

NETWORK FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS: EXPLORING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AS A POSSIBLE PATH



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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the intersection of vocational education and network entrepreneurship, focusing on how the “S” System in Brazil facilitates connections between students and the job market, with particular emphasis on the role of the National Commercial Apprenticeship Service (Senac). The aim is to investigate how vocational education can contribute to building entrepreneurial networks and enhance connectivity between students and the market. The methodology adopted involves an exploratory approach, focusing on literature research and case analysis, aimed at understanding the strategies and programs implemented by the institution under study. Regarding the theoretical background: Castells (2022); Law No. 9,841/1999, which establishes the Microenterprise and Small Business Statute and provides for differentiated, simplified, and favored legal treatment; Arruda (2017), among others. As discussed more comprehensively in the final considerations, we can highlight the significant contribution of Vocational Education not only in developing relevant skills for individuals both personally and professionally, but also in promoting social inclusion and facilitating students' access to professional networks and business opportunities. This underscores the vital role of public policies and educational initiatives focused on entrepreneurship as a strengthening agent within the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Keywords: Education, Network, Market, Entrepreneurship.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This research paper discusses an exploratory study in which the authors aim to enhance ideas using a case study of a network that promotes entrepreneurship, known as the “S” System, through a literature review and analysis. The “S” System, established in 1942, comprises a network of institutions dedicated to training individuals involved in industry, commerce, agriculture, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises. This system is funded by companies in the corresponding sectors.

The “S” System, which includes entities such as Sesi, Senai, and Sebrae, is primarily funded through mandatory contributions from companies (CNI, 2023). In 2023, the “S” System collected approximately R\$80 billion (TCU, 2023). It is worth noting that companies are obliged to contribute, even if they do not use the services (Sesi, 2023). There has been criticism regarding the lack of transparency and the political exploitation of resources within the “S” System (Senai, 2023 & Senac, 2023).

For this study, it will not be necessary to examine the major changes that have occurred in societies since the Industrial Revolution, as the significant social and business transformations resulting from technological advances are already evident. To begin our reflection on “Entrepreneurship networks and their connectivity between students and professionals”, we chose the late 1990s as our reference point. This period marked a significant expansion and popularization of technologies in Brazil. Specifically, we analyzed the role of the National Trade Apprenticeship System (Senac) as a key player within the “S” System network.

The 1990s witnessed significant advancements in data processing and storage, enhanced connectivity and interaction among networked computers, and other technological developments. These included the creation of systems and machines designed to streamline and simplify human tasks. Key areas of progress were process automation, robotics for quality improvement, and automated decision-making.

Thus, the entrepreneurship network and its connections between students and professionals are shaped by social and technological changes, including the widespread adoption of the internet and digital technologies. These advancements have automated processes and introduced new business models, redefining the job market and business practices. This situation has required the development of new skills and competencies, as adaptability, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and mastery of digital tools are now

essential for professional success in the constantly evolving job market (World Economic Forum, 2023).

In this context, the role of the “S” System is to enhance professional qualifications by offering training courses and programs aimed at facilitating entry and re-entry into the job market, as well as promoting entrepreneurship. This is made possible by adapting to new demands, diversifying the range of courses and programs offered to meet the needs of various audiences, including young people, vulnerable groups, adults, and professionals looking to update their careers.

Entrepreneurship networks have emerged as a driving force in today's socio-economic landscape, connecting students, professionals, companies, and educational institutions in an environment conducive to collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the development of new projects. This interconnection, made possible by digital tools, opens up a range of opportunities for individual and collective growth.

All the technological developments have been and continue to be of great importance to the significant transformations in global society. According to Melvin Kranzberg (1967), the historical record of technological revolutions shows that they are characterized by their pervasiveness, meaning they penetrate all areas of human activity. They are not merely an external source of impact but rather the framework within which that activity occurs.

In a similar vein, Castells (2022) argues that the defining feature of the current technological revolution is not merely the centrality of knowledge and information, but rather the application of this knowledge and information to generate knowledge and create devices for processing and communicating information, thereby creating a cumulative feedback loop between innovation and its use.

From this perspective, the dissemination and creation of new technologies enhance and amplify the capabilities of their users, who not only use but also continuously refine them, not merely as tools, but as evolving processes, because in this context, human intelligence directly drives production.

Thus, all the knowledge generated daily is disseminated in real time, which is made possible only by the development of the internet. In this context, communication and business networks expand, creating thousands of opportunities across different sectors of knowledge and business. Global networks facilitate exchanges, connecting individuals, “groups, regions, and countries, according to their relevance in achieving the objectives

processed in the network, in a continuous flow of strategic decisions” (Castells, 1999, p. 63).

