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# Heterodoxy, Educational Aims and the Design of Economics Programmes

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## Abstract

*Using the analytical distinction between intrinsic and instrumental aims of education, this paper argues that such aims are paramount in the design of Economics programmes and therefore educational policy. It is argued that a truly educational programme must achieve these intrinsic aims. Programmes designed instrumentally, for the purpose of enterprise, or for indoctrination, are likely not to achieve the intrinsic aims. The types of argument necessary to make a case for the teaching of heterodox Economics material are highlighted. Importantly, institutional factors rather than orthodox material itself might erode the educational value of many current Economics programmes.*

## Introduction

There is a growing awareness of a problem, perhaps a crisis, in Economics education. The problem is manifest in falling numbers of students wishing to pursue Economics both at A-level (in the UK) and degree level (see Becker 1997; Salemi & Siegfried 1999; Dunn 2000), although there is evidence from the United States that this trend has been reversed (Siegfried 2000). Additionally though, there is a common perception that both the public and even Economics students do not understand either the economy, or 'Economics', ie, the study of the economy (Becker 1997; Wirtz 1998; Hartman 1999; Eschenbach 1999; Salemi & Siegfried 1999; Walstad & Allgood 1999; Walstad & Rebeck 1999; Earl 2000). Some of these studies have shown that knowledge of Economics, even amongst Economics graduates or senior university students of Economics<sup>1</sup> is very poor. The responses to this failure have been varied and include: attempts to introduce alternative teaching methods (Becker; Laney 1999; Earl 2000); concern that there is a negative relationship between research activity and teaching commitment (Becker); recommendations to bring in more practical examples and applications of theory (Helburn 1997; Fettig 1999; Hartman; Salemi & Siegfried); the possibility of teaching less theory in order to achieve more depth on a restricted range of topics (Helburn; Salemi & Siegfried; but cf. Stigler

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<sup>1</sup> These studies have tended to focus on neo-classical economics. For instance, Walstad & Rebeck (1999) ask students what is the most important function of an economy: the answer being, to allocate scarce resources. There are, of course, alternative answers that to heterodox economists would be reasonable, but would be marked 'wrong' in these surveys. However, the failure of students brought up in the neo-classical tradition to answer correctly questions about that tradition is interesting.

1963); the recognition that not all students who study Economics specialise in that subject (Wirtz, p. 55; Salemi & Siegfried; Earl); and the consequent call for more Economics instruction to be part of what is called in the USA, 'general education', or 'general studies' in the UK.

While these responses concern both the content of courses and the actual process of teaching, the response from orthodox economists has tended to emphasise process over content<sup>2</sup>. Heterodox economists tend to offer criticisms of content<sup>3</sup>. For instance, work critical of the general content of Economics courses make reference to over-mathematisation (Eschenbach 1999; Hartman 1999). Wirtz (1998) reports that many Economics instructors find that their students are unable to cope with the mathematics they are required to learn and use in their Economics courses. Becker (1997, p. 1371) suggests, 'Students with stronger mathematics backgrounds ... are more likely to persist in the study of economics.' A similar finding was posted in a recent *Royal Economic Society* (April, 1999) newsletter. The inference drawn from the orthodoxy is that this problem with mathematics is in fact a problem with the students, not the subject. Marshall's advice on the limits to mathematics in economics (Pigou 1925, p. 427)<sup>4</sup> seems to have been forgotten. Many of these themes have been addressed in the recent protest of French students against what they perceive as the 'autistic economics' of the orthodoxy (see PAE 2000).

This then is the context and origin of this paper. There is a problem in Economics education. Students do not choose it and those that do, struggle, particularly with the quantitative elements. Even those who complete Economics degrees do not retain much of what they have been taught nor do they have any real understanding of economic issues. Orthodox responses suggest that the process of teaching is at fault and have advocated different methods of teaching, de-emphasising changes to content and rejecting any suggestion that the content is the central problem. The structure of the paper is as follows. First, three possible strategies for content modification are examined. Second, educational theory is used to create a framework for assessing the case for heterodox Economics programmes. In contrast to the current debate, the paper argues that often the aims that underlie content and process in fact supersede both in the assessment of programmes, and therefore need to be explicitly discussed. Also, education policy must stem from a view of the aims of education. The paper will, then, be of direct relevance to any discussion on educational policy.

