

Professional Education As A Catalyst For Social Development And Citizenship: A Case Study Of The Eefm Dom Aristides Pirovano Center For Professional Education

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Abstract:

Background: This study explores vocational education as a tool for social development and citizenship, focusing on the experience of the Dom Aristides Pirovano Vocational Training Center at EEEFM. The primary objective is to analyze how vocational education can be an effective pathway for strengthening citizenship and promoting social inclusion.

Materials and Methods: The applied methodology is characterized as applied research in terms of its purpose, with a qualitative approach to data. The study is classified as exploratory research, utilizing bibliographic research, documentary analysis, and case study methods. Data were collected through documentary analysis, interviews, focus groups, and field observation.

Results: The findings indicate that the appreciation of the human being, the socialization of knowledge, the re-evaluation of concepts, and the development of competencies are fundamental to the success of vocational education. The research also highlights the importance of an education that awakens in individuals the ability to intervene in society, promoting a re-elaboration of knowledge, attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Conclusion: Vocational education, as analyzed, proves to be essential for social development, enabling students to recognize the value of their school years in the construction of their citizenship. Education not only contributes to social inclusion but also strengthens students' awareness and responsibility regarding their participation in society.

Keywords: Vocational education; Professional training; Knowledge socialization; Citizenship.

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I. Introduction

School education plays an important role in society by acting as a factor of inclusion and national development. In this regard, education as a systematic pedagogical process of intervention in the dynamics of social life is now considered the subject of scientific studies aimed at defining strategic policies for the comprehensive development of societies.

The justification for choosing this topic stems from the need to validate the reality of the school unit as a space for the full exercise of citizenship, with students, school segments, and families recognizing the viability of vocational education aimed at the social inclusion and human promotion of students during their school tenure.

The methodology used is applied research in terms of its purpose, qualitative in its approach to data. The level of application and general objectives are aligned with exploratory research, which employed the following research instruments: bibliographic research, documentary analysis, and case study, along with the following data collection instruments: documentary analysis, interviews, focus groups, and field observation.

The general objective of this study is to present the reality of Vocational Education as a pathway to social development and citizenship, drawing on the experience at the Dom Aristides Pirovano Vocational Training Center at EEEFM. The specific objectives outlined are as follows: to present the analytical assumptions of vocational education in Brazil; to highlight the national policy for vocational education; to explain the framework of vocational education in national legislation; to demonstrate the importance of pedagogical innovation, competence-based training, and educational innovations; and to discuss the relationship between students, the job market, and education.

The State of Pará, addressing a local need to train young people qualified to enter the growing job market, has taken on the challenge and commitment of establishing Vocational Schools. This ambition was supported by a participatory government program and a favorable national context. The reference school is the Dom Aristides Pirovano Vocational Training Center at EEEFM.

The article is organized into four sections. The first section is the introduction, where the objectives of this research are explained. The second section presents all the methodological procedures employed in the development of this scientific article. The third section provides a theoretical foundation based on the opinions of various authors who research the same topic addressed here. Finally, the fourth and last section is the conclusion.

II. Material And Methods

The methodology employed is applied research in terms of its purpose, qualitative in its approach to data, with the level of application and general objectives aligned with exploratory research. This study utilized the following research instruments: bibliographic research, documentary analysis, and case study, along with the following data collection instruments: documentary analysis, interviews, focus groups, and field observation.

According to Lösch, Rambo, and Ferreira (2023, p. 03), exploratory research has been increasingly used to investigate the complex phenomena of educational reality. This type of investigation seeks answers to questions and is dedicated to identifying and understanding educational facts/events that need to be explored. It is not merely a popular consultation; the purpose is to involve the participant in this investigative process in a moment of reflection, reality analysis, and knowledge production¹.

Among the classifications proposed by Gil (2010), this research is characterized, according to the field of knowledge, as applied social sciences. Its purpose is to propose a study to solve a problem identified within the society in which the researchers live, thereby contributing to the expansion of new knowledge, which could influence strategies in teaching practices within the educational institution under study².

