

Tracing the Inter-disciplinary Trajectory: An Intra-Discipline Analysis and Lessons in Context of Human Development

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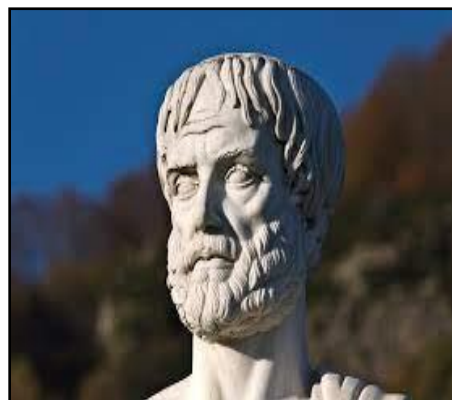
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The aim of this brief write-up is to contextualize the discipline of Human Development as a subject in the context of its expanse and boundaries seen in relation to its development. Also, the intent is to draw a comparison with other disciplines and their growth trajectories.

To begin with we know that academic discipline is defined as an organized body of knowledge collectively embraced in a formal course of learning. The acquisition of such knowledge is assumed to be an adequate and worthy objective such as without any demonstration or requirement of practical application the content is theoretical and scholarly as distinguished from technical and professional. (Henry 1967). Has focus, a conceptual framework that provides structure to the field, a unique scope in comparison to other fields, and distinct scholarly methods and modes of inquiry leading to the advancement of knowledge and deeper understanding. With time the academic disciplines mature specialize bifurcate into many other branches in the process enriching the existing knowledge base.

Historical Perspective

Tracing historically, we find that, most academic disciplines have their roots in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century with secularization of universities when the traditional curricula were supplemented with non-classical languages and literature, social sciences such as political science, economics, sociology, and public administration, and natural sciences and technology disciplines such as physics, chemistry, biology, and engineering. In the early twentieth century, new academic disciplines such as education and psychology were added. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was an explosion of new academic disciplines focusing on specific themes,



such as media studies, women's studies, and Africana studies. Going further back in time, where until the 18th Century the moral sciences, as the social sciences were then known, possessed greater unity than diversity! The study of society, ethics, and morality initiated by the ancient philosophers like Aristotle. The beginning of the 19th century brought industrialization and with it came specialization of social sciences as it became beyond the scope of Political science to study the various aspects of the complicated social phenomenon under a single discipline. The complication of the society and the pure physical need for a division of labor accounted for the distinctions among the social sciences their diverse specialization. The social sciences have grown up as separate disciplines because and only because of this historical necessity.

Home Science and Human Development

As an academic discipline, Home Science, is constantly improvising as it now expands beyond the confines of a home, to ensure that it remains a relevant modern-day career. When Home Science was first introduced in the princely state of Baroda in 1913, it attracted a lot of elite women, by promising to fine-tune a woman's ability to deal with her home, family, and community, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. However, with the growth of women's empowerment post-independence, it was sniggered at for being a subject that only dealt with domestic chores. There is now a paradigm shift in the academic discipline of Home Science which like the historical journey of other academic disciplines flourished into an individual domain specialized to cater to specific needs of the society and the family and has with time become so large that it branched into separate disciplines like Food and Nutrition, Human Development, Community Resource management, Extension education and community studies have emerged as independent subjects.

Of these diverse specializations, Human development is a multi-disciplinary study of the psychological, biological, and sociological factors that impact people from infancy through adolescence to adulthood. The study of human development came to prominence in the 1970s. The human development index was created as an alternative to measuring nations by their GDP. People believed that the economy was not enough to reflect what life was like for a nation's population. The human development index includes health, education, and income. A healthy environment, access to healthcare, educational opportunities, and a decent standard of living are all keys to freedom and self-actualization. The Human Development as seen from the economist perspective is more about quantitative approach to development. However, within the paradigm of Home Science it is not only about the quantitative aspect but also a multidisciplinary qualitative purview of the Human Being seen in the social-economic-cultural context.

