

Principles for Teaching Economics and Social Science Education Discourse

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Abstract. The research employed critical discourse analysis of official social science documents and three prominent lines of social science textbooks. Despite the recent emphasis on incorporating real-world economic practices into school financial education, the findings reveal that new social science textbooks exhibit increased criticism toward the market economy. Furthermore, they tend to avoid addressing and analysing the socio-economic issues of the present day. The study concludes by emphasising the need for economic education in schools to focus on contemporary social and financial problems.

Keywords: teaching economics; market economy; discourse; analysis; interviewing techniques.

INTRODUCTION

Economic education refers to the instruction provided by knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers or experts, on various economic issues and challenges. The "Education Economics" course offers students an opportunity to examine education through an economic lens, applying economic frameworks, evaluation methodologies, and principles to the field of education. Institutions train individuals who will later teach financial concepts to secondary school students to find solutions to economic problems in society. It is essential to recognise that a significant portion of our daily lives involves making economic decisions, whether as producers or consumers. By understanding economic principles, we can make better decisions than we would have otherwise.

Economic education empowers individuals to make well-informed decisions that positively impact their lives and society.

The world of economies and economics confronts a complex web of crises, prompting us to examine the approaches to economic education across various nations to equip young individuals with the necessary tools to tackle the unique challenges of the 21st century. What are the expected outcomes of economic education in today's context? While opinions may vary, most

economic educators would likely concur that financial education should foster students' comprehension of fundamental principles governing national and global economies, impart skills to effectively manage personal finances, cultivate an understanding of the intricacies of the professional realm, and enable them to make informed decisions when embarking on their initial career journey. However, recent years have witnessed a noticeable shift in perspective, with greater emphasis on financial literacy and nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset, supplanting the previously emphasised objectives (as indicated by research on financial literacy by [1, 2]).

Social studies encompasses various academic disciplines, such as history, geography, civics and government, economics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology [3]. Consequently, the subjects covered in the Swedish definition of social studies, namely political science, economics, and sociology, align with the broader international understanding of the field. The teaching of economics faces challenges in competing with the vast information landscape outside of schools. Many occupations rely on practical experience rather than the subjects studied in high school. Some individuals may enter these careers regardless of their education and gradually accumulate relevant experience. Another segment of job seekers

may pursue higher education to secure employment aligned with their educational background and qualifications. However, unintentional decisions regarding university majors can lead to various consequences for countries. These include heightened government spending on higher education institutions, an increase in job vacancies that remain unfilled, intensified competition among individuals with undergraduate degrees, an excess supply of labour in the job market, decreased wages, adverse effects on the quality of university education, and an extended job search period.

If secondary education focused more on the economy, professions such as handicrafts would gain attractiveness and admiration. Society and its institutions would support these career paths by incorporating these skills into school curricula. Furthermore, these jobs have the advantage of not requiring substantial capital investment while being product-oriented, thus stimulating the local economy and generating employment opportunities for job seekers. Conversely, when secondary education fails to adequately prepare students with practical skills for entering the workforce, these simple jobs tend to be undervalued by institutions.

This lack of emphasis on vocational skills results in untapped potential regarding physical capital, natural resources, unique regional characteristics, and local economic growth. Consequently, various locally viable professions may be neglected, and individuals may delay their job search until after completing a university education. This scenario leads to higher rates of unemployment, increased emigration, reduced domestic investment, and decreased expenditure on education, particularly in the realm of secondary education.

Schools play a crucial role in economically advanced nations as they design curricula to impart diverse, high-quality skills to students. Consequently, the duration of schooling in these countries tends to be longer compared to Iran. Graduates' skill sets and ease of finding employment reflect the challenges faced by individuals in Iran when seeking jobs compared to their counterparts in developed countries. Moreover, other important aspects are lacking in Iran's educational system and families. Schools in Iran struggle to teach students how to think creatively, step outside conventional boundaries, acquire practical skills, or embrace risk-taking. The existence of

a rigid curriculum, where students must merely complete coursework and gain theoretical knowledge, further exacerbates the situation.

The principles and main objectives of teaching economics in school and the realities of economics. The state's expectations for social science education are outlined in the state educational standard for secondary general education. This document serves as a key reference point, establishing the objectives and fundamental principles of teaching social science in modern schools. The standard emphasises cultivating several student characteristics encompassing civil, moral, and legal orientations. These characteristics also extend to promoting healthy lifestyles, thoughtful career decision-making, and self-education.

