

DOES GEOGRAPHY DUPLICATE OTHER DISCIPLINES?

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ABSTRACT

This paper technically examines the value of geography understanding, scope and contents that may be drawn to negate the argument that geography duplicates the work of other disciplines. The data for this study were gleaned from existing relevant literature and guided personal understanding and interpretation of the information over time on the subject matter. The paper underscores that Geography emphasis is on the geographical distribution of varied phenomena that exist in an area with human – environment relation interest. It has dignified as an academic discipline because the connection between phenomena can be studies and explained. Considering these, this study noted that it is difficult to name a separate discipline which deals with main function of the phenomena as geography does, and where the discipline do exist the study types and the real position and distribution on ground are seldom important. It also observed that many of the subject from which geography is said to borrow do not exist for the fact that geography does not take up the particular facts about phenomena only when it has recognized their geographical conditionality, but establishes their geographical circumstances descriptively and embarks on to the causal investigation as well as introducing facts to phenomena whose fundamental connections to human – environment interest is not yet clear.

Keywords: *Geography, disciplines, duplicates, scope and contents*

INTRODUCTION

Does Geography duplicate other disciplines? Geography as its own identity has two dimensions in one - its physical aspect with emphasis on earth physical phenomena, and its human aspect of social relation. The concerns of geography are much more to the feedback outcomes of the interaction of the two aspects. The concerns derive from geography's focus on the evolving character and organization of the Earth's surface, on the ways in which

the interactions of physical and human phenomena in space create distinctive places and regions, and on the influences, those places and regions have on a wide range of natural and human events and processes (Committee of National Research Council, 1997; Turner, 2002; Sautter, 1975). Such concerns provoke questions like - how should societies respond to the accelerated pace of environmental degradation in many parts of the world? What are the underlying

causes, drivers and consequences of the growing interaction between man and the environment? How can man adapt to the changing environment he has influenced consciously and/or unconsciously?

It is on these notes that this paper practical examines the value of geography understanding that may be drawn to negate the argument that geography duplicates the work of other disciplines. This study gleaned from existing relevant literature and critical/guided personal understanding and interpretation of the information of geographical thinkers over time on the subject matter.

THE MEANING AND SCOPE OF GEOGRAPHY

Geography is concerned with the descriptions and analyses of physical earth phenomena as well as with their relationship with people and vice versa (Harvey, 1968; James, 1972, Rawstron, 1975). In order to throw light on the nature and pattern of human society Geography analyses focus on the physical landscape and cross examination of the interrelationships that exist between people and their physical environment phenomena, draw regional lines and design regional relationships, and equally investigate and account for the relationships and differences (Harvey, 1969; Sayer, 1985).

Geographers direct their studies to a better understanding of the human world and this represents the varying views which have been expressed about the discipline. On the

other hand, **Kant, Hatner, Strabo and Ritter** used theories of regions to interpret geography and as a result perceived geography as the study of science of "Regionalism" – the study of the world and its occupation, as the science of region or as the science of area differentiation (James, 1972; Montello, 2003; Matthews and Herbert, 2004; Werlen, 2005).

These apostles conclude that geography is a combination of several phenomena that makes one part of the earth different from the other. For example, region may be interpreted as an area of homogenous relics, climate, land use etc (Werlen, 2005).

Different from the apostles of regionalism are Martha and Mackinder, who interpret geography as science of distribution. These fellows view geography as a subject that studies the spatial arrangement of things on the earth surface i.e. the where of thing and how they are ordered. In other word geographer considers the arrangement and relationships of the phenomena within a region; to think geographically is to think of phenomena not as individual objects in themselves, but as elements determining the differential characters of areas.

From the view point of those that belong to school of environmentalism and/or Apostles of environmentalism, geography is a subject that is inquisitive with the interrelationship between man and his environment - physical phenomena and the human activities. in this view, Geography also considered as human-oriented

discipline i.e. the study of existence of man is restricted to human activities and phenomena which affect human survival on the planet earth.

These views regarded geography as a subject or discipline which is concerned with spatial analysis with respect to man and its immediate environment, and issues about which subject matter is unique to the discipline (Turner, 2002). The object of study of geography has been conceived as the combinations of phenomenon in the earth surface, namely, the physical landscape which is the sum total of the interaction of those phenomenon, and the totality of man and its activities. If geography had been consistently based its argument, understanding and concepts of its study on man and its environment, then which subject is unique to geography and where is the duplication?