In this way, networks are structures in which several individuals maintain various types of relationships, such as friendship, business, and networking, all united towards common goals.

Castells (2000, p. 68) defines a “network” as a set of interconnected “nodes”. As Castells (2022, p. 101) puts it, “[...] The universality of digital language and the sheer logic of communication system networks have created the technological conditions for global and horizontal communication”. Additionally, a network consists of individuals or organizations interconnected through various types of relationships.

Despite the proven efficiency of technologies, their crucial usefulness became even more evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the world limited interpersonal contact and transactions had to be conducted remotely. It was a time when societies either adapted to new technologies or were left behind, unable to participate in the processes essential for survival.

In the context of Covid-19, creativity and innovation were essential for companies to survive. In this regard, entrepreneurship became a collaborative means of pooling resources and strategic knowledge to find common goals. With this networked approach to entrepreneurship, which emphasizes forming connections and partnerships, entrepreneurs have expanded their ecosystem(s) through business partnerships, cooperative networks, franchises, and more.

The connection between entrepreneurship and networking is essential for establishing a feedback ecosystem. Networks play a crucial role in the business world, whether they are social, professional, or commercial. They provide opportunities to network, share knowledge, seek mentorship, find partners and clients, and receive emotional and technical support.

For entrepreneurs, networks can provide valuable insights, access to resources, potential investors, and help in building a solid personal and business brand. Through networking, they can expand their reach, capitalize on new business opportunities, and receive valuable feedback for the growth of their organizations.

The ability to build and maintain a strong network is often seen as a competitive advantage in the business world, and many successful entrepreneurs attribute part of their success to the connections they have made over time.

Thus, entrepreneurship in networks offers several benefits, including quick access to resources such as knowledge, technology, innovation, capacity building, and capital. It also facilitates risk reduction through shared experiences with partners and can mitigate risks and negative impacts, as the network provides support for common challenges. Another important benefit is the strengthening of the brand, which is enhanced by associating with other reputable and credible brands.

Despite the many benefits mentioned above, network entrepreneurship also presents challenges. One significant challenge is maintaining a shared vision, which is crucial for the success of the collaboration. Peter Senge (1999, p. 46) states, “a shared vision stimulates commitment to the long term”. Another challenge is building and maintaining solid relationships.

Zygmunt Bauman, a renowned Polish sociologist, has explored the fluid and changing nature of human relationships in contemporary society in his works. He argues that due to the fluidity and instability of modern relationships, it is crucial for people to invest in building and maintaining solid and meaningful connections.

Bauman (2021) notes that in a world marked by rapid change and superficial interactions, social ties tend to be more fragile and ephemeral. In this context, building solid relationships requires time, dedication and effort on the part of the individuals involved.

Based on Bauman's perspective on the importance of building and maintaining solid relationships, it is crucial to cultivate genuine connections based on trust, dialogue, and mutual support. These form the deepest and most essential ties for navigating the uncertainty and volatility of modern life, providing emotional support, security, and a sense of belonging.

In this context, it can be said that immediacy is not suitable for network entrepreneurship. It is necessary to manage expectations, align interests, develop effective and rapid communication among network members, and efficiently handle challenges. Network entrepreneurship is a powerful strategy that can enhance the development of individuals, as well as the local and national economy.

One of Senge's main ideas is the importance of building “learning organizations”, where the ability to learn and adapt is considered essential for long-term success. By linking the author's ideas to entrepreneurship and network building, we can emphasize the importance of establishing networks for learning and collaboration. Entrepreneurs can benefit from applying organizational learning principles to their own structures by seeking

opportunities to share knowledge, learn from others, and adapt their strategies based on feedback and shared experiences.

In other words, networks can serve as environments that promote systemic thinking and shared vision. By integrating organizational learning with networking and entrepreneurial practices, entrepreneurs can create environments that foster innovation, growth, and long-term sustainability.

The essence of entrepreneurial networks lies in collaboration. Through interaction among the different members, the sharing of knowledge and experience becomes a reality, driving innovation and the creation of effective solutions to market challenges. This mutual exchange of information and perspectives enriches the learning environment and contributes to the development of more robust and sustainable projects.