The objectives of economic education can be summarised as follows:

1. Gaining a thorough understanding of the financial system in society, seeing it as the setting for economic activity for people, families, enterprises, and the government.
2. They are developing economic thinking abilities that allow people to make wise decisions while taking responsibility for the effects on themselves, their environment, and society.
3. Nurturing project skills, encompassing the ability to design and implement interdisciplinary economic projects based on foundational financial knowledge and values.
4. Putting newly learned information and acquired abilities to successfully perform various socio-economic tasks, including consumer, producer, buyer, seller, borrower, shareholder, employee, employer, and taxpayer.
5. Gaining an understanding of my position and role in the global economy and developing the ability to navigate and comprehend current economic events.

These objectives aim to equip individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to navigate economic matters effectively, make informed decisions, and actively participate in economic activities within the societal context.

A key objective of the concept is to foster legal, economic, and political literacy among students. Within the economics component, there is a focus on addressing issues such as corruption, the functioning of capital and labour markets, and developing an understanding of entrepreneurial activities and the knowledge economy. The con-

cept also emphasises the importance of financial literacy, which has gained significant prominence in public policy discussions in recent years. However, while the idea specifies certain areas of individual economic activity, it fails to address several fundamental problems that pose significant challenges to conducting business openly. These problems include bureaucratisation, oligarchic capitalism, high levels of corruption, an economy heavily reliant on raw materials, obstacles to small business development, and the pervasive existence of a shadow economy within a society characterised by migration. These unresolved issues complicate the economic landscape and require further attention and solutions to create a more favourable environment for economic activities.

By examining the critical normative documents about social science education and the notable challenges within the modern economy, it is essential to explore how this contradiction between educational goals and economic realities manifests in the discourse of financial education within schools. This investigation involves analysing popular social science textbooks and studies conducted with teachers, including interviews, to gain insights into the perception and experiences of educators in economic education.

Social science textbooks as a reference: representative sampling and methodology concerns. According to the argument presented, educators may rely on the economics sections in social studies books for instructional guidance. These textbooks, whether in physical or digital form, are produced by authorised publishing companies and serve as valuable resources that shape the curriculum being taught. They provide essential content guidance, influencing school material [4, 5]. Research has indicated that despite online resources' growing availability, teachers and students continue to utilise traditional paper-based textbooks. Furthermore, textbooks directly impact students' learning experiences and indirectly influence teachers as they serve as instructional references [6, 7]. By applying this methodology, the study aimed to critically analyse the discourse present within economic education, shedding light on how knowledge is constructed and disseminated and its implications for shaping individuals' understanding of economic realities within society.

The model [8] has gained recognition and has been widely employed in analysing printed pub-

lications. The model encompasses several stages, including an overall publication review and selection of specific discourse fragments for analysis. The study also examines the contextual elements, such as visual components, presentation structure, and the topics covered. Additionally, the research focuses on identifying rhetorical techniques, such as argumentative forms, symbols, and tropes. The goal is to isolate the ideological component and ascertain the overall intention of the text.

This comprehensive analysis examines specific discourse fragments in-depth, leading to discovering a discourse strand. In framework [8], a discourse strand refers to a collection of text fragments that pertain to a particular topic. In the study, the Siegfried Jäger model was applied to analyse all three lines of textbooks. This approach enabled the identification of discourse strategies and ideological influences, facilitating a comparative analysis between the books.

By examining these specific areas, the study aimed to shed light on the discourse surrounding them and uncover any noteworthy patterns or ideological influences in the textbooks. In economics, books play a pivotal role in education's pedagogical and epistemological aspects [9]. They are essential tools for teaching and learning, providing a structured framework for conveying economic concepts and knowledge. Moreover, textbooks contribute to developing and understanding the discipline's underlying principles and ways of thinking, shaping the epistemological foundations of economics education.

Directed at the future? Analysis of economics textbooks in discourse. An alternative definition of the economy is presented, emphasising its connection to material and non-material benefits and needs [10]. It is also recognised as a scientific field investigating the laws governing this sphere of activity. Additionally, a brief overview of the historical development of economic doctrines is provided, ranging from mercantilists and physiocrats to Keynesians and neoclassicists. However, there seems to be a gap in the curriculum concerning the role of the economy in modern society. Instead of addressing contemporary societal aspects, the focus shifts towards the relationship between economic production and the spiritual self-improvement of individuals [10]. This omission raises questions about the representation of the economy about current societal dynamics

and the understanding of its impact on modern society.

The paragraph highlights another issue in the teaching of economics in the curriculum. After briefly discussing the historical development of economic doctrines, the description of the role of the economy in modern society falls short. Instead of delving into contemporary financial processes and their relevance, the focus narrows down to the roles of individuals as participants in economic relations, mainly as owners, consumers, employees, and representatives of households [10].

