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Enseñanza introductoria de economía para no economistas: un contenido panorámico clave

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Abstract

This article condenses some of the learning experience gained through the teaching of the subject Economics and Education, in a graduate program to form educational researchers (also tested in others, with similar results), which comes from different areas of knowledge, from social to exact ones, passing by the naturals. It is claimed that the content setting- panoramic and direct-, overcomes the usual resistance in these students to recognize that the knowledge provided by the Economy is essential for an integrated approach to all social phenomenon and, in particular, establish that causes are not always which violate the external social, this objectified the way it assumes the economic structure, usually confronted with sustainable development. In return, the traditional method of such teaching re-focuses in a mayor psychological sense, according in what the group inquires about the representations that support the educational phenomenon.

The suggested content, approachable in 6 sessions of 4 hours (unlimited adult participants), it begins by identifying the correct use of key concepts, followed by a brief history of the great dilemmas of economics, its writers and the object of study, together, allow any review of the general postulates of the three contemporary political-economic dominated systems. Along the way, interspersed explanations of the meanings for Mexico, cases are emerging whose analysis should benefit the interdisciplinary approaching pursuit of a holistic vision.

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Economy, education, environment, consumption and responsible production

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1. Introduction

The essence of economics, it is stated, it is pertinent to impart to students of any postgraduate in social sciences, it began to take shape after 1990, when it had to adjust an economics course to typically-bent-for mathematical formalizations Master of Education and subsequently administrative areas. This was the first mismatch to be corrected, it comes from adult students who entered to be users of the economy, not economists, even that at some point in their training took courses in mathematics, the memory of them is this asymptote to almost nothing, which makes the imposition of such a profile is inappropriate. The combination "profile of entry-time-topics" turned into a constant tension during the first courses, until we identified two circumstances:

- The diverse professional origin of the assistants which, in the same group serves architects, engineers, lawyers, nurses, artists, teachers- predominating this last ones -, among others, to be a challenge, it became an advantage, because the complexity of the relationship between economy-education is consistent with the construction of explanations from disciplinary approach of each participant. Then, the next task became to structure a robust definition of the subject matter of economy.

- During the first session is usually identified 2 precognitions:

  • That "economy” is a matter for mathematicians, being conducive to demonstrate that this is only descriptive and prognostic stage, but most useful is the discipline that addresses the ways in which human groups decide to resolve their material existence.

  • The economy is the one “to blame” for the precarious situation of education, the nation and the planet, which makes appropriate for the immediate approach to avoid such disqualification, using brief examples of how the culture of each human group and its practices the political scope, determine crucial economic distortions.

After the detection of resistance, a brief survey is made of the dominant representations in the group about what is education as a service, and for the purpose it serves or could serve.

At the end of the session the reading is promoted of the book designed for this purpose, winner of the first contest of the University of Guanajuato on didactic material, being also relevant to point along the short contemporary readings sessions on the topics that will be addressed as well the support in the dictionary of Economics preference.

2. Explanation of objectives

To reflect on a panoramic way on sense of the basic concepts of conventional economics, the purpose is that the student make it on their own, professional and personal, resizing is courses on welfare, economic growth and social development.

The specific objectives are: a) Support the precise handling and fluid core economic concepts, b) Understand the potentiality that economy offers to explain more fully the social surrounding and organizational environment on behalf of sustainability, understood as the ability of nature to be restored before the human action determinates that collapse in its nodes.

2.1. Purpose of the study of economics
It begins by explaining that there is not only one definition of economics, because in every treatise they will find the focus on some of its parts. What does exist is a single object of study, to be known: production --> distribution --> consumption, of goods and services for the satisfaction of "necessity and wishes".

It is clarified that the economy, either as discipline or as part of social reality, is limited to the scope of the form of how human groups "decide" to satisfied their materialities, with goods (that are tangible, with high inputs) and services (that are intangible, with less content of inputs). The intention is to allow compliance on a "optimal" way the production, distribution and consumption. However, is warned that economy is not more than a reservoir where such practices are deposited, socially and culturally justified, so the "mistakes" about what is optimal or the bad decisions to select, are the personal responsibility, That use to happen in social prejudice aggregate by types of actors.

The next aspect of substance, is with precision identify the distinction between the physiologic derivation of the necessities and the psychological derivation of the wishes to achieve establish a mental structure of critical order between goods and services priority over the superfluous useful most of it in times of scarce resources. Such activity has to prefigure personal responses to what common characteristic have the "goods" that now make up the majority consumption in Mexico or another country? Known that are soft drinks, alcohol, cigarettes, chips, canned goods and packaged, plastics, cosmetics, chemicals, toys and high energy consuming devices, etc... Is subjected to wide scrutiny of whether it is edifying or destructive products the person and the planet, coming to trial if the current historical exploration is increasing human traits or decomposition.

