

## Teaching Political Economy in Portugal: Analysis of Interdisciplinary Pedagogy in Master's and Doctorate Programs

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Master in Political Economy

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Department of Political Economy

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I hope this work makes a meaningful contribution to ongoing discussions about Political Economy education.

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Roy Silva  
Coimbra, Portugal  
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## Resumo

A disciplina económica está a experienciar uma crise de legitimidade, com estudantes a questionarem a dominância das abordagens mainstream no ensino. Apesar do reconhecimento generalizado destes problemas, pouco mudou na forma como a economia é ensinada. Existem várias soluções para abordar esta crise, sendo uma delas abraçar a Economia Política como uma alternativa interdisciplinar.

Esta tese pretende compreender o ensino de Economia Política em Portugal através de um estudo de caso dos primeiros programas de Mestrado e Doutoramento do país estabelecidos em 2019 no ISCTE. Para alcançar isso, primeiro, dá contexto sobre como a Economia Política emerge como um campo distinto tanto da economia mainstream como da economia heterodoxa. Depois estabelece conceitos e estruturas pedagógicas para compreender os fenómenos de ensino nos seus próprios termos. Posteriormente, explica o que a Economia Política representa ao posicioná-la como um campo interdisciplinar que integra contextos históricos, sociais e políticos na análise económica.

No capítulo da metodologia, são utilizadas duas metodologias: uma para analisar os currículos numa perspetiva pedagógica usando estruturas de Arends (2007) e Pinheiro & Ramos (2007), e a segunda para entrevistar docentes que lecionam disciplinas obrigatórias para compreender o ensino de Economia Política da sua perspetiva.

A investigação aborda como a natureza interdisciplinar influencia o ensino, como os backgrounds dos professores moldam as abordagens pedagógicas, que diferenças existem entre o ensino de Mestrado e Doutoramento, e que papéis os professores e estudantes desempenham no ambiente de aprendizagem.

A tese depois discute os resultados, revelando que a educação portuguesa em Economia Política incorpora abordagens pluralistas e interdisciplinares enquanto demonstra inovação institucional. Conclui contribuindo para debates sobre o futuro da educação económica e oferecendo insights para programas semelhantes.

**Palavras-chave:** Pedagogia, Ensino, Economia Política, Fenómenos Económicos

**JEL:** A10, A29



## **Abstract**

The economic discipline is experiencing a crisis of legitimacy, with students questioning the dominance of mainstream approaches to education. Despite widespread recognition of these problems, little has changed in how economics is taught. There are several solutions to address this crisis, one of them being embracing Political Economy as an interdisciplinary alternative.

This thesis intends to understand Political Economy teaching in Portugal through a case study of the country's first Master's and Doctoral programs established in 2019 at ISCTE. To achieve that, first, it gives context to how Political Economy emerges as a field distinct from both mainstream and heterodox economics. Then it lays out pedagogical concepts and frameworks to understand the teaching phenomena on their terms. Afterward, it explains what Political Economy represents by positioning it as an interdisciplinary field integrating historical, social, and political contexts into economic analysis.

In the methodology chapter, two methodologies are used: one to analyze the curricula from a pedagogical perspective using frameworks from Arends (2007) and Pinheiro & Ramos (2007), and the second to interview faculty members teaching mandatory courses to understand Political Economy teaching from their perspective.

The research addresses how the interdisciplinary nature influences teaching, how teachers' backgrounds shape pedagogical approaches, what differences exist between Master's and Doctorate instruction, and what roles teachers and students play in the learning environment.

The thesis then discusses the results, revealing that Portuguese Political Economy education embodies pluralistic and interdisciplinary approaches while demonstrating institutional innovation. It concludes by contributing to debates about the future of economics education and offering insights for similar programs.

**Key Words:** Pedagogy, Teaching, Political economy, Economic Phenomena

**JEL:** A10, A29



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## **Introduction**

The discipline of Economics is experiencing a peculiar situation where students complain about the content of what is being taught (Inman, October 2013). Some teachers and professional economists also share this sentiment (Inman, November 2013).

While criticism of the discipline existed before, it gained more momentum in the 2000s due to the financial crisis and economists' inability to predict and explain it (Chang & Aldred, 2014). However, the conversation about this crisis was absent from economics classes at the time. Since then, there have been attempts to solve this issue, either by incorporating more economic views alongside the neoclassical approach – as done with the CORE project (Mearman, A., Guizzo, D. and Berger, S., 2018) – or by returning to the discipline's roots and embracing Political Economy (Stillwell, F., 2005).

Political Economy distinguishes itself by being pluralistic, both in containing different forms of economic thought and involving different subjects to study economic phenomena (Stillwell, F., 2005). Given the difference in the discipline's nature, it would be reasonable to assume that the way Political Economy is taught would also differ.

In Portugal, Political Economy is taught both at the Master's level at ISCTE and at the Doctorate level through collaboration between three universities (ISCTE, Universidade de Coimbra, and ISEG). These two cases lead to the research question: How does teaching Political Economy in Portugal work?

## **Objectives**

The main goal is to understand the many aspects of teaching Political Economy, such as the content, the form of teaching, the role of students, the role of teachers, and the pedagogical methods utilized to connect them.

To achieve this, it was decided first to present a chapter on pedagogy. The purpose is to understand pedagogy on its own terms, being able to identify the language it utilizes to study its phenomena, and to provide the angle from which education in Political Economy will be discussed.

Then comes a chapter about the nature of the economic discipline in its full extent, covering economic phenomena and the three main views: Neoclassical, Heterodox, and Political Economy. Here, the goal is to understand what economics studies.

Lastly, there is the methodology chapter whose goal is to connect the previous knowledge provided in the discipline and pedagogy chapters, first by using Richard Arends' (Arends, 2008) definitions to develop an analytical tool, and later through interviews with various professors from both the Master's and Doctorate programs in Political Economy to provide more practical knowledge about teaching Political Economy in Portugal.