On Instruments and Data Collection

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative data collection involves much more than just focusing on procedures to gather data; it entails obtaining permissions, employing appropriate sampling strategies, and recording information. For the acquisition of research data, in addition to bibliographic sources, three strategies were used: documentary research, interviews, and data analysis. Initially, a literature review was conducted, which was necessary to establish the theoretical foundation for field research, the construction of data collection instruments, and their analysis³.

"Field research is a procedure widely used in the academic field, characterized by investigations involving data collection in the field"⁴.

III. Literature Review

To theoretically underpin this study, it was necessary to examine the various facets of vocational education in Brazil. The investigation began by addressing the historical and philosophical foundations that guide vocational education in the country. Following this, the national policy on vocational education was discussed, with an emphasis on the government's plans and guidelines for technical and technological education in Brazil. Analyzing the national legislation governing vocational education was another crucial step, as it provided a detailed view of the standards and regulations that shape this educational sector.

Moreover, the role of pedagogical innovation was highlighted, with a focus on competence-based training and educational innovations. It was then demonstrated how these methods can enhance the teaching-learning process and meet the demands of the labor market.

Finally, the relationship between education, the market, and students was examined. This was done to understand how vocational education can assist students in entering the labor market and contribute to socio-economic development. This theoretical approach provided a broad understanding of the opportunities and challenges of vocational education in Brazil.

Analytical Assumptions of Vocational Education in Brazil

To meet the need for adaptation, it is essential to reinvent concepts and seek tools that provide efficiency to the practice of vocational education. In this context, considering the need for constant updating, several aspects

must be considered when teaching or promoting the development of competencies and skills, especially when dealing with Apprentices.

These aspects include: 1. Verifying whether what is being taught and learned is necessary for their entry into that specific labor market; 2. Expanding, where feasible, the scope of teachings to provide a more comprehensive education for the Apprentice; 3. Confirming that the Apprentices are familiar with the subject matter intended to be taught; 4. Clearly specifying the desired outcomes; 5. Selecting and organizing learning experiences; 6. Evaluating the performance of Apprentices according to the expected results.

According to Lorenzet, Andreolla, and Paludo (2020, p. 03):

Vocational and Technological Education has a vertical character, capable of operating from Basic Education, with Elementary Education, through Initial and Continuing Training (FIC) or professional qualification; with Secondary Education, through Articulated Technical Training (in Integrated and Concomitant Courses) and in Subsequent Courses, potentially in conjunction with the modality of Youth and Adult Education (EJA); to Higher Education, through undergraduate Technological Courses, Undergraduate Courses, and in postgraduate studies in Specializations, Master's, and Doctoral programs⁵.

The analysis and resolution of these aspects contribute to the strategic construction of teaching methods. To establish vocational education as a well-founded structure, it is crucial to address the following questions: 1. Where am I going? Determining the goal to be achieved and the desired destination. 2. Who or what are we training? Analyzing the audience receiving the information to determine the most effective way to communicate with them. 3. How will I get there? Planning the tools and methods that will be used to achieve the determined objective. 4. How will I know if I have arrived? Monitoring actions and establishing criteria for measuring results.

Competency-based vocational education develops in young people an understanding of "what and why" events occur. It teaches them "how to do" tasks and further stimulates the "will and determination" to accomplish them. This approach embodies the well-known CHA: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes. Technical courses offered throughout Brazil aim to meet the demand for qualified and certified labor, as many institutions today adhere to international certification standards, which require methods and workers with professional certifications. The importance of technical courses is highlighted by the fact that higher education today aligns with international agreements aimed at producing goods for the circulation of products from central to peripheral countries.

"Another consensus built in recent years is the obsolescence of knowledge production, creating other values not only concerning the behavior of institutions in relation to research but also defining other pedagogical concepts that affect the relationship between teacher/student/knowledge/training"⁶.