The reaction of certain students begin to be dramatic when it states that this type of consumption, besides of damage the health of one who is willing to spend on what he gets ill of, goes against the public health sector budget, by the over demand that generate who consumes. This section requires skillful management of impersonal reminding almost always, the sensation of that it could have gone further, or that the reflection was cut by over-reaction of a participant, which is a risk that must be take, if we really want to help to reflect on the positive transformation of lifestyles.

In any case, the final statement is that "who demanding, commands," but if is made wrong ... the economy and the environment are those who receive the effect of such "habits." The purposeful corollary consequent is that if in the family "good" habits were form there would be no advertising, even as pertinacious it was, to induce to markets through negative paths, the time is suitable to exemplify the behaviour of those that with his purchase support organic products or use alternative energy. There is not left explanation that the marketing is a technic "for sale to the highest bidder", being more part of psychology than the economy, being more used to distort the rational election of the unwary and insecure-they prefer to deal by appearances than by essences, that provide objective information on the product concerned.

Then the conceptual strengthening the responsibility for what is deemed as a necessity and desire is personal, taking care to be clear that all economic good (subject to purchase-sale) is replaced, and that everyone must find the source of their beliefs in fixed behaviour patterns from childhood in the family, the development context, the influence for exposure to the media or in the present circumstances.

In function of the stinging observed, is it desirable to raise two debates derivatives: a) the reason of why economists often decide to legalize the drug, pointing out that loneliness and social dissatisfaction of those who purchase has more to do with the fractured families and values, with the bidders, which would disappear if the buy stops and, b) the case of imported products of the people without nationalist
ruthlessly, who expects orders from outside to decide what to use, eat or see, putting on the side products of their own culture, valued as "ghetto" or out of fashion. Such cases make the student to ponder about their positive economic axiology, transcending to identify the consequences of their choice, at which point you can start looking for alternatives and solutions, personal or joint, and not keep looking "guilty ones" in government, businessmen, Chinese or Americans. In other words, we look that each one switch its sight from outside to inside.

At the end of the session, a basic method is presented to give an order to the cause and effects of social phenomenon of similar nature, that could help to reduce the saying that "everything has to do with everything" if this is certainly true, it is not the expected state of a social scientific, whose duty whose work resides in applying observational acuity to identify generalizations and special cases to explain the social order, obtaining ordered mental structures, lends their self to systematic analysis, in this case, exercising the discretion on whether it satisfies the essential belonging to the subject matter of economics, without denying the multi-factorial and multi-real causality, but determining what explains the most or actives the dynamics studied. The method reconstructs the phenomenon analyzed in four determinates instances: social, cultural, political and economic. Is warned that the ignorance of the cause (s), moves away the probability of producing the right solution or the phenomenon control. Then, how to know if the observe phenomenon is the study object of economics? First, divide the reality in 4 social instances: society, politic, cultural and politic; second, diagnose if the cause is in the economy object; if "yes", go ahead, but if "not" search another science for help to solve.

2.2. Key Concepts

In the second session will address the following concepts that stabilize the channel of communication to raise further issues of greater substance.

- Resource
The instruction is directed to admit that resource is all element available for a productive use, requesting the identification of countries that possess exiguous material conditions, but with very proactive human resources, who come to determine the existence of the capital resources, assisted by historical joint, as are the cases of Japan and the Netherlands, in contrast, sets out cases of countries economically "poor" but favoured by nature with physical resources and plenty of human resources, but not able to the creation of capital resources. Consequently, the general content is discussed between a generalization about resources essence in the production: Materials, are conditional; Humans are determinants; the Capital ones are the result of the interaction.

Because there are habitants on the planet that having the resources, do not see them, or prefer to wait for the gift of government, and others who, without have them, attempt them with technological developments and lots of coordinated work, being their imagination the limit and the interest to please the physical environment for (without discuss by the moment whether the production of profitability is done with care or not the environment and society, in example, the viability of life in long term), is concluded that those who do not apply their daily effort in such way, is often guilty of natural disasters, reason why are often called underdeveloped countries.

The discussion can also be detonated from sayings such the ones of theories of determinism of the physical environment, which claim that leisure is inherent to the natural rich and, on the contrary, the creation of technology is the result of natural precautious conditions or less fitted, to face extinction.

