THE TEAGLE DEBATE: SHOULD ACADEMIC ECONOMISTS THINK LIKE TEACHERS?*

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ABSTRACT
This paper reviews the Teagle Report on ways to return economics education to its liberal arts roots. Twenty-five respondents were invited to argue for or against this proposition and in the process to outline economics educators’ contemporary views on teaching and learning. The paper argues that there is a strong commitment among the book’s contributors to critical thinking, finding a balance between depth and breadth of learning, addressing “big think” questions and demonstrating examples of how economists solve economic problems. It also argues that there is equally strong agreement that the undervaluing of teaching begins with U.S. graduate education in economics which is designed for researchers rather than teachers. The paper compares educational and economic ways of thinking about economics education, and considers the likely impact of the Teagle Report’s suggestions for recruiting those who think like economists and encouraging them to think like teachers.

Keywords: learning, pedagogy, academic development.

JEL classifications: A22, A23

1. INTRODUCTION
The level of economics knowledge your average person will need in their lifetime is hardly in the realm of rocket science. According to the authors of Educating Economists, the most likely motive students in a U.S. university will have for getting a grounding in economics is to meet the requirements of a business degree. Therefore, with a good understanding of competition in the face of scarcity, cost-benefit analysis and opportunity cost, along with the general equilibrium of the market, they will be able to

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 follow most policy debates they are likely to come across throughout their career. Nevertheless, economics in the U.S. is taught as if every student is expected to graduate with a Ph.D. in economics. As a result many economics courses are out of touch with the majority of their students, employers and the wider society that has an expectation that universities will graduate well-rounded citizens or employable graduates.

In the place of pushing a self-interested agenda of producing ever more economists with a deep but abstract understanding of economic principles, the Teagle Foundation Report (Colander & McGoldrick 2009) advocates for an elementary grasp of economic thinking to be part of every well-rounded person’s education. This will come as welcome news to the Report’s sponsors, the Teagle Foundation, who commissioned the authors to consider how economics can contribute to its goal of promoting liberal education. Consequently, the Report begins by taking the benefits of a liberal education for granted without offering an argument for its continued relevance in education today. Economics, it is simply argued, was once closely aligned with a liberal education and has steadily drifted way from these earlier values. The task, therefore, for the authors of the Teagle Foundation Report is to bring economics back into the fold. The authors of the Report intend that their recommendations do this by engaging academics involved with undergraduate economics education in a discussion about the role and direction of the economics major.

Sadly, all of the authors of the book agree that the forces at play are currently taking the economics major in the opposite direction to a liberal education. In the 25 contributions presented in this book, all but two agree that the economics major in U.S. universities needs radical reform. There is general acceptance that economics has become increasingly technical, specialised and scientific in its thinking but there is less agreement on whether this is at the expense of a liberal education or whether a liberal education is a desirable thing.

The challenge for economics education is summed up in a single sentence from the Report; “Teaching receives little respect” (p.27). It is consistently argued throughout the book that prioritising teaching as an economist leads inevitably to being labelled a second class citizen in the world of economics. No one (including the writers of the Report and the majority of the respondents) seems willing to argue for the centrality of education in academia. Instead the poor standing of teaching is accepted without any attempt at presenting the positive aspects most academics mention when discussing their teaching. This is despite evidence from studies like McKeachie (1997) that shows U.S. faculty members are
largely attracted to academia by a sense of making a difference, interacting with students (particularly in seeing them develop), being considered helpful, and feeling competent in what they do. In Australia, McInnis (2000) similarly found that university teachers get significant intrinsic rewards from contact with their students and contributing to students’ overall growth and development, although failing to receive expected external rewards was recognised as a major de-motivating force.

Instead of teaching being valued in its own right, the authors of the Teagle Foundation Report suggest that the majority of economists working in universities prefer to be thought of as researchers. The incentives at work in economics departments are such that only research provides intellectual freedom and professional autonomy while teachers work in servitude, trying to please many masters, including students who have no interest in taking economics as a major or as a career.

The Teagle Foundation Report is therefore no corrective to this mischaracterisation of university teaching, the true value of research or its place in the role of an academic. Instead the authors of the Report consider any problem with economics education will be best addressed by the economics major being taught by people with a personal commitment to education. As these people are difficult to find in economics departments, they effectively recommend that universities begin to train economists to think like teachers (though these are my words rather than theirs).