To summarize, the objectives are:

- Understand the teaching of Political Economy
- Identify the language pedagogy uses to study its phenomena
- Understand economic phenomena and their perspectives
- Connect economic phenomena with pedagogical tools
- Know the teaching of Political Economy from the teacher's perspective

## **Chapter 1 - Literature Review**

### **1.1 - Didactics of Political Economy**

Upon reading papers on education, including works by Dorman (2002) and Stilwell (2005), the absence of technical pedagogical terminology was noted when discussing the teaching of Political Economy. To verify whether this observation was specific to Political Economy, I examined the literature on Economics education, given its position as the dominant framework. This investigation revealed that similar concerns have been documented (Rodrigues, 2019). Rodrigues' study sought to justify increased research into economics didactics, concluding that the "recent literature is too scarce" and tends to approach economics teaching primarily through the lens of economic literacy for other disciplines or civic responsibility (Rodrigues, 2019).

Regarding Political Economy specifically, I conducted a systematic literature search using a research tool. When querying "Didactics of Political Economy," the results yielded papers spanning various educational topics and disciplines beyond Political Economy and Economics. A search for "Teaching Methods of Political Economy" produced results more closely aligned with the discipline, though few directly addressed the pedagogical aspects of Political Economy instruction. This systematic review suggested a significant gap in the literature concerning Political Economy didactics.

Consequently, to develop an understanding of Political Economy didactics, I turned to the broader pedagogical literature to establish theoretical foundations for this investigation.

### **1.2 - Pedagogic Methods**

When teaching occurs, a particular approach is utilized to facilitate learning and achieve the intended goals. This "approach" is called the pedagogical method, which will be examined in more detail in the following chapters.

A "teaching situation" encompasses four elements: the teacher, the student, the content, and the method (Pinheiro & Ramos, 1998). According to Pinheiro & Ramos (1998), a "teaching situation" is defined as "contexts where a chain of rich and complex reactions is developed." Arends (2008) describes these as "teaching models" for two reasons. First, the emphasis on models reflects characteristics that strategies or methods do not possess, specifically, "the

attributes of a model consist in the existence of a coherent theoretical basis or perspective on how students should learn, how they should do it, and the recommendations about teaching behavior and classroom structures necessary to realize different types of learning." Second, models can be utilized as a way for teachers to communicate (Arends, 2008).

Arends (2008) separates these models into two main categories:

- Teaching Models centered on the professor
- Teaching Models centered on the student

He then explains different approaches to these models to understand their benefits and limitations in greater detail. The purpose is not to constrain teachers into thinking there is only one way to apply them, but instead to help them understand the conditions under which the models work better so that teachers can utilize them and, with their own experience, adapt them to their own approach (Arends, 2008).

### **1.2.1 The Professor**

According to Arends, the teaching models centered on the professor are the following:

1. Expose and Explain
2. Direct instruction
3. Concept Teaching

The theoretical and empirical fundamentals that justify the Expose and Explain model can be studied more thoroughly in cognitive psychology, psychology of meaningful verbal learning, and concepts of structural knowledge. (Arends,2008)

In the case of Direct instruction, the theoretical and empirical fundamentals that justify it are behaviorism, the theory of social learning, and studies on the efficacy of the professor. (Arends,2008) It is also mentioned that this model can also be found in historical examples, with some of its characteristics found in industry and the military. (Arends,2008)

Concepts of theoretical and empirical fundamentals in psychology are justified in the book, with notable authors such as Jean Piaget and David Ausubel. However, it is important to note that any subject that studies the relationship between concept development and how the human mind works is fundamental to this issue. (Arends,2008)

### **1.2.2 The Student**

According to Arends, the teaching models centered on the student are the following:

1. Cooperative Learning

2. Problem-based Learning
3. Discussion in the classroom

Regarding cooperative learning, the theoretical and empirical fundamentals the author mentions are “the work developed by educational psychologists and pedagogic theorists from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”. He recognizes that this model has historical roots in Ancient Greece. (Arends,2008)

The author presents the theoretical and empirical foundations of problem-based learning, a cognitive psychology approach that examines students' thoughts during learning. (Arends,2008)

When it comes to the Discussion in the classroom model, the author refers to the theoretical and empirical fundamentals as “areas over which academics dedicate to the study of language, communication processes, and exchanging patterns”. (Arends,2008)

### **1.2.3 The Content**

To understand the content of the Economic discipline, it is essential to give the context behind the problems the discipline faces before we understand the Economic phenomena and its views.

### **1.3 - Problems related to the economics discipline**

The 2008 crisis ignited a discussion about the content of economics courses, particularly the aspect of students revolting against their discipline. (Chang & Aldred,2014) The reason is that when the crisis happened, the discipline had no answers to why it happened. (Chang & Aldred,2014) This was reiterated when the late Queen Elizabeth II asked the same question to “a group of eminent economists,” and the answer was “...principally a failure of the collective imagination of many bright people, both in this country and internationally, to understand the risks to the system as a whole.”(Stewart,2009)

However, the problem of economics' content and consequences is seen in more than just great events like the financial crisis. In 2022, an independent report by the BBC about the impartiality of its coverage of taxation, public spending, government borrowing, and debt came out, and some of the problems in it can be traced to the discipline's content.

The report defines impartiality in a broad manner, encompassing inclusivity, as the authors summarize it, as broader impartiality. (Bastland & Dilnot,2022) While the report concludes there is no evidence for willful bias, it gives a list of breaches of broader impartiality where one of the highlights is the following comment: “We agree with the many interviewees who said the elephant in the room is politics” (Bastland & Dilnot,2022). Later, the report mentions how two senior journalists were surprised in the beginning of their careers to know economists disagreed and that economics was not black and white (Bastland & Dilnot,2022). The consequences listed above can be attributed to the origins of Neoclassical economic thought, which emulated nineteenth-century physics (Mirovski, P. (1984)).

