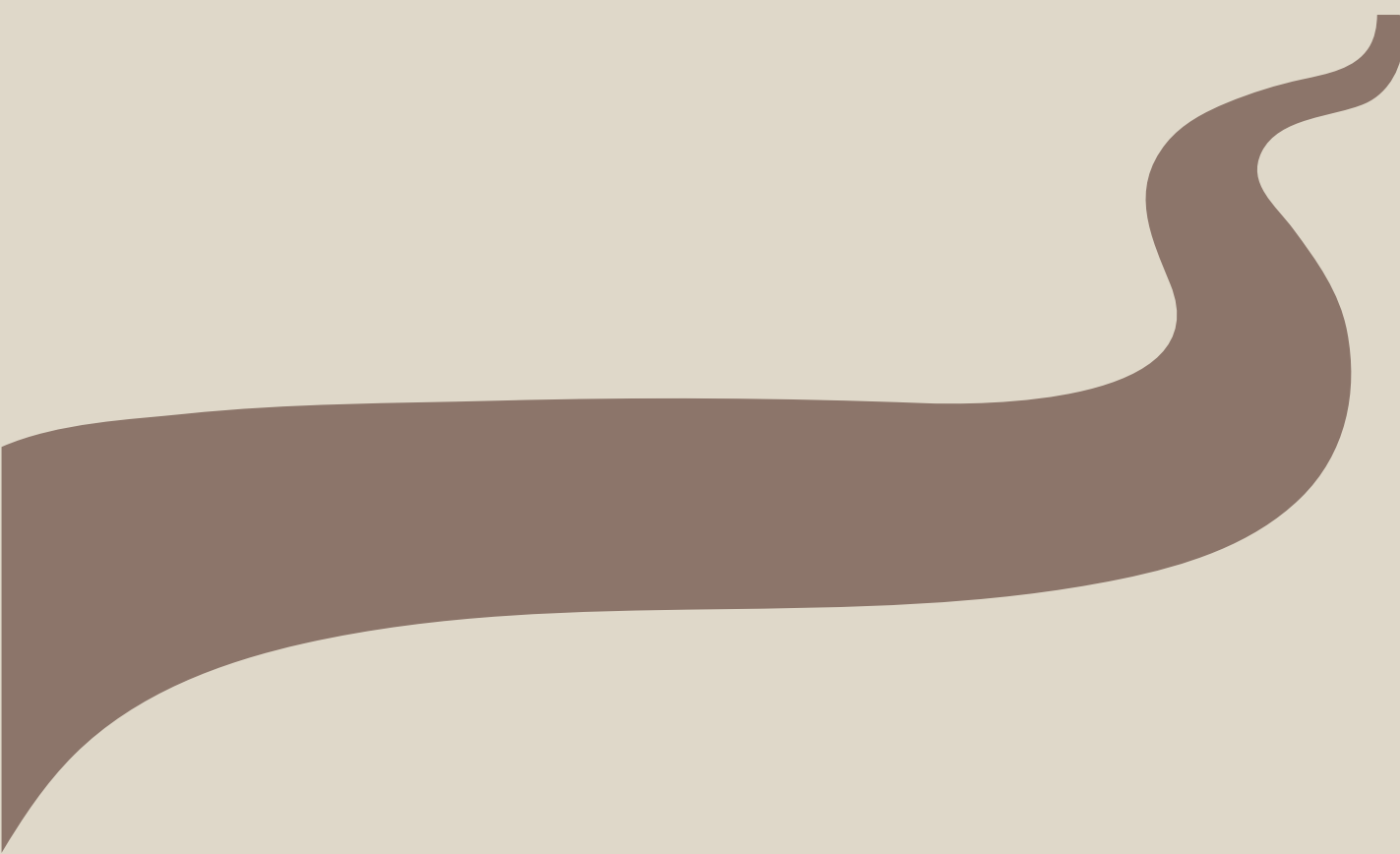


Pathways to Education

New Time, New Route



Average student, Average life

When we talk about education, it's inevitable not to think of schools. And it's quite common to find in these spaces the implicit idea that academic performance defines a student's future, as I personally experienced. This conception often manifests non-verbally, through symbols like rankings, competitions, photos of successful students on city billboards, and even strict criteria for awarding scholarships based only on grades. These performance indicators often overlook individual skills, passions, and diverse forms of learning, leading to a limited view of the student's potential.