While on the face of it this appears to be a reasonable proposition, in this paper I will investigate how realistic the authors in the book have been in addressing this suggestion. I’ll begin by examining how economists answer five basic research questions that focus on concerns central to higher education teaching and learning in the higher education literature (Kandlbinder 2011). To review how economists think about education, I’ll take each question in turn and highlight, where possible, the answers given by the respondents to the Report. I’ll then use these examples to compare and contrast educational and economic ways of thinking, to determine the likely impact of the authors’ suggestions for recruiting those who think like economists and training them to think like educators.

2. THINKING LIKE A TEACHER

Educational and economic thinking appear to me to have a number of things in common. They are both proposing a solution to the problem of how to construct arguments about how people should act. Educational research, however, tends not to make predictive claims like science or some branches of economics. Instead, it tries to show how things happen
without claiming to have a clear understanding of how they will happen in the future. Rather than conforming to standards of causality that are appropriate in the social sciences, educational arguments are more likely to describe associations between various components of research findings. Many of these associations revolve around a set of key beliefs or perceptions about what influences student learning. As such, an important starting point in presenting any educational argument is the intention of teaching and learning, judged by the level of congruence between those goals and how the process by which this intention is enacted (Biggs & Tang 2007).

Predictably, none of the essays by the respondents in this book make claims about educational research. They are personal reflections on being involved in economics education by academics who have a history of engaging in economics teaching. Only a few attempted to outline the assumptions made regarding students and university learning that one would expect when discussing questions of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, underpinning each author’s argument, is a view on how and why economics education should be practiced in U.S. universities. After all, the authors of the Report would not have asked economists to comment on their recommendations if they were not confident that they would be able to give a meaningful response to the Report’s findings. I’ll summarise these beliefs about teaching and learning by looking at how some of the authors in the book answer five general questions often addressed in higher education research, where these questions are applied to the particular context of economics.

(i) What is distinctive about learning economics in universities?
Courses are structured into majors because of a belief that there is something distinctive about learning within a particular discipline or profession. The liberal education that once formed the basis of most university degrees has given way to increasingly specialised courses, and whenever discipline and professional specialists are asked to describe the features of this distinctive kind of learning in their field a common response is that their courses help their students to think and act like them. For the economics major Colander & McGoldrick (2009, pp.16-20) describe this as ‘thinking like an economist’ which they say has changed over time to become more technical—by which they mean increasingly based on mathematics and statistics. This view is supported by Jones, Hoest, Fuld, Dahal & Colander (2009) who report that most students see themselves as learning the economic way of thinking in their economics
courses. Equally, the respondents in the book largely agree with this proposition, describing economics thinking as a combination of critical thinking and scientific analysis.

Critical thinking can be seen as the defining feature of all university level education where the goal is to prepare students to engage in critical thought, self-reflection and action (Barnett 1997). Colander & McGoldrick (2009) suggest that critical thinking within economics can address issues such as values, ethics and civic engagement. Garnett (2009) supports this growing demand for critical inquiry in university majors as necessary for developing the students’ capacities for intellectual autonomy and judgment, which Wight (2009) argues comes from grappling with alternative ethical frameworks and developing skills in moral reasoning.

While the liberal impulse of thinking for oneself is widely supported as the ideal in the Report, Colander & McGoldrick (2009) argue that there is a second and increasingly dominant side to thinking like an economist. Scientific reasoning tools, especially those that are quantitative and statistical, have come to define economists as scientists. Wible (2009) argues that studying economics leads to developing exceptional analytical tools which Goldsmith (2009) agrees has a very specific value related to hypothesis testing. For Siegfried (2009) students can be considered to think like an economist as soon as they know which tool is appropriate for which analytical task.

(ii) What kind of learning should we be aiming for in higher education?

The outcome of an economics major described as most worthwhile for economics education is where students find the right balance between depth and breadth of learning (Holmes 2009; Wible 2009). Colander & McGoldrick (2009) argue that in most cases the balance has tipped towards depth due to the push for students to become more technically proficient and prepared for graduate school at the expense of the breadth needed for a liberal education. Most of the respondents agreed that an overly narrow major is a problem but few wanted to give up the depth of thinking in one field that studying a major can bring. For Persky (2009) the major is the one place where students have an opportunity to experience the real thing of studying economics in-depth. Others argue that an integrative ability only comes from students incorporating thinking that has been developed outside of economics into standard economic models (Goldsmith 2009). For many respondents the economics major needs to concentrate on depth in order for students to have something to
integrate other knowledge into, which leads Siegfried (2009) to suggest that the current economics major has got the balance about right.

