

post keynesian economics

post keynesian economics represents a significant school of thought in economic theory that builds upon the ideas of John Maynard Keynes, emphasizing the role of aggregate demand in influencing economic output and employment. This approach diverges from classical economics, particularly in its understanding of market dynamics, the importance of uncertainty, and the functioning of financial markets. In this article, we will explore the foundational principles of post-Keynesian economics, its historical context, key concepts such as effective demand, the role of institutions, and the implications for policy-making. Furthermore, we will examine critiques of this economic perspective and its relevance in contemporary economic discourse.

To facilitate your understanding, the following Table of Contents outlines the key sections of this article:

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Introduction to Post-Keynesian Economics

Post-Keynesian economics emerged as a response to the limitations of mainstream Keynesian economics and neoclassical thought. It seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of economic phenomena by integrating historical, institutional, and behavioral factors into its analysis. Scholars within this framework argue that the economy is inherently unstable due to the unpredictable nature of human behavior and the influence of financial markets. This perspective emphasizes the importance of effective demand—the total demand for goods and services in the economy—as a driving force behind production and employment.

The post-Keynesian approach critiques the assumptions of rational expectations and market clearing, proposing instead that prices and wages are often sticky, meaning they do not adjust quickly to changes in demand. This sticky nature can lead to prolonged periods of unemployment and underutilization of resources. Additionally, post-Keynesians advocate for a strong role for government intervention in the economy to stabilize output and ensure full employment.

Historical Context

The development of post-Keynesian economics can be traced back to the mid-20th century, arising primarily from dissatisfaction with the dominant Keynesian synthesis that incorporated elements of neoclassical economics. Key figures such as Joan Robinson, Piero Sraffa, and Hyman Minsky played vital roles in shaping this alternative perspective.

The Influence of John Maynard Keynes

Keynes's seminal work, "The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money," published in 1936, laid the groundwork for understanding the importance of aggregate demand in driving economic activity. Post-Keynesians build upon this foundation, emphasizing that markets do not always clear and that economies can experience persistent unemployment.

Response to Neoclassical Economics

Post-Keynesian economics arose as a critique of neoclassical economics, which tends to emphasize equilibrium states and the rational behavior of agents. Post-Keynesians argue that such models oversimplify the complexities of real-world economies, particularly concerning the role of uncertainty and the dynamics of financial markets.

Core Principles of Post-Keynesian Economics

Post-Keynesian economics is characterized by several core principles that differentiate it from other economic schools of thought. Understanding these principles is crucial for grasping the post-Keynesian perspective on economic issues.

Effective Demand

The concept of effective demand is central to post-Keynesian economics. It posits that the level of economic activity is determined by the total demand for goods and services, rather than supply-side factors. Post-Keynesians argue that insufficient demand leads to economic downturns, making it essential for government policy to stimulate demand during recessions.

Uncertainty and Expectations

Post-Keynesian economists place significant emphasis on uncertainty as a defining characteristic of economic life. They argue that uncertainty affects decision-making processes for both consumers and businesses. Unlike neoclassical models that assume rational expectations, post-Keynesians contend that expectations are often formed based on past experiences and social contexts, leading to

unpredictable economic outcomes.

Role of Institutions

Another principle of post-Keynesian thought is the importance of institutions in shaping economic behavior. Post-Keynesians argue that economic systems are embedded within social and institutional contexts that influence the actions of individuals and firms. This perspective highlights the need to consider the regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and historical developments that impact economic outcomes.

Key Concepts in Post-Keynesian Economics

Within the framework of post-Keynesian economics, several key concepts further elucidate the mechanisms through which economies operate.

Liquidity Preference

The notion of liquidity preference, introduced by Keynes, refers to the desire to hold cash or easily convertible assets instead of investing in illiquid assets. Post-Keynesians argue that this preference significantly influences interest rates and investment decisions, thereby affecting overall economic activity.

