **The importance of regular collective dialogue, informal chats with groups and individuals, and reflective field diaries**
- **Reflecting on and sharing experiences AND emotions**

It's not just for students, tutors have to develop their emotional intelligence too!

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

(1) Being self-aware

- The hidden curriculum (Cotton *et al.*, 2013)

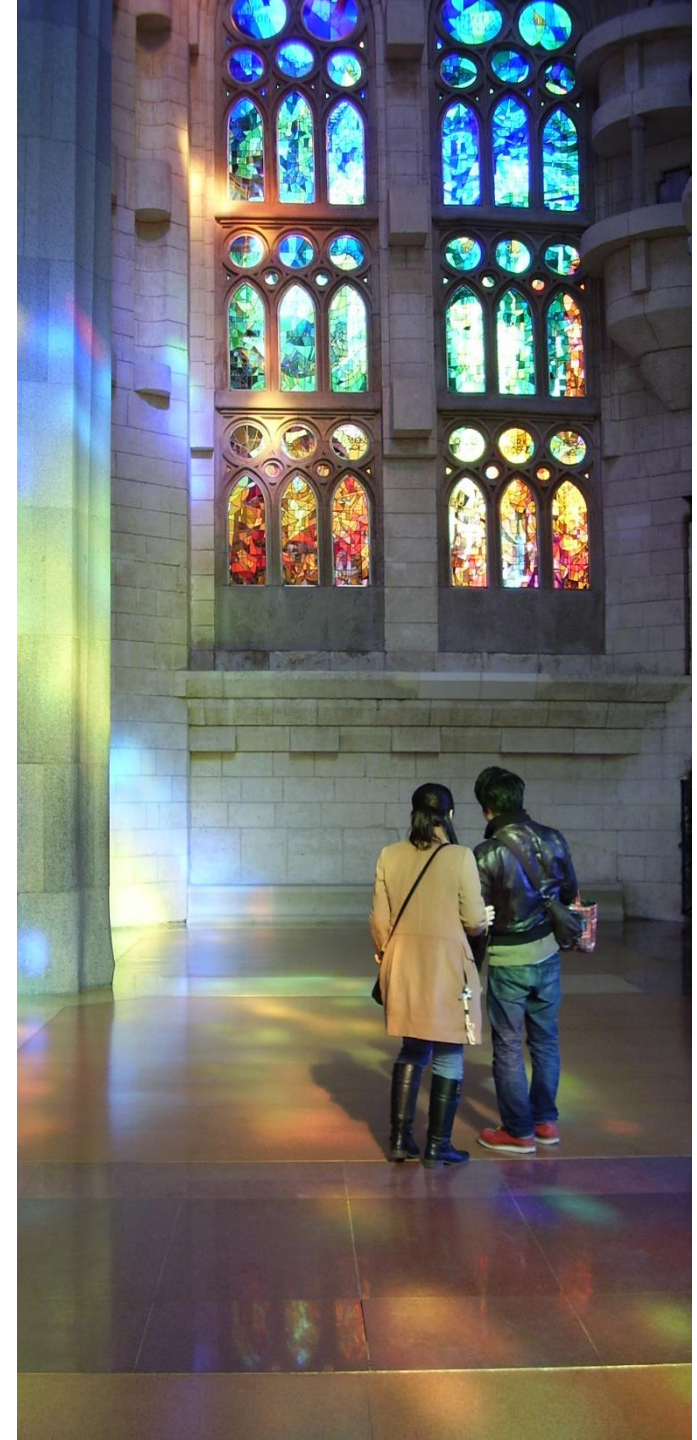
(2) Aware of others

- 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



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.*, 2020)
 5. **Open dialogue and rapport** – recognising challenges, offering support, facilitation
 6. **(Self-) reflexivity** (Marvell & Simm, 2018)
- Applications to other subjects and disciplines – unravelling the palimpsest of the landscape

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