

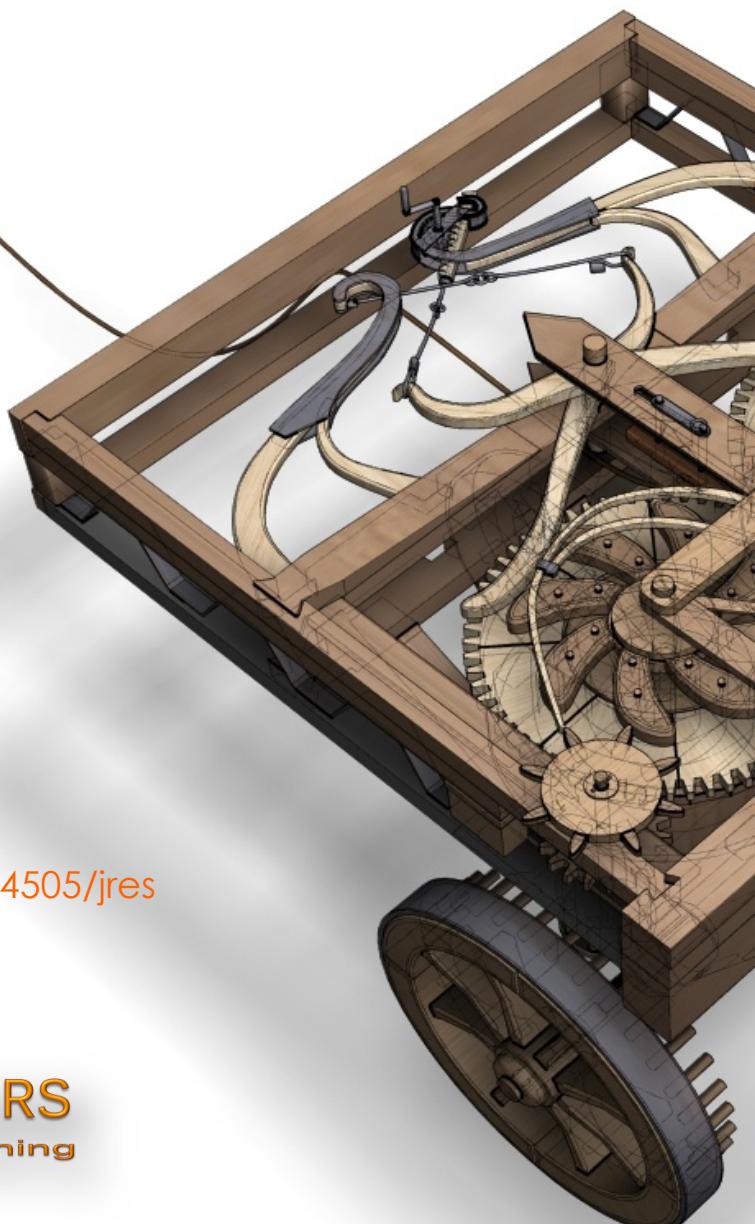
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## Integrating Economic Philosophy into Sierra Leone's Educational System: A Comparative Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development

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**Abstract:** This study advocates for embedding economic philosophy into Sierra Leone's educational framework, uniting technical economic expertise with critical thinking and ethical reflection to address complex socio-economic challenges. Adopting a conceptual analysis approach, it examines the discipline's relevance in the national development context and proposes a structured framework for integration, including educator training, curriculum design, and evaluation mechanisms. While recognising barriers such as resource constraints and institutional resistance, it recommends phased implementation with active stakeholder engagement. The anticipated outcome is a generation of economists proficient in theory, skilled in ethical evaluation, and capable of fostering inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** economic philosophy; educational reform; socio-economic development; Sierra Leone; knowledge advancement.

**JEL Classification:** A22; B40; I25; O15.

### Introduction

Economic philosophy extends beyond basic economic modelling or empirical policy evaluations; it rigorously analyses the ethical, social, and intellectual underpinnings of economic institutions (Jackson, Tamuke & Jabbie, 2019; Hausman, 2008). It promotes contemplation of the values, assumptions, and normative assertions that influence economic theory and practice, transcending the perception of economics as solely a technical pursuit. It provides a comprehensive and analytical framework to evaluate both the intentional and unforeseen effects of economic activities on society.

