Chapter 2
The Pedagogic Value of Field Schools: Some Frameworks

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2.1 Introduction

In North America, the field school is often described as the rite of passage during which those students who will develop an archaeological career discover what the emblemic activity of excavation involves and identify themselves as aspiring archaeologists (Baxter 2009; Chaps. 6 and 13; Walker and Saitta 2002). In the UK, less formalised training excavations are available to those at school as well as university and are well-advertised through media such as the Council for British Archaeology's website. In the UK, more opportunities arise for other forms of involvement because of the traditions of avocational archaeology carrying out scientific excavations and because of community involvement sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund, but in other countries such as many in Europe and in Australia (see Chap. 5) the local opportunities are often extremely limited. Nevertheless, in most countries it would seem that the formal field training offered to students while undergraduates at University is the recognised building block on which all further professional and academic experience is founded.

While Baxter (2009) has produced a valuable outline for the aspiring field school director in North America, a single-author volume is by necessity limited in the range of first-hand experiences that can be used to illustrate problems and challenges and their solutions. Issues surrounding projects intimately linked with indigenous communities have been explored through the volume edited by Silliman (2008), though again only in North American contexts. Field training can be extremely variable, from an element in a primarily research-driven project (see Chap. 11), to one with a mix of attendees including those taking formal classes

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for credit and university students obtaining experience as part of their degree programme that is not formally assessed (as has often been the case in the UK), through to volunteers of any age who wish to gain an understanding of archaeology (see Chap. 7), including those with various forms of disability (see Chap. 4).

The North American field school pattern of 4–6 solid weeks of fieldwork is only one model for the instruction of archaeological practical methods. In the UK, more rigorous degree programme planning has formalised teaching methods, and these are now often structured on a developmental basis with short (5–14 day) compulsory intensive programmes where teaching dominates over research for all first-year archaeology students, with then optional modules in the second year where greater depth of training is offered, often linked to staff research projects (see Chap. 3). Whereas the field school is a discretionary element in North America and may be only available at a few institutions in Australia (see Chap. 5), it is seen as central in the UK where archaeology is recognised as a discrete discipline, even where it has been combined in larger units within university institutional frameworks. Fieldwork experience is part of the national subject teaching framework (Darvill 2008), and departments have to design some way of fulfilling this requirement. This nationally recognised status for fieldwork training has assisted departments in protecting internal budgets for this activity in the face of financial constraints, but it is still a major logistical challenge for most if not all departments, particularly as cohort sizes have increased substantially. However, as most students do not wish to continue in the archaeology profession and the fieldwork requirement beyond a basic level is not compulsory, it is less problematic to find resources to support the relatively small numbers who continue with this field training through their degree programmes. This different structure, combined with many ways in which an extremely visible heritage can be experienced by students other than on projects, means that the field school experience does not hold quite the same pivotal place in the emotions of many UK students and staff.

Whatever the overall structure and timing of practical archaeology, it is fieldwork that converts many students to the subject, just as it puts others off this as a career. Therefore, how excavation and survey is projected, taught, and learnt in field schools affects how the profession will consider its role in the future. The widespread imbalance by gender towards males in professional field archaeology and to females in field schools for North American and UK students (see Chaps. 4 and 6), yet the high proportion of museums and some other heritage sector posts being now held by women, suggests that the significance of the traditional field school in creating an interest in the wider heritage profession may be outdated if it concentrates on excavation. In this regard, field school training on finds (see Chap. 12) or programmes where survey or public interaction is important (see Chaps. 11 and 14) may be more significant than has hitherto been appreciated.

The field school is designed to meet a number of training aims that are achieved through a series of objectives that the director structures within the time students spend on the project. There are two aspects that uniquely define almost all field schools: that experiential learning is central, and that learning takes place within a

real-life research context. Each of these require careful consideration, as much of the generic literature on student learning assumes a primacy of classroom contexts and a control and predictability of student experience which is not always applicable in a field context.

