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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken in 1974 to determine the extent of economic education in the secondary schools of California and the formal economics training of the teachers. Questionnaires were mailed to the principals of all the junior and senior high schools in California. Approximately 1300 questionnaires were mailed and 480 returned. Since a similar study was conducted in 1966, some comparative data are available. About 38% of the schools indicated that they offered a separate one-semester course in economics for grade 12. This is a small improvement over the 31% in the 1966 survey. Consumer economics has increased in relative importance as 139 schools reported courses in this area, 68 in general economics, and 48 equally divided between consumer and general economics in the current survey. Thirty-eight secondary schools offer a one-quarter semester course in economics and enroll 42,333 students. In 1966, 32 schools reported offering this course but enrolled 32,567 students. The economics training of personnel teaching separate economics courses has shown some improvement since 1966, although 134 teachers of such courses have no college economics and an additional 85 have less than three units of credit. The separate economics classes in 1974 and 1966 were taught predominantly by social science teachers. (Author/RM)

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ECONOMIC EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

1974

by

Milton S. Baum, Ph.D.

SD 009953

California Council for Economic Education

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PREFACE

This study was undertaken to determine the extent of economic education in the secondary public schools of California and the formal economics training of the teachers of economics and related courses containing economic units. Since a similar study was conducted in 1966, some comparative data are available.

This research was conducted with the cooperation and assistance of the California State Department of Education, the California Council for Economic Education, the California Chamber of Commerce, and the Economic Education Center of California State University, Sacramento.

MILTON S. BAUM
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Director, Economic Education Center,
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INTRODUCTION

Questionnaires were mailed to the Principals of all the junior and senior high schools in the State of California under a covering letter from the California State Department of Education and the questionnaires were returned to the same department. Approximately 1,300 questionnaires were mailed and 480 returned.

Economics Course

At the senior high school level, 290 students in 15 schools were reported as enrolled in a separate one-year course in economics at the 12th grade level. Approximately 10,600 students were enrolled in the one-semester economics course. About 38 percent of the schools returning questionnaires indicated they offered a separate one-semester course in economics for grade 12. This is an improvement over the 31.7 percent in the 1966 survey of California schools.^{1/} In both cases, a large number of schools did not respond to the questionnaire at all. Consequently, the percentage of schools offering such a course is probably lower than the 38 and 31.7 percent figures.

^{1/}Economic Education in California Public Schools (California State Department of Education, Sacramento, February, 1967), p. 1.

TABLE I

Schools Offering Separate One-Semester Course
in Economics for Grade 12

Response	Number
Yes	181
No	244
No Response to this question	52
Total . . .	477
Student enrollment in the most recent offering of this course	
	10,603

Some schools reported that their separate economic course is open to both eleventh and twelfth grade students. One hundred forty-one schools enrolled 8,992 students in a separate economics course below the 12th year level. Thus, total student enrollments in separate economics courses one semester and one year at any grade level are 19,885.

Consumer economics has increased in relative importance as 139 schools reported courses in consumer economics, 68 in general economics and 48 equally divided between consumer and general economics in the current survey. (See Table II)

There has been an absolute as well as a relative decline in the number of general economics and equally divided courses, with consumer economics more than doubling its share from 21.1 percent in 1966 to 54.5 per cent in 1974. Some teachers and administrators have indicated

that students have greater interest in consumer economics, as they see an immediate application of the knowledge gained.

TABLE II

Economics Courses Offered by Schools--1974 Compared with 1966

Types of Courses	Number and Percentage of Schools Offering Course			
	1974		1966	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Consumer Economics	139	54.5	45	21.1
General Economics	68	26.7	99	46.5
Equally divided	48	18.8	69	32.4
Total.	255	100.0%	213	100.0%

Thirty-eight secondary schools offer a one-quarter semester course in economics and enroll 4,233 students. In 1966, thirty-two schools reported offering this course but enrolled 32,567 students.

The new High School Graduation Requirements give examples of minimum academic standards for graduation to assist school districts in the development of their own minimum academic standards for graduation as required by EC 8574. In this list is Consumer Economics and the statement, "the pupil should be able to be an intelligent consumer of goods and services." There are also spelled out several skills, proficiency levels and performance indicators. It is very likely that this change in academic standards will influence the number of courses and the enrollments in consumer economics and the content of social science courses in the future. In addition, certain subject matter courses are required to be taught and social sciences are in this list in EC 8571.