The marginalization of philosophical discourse in economics education in Sierra Leone has impeded the cultivation of economists who are both critical and culturally informed (Jackson, 2023a). Notwithstanding attempts to overhaul the education system, the emphasis has frequently been on rote memorisation and technical skills, rather than cultivating critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and a comprehensive awareness of the socio-economic factors influencing the nation's development (World Bank, 2020). This limited emphasis on technical skills restricts students' capacity to tackle the intricate challenges of poverty, inequality, governance, and globalisation that are widespread in Sierra Leone.

This study advocates for the formal incorporation of economic philosophy into the economics curriculum at both secondary and post-secondary levels in Sierra Leone. This is not simply an educational improvement but a strategic imperative for national advancement. Incorporating philosophical inquiry into economic education enables students to examine the assumptions of economic theories, engage with varied theoretical viewpoints, and contemplate the ethical implications of economic decision-making. This critical approach is vital for cultivating economists capable of significantly contributing to Sierra Leone's sustainable and inclusive development (Jackson, 2016).

The incorporation of economic philosophy into the curriculum will enhance knowledge acquisition and sharpen students' analytical skills, fostering a more economically robust and ethically informed society. This transition anticipates a future in which economic decisions are informed by reflective judgement and ethical considerations, with policies designed to emphasise justice, human welfare, and societal well-being. In the long

term, integrating economic philosophy into the educational system will cultivate leaders capable of guiding Sierra Leone towards sustained and equitable economic advancement.

This study aims to demonstrate the theoretical and practical importance of economic philosophy as a core element of Sierra Leone's educational system. It seeks to reconceptualise economic philosophy as an all-encompassing, critically engaged discipline, rather than only a technical field vital for national development. The objective is to recommend a redesign of the current economics curriculum to improve its reflective, analytical, and contextual relevance, prompting policymakers and educational stakeholders to consider these changes. The specific aims set out for this study are: (i) To examine the impact of economic philosophy on the evolution of critical economic thought and reasoning. (ii) To provide a structured framework for incorporating economic philosophy into Sierra Leone's educational curriculum, and (iii) To highlight the potential contributions of philosophically informed economic education to the socio-economic transformation of Sierra Leone.

The novelty of this research lies in its pioneering effort to position economic philosophy not merely as an academic curiosity but as a transformative driver of socio-economic progress in Sierra Leone (Jackson, 2024). While previous studies have explored curriculum reform in economics, few have directly addressed the integration of philosophical inquiry as a strategic tool for national development. By bridging the gap between technical economic instruction and reflective, values-based reasoning, this study offers an original framework for producing graduates who are both analytically rigorous and ethically grounded. It challenges conventional educational paradigms by proposing that the moral and cultural dimensions of economic decision-making are not peripheral but central to fostering inclusive growth, institutional integrity, and resilience in the face of complex global and local challenges. In doing so, it situates Sierra Leone as a potential exemplar for other developing nations seeking to harmonise economic competence with social responsibility in their educational systems.

## 1. Research Background

### 1.1. To Cultivate Critical Thinking and Ethical Reflection

Economic philosophy is essential for fostering intellectual curiosity, ethical scrutiny, and autonomous reasoning among students. The aim of promoting critical thinking extends beyond the simple use of economic models and tools; it necessitates that students thoroughly examine the foundational assumptions, values, and ethical implications that influence economic theory and practice. Through philosophical inquiry, students are prompted to scrutinise not only the technical dimensions of economic theories but also their social, political, and ethical ramifications. This ethical reflection method enables students to critically assess the effects of diverse economic policies, allowing them to recognise potential injustices or unexpected consequences stemming from these decisions. Contemporary literature increasingly acknowledges the significance of critical thinking in economics education, with scholars contending that it is vital for cultivating economists capable of addressing intricate real-world issues, where ethical considerations frequently intersect with economic analysis (Sen, 1999; Moyo, 2018). The objective of economic philosophy is to provide students with the intellectual instruments required to question assumptions, assess alternative theories, and contemplate the ethical aspects of economic systems and policies. This process is especially pertinent in Sierra Leone, where socio-economic difficulties necessitate not only technical answers but also a contemplative approach that incorporates equity, justice, and long-term sustainability in decision-making.