(iii) What is the role of the teacher in economics education?

In education it is generally agreed that the teacher’s role is to create the environment that maximises student learning (Ramsden 2003). If economics students need to develop sophisticated skills of integrating thinking from in and outside the discipline, educational research would be looking to identify teaching approaches that are consistent with these goals. For example, Colander & McGoldrick (2009) maintain that a passion for learning is best instilled by a passion for teaching. To safeguard this passion they argue that economics teachers must be given a high level of individual choice so they do not get bored with what they teach. Siegfried (2009) strongly agrees with the proposition that passion is more important than content.

Yet, when describing current teaching practice in economics, the authors in Educating Economists paint a pessimistic picture of economists and economics teaching. In effect they imply that currently economists are either being forced to teach something they don’t like or repress the true passion that they feel for economics for other reasons.

To take a slightly more optimist perspective, I’d like to assume with the authors that passion is indeed the driving force for university teaching and also that there is congruence between the goals of economics education and its processes. It is hard then not to conclude that economics teachers are passionate believers in the benefits of lectures for student learning or focussed on teaching as telling and transmission, given that lectures and textbooks dominate undergraduate teaching in economics more than other fields (Colander & McGoldrick 2009).

With a preference for seeing themselves as scientists, it can also be supposed that economics lecturers are modelling their teaching on approaches popular in the sciences. Lecture demonstrations, in which experiments are performed in front of students have a long history in the teaching of science (Taylor 1988). This approach is considered a far more effective means of developing an understanding of scientific principles than explanation alone. Taylor (1988) argues that the interplay between the lecturer and students as they discuss the salient features of the demonstration is critical to the approach’s success. As there is no physical dimension to critical thinking or scientific analysis, Garnett (2009) argues that professors need to reveal the grounds of their own thinking to their students. Indeed, it is this primacy of analysis and communication with
peers that leads Daly (2009) to argue that publishing research is a good proxy for the quality of teaching.

Colander & McGoldrick (2009) attribute this preference for a transmission style of teaching to the reproduction of learning that academics themselves undertake in their graduate programs. Most U.S. graduate schools have two years of coursework in their Ph.D. programs. In the first year there will be a core program followed by a greater choice of electives provided in the second year. In economics the admission into these programs is extremely selective with class sizes rarely more that 20 – 30 students. Critical thinking and communication typically is left to later stages in the program when candidates are required to argue a thesis and present a defence of their work. It is this structure of foundational knowledge presented in specialised lecturers followed by inquiry-based approaches in the later years of the program that is being replicated in undergraduate degrees. A number of respondents therefore agree that economics professors rarely graduate with the communication skills they want to instil in their students, and that only changing the Ph.D. will give potential academics an ability for critical thinking or the ability to teach the writing skills needed in a liberal education course (Bateman 2009; Breneman 2009).

Consistent with their experience of U.S. graduate education, integration was largely seen as the responsibility of the student without a specific role for economics teachers. Holmes (2009) suggests that interdisciplinary teaching often includes specialists from different fields, which Siegfried (2009) and Salemi (2009) agree needs teachers specializing in introductory courses who can reform the foundation subjects that influence the most students in a major. To make better use of this specialization, a number of respondents agree with Daly (2009) that students are skilled enough to make their own courses and all they need is better advice from their advisors (Bateman 2009; Kennett 2009; Persky 2009), especially as there is pressure from students and employers who want narrower courses. Simkins & Maier (2009) argue that students need to be guided through this process until they build the confidence to uncover misconceptions in their understanding and build upon their prior knowledge.

(iv) What has the greatest effect on students learning economics?

Jones, et al. (2009) show that students generally find the economics major hard or moderately hard, this finding being consistent with other technical courses focused on scientific thinking. Colander & McGoldrick (2009) argue that the perception of economics being a difficult course comes from
a dominance of “little think” which involves questions that have a known answer. Simkins & Maier (2009) suggest current economics courses are encyclopaedic which rewards students for memorization rather than developing in-depth thinking. This approach means that there is always some additional, increasingly obscure, piece of information that could be learned.

Colander & McGoldrick (2009) argue that economists should also address “big think” questions (p. 5). They describe big think as focusing on breadth, transcending disciplines and bringing disciplinary knowledge into question. Only some respondents agree that economics is about big think questions (eg. Bateman 2009), while Hill (2009) prefers little think questions to build up foundational knowledge and Wible (2009) sees science as involving a pedagogy of small ideas that doesn’t get bogged down in unanswered questions. For those who agree with a focus on big think questions the answer is to change assessment to longer-form, discursive assignments. Siegfried (2009) argues for a change in assessment to encourage students to write long essays on big think questions, although Skaggs (2009) claims that the reason written assignments are not used is due to the time they take in marking.

