

## **TEACHING OF ECONOMICS AND PLURALISM IN BRAZIL**

**Rafael Galvão de Almeida**

PhD student at Economics from CEDEPLAR/UFMG

**Ian Coelho de Souza Almeida**

PhD student at Economics from CEDEPLAR/UFMG

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the current issues in the teaching of economics and analyzes the evolution of the teaching of economics in Brazil. We study the contents of Brazilian curriculum ever since the beginning of the 20th century in order to consider the various curricular reforms until reaching its current iteration. We argue that Brazil's economic plurality lays on the presence of divergent thinking in the local economic thought development. The early presence of HET as a mandatory discipline can help explain this environment, although this direct implication may have hindrances. In a further attempt to explain the alleged phenomena, we also show the current situation of teaching through the eyes of the professors. This investigation continue on showing that the economic professors in Brazil feel there is little preparation to teach economics and that, although there is great space on how to improve economic education, most of them agree that the teaching of economics in Brazil must be rethought. In light of all that, we argue that, due to its peculiar evolution of economic thought, Brazil allows a relatively greater level of plurality in the academy.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The 2007-2008 crisis showed there are problems in the teaching of economics. This diagnostic is clear both for Brazil and for the world. And given how economics is an international social science, i.e., it has a clearly distinguishable framework that allows peoples of different nations and contexts recognize a “common language”, there is convergence in a lot of issues, especially teaching of economics. The internationalization of the discipline is a double-edged sword because, while it allows an easy interchange among different people, it also ends up creating a monistic pattern that rules out different approaches. However, it also creates the opportunity for alternative approaches to converge as well as alternatives to the mainstream.

In this paper, we aim to understand how the Brazilian experience in teaching of economics can be a good way to show that have pluralism in academia is possible. However, this paper also studies problems and issues in the Brazilian economics and educational system.

This paper has six parts, including this one. In the second part, we study current issues in economic education, by analyzing two reports: the Teagle Report, financed by the Teagle

Foundation, that evaluated the situation of the majors in economics through the United States in relation to a liberal arts education. The results and discussions were gathered in *Educating Economists: The Teagle Discussion on Re-evaluating the Undergraduate Economics Major* (COLANDER; MCGOLDRICK, 2009); the second, *What Is The Use of Economics: Teaching the Dismal Science After the Crisis*, (COYLE, 2012a), comes from a conference sponsored by the British government where a series of discussions took place between the various stakeholders in economic education, i.e., employers, teachers and graduate students. It should be noted that, while their context is referent to the United States and Great Britain, the issues are also seen in Brazil. Thus, issues of each country, while they have their localisms, also have converged. In this context, we believe it is useful to assess both reports in order to understand the Brazilian teaching of economics context.

In the third part, we give an abridged history of economic thought in Brazil. The Brazilian tradition is peculiar because it allows a *relative* greater level of pluralism in economics. We also briefly discuss the reasons why this pluralism emerged in Brazil.

The fourth part is meant to show how the economic education evolved in Brazil, ever since from its first course, in the beginnings of the XIX century, to the curriculum reforms that happened in the XX century.

In the fifth part, we analyze the results of an empirical research on the current situation of Brazilian economics course, from the point of view of the teachers in which we analyze the issues posed in part two. They were asked to give their account on the situation and hopefully to induce improvements in the Brazilian economic education. Lastly, we conclude the article.

## 2. ISSUES IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION

In order to approach the issues in economic education, we use COLANDER; MCGOLDRICK (2009) and COYLE (2012a) as guides to the situation of teachings of economics. We considered those two works as better suited to the objectives of this paper and to Brazil's situation, because the issues explored in those reports were the base of the empirical research studied in the fifth part of this paper.

The Teagle Report discussed the importance of a liberal arts education<sup>1</sup> in the economics major. The main issue is that most of the teachers in most American colleges are graduate students

---

<sup>1</sup> The liberal arts education is an approach that focuses on the formation of thinkers, an intellectual elite capable of critical thinking, instead of a technical skill-focused education. "The aim of liberal education, however, is not to produce scientists. It seeks to develop free human beings who know how to use their minds and are able to think for themselves. Its primary aim is not the development of professional competence, although a liberal education is indispensable for any intellectual profession. It produces citizens who can exercise their political liberty responsibly. It

in PhD Programs throughout the United States. Those teachers are usually specialized in one field, the one in which they are working in their thesis and have a great understanding of the techniques involved, as it is argued: “So, today, as a result of their increased technical training and reduced broad-based training, the economics professorate contributes more to the quantitative literacy goal of a liberal education, and less to the moral reasoning goal.” (COLANDER; MCGOLDRICK, 2009, p. 17).

The fact that there is a huge emphasis on techniques means that the “Great Books” approach, that focused on studying and debating classical economic texts, waned with time. One of the reasons why this happened is, while it was popular in the 1950s and 1960s, PhD students that taught those classes were ill prepared, thus the content was delivered superficially<sup>2</sup>. The crisis of economic thought teaching in the US is a testament to this, as Mark Blaug argued in his well-known essay (BLAUG, 2001). Persky laments that “Historical and institutional materials have been largely removed from the graduate curriculum. This is an unfortunate and destructive development. Economists rightly value their efforts at rigor and discipline. But it is foolish and self-defeating to achieve those at the cost of abandoning realism.” (PERSKY, 2009, p. 44).

Not only the history of thought is harmed, but moral reasoning as well<sup>3</sup>. Marglin comments that critical thinking, especially about the conclusions economists reach through their modeling tools, is lacking in the economic discipline (MARGLIN, 2009).

As a result, “graduate education is not designed to create future professors of undergraduates; it is designed to create cutting-edge researchers who teach undergraduates as a sideline.” (COLANDER; MCGOLDRICK, p. 13). The underlying idea is that if the teacher has a PhD, he is automatically prepared to teach (COLANDER, 2004). The result is that PhD students do not consider themselves prepared to teach, to the point even a superficial training can be helpful for them to feel at ease teaching (MCCOY; MILKMAN, 2010).

Related to this, there is a presence of a “publish or perish” culture, which may affect both research and teaching (FANELLI, 2010). And the existence of this culture affects the way teachers allocate their time in researching and teaching. Although the complementarity between the two is considered the foundation of the modern university model, there is ambiguous evidence for and against it, due to difficulty in quantifying it (QUIGGIN, 2004). However, “if academics have to

---

develops cultivated persons who can use their leisure fruitfully. It is an education for all free men, whether they intend to be scientists or not.” (ADLER, 2015). Although Colander & McGoldrick are more focused on one approach to liberal education, we believe that their discussion can benefit the teaching of economics in general.