In this scenario, technical education gains prominence for creating professionals tailored to the needs of the domestic market, who better understand the local reality of the companies that employ them, making technical professionals increasingly sought after.

The National Policy for Vocational Education

From April 1964 onward, Brazilian society entered a period marked by the authoritarian dictatorship introduced by the military coup, aimed at suppressing the fervor of nationalist, democratic, and popular ideas to silence the nation and steer it along the tracks of dependent and associated capitalism.

Between 1964 and 1985, Brazil was under a military dictatorship, which, aside from the inherent implications of such a repressive regime, imposed the modernization process of the country through dependency and subordination to international capital.

Vocational Education Under the Military Dictatorship

Vocational education in Brazil has historically been characterized by duality and paternalism, rooted in the country's social formation process, where colonial slavery influenced social relations and distorted society's view of manual and intellectual labor in a prejudiced manner. This dual vision persisted throughout the entire body of educational legislation, which, as a mirror, reflects the social relations of the country and continues to differentiate between vocational education and academic education to this day.

From 1964 onward, with the country's modernization project, the dictatorial state emphasized vocational education due to the market's need for specialized labor for industries and state-owned enterprises, which had expanded to create a structure for steering and sustaining the monopolistic capitalist model. Through the creation of a new law of guidelines and bases and various decrees, the dictatorial state sought to address the lack of capitalist labor force by increasing vocational education at various levels, whether through education provided by its own institutions or by offering short- and medium-term courses through the private sector.

Beginning in the early 1960s, the demand for specialized labor increased significantly, formally recognized during the educational crisis of the 1960s, as analyzed in the previous section. The first Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education (LDB) was enacted in 1961 and highlighted the need for professionalization,

equating vocational education with academic education for the purpose of continuing studies. Thus, upon completing a vocational course, students could continue their studies at higher levels.

Between 1964 and 1968, no reforms in vocational education were observed. In 1968, the profession of industrial technician was regulated, and the Program for the Expansion and Improvement of Secondary Education (PREMEM) was created through decrees. These decrees signaled the dictatorial state's objectives of aligning educational policy with the goals of security and development, which translated into control, repression, and social promotion.

In 1971, another Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education was enacted through Law 5692/71, with education being restructured once again to meet the needs of capital. Between 1971 and 1982, the public education landscape began to show growing dissatisfaction among professionals and students, who, with every breath of freedom that arose from the weakening of the repressive system, protested against the privatization of public schools, the decline in the quality of education, and the devaluation of teachers and educational technicians. In essence, they protested against the state's neglect of education⁷.

In the final whispers of the military dictatorship, during the democratic transition, the quality of public primary and secondary education collapsed, driven by the dictatorial state's privatization policies, which distanced itself from education and invested only scant resources in vocational education or in some paternalistic and clientelistic projects aimed at mitigating the social distortions caused by the high concentration of income and resulting social inequalities.

This approach was always intended to establish an education that would provide students with an understanding of the need for their political involvement and the transformation of the social context. Therefore, the educational model outlined by the dictatorial state was highly authoritarian within schools, and, among other consequences, it brought with it political and ideological control of education and a lack of commitment to public, free, and quality education. This model remains present in schools today, necessitating that these remnants be regarded as models of the past that should be forgotten and merely overcome.

The Vocational Training of Students

The implementation of the vocational school model in Pará is guided by legislation, particularly the proposition of the law of guidelines and bases, as stated in Article 205: "Education, a right of all and a duty of the State and the family, shall be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship, and their qualification for work."

In this context, the social function of vocational schools in the State of Pará is linked to the understanding of the school as a center of democratic coexistence, enabling the exchange of experiences and the integration of different social groups, where differences are respected and valued. Today, vocational education is no longer just a tool for welfare policy nor merely a preparation for our youth. It is necessary to consider the foundations of education and also address the complexity of the labor market that our graduates will face, as they will have to perform a specific set of tasks.

