

## Research Article

## Is There Any Life After Graduation? What Opportunities Abound As A Professional Geographer?

M.O. Lawal Ph.D

Department Of Geography And Planning, Faculty Of Social Sciences, Lagos State University, Ojo, P.M.B 0001 Lasu Post Office, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

\*Corresponding Author

M.O. Lawal

**Abstract:** Something good has always come out of Geography. Perhaps, one of those things are the opportunities that abound in the discipline, which the non-geographers do not realize. This paper examines the definition of Geography and life, and what Geography is all about, the need for studying Geography as well as its importance to the students in particular and to mankind in general. A section of the paper was devoted to the opportunities that abound in the Discipline. Mentions were also made of those “fathers” of Geography who have blazed the trail in the discipline. The paper’s conclusion and made some recommendations that students be made to study Geography both at the Secondary School level and also at Tertiary Institutions. Apart from the opportunities that abound, the practitioners in the discipline should encourage prospective and potential Geographer, so as to avoid the ‘demise’ of the discipline; (Lawal, et. al 2009). The paper identifies the propective jobs and also evaluates the student’s orientation.

**Keywords:** Life, Geography, Opportunities, Abound, Discipline, Demise, Graduation, Geographer.

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Definition of Geography and Life

The word Geography is coined from the combination of two Greek words ‘Geo’ and ‘graphia’ which means ‘earth’s’ description. Geography has long been regarded as the doyen of all disciplines. Geography has been defined by the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* as “the scientific study of the earth’s surface, physical features, divisions, products, population etc. (Hornby, 2015:625)”. In other words, Geography is the study of the earth, its flora and fauna in all physical, political and economic aspects.

Life. On the other hand, it is defined by the *Chambers Dictionary of English (2006; 864) 10<sup>th</sup> edition* as “the state of being alive”, conscious existence; animate or vegetative existence; the sum of the activities of plants and animals. From the definition of life provided above, one can easily see that Geography is the Scientific Study of earth as well as the distribution of plants and animals.

From the geographer’s point of view; ‘life’ has been defined to involve all the three stages of man including the youth, middle and old age; as can be

found in the three stages of a river such as the upper course, middle course and the lower course.

As a matter of fact, the scientists believed that life started from water. This can be attested to in the sperm and spermatozoa produced by man and woman during reproduction which later transformed into a human being. When a woman is pregnant, the Amniotic fluid or water in the woman’s womb clearly explains this notion. Theologically speaking, both the Bible and the Qur’an define life as eternal and hereafter. The Bible specifically delved into the formation and says thus:

The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath and life and man became a living” (Genesis 2:7). In John 1:4 life is defined as “In him was life and that life was the light of men”. Also John 3:15 says that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life”. John 3:16 goes further to define life that “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16.)

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The Qur'an portrays life of this world as being sacred. Qur'an 6:32 says, "What is the life of this world, but play and amusement? But best is the Home; In the Hereafter, for those who are righteous will ye not then understand? The Qur'an went further to say that Life of this world (Qur'an 57:20) says: Know ye (all) that The life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting And multiplying (in rivalry) Among yourselves, riches And children. Here is a similitude, How rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (The hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers, thou wilt see it grow yellow; Then it becomes dry; And crumbles away. But in the Hereafter, Is a penalty severe (For the devotees of Allah) and what is the life of this world, but Goods and chattels of deception"?

The Holy Qur'an (17:33) regarded "life as been sacred. "Nor take life – which Allah has made sacred- except for just cause. And of Anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir Authority (to demand Qisas or to forgive); but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life: for he is helped (by the Law)".

