

CHALLENGES AND RELEVANCE OF ECONOMICS AS QUEEN OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PRESENT SCENARIO

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Abstract:

In the paper an attempt has been made to respond to the question that the teachers and the researchers in economics are to do what? why? when? where? for Whom with Altruism? Further issues have been identified for deliberation and discussion on relevance and education of economics for the other disciplines in social sciences.

Being humble students, teachers and researchers in economics, we believe that there are gaps in the learning, teaching and research in the subject which is otherwise important for one and all as consumers, producers, distributors and traders. Unfortunately, it is the economics of education which has devalued the value of education. We need to strengthen the educational value of education instead of devaluing it by attaching economic value to it. There is trade off between teaching and research in economics. Most of the teachers in schools and colleges are not able to do research of any kind in the subject of economics for want of time whereas most of the teachers in universities and research institutions devote more time to research obviously to get promotions which are based on research contributions and not the quality of teaching. The number of students in economics in schools, colleges and universities are declining probably because of the fear of mathematics which must be used to understand economics and not to complicate the subject as observed by Paul Ormirod in his book ' Death of Economics.' The use of software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is necessary but not sufficient in social science research. To make it sufficient, there is a strong case for proper analysis to draw policy implications which are otherwise missing. The use of SPSS is capable of re-establishing economics as a queen of social sciences as called by Noble Laureate Paul Samuelson. There is a strong case for higher allocation of funds for social science research in India.

Key Words: Consumers, producers, distributors, traders, knowledge-economy, needonomics

Introduction

All of us know that social science is all about the study of people and the factors affecting them. To know, why is economics considered the queen of all Social Sciences? Why not the other branches of Social Science? To my mind, the best reply is that economics explains a lot of the social phenomena of the world and plays a major role in each of the other branches (i.e. in sociology: haves vs. have nots, crime, what's going on in society; in political science: why countries do what they do, international trade, even war; in psychology: a person's mindset is affected by their socio-economic status; etc).

According to Samuelson, economics is the queen of social sciences. It is true that economics was the queen of the social sciences when it consisted of brilliant men revealing surprising truths about the nature of societal interaction. Presently, we have to accept that we adopt trial-and-error policy experiments in India, and calling it academic research which brings bad name to the subject.

As economics has lost academic market share, it has also faced, like other declining industries, escalating complaints about the quality of its product--its core theory and how it is taught. The problems appear to be, in economists' terms, both a deterioration of human capital and a technology increasingly mismatched to its labor force and customer demands. As economists, we are in danger of failing to become even what Keynes thought the best we could hope for, the "dentists" of social science--competent technicians in a distant but better world.

Challenges

Being a humble student, teacher and researcher in economics, I believe that there are gaps in the learning, teaching and research in the subject which is otherwise important for one and all as consumers, producers, distributors and traders. Unfortunately, it is the economics of education which has devalued the value of education. We need to strength the educational value of education instead of devaluing it by attaching economic value to it. There is trade off between teaching and research in economics. Most of the teachers in schools and colleges are not able to do research of any kind in the subject of economics for want of time whereas most of the teachers in universities and research institutions devote more time to research obviously to get promotions which are based on research contributions and not the quality of teaching. There is a strong case to reconsider the existing form of teacher-student relationship and evolve a system of education based on an interactive approach. We need to emphasize upon the role of the teaching fraternity in devising methods for holistic development of students.

I saw the movie '3 Idiots' with curiosity along with my family of teachers. The comedy of its own kind wrongly named and deserved a pat on the back to be named as '3 Genius' of the present era. It is full of message and lessons for all the stake holders of education system in all times to come which calls for drastic changes in the interest of the sustainable human development of Indian economy. 'All the best' is motivating for the self and the others. The Jugad technology of Indian origin deserved a patent to be recognized with international standards as survival of the weak but unique relevant in times of crisis.

Relevance

Economics is the mother science of all the subjects including commerce and management which are in demand today. Even to become politician in power or opposition with any political party in India and else where in the World knowledge of economics is a must.

The contemporary developments in the world economy and consequent policy ethos have only added to the felt-need for trained/professional economists ready to take on the challenges of a globalized 'knowledge-economy'.

We may like it or not, there is no escape from the reality of goods and services. As long as these goods are to be produced and distributed with reference to the claims made in the present, without losing sight of the future, some kind of 'rationality' would be called for, and hence the need for Economics as a discipline. More so, when we are living in a world full of contrasts- plenty co-existing with dehumanizing poverty, one often asks the following set of questions:

- Who is to do What?, Why? When? Where? for Whom with Altruism?
- Why we are where we are and others in a different position?
- Can goods and services be different for us?
- What can we learn from the experiences of others as consumers, producers, distributors and traders?
- Can we tap the accumulated knowledge for alleviating poverty of one and all?
- Can we ensure good governance for inclusive growth?
- What are the options, instruments, and institutions available to us?

