

BIO-ENVIRONMENT COURSES IN THE ECONOMICS UNIVERSITY

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"In an industrial capitalist-oriented society, certain categories of professional expertise play greater roles or exercise greater influence in determining decisions affecting the well-being of bios." These important statements also consider the introduction of a Bio-Environment course for the students at the university level of economic education. Many of the graduated economists and business students will be decision makers, and some of their decisions will positively or negatively affect the bio-environment. This fact justifies the necessity of new courses on the economic aspect of the bio-environment. This kind of education advocates a problem-solving approach as a skill which could help and guide its target groups in the solution of current and future environment and related problems.

Providing generalized ideas for the different colleges, universities, departments of economics and business schools on how to teach and what to teach is not an easy task because of the great variety in the economics curricula. "There are as many customs as there are countries," is a slogan which is also valid for this issue. In some countries, there are two levels of education, while in others only one. In some countries, the economic education as well as the business schools are integrated to the system of great universities whereas in other countries there are specialized discipline schools for economics education. In spite of these differences, there exists the need, no doubt, for a new kind of course on bio-environmental problems, a fact which has been recognized already in many schools. Of course it is understandable that, because of the nature of conventional economic thinking, some incomprehension accompanies this idea.

An important concern will be the necessity to assume the idea of sustainable development as a basic ideology of the bio-environment course. A complex interaction appears to be taking place as both scientific theory and human social order evolve. Two alternative solutions can be offered for inserting the new knowledge into the traditional economics curricula:

- A. New, additional, bio-environmental courses would be suggested alongside the usual economics courses covering environmental knowledge, environmental management strategies and methods.
- B. Bio-environmental case studies would infuse new knowledge into the traditional courses and draw the attention to environmental risks and adverse effects of economic intervention. The choice depends on the educational tradition of a given school.

Regarding the contents of the new course, it is recommended not to strive for a limited, fixed-content curriculum, since the current knowledge is being either partially or rapidly outdated. Naturally, the courses must provide knowledge on the bio-environmental processes and structures, the aspects of human society and its economic activity and a biospheric context including the problems of risks and damages. Also they may not neglect the economic aspects of environmental and resource management instruments, as well as some methodological tools such as impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis.

References

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Professor **Gyula Bora** graduated from the Budapest University of Economics. He was a Candidate for Science in Geography, and was sponsored by the Ford Foundation for his postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Chicago. He also studied US environmental policy on a WHO fellowship. Professor Bora works in the Department of Economic Geography at the Budapest University of Economics where he has also held the position of Vice Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Vice Rector for Scientific and International affairs. His scientific activities include regional studies, industrial plant location, consulting for regional organisation and research on environmental protection model building. He has been involved in several national and international research projects, and has been Acting President of the Hungarian UN Association and President of the Hungarian Geographic Society.