Social science courses are required to draw upon the disciplines of economics, anthropology, geography, history, political science, psychology and sociology. This requirement may tend to increase the economic content of social science courses, depending upon how it is implemented.

Teacher Training

The economics training of personnel teaching separate economics courses has shown some improvement since 1966, although 134 teachers of such courses have no college economics and an additional 85 have less than three units of credit. The numbers with 30-35 and 36 and over units are probably understated because a typo error in the questionnaire did not put a line opposite such numbers and the instructions to the key punch operators may have confused the responders.

TABLE III

Economics Training of Teachers of the
Separate Economics Course

Semester Units of College Economics	Number	
0	134	
1 - 2	85	
3 - 5	196	
6 - 11	181	
12 - 17	215	
18 - 19	33	
20 - 23	45	
24 - 29	78	
30 - 35	2	
36 and over	3	
<u>College Economics</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1966</u>
No College Economics	13.8%	27.5%
Less than 6 units	42.7%	53.5%
Less than 20 units	86.8%	89.01%

The major improvement in the economics training of teachers in the last eight years has been the substantial reduction in the percentage of high school teachers of a separate economics course not having any college training in economics. No major improvements have been made in increasing the percentage having the desired minimum of 21 units in economics recommended by the special advisory seminar to the State Department of Education.^{2/} The percentage of teachers having less than six units of economics has been decreased below the 50 percent mark but it is still very high, at approximately 43 percent.

The separate economics classes in 1974 and 1966 were taught predominately by social science teachers. There has been a slight gain by business education teachers but the major change has been an increase in the percentage of teachers in "Other Departments," offset by reductions in the percentage of social science teachers.

TABLE IV

Teachers of Separate Economics Classes

Course	Percentage Comparison	
	1974	1966
Social Science	63.04%	78.25%
Business Education	21.40%	20.05%
Other Departments	15.55%	1.70%

^{2/} College Preparation for Teaching Economics, (California State Department of Education, Sacramento, November, 1966), p. 12.

Economics in Other Courses

Many social science, business education and miscellaneous courses contain economics as an essential part of the educational process. Many history and social science teachers agree that an understanding of economics is very important to a better understanding of their subject matter. In any event, the survey of junior and senior high schools indicated that the respondents for 3,264 classes and 88,504 students in history classes were exposed on the average to 4.11 class periods of economics in the history course. In the case of government courses, a higher average of 6.3 periods of economics was reported. However, only 37,033 students of government were represented in the group responding. Surprisingly, business education indicated an average of only 3.65 class periods of economics per class. Geography was the second highest, with an average of 5.41 class periods of economics per geography class. The "Other" category (miscellaneous) averaged 4.04 class periods of economics, and sociology was the lowest of the group with 3.1 class periods of economics. Again, the bias is probably on the high side, as many schools did not respond to the questionnaire, and not all those responding to the questionnaire answered these questions. Since history courses enroll more students than any other course surveyed, they offer the best opportunity to expand economic education on a broad scale. However, all these curricula offer great opportunities to improve economic literacy and consequently improve the students' understanding of the world about them.

No comparable data were developed in the 1966 study as the number of class periods devoted to economics was not requested in that survey.

TABLE V

Economics Content in Other Courses

Course	Number of Classes	Total Economics Class Periods	Av. Class Periods Economics	No. of Students
Government	1,649	10,394	6.3	37,033
Geography	763	4,129	5.41	23,227
History	3,264	13,421	4.11	88,504
Other (Misc.)	1,317	5,322	4.04	26,688
Business Ed.	1,419	5,177	3.65	28,154
Sociology	414	1,284	3.1	9,024

Social Science Teachers' Training

The college economics training of teachers of courses containing economic units (chiefly history and social science) has improved. The 1966 survey indicated over 28 percent of such teachers had no college economics and the 1974 survey shows this reduced to 9.09 percent.

In 1966, only approximately 30 percent of such teachers would have qualified under the minimum nine semester units recommended by the Advisory Seminar (see Appendix A). In 1974, 28.33 percent of this group had more than twelve units of economics and almost 63 percent had six or more units of economics. The data for 1974 indicates that 549 teachers were in the six to eleven units of economics group. It is probably true that more had six to eight units than nine to eleven units. If it is arbitrarily assumed that 300 of the 549 were in the six to eight unit group, then approximately 44 percent are in the nine units or more economics group. If it is assumed that the six to eleven unit group of 549 teachers is equally divided between six to eight and nine to eleven units, then approximately 46 percent have nine units or more of economics.