Rather than the structure of the learning experience, some respondents argue that a greater influence on student learning comes from relating content to vocational outcomes. Jones, et al. (2009) show that 55% of students saw an economics major as somewhat relevant to their job prospects. They found that most students plan to work in business after graduation with only 4% going on to graduate school. It is surveys like this that Kennett (2009) sees as pressure for economics to be considered pre-professional training.

(v) How can we achieve better learning outcomes efficiently?

It comes as no surprise that economists think that reaching better learning outcomes is best served through specialisation and greater division of labour. The economics major is the place where students can concentrate on what economics specialists do best – namely, provide a deep understanding of economics. Friedman (2009) argues that economics is learned accumulatively with the major providing depth, which Simkins & Maier (2009) suggest can be achieved by promoting working with pre-existing knowledge and helping students to self-monitor. Correspondingly, a number of respondents question whether an economics major is the best place to provide a liberal education. Goldsmith (2009) argues that students take courses outside of their majors which Kennett (2009) argues requires
students to do all of the interdisciplinary work themselves. Rather than change the economics major, Kennett (2009) suggests that students should get a liberal arts undergraduate degree before doing a Ph.D. in economics.

3. ECONOMISTS’ VIEWS ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

The goals and processes necessary for learning economics are consistently argued for in *Educating Economists*. When discussing what is distinctive about economics education, the authors of the Report and their respondents argue for a combination of critical thinking and scientific analysis with a difference of opinion on the emphasis between the former and the latter. The desired combination of these outcomes would be demonstrated by students who can integrate their deep knowledge of economics with a broad liberal arts knowledge learned elsewhere. On this view, teaching economics involves expressing the thinking and passion of being an economist, primarily by explaining economics concepts in lectures. The structure of the major needs to support this accumulative engagement with economics concepts so that students can draw on the understanding that results to explain their experiences of the economy.

To achieve teaching practices consistent with these goals and processes, Colander & McGoldrick (2009) argue that courses need to be redesigned to involve a more explicit use of context, and the application of integrating skills to content from across courses. They suggest a two-prong approach to achieving these changes. Firstly, engage academics in conversations over best practice in a series of seminars that highlight pedagogical research and learning outcomes associated with alternative pedagogical practices. Secondly, develop a teaching commons in which communities of educators interested in pedagogical innovation can come together to exchange ideas about teaching and learning.

For most of the respondents in the book, the central issue is not one of educational reform but how to undertake major organisational change. Regardless of the educational merit of more interactive modes of teaching or opportunities to share best practice, bringing economics and liberal education closer together was mainly viewed as unlikely to happen within current departmental structures. Three reasons are offered by the book’s contributors for the status quo continuing: change is not needed; change is not possible; and change is possible but too difficult to implement.

Firstly, it needs to be said that not everyone agreed with the view that change is necessary. Goldsmith (2009) was firmly against the conclusions outlined by the Report, arguing that the current system supports economics well and the case for change has not been made by the Report’s authors.
Hill (2009) agrees that there is no evidence that there is a problem with the major or that economists are poor teachers, while Persky (2009) sees the Report fighting against departmental culture and being too pessimistic about change, with the result that the authors propose far too radical solutions. From these perspectives, change is not necessary until stronger evidence is provided on why it is required.

Of the larger number of respondents who agreed with the goals for change, many simply thought change was not possible. For example Marglin (2009) agrees that the economics major does not serve a liberal education, largely because of the current incentives that operate in U.S. universities, and he does not think it is possible to change the incentives. Friedman (2009) likewise agrees with the premise of the desirability of a liberal education but is sceptical of the approach and recommendations put forward in the Report being able to achieve those goals. Kennett (2009) thinks that excellence in teaching is simply too hard to instil in academics and specialist teaching programs will not be attractive as they will be seen as producing a second class of economists.

