

*Association for Heterodox Economics and  
International Review of Economics Education*

**One-day Workshop  
Saturday 18 October 2008  
City University, London**

**Pluralism in economics:  
rethinking the teaching of economics**

**Second Call for Papers**

The Association for Heterodox Economics (AHE) and the journal, *International Review of Economics Education* (IREE), are holding a one-day workshop on the theme of **Pluralism in economics: rethinking the teaching of economics**. IREE is also publishing a special issue in November 2009 on the issue of **Pluralism in economics education: Issues in teaching and learning**. The Call for Papers for the special issue can be seen here: [http://staff.city.ac.uk/andy.denis/IREE\\_pluralism.pdf](http://staff.city.ac.uk/andy.denis/IREE_pluralism.pdf).

While there is no requirement for contributors to the special issue of IREE to present at the workshop (or *vice versa*), we believe that this will offer an excellent opportunity for contributors to present their research, and then work up the feedback they obtain in the final version of the paper for submission to the Journal six weeks later.

The workshop is supported by the Department of Economics at City University, London, by the Economics Network, and by the Royal Economic Society. There will be no registration charge, and refreshments including lunch will be provided.

**New deadline for submission of abstracts: Friday 1 August 2008. Abstracts *must* indicate how the proposed paper will address the questions raised in this Call.**

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 be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand these differences of viewpoint, and to make judgements between conflicting claims.

Authors wishing to present their work at the workshop are invited to address a number of issues:

- 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 workshop 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.

**To submit a paper for the one-day workshop, please send an abstract (max 300 words) to Andy Denis ([a.denis@city.ac.uk](mailto:a.denis@city.ac.uk)) by Friday 1 August 2008. Decisions will be made within two weeks. For each paper accepted for presentation we will require a full paper by Friday 5 September 2008.**

## 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.