S.4 FIELD WORK NOTES
GEOGRAPHY 273/1

What is Fieldwork?

It is a study that involves students using the local environment as a laboratory to verify what is studied in classroom and read in text books.

It involves observation, recording, analysis and interpretation of the relationship between man and physical environment (geographical data).

Field work studies are a form of social enquiry into real - life situations. Field research therefore takes place in the "field" that is in natural setting, a setting that is not established for the purpose of conducting research.

Identifying the topic of study:

The topic must have the following characteristics:

Short and precise.

Emphasize "what" is studied and "where" i.e. the name of the area of the study.

Researchable and clear.

Have a geographical relationship.

Not ambiguous.

Examples include:

i) Factors that influence the growth and development of "Kasenyi Fish Landing site, Northern shores of Lake Victoria" (Wakiso District).

ii) "The growth and development of Kibuli Market and its influence on the surrounding areas".

Formulating the objectives of the study:

The objectives should have the following characteristics:

They should be specific (they should be clearly stated).

They should be measurable i.e. (can be evaluated).

The objectives should be focused and narrow in scope.

They should be realistic, therefore achievable.

They should be logical i.e. do not start with future prospects, start with location, historical background and end with future prospects.

They should be related to the topic of the study **BUT** they should not repeat the topic.

What should a student avoid when stating the objectives?

The students should avoid using words that are nor measurable, for example:

To assess.

To know.

To understand.

To see.

To examine etc.

Therefore, the student should use active verbs in order for the objectives to be measurable and correct. For instance:

To find out.

To identify.

To investigate.

To establish etc.

Each objective should also bear the **name of the area of the study** because each objective is independent of the other, for instance:

To find out the location of Kasenyi Fishing Landing site.

To find out the historical background of Kasenyi Fishing Landing site.

To find out the conditions favouring fishing activities at Kasenyi Fishing Landing site.

To investigate the influence of fishing at Kasenyi Landing site on the surrounding areas.

To identify the problems faced at Kasenyi and the possible solutions.

To find out the future prospects of fishing at Kasenyi Fishing Landing site.

CHOOSING METHODS OF DATA COLLETION:

The selection of the methods of the study depends on the information to be collected and basically the nature of the area of the study. Therefore, any method can be selected if it meets the criteria mentioned above:
They include the following:

Observation

Interviewing

Questionnaire method

Recording

Sampling

Map orientation

Measurement

1. OBSERVATION METHOD:

How to present the observation method while answering questions?
Definition:
Observation is a method or a procedure where the researcher uses his eyes to study the different geographical phenomena in the field of the study.

During the study we moved through the market stalls observing the different types of commodities sold in the market. Such commodities included tomatoes, dried fish and many others. We also moved to the raised land north of the market to observe the general nature of landscape and human activities. It was found out that south of the area is gently sloping, while the north has flat raised landscape. The southern part was generally used for trading activities as a number of shops were sited.

Advantages of observation method:

Observation provides information when other methods are not effective for instance in areas where there are no people to ask.

It employs a less time consuming procedure of subject selection compared e.g. sampling.

Observation offers first hand information without relying on reports made by other people.

It approaches reality in its natural structure and studies events as they evolve.

It is relatively cheap and does involve the use of unique tools.

Limitations of observation:

Observation cannot be employed when large groups or extensive events are to be studied.

Observation cannot provide information about the past and future, or instance observation cannot explain the historical background of the area neither can it explain the future prospects of the area of the study.

It is exposed to the observers' bias, selective perception and selection of memory i.e. it is subjective depending on the value judgment of the observer.

Observation is also affected by obstructions for instance tall buildings or vegetation, hills, fog, dust and many others.

How do you present the limitations to the observation made?

Explain your answer by mentioning **how you were limited, what limited you and what you wanted to observe.**

For instance:

Observation was limited by obstruction by the tall buildings on the eastern side of the market. For instance Kibuli Mosque, we could not clearly observe other economic activities taking place in the surrounding areas.

2. INTERVIEWING METHOD:

How to present interviewing method while answering questions:

Definition:

Interviewing is a procedure where the researcher asks questions about a given topic of the study and the respondent answers.