- Inputs
They describe the resources already transformed to integrate some good or service. This concept helps to understand, now a days the vanguard lines of production are not explainable nationally, but by analyzing the integration of transnational corporations, reinforced since the 40’s by the most technologically advanced countries, called outsourced (specialized in high-tech services) in the form of economies of scale or mass production. This led to a new international division of labour in which, countries with organizations capable of made direct foreign investment, act upon the world as their field of interest, with high independence of the existence of borders, forming it in groups of countries, in the current international basic division of labour, as know:

- Develop countries (third sector)
- Industrialized countries (endogenous or exogenous)
- Manufacturing countries (importing inputs)
- Primary-exporting countries (inputs suppliers)
- Autarkic countries

The conjecture is formulated the main result of such division, led by the capitalist countries "developed", is that dictated the financial and commercial rules through international agencies designed a way to redeploy its old industry to "selected" countries. These desires reach the stage of industrialized, even at the expense of their own territory to inherit a development model based on the guidance of exogenous structures. To open the dialogue, students are asked to arguments about whether they believe that the current way that global economy grows is already anachronistic, for standardizing and contaminant, entering the analysis tool denominated "globalization" application that helps the owners to stop the persistent decline in the rate of profit, taking advantage the countries willing to blur their culture, lower payment for work and open their finances abroad. In this point, it is good to raised at least a couple of commonly accepted of what is conceived by poverty, in order to contrast them with the "has to be" accepting extra economic points of view.

- Goods and services
Goods are conceptualized as tangible satisfactions and services as intangible satisfactions, one of their characteristics is that their consumption is simultaneous to their production, to be the case of educational services. Is explained that depending on the approach required, there are alternative types like: a) those that studied the use of income (goods are divided in "superior, normal and inferior), and b) welfare sensation (essential, desirable, pleasant).

The economic type by excellence is the first, which supports the knowledge of what each one believes it is more important to consume. The predilection to each product is tested by increasing the income, the vote is exercised of the buy in such product in such product, making the loss to the counterparty that is replaced, judged inferior (the normal is unchanged) the reading of connoted reports is suggested, that relating renowned products which are best positioned in the taste of different human groups, concluding that it is superfluous for widespread consumption in Mexico, even in times of crisis, which partly explains the form taken economic structure and situation of chronic insufficiency of income (debt).

- Market
The third session starts by defining that a market is the space (each time less physical, by electronic and catalog sales), in which suppliers and demanders attend, making actions of sale and purchase of goods and services, according to the tastes and bearing the preferences of each individual will determine. Thus, given the prices and quantities, it happens that the market is empty at the point of equilibrium, which implies the inexistence of wasted resources, since all that is offered is purchased—or imbalances emerging surplus or shortage someone has to pay. This can happen because of calculation errors or
because there are infra-marginal buyers (who are willing to pay just below the equilibrium price) and supra-marginal (who are willing to pay above the equilibrium price).

As a result of observation of such situations, sets forth the laws of supply (when prices are high, production rises) and demand (when prices are high, the demand is low) that, either because they met or not, become practical as positive or normative claims of economic theories as target image to the scientist it shows the basic logical operation of the neoclassical graphical formalization for their predominance in the way that present economists usually communicate their ideas and analytical results.

- Economic problems - crisis
Using the defragmentation, recalls that "problem" has the connotation of something negative and that the object of study of economics is the production-distribution-consumption of goods and services, whether in the real market (of product) or in the nominal market (of money), therefore, any interruption or obstacle in such order, constitutes in a economic problem, having to determine the stage, for its attention, if it worsens in time, space or amplitude, is denominated "crisis". Students are requested, cases of situations that began as an isolated problem and became the crisis.

3. Brief History of Political Economy

Through an image showing the genealogy of ideas of great thinkers who have left their mark on the approach to the subject of the economics study, it deals with social and historical circumstances that have mutated the unity of what is valued in different times and contexts: the slaves in the Slavery, land under Feudalism, and today, the capital (nominal, machinery, equipment and infrastructure) in the Capitalism. This helps to explain later, for example, that the Liberal Doctrine made possible the development of the political ideology that structures the capitalist system. So, is generalized in the books of Political Economy, the vague theoretical-philosophical of the economy is found through history and in the books of Economic Political, applications in making decisions guided by the requirements before mentioned in form of plans and public programs that seek to identify the effects, for example, fiscal policy (taxes), monetary (or banking), tariffs (or trade), etc.

