

Fieldwork on your CV

Fieldwork provides many opportunities to make you an employable geography teacher or head of department. John argues that these experiences should be included in job applications and CVs.

I recently went through the process of appointing a new member of staff to my department and was surprised by the lack of information about their fieldwork experience in applicants' CVs or letters of application. There was plenty of coverage of curricula taught, qualifications obtained, areas of expertise and their numerous key skills: but so very little about something that could well have proved to be most interesting – namely fieldwork. With fieldwork now prominent in the new GCSE and A-level specifications and the 2014 National Curriculum, there is a strong argument that fieldwork is more central to secondary school geography than ever. I would assert that fieldwork creates the sort of experiences that make job applicants interesting.

Having asked over 30 heads of geography for their views on how prominent fieldwork should be in a job application, it would be fair to say that not all think fieldwork is as important as I do, but all recognise the advantages of including it in an application. Much of what follows is advisory: as it is always key to be guided by the job specification first and foremost. Whether the post you are applying for is geography teacher or head of department, give your fieldwork skills and experiences equal billing with all the rest of your teaching experience. Equally, if you are responsible for writing the job specification, make any reference to fieldwork explicit.

Applying for a post as a geography teacher

Skills – dependent upon your current post, you could have experience of planning, budgeting, conducting risk assessments (including in the field) and leadership. Other experiences and qualifications you could draw upon to demonstrate your fieldwork skills are things like a First Aid qualification, an outdoor leadership qualification or minibus driving experience.

Responsibility – whether it be a local investigation into the school's microclimate or an international trip to study deserts in Morocco, both demonstrate a degree of responsibility. It may be that you have never led any fieldwork, or that your field trips took place in centres where staff have done the work for you: in both cases you should describe how your role improved geographical learning.

Personal qualities – this is your opportunity to convey your genuine passion for the subject. Describe your engagement with fieldwork, and show your energy, enthusiasm and dynamism. If you are newly qualified, with limited experience of leading or even accompanying fieldwork, you should carefully consider what fieldwork means to you and convey that clearly.

Applying for a post as a head of geography

Responsibility – Make sure you have experience of planning and leading fieldwork under your belt. The new fieldwork requirements at A level and GCSE focus on breadth as well as contrast, so include a variety of field trip locations and their rationales and be prepared to evaluate their success. Your interview could be an important opportunity to argue the case for fieldwork as an integral part of the school year – you should come prepared.

Leadership – Fieldwork offers an opportunity to demonstrate some of the core skills of 'management' without being a manager – planning an activity, liaising with parents, and producing a budget are all skills that you develop on a field trip that can be transferred to your new role as HoD.

Learning – Have a clear view of the value and role of fieldwork in learning. As well as making the case for fieldwork you should show how to make fieldwork possible – this skill is critical in demonstrating your ability to do 'change management' or 'curriculum planning', particularly if you have not had experience of significant change during your current role.

In addition to this there are a variety of skills derived from fieldwork that are well suited for senior management roles, particularly as so much of what is done depends upon close and careful liaison with students, staff, parents and external organisations.

So, if you are applying for jobs in this 'Year of Fieldwork' celebrate your fieldwork experiences, champion its role in geographical learning, extol its strengths in developing leadership and building rapport; and most of all, get out there and enjoy every minute of it. | **TG**



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