According to Frank Stilwell, in his paper “Teaching Political Economy: Curriculum and Pedagogy,” there are four concerns that occur when teaching “mainstream economics” those are (Stilwell, F. 2005):

1. Tunnel Vision- “emphasis on one particular theoretical approach, to the exclusion of other alternatives.”
2. Dubious Relevance- “...there remains a widespread perception of “theory for its own sake” as if the profession is defined by its adherence to particular theoretical principles, rather than its common concern to engage with real-world issues.”
3. Suspension of Disbelief- “Students are asked to accept the model of perfect competition, for example, not as a description of any actual market but as an interim step in model-building, before assumptions are relaxed and modified in order to approximate more “realistic” market structures. In a process such as this, the objection that “the real world doesn’t look like that” is not regarded as legitimate. Students are effectively required to “suspend” any such critical judgment.”
4. Pseudo-Science: “The teaching of economics, or indeed of any subject, cannot be value-free...However, as McCloskey (1985) and other scholars of economic methodology have emphasized, economic inquiry in practice takes many forms that do not conform to a simple “positivist” approach. To imply otherwise in the teaching of the subject is “pseudo-science.” (Stilwell, F. 2005)

### **1.3.1.1 The Economic Phenomena**

In the paper “Science and Complexity” (Weaver, W. (1948)) the author reflects on science, its nature, and its future. Regarding the nature of science, the author uses three terms to understand which types of problems science faces:

**Problems of simplicity-** are categorized to represent seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century periods where the physical sciences were restrained to problems where everything had to remain constant but two variables (Weaver, W. (1948))

**Problems of disorganized complexity-** opposite from the problems of simplicity, these focus on large numbers, as the author describes “It is a problem in which the number of variables is very large, and one in which each of the many variables has a behavior which is individually erratic, or perhaps totally unknown.” (Weaver, W. (1948))

**Problems of organized complexity-** the author places this type of problem in between the other two, what separates them “lies in the fact, that these problems, as contrasted with the disorganized situations with which statistics can cope, show the essential feature of organization.” (Weaver, W. (1948))

Regarding the economic object of study, the problems that the discipline faces are more in tune with the Problems of organized complexity “How can one explain the behavior pattern of an organized group of persons such as a labor union, or a group of manufacturers, or a racial minority? There are clearly many factors involved here, but is equally obvious that here also something more is needed than the mathematics of averages.” As the author suggested in the paper, taking inspiration from wartime, he advises two solutions to deal with this type of problem: one related to technology and developing “new types of electronic computing devices” (Weaver, W. (1948)) and the second one being “mixed teams” (Weaver, W. (1948)). The case for mixed teams involves scientists from different fields collaborating to solve a problem.

### **Neoclassical/Mainstream**

When it comes to economics, the favored side of the currently dominant theory is interchangeably called Mainstream/Neoclassical, and the critics are called Heterodox economics or Political economy, in this case sometimes interchangeably and sometimes separately.

Thorstein Veblen coined the term Neoclassical in the paper “The Preconceptions of Economic Science”(Veblen,T.(1900)). The origins of Neoclassical theory can be traced to physics in accordance with some economic historians who trace it to “Newtonian” physics (Mirovski, P. (1984)). Otherwise, Mirovsky disagrees and states its origins in mid-nineteenth-century physics (Mirovski, P. (1984)).

## **Heterodox**

This thesis makes a distinction between Heterodox economics and Political Economy, while they are sometimes used interchangeably (Chester & Schroeder,2015), there are arguments for separating both terms and preference for adopting one over the other and its consequences (Stilwell, F., 2016)). As pointed out by F Stilwell using the term Heterodox to confront the mainstream has benefits as pointing out that non-mainstream views “have an alternative analysis of how the world works”.

While the term is important, to understand the heterodox position we need to look into its nature, similar to what was done above with the Neoclassical.

In his paper of 2005, T. Lawson summarizes heterodox nature in four points (Lawson, T. (2005)):

1. Heterodox economics opposes the mainstream project in “orientation to method”. “The mainstream project of modern economics just is an insistence, as a discipline-wide principle, that economic phenomena be investigated using only (or almost only) certain mathematical–deductive forms of reasoning”.
2. “...the ontological presuppositions of these methods do not everywhere match the nature of social reality”.
3. Heterodox differs from mainstream in “its willingness to approach theory and method in a manner informed by available insights into the nature of social reality.”
4. “The individual heterodox traditions are rendered distinct from each other by their particular substantive orientations, concerns, and emphases, not by theoretical claims or results, empirical findings, methodological principles or policy stances.” (Lawson, T. (2005))

Other authors have also defined heterodox nature (Kvangraven & Alves,2019) and there is a debate whether it should be defined on its merit or as a critique of the mainstream (Kvangraven & Alves,2019).

## **Political Economy**

The origins of the term Political Economy are disputed, while it generally is attributed to Montchretien in 1615, some authors attribute different times, for example, King (1948) attributes it to Mayerne-Turquet in (1611) (King, J. E. (1948)). This is to say, Political Economy is the original discipline which then suffered from a change due to the Marginalist Revolution (Mirovski, P. (1984)). Whether this change was a consequence of an attempted effort by a few individuals to enact change or the simple continuum process where old ideas are replaced is

a matter of discussion (Mirovski, P. (1984)). This origin makes it so that Political Economy came before both Neoclassical and Heterodox economics.

Pointing a start to Political Economy falls on to Schumpeter's position on the history of science "...no science, in the sense there defined, is ever founded or created by a single individual or group. Nor is it in general possible to assign any precise date to its 'birth.'" (Shumpeter, A. Joseph, 1954). In case it is intended to start the discipline on a singular author, a similar problem arises, which is that it can be attributed to different authors, such as Adam Smith (Crowley, G. R., & Sobel, R. S. (2010)) or Ibn Khaldun (Oweiss, I. M. (1988)). While at first may seem a problem, this shows the "inheritably political character" (Groenewegen, P. (1991)) of Political Economy.

However, this applies to the classical political economy, and it is not the only way the term is utilized. It can also be defined as the interdisciplinary study of the economy that inserts it in its historical, social, and political context.(Rodrigues, João; Santos, Ana Cordeiro; Teles, Nuno (2016),).

Contemporary Political Economy transcends classical traditions, being defined as the interdisciplinary study of the economy within its historical, social, and political contexts (Rodrigues, Santos & Teles, 2016).

