

International Review of Economics Education

Special Issue

Pluralism in economics education:
Issues in teaching and learning

Call for Papers

Special issue to appear November 2009

The *International Review of Economics Education* (IREE) is planning to publish a special issue in November 2009 on the issue of pluralism in economics education: issues in teaching and learning. The guest editor will be Dr Andy Denis, City University, London.

Deadline for submission of papers: Friday, 28 November 2008.

Undergraduate students of economics are currently taught to acquire a received and mutually consistent body of 'mainstream' theory. This pattern is remarkably consistent from one university to another and from one country to another (Becker, 2004; Reimann, 2004). Benchmarking statements (<http://tinyurl.com/2e7bgm>) of the kind produced in England by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) may serve to reinforce this homogeneity. This might be seen as a good thing: it could be taken as an indicator of a mature subject that has settled a number of big questions and agreed a basis for theorizing. It might make it easier for students to transfer from one institution to another in the course of their degree. However, it might also be seen as problematic for the future health of the subject.

That is, it might reflect inertia in relation to teaching whereby sunk capital in teaching a received body of theory and low professional returns to innovation in teaching compared with professional returns from research generate very weak incentives for diversity. Economists have written much on how to overcome agency problems arising in teaching in schools. But what about the agency problems in teaching economics in higher education? In particular, does teaching a received body of mainstream economic theory leave students ill-equipped to make sense of economic problems and conflicting interpretations they encounter in professional and everyday life?

Alternatively, homogeneity in the undergraduate economics curriculum could be interpreted as a reflection of a dominance of a particular school of thought within economics. This stance is adopted by the Association for Heterodox Economics (AHE) and articulated in their response (<http://tinyurl.com/2qhn45>) to the benchmarking statement issued by the QAA in England. The AHE argue that the current undergraduate economics curriculum adopts a monist approach to the subject and that this is taken for granted by the benchmarking statement from the QAA. They go on to argue that the curriculum should embrace pluralism and that students should be introduced to a range of schools of thought and equipped with the knowledge and

skills necessary to understand the differences of view and make judgements between conflicting claims.

Authors are invited to address a number of issues within this special issue:

- What constitutes a pluralist or monist curriculum? Do benchmarking statements such as the QAA statement on economics encourage a monist curriculum? Do benchmarking statements necessarily encourage monism?
- What are the arguments for and against pluralism in the economics curriculum? To what extent can these arguments be justified by reference to outcomes for students? Are debates about pluralism in the curriculum simply professional debate that has little to do with the students themselves?
- Does teaching about alternative schools of thought overcome or compound the problem of teaching students about bodies of theoretical knowledge that they are unable to put to practical use in their professional and everyday lives?
- What does pluralist teaching in economics look like and what are the distinctive outcomes for students?

Contributors are invited to bear in mind that

- the discussion is international in scope, and papers comparing practice in more than one country will be particularly welcome.
- the special issue will focus on teaching and the curriculum, it should not be seen as an opportunity to pursue debate about the nature of economics per se (e.g. arguing the merits of one school of thought or another).
- contributions comparing pluralism in teaching economics with teaching in other disciplines will be welcome.

The special issue of the journal will have two parts. The first will contain two commissioned papers articulating the alternative stances adopted towards pluralism and benchmarking. The second part will be open. Contributions to the latter will undergo double-blind refereeing.

Contributors should email a complete paper to the Guest Editor, Dr Andy Denis, at a.denis@city.ac.uk, by the deadline of Friday, 28 November 2008. Contributors should ensure that they follow the guidelines for submission to IREE, at <http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/iree/howtosubmit.htm>.

References

- Becker, W. (2004) Economics for a Higher education, *International Review of Economics Education*, 3, 1, pp. 9-38.
- Reimann, N. (2004) First Year Teaching-Learning Environments in Economics, *International Review of Economics Education*, 3, 1, pp. 52-62.