

Chapter-1

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1.1 Introduction

Economics as a subject has great significance in the life of human and networked through many dimensions as social, political, national or international. Economics is the only subject in social Science in which Nobel Prize is awarded. India, with its vast population and limited resources, faces constant challenges in how to allocate resources efficiently. From buying groceries to paying EMIs and watching the news about the government budget, economics plays a big role in our daily lives. It helps us to make smart decisions, both as individuals and as a nation. Economics helps students and policymakers understand how to prioritize spending, manage scarcity, and maximize welfare India still struggles with poverty and unemployment in many areas. How the government can create better jobs and reduce poverty. how the government collects money (taxes) and how it spends it. why prices rise and interest rates affect loans, the reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US government how it affects the Indian businesses and the global market. The world facing many common economic challenges like rising oil prices, recession fears, and wars or conflicts that impact global trade.

Economists justified the inclusion of the subject on the ground of ‘Good citizenship’. In order to play an effective part in decision making, they argued, citizens need to have an adequate understanding of economics.

Education philosopher such as Hirst argued for inclusion of economics in the school curriculum as he believed that the subject had concepts, a distinct logical structure arising from a unique conceptual framework within which experience can be understood in its own distinctive methodology, which made it unique among other social sciences. As such, the subject had the potential to enable students to build capacity for reasoning and logical expression of ideas. In addition, it may help to develop such skills as creative imagination, a sense of judgement, critical thinking, and ability of communication among learners.

Class 11 Economics is a crucial stage in a student's academic journey, laying the groundwork for understanding more complex economic concepts in higher classes and beyond. This subject not only introduces students to fundamental principles of economics but also shapes their analytical and critical thinking abilities. Despite its importance, many students find economics at this level to be challenging. The reasons are manifold: abstract concepts, unfamiliar terminology, a shift from rote memorization to analytical reasoning, and often, inadequate teaching strategies. In classroom learners feel boredom and remain passive which can hinder their overall learning experience. The teaching methodology used for understanding these topics is not motivating and stimulating enough. As a result of this, students often lose interest in the subject. Its teaching should not only concentrate on laws and explanation, but also through which the law can be interpreted. This research aims to identify the hard spots in the 11th standard economics curriculum and propose measures to simplify these concepts for better comprehension. To simplify these concepts the researcher has made a module for these concepts and solve the issues

Teaching through the module helped both students and teachers in terms of their achievement in the subject and their interpersonal skill (Crittenden & Creswell,1972). It was found that teaching through module results in active and explicit learning of concepts. It will also lead to the development of creative and critical thinking, solving problems and issues with various other skills as and when compared to teaching through traditional method (Cheng & Bakar).

Researches proved that module-based learning resulted in concept retention for further courses as well as more enthusiasm and participation in class (Connolly, 2002).

Meaning of Economics

Economics is the social science that studies how individuals, businesses, governments, and nations make choices about allocating resources. Resources such as land, labor, capital, and entrepreneurship are limited, but human wants and needs are virtually unlimited. This basic fact of life gives rise to economic problems: what to produce, how to produce, and for whom to produce. Economists seek to answer these questions and explore how societies can best manage their resources to improve the standard of living for everyone. The goal of economics is to understand how these decisions affect the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Economics helps to

analyse how markets function, how policies impact society, and how individuals and organizations behave when faced with limited resources.

The term is ultimately derived from Ancient Greek (*oikonomia*) which is a term for the "way (nomos) to run a household (oikos)".

There are a variety of modern definitions of economics, Scottish philosopher **Adam Smith (1776)** defined what was then called political economy as, "an inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations" essentially focusing on how wealth is produced, distributed, and the factors that contribute to a nation's prosperity.

Alfred Marshall in his textbook *Principles of Economics* (1890) "Economics is the study of mankind in the ordinary business of life". Marshall's definition, sometimes referred to as the "welfare definition", emphasizes that economics is concerned with how individuals and society strive to achieve economic well-being. This includes both material goods and services, as well as other aspects of life that contribute to overall happiness and well-being. This definition, from the late 19th century, shifts the focus to human behavior and how individuals interact in the market.

Lionel Robbins (1932) "Economics is the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses". This definition, from the mid-20th century, emphasizes the concept of scarcity and how individuals make choices with limited resources.

Branches of Economics

The field of economics is vast, encompassing several branches, each focusing on different aspects of economic life. These branches can be broadly categorized into two broad categories: **microeconomics** and **macroeconomics**. However, other specialized areas of study, such as **econometrics**, **international economics**, and **development economics**, also contribute significantly to the overall understanding of the field.