**1.2 Divisions of Geography**

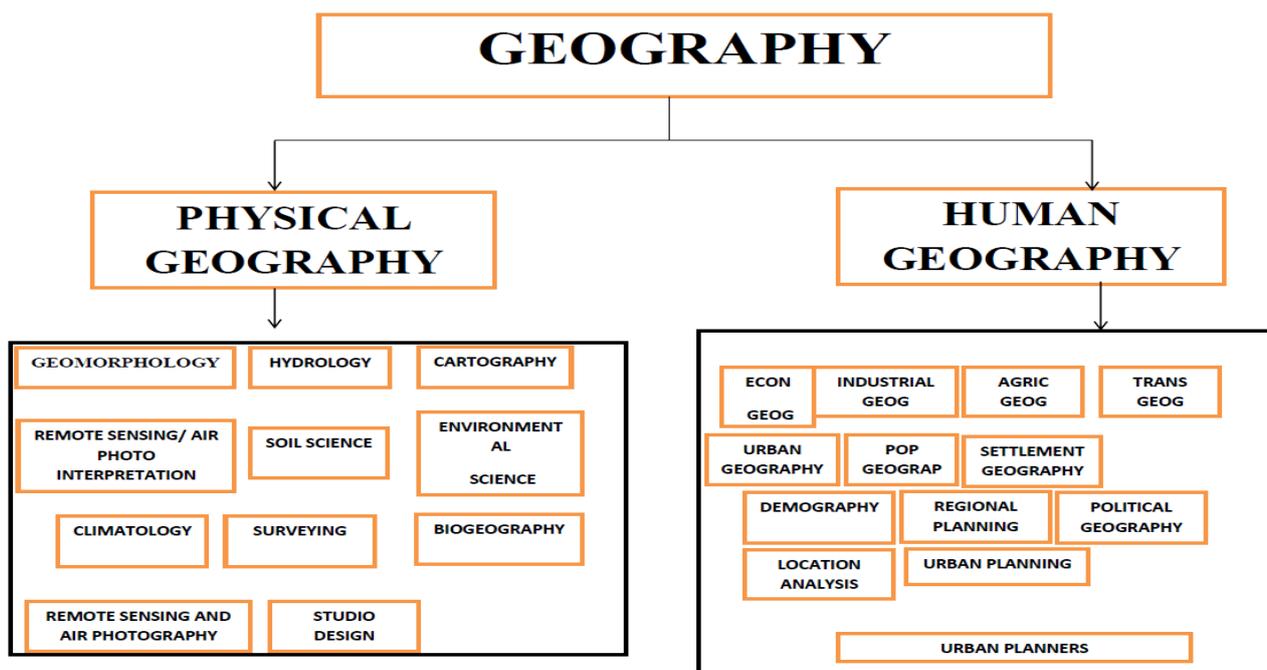
Geography as a discipline and a profession like any other discipline can be generally divided into two major areas: physical and human. Within this broad division arises the other sub-disciplines; such as Geomorphology, hydrology, climatology which can be classified into the physical aspect of Geography; while

Economic, political, settlement, population studies can be classified into the human aspect of Geography. The other area of Geography that is worth mentioning is the Regional aspect which has been subsumed under the human Geography. The third division of Geography can be seen in the area of Techniques and philosophy. This includes, map and Air photo interpretation, cartography, the arts of map making and Quantitative techniques as well as philosophy of Geography. The detail of this division of Geography is presented in Figure 1.

**1.3 Contributions of Geography to Knowledge and Man**

The study of Geography as a discipline and profession is very important to man. There is need to know the question that professionals in Geography often ask what, where, when and how? These questions, guide man in whatever activities he is engaged in; be it in the location of industries, climate and weather forecasting. Directly or indirectly, we are all geographers and we all practice the profession, consciously or unconsciously. The quantity of rainfall, planting and harvest seasons, quantity and qualities of produce, extraction of raw materials such as gold, petroleum, copper, Aluminum, etc. from the earth affects all. Geographers in a nutshell talk about time and space i.e. temporal and spatial.

Geographers often talk about the spatial pattern in the distribution of vegetation and types, etc; why certain phenomenon are located where they are, the spread of certain types/forms of diseases in which the medical geographers engages in.