2 REVISITING THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The review of the theoretical foundations of Network Entrepreneurship will provide theoretical support for this research. From this review, we can understand the current state of affairs on the subject. Therefore, we will start this Review by listing the works (articles, books, legislation etc.) in order of their importance:

- Desenvolvimento de Políticas Públicas de Fomento ao Empreendedorismo em Estados e Municípios. (2012). Organized and published by Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Center for Public Administration and Government Studies, and the Center for Entrepreneurship and New Business. São Paulo. The work results from a case study on the entrepreneurial environment in the states of Santa Catarina and Minas Gerais.
- Dolabela, F. (2023). *Pedagogia Empreendedora*. Editora de Cultura. The book proposes a method for developing a culture of entrepreneurship in children within the Brazilian context.
- Dornelas, J. C. de A. (2008). *Empreendedorismo: transformando ideias em negócios*. Elsevier. It adopts a historical approach to entrepreneurship, analyzes opportunities, and includes case studies of successful entrepreneurs.
- Fillion, Louis-Claude. & Dolabela, F. (2007). *Boa ideia! E agora?* Editora Cultura.
- Frigotto, G. (2001). *Educação e trabalho: bases para debater a educação profissional emancipadora*. In *Anais do II Encontro Estadual das Escolas Técnicas*. Porto Alegre, v. 1, Year 1, Special Edition. Frigotto's text critiques neoliberalism and

its relationship with the state, contextualizing the crisis of wage labor in capitalism within an ontological framework.

- GEM - Brazil. (2023). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Empreendedorismo no Brasil. Executive Summary 2023. IBQP.
- Brasil. Decree n. 10.988. Establishes the National Strategy for Women's Entrepreneurship (Brasil para Elas - Brazil for Them) and the Women's Entrepreneurship Committee. Federal Official Gazette: Brasilia, March 08, 2022.
- Brasil. Law n. 9.841/1999. Establishes the Microenterprise and Small Business Statute, providing for differentiated, simplified, and favored legal treatment.
- Brasil. Federal Constitution of 1988.
- Mintzberg, H. & Jorgensen, (1995, jan). Una Estrategia Emergente para la Política Pública. En *Gestión y Política Pública*, IV (1).

In the book, the authors note that in the public sector, the concept of public policy is analogous to the concept of strategy in the private sector; that is, public policies are future-oriented plans or guides for action. According to the authors, these processes originate from a rational model where knowledge precedes action and have thus been institutionalized into distinct phases: first “formulation” and then “application”. They view public policy as the state in action.

- Lundström, J. A. & Stevenson, L. (2005). *Política de Empreendedorismo: Teoria e Prática*. Em *Estudos Internacionais em Empreendedorismo*. Springer.
- In entrepreneurship studies, the work of Lundström and Stevenson (2005) gained prominence for exploring the state of the art of research on entrepreneurship policies, as well as presenting a framework of analysis that takes into account the focus of the policy, framing them in six different categories, namely: (1) promoting an entrepreneurial culture; (2) entrepreneurial education; (3) reducing barriers to entry and exit; (4) financing; (5) entrepreneurial support; and (6) support for specific groups.
- Jardim, J. & Franco, J. E. (2019). *Empreendipédia: Dicionário de Educação para o Empreendedorismo*. Porto: Gradiva.

It is a pioneering work, the first designed for the Portuguese-speaking audience. It offers a comprehensive overview of concepts, theories, movements, works, individuals, and

organizations associated with promoting education and fostering an entrepreneurial culture and mindset.

- Brasil. National Education Plan (PNE 2014-2024). (2014). Ministry of Education.

3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The research presented here is based on the following question: "How can vocational education contribute to the development of entrepreneurial networks that connect students with the market?"

To address this question, we classified the research as exploratory. This approach enables the researcher to engage more deeply with the subject matter, enhancing familiarity with the topic under investigation. According to Gil (2022, p. 41), "the main objective of this research is to refine ideas or uncover insights. Its planning is therefore very flexible, allowing for a wide range of aspects of the subject under study to be considered". In terms of methodology, this is a bibliographic study that employs a case study approach and uses secondary data sourced from institutions such as the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and the institution that is the focus of this study.

The first phase of the study involves a literature review where we contextualize entrepreneurship in Brazil. We then examine professional education and its connection to the market, and finally, we analyze the Senac institution as a specific case study.