Based on the general concept of geography, it is quite reasonable clear that geography is a continuous growing and changing subject (Sauer, 1941; Minshull, 1972; Leigh, 2005; Minshull, 2014). The history of the discipline reveals the constant inclusion and exclusion of different phenomena have changed over time and led to the growth and development of the discipline. This can be viewed from the subject matter of geography - physical and human. Though, these subject matters are shared (not duplication) with several other disciplines, nonetheless, study of these subject matters are strictly based on the aims and methods of geographers' scope (Kartshgrne, 1946,

Harvey, 1969; Sayer, 1984)). It means that geography does not take up the particular facts only when it has recognized their geographical conditionality, but establishes their geographical circumstances descriptively, before it goes on to the causal investigation; and it can easily happen that it must introduce facts whose causal connections are not yet clear (Kartshgrne, 1946; Sayer, 1982).

CONTENTS OF GEOGRAPHY

The subjects matter of geography- physical and human as well the recently added – techniques provoked extreme reaction. Many scholars including those who are interested in history of geography particularly the social and science origin of the subject see geography as old fashion and alleged that geography simply duplicates and borrow bit and pieces from other discipline (Hartshorne, 1939; Natter, 2005; GIS Best Practices, 2009). Even some geographers in their methodology state that the subject matter in geography is shared with other discipline but restricted their thinking to the purview of the man – environment relationship i.e. places of the world and what people do (James, 1967). He noted further that certain contents matter is unique to geography. The general content of physical geography belongs to the four spheres of the physical environment and therefore formed five major topics of studies vis-a-vis Rock type and arrangement, relief and drainage, climate, soil, and wide vegetation.

Physical geography can be wide enough to include a comprehensive treatment of these

five major studies but in geography, they are considered from the point of view of the earth as the home of man (Davis, 1900; The Geography Education Standards Project, 1994; Webber and Punnett, 1999; Ettwein and Maslin, 2011). In particular, it is the aspect of this topic which is significant to human life that geography considered as object of studies. Thus, geography is concerned with rock at the surface and near the surface and so share from geology which is the realm of geophysics. Similarly, geography studies the troposphere but not the stratosphere which is the realm of meteorology. Oceanography exists as a special study but aspects of this are seldom included in physical geography for example, the effects of wave on coast of ocean and on the climate of adjacent central area and of many aspects of the seas or fishes. The physical geographer studies some aspect of the rock, relief, climate, soil and vegetation (Minshull, 2014; Brown, and LeVasseur, 2006; Ettwein and Maslin, 2011; Minshull, 2014).

While there are general agreement on the content of physical geography there is much agreement in the content of human geography (Harvey, 1969; Matthews and Herbert, 2004). In contrast to the subject content, human geography seems to be the result of man process of trial and error and this is still continuing (Price, 1963; Jones, 2011). A survey of the content of human geography is very much a survey a few men have done and are still doing (Jones, 2011). For example, Fleure (1919) arranged the topic of human geography

into three groups, namely Life, New life, and Good life. Le Play and Geddes considered human geography as involving the study of place, work and folk (Gately, 1980; Puja Mondal Geography, 2015). Forde considered human geography as involving the study of habitant, estuarine and society. De la Blache was more interested in the variations of certain phenomena from one part of the world to another with respect to world population, groups of people, tools and raw material, food products, houses and settlement, the state of development of the particular civilization, transport and communication. Thus, the emphasis is in how men make a living, the many different societies occurring in the world and the level of technological achievement. Brunhes - emphasis further that any human activities which is not directly connected with physical environment should not form focus of geography scope occupational differences, namely, reproduction occupation of the soil as comprising housing and settlement, highway (all transport and communication), conquest of the plant and animal world, and the destructive occupation of the land.

He According to Demangeon human geography involve mode of life in the climate region of the world and technique of making a living, history, fishing, farming and trade, equally, important are population density, distribution, limits, migrations and types of urban and rural settlement. The content of human geography has put forward by Ernys Jones try to strike a balance between Population

growth, Division of mankind, Migration, food, settlements, mining and manufacturing, towns and cities, and Communication.

Whichever terminology have been employed there is a general agreement that one should study the place in which people live and the way they make a living and, the kind of life they have. Place is covered in physical geography and in the case of human geography, only certain of the economy are consider while the way in which people live weather new or good life is seldom considered - Physical environment, Works economy), and sort of people. Certainly, the content of human geography must change as the activity of man on the face of the earth changed. In broad outline, the only general agreement about the content of human geography put forward by different people is that man economic activities formed the hard core of the study.

One can consider many criteria from the selection of content of human geography (Lindsay, 2001; Davies et al., 2014). Selection must be made from the total sum of phenomena in the earth surface to make the work manageable since *one part of the world is obviously different from the other part* (Frank, 2004) but the question arises - how is it different and what things are different? These lead to the contemplation of map and the landscape. The landscape result partly from the physical feature and partly from what men has done and his doing to the physical environment. Relief and vegetation are the most important

physical feature in the appearance of the physical land scape but the expose rock, climate and soils are vital factors in causing their appearance in the humanized landscape.