**Fig 1: The Schematic Diagram of Divisions of Geography & Its Sub-Disciplines.**

#### **1.4. Areas of Geographic Interests and Opportunities that Abound in Geography**

Over the year some Fresh Students have continually asked the question about what they could do with this course when they graduate. This has prompted the title of this paper. The question has been asked many times that: "Is there any life after graduation? What opportunities abound as a professional Geographers?"

An Anonymous (year?) author had also asked a related question: "What are my options in Geography" (See Appendix I). The following under-listed areas of the discipline are hereby enumerated to assist the prospective and potential students offering Geography as a major and profession, just like other professions. Omofhemih (2003) has summed up the career prospects for students studying or majoring in Geography.

This paper has been able to provide an insightful perspective into the employment options available to Nigeria geography graduates. Such areas includes Surveying, Oceanography, Geology (mineralogy), Climatology, Meteorology and Weather forecasting, Agricultural Geography, Estate Management, Banking and Finance, General Administration, Urban and Regional Planning, Transport Management, Housing expert, Historical and Cultural Geography, Soils and Vegetation Studies, Biogeography, Economic and Location Analyst, Environmental expert, Hydrology. Geographic Information System ((GIS) expert, curators in the Museum, Tourism and Hospitality, Demography and Population studies for the Census Board, Political Geographer as well as cartographers to draw maps and delimiting of boundaries for the Independent National and Electoral Commission (INEC).

Other opportunities can be found in enlisting into the military and paramilitary like the Army, Navy, Air Force, Police and Immigration. Other areas include Civil Service, Regional Analysis, Industrial and Manufacturing geography, medical geographer, petroleum and oil industries/Energy pundit, Research and academy in the Universities, Research Institutes, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, Teaching and Tutoring in Secondary Schools, Rural and Urban geography as well as working in the Aviation industry. The list is by no way inexhaustive.

Some of the career opportunities that exist in Geography include the following. These list are in no way exhaustive as trained Geographers could work with these National and International Organizations and Agencies. Such agencies and organizations includes the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board(JAMB), Examiners to the West African Examinations Council(WAEC), the National Examination Council(NECO), Nigeria Metrological Agency(NIMET), the Federal Airport Authority of

Nigeria(FAAN), the Nigeria Airspace Management Agency(NAMA), the United States Agency for International Development(USAID), the British Council, the United Nations(UN), the United Nations Development Programme(UNDP), UN Habitat, African Development Bank, Federal and State Ministries of Lands and Housing, Drought Commission, the Flood Commission, the Red Cross, the National Centre for Refugee Commission, the National Population Commission(NPC), the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture(IITA), and a host of other agencies and commissions that are not mentioned and captured here but are relevant to our discussions.

Others include the National Bureau of Statistics(NBS) formerly known as the Federal Office of Statistics, the Central Bank of Nigeria(CBN), the River Basins Development Authority(RBDA) which are strategically located in the country, the Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute(ARMTI), and the Food and Agricultural Organization(FAO), and for the medical geographers, the World Health Organization(WHO) is the appropriate quarter to seek for job as they deal in part or whole with the spatial epidemiological study of the spread and control of diseases. All the above mentioned are the prospective job opportunities where a trained geographer can easily fit into with their knowledge and training in the discipline.

#### **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study makes use of survey and cross sectional research design and it makes use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data involve the use of a structural questionnaire to elicit information on their perception of their course of study in terms of their choice of the course, the potentials and prospect in the course as well as the challenges facing their ability to study the course effectively while question on their suggestion were also asked. For the secondary data sources, the author made use of the library and other relevant news paper clippings on the subject matter. Non sampling technique was adopted by administering questionnaire to the entire population of students because of their number which is very few.

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive analytical; techniques of simple frequency an percentages to show the distribution pattern of the data and their responses. The results were analyzed with IBM-SPSS statistical software 22version.