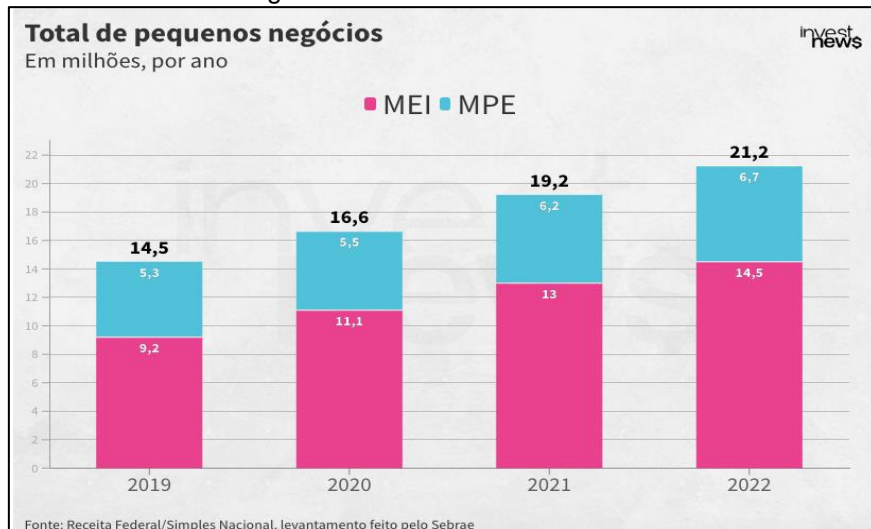
4 THE CONTEXT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN BRAZIL

The business environment in Brazil has always been closely tied to government actions. It creates and removes incentives, imposes barriers, and either encourages or discourages entrepreneurial activities. With each era or government, policies aimed at business development change according to the prevailing ideology. Nevertheless, the entrepreneurial ecosystem has been a central theme in global economic discussions due to its ability to generate wealth widely and effectively.

The 2022 Executive Report from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor indicates that 27 million people in Brazil are directly involved in entrepreneurial activities. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic causing many large companies to close their doors, the number of small entrepreneurs who saw opportunities to start new businesses increased significantly compared to 2021. This indicates a substantial number of Brazilians who seized the chance

to meet market demands arising from the newly established situation. Graph 1: The growth of small businesses, as detailed below, confirms the significant expansion of Brazilian entrepreneurship, which notably contributes to the Brazilian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 27.5%.

Figure 1 - Small Business Growth



These figures highlight the importance of the sector, which not only boosts the economy but also helps prevent or minimize internal migration. However, the GEM Executive Report highlights two concerning issues: firstly, the majority of ventures are initiated by men; and secondly, the low level of education among entrepreneurs. Only 11.4% of entrepreneurs have completed higher education. The largest group of entrepreneurs, forming the base of the pyramid, consists of 40.2% who have completed secondary school. A total of 18.2% have completed elementary school, and 30.2% have not completed elementary school.

Based on this statistic, we can infer that there is a significant mismatch between the success of entrepreneurship and both formal and entrepreneurial education. Although entrepreneurial education has gained importance in recent years, when developed intentionally only by a few institutions, it is insufficient to reduce the failure rate of small businesses.

Entrepreneurial Education should be established as a public policy by the State, serving as a tool to aid national development and to foster individual growth. Only through coordinated and comprehensive government actions will it be possible to bridge the gap

between education and the success of entrepreneurship as a strategy for social and economic transformation.

In the State of Bahia, for example, initiatives promoting entrepreneurship are being supported by the State Secretariats for Education, Science, Technology, Innovation, and the Secretariat for Labor, Employment, Income, and Sport. These three secretariats have been providing resources to the community by issuing calls for proposals to support initiatives, such as: Economia Solidária; Projeto Plantando Sonhos; Primeiro Emprego; Bahia + Inovadora; Cidade mais Inovadora, Cidade Inteligente, and many other projects aimed at developing individuals, businesses, and the region.

Other institutions nationwide are promoting Entrepreneurial Education and entrepreneurship, fostering a network of business education. The "S" System in Brazil consists of a group of organizations primarily focused on training and promoting the development of workers across various economic sectors. These entities are known by this name because many of their names start with the letter "S", such as a) National Industrial Apprenticeship Service - Senai; b) National Commercial Apprenticeship Service - Senac; c) National Rural Apprenticeship Service - Senar; d) Social Service of Commerce - Sesc; e) Social Service of Industry - Sesi; and f) Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service - Sebrae.

Each of these organizations operates in a specific area and offers a variety of courses, programs, and services focused on professional training, education, health, culture, sports, and leisure. The "S" System plays a crucial role in training and enhancing the skills of professionals across various sectors, thereby contributing to the country's economic and social development.

From this perspective, vocational education in Brazil has been fostering a connection between students and the workplace, as we will explore below.