2.2 Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is one of the key features of the field school; students may have lectures and other forms of formal instruction, but learning through doing is central to its ethos. It is therefore worthwhile considering the theoretical basic of this approach, but also what has been learnt from cognate disciplines such as geography and geology that also incorporate practical expeditions within their programmes (Healey 2005; Fuller et al. 2010; Spronken-Smith and Hilton 2009). Indeed, there has been a longer tradition of studying the pedagogy of fieldwork in those disciplines than there has in archaeology, so it is possible to benefit from these insights in considering both ways in which students can learn within fieldwork and how they might produce assignments for assessment.

Learning is seen by Kolb (1984) as a cyclical process in which concrete experience leads to reflective observation (Fig. 2.1). This is followed by abstract conceptualisation that has an impact through active experimentation, which in itself leads to new concrete experiences. The concrete experience can be considered as that gained in any number of field school activities, but within this the reflective observation can be of several kinds. It may be on the student performance – what am I actually doing within this task? But it can also be recalling reflective observation of past concrete experiences earlier in the field school or from other fieldwork, or may be reflecting on the form of recovered data in the ground and within the created record.

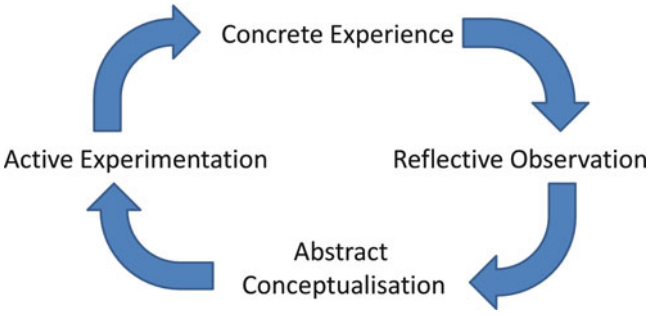


Fig. 2.1 The learning cycle according to Kolb (1984)

From this follows abstract conceptualisation, and this may relate to questions such as what does this mean, or what could this data be used for, consideration of how a post-mold represents an above-ground feature on its own, and perhaps part of a more complex structure. Issues of sequence and phases may be more apparent as students elucidate the stratigraphic relationships between features or while drawing a profile, and social or cultural inferences may be more obviously inspired by working with artefacts. In the Kolb cycle, this then leads on to active experimentation, for example, adjusting the excavation or recording techniques slightly, wondering about alternative interpretations.

Kolb (1984) considered that learners have one of a variety of learning styles, and this approach has been applied to the teaching of geography fieldwork at university, not dissimilar to many archaeological situations:

> *Divergers* view situations from many perspectives and rely heavily upon brainstorming and generation of ideas.
> *Assimilators* use inductive reasoning and have the ability to create theoretical models.
> *Convergers* rely heavily on hypothetical-deductive reasoning.
> *Accommodators* carry out plans and experiments and adapt to immediate circumstances (Healey and Jenkins 2000).

It is clear that explaining to students, structuring group and individual learning, and appreciating and empathising with the format and emphasis of the field school research design, will not be the same for all groups. Indeed, the way in which the field school is described and defined might influence which types of learners select a particular field school. While geographers have considered learning styles in relation to their students (Marvell 2008), this has yet to be attempted in archaeology.

While all learners will experience all stages of the Kolb cycle, Honey and Mumford (1982) have argued for a different categorisation of learning styles in which each of the defined types of student engages more strongly with different parts of Kolb's cycle. They suggest that learners may be divided into activists, reflectors, theorists and pragmatists. Moreover, they may prefer diverse forms of exploring the experiences and issues raised while learning. Activists not surprisingly focus on the concrete experience, and so these can be among the most motivated in the actual process of fieldwork, but may be weaker when it comes to reflecting on why decisions have been made the way they have, or in their flexibility as situations change. The reflector enjoys making observations and considering their implications, and so some forms of recording would be most likely to appeal to this type of student. Theorists may be less interested in the practical activity, seeing it only as a means by which to reach deeper understanding; such students can be poor on detail and untidy, irritated at the slow progress of fieldwork and the unprocessed nature of the data which prevents immediate interpretation. They may become time-wasters asking too many questions and engaging in discussions which may be appropriate in class but not in a practical work situation. The pragmatist, in contrast, wants to apply insights already gained in preliminary field courses and reading or earlier in the field season to the newly available practical situations, and

abstract issues such as theory, regional methodological traditions, and project research goals may be seen as impediments to getting on with the work.