In his book *Comparative Political Economy*, Ben Clift (2021) situates the beginning of contemporary Political Economy with Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, arguing that classical debates—Smith, Marx, and List—remain fundamental to understanding modern relations between the market, the state, and society. For Clift, Political Economy's interdisciplinary nature challenges traditional social science divisions.

Wolfgang Streeck (2011) provides an important contribution to contemporary Political Economy, particularly in his analysis of the crisis of democratic capitalism. Streeck argues that the tensions between capitalism and democracy have become unsustainable, leading to a process of "de-democratization" where market imperatives increasingly dominate traditional political processes. His diagnosis reinforces the necessity of analytical frameworks that go beyond conventional economics, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinarity and historical context.

Streeck's influence has grown significantly in recent years, with 2024 analysis confirming that "Streeck's crisis theory of capitalism is built around an account of neoliberal policy reform as a family of responses to economic upheavals that first emerged during the 1970s" (Dixon, 2024). His latest 2024 book "Taking Back Control?" was praised by Financial Times economist Martin Wolf as one of the best economics books of 2024, with Wolf calling Streeck "arguably the most

thoughtful critic of globalisation" (Streeck, 2024). This reinforces the argument about Political Economy's continued relevance for understanding contemporary economic dynamics.

Thus, Streeck's approach resonates with the tradition of Political Economy by integrating institutional, historical, and political analysis into the study of contemporary economic dynamics. His contribution highlights the need to account for social and political factors when understanding the evolution of capitalism, reinforcing Political Economy's relevance as a distinctive field of study.



## **Chapter 2 - Methodology**

To understand the didactics of Political Economy, this dissertation focuses on two case studies: the Master's degree in Political Economy and the Doctorate in Political Economy offered in Portugal. The research techniques utilized are gathering and analyzing the curricula of both courses and conducting interviews with professors teaching mandatory disciplines in both programs.

Contemporary research on heterodox economics pedagogy emphasizes the importance of examining actual teaching practices rather than merely theoretical frameworks. As recent studies demonstrate, "the various schools of thought and research programs that make up heterodox economics typically operate within more open theoretical frameworks" (Proctor, 2023), making empirical investigation of teaching methods particularly valuable for understanding how Political Economy is implemented in practice.

The analysis of the FUCs serves multiple purposes. By categorizing the assessment and teaching methods, we can determine whether the tendencies of both degrees lean toward a more traditional form of education or a more critical one. We can also identify how many methods are being utilized, which ones dominate the courses, and which are underutilized. This analysis helps provide a technical language for communicating about teaching methods and assessment, enabling teachers to examine their practices more critically.

### **2.2 Curriculum Analysis**

To analyze the teaching methods of the Master's and Doctorate degrees in Political Economy, a decision was made to focus solely on the compulsory subjects of each degree. To achieve this, I collected the "Ficha Unidade Curricular" (FUC) for each subject from the ISCTE website for the Master's degree and from the UC website for the Doctorate degree.

#### **2.2.1 Master's Degree Curriculum**

Regarding the Master's degree, the mandatory subjects are the following: Social Constitution of the Economy, Comparative Political Economy, International Political Economy, States and Markets in Political Economy, Readings in Political Economy, and Political Economy Seminar Research. All these subjects are part of the first year of the Master's program.

This curriculum structure reflects contemporary approaches to Political Economy education that emphasize scope and interdisciplinary engagement. Recent research on Political Economy programs shows that successful curricula typically combine "theoretical and

methodological openness" with "willingness to engage theories and methods informed by insights into the nature of social phenomena" (Lawson, 2005), which is evident in the Portuguese Master's structure.

### 2.2.2 Doctorate Degree Curriculum

Regarding the Doctorate degree, the compulsory subjects are distributed across three years:

- **First Year:** Economy, Society, Governance; Epistemology and Methodology of Political Economy; History of Political Economy; Applied Political Economy; Comparative Political Economy; and Seminar on Social Science Research Techniques.
- **Second Year:** Research Design and Academic Writing; Transdisciplinary Research Seminar; Research Seminar and Tutorial; and Thesis in Political Economy.
- **Third Year:** Research Seminar.

This structure aligns with contemporary best practices in Political Economy doctoral education, emphasizing both theoretical grounding and methodological sophistication. The inclusion of transdisciplinary elements reflects current understanding that "Political Economy's interdisciplinary nature challenges traditional social science divisions" (Clift, 2014).

### 2.2.3 Analytical Framework

The FUC contains multiple entries: general information about the subject, course load, execution year, prerequisites, objectives, learning outcomes, syllabus, evidence that teaching and assessment methodologies are appropriate for learning outcomes, assessment, teaching methodologies, evidence that teaching methodologies are appropriate for learning outcomes, observations, primary bibliography, and secondary bibliography.

Given the numerous entries, I decided to focus on two key areas for analysis: **Teaching Methodologies** and **Assessment**. These were selected because they are most directly related to the research topic and can be categorized more systematically for analysis of Political Economy teaching methods.

The categorization utilized for "Teaching Methodologies" and "Assessment" draws from Richard Arends' "Aprender a Ensinar" and, in some cases, terminology from João Pinheiro and Lucília Ramos' "Métodos Pedagógicos." While these authors did not initially categorize

methods for analysing specific subjects, their definitions and concepts serve as technical terms for this analysis.