4.1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL AS A BRIDGE TO THE JOB MARKET

Education for work is not a modern concept. In the 18th century, the Marquis of Pombal, aiming to boost Portuguese trade and its colonial economy, including that of Brazil, established monopoly companies staffed with skilled merchants to train businessmen for commercial roles. The so-called "Trade Classes" were intended to modernize trade and were formalized by the Decree of September 30, 1755, which established the "Board of Trade".

Vocational education for tradespeople was quite common in Europe in the mid-18th century and is considered one of the earliest European vocational education initiatives (Tales, 2012). Later, the Prince Regent, who would become King João VI, established the College of Factories in 1809, shortly after the lifting of the ban on manufacturing industries in Brazil. From the 1840s onwards, ten Houses of Educators and Artisans were established in the capitals of the provinces, the first of which was in Belém do Pará. These institutions were primarily intended to serve abandoned minors, with the goal of “reducing crime and vagrancy”.

The Imperial Decree of 1854 also established special institutions for orphaned and abandoned minors, known as “Asilos dos Meninos Desvalidos”. Here, they received basic education before being placed in public and private workshops under apprenticeship contracts overseen by the Orphans' Court (Senac, 2015).

In the case of Senac, the institution was founded in 1946 with the commitment to organize and offer commercial professional apprenticeship programs, and currently serves young people aged 14 to 24. As part of Senac's educational initiatives, the courses designed for these young individuals are part of the "Commercial Professional Apprenticeship Program". This program is distinguished by specific features and is subject to ongoing adjustments due to technological changes impacting the world of work and revisions in labor and educational legislation (Senac, 2015).

The institution has a strong and decisive connection with the world of work, which is a defining feature of Vocational Education in Brazil. Additionally, it represents a significant educational pathway, allowing students the option to combine this training with their Secondary Education.

The thematic areas covered in the various courses offered focus on Gastronomy, Health, Safety and Welfare, Fashion, Information Technology, Business Management, Beauty, Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure. In this way, aligning more closely with the demands of companies and their operations becomes a key element and even a differentiator, as market research is conducted and the primary productive sectors are listened to.

In light of this scenario, vocational education must align more closely with the productive sector to design courses and programs that meet the demands of the workforce. To effectively identify the needs, characteristics, and trends of various productive sectors, Senac uses Sector Forums organized by segment as its main method of listening. These are consultative forums composed of stakeholders from the world of work, including company representatives, industry associations,

employers' and workers' unions, academia, and institutions of research, science, and technology, as well as experts from Senac itself. The aim is to gather a diverse range of perspectives on the realities of various occupations (Senac, 2022, p. 14).

In a world that is constantly changing, professional education serves as a crucial link between individual development and job market demands. To ensure its courses and programs meet the needs of the productive sector, Senac invests in an innovative methodology: Sector Forums. They consist of representatives from companies, industry associations, trade unions, research and educational institutions, as well as experts from Senac itself. They foster an open and inclusive dialogue about the characteristics, trends, and needs of each economic sector. This active listening enables Senac to accurately identify the challenges and opportunities in the job market, equipping students with the tools and knowledge necessary for professional success.

Schneider et al. (2021) highlight the strong performance of vocational education in international competitions such as WorldSkills. The case of Brazil is emblematic because, according to data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), its basic education ranks among the worst of the 70 countries evaluated. However, Brazil's performance in the aforementioned competition demonstrates that Vocational Education, by focusing intensively on the Learning to Know and Learning to Do pillars, adopts a more pragmatic approach to education. This approach is more utilitarian and closely aligned with the demands of the world of work, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

When it comes to school performance across various educational levels - Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary Education, Special Education, and Youth and Adult Education - the data are worrying and indicate a steep decline in the country. However, when discussing Vocational Education, these international organizations highlight a different reality with varying results [...] Thus, we have identified that Brazil's success in WorldSkills can be attributed to effectively integrating learning with 'doing' in the educational process. This approach adds the 'Learning by Doing' pillar to the school's pedagogical framework, underscoring the potential of Brazilian apprentices despite structural challenges in their training. Conversely, Basic Education has declined because it fails to integrate 'doing' with 'thinking' (Schneider et al., 2021, p. 117-118. Emphasis added).

While the primary focus of this research is on Senac, it is important to note that the "S" System encompasses various corporate entities dedicated to professional training, social assistance, consultancy, research, and technical assistance, as previously demonstrated. These institutions aim to provide specialized professional training to meet market demands, with each focusing on its own specific area of expertise.

