

Key Concepts In Consumer Economics Textbooks

This study examined the amount of coverage of basic consumer economic concepts by college-level consumer economics textbooks. The content was defined by the test questions used on the nationwide test of consumer knowledge of high school students sponsored by Consumer Federation of America and American Express Company.

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This study compared the degree of emphasis in college-level consumer economics textbooks on the six content areas of the nationwide test of consumer knowledge of high school students sponsored by Consumer Federation of America and American Express Company (1991). The areas were: (1) credit, (2) checking and savings accounts, (3) auto insurance, (4) housing rental, (5) food purchases, and (6) car purchases.

The test questions covered rudimentary, rather low-level consumer economics concepts (such as shopping, buymanship and renting), rather than higher-order knowledge. This is logical since the test was designed for high school use.

Procedures

Procedures of this study included creating brief narrative descriptors of the content covered by the test questions, examining the associated content for each book for the six areas, and assessing the degree of the amount of the content in each book using a five-point scale (thorough coverage being a 3 while zero coverage equaled a 0). Therefore, the highest rated text would receive a score of 18.

The college-level consumer economics textbooks and their respective rating score follows: (1) Leet, D. R., and Driggers, J. (1990), Economic decisions for consumers (2nd edition), MacMillan; 15 points, (2) Miller, R. L. and Stafford, A. D. (1994), Economic issues for consumers (7th ed.), West; 13 points, (3) Garman, E. T. (1994), Consumer economic issues in America (3rd ed.), Dame Publications; 6 points, (4) Zelenak, M. J. (1993), Consumer economics (10th ed.), Publishing Horizons; 5 points, and (5) Walden, M. L. (1992), Economics and consumer decisions, Prentice Hall; 4 points.

Findings

These data make clear that only two of the five college-level consumer economics textbooks covered the concepts considered important on the nationwide test of consumer knowledge with any degree of completeness. The other four textbooks largely skipped over the concepts. The knowledge areas may have been omitted in the college texts because the authors assumed that college students would have already been exposed to the basic concepts or because they believed such rudimentary coverage would be inappropriate at the college level.

A table showing the ratings of the textbooks and an annotated bibliography of other related titles is available from: E. T. Garman, Virginia Tech, HIDM Dept., Blacksburg, VA 24061-0424.

Other Consumer Related Books

Other useful consumer related college-level books include Anton, Bennett and Widdows, Inbound Customer Call-Center Design (Dame); Bryant, The Economic Organization of the Household (Cambridge University Press); Magrabi, Consumption Economics (Praeger); and Meier and Garman, Regulation and Consumer Protection (Dame).

References

Consumer Federation of America. (1991). High School Student Consumer Knowledge: A Nation-wide Test, Washington, DC.

Endnotes

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