While in Kibuli Market or at Kasaku Tea Plantation (use the appropriate name where your field work was carried out) we interviewed a number of market vendors or workers at the plantation using a list of guiding questions e.g:

Interviewer:
Briefly explain how the market was started?

Interviewee (Mr. Kimansulo): the market was started by Buganda Board and the land was donated by Miss Nakabugo who managed the market during its initial years of development.

Note:
You can use any questions as long as they are relevant to the topic and objectives of the study.

Advantages of interview method:

Flexibility; interviews can be adjusted to meet many diverse situations.

High response rate is got; the presence of the interviewer gives the opportunity to the interviewee to discuss the participation in the study.

Gives the chance to the researcher or student to correct misunderstood questions by respondents while still in the field.

Less patience and motivation are needed to complete than required by the questionnaire method.

The interview method helps the students to interact with people.

Disadvantages of the interview method:

Interviews are more costly and time consuming than other methods.

Interviews are affected by possible bias associated with the interviewer.

It is less effective than other methods especially where sensitive issues are discussed.

Hostility from the respondents.

Language barrier i.e. in most cases the students cannot easily communicate in local languages and the local people cannot understand English.

How to present limitations of interview method during the study:
Interviewing was limited by hostility from the workers of Kasaku Tea Estate who insulted the students who could ask questions such as: how are you going to help us? We are tired of students.

Interviewing was limited by language barrier. Most of the workers at Kasenyi Landing site could not communicate in any other language apart from Luganda that could not be understood by some students.

3. RECORDING METHOD:

Recording is a procedure where the researcher writes down information using stationery such as a pen and paper. However, other devices can be used to record down information especially where writing down of information is not effective.

Advantages of recording method:

Students are in position to keep permanent records of information.

Information is more organized when recorded than in other methods of data collection.

Where drawings and tabulations are involved, it helps students to acquire skills that are to be used at later stages of academic hierarchy.

It is used in other methods of data collection (it acts as a link between the different methods).

Limitations to the method of recording:

It is affected by climatic conditions for instance recording on white paper during sunny days.

The stationery may be lost either having been destroyed by fore or stolen.

Stationery is expensive for students.

How do we present recording method while answering questions?

E.g:

Describe how you used the following method to collect data while in the field of the study.

a) Recording:

- Approach.
- Define what recording is.
- Explain how you recorded the information.
- Give examples of the recorded information.

For instance a student may answer as follows:

Recording is where the researcher writes down information as got from the field of the study. During recording, pens, pencils and papers were used to record down information as observed or interviewed from the field of the study. We recorded down the problems faced by the fish mongers at Kasenyi Landing site, which included; lack of modern equipments to preserve fish, lack of capital to buy equipments etc. We also used tables to record data, for instance the types of fish species caught and major methods by which it is caught.

A table showing fish and the main methods of catching fish at Kasenyi Fish Landing site:

Fish species	**Methods of fishing**
Tilapia	Gill netting
Nile perch	Trawling

4. MEASUREMENT METHOD:

It is a method used to determine the quantity or size using special equipments or instruments. In other words, it is a method by which distance, areas, heights, weights and quantity are got or determined.

Short distances over a good teaming can be measured with a tape measure; longer distances can be measured by pacing.

Advantages of measurement:

The method gives first hand information to the students.

Students also learn skills and the using of some tools as they physically carry out the measurements of distance and other objects in the field.

Limitations of the measurement method:

Measurement is affected by inadequate tools in most cases the tools are nor enough in order for each student to have her of his own.

Measurement is affected by lack of skills by students to use the tools especially where obsolete tools are used.

Measurement is affected by physical obstructions for instance sudden rain, steep slope, buildings and many others.

5. SAMPLING METHOD:

Is a process where a portion or part of a whole is selected or used to represent a whole in the study.

Advantages of sampling:

Sampling saves both resources and time. In many cases a complete coverage of the whole population is not possible because of the limited time and resources.

Sampling provides first hand information and in detail. Since the researcher has enough time to give to a few people, he/she can be ask for other information related to the topic and objectives of the study.

Field work studies based on sampling are less demanding in terms of labour requirements because they require a small portion of the population in the areas of the study.

