Why tax education matters – and how you can help

General Features

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Tax affects everyone, yet it receives little attention in schools. This article explains why improving tax education is so important, how the ATT is working to raise awareness of taxation and careers in the profession through its Schools Education and Careers programme, and how you can play a vital role in inspiring the next generation.

'Tax overlaps with so many areas of life, and we have long called for more attention to be given to it at school. How wonderful would it be if young people could leave school already having a strong grasp of the issue?

'Improving the education of tax in schools will not only ensure young people enter the world of work with an understanding of tax, but also open students' eyes to the diverse and rewarding careers available in the tax profession.'

These were the words of Barry Jefferd in his inaugural speech as President of the ATT. They capture a vision that continues to underpin the ATT's Schools Education and Careers programme: improving tax literacy across society while inspiring the next generation of tax professionals.

Tax affects almost every aspect of modern life. Whether receiving a first payslip, becoming self-employed, buying a home, starting a business, saving for retirement or simply understanding how public services are funded, everyone encounters the tax system. Yet, despite its importance, taxation receives very little attention within the school curriculum. Many young people leave education with little understanding of how the tax system works, why taxes exist or the role they play in society.

This gap in knowledge can have real consequences. Young adults entering employment often struggle to understand deductions from their salary, while those considering self-employment may be unaware of their tax obligations. As financial decisions become increasingly complex, improving tax literacy equips individuals with practical knowledge that can help them make informed choices and engage more confidently with the tax system.

For the ATT, however, tax education is about more than simply explaining tax rules. It is also about broadening horizons.

Many students have never considered tax as a career, largely because they are unaware that it exists as a profession. Unlike careers such as law, medicine or engineering, taxation is rarely discussed in schools, meaning talented young people often overlook the wide range of opportunities available. Yet the profession offers intellectually stimulating work, varied career paths, excellent opportunities for progression and the chance to make a genuine difference to individuals, businesses and the wider economy.

Recognising this, the ATT has invested significantly in its Schools Education and Careers programme, working with schools, colleges, universities and careers organisations across the UK to raise awareness of both tax education and careers in taxation.

Through careers fairs, classroom presentations, employer engagement events and online resources, ATT members are helping thousands of young people each year to discover a profession they may never previously have encountered. These events provide an opportunity not only to explain what tax professionals do, but also to

challenge misconceptions and demonstrate the breadth of roles available across practice, industry and government.

One of the most rewarding aspects of attending careers events is seeing students' reactions when they realise what a career in tax can involve. Conversations often begin with uncertainty but quickly develop into discussions about apprenticeships, professional qualifications, technology, problem-solving, communication skills and the variety of work available. Many students are surprised to learn that tax is not simply about numbers; it is about helping people, interpreting legislation, solving complex problems and supporting economic growth.

The ATT's work extends beyond careers fairs. We have developed a growing range of free educational resources designed to support teachers, students and parents. These resources introduce taxation in an accessible and engaging way, helping to explain why taxes exist, how they fund public services and how they affect everyday life. By making these materials freely available, we hope to encourage greater discussion of tax both inside and outside the classroom.

The programme has only been possible because of the enthusiasm and generosity of ATT members who volunteer their time and expertise. Members regularly attend careers fairs, speak in schools, share their own career journeys and act as ambassadors for the profession. Their willingness to engage with young people brings an authenticity that cannot be replicated through written materials alone.

Volunteering need not involve a significant time commitment. For many members, participating in a single careers fair or delivering one school presentation each year can have a lasting impact. A short conversation with a student who had never previously considered taxation may ultimately influence their future career choices.

The benefits also extend beyond the students themselves. Members frequently tell us that they find these events enjoyable and rewarding, providing an opportunity to develop their own communication and presentation skills while giving something back to the profession. Many employers also recognise the wider benefits, including supporting their social value and community engagement objectives while helping to develop their employees' confidence and professional skills.

Ultimately, improving tax education is not about creating tax experts in every classroom. Rather, it is about ensuring that every young person leaves education with a basic understanding of the tax system they will inevitably encounter

throughout their lives, while also making them aware that taxation offers a respected, varied and rewarding career.

By improving tax literacy, promoting careers in taxation and working together with schools, parents and employers, the ATT is helping to build a future in which young people are better informed, better prepared and better able to appreciate both the role of taxation in society and the opportunities that our profession provides.

If you would like to find out more about the ATT's Schools Education and Careers programme, we would encourage you to register for our Volunteering in Schools and at Career Fairs webinar. During the session, you will hear from Emma Rawson OBE, Director of Public Policy, and Steven Pinhey, Technical Officer and Schools Education and Careers Programme Lead, who will outline the work the ATT are doing and the support available to volunteers. You will also hear first-hand from ATT members who have volunteered in schools and at careers fairs, sharing their experiences, the impact they have made and why they would encourage others to get involved.

Whether you can spare a couple of hours at a local careers fair or visit a school to talk about your career, your experience could inspire the next generation of tax professionals.

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