Currently, Vocational Education is no longer conceived as a mere instrument of welfare policy or a simple adjustment to labor market demands, but rather as an important strategy to ensure that citizens have effective access to the scientific and technological achievements of society⁸.

After the new Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, Federal Law 9.394/96, vocational education has come to mean much more: the operational mastery of a specific skill, accompanied by a comprehensive understanding of the productive process, the acquisition of technological knowledge, the appreciation of culture and work, and the mobilization of the values necessary for decision-making.

As human development, the goal is to ensure that adolescents, young people, and adult workers have the right to complete training for understanding the world and acting as citizens belonging to a country, integrated with dignity into its political society. This training, in this sense, presupposes the understanding of the social relations underlying all phenomena⁹.

The adopted methodology is understood as a set of procedures employed to achieve the proposed objectives for integrating basic education with vocational education. In this regard, it is recommended to adopt didactic-pedagogical procedures that can assist students in their intellectual development, such as: - Problematizing knowledge, seeking confirmation from different sources; - Providing conditions for the student to be an active agent in the teaching-learning processes; - Adopting research as an educational principle; - Articulating and integrating knowledge from different areas without the overlap of knowledge; - Adopting an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary attitude in educational practices; - Organizing an educational environment that integrates multiple activities aimed at the various dimensions of youth training; - Diagnosing students' learning needs based on their prior knowledge; - Developing projects with the aim of articulating knowledge.

According to Souza, Santos, and Santos (2020, p. 15), "[...] didactic-pedagogical procedures allow students to realize that knowledge does not belong exclusively to one or another discipline, fostering the ability to express doubts, research, create connections, and reconstruct their knowledge"¹⁰.

Labor Market for Young Mid-Level Professionals

When evaluating the labor market for information technology technicians, particularly those focused on the development and maintenance of information systems for the internet, it becomes clear that this specialization offers a distinct career pathway, enhancing employability. Professionals with expertise in these technologies are increasingly in demand in today's context, where the internet occupies an ever more prominent role.

The nursing technician course, associated with the medical field, prepares students to work in environments such as hospitals, medical clinics, and health centers. The job market for nurses is quite extensive, as they can contribute through their work to health education, sanitary education, and the promotion of preventive measures to avoid major diseases.

Vocational Education in National Legislation

Vocational education aims not only to train mid-level technicians but also to provide qualification, requalification, and reprofessionalization for workers of any educational level, ensuring continuous technological updates and certification at both the secondary and higher education levels. Vocational education should lead to the "permanent development of skills for productive life." This goal must be clearly understood by both teachers and students, who should be focused on social development and the school's social responsibility.

Vocational Education in the Context of Basic Education

Secondary education must simultaneously provide general education and basic preparation for work. To achieve this, two conditions are necessary:

- The adoption of curricula that are simultaneously:
 - Diversified in content, focusing on areas or knowledge clusters that meet the needs of production—whether in goods, services, or knowledge—and the needs of individuals or groups of individuals.
 - Unified in terms of the cognitive, affective, and social competencies to be developed based on these diversified contents, thereby providing a general and common education for all.
- The adequate integration of basic work preparation offered in secondary education with the vocational training intended to equip students for specific job functions, whether through further studies or directly in the workplace.

As Kauer (2021, p. 01) notes:

The changes society has undergone over time have expanded the needs in areas such as education, work, and especially in technology and knowledge. With so many changes, the labor market has demanded new professional profiles suited to these needs. Therefore, this work seeks effective goals to assist not only students but also parents and teachers in this process of professional and civic formation. Schools, municipalities, and the state have a duty to help in this development process¹¹.

In this sense, preparation for work in secondary education will be fundamental:

- Because it should enable the acquisition of knowledge that is useful or necessary for a specific field or professional area—hence the need to diversify curricula.
- Because it will lead to the development of competencies that are essential in all professions—hence the need to center and unify the curricular proposal around general cognitive, affective, and social competencies.