The reflectors and theorists can be most effective in traditional university courses, but may do less well in the field context. They can find the practical elements, including organisation involving others, the need to carry out repetitive tasks, and the response that we do not yet know the answers to their high level questions, all extremely frustrating. In contrast, activists and pragmatists can find that they are in their element, being able to carry out clearly defined programmes of action toward defined goals. Fleming and Baume (2006) have proposed a different set of categories for student learning styles, emphasising visual, aural, reading and writing, or kinaesthetic styles, and these likewise carry the implication that some students may be generally stronger in the field school context than in class, and vice versa, and that some students will absorb some certain of communication and learning more easily than others.

Types of knowledge also appeal to different learning styles, and this also needs to be considered in the content and structure of a course. Convergent knowledge combines principles with particular information to deal with a problem, as with understanding the principles of stratigraphy on the one hand combined with the drawing and interpretation of an actual profile through the construction of a Harris matrix on the other. This type of knowledge usually leads to right or wrong answers – the sequence is either correctly identified or it is not. Divergent knowledge links to experience and judgement and relates to qualitative matters that do not have clear right or wrong solutions, as with decisions regarding sampling deposits for environmental data. In fieldwork contexts, some yearn for a firm right or wrong answer, others relish the challenges of shades of grey rather than black or white; this will affect what is seen as a satisfactory conclusion to a discussion and can vary from one cohort to another. For some, a definite answer is required to make a learning session successful, for others revealing its complexity is the desirable outcome. The field school teacher needs to be ready to help all to their own appropriate outcomes, rather than necessarily to a full consensus. Evaluating students and their personalities, including learning styles, is an important part of the field school staff's role and should commence as soon as the project begins.

One of the criticisms of the Kolb model is that learning does not take place in the straightforward cyclical order of the model, and this is very obvious when carrying out fieldwork. There is a constant interaction between several of these stages at any one time, the feedback being much more fluid than is implied by the diagram. Moreover, the rate and quality of learning and reflection varies over time, depending on the task, the student's motivation, and the levels of new information (about the task or the archaeology) that is being discovered. It is important for both students and staff to be aware that all stages of this model should be stimulated and encouraged. Just "getting the job done" on site is insufficient, but so is discussing abstruse points of theory or method without achieving any practical output, not only in terms of the research aims but also pedagogically, given the practice elements of the aims and objectives.

2.3 Experience in a Research Context

Experiential learning can occur to varying degrees away from the field, such as artefact or ecofact practical classes in laboratories, or excavation research design testing through computer simulations. What makes the field school special for both staff and students is that the teaching and learning happens partly alongside but largely within a research context. Few academic subjects can allow students to experience a class where they can be contributing to cutting edge research while also learning. Some students find it hard to appreciate that their professor does not know all the answers – the response "If we knew all that already we would not need to excavate" is unexpected. But the very engagement with current research questions, however small-scale, creates both opportunities and practical and ethical concerns in relation to the pedagogic aims of the field school (see Chaps. 8, 10 and 14). Students must be aware that field schools have, in their very operation, commitments to them as learners, but also to the public, the wider archaeological community, and to the discipline itself (see Chap. 15).

