

ეკონომიკის უახლოესი გამოწვევები და ეკონომიკური განათლების პრობლემა

აბულაძე კონსტანტინე
საქართველოს უნივერსიტეტი

თანამედროვე ეკონომიკური მეცნიერება განიხილავს ცოდნას, როგორც ქვეყნის ეკონომიკური განვითარების ფაქტორს, ინვესტიციის ფორმას ადამიანურ კაპიტალში, რაზეც მნიშვნელოვნადაა დამოკიდებული ეროვნული წარმოება და საზოგადოების ცხოვრების დონე.

ცხადია, რომ მოვლენათა განვითარების ყველაზე სასიკეთო პირობებშიც კი ჩვენ ვერ დავაფინანსებთ ფუნდამენტურ და გამოყენებით კვლევებს იმ მოცულობით, როგორც ეკონომიკურად განვითარებული ქვეყნები. ასეთ ვითარებაში დიდი მნიშვნელობა ენიჭება ინტელექტუალური რესურსების მართვის ღრმად გააზრებულ პრაქტიკას, პოლიტიკას, განათლების სისტემის მხარდაჭერასა და განვითარებას.

ამ მიზნით ჩვენი ქვეყნის ერთ-ერთ წამყვან უმაღლეს სასწავლებელში – საქართველოს უნივერსიტეტში დაიწყო ეკონომიკური სწავლების არსებითი განახლების პროცესი. ეკონომიკური თეორიის, მიკრო და მაკროეკონომიკის ფუნდამენტურ კურსებთან ერთად, რომლებსაც ტრადიციულად ასწავლიან ეკონომიკური პროფილეს ყველა უმაღლეს სასწავლებელსა და უნივერსიტეტების შესაბამის ფაკულტეტებზე, ჩვენი უნივერსიტეტის ეკონომიკის, ბიზნესისა და მართვის სკოლის ინიციატივით შემოღებულია ახალი სალექციო კურსები: ეკონომიკური რეფორმები, ეკონომიკური პროგნოზირება, ეკონომიკური სისტემები და ეკონომიკური საბაზრო მოდელები, ეკონომიკური აზრის ევოლუცია: ნობელის პრემიის ლაურეატები, კლასიკური ეკონომიკური კვლევები.

The Improvement of Teaching Economic Subjects

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Modern economic science considers knowledge as one of the factors of the country's economic development, a kind of investment in human capital which largely determines national production and the level of social life.

In the period of economic globalization postindustrial countries show a significant interest in intellectual resources, which is related to the development of new, knowledgebased economy.

Currently, the utilization of natural resources is also dependent on expertise, on the technologies used. The progress of mankind through the utilization of natural resources clearly illustrates this. Thus, the accumulation, transmission and enrichment of knowledge has become a driving force of social progress.

The economy of the knowledge based postindustrial society differs from that of the previous formations in the following respects:

Firstly, the knowledge embodied in goods and services is an important part of their value. One of the indicators of the increase of the share of research in the production of goods and the provision of services is the dynamics of the expenditure on research and construction & development works. This could be illustrated by the production of household appliances and agricultural produce, extraction of oil and valuable minerals as well as the production of astronautic and aeronautic equipment. The largest share of the market price of modern cars is the value of their design, electronics and other like components.

According to experts, the world market of goods and services with a high share of knowledge based components is developing five times as fast as traditional world markets.

Secondly, due to the above listed reasons, the activities related to the development and application of knowledge are gaining increased importance in the postindustrial society. Special importance is attached to education, the nature and content of which is undergoing dramatic changes. A real education industry has been created in the world. Such an industry is basically state funded. These expenses are as important for many countries as the expenses on national defense, health and social protection.

Thirdly, the main feature of knowledge based economy is that within the overall number of employees, the share of specialists involved in the development, transmission and application of knowledge is steadily increasing. For example, in the US, they already constitute one third of the population employed in the economic sector. One group of researchers maintains that this is a result of scientific and technological progress and the related increase in labor productivity and living standard. Other experts explain this by the exhaustion of natural and working resources. There is still

another group which links the changes in social production trends with information and communication revolutions.

Currently, information revolution is rightly considered to be the most important event after the invention of written language, and the printing press, whereas communication revolution is thought to be the most important event after inventing the wheel and the steam engine.

As a result of the integration of these XX century phenomena, we receive a synergic, rather than a cumulative effect in the social, economic and cultural sectors.

Information revolution has largely contributed to market globalization and, what is most important, has created new forms of arrangement of economic activities (electronic trading) as well as new economic activities per se (electronic money). All this will dramatically change economic practice in the near future. It is just the combination of these objective trends that determines the role and importance of intellectual resources.