Problems of sampling:

Lack of complete representation of the target population. For instance when a fish landing site is visited, many of the interviewed people may not be fish mongers and this may result into giving of wrong information.

Bias in selection is common since in most cases students only interview people in the field who are interested in their study.

There is a tendency of missing on important sub-groups especially in cases where simple random or incidental sampling is used; where students just go to the field and ask anyone who comes their way.

Inadequate tools e.g. chemicals especially where testing of substances is required for example testing soil pH or water salinity.

6. SKETCH MAP DRAWING:

A sketch map is a layout of features as seen from above. It represents the location of the area as well as the relationship between different geographical phenomena.

Like any other map, a sketch map should have the following:

A well elaborated title.

Frame.

A key/labels printed/written on the map.

Compass direction.

Physical features must be shown by names.

Land use types or man made features must be given.

If field work has been carried out around the school, the name of the school must appear on the sketch map e.g. A sketch map showing physical features and human features around Kibuli Secondary School.

Steps followed while describing or explaining a given method:

Identify the method (if it was not given).

Define it.

Explain how it was used (be brief here).

Give examples from the field (information gained while using a given method).

Geographical significance of the field work study:

In explaining geographical significance of the field work study a student is expected to state the findings of the study. The significance of the findings should be related to the topic and objectives of the study; however students shouldn't repeat objectives in these findings.

The findings should be weighed against the existing geographical facts on the ground/area of the study. These may be relationships between:

i) Physical and physical.

ii) Physical and human.

iii) Human and human.

For example: (Physical to physical)
Through observation we established that the gentle slopes north of Kibuli Secondary School favoured the accumulation of deep fertile soils. Such soils are deposited there by surface run-off during the rain season.

Through observation we established that lateritic rocks were found on Kibuli flat topped hill because its an area of maximum leaching and soil erosion exposed most of these lateritic rocks.

Through observation we found out that Mataba Swamp South East of Kibuli Secondary School is located in Nsambya Valley.

Human and human activities:
Through observation we established that the Kibuli - Mukwano Road to the west of Kibuli Secondary School influenced the location of Mukwano Factory. This enables transportation of raw materials, manufactured goods and labour cheaply.

Through observation we established that the Kibuli - Mbogo road East of Kibuli Secondary School influenced the location of Kibuli Market that offers goods and services to nearby settlements.

Physical and human activities:
Through observation we established that the gentle slopes and valley south west of Kibuli Secondary School favoured settlement activities e.g. teachers' quarters and neighbouring communities are located in the gentle slopes and valley area.

Problems encountered during the field work study:
Students may give these problems depending on the methods used during the field work study while giving practical examples from the field and should be related to the topic and objectives of the study.
For instance if the topic is:
"A study of the influence of soils to the growth of tea at Kasaku Tea Estate in Mukono district".

PROBLEMS:

Questionnaire:

All questionnaires which were posted by Kaanyi Joseph got lost on the way. Therefore we were not able to find out the problems facing tea farming at Kasaku.

Mr. Zansanze and Ms. Njoroge deliberately refused to inform us the influence of Kasaku Tea Estate to the surrounding environment.

Observation:
This refers to the art of obtaining information from the field by way of identifying geographical phenomenon using the eyes. The problems we established with it are; we failed to collect the other types of crops grown on the estate. This is because a hill obstructed us from seeing those crops.

Recording:
This involves the use of pens and pencils to write down information and draw sketch maps and diagrams from the field. We failed to record down the influence of soil to the growth of tea at Kasaku because it began raining soaking our papers so we could not record.

N.B:
The problems stated should be geographical and not personal for example hunger, got tired, too expensive, boring etc.

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES/STAGES:

This is the activity done by the researcher when he or she comes from the field. The following steps are taken:

Analyzing interpreting and sorting out data i.e. sorting out the relevant data from irrelevant data.

Polishing up the field sketches such as completion of sketch maps, panoramas, line transects and filling up the tables.

Comparing information from different groups and come up with one accurate information.

Final report writing showing what was included in the report e.g. the topic, objectives of the study etc.

Distribution of copies of the report to stakeholders i.e. people with authority in the area of the study e.g. L.C.I chairman of the area of the

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