A Comparative Evaluation

Although the inception of Home Science and hence the journey of accumulation of knowledge and branching out of the specific knowledge branches has traversed comparatively less path in comparison to few other older disciplines yet there has been a significant of time that has elapsed since the commencement. So, it may be wise to just look into the case studies of the contemporary academic disciplines branching out of the Home Science. The first case may be that of Food and Nutrition which have branched out it catering to specific needs of the society like: Dietetics, Critical care nutrition, Maternal and child nutrition, Geriatric nutrition, Sports Nutrition, Clinical Nutrition, Public health nutrition, Food Processing, Nutrigenomics, which are either separate independent discipline or are special papers of the subject. Similarly, Resource Management has specialized branches extending to Environment and consumer, Ergonomics, Work Environment, Work and Work Posture Analysis, Job Analysis and Optimization, Consumer Ergonomics etc. Lastly, the example of Extension Education may be considered where specialized academic discourses have forked out as Agricultural Extension, Veterinary/Animal Husbandry Extension, Dairy Extension, Fishery Extension, Home Science Extension, Extension Methodology PRA etc.

In comparison the journey of Human Development is still nascent. A subject which is in the process of evolving and is yet to establish it niche in the day-to-day activities of social living free from the multidisciplinary approach and having its own methodology and lens to view the world.

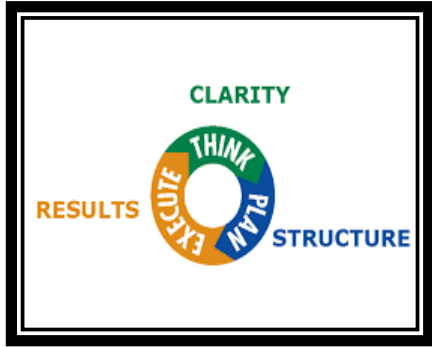
The Way Forward

Since the earliest of civilization and the pursuit in quest of knowledge the philosopher debated about the utility or the aim of the knowledge. In the above context a concrete answer was put forward by the Philosopher Aristotle, who came up with the concept of *Eudaimonia* – the contented state of feeling healthy, happy, and prosperous. Even today all the quest of knowledge is guided by the same principle. More specifically any discipline must have the following properties:

1. “Disciplines have a particular object of research (e.g. law, society, politics), though the object of research maybe shared with another discipline.”
2. “Disciplines have a body of accumulated specialist knowledge referring to their object of research, which is specific to them and not generally shared with another discipline.”
3. “Disciplines have theories and concepts that can organize the accumulated specialist knowledge effectively.”
4. “Disciplines use specific terminologies or a specific technical language adjusted to their research object.”
5. “Disciplines have developed specific research methods according to their specific research requirements.”

6. "Disciplines must have some institutional manifestation in the form of subjects taught at universities or colleges, respective academic departments and professional associations connected to it."

Going through the above criteria it is obvious that Human Development as a discipline focus on the wellbeing of the individual and strives for welfare of the society at large so the concept of eudemonia is well placed. The need of the hour is to evolve a unique methodology free from



the shackles of the established subject. The responsibility lies with the teachers to frame a syllabus which honors the skills of the students and the student who remain true to their discipline and look at the world through the lens of Human Development. The core of the process lies in clarity of the thought process, the structure of methodology and analysis of the result which needs meticulous planning, clear thinking, and effective execution of the same through new work which is

qualitatively enriching.

Human development is a broad, multi-disciplinary field. While this expansiveness might intimidate some, it is a wonderful field to study if anyone is interested in how different subjects impact, influence, and relate to each other. Because the study of human development includes biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics. One can further their knowledge in all these areas. One can also focus on the interplay of these factors think afresh with your new ideas and help in advancing the juggernaut of knowledge for this emerging discipline.