#### **3.0 Results and Discussions of Empirical Observation**

##### **3.1 Demographic characteristics**

Table 1 below reveals the demographic characteristics of the students surveyed. The result as presented in Table 1 below shows that out of one hundred and ninety six students surveyed, one hundred and fifty ( 76.5% ) are male while, forty six (23.5%) are

female. The only reason one can adduce for this pattern is the fact that few female students usually apply to study the course because of the rigour and physical energy required for the course. On age of the respondents, it reveals that fifty one (26%) are less than 20yrs of age, one hundred and forty two (72.4%) are between the ages of 21-25 while one (.5%) and two(1%) represent student with ages of 26-30yrs and

31yrs and above respectively. The level of the students in terms of number of years they have spent in school studying the subject varies and the survey or study shows that there are twenty six (13.3%) of the students in 100 level, fifty eight (29.6%) at 200 level, fifty one (26%) at 300 level while we have sixty-one (31.1%) at the 400level.

**Table- 1. Demographic Data**

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Gender			
Male	150	68.5	76.5
Female	46	21.0	23.5
Total	196	89.5	100.0
Age			
Less than 20	51	23.3	26.0
21-25	142	64.8	72.4
26-30	1	.5	.5
31 and Above	2	.9	1.0
Total	196	89.5	100.0
Level			
100	26	11.9	13.3
200	58	26.5	29.6
300	51	23.3	26.0
400	61	27.9	31.1
Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

**3.2 Academic characteristics and challenges of the discipline**

On the question posed to the students on whether they originally applied to study Geography or they were via to the department from the department they originally applied to due to, their inability to secure

admission in to those departments. The result of the survey on this reveals that one hundred and fifty seven (80.1%) of the students originally opted to study Geography. The details of other discipline the remaining students who did not applied for geography originally are as contained in Table 2 below

**Table 2: Course of study originally applied for in Jamb**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Sociology	1	.5	.5
Marketing	20	9.1	10.2
Geography	157	71.7	80.1
Economics	6	2.7	3.1
Business Administration	2	.9	1.0
Others	10	4.6	5.1
Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

The awareness of the students in terms of the essence and prospect of studying geography at higher institution before gaining admission to read the course

reveals that majority (98%) of the students were aware of the importance of the course in terms of career prospects that await them (Table 3).

**Table 3: Awareness of the Purpose of Geography by students before admission**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	192	87.7	98.0
No	1	.5	.5
Do not know	3	1.4	1.5
Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

The result obtained from the survey on the choice of employment after their graduation from the university varies as eighty one (41.3%) of the students would prefer to work with the various environmental; and planning related government ministries, agencies

and parastatal while forty two (21.4%) and forty (20.4%) students opted for Telecommunications industry and Private organizations respectively. Only six (3.1%) students submitted that they will go into teaching (Table 4)

**Table 4: Choice of employment after graduation**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Teaching	6	2.7	3.1
Ministry	81	37.0	41.3
Private organizations	40	18.3	20.4
Others	27	12.3	13.8
Telecoms	42	19.2	21.4
Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

On whether at the completion of their first degree in geography, they will advance their knowledge of geography at postgraduate levels. The survey has revealed in Table 5 shows that one hundred and fifty four (78.6) indicate their willingness to pursue M.Sc Geography while one hundred and two (52%) students

indicate they will go further to pursue Ph.D in Geography after their first degree and second degree. Others opted to pursue masters and doctoral degrees either in other discipline or may not proceed at all. This is as presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Pursuance of Geography at higher degree levels**

Degree	Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
M.Sc	YES	154	70.3	78.6
	NO	42	19.2	21.4
	Total	196	89.5	100.0
Ph.D	YES	102	46.6	52.0
	NO	94	42.9	48.0
	Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

The source of motivation for studying Geography according to the survey conducted on the students reveals that one hundred and forty seven (75%) of the students said they opted to study Geography out

of their own volition, thirty eight (19.4%) are studying the course by accident, meaning that they never had it in their plan to study Geography while eight (4.1%) said they are influenced by their families.

**Table 6: Source of motivation for studying Geography**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
By Accident	38	17.4	19.4
Family influence	8	3.7	4.1
Peer group	3	1.4	1.5
Self interest	147	67.1	75.0
Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

On whether the students have any regret for studying Geography, the student responses varies. Table 7 reveals that majority said they do not have any form

of regret whatsoever to have dwelt into studying the course.

