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How to Establish Pluralism at the Department Level**

Cómo establecer el pluralismo a nivel departamental

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Resumen

Nuestra generación se enfrenta a muchos problemas como el cambio climático, el daño ambiental, la crisis financiera global, una disparidad palpable en el ingreso y la riqueza, el aumento de la deuda, y una crisis de salud. Estos problemas se refuerzan mutuamente y se empeoran. En el centro, sin embargo, es la disciplina de la Economía misma y la enseñanza de ésta, las que ofuscan la interrelación de nuestros problemas, acostumbran a sus estudiantes al sufrimiento humano y niega la discusión reflexiva de la condición humana. Atrás se quedaron los días en que una sola escuela de pensamiento podría considerarse suficiente para educar a la gente y proporcionar a los hacedores de política una serie de soluciones. Atrás se quedaron los días en que sólo una escuela de pensamiento en economía podría reclamar el monopolio del conocimiento, al tiempo que desestimara la legitimidad de todas las demás. Para resolver los problemas de nuestra generación necesitamos ciudadanos educados y economistas que entiendan la diversidad y sean capaces de trabajar el uno con el otro v con otros científicos sociales. En 2001, estudiantes de economía de Francia solicitaron a sus profesores una enseñanza más realista y pluralista de la economía. Desde aquella petición francesa, el pluralismo ha sido ampliamente aceptado como método de enseñanza. Varios libros se han escrito sobre la manera de enseñar economía pluralista, incluyendo Teaching Pluralism in Economics, de John Groenewegen (2007); Pluralist Economics, de Edward Fullbrook (Zed, 2009) y Handbook of Pluralist Economics Education de Jack Reardon (Routledge, 2009), entre otros. Bajo este contexto, el propósito de este artículo es el desarrollo de un plan sistemático para implementar el pluralismo a nivel departamental. En la primera parte se discutirán brevemente las ventajas del pluralismo, en la segunda sección se discutirán los elementos clave del plan, en la tercera sección se discutirán los posibles problemas y críticas, y en el cuarto se ofrecerán las observaciones finales. No es mi intención ofrecer una receta definitiva, sino que las propuestas son tentativas y sugerentes.

Palabras clave:

- Papel de la economía
- Enseñanza universitaria
- Microeconomía

Abstract

Our generation is confronted with many problems including climate change, environmental damage, a global financial crisis, a palpable disparity in income and wealth, escalating debt, and a health care crisis. These problems are mutually reinforcing and will only worsen. At the center, however, is the discipline of economics itself and economics education, which obfuscates the interrelationship of our problems, inures its students to human suffering and abnegates thoughtful discussion of the human predicament. Gone are the days when only one school of thought could be deemed sufficient to educate the public and provide policy makers with a range of solutions. Gone are the days when only one school of thought in economics could claim a monopoly on knowledge while derisively dismissing the legitimacy of all others. To solve the problems of our generation we need educated citizens and economists who understand diversity and are willing to work with each other and with other social scientists. In 2001 French economics students petitioned their professors for a more realistic and pluralist teaching of economics. Since the French petition, pluralism has become widely accepted as a method of teaching. Several books have been written on how to teach pluralist economics, including John Groenewegen's Teaching Pluralism in Economics (2007); Edward Fullbrook's Pluralist Economics (Zed, 2009) and Jack Reardon's Handbook of Pluralist Economics Education (Routledge, 2009), inter alia. In this context, the purpose of this paper is to develop a systematic plan for implementing pluralism at the department level. The first section will briefly discuss the advantages of pluralism; the second section will discuss the key elements of the plan; the third section will discuss its potential problems and criticisms; the fourth will offer concluding observations. It is not my intention to offer a definitive recipe; rather these proposals are tentative and suggestive.

Keywords:

- Role of Economics
- Undergraduate
- Microeconomics

JEL: A11, A22, B21

Alfred Marshall wrote in his best-selling principles of economics text that "economic conditions are constantly changing, and each generation looks at its own problems in its own way." [Marshall, 1920, p. v.] Our generation is

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confronted with many problems including climate change, environmental damage, a global financial crisis, a palpable disparity in income and wealth, escalating debt, and a health care crisis. These problems are mutually reinforcing and will only worsen. At the center, however, is the discipline of economics itself and economics education, which obfuscates the interrelationship of our problems, inures its students to human suffering¹ and abnegates thoughtful discussion of the human predicament.

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Too often the lectures leave no place for reflection. Out of all the approaches to economic questions that exist, generally only one is presented to us. This approach is supposed to explain everything by means of a purely axiomatic process, as if this were the economic truth. We do not accept this dogmatism. We want a pluralism of approaches, adapted to the complexity of the objects and to the uncertainty surrounding most of the big questions in economics (unemployment, inequalities, the place of financial markets, the advantages and disadvantages of free-trade, globalization, economic development).

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¹ Keynes once again, on the completeness of the Ricardian victory, "That it could explain muchsocial injustice and apparent cruelty as an inevitable incident in the scheme of progress, andthe attempt to change such things as likely on the whole to do more harm than good, commended it to authority" (Keynes, 1936, p. 33).

²The objective of the IJPEE is to reconceptualize and reform economics education and to foster and encourage to inquisitive cooperation between the many disciplines in economics and among the social sciences.

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