



# Associative Financial Literacy

## Accompanying the journey of life

Published on behalf of the Economics Conference of the Goetheanum as a contribution to understanding and teaching financial literacy.  
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Publication No. 5 / August 2021

## A One-hour On-line Lesson

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We live in very strange and rapid times, which demands a strong attitude to adapt oneself. I was recently invited to give an on-line one-hour finance lesson to a young group of 17 immigrants that live in the city of São Paulo. Those 18-25 year old young people were gathered together in the 8<sup>th</sup> Cooking Training Program edition of a social project that I happen to know and admire. It's called "Chef Aprendiz"<sup>1</sup>

At the end of their training program, small teams are formed and each team receives a challenge to organize and realize a complete menu-for-two. They also receive a certain amount of money for doing so. The result is presented in a contest where well-known restaurant owners and chefs are judges. The participants give their best to show what they can accomplish as entrepreneurs. Some expect to be in evidence to get hired, others have already started their own activity or wish to do so.

The lesson happened just a week before the contest, so they were very motivated. They were all together in the same room accompanied by an Educational Coordinator and their Chef-Trainer. Both educators were at my disposal as assistants for the finance lesson and also for all technical issues. It was something a little strange for me at the beginning, they asked me to prepare a movie containing what I wanted to say in order to avoid any troubles with internet connections.

My objectives were to awaken in them some interest in economics and finance by telling them one or two prior statements we know from associative economics and also bring to them at least one financial tool that could be immediately useful.

The program was as follows:

1. **Welcome (10')** They were asked to write down to themselves how they were arriving at this lesson and what were their expectations. One or two could talk if they wanted.
2. **First prepared movie (7')** "Why should we all know finance?"

The script had two parts. The first one shows the historical evolution of economics since the time when priests would take all the decisions about economic life until the Industrial Revolution and our days. I mention the Renaissance, underlying the big discovery of double-entry accounting by Lucas Pacioli. I want to show that we, as humanity, are not the same as before. That we can learn from the past in order to build the future.

In the second part, I try to get their attention by saying emphatically that they have to retain at least four points:

- a) **The meaning of the word economics.** Comes from the Greek: *oikos* = house + *nomos* = care; meaning: our house is our responsibility we all have to take care of it. We all live in the same house: The Earth.

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<sup>1</sup> A cooking training program for disadvantaged young people founded by Beatriz Mansberger, a former Waldorf student who is very dissatisfied with the poor level of public education in Brazil and all the consequences this has for young people's lives and society in general. <https://www.instagram.com/chefaprendiz/>

- b) **Field of Economics: Capacities X Necessities.** They are both different for each person. But we all have both of them. Plus: we can always increase our capacities and consciously change our necessities. Always.
  - c) **Practise and Theory.** We should all pay attention to what we do in practice. We should plan our activities but it's interesting to observe how things change under circumstances of time and place. So, we have to pay attention to that in economics.
  - d) **Finances as a universal language.** We can all understand each other through it. Figures do not lie.
3. **Dynamics Money X Capital (20')** The educators in the room managed the dynamic, following the instructions I gave them. So the participants shouted out what was Money and what was Capital. These words were written on a flip-chart. Then we all together discussed the words. I could then reinforce one or two points from the previous prepared movie.
  4. **Second Prepared movie (5')** "How to make a budget" Before mentioning the budget itself, I reinforce the importance of double entry bookkeeping, discovered in the Renaissance. I mention how double-entry accounting can enlighten us in our position in business and in life. And also how accounting can show the double side of transactions, for there is always another side. As credit X debit; expenses X revenues inside me X outside me; me X the other. Then in the movie I mention the importance of and showed how to build up a simple budget.
  5. **Budgeting in groups (15')** They were asked to start doing their budgeting for the menu they were going to prepare. Just three columns: Item X Quantity X Price. We kept it very simple.
  6. **Goodbye and listening (5')** They were asked to write down what they had learned or noticed. Two of the participants wanted to speak. One of them said he remembered he had once studied accounting and that at that moment he had noticed how useful it could be. The other one said how very much surprised she was with the prices of the ingredients of what she intended to prepare so that building the budget allowed her to better organize herself. That was it.

They were left to finish their budget activity in the presence of their Educational Coordinator and their Chef-Trainer. Now, the contest is over and I've seen some pictures in social media. I'm about to have a final meeting of evaluation with the coordinators of the program.

I could do the preparation of the movies for this lesson with the help of a professional friend. I was very reluctant to do so, but this exercise helped me to be concise and work out exactly what I wanted to say. Finally, during the on-line lesson the time of the movie became a time of breathing for myself during the whole section. So it turned out to be something in favour of the whole thing.

Concerning the organization, I had many talks with Camila Pannain, a dear colleague in Italy who also happens to be a Waldorf teacher and to whom I thank for all her support. From her I learned, among other things, that for a class to be successful and complete one has to address things at the levels of the students' thinking, feeling and willing. I think I managed to do that, since they have to think during the explanations and the movies. Their feelings were touched while talking and discussing about money and capital. And finally they have done something by building up their menu-budget.

In regards to economics and the choices I made about what to bring to them, I brought out the most important things I could from the experience of other Economics Conference colleagues and their examples of how they teach. I was also very much inspired by the first of three conferences Rudolf Steiner gave at the end of the meeting on 'Spiritual Values in Education and Social Life' at Manchester College, Oxford, England, in 1922.<sup>2</sup> I had specially in mind how today we are still far from understanding economics. So, even knowing I was about to bring something imperfect and incomplete, I encouraged myself that every stone we bring to a building bridge helps us arrive at the other side.

To finish, I'd like to quote the greatest Portuguese poet: "*Tudo vale a pena, se a alma não é pequena*"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lecture: 'The Evolution of the Three Spheres of Society', in *Threefold the Social Order*, Translated by Rudi Lissau. GA 305. These lectures were considered as the last lectures by Rudolf Steiner on the theme of the social question. Available from <https://aebookstore.com/publications/associative-economics-worldwide/authors/rudolf-steiner/threefold-the-social-order/>

<sup>3</sup> Fernando Pessoa – free translation: "*Everything is worthy if the soul is big enough.*"