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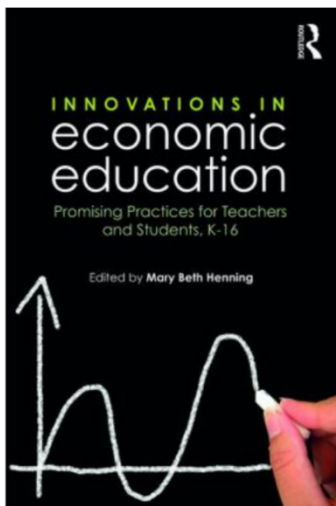
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Innovation in Economic Education



Reviewed by

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Economic integration in the K-16 space is one facet of the American education system that depicts inadequacy yet potential. Mary Beth Henning alongside several educational specialists and economists illustrate how economics can be taught in a multidisciplinary manner through the mandated disciplines, such as math, reading, and history. The authors of this book demonstrate the need for students to develop an economic way of thinking through three themes focusing on: interdisciplinary integration of economics, blended learning, and economic educator preparation. I would highly recommend this book to K-16 educators looking to integrate economics into core academic subjects through age-appropriate and relevant examples intending to promote economic ways of thinking among students.

This book contains ten chapters, each written by a different author, thus providing a variety of experience and insight into interdisciplinary best practices. This book depicts both the need for economic education as well as the potential methods of implementation for educators to use in incorporating economics into their instruction.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ECONOMICS

Economic literacy is a key attribute that youth should be equipped with when entering the workforce and when partaking in civic and community responsibilities. The premise of economics being interdisciplinary is prevalent throughout this book. The authors and the editors depict how simulation in classroom instruction can promote higher-level thinking of citizenship, community, and economic class perceptions. The book includes several examples of how students can simulate activities that represent given economic trends. One example is through a peanut butter and jelly assembly line activity. Through this activity, students can learn about production efficiency and quality, the historical context of assembly lines and the industrial revolution, the mathematical aspects of worker compensation and the business cycle, and how these events or concepts play a role in the larger economy.

The contributors in the chapters highlight other ways in teaching economics through social studies and mathematics while ensuring instruction meets state standards, particularly at the secondary level. The book outlines examples from history that have economic prevalence, such as the Cold or Civil wars. The economic underpinnings of this history can be used as practice and to give context in mathematics. Using lessons on interest rates and inflation to help students work with percentages or using algebra and graphing to understand the economic production function are examples of effective interdisciplinary education.

Interdisciplinary work also comes through in the discussion of integrating economic literacy and justice through the arts and literature. An example is having students find their own representations of substitutes versus complements, expressing them visually, or discussing scarcity and giving materials to groups of students to see what they make. The debriefing process following these activities is also stressed as an integral component. Concurrently, the authors highlight how culturally relevant literature can bring economic and historic concepts to life, simultaneously, such as in the Great Depression, immigration/settlement, and WWII. The authors emphasize the significance in involving parents in developing a child's economic mindset. Children are asked to make choices about toys, activities, food, etc. very early in life, all of which involve understanding needs, wants, and consumer choices. This can be capitalized on through reading literature in school and further extended through conversations at home.

BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning prevails across this book and specifically highlights technology and computer systems that bring economic education to life through the use of data. Several platforms of data allow students to create graphs and learn more about economic systems, while computer applications and games let students engage within systems and take on roles that emphasize economic decision making. In terms of teacher preparation and curriculum, several chapters highlight how economic literacy can be incorporated into curriculum and why K-12 teacher preparation programs are essential to make connections across these disciplines. The book outlines a specific teacher preparation program at Purdue University that helps train future educators on combining economics with core subject curriculum through a variety of applicable strategies.

IMPLICATIONS

Although notions across the K-12 space are that students are unable to comprehend economics, students are often learning these concepts unbeknownst to them. Students can understand the premise of opportunity costs by watching Space Jam, can learn about economic inequality by discussing the Hunger Games or the Civil War, and can comprehend what factors led to and further inflicted the Great Recession. As a recommendation, incorporating more information on integrating economic teaching across higher education would have been fitting. As prefaced in the book, the lack of economic thinking amongst students stifles and affects their decisions and understanding of the world around them. If K-12 students are not leaving our education system with the appropriate knowledge in economics, higher education instructors should make efforts to embed and promote economic ways of thinking through their own pedagogy. Economics surrounds students and will play an integral role in their lives, thus it is vital that educators incorporate these real-world concepts, experiences, and decision-making opportunities into core instruction. Although some state standards include economics within core subjects, they often do not offer a practical way for educators to approach related lessons. This book provides a thorough analysis of how the content is relevant and how economic integration can be successful and achievable.

REFERENCES

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