

# Reimagining Planning and Economics of Education as Separate Semester Units with Integrated Assessment

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**Abstract:** Many degree programs in education and public policy have historically covered planning and economics of education as a unified subject. Nevertheless, this integration frequently condenses two conceptually and methodologically separate fields into a constrained amount of instructional time. This essay makes the case that in order to guarantee academic rigor, professional relevance, and student competency, each subject should be given a full semester of independent study. It suggests a two-semester model where each unit is regarded as a stand-alone course, but the average of the two is used to calculate the final cumulative grade. The study presents a framework for distinct but coordinated delivery and assessment, drawing on theories of curriculum design, global models, and real-world issues.

**Keywords:** Educational Planning, Economics of Education, Curriculum Design, Higher Education, Interdisciplinary Assessment, Education Policy

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education professionals' training must change to meet new demands as global education systems become more complex. Planning and Economics of Education are taught together in the majority of public policy, educational administration, and teacher education programs. Even though this illustrates how the two fields overlap at the policy level, it can lead to an excessively streamlined curriculum that sacrifices depth and skill development.

While educational economics addresses economic theories, funding, cost-effectiveness, and the influence of education on growth, educational planning concentrates on system building, demographic projections, and resource allocation strategies. Different approaches, literatures, and skills are needed in these fields. This study proposes for treating them as two different full-semester units, allowing for complete treatment. The final course mark should nevertheless still represent the average of the two unit scores in order to preserve policy integration.

## 2. EDUCATIONAL ECONOMICS AND EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

### 2.1 Distinct Disciplinary Foundations

The fields of educational economics and educational planning come from distinct theoretical and methodological backgrounds. Public administration, demographics, and systems theory are all used into educational planning. By using instruments like school mapping, enrollment forecasting, and strategic policy design, it aims to match educational objectives with national development plans (UNESCO, 1995). The economics of education, on the other hand, is based on classical and neoclassical economic theory, with a focus on human capital theory, which sees education as an investment with

quantifiable financial returns (Becker, 1964; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). These disparate origins imply that every area necessitates a unique scholarly methodology.

As a reflection of their disciplinary independence, prestigious American colleges like Stanford and Harvard recognize these fields as separate academic tracks. While educational planning is frequently incorporated into programs for educational leadership or administration, applied economics and public policy departments handle the economics of education. More in-depth analysis and domain-specific knowledge are made possible by this division. In a similar vein, to retain disciplinary integrity, the University of Oxford and UCL Institute of Education in the United Kingdom provide separate planning and economics programs (IOE, 2020).

However, institutional limitations like faculty shortages or curriculum compression sometimes result in the two disciplines being combined into a single course in nations like the Philippines, Indonesia, and India. For instance, interdisciplinary pedagogy is used to justify the combined unit at the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) in India, despite the claims of some academics that this undermines specialization (Tilak, 2015). Although integration fosters a comprehensive understanding, it restricts in-depth research in either field, especially when using sophisticated planning simulations or economic models.

Planning and economics are commonly combined into a single education policy subject in African universities like Makerere University in Uganda and the University of Lagos in Nigeria. There is increasing academic support for separating them to improve methodological rigor and policy relevance, even though this reflects practical factors such as staff capacity or limited student enrollment (Verspoor, 2008). These units can be differentiated to enhance research outputs and better match graduate competencies with industry demands.

## 2.2 Pedagogical Differences

The argument for their distinct treatment in university programs is strengthened by the stark differences between the educational frameworks of planning and economics of education. Simulation exercises, demographic modeling, policy research, and systems mapping are all prioritized in educational planning. Strategic scenario planning and long-term forecasting are frequently taught to students. In contrast, economics of education depends largely on statistical methods, regression analysis, cost-benefit modeling, and financial simulations to analyze educational investment and outcomes (UNESCO, 2000).

Universities in nations like Canada and Australia frequently adapt their curricula to reflect these pedagogical differences. For instance, Monash University and the University of Toronto both provide distinct courses to give students time to become proficient in the data approaches and pertinent software tools specific to their fields. While economics modules focus on econometrics and tracking public spending, planning modules might call for the use of GIS systems or cohort survival analysis (OECD, 2017).