### Three Strategies for Economics Programmes

The range of possible Economics programme structures might be modelled in terms of (i) the *status quo*; (ii) a radical change to an essentially heterodox approach; and (iii) an intermediate method, entailing what could be termed 'parallel perspectives'.

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, most of the responses above which emphasise process and teaching methods in particular come from economists in the orthodoxy. Where these economists suggest changes to curricula (for example, Salemi & Siegfried) this involves only tinkering, not fundamental revision. Calls for fundamental revision tend to come from economists sympathetic to heterodoxy. This is not surprising.

<sup>3</sup> Clarke and Clarke (1996) and Earl (2000) are exceptions to this tendency.

<sup>4</sup> Moreover, a leading exponent of mathematical proficiency in economics has come out against excessive mathematisation (Baumol, 1991), although he too appears to have been ignored.

By the *status quo*, it is meant that Economics programmes are organised around the dominant neo-classical paradigm. Thus, programmes concentrate on teaching that paradigm, drawing on alternative perspectives only where strictly necessary, presenting those perspectives in an incomplete way and invariably from a neo-classical perspective. This also involves the (implicit) imposition of a specific philosophical position. The object seems to be simply to equip students with knowledge of neo-classical economics and the ability to perform economic analysis according to its mode of thought and techniques. There is seldom any systematic attempt to criticise that material. Of course, this picture does not represent the situation in all universities, but it appears to be common enough to take as the prevailing paradigm.

The second option is to organise the Economics programme around the heterodoxy. This might involve a different (often implicit) underlying philosophy. Of course, 'heterodoxy' is a controversial term. First, it must be established whether an individual paradigm or a single synthetic heterodoxy should be taught. Objections might be raised to the first option on the grounds of having to select a paradigm. Indeed, objections can be raised to any: for example, one might object to Marxism or Post Keynesianism on the basis of, respectively, the labour theory of value (Schumpeter 1942, Ch. 3), or incoherence (Walters & Young 1997; cf. Dunn 1999), so that to teach one exclusively would be unrepresentative.

Even if it is thought preferable to teach the heterodoxy drawing on its diverse traditions, other objections might be made. There may exist methodological and theoretical differences between the strands; to ignore or deny these would be dishonest. One might reply that in fact there is coherence in common objection to the orthodoxy. However, this then requires that the orthodoxy be taught prior to the heterodoxy. Also the argument that there is coherence in plurality might be applied to the heterodoxy as a whole, but this is a somewhat problematic argument. All of these issues must be resolved before such a strategy could be implemented.

Third, a programme might adopt a 'parallel perspectives' approach. This is practised in other subjects. For instance, some International Relations (IR) tutors teach IR issues from three perspectives: idealist (liberal), Marxist, and realist (Hobbesian). Whilst it is acknowledged that in some spheres of the subject one paradigm dominates, the programme is not organised around that paradigm for every issue: all three views are considered as a matter of course. Other paradigms are introduced in an *ad hoc* way, much as are heterodox economic perspectives in current orthodox programmes. Other examples of this approach can be found in the teaching of Sociology and Political Science. The normal starting point for Sociology is to teach the three perspectives associated with the founding fathers of the subject, namely functionalism (Durkheim), interactionism (Weber) and Marxism. In Political Science it is common to start with the principal political ideologies of conservatism, liberalism and socialism. Obviously each subject has specific requirements and nuances, but it might be possible and desirable to organise Economics programmes in a similar way, thus avoiding the organisation of the subject around one view and thus avoiding the impression that the subject *is* that view. Educational policy might facilitate this by issuing guidelines that safeguard or encourage plurality. Certain clauses in the recent UK Benchmarking Statements for Economics (QAAHE 2000) reflect this concern.