General education provides the foundation for lifelong learning. It is of utmost importance for developing the skills needed to face new situations, emphasizing the application of theory to practice and enriching the experience of science in technology and these in society, given their significance in the development of contemporary society. Within this conception of education, the required competencies and skills are the same to achieve the primary objectives, whether they are personal development and citizenship, basic preparation for the world of production, or mastery of the tools necessary for continued learning.

The Brazilian Proposal for Vocational Education

Cichaczewski and Castro (2020, p. 01) state:

Experiences of Vocational and Technological Education (VTE) in Brazil have been marked from the outset by many contradictions, advancements, and setbacks. However, its main characteristic lies precisely in the dualistic division present in educational policies: one type of training reserved for the ruling class and another for the exploited class¹².

Considering the understanding of the aforementioned authors, it is essential to emphasize that the secondary education options most frequently adopted by Brazilian educational systems can be divided into three basic groups, with some variations within each.

The first category is one that establishes two paths: one focused on continuing education and the other on preparing for the workforce, without equivalence between them. This is the approach taken by Germany and the most recent Spanish educational reform, for example.

The second category seeks to reconcile all aspects through a multiplicity of offers that are quite differentiated but equivalent for the purpose of further studies, as seen in the French, Austrian, and Portuguese models. The third path, which has been emerging more recently, proposes a general education with a strong presence of scientific and technological components, complemented by vocational education, either in schools or within companies. This trend is evident in the secondary education systems of Argentina and, particularly, Israel.

Towards Pedagogical Innovation: Competency-Based Education and Educational Innovations

This is an intriguing topic. In Brazil, we have yet to experience innovative pedagogical practices in competency-based education. We are just beginning the process of developing curriculum frameworks based on competencies. However, this is a question we have already asked ourselves: how will the process of professional education for these reference frameworks unfold in schools? It will certainly not be the same as what we currently have.

Ultimately, we need to find pedagogical pathways that propose the integration of resources in real or realistic situations, with missing or approximate data, uncertain knowledge, deadlines, resistance, disagreements among professionals, and institutional obstacles.

Professional Training of Students

Among the reasons for the National Education Development Plan, the choice to support the provision of integrated technical vocational education at the secondary level with high school education is due to its better pedagogical outcomes. With the consequent advances in technology within the context of a globalized world, information is produced and transmitted at an accelerated rate.

Pereira and Henriques (2021, p. 255) observe that: “With information and communication technologies, there are new possibilities for dialogue, exchange, listening to others, and diversity, contributing to autonomy and freedom of expression, and expanding horizons of action and reflection”¹³.

In this context, education is undergoing structural and functional changes in response to these new technologies and the diversity of information present in our daily lives. At this moment, information technology is becoming increasingly important in the educational landscape due to its use as a learning tool, and its role in the social sphere is rapidly increasing.

Within this context, the role of Information Technology is not merely to promote interdisciplinarity or even transdisciplinarity in schools; current technological resources bring new ways of reading, writing, and thus thinking and acting. This provokes a different way for individuals to interpret what they have written, understand texts, and interpret graphics.

Pedagogical Coordination and Monitoring of Professional Students

The Pedagogical Coordinator plays a fundamental role in the school environment, coordinating and contributing to pedagogical work alongside teachers. It is crucial that the coordinator leads daily responsibilities effectively, as they are a key facilitator within the school environment. Effective leadership requires harmonious dialogue where all parties are satisfied. How can professional education be conducted without the involvement of professionals? Collaboration between the school and the working world is essential for realizing this conception of professional education.