Among those that think that change is possible and desirable, there was a strong agreement that the problem begins with U.S. graduate education which is designed for socialising researchers not teachers. Some in the book called this a supply side approach to reform (Bateman 2009; Siegfried 2009). That is, the problem was identified as not enough academics with expertise in teaching a liberal education. The solution therefore is to provide this expertise as a by-product of their graduate education. Colander & McGoldrick (2009) identify graduate students as the future researchers in the discipline and they need to be prepared in U.S. graduate schools so that they can teach in a broader environment. This, they say, requires incentives that encourage research that fits in with a liberal education. Most agreed that Ph.D.s are poor preparation for undergraduate teaching, although Persky (2009) wants to reassert the foundations of the discipline instead of reintroducing broad subjects into Ph.D. programs, while Wible (2009) suggests there could be less emphasis on mathematical modelling.

Given that recruitment draws from the pool of graduates with a postgraduate economics education, some respondents argue that teaching an economics major is not a supply problem but a demand problem. Goldsmith (2009) argued that administrators are not hiring suitable staff even though the influx of women into economics has broadened the discipline and research has become more interdisciplinary. Bateman (2009) agrees that the recruitment processes can weed out unsuitable
candidates and Breneman (2009) encourages universities to only recruit people who can teach big think courses.

In short, it was up to those who are doing the recruiting to recognise the benefits that come from increasing diversity in the department. Colander & McGoldrick (2009) identify departments as the intellectual homes of academics and therefore ultimately responsible for any decrease in the importance of liberal education. This leads the authors of the Report to argue that there is a need to restructure departments so that the locus of power goes beyond the gatekeepers in the department. Affirmative action to employ professors whose research and teaching interests align, who can demonstrate they value teaching and who use non-traditional research methods, would over time encourage staff with an interest in teaching to join economics departments. Others prefer to remove the responsibility of organising teaching away from departments altogether, with O'Flaherty (2009) suggesting that administrators are better placed to arrange students’ lives and Owen (2009) suggesting that an external agency could do the teaching at reduced cost.

The idea not canvassed by the Report but popular among some of respondents was a change in the way education is evaluated to ensure that teaching is judged by measures equivalent to research. Breneman (2009) identifies this as a move to external measures of teaching quality and Skaggs (2009) suggests that changes in measuring teaching quality will be forced upon them unless economics departments change voluntarily. Owen (2009) argues that teaching goals should be written by individuals and evaluations weighted towards these goals, which then could be used to rank teaching quality in each institution. Grimes (2009) argues that the reward structures should reflect student learning outcomes and Hansen (2009) would like to see faculty rewarded for integrating service learning.

Others argued that the only incentive that matters is a price signal and economics education will not change until more money goes towards teaching (Grimes 2009). Salemi (2009) would like to see this money go to positions directly related to teaching and to pay for training. Hansen (2009) argues that change requires an investment in time and money to restructure courses and provide administrative support. For Grimes (2009), teaching well is just too difficult and unless it can be made easier most economics educators will play safe and continue with their current approach so that can devote their creative energy to research.
4. CHALLENGING VIEWS OF ECONOMICS TEACHING

Grimes’ (2009) conclusion that most economists are unwilling to do the hard work of teaching is a common view presented throughout *Educating Economists*. I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of this opinion that economists want to escape some of their key responsibilities as academics or that an elite group of researchers set the standards for the rest of the economics community. Instead of economists valuing the opportunity to have more contact with students and contributing to their learning, they would rather see themselves as scientists, and as such, it is not surprising that they replicate the teaching culture that also plagues the sciences, with similar consequences of falling enrolments, declining relevance with employers and low esteem among students outside the major.

According to the insider perspectives presented in this book, the result of the current incentive structures in operation within economics teaching is that the majority of economic academics feel demoralised by being undervalued and unrecognised as a result of taking on the more difficult teaching-related tasks in the department. Despite widespread acknowledgement of unequal and unfair contributions to teaching responsibilities, the book overlooks that in one sense this is a collective decision made by economists employed in universities across the United States. This is represented as a systemic problem in economics education but I have to admit that I was disappointed that the respondents of this book did not then have the strength of their convictions to take their economic analysis to its logical conclusion.

Instead, most authors accept that the real-world application of incentives to teaching would be too difficult to implement. This unwillingness to bring about drastic reform seems to me to be a tacit acceptance that incentives alone will not bring about educational change in the real world. Applying neo-classical theories of economics to reform economics education would be too damaging to economics departments as they would be forced to cut cross-subsidization to research and rein in the wastage of effort created by having over-qualified and overspecialised academics teaching introductory economics for business courses.