## The Aims of Education

However, any discussion of content – such as the choice between the three strategies available – must be preceded by a discussion of the philosophy of education itself. To truly understand the argument over content requires an exploration of the philosophy of education, otherwise contributors to the debate have no real point of contact. The starting point of any discussion of content and process should be a discussion of aims – not for the purpose of determining the validity of these aims but as ‘a way of getting people to get clear about and focus their attention on what is worth while achieving’ (Peters 1970, p. 28). This is necessary because, as Castle (1961, p. 210) has argued, these beliefs will affect to a large extent the manner in which teachers operate. Additionally, it should be clear that aims over-arch and embrace both content and process. This paper thus stands in contrast to other existing literature, which tends to look at content *versus* process. Helburn (1997, p. 272) tries to transcend the usual arguments, by saying that ‘...there must be some way round this continuing (boring) debate in social studies about content versus process. Obviously we need both!’ This paper shares her position but argues that it is limited, since content and process are bounded by (philosophical) aims. Such discussions have a long history. Castle (1961, pp. 203-4) points out that ‘Plato would certainly remind us that it is impossible to devise the right means if we are not clear what our aim is to be’. Many that have written on the topic would agree. For example, Russell: ‘Before considering how to educate, it is well to be clear as to the sort of result which we wish to achieve’ (1992, p. 413); Mager (cited in Curzon 1990, p. 131): ‘Instructors simply function in a fog of their own making unless they know what they want their students to accomplish as a result of their instruction’.

To reiterate, these considerations are a prerequisite of any discussion on process or content, for as Peters comments, education itself ‘...picks out no particular activity or process. Rather it lays down criteria to which activities or processes must conform’ (1970, p. 25). Unfortunately these arguments and considerations have been absent from the debate on the goals of education, and hence educational policy, and some educators may even be ignorant of their own underlying educational philosophies. Again, the argument of this paper is that such aims must be considered first (chronologically and in terms of significance) in the design of educational Economics programmes.

## Intrinsic And Instrumentalist Aims of Education

This section outlines one method of analysing and classifying educational aims, and the underlying philosophy of educational policy. Intrinsic educational aims, or a liberal education, are concerned with education being an end in itself. For Bridges (1992, p. 92) the central feature of a liberal education is ‘to equip people to make their own free, autonomous choices about the life they will lead.’ He identifies three categories of intrinsic aims: ‘i) an ability to treat critically and of course also informedly ideas and beliefs put forward by other people; ii) an awareness of the wider alternatives...available upon which one may exercise choice; and iii) a level of personal independence or autonomy which gives one the will, courage or confidence to act on one’s own beliefs’ (p. 92). In more familiar terminology, one might think of these categories as (i) critical and analytical thinking; (ii) comparative thinking and open-mindedness; and (iii) some notion of intellectual freedom or emancipation. Though listed as separate points they are clearly interdependent.

In contrast to these intrinsic aims of education, there are the so-called instrumental aims. Instrumental aims, or enterprise education, can be defined quite broadly and may be thought of more as outcomes, or as *training*. A student being able to solve a particular type of problem, or being able to command certain techniques, are instrumental outcomes. A common instrumental aim is that to which Thatcherite UK Government Minister Norman Tebbit referred when he suggested that it was necessary to ‘gear education to the market place’ (Bailey 1992, p. 99). Much educational policy today (and in the authors’ view, this is the *problem* of educational policy today) is driven by the idea that the value of education lies in such instrumental benefits. A well-educated workforce will, it is supposed, increase productivity in the workplace, and so benefit all.

But for Bailey (1992, p. 99) instrumentalist education goes further than gearing education to the marketplace: ‘The lines of pressure have been varied, but the general direction has been towards casting education, or at least schooling, in an instrumental mould which will produce citizens not only capable of filling the roles of producers and consumers in a free-market society, but happily disposed to approve of such a society and their roles within it.’ Thus education is aimed at preserving existing economic and social arrangements.

One might see the intrinsic and instrumental aims as opposites. However, this is not the case. For example, student plumbers might be taught how to unblock a drain. This is clearly a useful skill, but is an instrumental outcome – an exercise in training. However, this becomes more of an (intrinsically) educational exercise if, to do this, they also learn, in abstract terms, physical concepts such as pressure and vacuums and, more particularly, if they begin to think systematically and logically, to consider critically hypotheses about drains. In this case, the students have learned new skills and gained knowledge, but also transformed somewhat their intellectual capacity. Similarly, teaching about capitalist society can lead to the outcome that students become critical of it and reject it. This process clearly includes the development of critical thinking, of the awareness of alternatives, and freedom of thought – intrinsic outcomes. However, if the freedom of thought (an intrinsic aim) leads to action, this can have the instrumental outcome of leading to material change. Thus the intrinsic and instrumental aims begin to converge. As Bridges (1992, p. 96) observes, ‘[i]t is

difficult to see how an education which seeks to be liberating can fail to include a significant measure of attention to economic and financial understanding, or that an understanding of how enterprise works could not be central in such a programme.'