It is important to consider the broad understanding of Vocational Education, which was once viewed as a separate system, somewhat distanced from Basic Education. Therefore, it is important to understand the role and responsibility of education systems in providing this service, which will require linking technical training with Initial and Continuing Education as well as with Youth and Adult Education (EJA) and Secondary Education. In this way, we can envision both a general education and a specialized education provided by technical vocational programs at the secondary level.

Professional Education (PE) goes beyond the outdated notion of being a separate system from Basic Education. Today, their interdependence and the responsibility of education systems to provide for them are recognized. This change requires coordination between Initial and Continuing Education, Youth and Adult Education, and Secondary Education to ensure a complete and comprehensive education.

Article 39 of the Law on Education and the Bases of National Education - LDB emphasizes that “professional education, integrated with various forms of education, work, science, and technology, leads to the ongoing development of skills for a productive life”. In other words, educating for work is much more than a legal obligation; it is the fundamental mission of the institutions that promote it.

As a form of basic education, it involves training for the workforce or developing essential skills, also offered through free, fast-paced courses designed to meet the demands of the job market. In higher education, which is often criticized for being too theoretical, impractical, or disconnected from market realities, extension activities were introduced by the Ministry of Education (MEC) through a resolution in December 2018. These activities, which are mandatory and integrated throughout the curriculum, aim to bridge the gap between students and society.

In this context, the courses offered by the institutions mentioned above present a valuable opportunity to combine practicality with enjoyment, supporting their noble mission of education for employment. Thus, training provides an excellent opportunity to broaden skills and exposes students to different realities, encouraging them to expand their vision and open up new perspectives on work, training, and performance.

5 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AS A POSSIBLE PATH TO CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH THE JOB MARKET

To effectively enhance and expand the concept of competencies within vocational education, it is crucial to understand the practical, hands-on nature of these competencies. They go beyond mere theoretical knowledge to include real-world application, emphasizing skills developed through practical experience. The development of competencies in Vocational Education, as outlined in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Vocational Education, requires moving beyond the segmented view of theory and practice (Senac, 2022).

From this perspective, we can apply concepts that represent abstractions from the field of human knowledge. In this way, pedagogical practice manifests as actions that can be tested and implemented. Thus, the action-reflection-action cycle enables the embodiment of professional practice. This facilitates the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which are represented by the popular acronym KSA, enabling continuous growth.

We can use the examples of courses for cooks, pastry chefs, hairdressers, makeup artists, computer programmers, or dressmakers, as those that, among others, are applicable and quickly integrated into commerce and the world of work.

Vocational education centers can offer general skills and foundational courses for a wide range of occupational options, but they cannot provide the same depth or intensity of learning for each one. The centers must always offer educational programs that meet the needs of companies, the demands of students, and the interests of authorities and educators. Those who prioritize meeting company demands often focus on sectors with the greatest regional development. Generally, only a few institutions are available to meet the needs of a region. In addition to providing general or basic level courses, vocational education institutions must make strategic decisions about which specialized programs to offer (Casanova, 2015, p. 66-67).

Offering general skills and comprehensive courses is essential to cater to different career options, but delving into all of them with the same intensity is unfeasible. The selection of specialized programs should be guided by a careful analysis of the needs of companies, students, and the community.

Prioritizing the demands of companies can lead to a focus on sectors with greater regional development. However, it is important to balance this by addressing the needs of various sectors and regions. When making strategic decisions, vocational education centers

must strike a balance between meeting market needs and providing development opportunities for all students.

A widely implemented initiative, known as the Senac Gratuity Program - PSG, serves as a pioneering national employment strategy. This program views apprenticeship as a fundamental and strategic goal for Senac, funded by mandatory contributions. It provides free opportunities for low-income individuals, specifically targeting students who are enrolled in or have graduated from Basic Education, as well as low-income workers, whether they are employed or unemployed.

Among the social inclusion initiatives that Senac offers in Sergipe, the PSG is a national policy that supports various activities aimed at social inclusion, one of which is the "first job" program, which provides teenagers and young adults aged 14 to 24 with opportunities to gain experience at Senac and in the commerce, services, and tourism sectors.

Another significant initiative in this context is the National Program for Accessibility, Diversity, and Social Inclusion. This program is designed to support individuals with disabilities, those in vulnerable and extremely impoverished conditions, and transgender and people with other genders by providing training to facilitate their access to the job market.

Additionally, the Sergipe Regional Office has implemented a program to support individuals facing socio-emotional and accessibility challenges. There is a specific investment to train these individuals, enabling them to access and retain employment and income.