### 1.2. To Harmonise Economic Theory with Socio-Historical Realities

The secondary theoretical objective of incorporating economic philosophy into Sierra Leone's educational framework is to harmonise economic theory with the nation's distinct socio-historical setting. Economic theory, albeit vital, must be situated within the distinct historical and social contexts of Sierra Leone, a nation characterised by its colonial heritage, post-conflict rehabilitation, and governance intricacies (Kandeh, 2008; Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2001). The colonial history of Sierra Leone, which moulded its institutional frameworks and economic systems, persists in affecting the current economic operations. The legacies of extractive institutions and resource dependency have resulted in considerable inequalities in wealth distribution and economic power. By anchoring economic theory in these socio-historical contexts, students can more effectively comprehend the developmental issues confronting Sierra Leone and critically analyse global economic theories that may inadequately represent the local milieu. Furthermore, economic philosophy requires students to assess how policies influenced by global economic paradigms frequently neglect the historical and cultural intricacies that characterise local economies. Students will learn traditional economic models while also developing the ability to critically evaluate their application and limitations within Sierra Leone's post-colonial and post-conflict setting. The incorporation of economic philosophy into education is not alone aimed at expanding

students' comprehension of global economic theories but also at motivating them to tailor these theories to effectively confront local reality.

### **1.3 To Develop Economists and Policymakers Grounded on Ethical and Philosophical Principles**

The primary objective of economic philosophy within the educational framework is to cultivate economists and policymakers who possess both technical proficiency and ethical awareness. In modern global and local economies, economic decisions encompass not only the maximisation of efficiency or profit but also moral considerations like fairness, equity, and justice. This is especially pertinent in a country such as Sierra Leone, where economic policies directly impact the lives of the most vulnerable populations. Integrating philosophical inquiry into economic education enables students to critically examine the ethical implications of their decisions, addressing concerns such as wealth distribution, individual rights versus collective welfare, and the long-term sustainability of economic practices. Inspired by the philosophies of Nussbaum (2011) and Sen (1999), which advocate for human-centered development, this purpose aims to cultivate a cohort of economists dedicated to promoting social justice, human dignity, and sustainable development. Graduates possessing this ethical framework will be capable of evaluating the economic ramifications of policies while ensuring that these policies foster inclusive growth, diminish inequality, and improve the welfare of all citizens. In Sierra Leone, this entails cultivating a cadre of leaders capable of addressing the nation's socio-economic difficulties with an emphasis on ethical considerations, equity, and sustainable well-being rather than immediate profits or politically convenient answers.

### **1.4. To Foster an Interdisciplinary Perspective**

Economic philosophy promotes an integrative methodology for comprehending and tackling intricate development issues. Economic philosophy integrates economics with political science, sociology, ethics, and history, offering students a comprehensive perspective on the world, acknowledging that economic challenges are seldom isolated and are profoundly intertwined with political, social, and cultural phenomena. In Sierra Leone, an interdisciplinary approach is crucial for addressing the complex concerns that influence the nation's growth, including political instability, environmental degradation, poverty, and governance challenges. Stiglitz (2000) contends that economic policies cannot be properly formulated or executed without comprehending the wider social and political framework in which they function. Economic philosophy fosters students' ability to integrate insights from diverse disciplines, thereby enhancing their comprehension of the economic challenges confronting Sierra Leone and enabling them to propose solutions that encompass economic, political, social, and ethical dimensions. An interdisciplinary approach to the mining sector in Sierra Leone would encompass not only the economic valuation of minerals but also the environmental and social ramifications, including land rights, local community development, and the ethical considerations of resource exploitation. Economic philosophy equips students to synthesise knowledge across several fields, preparing them to tackle complex development concerns comprehensively and integratively. This interdisciplinary approach is essential for creating solutions that are technically robust, socially responsible, politically feasible, and ethically just. The goals emphasise the necessity of incorporating economic philosophy into Sierra Leone's educational framework, guaranteeing that future economists and policymakers possess not only technical expertise but also social responsibility, ethical awareness, and the ability to tackle the nation's developmental challenges from a holistic, interdisciplinary viewpoint. This integration will enable students to think critically, reflect ethically, and engage with economic concerns in a culturally relevant and internationally educated manner.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This study employs a conceptual analysis methodology to examine the incorporation of economic philosophy into Sierra Leone's educational system. The project seeks to illustrate the potential benefits of integrating philosophical inquiry into economics education, while also confronting practical problems including resource constraints and institutional opposition. The research presents a systematic methodology grounded in the following strategies:

- Development of a Conceptual Framework: Economic philosophy serves as a vital instrument for fostering critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and a sophisticated comprehension of socio-economic reality. Prominent texts in economic philosophy, including those by Jackson (2019a & 2019b), Hausman (2008), Marx (1867), Sen (2009), and Nussbaum (2011), underpin this approach, promoting the integration of philosophical inquiry with economics to rigorously evaluate moral norms and assumptions.

- Curriculum Development and Evaluation: The study proposes a curriculum framework that includes modules such as "Ethics and Economics," "Foundations of Economic Thought," and "Economic Justice and Society". These modules will facilitate students' critical engagement with both classical and contemporary economic theories and their ethical ramifications. The curriculum design is informed by Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, fostering dialogue and critical reflection on societal norms.
- Educator Training and Capacity Development: The study identifies the deficiency of trained educators and recommends specialised teacher training programs to provide educators with philosophical and pedagogical knowledge. This project adheres to Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist learning theory, which underscores active, social, and experiential learning.
- Strategic Implementation Framework: A slow, incremental strategy for integrating economic philosophy is proposed, commencing with pilot programs and progressive curriculum modifications. This method entails engagement with essential players, such as the Ministry of Education and professional associations, to establish consensus on the significance of economic philosophy in tackling Sierra Leone's socio-economic issues.

**Engagement with Stakeholders and Institutional Assessment:** Engagement with stakeholders is essential for the contextual incorporation of economic philosophy into the curriculum. The document delineates solutions to address difficulties such as curriculum congestion, opposition, and resource constraints, including the utilisation of current courses and international collaborations for resource assistance.

### 3. Discussions

The incorporation of economic philosophy into Sierra Leone's educational system offers a distinctive chance to tackle the nation's socio-economic issues by fostering a new generation of economists who are critically engaged and morally informed. Recent studies underscore the increasing acknowledgement that economic education should extend beyond technical proficiency to encompass a wider ethical and socio-political consciousness (Jackson, 2023). In Sierra Leone, where structural disparities endure and the economy is heavily reliant on external assistance and natural resources, this integration is especially vital. Critical thinking, as proposed by Sen (1999), is essential for students to question the existing quo and critically examine economic theories about their ethical foundations. This method not only improves technical skills but also prepares students to assess the ethical implications of economic policies and practices.

One of the primary purposes of this study is to align economic theory with Sierra Leone's socio-historical environment, profoundly influenced by its colonial legacy and post-conflict circumstances. Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001) contend that the legacy of colonialism persists in shaping the economic frameworks of numerous African countries, including Sierra Leone. Economic philosophy offers a critical perspective for analysing these legacies and suggesting alternative frameworks that better correspond with the realities of developing nations. Recent research on post-colonial economies, including Moyo (2018), emphasises the necessity for educational reforms that enable students to interact with local historical and cultural contexts, thereby cultivating an understanding of how global economic systems have historically disadvantaged African nations. Incorporating economic philosophy into the curriculum enables students to examine these subjects comprehensively, fostering a more sophisticated knowledge of economic development and its ethical ramifications.