On the other hand, in undergraduate and graduate education programs, universities in nations like Ghana and Kenya usually combine both subjects into a single course. Although this makes policy concerns more widely accessible, it frequently restricts the practical use of either set of techniques. A student might study population forecasts without using planning models, or they might learn about financing for education without participating in budget simulations. Graduates are therefore less equipped for specialized positions in international organizations or ministries (Sifuna & Sawamura, 2010).

In an effort to better meet professional demands, some African universities are currently reviewing their pedagogical models. Planning and economics are treated as separate subjects with different learning objectives and evaluation standards in the updated curricula of educational leadership degrees at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. It is believed that this pedagogical division is a reaction to the growing need for accurate economic forecasting and evidence-based planning in the creation of educational policies (Sayed & Motala, 2012).

## 2.3 Global Practice

The integration or separation of planning and education economics is approached differently by the international academic community. Prominent academic institutions in North America and Europe, such as the University of Oslo, Harvard, Stanford, and UCL, clearly distinguish between the two. The necessity for advanced methodological skills, the growing complexity of educational institutions, and the specialized responsibilities graduates play in international organizations and

government all serve as justifications for this division (IOE, 2020; OECD, 2017). While economics graduates concentrate on funding, efficiency, and returns on education, students pursuing careers in planning are ready to work in ministries or non-governmental organizations on forecasts and infrastructure.

On the other hand, because of structural or logistical limitations, nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and portions of Latin America sometimes combine these entities into a single entity. For instance, public universities like Moi University and Addis Ababa University, as well as teacher training colleges in Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia, combine the two fields into a single unit that is usually taught over the course of a semester. Although this approach lowers course loads and boosts efficiency, it frequently leads to a cursory examination of both subjects, which hinders students' capacity to apply ideas in a professional setting (Sifuna & Sawamura, 2010; World Bank, 2007).

Disaggregation is becoming more popular in spite of these challenges. As separate skill areas, capacity building in educational planning and financing is emphasized in the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25) (African Union, 2016). As a result, to better reflect regional policy priorities, universities such as the University of Cape Town and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) have updated their postgraduate programs to distinguish between planning and economics.

Demand from the labor market is another factor driving the move toward unit separation. Graduates with specific expertise in planning or education economics—rather than generalists—are in greater demand by employers in ministries, development organizations, and research institutions. The separation of these domains in academic programs seems to be both theoretically sound and practically necessary as policy contexts become increasingly complicated and data-driven (Verspoor, 2008).

### 3. PROPOSAL: FULL-SEMESTER COURSES WITH INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

This paper suggests that, within a given academic year, Planning of Education and Economics of Education be taught as two separate semester-long units (for example, one in Semester 1 and the other in Semester 2). Each should have its own instructor, curriculum, learning objectives, and evaluation. To represent their complementary worth in educational policy and practice, the final course grade (which is recorded for transcript purposes) should be the average of the two unit scores.

### 4. PROPOSED COURSE STRUCTURE

#### *Unit 1: Planning of Education*

*Credit Hours: 3*

*Semester: 1st Semester*

#### *Course Description:*

Examines the planning of the education sector with an emphasis on school system particularly administration, policy modeling, demographic analysis, and strategic forecasting.

#### *Weekly Topics:*

1. Introduction to Educational Planning
2. Historical Evolution and Purpose of Planning
3. Approaches: Manpower, Social Demand, Rate of Return
4. Types of Planning: Short, Medium, Long-Term
5. Demographic Techniques in Planning (population pyramids, cohort analysis)
6. EMIS and Aggregation of Education Data
7. Education Sector Plans (national and sub-national)
8. Resource Allocation and School Mapping
9. Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Planning

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- 10. Governance, Decentralization, and Stakeholder Participation
- 11. Crisis and Post-Conflict Planning
- 12. Monitoring and Evaluation Techniques
- 13. Planning for SDGs and Global Commitments
- 14. Case Study Presentations & Review

**Assessment:**

Class Participation	Mid Term	Data Driven Planning Project	Final Exam	Total
10%	20%	30%	40%	100%

**Unit 2: Economics of Education**

*Credit Hours: 3*

*Semester: 2nd Semester*

**Course Description:**

Focuses on how economic theory is applied in the classroom. Students gain the ability to evaluate cost structures, educational returns, financial justice, and the wider influence of education on economic growth.