<sup>2</sup> “I suspect that the fields of history of thought and economic history faded from economics pedagogy in large part because of the difficulties of teaching the subtleties of these fields...the problem is that when these subjects are taught by lesser mortals – even those who are extraordinarily bright – the subtlety of the information conveyed is often lost.” (COLANDER, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Yezer, Goldfarb and Poppen (1996) argue there is evidence that economic theory turns students into more egotist persons.

spend more time teaching, they will spend less time on researching. This lowering of research output hurts the department's reputation and, therefore, its budget." (MCMAHON, 2012). Departments have to equilibrate between incentives to teaching (national exams such as the ENADE, in Brazil) and researching (budget and prestige concerns). So, in theory, it would exist a trade-off between teaching and researching. Against this, Hill argues that good researchers are good teachers and that, for a good economist, there should be no problem in teaching anything beside their field of specialization (HILL, 2009).

Thus, in the end, "all undergraduate economics programs reflect the graduate economics programs that train the undergraduate teachers. People teach what they learn." (COLANDER; MCGOLDRICK, 2009, p. 31). If the graduate student considers "thinking like an economist" mean proficiency in mathematical and statistical skills, their students will learn this as well. But the authors ask themselves whether those should be the focus of undergraduate teaching, because, while those skills are essential to students aspiring grad school, the great majority of undergraduate students do not aim grad school<sup>4</sup>.

The Teagle Report suggests many structural and pedagogical changes, such as increasing the number of professors that can promote teaching, providing credit incentives for grad students to choose training workshops and even full courses, and creating opportunities to better training, better incentives, and better interchange of professionals and students. There are more controversial ones, such as splitting the economics major into "economic theory" and "economic policy". All of this should be allied with a pedagogical reform of economics curriculum. Although of great interest, further discussions on those measures are beyond the scope of this paper.

In contrast, the discussion present in Coyle (2012a) is less focused on the establishment of a liberal education, and more in the relation between the teaching and perspectives of employment. She mentions that "the gap between the interesting question or real-world problems and the workhorse economics being taught to students at all levels has become a chasm since the start of the crisis" (COYLE, 2012b). This gap is not ignored by employers of economic graduates: "given this curriculum, students were poorly equipped to understand either the unfolding of the credit crunch or the deeper roots of the financial crisis and the Great Recession that has followed." (CARLIN, 2012).

The lack of an interdisciplinary approach is a concern, as Ramsden (2012) warned: "the real world does not respect any demarcations of disciplines, and policymaking is therefore intrinsically socioeconomic." Practical training is surely valuable for employers, as much as there is

---

<sup>4</sup> This is a well-documented fact in literature (HEYNE, 1995; SOUZA, 1996; COLANDER, 2004; O'DONNELL, 2004; ISLAM; MANALLOOR, 2009; PERSKY, 2009; COYLE, 2012b).

a difference between being trained in how to drive a car and how to build one, to which the current economic teaching is associated (ANAND; LEAPE, 2012).

Employers do not ignore the fields of economic history and history of thought. James commented that finance is history and that it should be analyzed historically, especially in the presence of great game-changing events, such as the recent crisis (JAMES, 2012). Furthermore, Stephen King, then HSBC's chief economist, warned that, contrary to the stereotype, knowledge of economic history is valuable in the financial markets, in addition to knowledge of international economic relationships and conjuncture developments, global capital flows and political economy – besides financial markets themselves, obviously. However, he also warned that “young economists arrive in the financial world with little or no knowledge of how the financial system operates” (KING, 2012). In other words, the “blackboard economics” Coase warned about in his “Nobel” lecture (COASE, [1991] 2015).

The consequence of blackboard economics is that they know little about the data. Bridget Rosewell, from the consultancy firm Volterra Partners, mentioned from personal experience that “economists think that they understand economic data because they have been taught a concept” (ROSEWELL, 2012). Much talk is about the possibilities of economics, but students also need to learn about the limits of it as well.

As we showed, there is an ample scope of issues to be explored in teaching of economics. The ones covered in this article are a mere fraction of the ones examined in the literature. Nevertheless, the focus of our paper is teaching in Brazil and its relation to the pluralism, that it will be the theme of our concern in the next sessions. Before presenting the impressions of Brazilian teachers on teaching and the question of pluralism, our intention is to argue that the country has in its theoretical diversity a strong characteristic. Therefore, we will introduce the different schools of thought that made themselves present over the twenty-first century and the development of the economic curriculum since its early days as one of the reasons for that. Then, we will be able to present the empirical research with a clear context.

### **3. THE SCHOOLS OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT IN BRAZIL**

One thing that is peculiar to Brazilian economic thought is the presence of many different schools of economic thought. Not only those schools of thought that are imported from abroad, such as the neoclassical, the Marxist and the Keynesian, but also a few ones developed in Brazil and Latin America.

The development of distinct schools of thought and Brazilian economic research is related to the industrialization of the country, started during the Vargas Age (1930-1945). Before it, the

Brazilian economic thought had a liberal bias, according to Bielschowsky (2001, p. 37). The State-sponsored industrialization challenged the liberal orthodoxy pre-1930. At the end of the Vargas Age, the dispute concentrated between two approaches: the 1930's neoliberalism<sup>5</sup>, represented by Eugênio Gudin, which defended the insertion of Brazil as a mainly primary products exporter in the international order, following the Ricardian comparative advantage doctrine; and the first developmentalism, represented by Roberto Simonsen, that defended the continuing industrialization of the country (SIMONSEN; GUDIN, 2010)<sup>6</sup>. Both approaches would shape the policy debates in the following years (and, arguably, today).

Mantega noted that the period between the 1960s and the 1980s was marked by great creativity in the Brazilian economic thought. (MANTEGA, 1997, p. 107). He listed five different approaches:

- The national developmentalism, influenced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), under the influence of Celso Furtado and Raúl Prebisch; it defended the creation of a national pact and Keynesian interventions in the economy;
- The authoritarian developmentalism, an evolution of the national developmentalism, but under the military government; it also proposed active intervention in the economy (although they had influence of liberal thinkers), and it had the great patrons as Delfim Netto, Mario Henrique Simonse, Affonso Celso Pastore, and most of the government economists of the time;
- The Neomarxist current, under André Gunder Frank, Teothônio dos Santos and Ruy Mauro Maurini, which defended radical ideas, such as the abandonment of capitalism for a socialist order. Those had limited but important influence in Brazilian academia (such as Marini, who defended that Brazil should integrate its markets with countries with similar level of development, a precursor to the idea of South-South relations);
- The New Left, that included an updated synthesis of Marxian and Keynesian ideas, and adopted a moderate approach to social issues (without supporting the military government or a socialist revolution); another name for this would be Dependency

---

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the term “neoliberalism” in this context has nothing to do with the 1990's neoliberalism. “The neoliberal economists were concerned, primordially, in defending the market system, basic formula of economic efficiency. Therefore, they were mainly liberals. The prefix “neo” has a very precise meaning: it represents the fact that Brazilian liberals, in their majority, started to admit, in the new reality after 1930, the necessity of some state intervention to cure market imperfections, that, according to what they recognized it, affected underdeveloped economies such as the Brazilian.” (BIELSCHOWSKY, 2001, p. 37).