Microeconomics

Microeconomics is the branch of economics that deals with the study of individual agents such as consumers, firms, and workers and their decision-making processes within markets. It aims to explain how these agents make choices about the allocation of limited resources.

Key areas studied in microeconomics include:

- **Consumer Theory:** Understanding how consumers maximize utility given their income and the prices of goods and services (Mankiw, 2017).
- **Firm Theory:** Studying how firms make decisions about what to produce and how much to produce, based on market conditions and costs (Pindyck & Rubinfeld, 2017).
- **Market Structures:** Analyzing different types of market organizations, such as perfect competition, monopolies, and oligopolies (Varian, 2014).
- **Price Determination:** Investigating how supply and demand determine prices in competitive markets (Mankiw, 2017).

Microeconomics helps individuals and businesses understand how market dynamics affect prices, output, and economic efficiency. It also assists in making decisions that optimize both consumer welfare and business profits (Varian, 2014).

Macroeconomics

Macroeconomics focuses on the broader aspects of the economy as a whole. It examines aggregate indicators, such as national income, inflation, unemployment, and economic growth, and considers the role of government policies in influencing these variables.

Important topics in macroeconomics include:

- **National Income Accounting:** Measuring the total output of an economy, typically represented by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Blanchard, 2017).
- **Inflation and Unemployment:** Exploring the causes of inflation and unemployment, and their effects on purchasing power and economic stability (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010).
- **Monetary and Fiscal Policy:** Studying the impact of government spending, taxation, and central bank policies on economic growth and stability (Mankiw, 2017).
- **Economic Growth:** Investigating the long-term increase in national income and the factors that promote economic development (Barro, 2013).

Macroeconomics provides critical insights for policymakers, enabling them to design effective strategies for achieving economic stability, full employment, and sustainable growth (Blanchard, 2017).

Need of studying economics at class 11

Economics is the study of how societies use limited resources to fulfil their needs and wants. At the Class 11 level, students are introduced to this essential discipline not just as a subject, but as a lens through which to view and understand the real world. The foundational concepts taught in Class 11 economics like demand and supply, national income, consumer behaviour, and market structures provide students with tools to critically analyse personal, local, and global economic issues.

In today's fast-changing and interconnected world, economic literacy is more important than ever. With issues like inflation, unemployment, poverty, and international trade dominating headlines, students need to be economically aware to navigate both their personal lives and the broader socio-political landscape.

Economics is often seen as a complex and abstract subject, filled with graphs, formulas, and theories. But at its core, economics is one of the most practical subjects a student can learn. It explains the basic principle that underlies almost every choice we make: how to deal with scarcity. From the moment we wake up to the time we go to bed, economics is working in the background, shaping our decisions, behaviours, and interactions. This makes the study of economics in Class 11 not just relevant but essential for every student. Below are some of the reasons of why should we study economics: -

Making Smart Personal Decision

Whether it's choosing between buying a new phone or saving that money for later, students deal with limited resources especially time and money. Economics teaches us how to make the best use of these resources. Class 11 introduces students to concepts like **opportunity cost**, which helps them understand that choosing one option means giving up another. This awareness sharpens decision-making skills and promotes a mindset of conscious consumption.

For example, if a student has ₹1,000 and must decide between buying a pair of shoes or going to the movies with friends, economics helps them weigh the benefits and costs

of both. The concept of **marginal utility** how much satisfaction one more unit of a good or service brings can help determine which option provides the greater value.

Understanding How Markets Work

A major part of Class 11 economics focuses on **microeconomics**, the branch that studies individual units like consumers, firms, and markets. Students learn how prices are determined in a free market through the forces of **demand and supply**. This helps them understand why the price of onions might rise during certain months or why discounts are offered during festive seasons.

Such knowledge isn't just theoretical. It helps students become more informed consumers. They can identify when prices are fair or inflated, how sellers may use psychological pricing, and even how monopolies or lack of competition can affect their choices.

Social Awareness and Empathy

Studying economics in Class 11 also helps students develop empathy and awareness about social issues. Concepts like **poverty, inequality, and unemployment** are not just statistics they're human issues. By understanding these through an economic lens, students are encouraged to think critically about social justice and equity.

A topic like poverty line and its measurement may spark curiosity about real-world conditions. Why do some people have access to resources while others don't? What can be done to fix that? Economics doesn't just provide answers, but also teaches students to ask the right questions.

Role in Daily Conversations and Media

Economic terms are frequently used in news reports, social media, and daily conversations GDP, inflation, recession, fiscal deficit, etc. Without basic knowledge from Class 11 economics, students may feel disconnected or misinterpret information. With even a foundational understanding, they become more capable of participating in debates, forming opinions, and interpreting economic events.

