

Transport Geography Education: Approaches and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

It is an established fact that transport geography education is one of the major approaches during the twentieth first century, and at the same time, it is also the need of the hour. In this field, we can perceive many challenges which can be overcome by taking into consideration a number of factors. This concept has been the part and parcel of syllabus as well as curriculum prescribed in a number of countries it is the need of the hour. By taking into consideration the transport geography education, many problems can be solved.

There is no doubt in denying the fact that at present time, the idea of transport geography has been prescribed in the syllabus of various curriculums of geography programs. It has, undoubtedly, provided a significant conceptual and methodological contribution of the discipline as well as to transport studies. In the wake of globalization, the transport geography is not only regarded as a science, but it has been hailed as dominantly a field of application. There are many theories in the field of space which depend upon various concepts like distance, mobility and accessibility which is one of the most important perspectives on which transport geography offers a solid background. In past, in order to understand contemporary economic and social processes, the idea of the spatial organization issues and transport networks has been very beneficial and notable contribution. Like any other discipline, the important issues in the transport geography education, is closely related to coherence and relevance of everything. So, the main focus in this regard is the relevancy of concepts and methods being taught and how with how much coherent way they have been explained. This thing is very important which, no doubt, requires critical analysis of each and everything including the concepts, theories as well as methodological in the field of transport geography. At the same time, the significant thing is also how they fulfill the required curriculum as well as the societal needs.

It was with Ned Taaffe and Howard Gauthier that the development of modern transport geography curriculum started in 1960 in United States. The result of this was the publication of the book, geography of transportation in 1973 which is considered to bring rigor in the descriptions and optimization in the field of transport system. As a matter of fact, we find that transport geography education primarily deals with priorities and concerns of the public and private sectors in which the main focus has been shifted with the passage of time on global issues, at the same time find its roots in the local. In the contemporary world economic, the significance of supply chain management as well as logistics is the reality. With this, it leads to provision of education in technical expertise related to information technology, transport management and inventory management. The main object behind it is to provide skill and knowledge across business areas as well as industrial sectors within a supply chain context. This situation is favourable to programs in transport management shifting towards logistic

management. Moreover, transport geographers must be able to anticipate rather than follow policy need.

It is an established fact that since the geographical setting changes the modal focus, but where transportation geography is taught, it has also a significant effect on the curriculum. Under these circumstances, the main aim of transport geography must be to reflect the realities of the regional transport system as it is primarily in the market where the students are supposed to find their employment. In many countries like Hong Kong one can witness that the rail transport has less importance and focus is on the public transit and international transportation issues. But, in case of many European countries, this perspective seems to be more policy oriented. Through public and semi-public agencies, the European governments seem to have more direct engagement over their transport system. Without any shadow of doubt, the transport geographers can be involved in the decision-making process in public as well as private sectors by means of policy evaluation and formulation.

Approaches in Curriculum

If we go through the history of last fifty years, we can perceive that there has been the creation of solid curriculum in the field of transport geography which is generally regarded as a sub-discipline to economic and human geography. If we want to expand it in the twentieth first century, then it will require nothing but a continuation of the same tradition with some new methodological initiatives as well as new concepts as there is also possibility of new problems to arise and also the development of new perspectives. Now, the question is how to tackle these issues. For that we require a new generation of those transportation geographers who are well versed and trained enough with focus on methodological and analytical perspectives. At present, the things that are getting more and more attention in this curriculum are sustainability issues and economic integration.

In the field of geographical education, the quantitative revolution that took place during 1970 resulted in many technical and methodological dimensions. Many of these have also resulted to the mathematical abstraction and quantification of transport geography but may have substituted for relevance. Transport geography, which is one of the specialized parts of spatial analysis, has focused on the relevance of integrating analytical tools in the curriculum. There are many methods and

tools which can be used traditionally in transport geography in which accessibility and network modeling, spatial interaction are worthy of detailed consideration. These have become the part of many readily available to go through analytically real world problems and are now indispensable parts of many GIS packages also.

It goes without saying that an incisive and close study of geography curriculum exposes two types of transport geographies namely, general and other is urban. The second type has its origin in the growing effect of urban geography in the geography curriculum as well as the increasing traffic problems in the cities. But, it is witnessed that urban consignment is, by and large, absent from the perspective. But, in comparison to that, general transport has a more balanced orientation between passengers and delivery, although modally there are differences, particularly when it switches to an extended geographical scale. The development of methods, theories and concepts is a collective undertaking which includes searching a consensus about what is important, but also what has lost of its significance. From this large source of knowledge, the transport geographer brings coherence in the curriculum by making choices related to what should be there according to the requirements of a curriculum.

Challenges

It generally includes three challenges

- Conceptual and Theoretical: Under this heading, the important challenge of transport geography education is that it must expose how important its conceptual

and theoretical foundation in describing present processes and events. This is a good indication of the relevancy of transport geography and it very pertinent to note to insure that it clearly gets conveyed to audiences.

- Methodological: Among the most important aspects of transport geography education is how the information is analysed which includes a wide array of methods from qualitative policy analysis to quantitative operation research. At present time, there are more opportunities to go beyond abstraction because of constant merging of methodologies with information technologies.
- Applied and Technical: Under this heading, we can find how this involves using technology to reproduce techniques and their methods as well as to use technology for educational purposes. GIS-T remains one of the important and significant tools in transport geography, particularly when used to show methodologies within simulation.

Besides it, more and more challenges are likely to be found in the institutional structures as transport geography remains what programs and departments to commit to discipline in terms of human and physical resources which is, no doubt, closely linked to educational matters as a successful curriculum, however modest, promotes its continuation and growth.

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