**Weekly Topics:**

- 1. Introduction to Economics of Education
- 2. Human Capital Theory and Critiques
- 3. Education as Investment vs. Consumption
- 4. Measuring Returns to Education (Mincer Equation)
- 5. Labor Market Outcomes and Skills Gaps
- 6. Cost Concepts: Direct, Indirect, Opportunity Costs
- 7. Unit Cost and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis
- 8. Public vs. Private Financing of Education
- 9. Aggregation and Analysis of Education Expenditure Data
- 10. Equity and Efficiency in Educational Finance
- 11. Global Financing Trends (OECD, World Bank, UIS data)
- 12. Economics of Higher Education and TVET
- 13. Behavioral Economics and Demographic Transition
- 14. Student Presentations & Final Review

**Assessment:**

Weekly Problem	Mid Term	Research Paper (Returns to Primary Education)	Final Exam	Total
15%	20%	25%	40%	100%

### Final Grade Computation

Hypothetical Course	Score (%)
Planning of Education	68
Economics of Education	76
Final Grade (Average)	72

This method respects both academic autonomy and interdisciplinary relevance.

## 5. INTEGRATING DEPTH, COHERENCE, AND PROFESSIONAL READINESS IN EDUCATION STUDIES

### 5.1 Depth and Specialization

Separating Planning of Education and Economics of Education into distinct units creates a learning structure that prioritizes conceptual mastery and applied expertise in both areas. Students gain the opportunity to explore specialized content, theories, and methodologies at a depth that integrated approaches often cannot provide. Recent studies emphasize the importance of domain-specific knowledge in education policy and administration, noting that the nuanced demands of modern education systems require professionals trained in discrete yet interrelated skillsets (UNESCO-IIEP, 2021; McGrath & Powell, 2020).

While students can concentrate on sector analysis, simulation modeling, and strategies for implementing policies in Planning of Education, Economics of Education provides a more in-depth examination of resource allocation, cost-effectiveness, and the financial effects of educational policies. This distinction guarantees that graduates are in line with current professional standards in addition to being academically prepared, particularly as nations transition to evidence-based education planning models (GEM Report, 2023).

### 5.2 Policy Coherence with Academic Rigor

Even if the content delivery is divided, policy alignment with curriculum equity and academic rigor is ensured by averaging final grades for Planning and Economics of Education. Students are less likely to prioritize one unit over another based on perceived simplicity or interest thanks to this structure, which encourages equal effort and accountability across both fields.

According to the World Bank (2022), creating holistic education professionals who can function well in intricate institutional settings requires multidisciplinary integration with balanced academic accountability. The notion that policy-relevant training needs to be rooted in both depth and coherence across education-related fields is further supported by recent curriculum modifications in nations like Ghana and Rwanda (ADEA, 2021). As a result, this grading scheme promotes students to treat both units equally seriously while maintaining material integrity and intellectual difference.

### 5.3 Professional Readiness

Graduates who can exhibit clear, advanced skills in both planning and economic analysis are in greater demand by employers, particularly in international NGOs, development organizations, and education ministries. The division of these units satisfies the demands of the contemporary workforce and guarantees that graduates possess the analytical adaptability necessary to participate in cross-sectoral decision-making.

For instance, as education systems deal with an increasing demand for cost-efficiency and impact measurement, organizations such as the Education Commission and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) emphasize the need for professionals skilled in financial forecasting and logistics planning (Education Commission, 2021; GPE, 2022). By reflecting how these functions are frequently defined in practice, a clear treatment of the two units improves graduates' employability and reflects the real-world division of roles within professional environments (UNICEF, 2020).

### 5.4 Enhanced Assessment Integrity

By using field-specific training, teachers can create tests that accurately gauge the competencies relevant to each subject, increasing the validity and reliability of student evaluations. Instructors can better adapt assessments and assignments to the

skills and learning outcomes relevant to each discipline when Planning and Economics of Education are evaluated independently. This leads to more insightful student feedback and learning results.

Recent pedagogical research indicates that by matching evaluation instruments with specific educational aims, these focused assessment frameworks increase learning outcomes (OECD, 2023; Kiwanuka et al., 2022). Furthermore, institutions are being urged more and more to implement granular grading schemes that can give students a better understanding of their areas of strength and growth as learning analytics and performance-based assessment technologies advance (World Bank, 2023). This guarantees a more encouraging learning environment based on equity and instructional alignment in addition to improving academic transparency.