It should be noted that the free spots will be available as follows: Initial, Continuing, and Technical Professional Education at the Middle Level. The regional directorates present the PSG's Annual Action Plan, detailing the activities to be implemented and their enrollment targets for the year. This is a remarkable activity that positions Senac among the leading institutions promoting social and educational inclusion in the country.

Entrepreneurial networks are thriving in the digital landscape, fostering individual and collective growth through collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of innovative projects. This connectivity, enabled by digital tools, democratizes access to information and resources, opening up a world of opportunities for both students and professionals.

Online platforms and applications enable real-time interaction among network members, regardless of their physical location. This constant communication facilitates the exchange of ideas, collaborative activities, and the development of creative solutions to market challenges.

For students, entrepreneurship networks provide an environment that fosters the development of essential future skills, including creativity, initiative, planning, and project management. Through mentoring and networking, students can learn from experienced professionals, gain valuable insights, and build a network of contacts that will assist them in their career paths.

Networks also provide access to resources and information, such as job opportunities, internships, and courses. This direct connection with companies and educational institutions enables students to explore various areas of interest and discover opportunities that align with their goals.

In short, entrepreneurial networks, powered by digital tools, are valuable assets for building a more prosperous and innovative future. Through collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of innovative projects, they contribute to both individual and collective growth, democratize access to information and resources, and empower students and professionals to reach their full potential.

In this context, the selection of a particular teaching and learning methodology is linked to the institution's stance and educational goals in response to societal demands and the educational environment. As analyzed, teaching and learning methodologies extend beyond the classroom and its planning; they reflect the social practice of education within a specific historical context (Senac, 2022, p. 7).

To enhance specialized technical training that emphasizes practical knowledge, typical of this educational approach, Senac published materials in 2020. These materials were designed to develop the skills of teaching teams, better aligning their actions with workplace demands. The focus was on methodologically emphasizing learning paths through a national proposal for training itineraries in the pedagogical area. Consequently, there is a clear commitment to ongoing professional development and qualification.

Converging vocational training with market demand and valuing the local productive arrangement, as well as creating a favorable scenario for adopting public policies to absorb these professionals, also drives the development of related economic activities, resulting in production links, connectivity, and continuous learning.

As a policy to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem, the Senac Opportunities Bank is a service designed for the institution's students and alumni. Its goal is to facilitate integration between students and the job market. Through this database, companies can post job and internship openings, while students and alumni can access these opportunities and apply for them.

This Senac initiative aims to facilitate access to job opportunities for students and alumni that align with their training and professional interests, as well as to establish partnerships with companies seeking qualified professionals. In this way, Senac's Bank of Opportunities assists students in entering the job market by serving as a bridge between their education and the actual demands of companies. Additionally, for companies, this platform offers an effective means of finding qualified professionals who meet their needs.

In this way, the initiative plays a crucial role in enhancing employability and establishing solid career paths for the institution's students and alumni.

It is worth noting that when we discuss the entrepreneurial ecosystem, we are not just talking about businesses. According to Dias Filho et al. (2022), the concept is currently supported by the enhancement of skills such as self-knowledge, creativity, resilience, persistence, flexibility, commitment, cooperation, leadership, and self-confidence. These skills promote autonomy and enable learning in four key areas: personal competence (learning to be), social competence (learning to live together), cognitive competence (learning to know), and productive competence (learning to do). This approach is justified by the need to spark students' interest in planning a future filled with dreams, ambitions, and a collaborative spirit. Entrepreneurial Education plays a crucial role in this context by fostering a dynamic process of awareness, reflection, and critical thinking among students in Professional Education. It encourages an active, rather than passive, form of citizenship, facilitating integration with the surrounding world and helping students set objectives, goals, and strategies that could potentially transform their lives and society.

In this sense, digital tools have revolutionized the way entrepreneurial networks operate, expanding their reach and democratizing access to opportunities. Online platforms and applications enable communication and interaction among members, allowing activities to be conducted in real time, regardless of physical location. The constant connectivity benefits both students and professionals in numerous ways.

For students, entrepreneurship networks provide an environment that fosters the development of entrepreneurial skills, including creativity, initiative, planning, and project

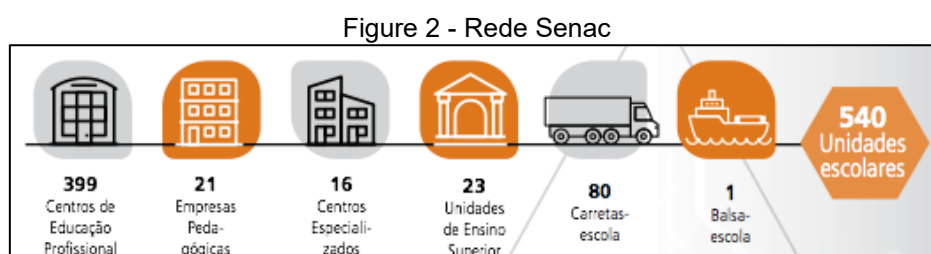
management. The mentoring and networking opportunities offered by these networks enable students to learn from experienced professionals, gaining valuable guidance and insights for their career path. Networks also facilitate access to resources and information, such as job opportunities, internships, and courses, by directly connecting students with companies and educational institutions.