If time is ripe, some graphic effects are shown in the key added markets such as labour, or any goods or services, as oil and telecommunications, raising awareness to study that the decisions of politicians (unfortunately not always knowledgeable about the discipline of economics or with the expert advisers are those who really impact the social spectrum. The conclusion may emerge by the awareness of the importance of exercising with great responsibility as a voter participation in elections, always preferable to abstention and the reprehensible indifference.

4. Tree Biggest Dilemmas of the Economy

Everything seen before the becomes more meaningful in the fourth session, to introduce three of the big dilemmas addressed by economists, with the aim of revealing the laws mechanisms or processes through which, goods and services acquire value (which is subjective) and its price is formed (which is objective, supply and demand).

4.1. The first dilemma is requested to speculate on for whom produce comes first? The tree big contemporary answers are named that humanity has given, to know:

a) Capitalist system: it favours the operation of market forces to produce first for those who have purchasing power (effective demand), refuting public intervention. To deepening its understanding,
we recommend some reading of the liberal work of its founder, Adam Smith, who studied at essentially the supply side (cost and production function), being out of time of economic repression which involved Feudalism, stating that selfishness is the oil that makes it work in an "almost miraculous" way the economic machine (automatic adjustment of markets, in which no intervention from anyone, moves the capital from industries less profitable to more profitable), setting an individualistic conception of society, the central assumption is that everyone in the pursuit of enrichment, should look at the needs of those with money and satisfy it, thus ends up serving one another, even though it was not part of the original intention.

The contemporary extension of Liberalism, is the Neoliberalism, that studies with greater emphasis the demand side, every time that the consumer develops is no longer "collector of goods", that is to say, for momentary attraction to become a skilled "hunter of prices" that treats markets as well thought only buy products from the best quality and best prices, admitting some government intervention, particularly as a referee "impartial" of the economic activity.

The solicitation subsequent to the students, is to identify what type of consumer it is, because if you buy at any price, any quality (laziness to go look), the off error's interpretations is that, it is indolent, sparking inflationary processes (up general price level), be the conduct of the applicant the opportunity. Demonstrated that everything is replaceable, it’s sufficient to test that high prices should be stop using them for download.

Arguments are requested on the social consequences of the holders of money are those that define the shape of the markets and on the possible meaning that countries like France and Spain, which began its modern history in this position, are strengthening a twist towards socialism.

b) Social systems: the government directs production to the collective needs, and its intervention that defines the shape of the market: what is produced, how, such what type, amount and method of distributing wealth. K. Marx was the synthesizer of these postulates, led to a higher stage still theoretical, denominated Communism, in which the government has to disappear.

c) Mixed economy or Welfare State: involves the undifferentiated mixing (in no case there are pure states) between the two above requirements: public and private co-exist (there is social security and private hospitals too, also schools, businesses, possession of land, etc.). Today is the most supported system by the experience of countries such as northern Europe. At this point we tested the idea that none of the previous systems in good or bad per se, but in terms of the quality of governance and the closure that achieves consensus with the public to realign its forces.

The analysis of this dilemma ends by asking the students to value and express the three systems and that express advantages and disadvantages of each, particularly the way that is observed is been linked with the environment, and conclude on which one can respect more. If there is resistance to commit to an answer, is subjected to scrutiny the idea that values are prevailing in each place and time that direct the production, by the logic of relevance to the act which is challenged in any of them.

4.2. Second dilemma: at the fifth session students are asked, about the appropriateness they observed of the way that income is distributed, and for the particular case of the underdeveloped Capitalist System. In this dilemma, also known as distributive conflict, combines the relationship between:
a) The evaluative or subjective approach (typically practiced in developing countries), has a sense of collective consensus that under implicit qualities "substantial" differentiated earnings are given being the workers typical business and intellectual benefit.

b) The technical approach or objectivist (typically practiced in developed countries), resulting quantification favours productive action. For better understanding, provides the comparison of situations in which the investment exceeds the amount of the labour force and in the other way, to see consequences as, for example, who must pay the job training to technological changes?: The market resolved, as will tend to pay the employer if the labour is scarce, but it will work, it overflows.

Once more both forms are subject to scrutiny from students, who appreciate advantages or not of, coming to identify where performance is taken into consideration or the other and, in particular, in the midst of higher education of Mexico, in the case facing the productivism with experience value.

The concepts reviewed simultaneously, useful of their constant appearance in economic information sources are: joint and interdependent demand, marginal analysis, production of function, law of diminishing returns, economies of scale, automation and labour flexibility in the technological effect.