From the data, it appears that between 44 and 46 percent of the teachers of social science and other courses containing economic units have nine units or more of economics, which is considerably better than the 30 percent figure for the 1966 sample.

TABLE VI

Economic Training of Teachers of Courses
Containing Economic Units

No. of Units	No. of Teachers	Percentage of Total
0	0 - 144	9.09
1 - 2	77	4.86
3 - 5	366	23.10
6 - 11	549	34.64
12 - 17	235	14.83
18 - 19	53	3.34
20 - 23	56	3.53
24 - 29	38	2.40
30 - 35	14	.88
36 and over	53	3.34

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded from the data that some improvements have occurred in the formal economics education of the teachers of economics and related subjects containing economics units, but much still remains to be done.

As far as the separate economics course is concerned, economic education is declining as measured by the numbers of students and percentage of students taking such a course. To the extent that students enroll in an economics course, the trend has been towards consumer economics. As to the teachers of the separate economics courses, the

tendency has been towards a slight increase in the percentage of business education teachers, a major increase in the percentage of teachers from other (miscellaneous) departments and a major decrease in the percentage and numbers of social science teachers. No doubt the trend towards consumer economics has resulted in an increase in the percentage of business education and home economics teachers of the separate economics course. The home economics teachers were not a separate category in the survey and are included in the data for the "Other Department" category.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES REPRINTED FROM COLLEGE PREPARATION
FOR TEACHING ECONOMICS, CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION, NOVEMBER 1966Summary of Guidelines

A. For all teachers K-12:

The basic course, three semester hours, stressing:

1. Economic reasoning
2. Basic concepts and models
3. Applications to problem and policy situations.¹⁵

Plus a "classroom laboratory" course in teaching economics.¹⁶

B. For all social studies teachers, grades 7-11

A three-course sequence in economics--9 semester hours

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. The basic course | 3 semester hours |
| 2. Contrasting Economic Systems | 3 semester hours |
| 3. An elective, preferably an advanced problems course | 3 semester hours |

C. For teachers of grade 12 semester-course in economics

A minor in economics 21 semester hours

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. The basic course | 3 semester hours |
| 2. Contrasting Economic Systems | 3 semester hours |
| 3. Macro-economics and Policy | 3 semester hours |
| 4. Micro-economics and Policy | 3 semester hours |
| 5. Quantitative Methods | 3 semester hours |
| 6. Two electives in economic problems | 6 semester hours |

15. Some of the participants regard these three objectives as organic functional parts of an integrated learning process, equally indispensable components of the teachers' intellectual tool kit, and of parallel efficiency in challenging intellectual curiosity, capacity, and creativity. All agree that textbooks and instruction early and late should stir up lively discussions of the economic aspects of current vexing problems such as inflation, wages, profits, taxes, education, defense, disarmament, balance of payments, etc.

16. If teacher trainees are required to take the one-hour "laboratory" course, they should be given one unit additional credit for successful completion of the basic course. The totals then become 4, 10, and 22 hours respectively.

J. O. McClintic.

C. (cont'd.)

Of course, any recognized university or college major in economics is acceptable, particularly if it includes, deepens, and expands the requirements for the minor set forth above.

APPENDIX B

ROSTER OF PARTICIPANTS

1966 Advisory Seminar to California State Department of Education

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APPENDIX C

TO BE RETURNED BY:
April 5, 1974

TO: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ECONOMIC EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE
721 CAPITOL MALL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814

ATT: MITCHELL L. VOYDAT

ECONOMIC EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of School _____
Address _____
Apportionment Code Number of District

(2-13) - - - - -

Apportionment Code Number of County

(14-16) - - -

GRADE LEVEL		NUMBER OF STUDENTS
6	(17-19)	- - -
7	(20-22)	- - -
8	(23-25)	- - -
9	(26-28)	- - -
10	(29-31)	- - -
11	(32-34)	- - -
12	(35-35)	- - -
Total	(38-41)	- - -

1. A. Do you offer a separate one year course in economics for grade 12? (42) yes---no---
- B. If answer is yes to "A", how many students were enrolled in the most recent offering? (43-45) - - -
- C. Do you offer a separate one semester course in economics for grade 12? (46) yes---no---
- D. If answer is yes to "C", how many students were enrolled in the most recent offer (if the same student was enrolled in the year course report in "1B", do not duplicate here)? (47-49) - - -
- E. Do you offer a separate economics course below the 12th year? (50) yes---no---
- F. If answer is yes to "E", how many students below the 12th year level were enrolled in the most recent offering? (51-53) - - -

Appendix C (cont'd.)