The design of teaching and learning activities has to be matched with practical and ethical issues, especially where these involve excavation and thus the destruction of the archaeological resource (Fig. 2.2). In many cases, these issues are predictable and the explanation of these to the students before and during work makes them both appreciate the importance of their contribution, and its quality, and is part of the student learning experience about what archaeological fieldwork involves. The challenge comes, however, when the archaeology is not as predicted. If the range of materials and features, or the density of artefacts recovered, is far less than planned, thus limiting the expected student experience, alternative strategies may need to be employed to complete learning objectives even if these are not part of the research design. In contrast, the data may be far greater and more complex than expected, creating challenges for inexperienced excavators and recorders, and for the project infrastructure; managing the material may dominate staff attention over teaching students the methods. More than with other forms of teaching, the director and other staff need to be more adaptable and ideally have alternative strategies ready to apply in such situations. One of greatest risks for the research effectiveness of a project is that the field training appears to have gone well, but the records, artefacts and samples have not received the attention they deserved and there is a large backlog of work to be undertaken even though most of not all the labour will have departed (Baxter 2009). Training needs to be structured to give appropriate emphasis to all stages of the archaeological process, and support staff need to be of an experience and number to cope with all the necessary checking and ordering of records and artefacts as the project proceeds.

There is no doubt that one of the greatest benefits to students is their increased motivation engendered by their involvement with discovery. At one level this is personal – finding a shard of pottery, a wall, discerning a change in colour or texture of the soil. But at another it is that such discoveries, and those made together as a team with research goals, lead to understanding things about the past that were not known when the field school began. It is therefore necessary for the field school director to build into the aims and objectives the learning about the contingency of



Fig. 2.2 Teaching takes place in various formats, involving action and problem-solving in both excavation and recording

research, of the messy nature of real-life archaeological data, of the provisional nature of interpretations and predictions, and that negative as well as possible results all contribute to understanding. Field archaeology should encourage a reflexive approach by students (Cobb and Richardson 2008; Hamilakis 2004), just as it must for staff in both their teaching and research.

2.4 Syllabus Content and Assessment

Field schools vary, and while the majority incorporate excavation, whether terrestrial or underwater, some focus on survey (Chap. 11) or on finds or conservation (Mills et al. 2008). There cannot be one overall approved syllabus, but it is important

that each director determines what aspects of archaeology are to be formally taught, what aspects students may become optionally exposed to or have greater focus upon, and what informal types of learning are to be specifically encouraged by exposure through site visits, meetings with other stakeholders in the heritage, or interaction within the field school group.

Professional archaeological bodies such as the Institute for Field Archaeologists (IfA) in Britain or the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA) in the US have particular defined skills which are seen as essential for all those entering the profession (Adler 2001; Perry 2004). Most academics would accept these as ones that could be taught within a field school, but not all posts in CRM or other professional structures require the same skills (Schuldenrein and Altschul 2000). It is therefore necessary to consider to what level of proficiency in any skill a student should reach; it is hard to find the time necessary for students to gain experience to a level that can be applied professionally (Neusius 2009). To have assisted in carrying out a gradiometer survey is quite different from having the responsibility of undertaking one in the field, downloading the data, manipulating it effectively, and interpreting it. Likewise, excavating in a test pit in the supportive and relatively slow working environment of the field school may or may not prepare a student for rapidly excavating a number of test pits within a CRM context. There are differences between some awareness of a technique, experience of it, competence in a supervised environment, and independently capable. These gradations should be made clear in the learning objectives – what level for a task will students be expected to reach? The challenge with meeting the expectations of those in the profession is that when starting from absolutely no practical knowledge, even 6 weeks is a short time to gain proficiency in many skills. Moreover, much professional experience is gained by working on different sites and in different conditions, something not possible for a single field school. It is also important that students' expectations are realistic regarding how much they can gain from one field school. Some students will be naturally able and will advance quickly, others may find even the most basic tasks a challenge. While a few participants will have combined attitude and abilities that allow them to reach a significant level of competence, learning outcomes need to be set so that most can achieve a recognised, albeit lower, level. We do not expect students to produce publication-quality written work to pass, and the same equivalence needs to be applied to practice; as field school grades are rarely based on practical skills, the profession needs to appreciate the role and limitations of field schools within the university structures that exist in each country.