Joint teams from the school and production areas must continuously work together to build a pedagogical process that ensures quality training, without negating the differentiated roles between the actors from the two areas: teachers and professionals. Diniz and Moraes (2024, p. 15) highlight:

[...] it was observed that without ongoing dialogue and encouragement between the pedagogical coordination and teachers, technology alone cannot guarantee student learning. Therefore, it is essential to discuss how professional development for both teachers and students in vocational education can also be an ally in addressing the future perspectives left by the pandemic, especially concerning the use of technologies. Educators still need to master technological tools with quality and criticality¹⁴.

Teachers are, above all, mobilizers, knowledgeable about the learning process, and, therefore, organizers of this process and agents of the systematization of learned knowledge. Professionals in the field are problem formulators, process regulators, and innovation stimulators. Planning is collaborative. The pedagogical process must be simultaneous and coordinated.

Students, Market, and Education

Complementary activities related to professional practice serve as an initial, broader professional experience, connected to the field of study in computer science, whether as participants or implementers, with a focus on practical immersion in the profession. This technology aims to support students in building competencies, fostering autonomy, initiative, self-assessment, responsibility, and enhancing work capacity, especially teamwork, which is crucial for efficient work and task and project realizations¹⁵.

Sousa et al. (2024, p. 04) highlight that:

The labor market, in the current scenario, demands professionals who can adapt to the new reality. In this context, it becomes important for schools to focus on this issue, as new agents of change will emerge in this environment. Given the learning process, students can receive, throughout their basic education in vocational training, encouragement for their aspirations and build a better future by recognizing opportunities in the environments they are part of. To address inequalities in the Brazilian reality, it is vital to promote an entrepreneurial culture through education¹⁶.

It is important to emphasize that information and knowledge, even before technological innovations, were used as tools for social and political domination, a period when access was limited to monasteries and sovereigns. Today, knowledge has become one of the main factors for overcoming inequalities and promoting social well-being.

Everyone for Quality Professional Education

When discussing the quality of education, the main issue is to consider quality education for all, which is very different from thinking about quality education for a select few. Historically, schools have not served everyone; the right to education requires us to envision a school for those who have been historically excluded. The practical aim of evaluation is not only to improve monitoring of the actions taken but also to provide support for decision-making.

The practice of self-assessment creates conditions for students to have a broader and more active role in their learning process, as it provides them with the opportunity to analyze their own study process (what they have learned and what they could have learned), as well as their attitudes and behavior towards the teacher and peers. Additionally, self-assessment has a pedagogical function, as it guides the process towards improvement.

Rossit et al. (2024, p. 01) agree that: "Self-assessment is characterized by a process of self-analysis carried out collectively by the participants involved, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. Self-assessment represents a collective effort to implement a process of critical, democratic, and participatory reflection¹⁷."

For these reasons, teachers should encourage students to participate in evaluating their own learning process, as the ability to self-assess, with skill, can be developed through constant practice. When introducing students to self-assessment, it is advisable to guide them by providing some questions that serve as a framework to facilitate the evaluative process.

IV. Conclusion

The school is one of the main spaces for social interaction, and we aim to contribute to this project by enriching information and transforming institutions, with the goal of improving relationships and development for students with special educational needs. We seek to provide significant contributions to the role of the school, ensuring that diversity fosters a range of cultural and social experiences for everyone.

The research indicates that for these outcomes to be achieved, it is essential to value the human being, the socialization of knowledge, the re-evaluation of concepts, and the development of competencies. It also suggests that education should be an act of awakening the human being, with the power to intervene, transmit, and rework knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs, and perspectives on how to perceive, feel, and transform reality and the world. Thus, professional education as a form of social development allows students to realize that their school years were not in vain but rather strengthened and solidified their civic consciousness and responsibility, enabling social inclusion.

At the end of the research, it is hoped that this work will provide a significant contribution to integrated high school and vocational education, particularly in guiding the technical course in information technology with respect to its pedagogical proposal, action plan, and goals to be achieved. In seeking an education that is relevant to our time and context, we must remember that the very conception of the future is constantly evolving. Changes and transformations are immediate, media-driven, and need to be absorbed.

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