But instrumental outcomes do not always advance intrinsic aims. For example, the student plumber can learn the order in which to unblock a standard drain blocked in the standard way, without understanding the constituent process. Similarly it is possible for a student to learn and apply General Equilibrium or Post Keynesian pricing theory without ever reflecting upon the limitations of either or becoming aware of alternatives. Moreover, it is possible that the pursuit of instrumental aims blocks the achievement of the intrinsic. As noted above, instrumental aims can include indoctrination. Essentially, there is no *requirement* in instrumental education that criticism should be generated. For Bailey (1992, p. 103), instrumental education 'is broadly indoctrinatory and on this ground alone has nothing to do with liberal education, which aims to counter indoctrination and liberate pupils from pervasive ideologies of all kinds.'

### **Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.**

Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives has had a considerable influence in the educational psychology literature. Whilst this has been criticised, not least for its behaviourist roots, its influence has been extensive. For Curzon (1990, p.142) it is 'the most widely known and influential taxonomy of learning objectives.' It is useful then, to link the discussions on intrinsic versus instrumental education to this. Bloom suggests that educational aims can be divided into three domains. The two that are relevant here are (1) the Cognitive Domain, which 'includes those objectives which deal with recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities and skills'; and (2) the Affective Domain, which 'includes objectives which describe changes in interest, attitudes, and values, and the development of appreciation and adequate adjustment' (Bloom 1956 p.7)<sup>5</sup>. The purpose of education is to influence what happens within these domains in some way. Bloom stresses the need for a 'proper' balance between the cognitive and affective domains; a 'complete' and 'good' education must address both the cognitive and affective domains. One problem with the affective domain is that it is very difficult to grade, and educational programmes tend, therefore, to place emphasis on the cognitive domain. This neglect of the affective domain may inhibit the achievement of 'true' educational aims.

It is fairly obvious that the cognitive domain has elements of both intrinsic and instrumental aims. As stated earlier, the affective domain is concerned with values and attitudes, but again it will reflect both intrinsic and instrumental aims. Intrinsic aims will be linked to things like tolerance, which falls within the affective domain. Clearly the affective domain can be linked to indoctrination (Bloom, Krathwold & Masia, 1964, p. 18), as education can be used to instil certain beliefs and values into students. It does seem then, that instrumental education can also be classified under the affective domain. Moreover, there is no 'fundamental separation' between the

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<sup>5</sup> The third, the Psychomotor Domain, which refers to the 'manipulative or motor-skills' (Bloom, 1956, p.7), would only be relevant to lesson such as physical education.



cognitive and the affective domains: ‘In spite of the lack of explicit formulation, however, nearly all cognitive objectives have an affective component if we search for it’ (Bloom et al. 1964, pp. 45-48). Bloom’s point is that educators should be aware of the aims they seek to achieve, and of the links between the domains.

Indeed, the distinction between the intrinsic and instrumental within this schema is defined by what Bloom and his co-authors call the ‘principle of complexity’; ‘[a]n objective such as ‘knowledge of specific facts’ could be isolated and defined at one level of complexity. But at another level of complexity this objective became a part of another objective such as ‘the ability to apply principles’. At one point the ‘knowledge of specific facts’ was an end in its own right, while at another point it became a part of, tool for, or means to, a larger or more complex objective’ (1964, pp. 9-10). Clearly then, are not opposites, as it is not possible to achieve intrinsic aims without achieving instrumental outcomes.

Bloom et al. (1964) suggests three approaches to the design of teaching programmes: the first treats ‘Cognitive Objectives as a Means to Affective Goals’ (p. 54) where knowledge is used to develop the affective domain. Increasing knowledge changes attitudes and values. Also however, ‘[c]ognitive behaviour may be used to indoctrinate points of view and to build attitudes and values’ (p. 56). In the teaching of orthodox economics, the first of these views suggests that teaching the orthodoxy from a critical perspective can develop cognitive capacities that in turn lead to changes in attitude. The second view warns that if this material is *not* taught critically the resulting solidification of dominant ideas can impede free thought and expression.