<sup>6</sup> The debate was important for the Brazilian economic thought and it had various nuances. See Loureiro (2009) for a summary of the debate available in English language.

Theory, but Mantega claims that it is not accurate (p. 124); Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Enzo Faletto, Paul Singer, José Serra were the main thinkers.

- The “inertial inflation theory”, that developed from studies about the Brazilian hyperinflation in the 1980s; its lead thinkers were Pêrsio Arida, André Lara Resende, Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, Yoshiaki Nakano and others; this current would later influence the 1990s Brazilian neoliberalism (MANTEGA, 1997, p. 110-128).

The abundance of different approaches reflected in academic positions. Loureiro and Lima (1994) summarized the polarization between the graduate centers in Brazil: in one side, the EPGE and the Catholic Pontifical University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) were *the* centers of neoclassical orthodoxy, with over 80% of their professors (in the biennium 1991-1992) with a PhD from an American university; on the other side, the Economics Institute of the State University of Campinas (IE-Unicamp) and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) followed the developmentalist doctrine of the ECLAC and had less of their professors with a PhD abroad (in the same biennium as before; the IE-Unicamp had only 8% of their professors with a PhD abroad); in the middle term, the IPE-USP and the CEDEPLAR-UFMG managed to have a relevant population of both orthodox and heterodox economists (p. 40).

The polarization rendered some conflicts. One of them happened when the IE-Unicamp requested filiation to ANPEC. The EPGE opposed the entrance because it did not consider the research developed in the IE-Unicamp as “scientific”, due to the center’s heterodox inclination. The request was denied and the EPGE exited ANPEC in protest for a few years (DELFIM NETTO, et al, 1997, p. 235-236).

Thus, we have sought to show that in the diversity of economic thought in Brazil, each school found their own niche. However, due to historic developments, the heterodox schools have a *relative* greater degree of acceptance than in other countries. And we will analyze whether the teaching methods and the curriculum structure has some influence in this.

#### **4. TEACHING OF ECONOMICS IN BRAZIL: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO PLURALISM**

The first degree in Economics was authorized in 1905, granted to the Commerce Academy of Rio de Janeiro (founded in 1902) and conferred the diploma of “graduate in economics” to those who finished the course, and “doctor in economics” to those who defended a thesis (PAULA, 1942, p. 37). In spite of being labeled as an “economics” course, most of the disciplines consisted of

Business and Accounting classes, with one single Political Economy chair. A new reform of the curriculum, in 1926, introduced more Law disciplines. The Free Sociology and Politics School of São Paulo (ELSP), founded in 1933, conferred diplomas in Social Sciences and had an emphasis on economic disciplines, such as social economics, international economics, history of economic thought, and others; ironically, it had more “pure economics” disciplines than the Rio de Janeiro school.

The decree-law nº 7,988, September 22 implemented the first official economics college. In practice, it was a reform of the Rio de Janeiro’s course, in order to increase the focus on actual economic disciplines. The cited decree also established the first institution dedicated to teach economics, the National Economics College, in the University of Brazil (located in Rio de Janeiro). In addition of establishing the curriculum, the decree also provided a model for future courses (until 1963). This curriculum, which had the important contributions of Bulhões and Gudin, was the first attempt of creating an internationalized curriculum, i.e., based on what meant by an “orthodoxy” (in the loosest sense of the term) of the 1940s’ economics. That included an emphasis on rationality and scientific rigor, rejection of “hybrid” curriculums (that had an abundance of Law and Business classes) in favor of mathematical and statistics classes. (LOUREIRO; LIMA, 1994)<sup>7</sup>. It should be noted that there was no regulation about the credit hours and other factors, and it did not specify syllabus for the proposed disciplines (NOGUEIRA; NUNES; BARROSO, 2005).

The regulation of the teaching and training of economics was an old demand. The formation of the economist, especially after the 1930s, was linked to federal administration bodies, and the training focused in preparing them to occupy public posts. The Superintendência da Moeda e do Crédito (SUMOC, lit. “Superintendence of Credit and Money”) and Departamento Administrativo do Serviço Público (DASP, lit. “Administrative Department of Public Service”) absorbed the supply of economists (LOUREIRO, 1992). The only way to acquire a better training in economics was the ECLAC courses on economic planning (BIELSCHOWSKY, 2001, p. 7). Another reason for regulation demands was that the first undergraduate classes had low quality: the majority of the teachers had no formal training in economics. They emigrated from other disciplines such as Law and Accounting. The low quality created a great level of evasion and it led to low demand of economics courses in the following years (LOUREIRO & LIMA, 1994)<sup>8</sup>. The emphasis in public careers meant a neglect of the private careers (DELFIM NETTO, et al, 1997, p. 293).

---

<sup>7</sup> However, the model took years to be fully implemented. In the University of São Paulo, for example, only in the 1960s that it was implemented reinforcements in courses such as economic theory and mathematics, in order to follow international standards (LOUREIRO, 1997b, p. 9).

<sup>8</sup> An example was the educational crises that the Economics Department of the University of São Paulo went through the 1950’s. (CANABRAVA, 1984)



Those problems persisted through years, until the powers that be decided to take action. In order to address those issues, the Ford Foundation sponsored the Itaipava Congress in 1966, the first great congress on the situation of the teaching of economics in Brazil (WIDDICOMBE JR, 1966). The diagnostic was bleak: unbalanced professional formation and geographic distribution ensured that the most qualified personnel was concentrated in a few centers in the southeast (DELFIM NETTO, 1966), excess of non-economic disciplines due to lack of prepared teachers, lack of basic knowledge of mathematics, statistics, logical reasoning in general, and lack of knowledge about the Brazilian institutions (SIMONSEN, 1966), the “bacharelist” culture, that conceded diplomas as a means of status, graduating ill-prepared professionals (FERREIRA, 1966) that demoralize the merit system and produced wage distortions (VELLOSO, 1966). Additionally, lack of quality in the academic production (KERSTENETZKY; CHACEL, 1966) was another consequence, though this was furthered by the lack of economic journals in the country.

