

## MONEY MATTERS: MAKING FINANCIAL LITERACY A KEY PART OF TLE

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Imagine this scenario: A student graduates from high school, starts studying or working, earns money and suddenly realizes they have no idea how to budget, save or invest. They know how to solve  $x$ , name the parts of a cell, and even recite historical data, but when it comes to managing their own money, they are completely lost. This is the reality of many young Filipinos and a problem that could easily be solved if financial literacy was taught as part of TLE classes in junior high school (Lalosa, 2020).

TLE (Technology and Livelihood Education) already teaches practical skills in areas such as agriculture, information and communication technology, home economics and arts and crafts. They learn how to bake, weld, sew, cook and even start a small business. But what is the point of learning how to run a business if students don't know how to manage money? That's why financial literacy should be considered another important TLE skill – it's a life skill that everyone needs, regardless of their career path.

One of the most important reasons why financial literacy should be taught in middle school is that most people develop their money habits early in life (Opletalová, 2015). If students grow up without a clear understanding of budgeting, saving and responsible spending, they are more likely to develop poor financial habits as adults. Think about how easy it is to pull out a credit card, take out a loan or spend money impulsively without thinking about the long-term consequences. Without financial education, many young adults are drowning in debt, living paycheck to paycheck and struggling to make ends meet. By teaching financial literacy in school, students can develop healthy financial habits before they enter the real world.

Furthermore, many young people see money as something that comes and goes without really understanding how hard it is to earn. If they learned about income, expenses, investments, and financial planning, they would have a better understanding of financial responsibility. Imagine a classroom where students learn how to budget their allowance, track their spending, and even start saving for small goals. These simple lessons can shape the way they handle money for the rest of their lives.

Including financial literacy in the TLE would also prepare students for entrepreneurship. Many students who take TLE courses want to run their own business one day, whether it's a food stall, an online store or a service business. But without financial knowledge, even the best business ideas can fail. Entrepreneurs need to understand cash flow, pricing, profit margins and even taxes. Integrating financial literacy into TLE classes gives students who dream of becoming entrepreneurs a solid foundation in business finances, increasing their chances of success.

Aside from entrepreneurship, financial education would also benefit students planning to enter the workforce after high school. Many companies today offer financial benefits such as SSS, Pag-IBIG, PhilHealth, and even investment opportunities – but how many young workers actually understand them? Teaching financial literacy in school would help future workers make informed decisions about salaries, benefits and savings. They would know how to budget their paychecks, avoid unnecessary debt and even start investing early.

Some may argue that parents should teach financial literacy at home, but let's face it – not all parents are financially literate themselves. In fact, many adults struggle with money management because they were never taught these skills. By incorporating financial education into the school curriculum, schools can help break this cycle and ensure that the next generation is better prepared for financial independence.

Integrating financial education into the school curriculum would not require a major curriculum overhaul. Simple lessons on budgeting, saving, investing, and financial decision making could be introduced in an engaging way. Students could do hands-on activities such as managing a mock budget, planning savings goals, or even running a small business with real money in the classroom. Through these practical exercises, financial knowledge would be more than just theory – it would become a habit.

Ultimately, financial education is not just about money, but also about security, freedom and opportunity. When students learn to manage money wisely, they can make more confident financial decisions, are less likely to fall into debt and are more able to build a stable future. TLE already teaches students valuable life skills – why not add another one that can make a real difference to their lives? If we want a financially literate generation, the best place to start is in the classroom.

#### References:

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- Opletalová, A. (2015). Financial Education and Financial Literacy in the Czech Education System. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 171, 1176–1184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.229>