When students hear that "the RBI has raised repo rates," they'll know that it might mean loans will become costlier and that it's a step to control inflation. This transforms passive listeners into active, informed citizens.

Applying Theoretical Models to Real-Life Situations

One of the key strengths of economics is that it bridges the gap between theory and practice. Class 11 students learn models like:

- Law of Demand and Supply
- Production Possibility Curve
- Consumer Equilibrium
- Elasticity of Demand

These models aren't just abstract concepts. They are simplified representations of reality that help students understand and predict how people and markets behave. Using these models, students begin to **think like economists**, applying logical frameworks to explain everyday phenomena, such as price fluctuations, consumer trends, or policy impacts.

After completing the higher secondary education, students who choose Arts or Commerce related subjects have to study Economics as one of the compulsories branches. A large number of students retain without understanding the basic concepts in Economics like elasticity, multiplier and market structures and so on. As a result, they develop highly uneconomical and unfruitful study habits. A thorough base in Economics should be provided at this level to those who are keen to continue the study in the subject for higher degrees. The experience of the Investigator as a teacher and the observations made during discussion with higher secondary school teachers also highlight the need for diagnosis of the nature and extent of problems and difficulties in learning Economics at higher secondary level. In spite of the significance of this area, no study has been conducted so far to identify and overcome the difficulties in a scientific and systematic manner.

1.2 Need and significance of the study

Despite its relevance to real-world scenarios and future academic pursuits, Economics is frequently perceived as a challenging subject by Class 11 students. These challenges

are not uniformly distributed across the curriculum; instead, they cluster around specific topics or 'hard spots' that students find difficult to comprehend. These hard spots may include abstract economic models, graphical analysis, statistical calculations, or interpreting economic data.

Identifying these hard spots is not merely a diagnostic exercise but a critical step in enhancing pedagogical effectiveness. When educators are aware of the specific hurdles that impede student understanding, they can adopt targeted teaching strategies to address them. Moreover, recognizing these areas of difficulty allows curriculum developers, textbook authors, and policymakers to design more inclusive and accessible learning materials.

This comprehensive exploration aims to understand the need for identifying challenging areas—or hard spots—in the Class 11 Economics curriculum and to propose effective teaching methods to address them. By engaging with theoretical perspectives, classroom practices, and stakeholder feedback, this piece seeks to offer actionable insights that can contribute to improved student engagement, deeper conceptual understanding, and ultimately, better academic outcomes in Economics.

In the context of education, "hard spots" refer to specific topics or areas within a subject that consistently pose challenges to student understanding. These are not just momentary struggles, but recurring stumbling blocks where many students face conceptual, procedural, or application-based difficulties. In Class 11 Economics, hard spots manifest in various forms, from abstract theories in Microeconomics to technical statistical operations and data interpretation.

Hard spots can stem from a variety of causes—ranging from the intrinsic complexity of the topic to the way it is presented or assessed. For instance, concepts like price elasticity of demand or national income accounting often appear repeatedly in student feedback as difficult to grasp. These are topics that not only require understanding of the core idea but also the ability to apply that understanding in multiple contexts, sometimes with mathematical rigor.

Characteristics of Hard Spots in Economics

There are several shared traits that define hard spots in Class 11 Economics:

- **Abstractness:** Many economic concepts, such as utility, opportunity cost, and equilibrium, are theoretical and not directly observable. This abstract nature makes it difficult for students to relate these ideas to real-life situations.
- **Multidisciplinary Demands:** Economics often requires skills from other disciplines—particularly mathematics and logic. A student who is weak in basic math may find statistical portions especially hard.
- **Graphical Representation:** Understanding and interpreting graphs—such as supply and demand curves or Lorenz curves—requires spatial reasoning, which not all students find intuitive.
- **Cumulative Learning:** Economics builds on itself. If a student fails to understand an early concept like demand, they will likely struggle with related topics like price elasticity and market equilibrium.
- **Terminology Overlap:** Economic terms sometimes have meanings that differ from their everyday usage. For example, "investment" in economics refers to the purchase of capital goods, not buying stocks or mutual funds as commonly perceived.

Understanding these characteristics is critical in recognizing why some areas of Economics become hard spots and need focused teaching strategies. Several underlying factors contribute to why these particular topics become challenging:

- **Cognitive Load:** Many Economics topics require students to juggle multiple ideas at once—understanding definitions, drawing diagrams, interpreting graphs, and performing calculations. This cognitive overload can reduce comprehension and retention.
- **Teaching Approaches:** Traditional lecture-based teaching may not adequately support the diverse learning needs of students. A lack of practical examples or interactive discussions often leads to superficial understanding.
- **Textbook Language and Structure:** The language in NCERT Economics textbooks can be formal, technical, and dense. Students may find the explanations abstract and lacking in relatable examples.
- **Lack of Real-World Connection:** When students are unable to relate economic theories to everyday experiences, they may lose interest or find topics too theoretical. Without relevance, learning becomes a rote exercise.