Market globalization, the increased number of transnational companies and modern technologies facilitated the conquering of new markets, and, in parallel, created hyper competition at the transnational scale.

In the situation like this, a complex and multi-facet economic phenomenon – the ability to be competitive, acquires a paramount importance. In the current conditions, the basis of competitiveness is the innovative activity of market subjects.

The economy of the countries developed in the course of globalization is undergoing a lot of strategic changes. This trend is likely to strengthen in the post-crisis period. If, for example, in the second half of the last century, a long-term planning of economic activity was considered to be one of the main conditions for success, currently, the emphasis has shifted to the ability to rapidly adjust production to the changeable micro and macro environment.

Intense competition has not only accelerated the introduction of changes and the increase of hi - tech products. It has also significantly reduced the life cycle of goods. Due to this, many enterprises are trying to renew their goods and services. Otherwise it will be more and more difficult to retain one's own market share.

All the above determines several qualitative attributes of the post-industrial economy:

Attribute one – The quality of material basis and work force in enterprises falls behind the pace and scale of scientific and technological progress.

Attribute two – Increase in transactional expenses, related to the search for information, market research, concluding contracts and like activities, rather than production itself, i.e. procurement of raw or any other kind of material, work remuneration, etc.

In the situation like this, the production of goods implies lower expenses than their sale. Therefore, demand for obtaining/processing information, marketing research, advertising and other knowledge-based activities has largely increased.

Attribute three – Enhancing the role of the management's intellectual resources. It has to be noted that in the period of economic crisis as well as in the post-crisis period, managerial knowledge is no less important than the producer's skill level.

Attribute four – Need for continuing education determined by rapid structural changes in economy as well as intense competition not only between different companies, but also between the employed.

It is clear that even in the case of the best scenario, we will not be able to finance fundamental and applied research to the same extent as economically developed countries. In the situation like this, an emphasis is made on a well grounded practice of the management of intellectual resources, the relevant policy and the support and development of the educational system.

When it comes to teaching economics, the manual always becomes the main concern. Currently, in the higher educational institutions of Georgia, they mainly use general orientation manuals (economic theory course, micro and macro economics), or what in some of the countries falls under the general concept *economics*. These include widely recognized classical manuals, whose authors are distinguished economists like G. Mankiw, C. McConnell and S. Brew, R. Pindyck and D. Rubinfeld, J. Sloman and M. Sutcliffe, W. Baumol and A. Blinder.

I am very pleased to note that thanks to the contribution of the *Open Society-Georgia*, other NGOs and Georgian economists, who ensured the translation and publication of these manuals, they are now accessible for Georgian readers.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that our book market is currently saturated with economic manuals and additional readings. A large quantity of books published by different Georgian institutions for higher education and independent authors has recently appeared on the market.

In the 90-s of the last century, after almost seven decades of the dominance of scholastic economic ideas and the “expectation of the total failure of capitalism”, we finally had the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the scientific basis of market economy. We had a chance to learn, in detail, about different aspects of companies’ activities, like the rational use of resources, reduction of expenses, the ways to maximize profit, regulation of product supply in market economy, etc.

Scientific, student and business circles expected from western economics courses to be clearly practice oriented. However, in already several years’ time, after transition economies accumulated certain experience in teaching economic subjects, it turned out that like courses did not often consider the theoretical issues directly related to future businessmen’s practical activity. For example, to illustrate the behavior of companies, as well as the other economic issues and processes, they used mono and duo production models, whereas, we mostly encounter the producers of multi-products on the actual market. Even the smallest shop or kiosk sells diverse goods and tries to further widen its assortment. On the other hand, large enterprises have to choose out of a large number of commodities and produce exactly what the market wants. To do this, the managers of companies have to answer the three fundamental questions of market economy – What? How? Who for?

The activity of firms and companies is pictured in such a way, as if they were focused on the production of one and the same goods. You get an impression that the companies know exactly what the demand curve is going to be like, whereas, in reality, the manager is unaware of it. Also, the demand curve is so changeable, that any attempt of its prediction can be only regarded as an aid helping to orient oneself.

All these are latent problems of economics teaching. They manifest themselves not in the course of learning (the student without practical entrepreneurial experience does not even notice them), but after graduating from a higher educational institution, when, after starting practical activity, the graduate clearly sees that he/she is not able to effectively apply, in practice, the knowledge acquired through economic theory. As people start practical activity in real life situations, it often turns out that it is extremely difficult to apply in practice the knowledge obtained through the discussion of economic models and implement seemingly very clear recommendations.

No one questions the utility of reviewing models in the course of economics teaching, but, at the same time, it is necessary for a general theoretical economic context to include actual economic problems and their detailed description.