Even extremely mentally exhausted and with no motivation to continue studying, I had family support and completed high school, paving the way for a new phase at one of the country's top universities, where I graduated in journalism. This experience introduced me to diverse people and a world of opportunities. I worked in both the public and private sectors, challenging behavioral standards and limiting mindsets, stemming from past insecurities and low self-esteem. Later on, I completed my MBA in Digital Marketing and used my experience to found Vupt Digital, an agency specializing in social media, which has been in the market for two years now, focusing on serving gastronomic companies.

All of this leads me to reflect that the system does not define us, but rather our choices. And when people ask me about the skills needed for entrepreneurship, aside from having a deep knowledge of the field, I remember that I was never an "exceptional student" in school, but I've always been creative, observant, resilient, and extremely curious. These various facets probably turned possible to the current chapter of my life, which plays a leadership role.

In school, the systematization of knowledge often does not result in logic, as contents are frequently taught in a fragmented and compartmentalized manner, without clear connections between disciplines or areas of study. On the other hand, when it comes to a company, systematization ensures that various

components and organizational processes function interdependently and mutually beneficially. Each modification in the definition, structure, and position of a role within the organization triggers a chain reaction throughout the institution. Functions in an organization are interdependent and interconnected (DRUCKER, 1966).

In other words, besides schools acting as a kind of "social elevator" for many individuals, it also highlighted the distance between established knowledge and those living in that place as an experience alien to their existence (FREIRE, 1996). Therefore, it is presumed that a large part of schools operates under a mistaken model, based on meritocracy rather than individualized attention, grounded in inclusion and equity.

Okay, but how did we get here?

We can understand these current phenomena as a result of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, when the evolution of human capabilities increasingly depended on industrial advancements. The educational principle of primary schools was based on the concept of work, which requires knowledge of natural laws and a legal order to regulate social life¹. Work is the educational pillar of primary school, as social order is introduced and identified in the natural order through work (GRAMSCI, 2001).

From that period onward, cities were never the same. From 1750 to 1850, Europe's population nearly doubled, increasing from 140 million to about 266 million.

¹ The excessive focus on technical training may have relegated the development of social and emotional skills to the background in the contemporary world. This thought is in contrast to the previous period, which showcased unique personalities during the Renaissance, such as the polymath Leonardo Da Vinci, bringing about remarkable cultural renewal under the principles of Humanism.

Advances in hygiene and disease control significantly reduced mortality rates; most population growth occurred in cities. Millions of people settled there or were born in the new industrial centers where factories and mills were located. This resulted in vast areas of slums, filled with people living in terrible conditions (DEVOS, 1993).

At the frantic pace fueled by increasing globalization, we arrived in the 20th century, the era of significant technological transformations. After the emergence of computers and information science, these innovations made it possible to store and process data at high speed, significantly boosting productivity in various activities on a global scale. Another significant element was the westernization of history and civilizations, i.e., the universalization of the world according to western standards (DRUCKER, 1993).

In "Post-Capitalist Society" (1993), Drucker sees knowledge in the 21st century as the primary economic resource, surpassing even capital and labor. He emphasizes the importance of knowledge management for organizations' success in the new era. This prediction has been materializing since the last decade, with the intense expansion of access to knowledge and online education. Learning platforms like Coursera, edX, Khan Academy, Domestika, and Hotmart have democratized access to knowledge, allowing millions of people worldwide to have more autonomy in learning and educational opportunities that were previously restricted to a few. Social networks also play a significant role in disseminating and accessing knowledge through the sharing of articles, real-time debates, and access to educational content on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, enabling connection with people anywhere in the world.

Self-management in the Dopamine Era

It is natural that the disruption of practices now considered obsolete (such as researching encyclopedias, depending on printed books, retaining information

only through handwritten notes, or visiting physical libraries to access academic journals) generates relevant debates across generations. After all, at what point is it viable for technology to perform roles previously designated for humans?