As for the main suggestions to improve the situation, there was a call to establish a “minimal curriculum”, in cooperation with foreign teachers, create graduate schools and tutorship programs, create a national association of economists, facilitate access to national and international economic research (DELFIM NETTO, 1966), closure of low quality schools, or transforming them into business schools, renewing of teaching staff (SIMONSEN, 1966), elimination of excessive Law and Accounting classes, expansion of *lato sensu* training programs (FERREIRA, 1966), reform of hiring methods in the public sector, creation of study groups in order to prepare sectorial projects (VELLOSO, 1966), establishment of centers of economic research, to incentive research projects on many topics, especially the improvement of the statistical data system (KERSTENETZKY; CHACEL, 1966). Although the lecturers defended the internationalization of the teaching, they preferred hiring foreign faculty in order to tutor national teachers.

The congress also delineated the format of Brazilian graduate programs in economics. The curriculum proposed by Simonsen (1966, p. 28) still influences today’s graduate programs: beginning with summer courses on mathematics and statistics, first semester consisting of further mathematics, statistics, together with econometrics, macro and microeconomics and further periods consisting of expansion of the contents taught in the first semester content, plus electives.

The university reform of 1968 gave momentum to the deliberations of the Itaipava Congress, especially the ones proposed by Simonsen. In a reform that started deep modifications of the national pedagogical base, it was established that universities and colleges should train professionals in order to supply industrialization demands. This process started with the Working Group, established in 1968 after student pressures following the military coup in 1964 (FERNANDES, 1970). It created the reform of Brazilian higher education.

The main proposals were the organization of teaching institutions in department systems, selection of candidates through an unified selection exam (the “vestibular”), the implementation of a common base cycle to many areas, the creation of a credit hour system and the substitution of chairs by disciplines (ROTHEN, 2008). In spite of the modifications, there were no changes in the economics standard curriculum until 1983. And yet, the teaching of Economics became more focused on teaching a profession at the same time it established the graduate programs.

Concerning this advance, Rego points that the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV) implemented the first doctoral program in economics, in 1966. It was named Graduate School of Economics (EPGE), led by Mario Henrique Simonsen (REGO, 1997). Yet, according to Rego, the EPGE method was intimately linked to the American methodology, which meant intense use of mathematical content in the disciplines. This influence became explicit by the fact that both the EPGE and the Economic Research Institute of the São Paulo University (IPE) received investments by a deal that had the participation of the USAID. This shows the link between the education model proposed to Brazil and the direct influence of the American economic teaching, as part of the renewal policy proposed by the military government. With the advance of this process, the National Association of Graduate Schools in Economics (ANPEC) is established in 1973, and also had the sponsorship of American institutes, such as the Ford Foundation (FERNÁNDEZ; SUPRINYAK, 2014<sup>9</sup>).

However, even without changes to the standard curriculum of the economics courses, the university reform of 1968 brought increased flexibility, allowing each institution manage their courses based on their own interests. With time, the divergences between curriculums of each institution became apparent for many reasons, among them the political climate. According to Almeida (2015), even in a period of strong social control and repression, none of the professors interviewed claimed to have a direct and intentional censorship to the content lectured in the classrooms (not even the Marxist related content, given the anticommunist context of the military government)<sup>10</sup>.

However, the modernization had its critics. Many of the left-inclined professors denounced an “Americanization” of the teaching of economics. The “internationalization” was another term for the American cultural imperialism, which molded the teaching of economics into American demands, not Brazilian ones (LOUREIRO; LIMA, 1994).

---

<sup>9</sup> Fernández and Suprinyak show that the role of the Ford Foundation was beyond the mere organization of ANPEC. It established norms for the creation of graduate programs and facilitated the interchange between Brazilian and foreign institutions, greatly improving the situation of the teaching of economics in Brazil.

<sup>10</sup> However, some interviewees did take measures of self-censorship, by not approaching certain issues or not writing about certain themes, fearing for reprisals (cf. ALMEIDA, 2015).

In general, we are inclined to recognize a tendency towards pluralism in Brazil's teaching, mainly due to the tradition of diverse national schools of thought and the presence of HET ever since the first standard curriculum, including the Itaipava model. However, this is not a strong argument if we consider how plural can be historians of economic thought. As Lee (2009) asserts, most of these historians do not consider the possibility that heterodox theories to be analyzed as a concise community, to study them as organized groups and heavy debate. Those argue that the continuity-pluralism thesis understand that the mainstream thought is the only one that can be considered intellectual history as a group<sup>11</sup>, and the other ones only enter in the debate when they are interacting with the first ones.

#### 4.1 HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT AND PLURALISM

In this article, we claim great importance to the role of the presence of History of Economic Thought in Brazilian syllabi since the establishment of the first undergraduate course. Nevertheless, it is important that we present the possible connections between HET and a pluralistic economics. The teaching of different approaches to economic problem solving was one of the major requests from student movements, such as the *Post-Autistic Economics Movement*, in France (REARDON, 2009). Four Notre Dame University's students wrote a testimony on their experience in such movements and the importance to know other theories than the Neoclassical, arguing how learning Political Economy allows a deeper understanding of traditional economics by depicting "the historical evolution of concepts and their implication" (DAN et. al, 2009:25). They proposed more HET classes as one of the solutions<sup>12</sup>. In our point of view, studying HET is effective to accomplish this goal, and the presence of it in the courses contributes to a more diverse view on economics.

Not only the HET is useful, but it is also a strategy to introduce heterodox economics in an orthodox environment. This approach is called the "competing paradigms" (NELSON, 2009). Either way, teaching HET may be seen as an effective manner of avoiding a orthodox monism. As Dow (2009) defends, the teaching of HET can be directly correlated to the existence of pluralism in economic teaching. The same can be said of teaching of Methodology (FERNÁNDEZ, 2011)<sup>13</sup>. However, the causality may be inverse, as points out Davies (2006:12): "In periods dominated by

---

<sup>11</sup> An example, according to Lee, would be the vision that the Marshallian theory is a direct continuation of Smith, Ricardo and Mill, thus there is no disjunction between the classical political economic and the neoclassical theory.

<sup>12</sup> Last year, we asked faculty and administrators, "Why is history of economic thought not required for the major while econometrics is? Why can't the ideas of political economy be introduced in our introductory courses? And why are there fewer and fewer political economy courses offered at the upper levels?" (DAN et. al, 2009:27)

<sup>13</sup> The teaching of Methodology was only included in the standard curriculum in 1984, in which the discipline appears as an "elective" in the professional formation. However, some universities already required it as obligatory years ago. In the case of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, it is mandatory ever since 1973 (cf. ALMEIDA, 2015).

particular approaches a lower value is placed on self-examination and self-appraisal on account of the absence of competition from other approaches”. In contrast, when divergent approaches are present, i.e. the role field of the study is not identified with one theory in particular, economists will value HET and Methodology better, since this will allow them to make their position clearer in the market of ideas.

