Code: ECON-407

Title: Institutional Economics

Credit Hours: 03

Prerequisite: Intermediate Microeconomics, Intermediate Macroeconomics and Development Economics-I

Objectives:

A course in "Institutional economics" accomplishes a series of courses that constitute the basic training for economists. Before studying institutional economics students should master not only the fundamentals of general economic theory but have knowledge of the historical courses and humanities as well.

Course Contents

Introduction

The concept of institution: attempts at definition. Institutions and organizations. Functions of social institutions. Interaction situations and the types of norms: prisoners' dilemma-type situation; co-ordination situation; inequality situation. Enforcement characteristics. Institutional structure of a society. Formal and informal institutions. Sanctions for disobeying norms (self-enforcing sanctions, guilt, shame, informational sanctions, bilateral costly sanctions, multilateral costly sanctions). Conditions of norms' effectiveness. Interaction of formal and informal institutions. The limits of imitations of institutions from best-performing countries. The problems of their enforceability. The New Institutional Economics and modern institutionalism. Old institutional economics.

Property rights

Property rights in different legal traditions (common law and civil law traditions). The property rights approach: some basic concepts. Specification of property rights, the bundle of rights, partitioning of property rights, attenuation of property rights. Assigning of property rights: the internalization of externalities. The Coase Theorem. Critic of Coase (dynamic effects of alternative legal rules, wealth effect, distributional effects, strategic behavior and the problem of holding-out, endowment effect, sociological critic, unrealistic assumption about zero transaction costs). Communal property. Optimal group size. Private property. Moral and economic aspects of private property.

Contracts

The definition of a contract. Legal and economic approach to contracts. Freedom of contract. Bounded rationality and contractual incompleteness. Asymmetric information (hidden characteristics, hidden information/ hidden action, hidden intentions) and opportunistic behavior. Adverse selection and the closing of markets. Signalling, screening and self-selection. Asset plasticity and moral hazard. Principal-agent problem and agency costs. A simple principle-agent experiment in the classroom. Controlling and preventing moral hazard (controlling the agent, incentive contracts, bonding, do-it-yourself method).

The new institutional theory of the firm

Neoclassical theory of the firm. Explanations of the firm in the new institutional theory (F. Knight, R. Coase, A. Alchian and H. Demsetz, O. Williamson, O. Hart). The market and the firm. Comparative analyses of the alternative coordination forms. Internal market and influence costs. The boundaries of the firm. Ownership structure of the firm. Separation of ownership and control in the open corporation.

The new institutional theory of the state:

Social mechanisms for constraining open access. Contractual theories of the state (Locke, Rousseau), Hobbes predatory theory of the state. North's model of the state. The regulatory role of the state in the Russian economy.

Recommended Books:

- Elinor Ostrom. Understanding Institutional Diversity. latest Edition, Princeton University Press.
- Marc Tool. Institutional Economics Theory, Method, Policy. Latest Edition.
- North D. (1990) Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance. Cambridge University Press.
- Tullock G. Rent-seeking. (1987) In: The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics. - L., Macmillan.