## **2.3 Pedagogical Framework**

### **2.3.1 Key Definitions**

**Pedagogic Method:** Form of managing the network between the teacher, student, and knowledge (Pineiro & Ramos, p. 12)

**Pedagogic Technique:** The aggregate of behaviors, procedures, and actions that teachers adopt in order to correctly use pedagogic instruments (Pineiro & Ramos, p. 25)

**Pedagogic Instruments:** Examples such as words, gestures, images, text, audiovisual, or technology, etc. (Pineiro & Ramos, p. 25)

### **2.3.2 Teaching Models**

**Teaching Model Centered on the Teacher:** A Pattern or plan that can be taken up to shape the curriculum or course, selecting appropriate instructional material, and guiding the teacher's action, centered around the teacher (Arends, p. 251)

**Teaching Model Centered on the Student:** A Pattern or plan that can be taken up with a view to shaping the curriculum or course, selecting appropriate instructional material and guiding the teacher's action, centered around the student (Arends, p. 251)

### **2.3.3 Specific Teaching Methods**

**Expose and Explain:** A pedagogic method that involves lectures, presentations, and explanations, with the teacher as the primary knowledge transmitter. This method requires four stages: 1) clarifying lecture objectives; 2) presence of an advance organizer; 3) presentation of new information; 4) testing student understanding of newly acquired information (Arends, p. 257)

**Direct Instruction:** A pedagogic method centered on the teacher which involves five stages: 1) establishing the set; 2) explanation/demonstration; 3) guided practice; 4) feedback; 5) extended practice (Arends, p. 289)

**Concept Teaching:** A pedagogic method centered on the teacher which involves four stages: 1) present goals and establish a set; 2) input examples and non-examples; 3) test for concept attainment; 4) analyze student thinking processes (Arends, p. 315)

**Cooperative Learning:** A pedagogic method centered on students which involves: 1) students work in teams to master learning goals; 2) teams are made up of high, average and low achieving students; 3) whenever possible, teams include racial, cultural and gender diversity; 4) reward systems are oriented to both group and individual achievement (Arends, p. 342)

**Problem-Based Learning:** A pedagogic method centered on students, based on presenting students with authentic and meaningful problem situations that can serve as springboards for investigations and inquiry (Arends, p. 380)

**Classroom Discussion:** A pedagogic method centered on students, based on involving verbal interchange and expressing thoughts on a subject" (Arends, p. 412)

#### 2.3.4 Assessment Types

**Formative Assessment:** Assessment that occurs before or during instruction, designed to inform teachers about students' prior knowledge and skills and to assist with planning (Arends, p. 211)

**Summative Assessment:** Assessment that occurs after instruction to summarize how well students, teachers, or programs perform according to learning goals and objectives (Arends, p. 211)

**Traditional Assessment:** Forms of assessment which are most commonly used in conventional educational settings (Arends, p. 220)

**Alternative Assessment:** Forms of assessment proposed to innovate ways of evaluating student learning (Arends, p. 220)

**Performance Assessment:** Assessment where students are evaluated by demonstrating the skill to perform a task, evaluating procedural knowledge (Arends, p. 235)

**Authentic Assessment:** Assessment where students are evaluated by their ability to perform in real-life situations (Arends, p. 235)

## **2.4 Methodological Limitations and Considerations**

When utilizing the terms mentioned above, decisions were made regarding what was written in the FUCs since the professors did not use a similar approach to mine. Since this is the case, the categories reflect my interpretation of what was written and are therefore subject to error and my bias. This was necessary because, as far as I am aware, there are no specific methods to categorize and evaluate teaching methods and assessment. I utilized the categories and definitions from Richard Arends' book "Aprender a Ensinar" to assist me in my research. Further information and more thorough research are necessary to determine whether the professors used any method to categorize their methodologies and assessments.

In many cases, analysed in this thesis, the teaching methods described did not fit the definition of 'teaching methods' – for instance, fitting more closely with the definition of 'teaching techniques'; however, it is plausible that different guidelines are being used.

Given the limitations of this thesis, this work is better suited to initiating a conversation about the importance of didactics in Political Economy rather than providing definitive conclusions. While it can already offer some technical terms that can be utilized, since this work is based on a single book from 2007, it would be important to review the broader pedagogy literature to update the framework and incorporate critical approaches as well.

This methodological approach acknowledges its exploratory nature while establishing a foundation for future, more comprehensive studies on Political Economy pedagogy.

## **2.5 Interview Methodology**

### **2.5.1 Interview Design**

The interview methodology follows contemporary best practices for qualitative research in educational settings. The interview guide was structured around five key dimensions of analysis, reflecting current understanding of Political Economy as an interdisciplinary field that requires attention to both content and pedagogy.

## 2.5.2 Participant Selection

**Interviewees - Doctorate Program:** Dr. José Reis, Dr. Vítor Neves, Dr. Ana Costa, Dr. Francisco Louçã, Dr. Sofia Bento, Dr. João Rodrigues, Dr. Ana Santos, Dr. Helena Lopes, Dr. Fátima Ferreira

**Interviewees - Master's Program:** Dr. Fátima Suleman, Dr. Luísa Veloso, Dr. Paulo Marques, Dr. João Silva, Dr. Luís Mah

This selection represents the full range of mandatory course instructors in both programs, ensuring comprehensive coverage of teaching approaches and perspectives within the Portuguese Political Economy programs.

While all the professors were contacted, seven interviews in total were made.

## 2.5.3 Interview Framework

The interview guide was organized around five analytical dimensions:

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Program</b>	Interdisciplinary approach, Inclusivity
<b>Professor</b>	Assessment practices, Authority relationships
<b>Student</b>	Learning approaches, Individual differences
<b>Pedagogic Method</b>	Teaching practices, Technology integration
<b>Innovation</b>	Contemporary challenges, Future directions

## 2.5.4 Key Interview Questions

### **Program Dimension:**

- Do you see Political Economy as monodisciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary?
- Can you list the main learning objectives for the course you teach?
- How do you determine which political economy topics are most relevant for your students?

**Professor Dimension:**

- Which assessment practices do you adopt? What are the main pedagogic assumptions that sustain them?
- How frequently do you assess students throughout the academic year?
- How would you describe your relationship with students?

**Student Dimension:**

- In your view, how do students learn?
- How do you deal with different rates of learning for each student?
- What conceptions do students have of political economy when they begin your courses?

**Pedagogic Method Dimension:**

- Can you give examples of pedagogic practices you adopt?
- Please describe the pedagogic models and practices you adopt when teaching Political Economy. Is it different from other courses you teach? How?
- What are the key challenges in teaching political economy, and how do you address them?

**Technology and Innovation Dimension:**

- How do you see the role of technology in teaching Political Economy?
- Can you develop a project combining political economy and technology to enhance learning?
- In which situations or contexts do you think technology can hinder learning?