This subject may be of major importance for understanding Brazil’s diverse theoretical environment. The 1945 curriculum had emphasis in technical abilities, but one trait from this curriculum, which we consider important for this work, is the presence of the HET class. Even an economist such as Simonsen suggested that the discipline “History economic doctrines” should be an elective of the future graduate programs (SIMONSEN, 1966, p. 28). None of the later curriculum reforms abandoned the teaching of HET. This is important to note, because in many countries the teaching of HET is not a required discipline, as O’Brien (2007) shows for the United States and Great Britain. Besides. Furthermore, when the a heated debate over economic planning happened during the establishment of the first curriculum – the Gudin/Simonsen debate mentioned above (GUDIN; SIMONSEN, 2010). Both Gudin and Simonsen used many examples of the history of economic doctrines (Gudin focused on the Ricardian international exchange, while Simonsen used the state-led development ideas by List).

Anyway, either as a cause or as a consequence we can connect the presence of HET to pluralism. This is an important characteristic of Brazilian economics, and one not easily found in several countries. However, in order to evaluate the apparent plural environment in Brazil, we present a survey made with Brazilian professors of economics that provides a preliminary view of their main traits and issues.

## **5. CURRENT ISSUES IN BRAZILIAN TEACHING: AN EMPIRICAL PRELIMINARY APPROACH**

The teaching of economics in Brazil does not get a great amount of attention. Ever since the Itaipava Congress, there has been little attention to topics of teaching, the USP meeting (LOUREIRO, 1997) been a rare example. Even though there are some sparse articles, there has been little effort in order to map how the teaching is done.

In order to fulfill that gap, an empirical attempt to map the current state of economic teaching in Brazil, focusing on pluralism, is summarized in this contribution<sup>14</sup>. The main topics concerning this qualitative research effort is majorly on teaching capacitation, teaching capacitation incentives, impressions on the state of nature of the economics and its teaching and the role of the

---

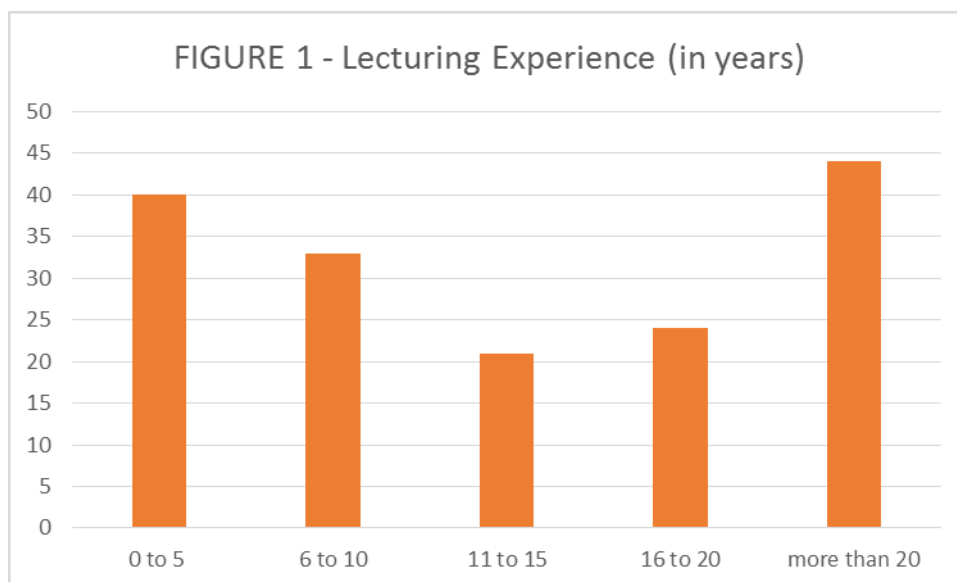
<sup>14</sup> See Almeida (2014) for further details.

academics as professors or researchers<sup>15</sup>, following the issues in economic teaching analyzed in part two of this paper.

The questionnaire contained 16 questions, ranging from questions about their age, gender, title, current university, teaching experience, incentives to teaching, use of teaching materials, and impression teaching and teaching environment. After sending a questionnaire to many public and private economics faculty, there were 162 replies. The general characteristics of our sample are as follows:

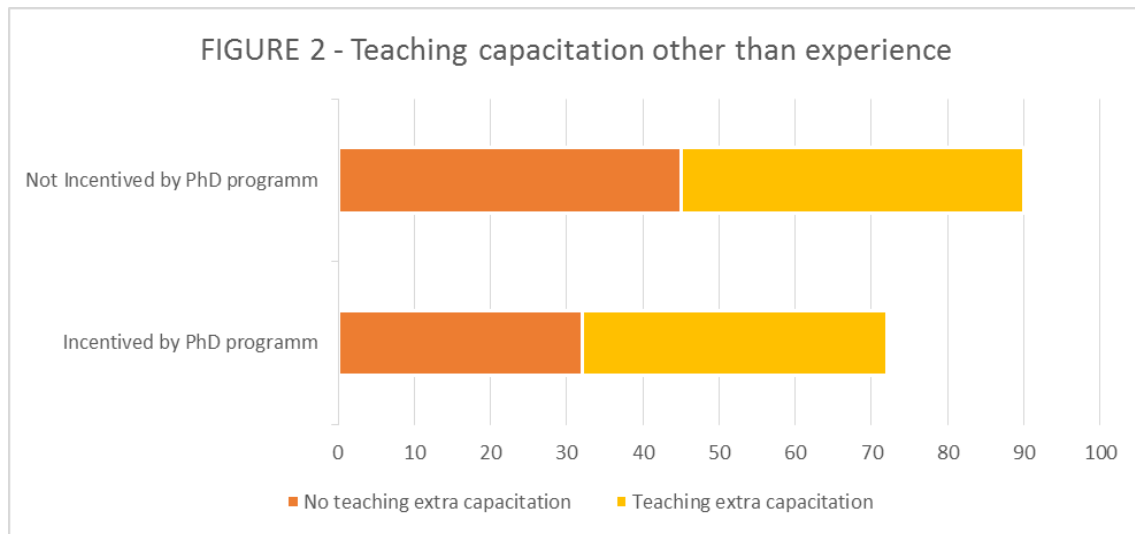
- 71% of them were men, while 29% were women;
- 52%, of them are less than 41 years old;
- 64% of them have a doctoral degree (most public universities in Brazil have tighter requirements for their admission exams such as necessity of a doctoral degree);
- 62% of them spent the majority or their lecturing time in public faculties;
- The great majority of them (85%) uses textbooks;
- The average was that they spent 14.7 years lecturing, which may indicate stability in the career;

As for actual experience, FIGURE 1 shows the distribution of our respondents teaching experience. It is slightly concentrated in the extremities (high and low experience).