This approach raises concerns as it fails to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of economic theories and their applicability in the modern world. Students may lack the necessary insights to critically analyse and engage with the present era's complex financial issues and dynamics by presenting factual knowledge about past economic schools without exploring their evolution and relevance in today's context. The curriculum must incorporate the study of modern financial processes, their evolution, and their implications for contemporary society to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of economics. This would enable students to understand better the dynamic nature of economics and its relevance to their world.

The textbook even provides examples of mixed economies in Japan, the United States, Sweden, and China [11]. However, the book fails to address the shortcomings or limitations of each economic system, leaving it up to the students to independently identify the positive and negative aspects of the systems being studied. This approach could hinder students' ability to critically evaluate and understand the complexities and challenges of different economic systems.

However, the textbook overlooks the concept of unfair competition, failing to provide students with an understanding of its impact on market dynamics and the broader economy. The curriculum needs to address the limitations and drawbacks of each system and encourage critical thinking skills in evaluating economic phenomena to provide a more comprehensive experience of financial systems. Additionally, unfair competition should be included to enhance students' awareness of its implications in market economies.

The paragraph describes the use of schemes and illustrations in the topic "The Role of the State in the Economy" within the textbooks. These visual aids are considered appropriate and contribute to understanding the content effectively. The mentioned schemes include the "invisible hand of the market" concept, illustrating the market's self-regulating mechanism. Additionally, diagrams depict the tasks of the state's economic policy and its essential roles in the economy (in the 9th grade). Furthermore, there are diagrams showcasing the directions of government programs and photographs representing social objects that serve as public goods (in the 11th grade).

The structure of the conveyed meanings follows a progression from general concepts, such as the state's role in the economy, to specific tasks, functions, and policy directions related to supporting the public sector. This sequential approach facilitates students' understanding of the topic and its practical implications. Visual aids, such as schemes and photographs, can enhance students' engagement and comprehension of complex economic concepts. By gradually introducing specific details and applications, students are guided towards a deeper understanding of the state's role in the economy and its various dimensions.

The analysis of the rhetorical means used by the authors reveals a consistent strategy employed in both the 9th-grade and 11th-grade textbooks. Rather than problematising the material and fostering critical thinking, the books present a simplistic narrative where specific fragments resemble slogans. This rhetorical strategy of giving historical examples as positive and successful reinforces a particular viewpoint without critically examining alternative perspectives or acknowledging the complexities and limitations of different economic systems. It simplifies the discourse and may hinder students' ability to develop a nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

By relying heavily on historical experiences as a source of argumentation, the textbooks may overlook contemporary economic realities and fail to engage students in critically analysing and evaluating different economic systems and their implications. It is essential for financial education to encourage students to think critically, consider multiple viewpoints, and explore the strengths

and weaknesses of various economic approaches in light of real-world challenges and dynamics.

A teacher's view of economic education in secondary schools. However, some commonalities exist among teachers from rural and urban schools. The teachers' reliance on the recommended textbooks may be attributed to restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Education, which limits their choices to the approved books. This lack of alternative options could impact the variety and quality of educational materials available to teachers and students, potentially limiting their exposure to diverse perspectives and approaches.

It is worth noting that the study did not provide specific details on the age-related differences in teachers' assessments and perceptions. However, the age factor suggests that more experienced teachers might have different perspectives than younger teachers, potentially influenced by their years of teaching experience and exposure to different educational approaches. It would be beneficial to consider expanding the range of recommended textbooks, allowing teachers greater flexibility in selecting materials that best suit their teaching contexts and students' needs to enhance the quality and diversity of economic education. This could foster a more dynamic and

inclusive approach to financial education, promoting critical thinking and exposing students to various economic perspectives and realities.

CONCLUSIONS

This discrepancy between educational goals and economic realities is reflected in the content and approach of the textbooks analysed. The books focus on theoretical aspects of economics and provide limited coverage of the complexities and challenges of the modern economic landscape. They often present a simplified and idealised version of financial concepts without addressing the real-life issues and problems individuals and societies face. These findings highlight the need for a more comprehensive and realistic approach to teaching economics in schools. This could involve updating the curriculum to include current economic issues, promoting critical thinking and analysis of financial systems, addressing social and economic inequalities, and encouraging students to explore and understand the complexities of the economic world they will eventually enter. By providing a more nuanced and realistic understanding of economics, students can be better equipped to navigate and contribute to their society's financial challenges and opportunities.

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