The second approach treats ‘Affective Objectives as a Means to Cognitive Goals’ (Bloom et al. 1964, p. 57). Here it is held that developing the students’ interests (an affective objective) will lead to cognitive goals. This approach might be reflected in the method of teaching via discussions of current, controversial topics that are relevant to students’ circumstances and aspirations. Thirdly they offer the ‘Simultaneous Achievement of Cognitive and Affective Goals’ (p. 59). The strategy here is to seek a cognitive goal to raise interest –an affective goal – that leads to further cognitive goals. The ‘parallel perspectives’ approach falls into this category: the initial intention is to develop cognitive capacities by the study of models, but then to stimulate students’ through discussion of debates among advocates of the different paradigms; this interest in turn will – one hopes – generate further cognitive achievements.

A key point to note is that these approaches are not portrayed as better or worse methods, but as simply different. However, this is contentious as it assumes that the same end point can be reached irrespective of the starting point or the route taken. This can be interpreted in a benign way, in that it removes the notion of an optimal education strategy. More seriously though, it removes the possibility that content can affect the outcome. Thus, policy debates that tend to focus on curricula would be pointless.

## Implications of the Aims of Education

Major implications of this discussion are the impact that it has on educational policy and the case for heterodox economics programmes<sup>6</sup>. Again, this case is affected by one's view of intrinsic and instrumental aims of education, and whether either or both have value. Some might hold the view that the aims of education are purely intrinsic. This suggests that instrumental aims have no educational value in themselves, but are merely outcomes en route to intrinsic aims. In this view, the specific instrumental outcomes do not matter, since it is the intrinsic aims that matter. Content becomes irrelevant. To those who hold this (exclusively intrinsic) view of education, instrumental education is nothing more than training.

For some, Economics is more to do with training than it is to do with education, and Peters (1970, p. 29) suggests that 'we do not naturally talk of educating men as rulers, soldiers, or economists; we talk of training them' (emphasis added). For Peters, though, the aims of education should be intrinsic and must involve a critical, comparative and emancipatory approach, irrespective of the content. If instead it is accepted that the aims of education are instrumental, the choice will become to train in orthodox or non-orthodox methods. Here, content is everything. However, a compromise position is possible, where both intrinsic aims and instrumental outcomes are complementary, in that the route to the intrinsic aims is important. Now it is held that content could affect the achievement of intrinsic aims. This reintroduces the issue of content, but within the context of educational aims. Therefore, whichever paradigm (with associated instrumental outcomes) is adopted, a critical approach is still necessary.

If there is agreement that the aims of education are intrinsic, we can begin to discuss the best method of achieving those aims. Bailey makes a useful comment on this, which is worth reproducing in full:

A modern liberal education would certainly, therefore, include some study of a free-market economy. However, alternative systems and alternative motivations to those of profit and selling would need to be understood as well. Also to be understood, as apparently inescapable aspects of a free-market economy, would be those frictional elements like unemployment, recessions, failure and bankruptcies of enterprises, the consequences of encouragement to borrow, gross inequalities of wealth and power – and so on. These are all undeniable parts of the free-market picture; to ignore them is grossly indoctrinatory. I remain to be convinced that enterprise education gives any attention to this negative side of free enterprise society...Enterprise education does not seem unbiased in what it tries to get pupils to understand (Bailey 1992, p. 102).

This comment, from an educationalist rather than an economist, suggests that heterodox ideas have a role to play in a non-instrumental Economics education, as of course do orthodox views. The question then becomes one of balance. To achieve

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that another implication is that the existing literature can be codified and classified. However, space prevents discussion of this. One worthy exception is to consider Perry's (1970) scheme of cognitive and ethical development as discussed by Earl (2000). In summary, it can be seen that Perry's scheme and Earl's use of it clearly correspond with both Bridges' intrinsic aims for education as well as addressing Bloom's cognitive and affective domains. Also, though, it underlines the argument that the tutor's beliefs, and indeed presence, are significant in the process of education.

the intrinsic aims of education, the Economics curriculum should include the teaching of both the orthodox and the heterodox, so as to cultivate the capacity for critical thought. An argument can be made for teaching *any* paradigm as long as it is done critically.

Therefore, if orthodox economics can teach people to think, so can heterodox economics. Indeed, the conclusion from this discussion should lead the reader to infer that in fact no decisive case can be made *a priori* for any specific curriculum. Orthodox programmes taught in a critical way, which allow for comparative analysis, and facilitate free inquiry, can achieve sound educational objectives. A heterodox programme that is not self-critical and fails to present alternative views is hardly a desirable educational model. The aim of teaching the heterodoxy should not be to replace one unquestioned paradigm with another, since this would conflict with the emancipatory goal, as contained explicitly in intrinsic aim (iii) and implicitly in the affective domain. Arguably it would be better for students to arrive *independently* at orthodox conclusions than for them to be forced into a heterodox way of thinking.