**Table 7: Any regret for studying Geography**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	14	6.4	7.1
No	182	83.1	92.9
Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

For challenges facing them in the department, seventy seven (39.3%) of the students identified lack of instructional facilities in the department as a major factor militating against smooth learning of the course that are more abstract in nature. Forty of the student identified finance as another factor militating against their learning of the course, this may be attributed to the

field work and practical nature of the course that requires some level of finance while Thirty five (17.9%) and thirty one (15.8%) of the student identified lecturers attitude and wider curriculum when compared with other courses as major constraints to the smooth learning of the course (Table 8).

**Table 8: Challenges in studying Geography**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Finance	40	18.3	20.4
Lack of Instructional facilities	77	35.2	39.3
Library	13	5.9	6.6
Wider curriculum compared to other courses	31	14.2	15.8
Lecturers attitude	35	16.0	17.9
Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

The suggestion put forwards by the students as to how to improve the teaching and learning of Geography are as presented in Table 9 below in which eighty nine (45.4%) of the students says that enough teaching aids should be provided to aid their understanding of some abstract phenomenon associated

with geography followed by eighty seven (44.4%) who believe that the solution lies in organizing frequent field work exercise as this will concretize the teaching in the classroom. Other suggestions are as presented in table 9 below.

**Table 9: Suggestions to improve teaching of Geography**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Scholarship to the best student	14	6.4	7.1
More books in the library	6	2.7	3.1
Field trip	87	39.7	44.4
Teaching aids and equipments	89	40.6	45.4
Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

Finally, on whether the student will study geography again if the case arises, the majority of one

hundred and thirty four representing 68.4% were in affirmative while sixty two (31.6%) say in negativity .

**Table 10: If student will still study Geography again if the case arises**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
GEOGRAPHY	134	61.2	68.4
OTHERS	62	28.3	31.6
Total	196	89.5	100.0

Source: Authors Field Survey 2018.

#### 4.0 Recommendations and Conclusions

There is no gainsaying that there are numerous opportunities in Geography as a profession as enumerated earlier in this paper. Quite a number of these students do not know what the future have for them while studying Geography. In spite of the current unemployment situation in the country and economic downturn the future of learning and reading of geography is still very bright.

undergraduate students in tertiary institutions who would like to study Geography in the University for a Career Opportunities and prospects of the discipline. There is a ray of hope for a geographer who reads/studies Geography to the postgraduate level by taking either a Masters or Doctor of Philosophy Degree in the discipline.

- There is need to have some kind of open/orientation day for both the High School pupils and

- It has been observed that some of the present day crop of geographers have found their way into the profession either by accident or by design, as some of them had wanted to study a different course. In

spite of this, these crop of geographers had made their landmark on the sands of time.