Moreover, incorporating philosophical inquiry into the economics curriculum immediately fulfills the necessity for economists and policymakers who possess both technical proficiency and ethical awareness. This is particularly relevant in Sierra Leone, where corruption, poverty, and inequality persistently obstruct growth (World Bank, 2020). Nussbaum (2011) supports for the integration of capacities into economic education, emphasising the enhancement of individual freedoms and possibilities for all citizens, rather than solely prioritising GDP growth. Integrating these ethical concepts into economic philosophy education will empower future economists to transcend the confines of conventional economic models and champion policies that emphasise social fairness and human dignity. This transition is essential in a nation such as Sierra Leone, where economic advancement must be more equitable to tackle the urgent challenges of inequality and underdevelopment.

Aligned with the study's purpose to cultivate an interdisciplinary perspective, economic philosophy urges students to investigate the intersections among economics, politics, sociology, and ethics. The current difficulties confronting Sierra Leone, including corruption, resource mismanagement, and political instability, necessitate a multidisciplinary approach for effective resolution (Jackson, 2021). The mining sector in Sierra Leone, a crucial component of the economy, currently confronts issues that are not merely economic but also political and ethical in nature. Incorporating economic philosophy into the curriculum would provide students with the means to

critically evaluate the moral and political aspects of these concerns, enabling them to suggest more comprehensive solutions. This interdisciplinary approach is crucial for equipping students to manage the intricacies of globalisation and its effects on local economies, especially in post-conflict contexts.

Furthermore, integrating economic philosophy via critical pedagogy and constructivist learning theory could transform the educational experience in Sierra Leone. Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy advocates for an active, participatory learning approach that invites students to interrogate society institutions and engage in discourse regarding possible alternatives. In Sierra Leone, where the education system has historically prioritised rote learning, the implementation of critical pedagogy would enable students to become more reflective and engaged participants in their education. This method has demonstrated efficacy in improving students' problem-solving skills and equipping them for real-world issues (Zhao, 2022). Utilising constructivist learning theory, which emphasises the significance of students' social surroundings in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978), economic philosophy can be contextualised to enhance its relevance to the daily experiences of students in Sierra Leone. This method would promote enhanced engagement with the content and motivate students to apply economic theory to local concerns, like income inequality, the informal sector, and rural development.

### Conclusions and Further Research

In conclusion, the integration of economic philosophy into Sierra Leone's educational framework presents a transformative pathway for cultivating graduates who are not only technically proficient but also ethically anchored and contextually aware. This study has demonstrated that embedding philosophical inquiry within the economics curriculum strengthens critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and an appreciation of the socio-historical realities that shape the nation's development trajectory. Such integration is pivotal in equipping future economists and policymakers to navigate the multifaceted challenges of a globalised economy while remaining attuned to the ethical imperatives of fairness, justice, and inclusiveness (Jackson, 2023).

By situating economic theory within Sierra Leone's historical and cultural context, the proposed approach empowers students to interrogate the moral and social implications of economic decision-making (Jackson, 2022). This is particularly vital in a society still grappling with the enduring legacies of colonialism, post-conflict recovery, and structural inequalities. Recent scholarship underscores that economic education must move beyond technical efficiency to address deeper normative concerns that influence policy legitimacy and societal well-being (Mensah & Boateng, 2024).

Moreover, the interdisciplinary emphasis of this research ensures that economic challenges are approached holistically incorporating insights from sociology, politics, ethics, and environmental studies. This multidimensional lens is essential for tackling pressing national concerns, from political instability to environmental degradation, and for fostering innovative, locally appropriate solutions (Conteh & Kamara, 2025). In this regard, economic philosophy becomes both an intellectual and practical tool for shaping sustainable and inclusive development pathways.

The adoption of critical pedagogy and constructivist learning theory further enhances the potential of economic philosophy to reframe the educational experience. By promoting active, participatory learning and contextual relevance, these approaches can dismantle the entrenched culture of rote memorisation and replace it with reflective, problem-solving mindsets. Such pedagogical reform is aligned with emerging educational models across Africa that link cognitive skills with civic responsibility (Okafor *et al.* 2024).