The structure of the syllabus is partly constrained by the form of a field season. On a site with no already partially excavated areas, work of necessity begins with setting out excavation areas and the removal of the plow zone. Only once profiles have been revealed can their significance be explained and their recording proceed. Although preliminary lectures may set the scene on recording methods to be employed, the experiential learning only takes place as these stages of the excavation are reached. This is both a constraint but also an opportunity, as the very sequence of an excavation is in and of itself something that students should appreciate. Some activities can begin at quite an early stage, for example artefact processing even from

plow zone collections, but some of the issues regarding use of artefacts for dating and functional interpretation may have to await the discovery of intact deposits later in the season. Indeed, learning the use of excavation tools and the procedures for artefact processing on superficial deposits of potentially less research value can be a less stressful way for both students and staff as the initial training takes place. Just as students are generally unused to the concepts of industrial labour (see Chap. 8), so many are unfamiliar with hard physical effort, and so fitness levels are sometimes problematic; while some activities may be constrained by disability (Chap. 4), many students are not as fully able to sustain physical effort as they were 20 years ago. Gradually gaining fitness is one of the unexpected by-products of a field school for many students.

In many field schools not all students work on a particular activity at one time, but rather these are linked to the necessary stages that their part of the excavation has reached. It is important to have some form of ongoing record that keeps track of which student has had which experience and the level of training and consolidation in understanding that they have received. It is easy for some aspects of training to be postponed, especially if labour-intensive for staff and requiring small group teaching, or limited to few locations on the site. This will lead to logistical problems towards the end of the field school, at a time when the completion of research priorities and the checking of the site archive are also at its height. It also means that issues introduced towards the end of the field school have limited time for application and integration in the students' minds.

Assessment of fieldwork can be a major concern, both for staff and students. While all are familiar with the criteria that apply to standard modes of class assessment, they may not be relevant or most appropriate in the field school context. It is therefore particularly important that explicit guidelines are drawn up by staff, and that grade descriptors are available to students as well as those responsible for grading. The grading may have to be broken down into various elements, suitably weighted, as students may for reasons discussed above be variable in their effectiveness across the spectrum of tasks involved. A useful summary of the principles, with many examples of grade descriptors, is provided by Prosser (2010), though most are designed for written assignments. These tabulations and correlations may be particularly valuable if students come from more than one institution, and perhaps other countries. As students progress through various activities, some method of recording levels of attainment needs to be instituted so that final grading is not based on only the most recent activities.

Some field schools require written assignments (see Chap. 7) and others incorporate a portfolio of records and a diary, while others rely on assessment of actual practice. There are good arguments for including practical competence, but also raise issues of measurement and comparability (one student's test pit may be complex, another's sterile). Whatever the balance, this needs to have been thought through and integrated into the aims and objectives of the programme and can include written or oral, the latter most appropriate in a fieldwork setting where students are taking some level of responsibility, for example in test pits; in geography this form of field assessment has been shown to be very successful (Marvell 2008).

Modes and timing of assessment should also be reviewed through some form of student feedback. There may be arguments for a brief survey before the field school begins and another afterwards, to see if perceptions change and expectations are met; studies of geography students show positive shifts between pre- and post-field trip cohorts (Boyle et al. 2007), and for students with disability, this reflexivity has assisted both students and staff (see Chap. 4); less complex versions for all students could be valuable. Most students, and indeed staff, do not recognise or explicitly state the transferable skills gained during the field school and its assessment (Chap. 3, Table 1). More emphasis should be placed on these strengths, which may also form part of the assessment.

2.5 Managing the Risks

Field schools provide an educational experience where there is a mix between formal teaching, backed up by reading, with a relatively large amount of time devoted to practical activity. While this resembles laboratory practical work in some respects, and so is similar to the pedagogic experience in other aspects of archaeology and some science subjects, it differs in some important respects. Except for a small number of excavation simulations, most field school fieldwork takes place in a context where not all variables are under the instructor's control. Unlike classroom teaching, contact times are long, and many factors can affect activity and learning. Moreover, although most research students and junior faculty are now provided with elaborate and sometimes time-consuming training in pedagogic skills in many countries, these cover standard contact situations such as one-to-one tutorials, small group teaching in seminars and workshops, lectures and laboratory practicals. Even where outside project work is occasionally considered, this is envisaged as being very controlled local repeatable simulations of site visiting or data collection that are still largely unproblematic.