<sup>15</sup> Most of academics, in Brazil, have to fulfill both roles.

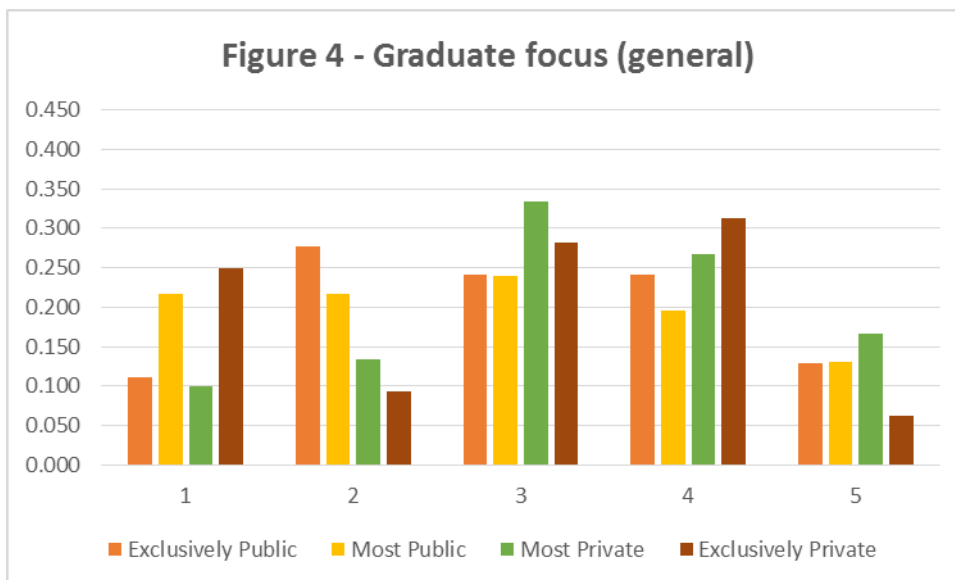
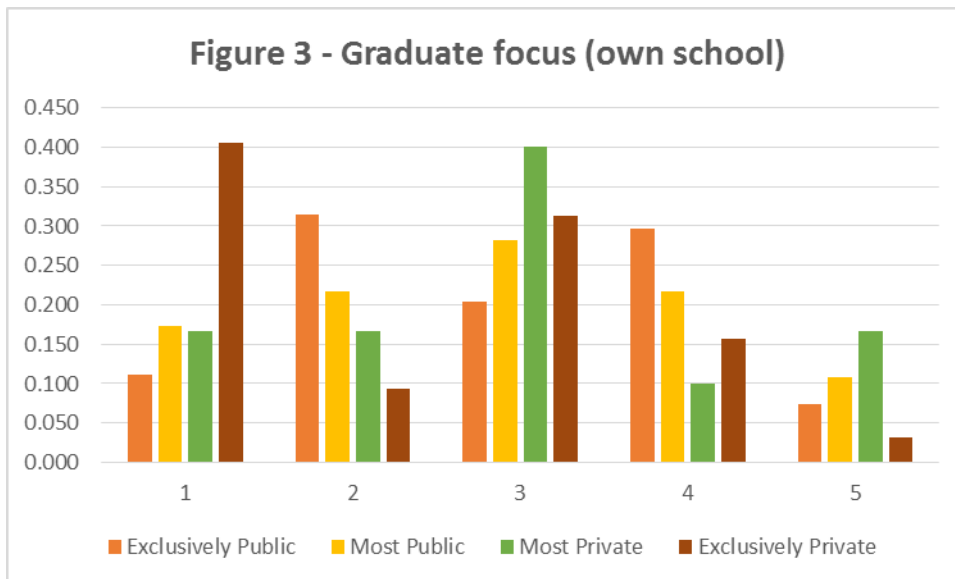
Regarding the teaching capacitation, most of the interviewees had no incentive on this topic by its graduate programs. Nevertheless, as is shown on FIGURE 2, this is not a major impact factor on whether the professor actually engaged on those kind of activities or not.



The later questions (with exception of the last one) used a Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree, moderately disagree, neutral, moderately agree and strongly agree. The graphics of the results to these questions are compiled on FIGURE 6.

Concerning the curriculum, we proposed them to the following questions: “In average, the current curriculum of economics focuses in preparing the student to grad school instead of the market” and “The current curriculum of my school focuses more in preparing the student to graduate school instead of market.” There was a slight agreement with this statement, 26% were neutral, while 25% agreed moderately. Below, in FIGURES 3 and 4, we depict these results with a secondary differentiation: whether the respondents spent most of their period as a teacher in a public or private institution. This aspect is important due the current understanding of a major difference on the objectives of teaching in private and public institutions, besides the possible influence from the funding source.

The most sensitive information this aspect add to our study, is how (only) private school professors tend to see their institutions’ courses as very little inclined towards a graduate focus (about 40% of them marked “1” in the questionnaire). Although 31,5% of the respondents who spent all their career in public institutions “moderately disagree” with the sentence, 29,6% of them “moderately agree”, keeping us from making any further inference.

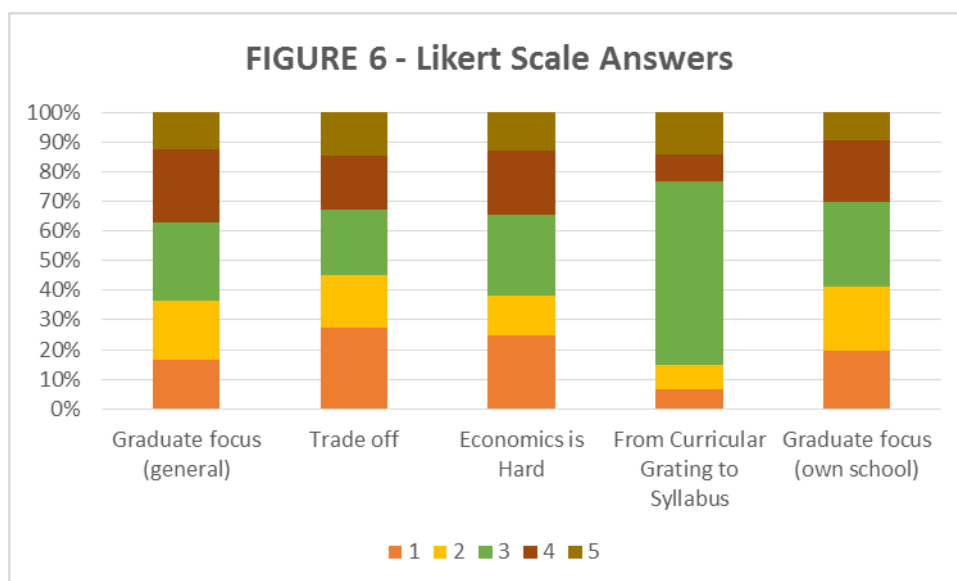


Moreover, regarding the trade-off between research and teaching we posed the following statement: “There is a trade-off between teaching and research”. It yielded a strong discordance. Over half of them disagreed, either moderately or strongly. This indicates Brazilian economic teacher tend to see the complementarity between research and teaching as important. Separating again the respondents by teaching facilities (if either public or private), there was no significant difference, where at least 40% of all the four possibilities strongly disagreeing or moderately disagreeing, as can be seen on FIGURE 5.