6 FINAL THOUGHTS

The relevance of the vocational education provided by Senac, over nearly eight decades of operation, is evident in its numbers and its impact on regional economic development and local labor markets.

Among the social inclusion initiatives is the Senac Free Program, which offers a variety of courses to help low-income students acquire new skills and secure a place in the job market. The Bank of Opportunities deserves mention as a policy designed to facilitate entry into the world of work and connect professionals and/or companies within a network. Additionally, students eager to tap into the opportunities created by the entrepreneurial ecosystem can take courses and training through various qualification programs. These programs cover a range of topics including business management, finance, marketing, and innovation. Teacher and pedagogical training for professional education and other equally important programs.

The Senac network enhances its connection with the job market through an innovative structure, equipping its students with a robust and responsible educational approach, as well as providing qualified instructors and state-of-the-art equipment. The diagram below illustrates the significance of this network for the country.



Source: Senac Report, 2023.

It can also integrate consultancy and mentoring services, as these organizations offer support to entrepreneurs looking to start or grow their businesses by providing technical and managerial assistance. There is also the possibility of accessing credit and

financing, as some institutions offer credit lines and financing options for entrepreneurs, helping them to develop and expand their businesses.

The digital age is creating a new landscape for entrepreneurship, fostering a symbiosis between innovative tools and the entrepreneurial spirit. Online platforms and apps thrive as catalysts for ideas, connecting creative minds and fostering the development of innovative projects.

This global connectivity redefines the concept of collaboration, enabling individuals from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise to unite around common goals. The exchange of knowledge and experience becomes instantaneous, fostering the development of effective solutions to contemporary challenges.

For students, this synergy between digital technology and entrepreneurship opens up a range of opportunities to develop essential skills for the job market. Through online platforms and applications, they can enhance their creativity, initiative, planning, and project management skills, thereby building a comprehensive and competitive professional profile.

Mentoring and networking, facilitated by digital tools, connect students with experienced professionals, providing valuable insights and opening doors to their professional futures. The search for job opportunities, internships, and courses becomes more efficient and targeted, directly connecting students with companies and institutions that align with their interests and goals.

Thus, the digital age and entrepreneurship are intertwined, creating an environment conducive to innovation, individual development, and the building of a more prosperous future. Digital tools democratize access to information and resources, empowering students and professionals to explore their full potential and make meaningful contributions to society.

And finally, the promotion of events and networking through talks, workshops, and networking activities provides opportunities for entrepreneurs to connect, share experiences, and expand their networks. Stimulating innovation is also an objective of this network, which encourages programs designed to foster creativity, develop new ideas, and implement innovative solutions in business.

These initiatives significantly contribute to strengthening Brazil's entrepreneurial ecosystem by training entrepreneurs and enhancing the growth and competitiveness of companies in the market.

In light of this, vocational education is emerging as a promising way to create a fairer and more prosperous future. At the heart of this journey is Senac, an institution committed to fostering hope and autonomy among its students by equipping them with the necessary tools to turn their dreams into reality.

By promoting entrepreneurship, Senac creates opportunities for socio-economic development. Through innovative courses, programs, and initiatives, the institution equips individuals to design, structure, and manage their own businesses, thereby fostering job creation and economic diversification.

Senac's social mission is realized through concrete actions that democratize access to quality professional education. Scholarships, qualification programs for people in situations of social vulnerability, and partnerships with public and private institutions expand opportunities for those seeking to build a better future.

By investing in vocational education and entrepreneurship, Senac is helping to build a fairer, more equitable, and happier society. The institution acknowledges that education is essential for both individual and collective growth and is committed to transforming lives by educating critical, independent thinkers who are equipped to meet the challenges of the job market.

Promoting hope and autonomy among students who view Vocational Education as a path to transforming their realities and futures is to recognize that schools, as spaces for building and discovering potential, facilitate the fulfillment of their social mission and their relationship with work, contributing to the development of a fairer, more equal, and happier society.

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