## Policy Implications

The problems that face economics education then, link to discussions on educational aims and policy. The aims of education can be utilised to assess the orthodoxy and the current situation in universities across the world. First, it has been argued that it *might* be true that, for instance, given its generally conservative policy conclusions, orthodox material is inherently enslaving. A related argument would be that heterodox theory is inherently emancipatory. This case however, has not been proven. One might also argue that orthodox economics is disengaging, and thus less able to achieve educational aims. Amongst the French students' complaints is that orthodox material is irrelevant and that they want to be taught more directly realistic and applicable content (PAE 2000). However, the position of this paper at this point is that it is not necessarily the case that the material *per se* cannot achieve educational aims. This remains open.

However, what might be inferred with more confidence, reflecting the crisis in Economics education, is that there are problems with orthodox economics in terms of educational aims. However, the problem might lie more in the orthodox *economists* rather than the material itself. For even if orthodox theory exists to be enslaving, there is no necessary reason to teach it as such. It is the lack of a critical approach by orthodox proponents that is the most serious problem. Orthodox programmes are, arguably, designed solely around orthodox material. Students achieve highest marks for commanding that material. Emphasis is placed on technique, hence the prominence of mathematics. Such instruction might aid analytical thinking but does not develop critical or comparative cognitive goals and certainly does not encourage freedom of thought. This can be seen in the claims of orthodox economists that there is consensus in Economics (Stiglitz 1997). This argument also explains the concentration by orthodox economists, as noted above, on the process of teaching, rather than the content. They are reluctant to change the content, but also, they are concerned that that content is not being retained. However, from the perspective of analytical, critical and comparative thinking, there is no need for retention, since the material is merely there to enable cognitive development. Thus, a concern for

retention only matters if that specific material should be retained. However, as has been argued, heterodox material could achieve the same educational aims. Thus we conclude that the aims of orthodox economists are instrumental, somewhat independently of the orthodox material itself. This also implies that heterodox economists building a case for the teaching of their material must argue not merely that orthodoxy is theoretically wrong, but that its educational aims are inappropriate.

Alternatively, it might be argued that largely irrespective of the aims (explicit or implicit; conscious or unconscious) of orthodox economists, the institutional structures of Economics discourage the teaching of heterodoxy. This is achieved partly by the composition of Economics departments. Increasingly, it is the impression of heterodox economists that there are barriers to their employment. In the UK, one such barrier is provided by the Research Assessment Exercise, which links research funding to research output, rated according to a scale biased towards orthodoxy (Lee & Harley 1999). Thus, if plurality is more educative than supremacy, as is suggested above, a clear policy implication is that departments should be encouraged to recruit heterodox economists, to develop balance. This would however, entail reform of government funding criteria

## Conclusion

This paper adds to the debate on Economics curricula. However, it transcends that debate by arguing that rather than focus on content or process, the aims of education, which underlie both, are paramount. Thus, arguments for heterodox material must be based, at least in part; on showing that heterodoxy can achieve educational aims. This paper has highlighted the type of argument necessary for this task. Clearly, heterodoxy can show that its material allows the development of analytical and critical thinking, is more engaging and by its mere presence encourages open-mindedness and intellectual emancipation. In general, though, it avoids substantive recommendations. These require the development of a coherent heterodox philosophical position, which will develop a heterodox philosophy of education as well as draw upon other heterodox philosophical arguments. It is not the purpose of this paper to determine such arguments, but to provide a framework that may encourage research in that direction.

The paper does also have implications for educational policy, and this is a current debate in the UK. The educational policy of the UK's New Labour Government does, like their predecessors, seem to favour instrumental educational aims. The following comment from a *Guardian* columnist seems to sum up the debate well:

What if you just want your child to go to an inclusive, free, well-resourced nearby school, with a range of abilities, a balanced curriculum and a policy of keeping children's options as wide as possible for as long as possible? But then, I'm talking about enriching children's lives with the joy of learning. I'm not thinking about the short-term needs of New Labour's business partners. Sorry kids, it's time for a word from our sponsors. (Hardy 2001)

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