The statement that “Economics is, in general, harder to teach, when compared to other disciplines” yielded no conclusive distinction. 38% of them disagreed either moderately or strongly, while 34% agreed.

Furthermore, the research also pointed that most economics teachers prefer that, in a curriculum reform, it should be given attention to both the catalogue of disciplines and their syllabus. In the scale, 1 meant it should focus more on the catalogue, 3 should focus equally on them, while 5 meant it should focus on the syllabus. As mentioned above, the compilation of all Likert scale questions can be seen on FIGURE 6.



At last, the questionnaire asked the professors to add comments regarding teaching economics or any personal experience. It was not mandatory), but some patterns emerged: thirteen



thought that the courses should be more concerned with applications (some meaning more pro-market teaching, other mathematic methods or even Brazilian context). On the syllabus reform, pluralism was the most remembered question, and the intention to open it to the presence of specific subjects (as finance, environmental economics, history, math or behavioral economics) was present. Some also demanded a convergence towards the American curriculum, or even a clearer differentiation among departments, with clear specialization in each field of economics, in the sense Werlang proposed in Delfim Netto, et al (1997).

However, one of the main problems pointed by them is the low quality of the high school students that enter the economics college. In the 2012 PISA results, Brazilian students performed below the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science (OECD, 2012), key disciplines for economics. The survey shows that economics teachers are aware of this underperforming effect. They have to spend more time teaching and re-teaching basic knowledge the students should have mastered in high school and, because of this, it remains little time to teach more advanced topics, i.e. the “second high school effect”.

## 6. CONCLUSION

We argued that the 2007-2008 created opportunities for reevaluation of the teaching of economics. In spite the fact that the Teagle Report was finished in 2006, its conclusions are congruent with the push for rethinking the teaching of the discipline, along with the various stakeholders of the economic science, as Coyle (2012a) showed. The reaction to the crisis urged economists to acknowledge there are alternatives to the mainstream approach, and those alternatives must not waste the opportunity to improve themselves and improve the mainstream approach with punctual criticism.

And this is a worldwide tendency. Brazil, due to the peculiarity of its economic evolution, is endowed with a *relative* greater degree of pluralism in the academy. However, little is discussed about the state of teachings of economics. The concerns of 1966’s Itaipava Congress still echo in the college classes. Issues such as lack of updated curriculums and teaching technology, low quality of high school students entering college, and lack of relevant applications are obstacles that hinder the development of the economic teaching in Brazil. More research in this topic and push for a defense of pluralist approaches in teaching is warranted.

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

ADLER, M. **What is liberal education?** Available at <<http://www.ditext.com /adler/wle.html>>, access: 4 sep. 2015.

ALMEIDA, I. C. S. **Disseminação do pensamento marxista durante a ditadura civil-militar:** Uma abordagem de história oral. Curitiba/PR. Dissertação (Mestrado em Desenvolvimento Econômico) – Setor de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, 2015.

ALMEIDA, R. G. **Desafios ao ensino de economia:** didática, capacitação e currículo. Trabalho final. Curso de Especialização em Docência do Ensino Superior. Mogi das Cruzes: Universidade Braz Cubas, 2014.

ANAND, P.; LEAPE, J. What economists do – and how universities might help, 2012. In: COYLE, 2012a.

BIELSCHOWSKY, R. **Pensamento econômico brasileiro:** o ciclo ideológico do desenvolvimentismo, 1930-1964. 5ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2001. [1989].

BLAUG, M. No history of ideas, please, we're economists. **Journal of Economic Perspectives**, vol. 15, n. 1, p. 145-164, 2001.

CANABRAVA, A. P. (Coord.); **História da Faculdade de Economia e Administração da Universidade de São Paulo:** 1946-1981. São Paulo: FEA/USP, 1984.

CARLIN, W. Reforming the macroeconomics curriculum, 2012. In: COYLE, 2012a.

COASE, R. H. The institutional structure of production, 1991. **Nobelprize.org**. Nobel Media AB 2015. Disponível em: <[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/economics/ciences/laureates/1991/coase-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economics/ciences/laureates/1991/coase-lecture.html)>. Access: 4 sep. 2014.

COLANDER, D. The art of teaching economics. **International Review of Economics Education**, vol. 3, n. 1, p. 63-76, 2004.

COLANDER, D. What makes a good economist?, 2012. In: COYLE, 2012a.

COLANDER, D.; MCGOLDRICK, K. (eds). **Educating Economists:** The Teagle Discussion on Re-evaluating the Undergraduate Economics Major. Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2009.

COYLE, D. (Ed.). **What's the use of economics:** teaching the dismal science after the crisis. London: London Publishing Partnership, 2012a. Kindle edition.

COYLE, D. Introduction: the state of Economics and the education of economists, 2012a. In: COYLE, 2012b.

DAN, Nicholas; HOUP, Nicholas; MALLIN, Sean; WITCHGER, Felipe. A Revolution from the Margin: A student perspective. In REARDON, J. **The Handbook of Pluralist Economics and Education**. New York: Routledge, p.24-31, 1999.

DAVIES, John B. The turn in Economics: neoclassical dominance to mainstream pluralism? **Journal of Institutional Economics**, v.2, n.1, p.1-20, 2006.

DELFIM NETTO, A. As oportunidades, os problemas e a estratégia para melhorar no Brasil o treinamento universitário em economia. **Revista Brasileira de Economia**, v. 20, n. 4, p. 9-18, 1966.

DELFIM NETTO, A., et al. Seminário da USP – Cinquenta anos de ciência econômica no Brasil. In: LOUREIRO, 1997a, p. 229-313.

DOW, S. History of thought and methodology in pluralist economics education. **International Review of Economics Education**, v.8, n.2, p. 41-57, 2009.

FANELLI, D. Do pressure to publish increase scientists' bias? An empirical support from US states data. **PLoS ONE**, vol. 5, n. 4, 2010. Disponível em <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2858206/>>. Acesso em: 23 mai. 2014.

FERNANDES, F. Os dilemas da reforma universitária consentida. **Revista Mexicana de Sociologia**, v. 32, n.4, p. 967-1004, 1970.