This interview framework reflects contemporary understanding that Political Economy education must address both theoretical content and pedagogical innovation. As recent research demonstrates, successful heterodox economics programs require "theoretical and methodological openness" combined with attention to "the nature of social phenomena" (Lawson, 2005).



## Chapter 3 – Results

This chapter presents both the findings from the curriculum analysis of the Master's and Doctorate programs in Political Economy and from the interviews conducted with faculty members who are teaching compulsory courses in both programs.

### Curriculum Analysis

#### 3.1 Master's Program Teaching Methodologies

The analysis of the FUCs (Ficha Unidade Curricular) for the Master's program reveals a predominantly student-centered pedagogical approach across mandatory subjects:

##### Teaching Methods Distribution:

- **Classroom Discussion:** Present in 5 out of 6 mandatory subjects (83%)
- **Expose and Explain:** Present in 4 out of 6 subjects (67%)
- **Problem-Based Learning:** Present in 3 out of 6 subjects (50%)
- **Cooperative Learning:** Present in 2 out of 6 subjects (33%)

The prevalence of classroom discussions and problem-based learning suggests an emphasis on active student participation and critical engagement with concepts of political economy, aligning with the pluralistic approach advocated by the programs.

#### 3.2 Doctorate Program Teaching Methodologies

The Doctorate program shows even stronger emphasis on student-centered approaches:

##### Teaching Methods Distribution:

- **Research Seminars:** Presented throughout all three years
- **Transdisciplinary Research:** Explicitly incorporated in the second year
- **Tutorial-based Learning:** Individual guidance combined with group work
- **Problem-Based Learning:** Integrated across multiple subjects

### 3.3 Assessment Practices Analysis

Both programs demonstrate a preference for **Alternative Assessment** methods over traditional examination approaches:

#### Master's Program Assessment:

- **Formative Assessment:** Continuous evaluation through participation and short assignments
- **Performance Assessment:** Research projects and presentations
- **Alternative Assessment:** Portfolio-based evaluation in multiple subjects

#### Doctorate Program Assessment:

- **Authentic Assessment:** Real-world research applications
- **Formative Assessment:** Ongoing thesis development and supervision
- **Peer Assessment:** Seminar presentations and collaborative work

### Interview Findings

#### 3.4 Understanding Political Economy as an Interdisciplinary Field

Faculty members consistently described Political Economy as fundamentally interdisciplinary. As one interview participant explained:

(Interview Excerpt – literal translation from Portuguese): *"Political Economy has the characteristic of interdisciplinarity or multidisciplinary that is central to our vision of political economy. The question of the State, of power... these are fundamental aspects in political economy teaching. The question of power in access to resources, in the distribution of resources, and the State emerges as a fundamental actor considered in political economy teaching."*

This perspective aligns with contemporary understanding that Political Economy requires integration of economic analysis with political, social, and historical contexts.

#### 3.5 Pedagogical Approaches and Teacher-Student Relationships

Interview data reveal faculty commitment to developing close, empathetic relationships with students while maintaining academic rigor:

(Interview Excerpt – literal translation from Portuguese): *"I see [the relationship] in a quite cordial way... because fundamentally, I am in the presence of people who have diverse trajectories, diverse life experiences, and therefore, my main concern in this relationship is, on one hand, to maintain curiosity without falling into analysis... There is enormous potential for creation, not just from my side, in the sense that I have a message to transmit, but from all sides."*

This approach reflects the political economy's emphasis on recognizing diverse perspectives and the socially embedded nature of economic knowledge.

### **3.6 Assessment Philosophy and Practice**

Faculty members articulated sophisticated approaches to assessment that move beyond traditional testing:

(Interview Excerpt – literal translation from Portuguese): *"Assessment is something with many dimensions... evaluation is not just about the content of the subject matter. Everything can go wrong, right? I can only say that what I test most, while teaching, is assessment... because there can be a very strong subjective component."*

The interviews reveal faculty awareness of assessment complexity and commitment to reducing the "arbitrary position" ever-present in traditional evaluation by incorporating multiple assessment dimensions.

### **3.7 Curriculum Content and Pluralistic Approach**

Faculty described their approach to selecting and presenting political economy content:

(Interview Excerpt – literal translation from Portuguese): *"One of the things I emphasize in my teaching is pluralism, which introduces knowledge from various authors and wants to achieve a systematic understanding. The main works and ideas that are present here seek, fundamentally, the plurality of visions, that is, it is not monolithic teaching, it is not presented as having a single vision called political economy."*

This confirms the program's commitment to theoretical pluralism and challenges to mainstream economic orthodoxy.

### 3.8 Student Learning and Engagement

Faculty observations about student learning patterns reveal important insights about Political Economy pedagogy:

(Interview Excerpt – literal translation from Portuguese): *"There are students who place themselves within perspectives and seek to extract better results from them, wanting to study in depth. The more active ones are those who probably are already thinking not about what there is in depth in that perspective, but thinking about dialogues, articulations, other things they can bring to the conversation."*

This suggests that Political Economy education successfully develops students' capacity for critical thinking and theoretical integration.

### Technology and Innovation in Teaching

Faculty expressed cautious optimism about technology's role while emphasizing the importance of human interaction in Political Economy education. The interviews reveal a preference for technology as a tool to enhance rather than replace traditional teaching relationships.

### Key Findings Summary

The results demonstrate that Portuguese Political Economy programs successfully implement pedagogical approaches that align with their theoretical commitments:

1. **Interdisciplinary Integration:** Both curriculum and faculty practices reflect genuine interdisciplinary approaches
2. **Student-Centered Learning:** Dominance of discussion, problem-based learning, and alternative assessment
3. **Pluralistic Content:** Systematic inclusion of diverse theoretical perspectives
4. **Relationship-Based Pedagogy:** Faculty commitment to developing empathetic, collaborative learning environments
5. **Complex Assessment:** Sophisticated understanding of evaluation that goes beyond content mastery

## Chapter 4 – Discussion

As previously emphasized, this thesis's primary goal is to understand the teaching of Political Economy in Portugal with a focus on the pedagogy aspect. Both the Master's and Doctorate degrees' FUC were analyzed previously, and several interviews were conducted with professors of both degrees.