- **Assessment Pressure:** Because Economics involves both numerical and descriptive questions, students often feel unsure about how much detail is required. The pressure of board exams may discourage exploration and focus learning narrowly on "what will be asked," not "why it matters."

Impact on Student Learning and Progress

When students encounter hard spots without adequate support, several negative outcomes may follow:

- **Loss of Interest:** Repeated failure to understand key topics can lead to disengagement.
- **Poor Academic Performance:** Misunderstood concepts can affect not only internal assessments but also board exam results.
- **Limited Higher-Level Thinking:** Without mastering foundational concepts, students cannot progress to analytical thinking or problem-solving.
- **Anxiety and Frustration:** The cumulative effect of confusion and poor performance can lead to academic anxiety and self-doubt.

These consequences reinforce the need for early identification and proactive intervention in addressing hard spots.

After identifying the hard spots in Class 11 Economics, the next crucial step is devising and implementing effective teaching methods that make these challenging areas more accessible to learners. Economics, by nature, combines abstract theory with real-world application, requiring a blend of conceptual clarity and practical understanding. Traditional lecture-based methods often fall short in achieving this balance. Therefore, a strategic, diversified, and student-centric teaching approach is essential.

This section explores a variety of teaching methods and classroom strategies aimed at demystifying complex economic concepts and improving overall student engagement and performance.

Teaching Microeconomics Effectively

Microeconomics introduces students to the basic functioning of markets, consumer and producer behaviour, and the pricing mechanism. Several concepts are abstract and involve heavy use of graphical and mathematical analysis. Use of Visual Aids and Diagram, tools (like Desmos or GeoGebra), Concept Mapping, Real-Life Examples and Case Studies, Active Learning Strategies (like role plays and debates).

1.3 Statement of problem

Economics is often seen as a complex and abstract subject, filled with graphs, formulas, and theories. Rote memorization has no role to play. Each topic is highly interrelated. Study of Economics can be made simple only through changing our style of learning. Hence the topic selected for the study is entitled as **“Identifying and Addressing Challenging Areas in 11th Standard Economics: A Focus on Effective Teaching Strategies.”**

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

Identification

The action of identifying or the fact of being identified (Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary, 2001).

To notice or recognize something or someone (Macmillan Dictionary, 2010).

Operational definition: By the word ‘Identification’ here the Investigator means locating or finding out something from among a group of things.

Challenging topic

Specific topics or concepts in the 11th standard Economics curriculum that students struggle to understand or find it difficult, which may include topics like elasticity, slope, market structures, multiplier, and fiscal policy.

Teaching Strategy

Methods employed by educators to facilitate learning, including traditional lectures, collaborative learning, project-based learning, and technology-enhanced instruction.

Effective Teaching Strategy

Approaches that significantly improve student understanding and engagement, as measured by improvements in test scores, classroom participation, and student feedback.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

In order to identify the hard spots in class 11th Economics and to address the issue by compiling a package by the researcher and see its effectiveness, the present study realizes the following specific objectives.

1. To determine specific topics within 11th standard Economics that students find difficult.
2. To develop effective strategy to enhance understanding of the topic and to improve in their achievement, different modes of instruction in the form of pictures, videos (in the case of e-content), activities, text, graphs, visual media (Power Point Slides), traditional method (Lectures), case studies are included.

Apart from the above stated objectives, the other implicit objectives are:

1. To develop the package for the identified challenging topics
2. To develop the achievement test in that topic of Economics.

1.6 Hypotheses of the Study

The following Null Hypothesis is formulated on the basis of objectives of the study-

H₀: Implementing targeted teaching strategies will lead to a statistically no significant improvement in students' understanding and performance in Economics.

1.7 Delimitation

The present study is delimited to the following aspects.

1. The study is delimited to exclusively on the 11th standard Economics curriculum in selected high schools, limiting its applicability to other grades or subjects.
2. The study will be conducted in a specific region or city, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other contexts.
3. The research will involve a sample of 20-30 students of a class, which may not capture the experiences of all students in the 11th standard across different educational settings.

4. The study will prioritize certain challenging areas in the curriculum, potentially overlooking other topics that students may also find difficult.
5. The proposed teaching strategies will be implemented over a defined period (e.g., one or two week), which may not reflect long-term effects on student performance.