As a communication and marketing professional, I deal daily with the challenges of working with algorithms and I see no better way to discuss social media in education without also addressing self-management theories and the social drama of addiction. In the documentary "The Social Dilemma," released in 2020 on Netflix, it is revealed that developers of these platforms design their interface based on studies of behavioral psychology and neuroscience. Sean Parker, cofounder (2004-2005) of Facebook, admitted in an interview with The Guardian that the "like" button was created to generate a dopamine boost and encourage users to be online more often, but not necessarily to learn something of value. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter produced by the brain in the mesolimbic system, also known as the "reward circuit." It influences mood, pleasure, motivation, motor coordination, and learning. Lately, we have seen a growing number of people struggling with anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders, for multifactorial reasons. But it is a reasonable hypothesis that these technologies have a share of responsibility in this (LEMBKE, 2021). It is becoming increasingly necessary for new generations to develop emotional intelligence to deal with challenges related to the intensive use of these technologies, which without supervision can threaten the development of the ability to express oneself, collaboration, stress management, adaptability, and critical thinking.

It is common for an adult to lose track of time and neglect tasks when immersed in the digital world. Imagine the impact of this on children and adolescents, whose prefrontal cortex — the brain region that aids in reasoning, emotional behavior, attention, and decision-making — is still developing? Faced with these circumstances, the concept of self-management gains even more relevance and should be incorporated into the school curriculum. According to Drucker (1999), individuals need to take responsibility for their own learning and development. This includes continuously seeking new knowledge, adapting to new realities, and

making conscious decisions about using available technological tools to our advantage. Knowing how to manage online time, filter information, and cultivate a critical mindset are essential skills for future generations to balance the use of technologies with other activities important for well-being and personal development.

The other side

Digital exclusion is a reality that particularly affects marginalized communities, rural areas, and developing regions, limiting their access to knowledge and online educational opportunities. In Brazil, this reality became very clear during Covid-19, affecting poor students in two different ways: making access to knowledge more difficult due to restricted access to technology used in remote classes and, at the same time, reducing families' income, pushing students to seek employment. Even after the end of the pandemic, it is estimated that 11% of Brazilian adolescents from public schools did not return to school, according to The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

School dropout is a global problem that has persisted for years. There are various reasons families or students choose not to enroll in school, making this educational issue complex. Among the most common factors are personal or family issues, learning difficulties, and situations of socio-economic vulnerability. However, according to a recent survey by Eurostat, the school dropout rate in the European Union (EU) dropped to 10% in 2022. Countries like Croatia (2%), Ireland, Slovenia, and Greece (4% each), Poland and Lithuania (5% each), and Portugal (6%) stand out as having the lowest rates. Some initiatives adopted to reverse the scenario included the implementation of a leadership plan for managers, ongoing training, use of monitoring and evaluation tools, incorporation of motivating curricular and extracurricular activities, strategic use of technologies, emotional support, and political and governmental support.

I bring Peter Drucker into the light of this new model; he who was visionary in many aspects with his ability to anticipate trends and understanding administration as a science that mainly deals with people in organizations. Thus, the education of the future will not exist without schools, just as schools will not exist without students.

Pathways to Education: New Time, New Route

Therefore, individualized attention and multiple potentials are often not fully recognized in traditional educational systems. We can draw inspiration from new disruptive schools and approaches that are gradually being used in the European Union to solve school dropout problems and create a more favorable and welcoming educational context for future generations, who will need to deal with the challenges of an ultra-connected and dynamic world. In this sense, 21st-century schools have the challenge of adopting more inclusive and personalized educational practices with digital inclusion policies, emotional support, and innovative pedagogical approaches. Understanding that each person has a unique trajectory, shaped by their personal characteristics and learning opportunities, is the key point for the development of Next Education, where self-management practice will be indispensable for each student to explore their potential to the fullest; encouraging self-expression and autonomy in learning in a healthy way.

“The only thing we know about the future is that it will be different.”

(Peter F. Drucker)

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