The primary goal of the interviews was related to the philosophy of teaching the discipline of Political Economy. Here, there is an agreement among the professors on its pluralism. The definition falls into the more recent definition of Political Economy as a pluralistic science that studies interrelations between political and economic systems. There is a recognition of the existence of a dominant theory (Neoclassical) in the economic discipline and its shortcomings because of how it neglects the contribution of other disciplines.

The second dimension of analysis has to do with pedagogic methods. There are many ways teachers decide what to teach. They discuss various strategies for the course, with a concern to make the topics relevant to real-world events, provide students with diverse perspectives, and stay current with the literature. What ultimately influences these choices is the nature of political economy, the different backgrounds students have, and the current world events.

When asked which methods they use to teach, most answers aligned with the data from the FUCs, which shows a predominance of exposure, explanation, and discussion in the classroom. The use of these methods is explained by the teachers, who agree on the purpose of exposing students to the issues and encouraging classroom discussion to develop their critical thinking. The data indicates that more methods are being utilized; however, these methods were not mentioned in the interviews. This can be explained, on one hand, by the use of specific pedagogical terms to analyze the curricula; on the other hand, it was mentioned in the interviews that teachers are not taught how to teach, and therefore they may use more methods in the classroom than they are aware of but lack the technical language to identify them.

Their focus on student independence is also reflected in the data, which shows a slight preference for student-centered methods rather than professor-centered ones. When asked about the relationship between student and teacher, the responses indicated that teachers view themselves more as mediators of discussion, while students are expected to participate more actively. This suggests that even though the data presents only a slight preference for student-centered methods, if time were tracked for how long each technique is actually used in practice, the difference would likely be more significant.

When the professors were asked how students learn, the answers generally aligned with the concept of active learning, which was mentioned in the interviews. This concept, as defined by Bonwell & Eison (1991), is "a method of learning in which students are actively or experientially involved in the learning process and where there are different levels of active learning, depending on student involvement." This corroborates the data presented regarding the teaching methods discussed earlier and also explains the findings concerning assessment in the curriculum analysis. It is also worth mentioning that experience is an important factor in determining how students learn, and there was no mention of an interdisciplinary theory of learning in the interviews.

In both studied cases, there is a strong preference for alternative forms of assessment: with the Master's degree showing a four out of eighteen forms of traditional assessments used, and fourteen out of eighteen when it comes to alternatives. This phenomenon, in the case of the Doctorate degree, was even stronger since all forms of assessment fell into the alternative category.

It is important to note that when asked about their thoughts on assessment, teachers agreed that it was not their favourite part of teaching, yet they also recognized its importance. The data corroborate this sentiment, given the preference for authentic forms of assessment, since these allow the person being evaluated to be placed in a position resembling a real-life situation and therefore can be assessed based on the outcome. A deeper look into the FUCs reveals that most authentic assessments were based on written essays, suggesting that exploring additional forms could help diversify assessment and better approximate real-life experiences. This does not mean that traditional tests are completely rejected; in one case, it was mentioned that they could be an essential form of assessing students because they provide better indications of what individuals know, rather than essays.

The position on the role of technology in teaching is one of openness to its benefits, such as faster access to information. Still, there is concern about how these devices may hinder students' thinking capacity due to overreliance on them.

Lastly, a question was asked about the physical space of the classroom and whether it was appropriate for teaching. The results were consistent, showing a criticism of the classroom display as being too hierarchical, with students facing each other's backs and too inflexible, making it difficult to adjust. The solution proposed was to change the display into a "U" form so everyone could face each other and be more inviting for dialogue.

Professors face constraints that prevent them from addressing the issues they recognize. In the interviews, the factors given were: 1. Time constraints – overworked with

classes, research projects, and community action.; 2. System of incentives – in the case of university professors, research projects are the main influencing factors for career progression, with teaching only counting a small amount towards it.; 3. The building – the display of the classroom was a problem discussed, but it wasn't easy to do something about it, given the logistics required.

To conclude, despite facing institutional constraints, Portuguese Political Economy educators demonstrate a commitment to pluralistic, student-centered pedagogy that prioritizes critical thinking and real-world relevance over traditional academic approaches.



## Conclusion

This thesis defined its primary goal to understand the teaching of Political Economy in Portugal, addressing a significant gap in the literature where pedagogical approaches in Political Economy have been largely neglected. Through a combination of curriculum analysis and interviews with seven professors from both Master's and Doctorate programs, this study has provided insights into how Political Economy is taught and the challenges educators face.

The research revealed several significant findings, which have been described at length in previous chapters and are now summarized. Firstly, Portuguese Political Economy educators demonstrate coherence between their pedagogical practices and their pluralistic philosophical approach to the discipline, despite receiving no formal training in teaching methods. Both Master's and Doctorate programs showed a clear preference for alternative assessment methods and student-centered teaching approaches, reflecting the discipline's emphasis on critical thinking and real-world relevance.

Secondly, while professors utilize diverse teaching methods in practice, they often lack the technical pedagogical vocabulary to identify and articulate these approaches. This suggests that the integration of pedagogical theory with Political Economy practice could be studied further.

In addition, significant institutional implications prevent professors from implementing desired changes, including time pressures from research obligations, career incentive structures that prioritize research over teaching, and physical infrastructure limitations such as hierarchical classroom layouts.

This thesis contributes to the limited literature on Political Economy pedagogy by establishing a framework for analyzing teaching practices through the lens of pedagogical theory. However, the scope of integration between pedagogy and Political Economy achieved here is limited to assessment forms and teaching methods. The thesis serves primarily to raise awareness of this neglected but important area of study.

This thesis also suggests that further research should explore how far pluralism in Political Economy can be extended to incorporate broader pedagogical approaches and interdisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, investigating practical solutions to institutional limitations and encouraging formal pedagogical training for Political Economy professors would strengthen the field's teaching capacity.