G. If a separate economics course is offered, at any grade level, is the emphasis on

consumer economics	1	_____	(54)
general economics	2	_____	
equally divided	3	_____	

H. Do you offer two separate courses, one in consumer economics and the other in general economics?

(55) yes---no---

I. Do you offer a separate one-quarter course in economics?

(56) yes---no---

J. If the answer is yes to "I", how many students were enrolled in the most recent offering of the class?

(57-59) - - -

2. Relating to the questions above, how many separate economics classes are taught by:¹

A. Social science department teachers? (60-61) - -

B. Business education department teachers? (62-63) - -

C. Members of other departments? (64-65) - -

3. Many schools offer courses in social science and business education that contain units of economics.² Please indicate the number of courses in your school that contain such economic units and the number of students involved.³

History

Number of different courses	(66-67)	- -
Number of classes	(68-69)	- -
Total economics class periods	(70-71)	- -
Number of students	(72-74)	- - -

Government

Number of different courses	(75-76)	- -
Number of classes	(77-78)	- -
Total economics class periods	(79-80)	- -

card column 1 - 2

Duplicate card columns 2 -16

Number of students	(17-19)	- - -
--------------------	---------	-------

Business Education

Number of different courses	(20-21)	- -
Number of classes	(22-23)	- -
Total economics class periods	(24-25)	- -
Number of students	(26-28)	- - -

Appendix C (cont'd.)

Geography			
Number of different courses	(29-30)	--	
Number of classes	(31-32)	--	
Total economics class periods	(33-34)	--	
Number of students	(35-37)	---	
Sociology			
Number of different courses	(38-39)	--	
Number of classes	(40-41)	--	
Total economics class periods	(42-43)	--	
Number of students	(44-46)	---	
Other			
Number of different courses	(47-48)	--	
Number of classes	(49-50)	--	
Total economics class periods	(51-52)	--	
Number of students	(53-55)	---	

4. Economics Training of Personnel in your school teaching separate economics courses.

Semester Units of Credit
for College Economics⁴

NUMBER OF TEACHERS

0	(56-58)	---
1- 2	(59-61)	---
3- 5	(62-64)	---
6-11	(65-65)	---
12-17	(68-60)	---
18-19	(71-73)	---
20-23	(74-76)	---
24-29	(77-79)	---

card column 80 = 1

card column 1 = 3

Duplicate card columns 2 - 16.

30-35	(17-19)
36 & over	(20-22)

5. Economics Training of Personnel on your School Teaching Courses Containing Economic Units (other than separate economics courses).Semester Units of Credit for College Economics⁴

0	(23-25)	---
1- 2	(26-28)	---
3- 5	(29-31)	---
6-11	(32-34)	---
12-17	(35-37)	---
18-19	(38-40)	---

continued. . .

Appendix C (cont'd.)

20-23	(41-43)	- - -
24-29	(44-46)	- - -
30-35	(47-49)	- - -
36 & over	(50-52)	- - -
6. If qualified personnel were available, how many additional classes, if any, of the separate economics course would you offer in your school during the 1973-74 academic year? ⁵		
	(53-54)	- -
7. How many additional classes in the separate economics course do you estimate offering in your school 5 years hence (1977-78) assuming no changes in the Education Code relative to required courses? ⁵		
	(55-56)	- -

1. A school offering three different classes or sections of a one semester course in economics with two of the classes taught by social science teachers and one by business education teachers would report 2 in 2A and 1 in 2B.
2. A unit is defined for this purpose as ten or more class periods or the equivalent per semester devoted to the study of economics.
3. If your school offers economic units in both World History and United States History and in five different classes or sections, this would be reported as 2 courses in history and 5 classes for this purpose.
4. Economic courses should not be confused with business administration or home economics courses.
5. Additional as compared with your district 1972-73 offering.

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