It therefore clear that there are so many things to consider in the human landscapes while man's physical changing of the natural landscapes is the most obvious easiest to record, measure and map (Western, 2001; Foley and Lahr, 2011). They are the direct result of man's attempt to make a limit or to provide himself shelter, food, and relaxation. Thus, the approach of the problems of what to select and include in human geography is by way of man's visible and concrete addition and changes to the earth surface. However, there is little geographic value in study a phenomenon which is the same throughout the world or in study something which does vary in place to place but which is not of vital concerned to the people in those places. Thus, geographers pay scant attention to foot path which exist throughout the world but are interested in roads which exist in different countries (Blumberg, 2007). This is because the study of road has shown that the economy of a country is retarded by desperate shortage of good road.

WHERE IS THE DUPLICATION?

A distinct form must be made between the fact that the allegation that content mater of geography segments a work done in other places is basis common to many disciplines (Dunbar, 2001). No doubt that many of the most common topics touch in

geography exist as subject in their own right (Horacio, 1989) vis-a-vis Economic geography (Economics), population (Demography), Geomorphology (Geology), Climate & weather (Meteorology), Soil (Penology), and Vegetation (Botany) etc. The allegation that geography repeats the work of other discipline has some validity in the case of physical geography. For instance, the content of human geography surrounds man's economic activities, settlement and social organization including various ways man lives and survives with methods of producing food and raw material, manufacturing, rural and urban settlement, communication and political boundary and limits. Though, they are areas of interest of other discipline but are seldom alleged as contents of duplication by geography on the other hand, each of the contents of physical geography is a significance discipline with its own aim and methods.

The most important issue here is that the disciplines are natural science, they are thereby interested in study earth discovery, general law and investigating the nature of the topic of study, the study process and systems often in historical depth. However, in establishing the law and the general principle, they hardly concerned with description and explanation of the complete and worldwide distribution of those phenomena as well as the significant of phenomena on how man live and make a living.

These therefore imply that where the interest of other discipline stopped that of

geography begins (Elden, 2009; El-dali, 2011). One may call himself a physical or bio-geographer, what made him a geographer is not this title but actually his concerned with the distribution of the phenomena in the surface of the earth. In the topics, man which are usually in concern of economics geography, a distinction must be made between the work people do and the things he produced or the objects with which they produce them, for example, in the topical of commercial sea fishing which normally included in economic geography - the object or product. The fish are studied by the zoologist but there is no separate discipline which study fishing. Can this be alleged as duplication by economic geography?

Farming may form the content of agriculture but farming is being studied from three different points of views - the agronomist interested in method, the economist interested in products, cost and trade while the interest of geographer in the location of different types of farming both in place and in relation to physical and economics factors. Generally, economists only touch some of this activity among other and in a systematic manner. Only geography consider the activities of fishing, farming, mining and manufacturing in detail in the actual places and under the real condition in which they take place (Minshull, 2014). Considering these it is difficult to name a separate discipline which deals with main function of the phenomena, and where the discipline does exist the study types and the real position and distribution on ground

are seldom important. This therefore implies that many of the subject from which geography is said to borrow do not exist. With the promotion of geography, the society has benefited from geography itself as a discipline. There is the need by geographer to raise the levels of awareness of geography's value to society and find more effective ways to publicize and utilize geography's perspectives, skills, and knowledge base.

Geography's ability to respond to society's needs depends considerably on its strength as a discipline, and its strength wholly depends considerably on its contents (Physical and human) that have links with other discipline like the way other discipline also link with other disciplines (Skole, 2004). However, there are still gaps in our knowledge in human behavior and attitude toward the understanding of man-environment. At present, the content of human geography consists of economic, activity, settlement and social organization which aid how man live, how man will live and how man make a living vis-à-vis methods of producing food and raw material, manufacturing, rural and urban settlement, communication and political boundary and limits. These may be old thinking but content is a subject of time and change, and subsequently becomes guide to the choice of new paradigm since the occurrence of phenomena vary from place to place and have connection with other phenomena which also varies from place to place. Geography exists as an academic discipline because of its interest on the logical arrangement of phenomena

which vary from place to place and its ability to study and explain the connection between phenomena with respect to human existence and survival. The question arising from geographers' review is – are there certain subjects that are unique to geography?

CONCLUSION

Geography limits its field of enquiries to the five major physical contents namely; rock, relief & drainage, weather & climate, vegetation, and soil, and, three major human contents namely; economic activity, settlement and social organization. These make geography a discipline with no niche that is not keenly competed for by other disciplines/professions. Geography has value in selecting from everything on the earth surface that is most significant for human survival and environmental sustainability. From these views it should be understood that the understanding and approaches of geography to human world give individual the opportunity to be trained to become "Jack of all trades"; it is up to each to become master of "all", "one" or "none" based on individual understanding of the subject matter and the CONTENTS.

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