Additionally, the leaders in all walks of life also require, and play with, strategies to stay at the top. For some it is a question of initiating change and bridging the gap, for others it is the management and sustainability of economic growth that is more important. Both sets are faced with economic questions and seek authentic answers.

These types of questions are equally relevant for the individual (micro) as also groups— Self-Help Groups. Each agent/agency can take its own decisions out of convention, tradition, habit, gut-feeling and the like, often availability of professional advice is considered necessary and desirable. A need for trained (professional) economists springs from this source. A professional, besides having a strong spirit of enquiry, is required to be well-versed in a variety of skills to handle a situation. But, that presumes an ability to comprehend the situation and think of alternatives, relate those to the past and come up with policy measures for the future. This calls for development of certain skills which is, by and large, not possible under the existing arrangement. In addition, the gap between theory and practice needs to be bridged through on- the- job training. The influx of foreign universities is partly due to the growing market for trained professionals. The indigenous systems need an urgent up-gradation for negotiating this neo-imperialism. Quality product at affordable prices is the answer.

There is certainly a case for making the present courses of study relevant for catering to the new/emerging demands on the profession and challenges faced by a 'resurging India'.

Economics is about choice; taking decisions in one's best interests given the constraints imposed by income, costs and time. It analyses how people, firms and governments obtain money and how their spending influence the production and distribution of goods and services. It emphasizes people's activities as they use their environment to produce goods and services and distribute them. Economists study how a society distributes scarce resources, such as land, labour, raw materials, and machinery, to produce goods and services. They conduct research, collect and analyze data, monitor economic trends, and develop forecasts. They research issues such as energy costs, inflation, interest rates, exchange rates, business cycles, taxes or employment levels. Economists devise methods and procedures for obtaining the data. For example, sampling techniques may be used to conduct a survey and mathematical modeling techniques may be used to develop forecasts. Preparing reports, including tables and charts, on research results is an important part of an economist's job. The various specialization in economics are : Agricultural Economics, Financial Economics, Labour Economics, Industrial Economics, International Economics, Econometrics, Development Economics, Economics of Human Resource Development, Health Economics, Rural Economics and Business Economics. We only need to learn to understand, analyze and interpret the economics of any thing and everything on earth including cost of a missed call which is not zero as is generally told by many students of economics who should know the difference between fixed cost and the variable cost.

To serve the society (All minus Myself) with altruism and without traveler's dilemma, let God provide us tons of opportunities to prove our worth and potential as students and academics in economics for all times to come.

May our soul become compassionate to learn that it is beneficial to save even one soul from Mahamaya's prison (Greedonomics) and prisoner's dilemma. This calls for promoting Needonomics as a subject of relevance which is capable of removing the FEAR (False Evidence Appearing Real) of the so called global economic crisis very well diagnosed by US President Obama as a consequence of greed and irresponsible behavior of some. To maximize growth in the present times of global economic crisis, there is an urgent need of re-writing the theory of finance for which young economists are to be motivated to do serious research. We need to understand the multiplier effects of the share market in various sector of the economy.

To create a climate of investment and growth in the Indian economy, we need to make every possible effort for increasing the marginal propensity to save which requires correct valuations of shares by reducing the risks over time and space further required for increasing the returns.

It may be relevant to read the writings of J.M. Keynes that 100 percent freedom and deregulation for the finance market is not conducive to predictability of steady growth of the markets of the economy. Contrary to this observation, the NPA in the Indian Banks probably is the result of the State intervention and need to be discouraged. We need to do soul searching for concrete plan of action to re-establish economics as a queen of social sciences.

Conclusion

Economics is a necessary subject for everyone as consumer, producer, distributor and trader to learn and comprehend. It is really a queen of social sciences as conceptualized by Noble Laureate Paul Samuelson but has reduced its stature because of the human behaviour on which it is based. The present economic crisis compelled us to believe that economics is not sufficient to solve all the problems of the people. To make economics sufficient, we have to look around our epics, particularly the *Bhagavad Gita*, which is an 'ism-neutral', 'religion-free' treatise on management and welfare economics. We should avoid plagiarism (the intellectual theft) in our research endeavors which is a moral and ethical offence rather than a legal one. Data on socio-economic indicators with all its limitations are essentially required for doing research in social sciences which are useful for making projections for perspective development planning and can be viewed as the integral part of health planning, educational planning, environmental planning, population Planning, employment planning, social and regional planning. To minimize the data limitations for social science research in India, there is a strong case for minimizing the time lag between the collection and publication of data, consistency in the concepts and definitions of important data, coordination between different data agencies and Strengthen the data base for future prediction to be more certain.

The use of software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is necessary but not sufficient in social science research. To make it sufficient, there is a strong case for proper analysis to draw policy implications which are otherwise missing. The use of SPSS is capable of re-establishing economics as a queen of social sciences. There is a strong case for higher allocation of funds for social science research in India.

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