4.3. Third dilemma: in the sixth and final session, students are encouraged to identify cases of economic crisis, returning to those where there is conflict of interests in a single agent, given its multiple economic, as workers, consumers, savers, investor, and so on. This is useful to introduce the understanding of parallelism that must exist, given the currency regulations, including the market for goods -services and money market (and its price, which is the interest rate), focusing on the detection of possible crisis through the Quantity Equation of Money and the process of money creation (nodes of possible economic crisis: money--> merchandise--> money increased; each obstruction to the flow "money -products", so-called crisis of first, second and third stage. Verifying the performance of self-assessment exercises in the book recommended, the course closes with the presentation of basic analytical method through which it can quickly set and clear a context analysis to identify when to be used instrumental economical to approach to social desired phenomena having to search in some other discipline. Then, a basic analytical method is: check whether the observed phenomenon is the subject of study of economics; if yes, determine the cause (is it in production, distribution, consumption); described critical effects breakdown and, finally, pose alternative solutions consistent with the cause (choose the one that complies with effectiveness, efficiency and effectiveness).

Thus, noting that without the support of other disciplines, as exact and social, the diagnostic of dilemma becomes a mere abstraction or fatuous exercise of measurement (which justifies jokes about the economist spends half his life predicting what will happen, and the other explaining why it was not) and finally, depending on the availability of time, outlines the parties that the economy is conventionally divided, namely, in microeconomics, macroeconomics and international economics.

Conclusions

The configuration of this extra-condensed content, which began as the search for instruction in the essential understanding of economic thought to professionals who, without intending to become experts, need to become familiar with basic milestones, eventually hooking up with the analysis of large challenges facing humanity by thoughtlessness on the issues raised.

Then, this content is expected to contribute to the teaching of economics for students of introductory courses, very brief but ambitious, suitable for college, but also for non-university who wish to incorporate
a basic understanding of economics as extracurricular. The matching contribution is difficult to set solid foundations still maintain that the economy is the primary responsibility for achieving sustainable development management, being jointly responsible for direct, culture, politics and socio-historical practice, preceded by their values and judgments relevance of the action.

Certainly, the relativity of economic "laws" by which the ideological frame Neoliberalism and justify the production of "whatever" in pursuit of profitability that exploits appearances, enter recurring crisis abuses of natural resources and pollution of the environment, paradoxically, makes it increasingly scarce and therefore expensive, leading to the initial purpose otherwise. But this is not just the responsibility of Capitalism, for Socialism and Mixed Economy also upload their culpable ecocide. The fundamental problem lies in the historic walk of humanity, with individuals and conglomerates little awareness of the importance of caring for Mother Earth, living the life of everyone, in every decision and action of production and consumption.

In the interest of course, depending on the style of each guide, it should approach cases upgradeable ignore the catastrophic effects of the trinomial cultural political economy, is the involvement of a doctor or biologist to explain the effect of school or mother instead of feeding milk to give children junk food or soda, blocking their learning (synapses) but making it tedious and diabetic, excessive intake of sugars or supported by a physicist or chemist to explain the carcinogenic effect of long-lasting lipsticks containing lead, with damage to the air by the peroxide in the dyes hair, aerosols and plastic products in general, and what about cigarettes, alcohol and all kinds of non-biodegradable waste to water, batteries and consuming excess energy. Everyone, from their base discipline, has to make the diagnosis of cases and solutions that help reverse the tragedy of the commons, in which, each in its smallness, think that their actions do not impact, without thinking that the action collectively in the same direction as consumption is generated by the catastrophe to which it is leading the planet. This is not to stop using, but consumed with transcendental consciousness and, therefore, the producer will not convert their production other than in an ethical sense.

The reader may have already inferred that before closing the introduction should be made explicit two limiting situations: 1) the approach of almost all the issues discussed, given to complete courses of Economy, which is not to say that the findings imply that the profiled debate is over, and 2) the recursive tension during sessions, practices and customs as playing is deeply rooted collective thoughtless, makes the students react in defense of those who, though notoriously harmful and unnecessary, they have them and drop them clinging seems impossible, consisting this a real opportunity to transform that part of social action. Regardless of achieving such high claims, inevitably attends a meaningful practice of building interdisciplinary analysis.

Given that ecology, rather than a subject, is a way of life, it requires the continued support of resolute meditation in schools of all levels and of all types, that's where they have to recreate the high-power strategies to transform necrotic practices. Then, to help positively transform lifestyles, each teacher has to take up the mission that way, having proved that the support in the Economy is a timely and appropriate primer, as urgent reintroduce all know, even the way introductory suggested here.

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