This concentration on incentives by the respondents highlights the major limitation that comes from taking an economic approach to a largely moral and political question. As Marglin (2007) shows, the logic of the market has devastating effects on the social solidarity and reciprocity needed to build communities. There is a social contract between students and lecturers that cannot be ignored, just as there is a profound process of socialisation that occurs in departments and schools. Academics do not
come into departments as blank slates without any prior experience of university teaching. They have had a long apprenticeship as students, which in the main will have resulted in positive experiences of universities and how university courses are taught. We know that most socialisation in teaching occurs after graduate school and challenging what might have been the norms that govern any department with theories of best practice learned as a student will quickly be overpowered by the status quo. In short, inauthentic learning experiences, whether in graduate schools or seminars, have little chance of changing the minds of academics who are likely to approve of existing arrangements.

Accordingly, I agree with Bateman (2009) who says the Teagle Foundation Report focuses too much on incentives and not enough on culture. Incentives have their place but cultures are resistant to change and leadership is needed to turn around deeply felt attitudes such as those directed against teaching reported in this book. The respondents all imply that change will only occur when the costs are small but the benefits are large. Yet, studies show that psychologically a loss can be twice as powerful as a gain of the same value (McGraw, Larsen, Kahneman & Schkade 2010). Therefore in order to change academic practice through incentives they will expect at least a four-fold benefit from the changes. There is nothing I can imagine that would deliver that kind of benefit in intellectual freedom, professional autonomy, reward and recognition in addition to what economics educators already receive. After all, surveys of students reported in the book show that most students studying economics are satisfied with their economics majors (Jones, et al. 2009, p.192), suggesting improvements are starting from a relatively high base.

A focus on extrinsic rewards to individual academics is therefore unlikely to result in change. As Robert Frank shows, studying economics actually reduces the chance of cooperation in a range of settings (Frank 2004, Chapter 9). When individual interests and cooperative interests are in competition, economists are unlikely to be persuaded by appeals to the common good. As a behavioural economist, Frank argues that where people are operating in predominantly self-interested ways it is necessary to have external regulation to enforce fairness (Frank 2004). Any incentives used to change departmental culture must target Deans and Heads of School who are responsible for departmental structures that can be altered to target aberrant academic staff behaviour not currently tied to educational outcomes. As Frank (2004) highlights, economists do behave in communitarian ways when they expect others to also cooperate. If decision makers were judged on the quality of teaching in the department
as a whole, they would have incentives to ensure that the best teachers have the necessary resources and unambiguously send signals that research output and the previous pre-service role of the graduate school have become less relevant to the running of the department.

Moulding economists into educators will take substantial commitment from academics and administrators and, while I agree with Hill (2009) that researchers can be good teachers, I fear this group of economists are unlikely to ever read this book. To be fair, the authors of the Teagle Foundation Report have identified re-evaluating the undergraduate economics major as exactly the kind of ‘big think’ ideas they say economic educators must get better at incorporating in their teaching if it going to remain relevant to liberal education. Unfortunately with economics becoming increasingly technical, specialised and scientific in thinking, many of the economists in this book were unable demonstrate how economics thinking can assist when faced with the ‘big think’ questions facing real-world policy dilemmas.

5. CONCLUSION

Most respondents to the Teagle Foundation Report agree that economics education does not provide a liberal education in its current form. Still, the general view appears to be that the economics major provides other important skills to students and there is no need for urgent action. Colander & McGoldrick (2009) identify barriers to returning economics to a liberal education in the existing institutional and disciplinary structures, as well as unhelpful practices learned in graduate schools. In the end, most respondents to the Report’s recommendations find their solutions to these barriers unconvincing and uni-dimensional. There is no grand vision for economics education, just modest reforms to re-educate misinformed faculty on the value of liberal education and providing a safe haven for staff who buck the dominant culture and profess an interest in teaching.

As a result of reading this book, I was left with a strong feeling that economists are able to diagnose themselves accurately and honestly but appear unable to think themselves out of their current situation. The reason for this was identified time and again- economists think like researchers not like teachers. Teachers create an environment in which learning takes place, while economists rely on their technical expertise to analyse situations and discuss ideas without necessarily considering of how these ideas can be applied to change practice.

Yet, teachers make the same mistakes as others whenever they try to reform education (Bullock 2011). Insiders do not have a good track record
in reform and university teachers equally tend to fail to recognise there is no neutral place for change and often do not have effective strategies for productive change (Trowler 2008). Having economists think like teachers is unlikely to take the focus off individual practices and move it onto the structures that support unequal and unfair contributions to teaching. What is also needed is for faculty managers to think like teachers so they can create an environment that engenders change in which all academics can learn to provide a supportive environment for students to achieve the goals of a liberal economics education.

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