Consideration of risk normally concentrates on health and safety, and all field school directors should be trained in evaluating and having strategies for all risks that they can perceive for their project. Universities all have administrative procedures to ensure that their insurance terms are covered, an issue that can cause problems when students attend projects runs by other institutions (see Chaps. 5 and 6). It is essential that, however bureaucratic these systems may be, all key staff are fully trained and aware of all these procedures and limitations on activity. It is also highly desirable to have a number of staff trained on first aid at the appropriate level, with greater training and qualification necessary for those expeditions to remote areas. It is not sufficient to only have the field school director trained, as they may have to be away from the site or base camp for administrative reasons at times, and also someone has to be able to deal with the director's injury should they suffer one. Student and junior staff awareness of the known abilities and disabilities of attendant students is an essential element in preparation and planning (see Chap. 13), even at the level of acceptance and adding of conditions and provisos for those who may not be able to

fully achieve all the standard learning objectives or may require a different form of assessment. Even minor issues such as colour blindness will affect student perception of deposits or artefact characteristics and the extent to which they can complete recording protocols successfully.

The awareness of health and safety constraints affects how teaching will take place, and where; it may affect group size, proportions of staff to students, and where students might work such that they could be evacuated in an emergency. While some conditions are obvious because they are frequently an issue, such as trench depth and the risk of collapse, others such as proximity to a rock face, unstable structure, or a busy road may not be. Field school directors draw from their own personal experience, but in health and safety many issues are also localised and require a level of anticipation beyond direct experience. This is particularly important when training students as, unlike a professional field crew, they are often unaware of the dangers of earthmoving machinery, wildlife, or the many forms of trip hazard, to name just some examples. Discussing the possible hazards with colleagues and more experienced project directors is an excellent way to increase awareness; those many stories told in bars at conferences of heroic acts and "near misses" can actually provide a framework of warnings that should be heeded. These stories are not desired outcomes from a field school, and all field staff should be constantly vigilant regarding student action or lack of it with regard to these matters. The learnt awareness of health and safety is itself part of the field training and is indeed an excellent transferable skill that can be applied in other work contexts. It must be a condition of attendance that all students abide by all regulations, and that refusal to wear, say, stout shoes or a safety helmet when required should exclude them from the site. Any toleration of lax standards will only lead to increased risk for which the director will be held responsible, but also encourage lower quality in other aspects of the project such as excavation and recording. While as director these rules may seem a hindrance, they should be seen and broadcast as the enabling framework within which work can take place at all. Particular risks can be attendant on work in industrial archaeology (Chap. 8), and even more obviously with underwater archaeology (Chaps. 9 and 10).

The logistical uncertainties beyond health and safety also create a sense of tension, particularly in the minds of inexperienced project directors, and these are always a matter of concern, especially on the first field season on a site. The nature of the buried deposits, their state of preservation, the range and density of artefacts, and the period uses of the site are all archaeological variables that affect training, research design, and allocation of resources to different aspects of the project. To these archaeological unknowns can be added relationships with neighbouring contemporary communities (including the landowner), social dynamics within the students and staff, variations in weather, reliability of equipment including transport, and unforeseen problems with accommodation and food. While on-campus practicals can face some of these problems, there is locally available support, alternative facilities, or at worst the re-scheduling of relatively short teaching sessions. Out in the field, some of these problems can be difficult to resolve and can severely impede or even halt all work, and so affect the pedagogic value of the experience for students.