Another example of the gap existing between theory and practice is that adequate attention is not given to important economic categories (e.g. quality and competitiveness), which have to be thoroughly researched in the present conditions.

When describing a competitive market they use an unrealistic assumption about the operation of all the companies in equal conditions. We cannot, of course, limit ourselves to this abstract analytical stage. It would be more desirable to review the model of pure competition taking into consideration the difference between the company's expenditure and its behavior. Attempts to maximize profits is shown using the examples of the companies producing one sort of products.

Another important point is to consider the effects entailed by limited information available to economic subjects as well as asymmetric information and their impact on companies' activities. Almost any regular course in microeconomics describes companies' behavior in such a way, as if the companies knew in advance which obstacles to expect during their future activities. As for the extremely important problem of economic risk, it is either briefly discussed in the final section of the course, or is not discussed at all.

The manuals of economic theory do not highlight the entrepreneur's personal, creative role or his/her function in the coordination of the entrepreneur's and the consumer's interests. Nothing is said about the entrepreneur who constantly searches for unsatisfied market demands. At the same time, nothing points to the importance of entrepreneurial skills and they are only mentioned as one of the production factors.

It is clear that the combination of theory and practice is an extremely difficult task, which, even according to the methodology of economic theory, is determined through scientific abstractions and certain assumptions made in the course of economic studies.

The reproduction of intellectual resources and their management is topical not only for the leaders of world economy, but also for the economies in transition. This is especially important for those higher educational institutions of our country where economic disciplines are studied by a large number of students, who, in the future, are going to be employed by public and private enterprises, by the so-called economic block of state authority bodies. Given the dynamics of changes taking place in the world as well as in our country, fundamental education offered to such students has to include the theoretical approaches able to explain and predict economic processes given the changeability and instability of economic institutions.

One of the effective means ensuring the readiness for the most recent economic challenges is university education, which has always been fundamental and, at the same time, oriented at the students' narrow specialization. Similarly to the formation of new fields in economics, new directions appear in economic sciences. This process is especially intense in the economies that are in the state of transition.

The fundamental character of education is determined by the overall arrangement of the educational process in addition to studying basic disciplines during the first years. The balance of special and fundamental education is favored by the three-stage system of higher education - bachelor's, master's and PhD programs. These three stages of education meet any requirements of market economy.

Given the current university education, it is possible to single out the two functions of economic knowledge – professional and general cultural. Each one has its related specific tasks. Professional function of the acquisition of economic knowledge suggests that modern specialists, lawyers, journalists, political scientists and public administrators cannot operate without a needed level of economic knowledge. Furthermore, the professional function does not require deep knowledge of micro and macro economics. Therefore, in this case, the teaching of economic disciplines can be ensured through brief economic programs.

The other function of economic knowledge is general cultural. It implies the training of specialists who will have thorough knowledge of social processes. In this case, one of the crucial issues is the studying of economic theory, which encompasses different schools and directions. Thus, the utilization of the foreign models presented in modern economic manuals will be effective only if during the lecture, in the classroom, the students analyze in the context of standard theoretical situation national economy, economic situation in the country's regions and the activity of specific economic subjects. If the analyses does not take into consideration national or cultural traditions, it will be of no use.

For the above purpose, Georgian University, one of the leading higher educational institutions in the country, has introduced important innovations into the teaching of economic disciplines. Along with the fundamental courses in economic theory, macro and micro economics, traditionally delivered at the corresponding faculties of all the institutes and universities teaching economic disciplines, the University's economic, business and administration schools have introduced new courses (economic reforms, economic forecasting, economic systems and economic market models, the evolution of economic thought: Nobel prize winners, classical research in economics).

We are also planning to introduce courses in institutional economics, public sector economy, sectoral market economy, etc.

We find it extremely important to carry out interdisciplinary research involving economics, sociology and political sciences, which will make it possible to model administrative and other external influences on the economic activity of the enterprises and organizations of civil society. One of the promising directions is quality of life issues, which is also studied through interdisciplinary research involving economics and sociology. Competitiveness of Georgian economy is a topical research problem.

Linking theory and practice is a creative process. For this reason it has to take into consideration national traditions, the optimal balance between general economic

and special disciplines, research potential of higher educational institutions, and, what is even more important, the market demand for future specialists.

At the same time, given the intensification of the applied aspects in the teaching of economic disciplines, we should not ignore the current interest in economic theory. Disputes about the importance of economic theory have always been groundless, since such a theory creates the methodological basis for general economic thinking. What we have to think about is the direction to be taken during the in-depth teaching of economic theory.

We believe that instead of aligning theory with practice, we ought to make theoretical generalizations based on practical experience. Such an approach agrees with the internationally observed practice of teaching economic disciplines and is well illustrated in the manuals of managerial economics.

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