## **6. CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Faculty Load and Staffing**

The necessity for specialist professors is one of the biggest challenges universities confront when putting this division into practice. There are now few lecturers in many universities that can teach both planning and economics of education. These instructors are generally generalists who cover overlapping curriculum areas, and the change to a differentiated model would entail either recruiting new personnel or engaging in rigorous professional development. Each unit requires academic staff with advanced, domain-specific training due to the complexity of the curriculum, which includes econometric modeling in economics and quantitative policy analysis in planning. The fundamental justification for dividing the courses in the first place could be compromised in the absence of such specialization, as the quality of instruction runs the risk of being fragmented or diluted.

Universities need to take a deliberate approach to staffing in order to lessen this problem. This entails providing in-service training for current staff, facilitating graduate scholarships in education planning and education economics, and collaborating with regional education institutes like UNESCO-IIEP to enhance capacity. Institutions may also look into faculty models that are shared across departments or universities, especially in areas with the worst shortages. To guarantee that the curriculum reform results in significant academic and professional benefits, strategic faculty deployment and long-term academic staff development investments will be essential. Accreditation agencies and national education commissioners must assist institutions by acknowledging faculty specialization tracks in these nascent academic subfields.

### **6.2 Administrative Adjustments**

There are also substantial administrative challenges to overcome in order to successfully separate the planning and economics of education. Curriculum committees must redesign course outlines, redistribute credit hours, and adjust sequencing to ensure that the units complement rather than duplicate each other. This entails aligning semester schedules, making sure prerequisites are rationally ordered, and making space in the degree structure so that both subjects can be taught in different terms without putting too much strain on students. Additionally, the two-course framework needs to be reflected in the revision of reporting protocols, moderation cycles, and assessment procedures. These responsibilities put more strain on academic boards, university registries, and quality assurance offices—especially in establishments that are already dealing with systemic inefficiencies.

Universities should form transitional curriculum review taskforces with members from the faculty, administration, and students to address these issues. Before implementing the new structure widely, these teams can test it in a small number of departments or campuses, enabling iterative changes based on immediate feedback. Universities should also spend money on academic planning tools and curriculum design technologies that can model the impact of suggested structural changes. Institutional preparedness will be further improved by enlisting outside curriculum specialists and coordinating reforms with national education strategies. Early planning, phased implementation, and cross-departmental coordination can help manage the significant administrative burden.

### **6.3 Learning Continuity**

Concerns with preserving coherence in the delivery of information are raised by the separation of Planning and Economics of Education into separate courses, particularly where subjects overlap. For instance, both courses usually cover topics like school financing and rate-of-return analysis. This could result in redundant teaching or, on the other hand, significant content gaps if it is not well coordinated. If teachers use different terminology or frameworks to address overlapping topics, students

may become confused. Furthermore, uneven treatment or depth between semesters may impair students' capacity to integrate information from the two disciplines, lowering the possible interdisciplinary insights that the structure seeks to maintain.

Institutions must encourage strong cooperation between the teachers of the two courses in order to guarantee continuation. To synchronize course content, inter-unit consultation meetings, common reading lists, and collaborative curriculum mapping sessions ought to be formalized. When there is overlap, it should be deliberate and complimentary. For example, Economics of Education may examine a concept analytically, while Planning of Education may introduce it contextually. Universities could also implement integrative seminars or capstone projects that push students to use what they've learned in both modules to solve practical challenges. This will support the curriculum's applied, professional orientation while also enhancing coherence. For this pedagogical innovation to be successful, faculty collaboration and communication are therefore crucial.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In order to maintain an integrated final score through averaging, this paper proposes splitting Planning and Economics of Education into two separate full-semester units, each with its own assessment. A model like this allows for more specialized instruction without overburdening institutional frameworks by striking a balance between academic depth and practical coordination. It guarantees that each discipline—economics of education and planning—is provided with the educational room to explore its theoretical underpinnings, methodological instruments, and practical aspects. Additionally, this division is in line with international academic standards at establishments that have realized the importance of treating these disciplines as distinct but related fields of study.

Professionals with expertise in both educational planning and economic analysis are increasingly needed as educational demands become more complicated. Universities, therefore, must take the lead in modifying their curricula to meet these evolving needs. The suggested reorganization improves academic discourse, increases professional readiness, and complies with international standards like SDG 4 and national education objectives like Vision 2030. To ensure the successful implementation of this reform in the future, institutions should support it through quality assurance, administrative changes, and faculty development.

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