Fig. 2.3 Risk management: wet-weather activities designed to incorporate artefact and sample processing when on-site activities were curtailed, ensuring that teaching and learning could continue in a flexible manner

Students like time off, but they do not appreciate missing out on the training for which they have given both time and money. Many logistical problems are outside the control of the field school director, but that is not appreciated by inexperienced students, who see themselves as customers who were promised a particular product. It is therefore important to incorporate flexibility in perhaps the order that training in particular aspects may take place, or the replacing of one type of practical activity with another, with perhaps merely discussion and reading representing the lost activity. It is valuable to have a number of exercises and projects, as well as background reading, held in reserve to cover at least the first stages of any crisis. This can allow junior staff to supervise students on this activity while the director or the relevant staff member can concentrate on resolving the problem, or determining the best course of action if a solution is not immediately to hand.

Examples of a flexible approach can best explain how field school directors can be prepared for difficulties. In the UK, it can rain heavily for several days in a row and, while some work in the rain may be possible, on many subsoils the site rapidly becomes unworkable, and damage is done to deposits by attempting excavation and recording. The Castell Henllys base camp included a large dining tent, and after breakfast on days with heavy rain various activities would be laid on, and students would rotate round these (Fig. 2.3). The sorting of samples linked to the programme of flotation and wet screening was a routine activity, but a significant number of

samples were always held back, at least until towards the end of the season, so that they would be available for wet-weather days. The same applied to artefact processing, and data entry onto laptop computers, though this was necessarily only open to few students at any one time. Field school students were also able to read selected texts relevant to their written assignments, and short impromptu seminars on aspects of the cultural history of the region or particular methods could be held. A small collection of animal bone and ceramics of other periods and regions than that of the site was also kept at the base camp, so that training on identification of these could take place. In addition, a relatively simple and a more complex profile drawing was available in multiple copies so that students could be taught the principles of the Harris matrix, and then could apply this to the exercises; if this had already been part of their training, the more complex example could challenge their understanding and application of the method. If the rain eased off but the site was still too waterlogged, visits to other sites or the teaching and learning of survey techniques could also take place. Many of these activities required some planning, but were well worth having ready even though some years they were not required at all. These types of activity may be necessary if transport from base camp to site breaks down, or if an activity such as survey has to be halted because of equipment failure or staff illness. Just having some back-up plans, for which sufficient staff are proficient, creates a sense of confidence and allows the resolution of the problem to be the focus of the director, rather than pacifying students and keeping up their morale (see also Chap. 11).

Effective teaching and learning is always a fluid, adaptable exercise, though linked back to core aims and objectives. The very definition of those objectives needs to be informed by risk awareness, and back-up plans also need to be designed to replace or augment aspects that may for unforeseen reasons be unavailable. The writing of the programme outlines needs to factor in the possibilities of flexible delivery so that the primary goals can be satisfied, and that only a number, though not necessarily all practical aspects of the syllabus, may be provided to fulfil the learning objectives. Students also must appreciate that understanding this flexibility and adaptation to conditions is part and parcel of a field school experience, and that while staff attempt to provide every aspect of training, this is not always within their power. Communication on all sides is essential to ensure a positive attitude in the face of adversity.

2.6 Conclusions

The field school is a highly effective learning environment in more ways than most students or staff appreciate. Making explicit to students all the ways in which they learn about archaeological methods, themselves, other people, and the context within which fieldwork takes place is important. They may even learn about the past, though that may be as effectively taught in the classroom. Field school directors should consider how they frame the aims and objectives of their programmes

and what literature about the project and the training should be provided ahead of being in the field (which will be read avidly by some and not at all by others). Once in action, the staff should explain how the work being undertaken by the students is an ongoing and deepening learning experience, despite its sometimes repetitive character. Modes of assessment should be linked to the aims and objectives and be clear to students and all staff so that levels of attainment are fair for all. The variety inherent in a field school means that many can achieve proficiency in at least some aspects of the programme, and it is an arena in which some who find class-based working difficult can flourish. Indeed, the field school may be a better indicator of general employability than some classroom contexts, as practical problem-solving skills and the ability to work in a team and meet objectives within time constraints are highly valued (see Chap. 3). Thus, at the level of formal and informal teaching and learning, and as an assessor of employability, the field school can be extremely instructive for all.

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