Endogenous Money

Post-Keynesians contend that money supply is endogenous, meaning it is determined by the demand for credit rather than being exogenously controlled by central banks. This perspective emphasizes the role of banks in creating money through lending, which can lead to cycles of boom and bust.

Distribution of Income

The distribution of income plays a crucial role in post-Keynesian economics, as it affects consumption patterns and aggregate demand. Post-Keynesians advocate for policies that promote equitable income distribution, arguing that a more equitable distribution can lead to increased effective demand and economic stability.

Policy Implications

The insights gained from post-Keynesian economics have significant implications for economic policy, particularly in times of crisis.

Fiscal Policy

Post-Keynesians strongly advocate for active fiscal policy to manage economic fluctuations. They argue that government spending can help boost aggregate demand during recessions, leading to increased output and employment. This approach contrasts with austerity measures often favored by neoclassical economists.

Monetary Policy

While post-Keynesians recognize the role of monetary policy, they argue that it should be complemented by fiscal policy. They caution against relying solely on interest rate adjustments to stabilize the economy, emphasizing that liquidity preference and credit creation are critical factors in determining economic outcomes.

Critiques of Post-Keynesian Economics

Despite its contributions, post-Keynesian economics has faced critiques from various quarters.

Challenges from Neoclassical Economists

Neoclassical economists argue that post-Keynesian models lack rigorous mathematical foundations and rely too heavily on historical anecdote. They contend that the assumptions of sticky prices and wages can lead to inefficiencies in policy applications.

Internal Disagreements

Within the post-Keynesian community, there are also debates regarding the best approaches to modeling and analyzing economic phenomena. Some scholars advocate for more formal mathematical frameworks, while others maintain a focus on historical and institutional analysis.

Conclusion

Post-Keynesian economics offers a robust framework for understanding economic dynamics by emphasizing the importance of effective demand, uncertainty, and institutional factors. Its critiques of mainstream economic theories highlight the complexities of real-world economies and the limitations of models that assume rational behavior and equilibrium states. As contemporary economies face unprecedented challenges, the insights of post-Keynesian economists can contribute to more effective policy responses aimed at fostering stability and growth.

Q: What is post-Keynesian economics?

A: Post-Keynesian economics is a school of thought that builds on the ideas of John Maynard Keynes, emphasizing the role of aggregate demand in influencing economic output and employment while critiquing neoclassical assumptions about market dynamics.

Q: How does post-Keynesian economics differ from mainstream Keynesianism?

A: Post-Keynesian economics diverges from mainstream Keynesianism by emphasizing the importance of uncertainty, the stickiness of prices and wages, and the role of institutions, advocating for a greater role of government intervention in the economy.

Q: What is effective demand in post-Keynesian economics?

A: Effective demand refers to the total demand for goods and services in an economy, which post-Keynesians argue is the primary driver of economic activity and employment levels.

Q: How do post-Keynesians view monetary policy?

A: Post-Keynesians recognize the role of monetary policy but advocate for its complementarity with fiscal policy, cautioning against overreliance on interest rate adjustments as a tool for economic stabilization.

Q: What role do institutions play in post-Keynesian economics?

A: Institutions are seen as critical in shaping economic behavior and outcomes, influencing how economic agents interact and how policies are formulated and implemented.

Q: What are the critiques of post-Keynesian economics?

A: Critiques include challenges from neoclassical economists regarding modeling rigor and internal disagreements among post-Keynesians about the best analytical approaches to understanding economic phenomena.

Q: Why is income distribution important in post-Keynesian economics?

A: Income distribution is crucial because it affects consumption patterns and aggregate demand, with post-Keynesians advocating for equitable distribution to enhance economic stability and growth.

Q: Who are some key figures in post-Keynesian economics?

A: Key figures include Joan Robinson, Piero Sraffa, and Hyman Minsky, who have significantly contributed to the development and evolution of post-Keynesian thought.

Q: What policy recommendations do post-Keynesians typically support?

A: Post-Keynesians generally support active fiscal policies to stimulate aggregate demand during economic downturns and emphasize the importance of equitable income distribution and regulation of financial markets.

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