The novelty of this research lies in its unprecedented framing of economic philosophy not as an ancillary academic subject, but as a strategic national development tool. While prior reforms in economics education have prioritised technical competencies, few have positioned philosophical inquiry as the central bridge between technical analysis and ethical governance. This study uniquely proposes a structured, context-sensitive model that harmonises global economic theory with local socio-cultural realities, thereby producing graduates capable of advancing both economic efficiency and moral legitimacy in policy-making. In doing so, it offers Sierra Leone an opportunity to become a regional exemplar for integrating ethics and critical thinking into economic education - an approach increasingly recognised as indispensable for resilience in the face of complex global and domestic challenges (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2023).

Ultimately, this intellectual and pedagogical transformation is not merely an academic aspiration but a strategic imperative. As Sierra Leone aspires to middle-income status, aligning its economic education with ethical, interdisciplinary, and context-specific principles will ensure that future decision-makers are equipped to craft policies that are technically sound, socially just, and sustainably inclusive.

### Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

**Emerson Abraham Jackson:** Responsible for all the following: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Data curation, Validation, Writing – review and editing, Visualization, Funding acquisition.

### Declaration of Competing Interest

There are no competing interests.

### Declaration of Use of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

Some ideas were generated from shaping the direction of the work from DeepSeek.

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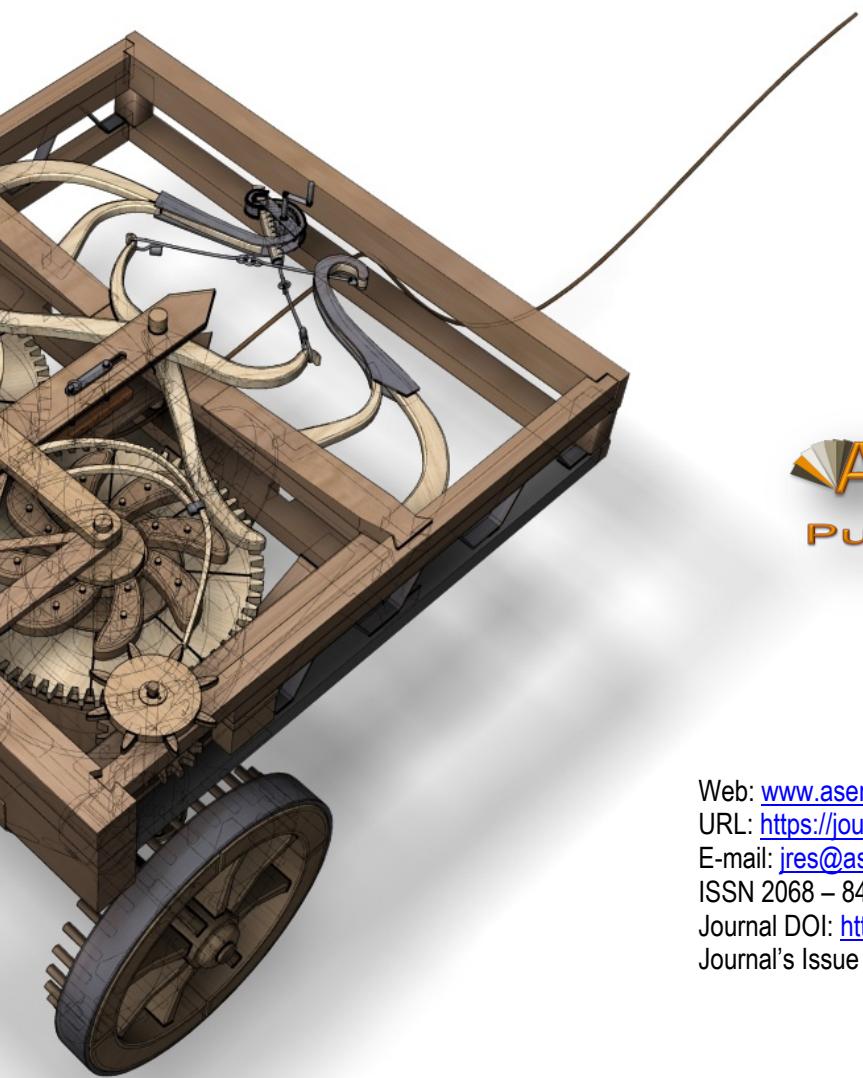
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