FERNÁNDEZ, R. G. A metodologia como argumento a favor de uma Economia pluralista. In: Guilhoto, J.; Duarte, P. G.; Silber, S. **O Brasil de a ciência econômica em debate – O estado da arte em economia**, v.2, p.137-152, 2011.

FERNÁNDEZ, R. G.; SUPRINYAK, C. E. Creating Academic Economics in Brazil: the Ford Foundation and the beginnings of ANPEC. In: XLII Encontro Nacional de Economia, 2014, Natal. **Anais do XLII Encontro Nacional de Economia**, 2014.

FERREIRA, M. O. A formação do economista no Brasil. **Revista Brasileira de Economia**, v. 20, n. 4, p. 29-38, 1966.

HEYNE, P. Teaching introductory economics. **Agenda**, vol. 2, n. 2, p. 149-158, 1995.

HILL, C. Good researchers make good teachers, 2009. In: COLANDER, D.; MCGOLDRICK, K., 2009, p. 163-169.

ISLAM, S.; MANALLOOR, V. Teaching introductory economics to students of different majors: challenges and opportunities. **Journal of Higher Education Theory**, vol. 12, n. 1, p. 56-65, 2012.

JAMES, H. Finance is history!, 2012. In: COYLE, 2012a.

KERSTENETZKY, I.; CHACEL, J. M. Reflexões em torno dos problemas da investigação econômica no Brasil. **Revista Brasileira de Economia**, v. 20, n. 4, p. 47-60, 1966.

KING, S. Economists in the financial market, 2012. In: COYLE, 2012a.

LEE, F. **A History of Heterodox Economics**: Challenging the mainstream in the twentieth century. Routledge, 2009.

LOUREIRO, M. R. Economistas e Elites Dirigentes no Brasil. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais**, ano VII, nº 20, pp. 47-69, 1992.

LOUREIRO, M. R. **50 anos de Ciência Econômica no Brasil**: pensamento, instituições, depoimentos. Editora Vozes, 1997a.

LOUREIRO, M. R. Introdução. 1997b. In: LOUREIRO, 1997a, p. 7-14.

LOUREIRO, M. R. Economists in the Brazilian government: from developmentalist state to neoliberal policies. In: MONTECINOS, V.; MARKOFF, J. **Economists in the Americas**, p. 100-141, 2009.

LOUREIRO, M. R.; LIMA, G. T. A internacionalização do ensino de economia no Brasil. **Revista de Economia Política**, vol. 14, n. 3, p. 31-50, 1994.

MANTEGA, G. O pensamento econômico brasileiro de 60 a 80: os anos rebeldes, 1997. In: LOUREIRO, 1997a, p. 109-157.

MARGLIN, S. A. The economics major as illiberal education. In: COLANDER, D.; MCGOLDRICK, K., 2009, p. 48-52.

NELSON, Julie. The Principles course. In REARDON, J. **The Handbook of Pluralist Economics and Education**. New York: Routledge, p.57-68, 1999.

MCCOY, J. P.; MILKMAN, M. I. Do recent PhDs economists feel prepared to teach economics? **Journal of Economic Education**, vol. 41, n. 2, p. 211-215, 2010.

MCMAHON, M. Teaching and research in a UK university, 2012. In: COYLE, 2012a.

NOGUEIRA, A. M.; NUNES, E.; BARROSO, H. M. **Mensuração dos Conteúdos Acadêmicos da Educação Superior**. Rio de Janeiro: Observatório Universitário. Documento de Trabalho, nº42, 2005.

O'BRIEN, D. P. **History of Economic Thought as an Intellectual Discipline**. Cheltenham, United Kingdom: Edward Elgar, 2007.

OECD. **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results from PISA 2012**. Country Note: Brazil. 2012. Available at <<http://www.oecd.org/education/PISA-2012-results-brazil.pdf>>, access: November 12, 2015.

O'DONNELL, R. What kind of economics graduates do we want? A constructive critique of Hansen's proficiencies approach. **Australasian Journal of Economic Education**, vol. 1, n. 1, p. 41-60, 2004.

PAULA, L. N. **Síntese da evolução do pensamento econômico no Brasil**. Rio de Janeiro: SEPT, 1942.

PERSKY, J. Teaching students to "think about the economy", 2009. In: COLANDER, D.; MCGOLDRICK, K., 2009, p. 43-47.

QUIGGIN, J. Research and teaching: complements or substitutes? **Australasian Journal of Economics Education**, vol. 1, n. 1, mar. 2004, p. 18-29.

REGO, J. M. **Autonomia dos Centros de Pós-Graduação em Economia: uma Abordagem Institucional e de História Oral**. São Paulo: FGV, 1997.

RAMSDEN, D. Making economics and economists better: The Government Economic Services perspective, 2012. In: COYLE, 2012a.

REARDON, J. Introduction and Overview. In REARDON, J. **The Handbook of Pluralist Economics and Education**. New York: Routledge, p.3-17, 1999.

ROSEWELL, B. Economics: purposes and directions post-crisis, 2012. In: COYLE, 2012a.

ROTHEN, J. C. Os bastidores da Reforma Universitária de 1968. **Educação & Sociedade**, v.29, n.103, p.453-475, 2008.

SAES, A. M. *et al.* **Fipe 40 anos: pesquisa, ensino e debate sobre a economia brasileira**. São Paulo: Narrativa Um, 2014.

SIMONSEN, M. H. O ensino de economia em nível de pós-graduação no Brasil. **Revista Brasileira de Economia**, v. 20, n. 4, p. 20-30, 1966.

SIMONSEN, R. C.; GUDIN, E. A. **controvérsia do planejamento na economia brasileira**. 3ª edição. Brasília: IPEA, 2013. [1977].

SOUZA, S. C. I.. O ensino de princípios de economia: uma contribuição. **Semina: Ciências Sociais e Humanas**, vol. 17, n. 3, p. 329-337, set. 1996.

WIBLE, J. Teaching economics students as if they are geniuses, 2009. In: COLANDER, D.; MCGOLDRICK, K., 2009, p. 65-75.

WIDDICOMBE JR, S. H. Introdução sobre o Seminário de Itaipava. **Revista Brasileira de Economia**, v. 20, n. 4, p. 7-8, 1966.

VELLOSO, J. P. R. Treinamento informal em economia e eficiência do setor govêrno. **Revista Brasileira de Economia**, v. 20, n. 4, p. 39-46, 1966.

YEZER, A. M.; GOLDFARB, R. S.; POPPEN, P. J. Does Studying Economics Discourage Cooperation? Watch What We Do, Not What We Say or How We Play. **Journal of Economic Perspectives**, v. 10, n. 1, p. 177-186, 1996.