- Many parents and guardians would prefer that their children and wards study courses in disciplines such as Law, Engineering and Medicine, which are well defined and known for the role they have played in society. Geography as a profession has produced quite a number of erudite and astute professors. Some of these professors include Alexander Von Humboldt; Carl Ritter; Hartshore, R; Wooldridge, S.W. Peter Haggett; F.K. Schaefer; C.O. Sauer; Isaiah Bowman; Peter Gould; Walter Isard and A.L. Mabogunje. Other Nigerian Professors of repute include Nurudeen Alao, R.K.. Udo, Adetoye Faniran, Jerry Gana. Professor A. Boateng (Ghana), G.E.K. Ofomata, R. Olu Sule, and a host of other notable Professors that are not mentioned here. These and other Professors that are not even mentioned here have in no small measure, contributed immensely to the development of Geography in this world.
- From this study, it has been shown that majority of the student are aware of a course called Geography both as a discipline and as a profession. They are also aware of the prospects, opportunities and challenges in the discipline.
- It is necessary and essential to mention here that some of the Nigerian Professors mention had contributed socially, educationally and politically to the development of the country. Prominent among these Professors are Prof. A.L Mabogunje, who had worked assiduously and contributed immensely to the development of geography in Nigeria. He is an expert in both Rural and Urban Geography. He has been regarded as the doyen of Nigerian Geography as well as a distinguished professor of Urban and Rural Geography.
- Professor Nurudeen Alao-A quantitative geographer is an erudite scholar who had served for 8 years as the Vice-Chancellor of University of Lagos.
- Professor Reuben K. Udo – A demographer and population pundit. He served as the Deputy-Vice Chancellor of University of Ibadan as well as the National Population Commission(NPC) at various times. He is and Emeritus Professor of Geography at the University of Ibadan.
- Professor Adetoye Faniran – A Geomorphologist who have served the University of Ibadan meritoriously. He was appointed Commissioner of Water Resources in the Old Western State and presently an Emeritus Professor on the Department of Geography at the University of Ibadan.
- Professor Jerry Gana – worked at the Department of Geography, Ahmadu Bello University(ABU) Zaria. His research interest was in the area of period market in Northern Nigeria was superb. He served as the Director-General of Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure(DFRRI) during the Babangida Administration in the 80s. He also served as a Minister of Information. Professor Gana is

currently the Chancellor of the University of Lagos and Presidential Aspirant for the Social democratic Party (SDP) for the forthcoming Presidential Election in 2019.

- Professor R. Olu-Sule – an erudite scholar on housing at the University of Calabar. He was a former Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Calabar.

### Appendix 1

#### What are my options in Geography?

AUNTY NG: I just graduated from the department of Geography and planning but I'm still in the blue concerning my career. Please what options await me?

- Ola

Dear Ola,

"I must confess that I was a bit taken aback by your question. You are already a graduate, actually spent four or five years on it and you still do not know the career options that await you in Geography? It's alright for a 100-level student who probably got into the course or some other reason to want to know what could be in a course for him. It definitely does not say much about the level of education in Nigeria, the institution you attended' your lecturers and even you, to get such a question from a graduate. Fortunately, your full name and other details are not included here so you can rest assured that your little secret remains so. I must add that I admire your honesty, all the same. It is better to learn late than to think one is too old (or qualified) to learn. As long as one is open to learning, one can and will definitely go places. I had a lecturer who used to say that one dies the day one begins to think one can no longer be taught. So, what career options are there for a Geography graduate who wants to pursue a career with his degree? Before I proceed to attempt an answer I must say that you should know that you must not remain within what Geography can offer. It is up to you to decide if you want to remain in it or go into other areas. When I counsel young people without higher education on the need for it, even if it's through a part-time, sandwich, distance learning or whatever programme, I emphasize the fact that the exposure and certificate one gets are increasingly becoming necessary fundamentals in our changing world. Geography is the study of the earth and its lands, features, inhabitants and phenomena. Modern geography is an all-encompassing discipline that seeks to understand the earth and all of its human and natural complexities, not merely where objects are, but how they have changed and come to be. Geography has been described as the bridge between the humanities (arts) and physical sciences. Such, it is divided into two main branches-human geography and physical geography. Physical geography focuses on geography as an earth science and includes the climate, the environment, landscape, oceans and all those. Human geography focuses on the study of patterns and processes that shape human interaction within various environments. It encompasses human, political, cultural, social and economic aspects. There is another

branch which emerged as it became increasingly clear that none of physical and human geography exists in isolation of the other. That branch is environmental geography; it serves as a bridge between the first two. I believe you already knew all those and even much more. Let's look at the career options. I'm a humanist so will tend to explore more of what you can get into with a good background of human geography. You can get involved in careers in refugee issues, globalization, urban development, tourism, population management and environmental issues. A recent sub-departments known as Geographical Information Systems (GIS). A master's degree in GIS will stand you out. UNILAG is good in this course. Geography is one course which enables its students to develop skills like in IT as well as interpreting maps, graphs, satellite images and photos".

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