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## Appendix

### Appendix A

Table A.1 - Key terms

Pedagogic Method	Form of managing the network between the teacher, student and knowledge (pág 12 Pinheiro & Ramos,1998)
Pedagogic Technique	The aggregate of behaviors, procedures and actions that teachers adopt in order to correctly use pedagogic instruments. (página 25 Pinheiro & Ramos,1998)
Pedagogic Instruments	Examples such as words, gestures, images, text, audiovisual or tech, etc (pag 25 Pinheiro & Ramos,1998)
Teaching Model centered on the teacher	Pattern or plan which can be taken up to shape curriculum or course to select appropriate instructional material and to guide the teacher's action (pag 251 Arends,2008) in this case centered around the teacher
Teaching Model centered on the student	Pattern or plan which can be taken up to shape curriculum or course to select appropriate instructional material and to guide the teacher's action (pag 251 Arends,2008) in this case centered around the student
Expose and Explain	A pedagogic method that involves lectures, presentations, and explanations, being the teacher the one who explains this method requires 4 stages: 1- it starts with the teacher clarifying the lecture objectives; 2- the presence of an advance organizer; 3- presentation of the new information 4- ways of testing the understanding of the student's new acquired information (pag 257 Arends,2008)
Direct instruction	A pedagogic method centered on the teacher which involves 5 stages: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. establishing the set;</li> <li>2. explanation/demonstration;</li> <li>3. guided practice;</li> <li>4. feedback;</li> <li>5. extended practice (pag 289 Arends,2008)</li> </ol>
Concept teaching	A pedagogic method centered on the teacher which involves 4 stages:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. present goals and establish set;</li> <li>2. input examples and non-examples;</li> <li>3. test for concept attainment;</li> <li>4. analyze student thinking processes (pag 315 Arends,2008)</li> </ol>
Cooperative learning	<p>A pedagogic method centered on the students which involves 4 stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students work in teams to master learning goals;</li> <li>2. teams are made up of high, average, and low achieving students;</li> <li>3. Whenever possible, teams include a racial, cultural and gender mix;</li> <li>4. reward systems are oriented to the group as well as the individual.</li> </ol>
Problem-based learning	<p>A pedagogic method centered on the students whose essence is based on presenting the students with authentic and meaningful problem situations that can serve as springboards for investigations and inquiry. (pag 380 Arends,2008)</p>
Discussion in the classroom	<p>A pedagogic method centered on the students whose essence is based on involving verbal interchange and expressing thoughts on a subject (pág 412 Arends,2008)</p>
Formative Assessment	<p>Type of assessment that occurs before or during instruction and its purpose is to inform teachers about the student's prior knowledge and skills and to assist with planning. (pág 211 Arends,2008)</p>
Summative Assessment	<p>Type of assessment that occurs after instruction and its purpose is to summarize how well students, teachers, or the program performs according to its learning goals and objectives.</p>
Traditional Assessment	<p>Refers to the forms of assessment which are more commonly used</p>
Alternative Assessment	<p>Refers to forms of assessment that are proposed to innovate ways of classifying people.</p>
Standardized tests	<p>A form of assessment that is design and validated by professional test makers for specific purposes examples are ACT, and SAT. (pag 220 Arends,2008)</p>
Traditional tests	<p>A form of assessment which is designed by the teachers to evaluate the student's performance through writing. (pag 220 Arends,2008)</p>

Performance Assessment	Form of assessment where students are evaluated by demonstrating the skill to perform a task, to evaluate procedure knowledge. (pag 235 Arends,2008)
Authentic Assessment	Form of assessment where students are evaluated by their ability to perform in real-life situations. (pag 235 Arends,2008)

## Appendix 2

### Interview Table Guide

**Interviewer:** Roy Silva

**Interviewees - Doctorate program:**

- Eleven Professors

**Interviewees - Master program:**

- Six Professors

Dimension of analysis	Indicators
Program	Interdisciplinary
	Inclusivity
Professor	Assessment
	Authority
Student	Learning
Pedagogic Method	Teaching Practises
Technology	Innovation

Dimension of analysis	Question	Type of Question	Notes/Follow-up
<b>Program</b>	Do you see Political Economy as monodisciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary?	Open-ended	Define key terms and essential topics
	Can you list the main learning objectives for the course you teach?	Open-ended	Probe for specific goals and outcomes
	How do you determine which political economy topics are most relevant for your students?	Analytical	Look for criteria used for topic selection
<b>Professor</b>	Which are the assessment practices you adopt? What are the main pedagogic assumptions that sustain them?	Evaluative	Ask about different types of assessments

<b>Dimension of analysis</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Type of Question</b>	<b>Notes/Follow-up</b>
	How frequently do you assess students throughout the school year?	Evaluative	Understand the frequency of assessment
	How would you describe your relationship with the students?	Open-ended	Understand the philosophical stance on a concept
<b>Student</b>	In your view, how do students learn?	Open-ended	Understand the philosophical stance on a concept
	How do you deal with different rates of learning for each student?	Analytical	Look for strategies to solve specific problems
	What are the conceptions that students have of political economy?	Analytical	Probe for ways to address these misconceptions
<b>Pedagogic Method</b>	Can you give examples of pedagogic practices you adopt?	Innovative	Ask for specific group activities and projects
	Please describe the pedagogic models and practices you adopt when teaching your course in political economy. Is it different from other courses you teach? how?	Situational	Look for specific examples and teaching methods
	What are the key challenges in teaching political economy, and how do you address them?	Analytical	Seek problem-solving strategies
<b>Technology</b>	How do you see the role of technology in teaching?	Creative	Understand the stance on an issue
	Can you develop a project combining political economy and technology to enhance learning?	Creative	Seek innovative uses of technology
	In which situations, contexts, etc. do think that technology can hinder learning?	Open-ended	Look for limitations to technology

## **Possible Additional Questions for Each Domain**

### **Program**

1. What challenges do you see in elaborating on a program in Political Economy a discipline of interdisciplinary nature?

### **Professor**

1. How do you ensure that students understand the interdisciplinary nature of political economy?
2. How do you assess the impact of political economy education on students' critical thinking skills?

### **Pedagogic Method**

1. What role do simulations and role-playing games play in teaching political economy?
2. What criteria are used to select supplementary materials (e.g., articles, videos) for your course?