

Entrepreneurial education and innovation in the school context: the analytical perspective of school managers in Basic Education

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Abstract:

Background: The growing demand for entrepreneurial skills in contemporary society highlights the need to incorporate entrepreneurial education into the school environment. This context challenges educational institutions to rethink pedagogical strategies and school management, focusing on training students who are proactive, autonomous and able to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Materials and Methods: In order to understand managers' perceptions of the role of entrepreneurial education in the school environment, a qualitative study was conducted with nine school managers. They were asked about their visions and understandings of the term. The answers were collected through semi-structured interviews and then analyzed using the content analysis proposed by Bardin (2016).

Results: Managers recognized the importance of entrepreneurial education as fundamental to better school organization and development. They emphasized the need to efficiently manage school management, perceiving entrepreneurship as a means of continuously improving education and preparing students for future challenges

Conclusion: Entrepreneurial education is perceived as a crucial pillar in the development and optimization of educational institutions. Incorporating it into the curriculum and school culture is not just a pedagogical strategy, but a vital necessity to prepare students for a dynamic and interconnected world. Continuing to explore and integrate this approach into educational systems is essential for the advancement of education in the 21st century.

Key word: Basic Education. School managers. Entrepreneurial education. innovation school

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I. Introduction

In an era marked by rapid change and the advent of new technologies, education cannot remain static. The current global scenario, permeated by technological advances, social challenges and constantly evolving market demands, requires an educational approach that goes beyond the traditional, pushing students to think critically, creatively and entrepreneurially. In this context, there is a need to integrate entrepreneurial education and innovation into the school environment, especially in basic education, where the foundations of knowledge are laid.

The importance of entrepreneurial education is not just restricted to creating future entrepreneurs, but is intrinsically linked to the development of skills that are essential in the 21st century: problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and adaptability. These skills prepare students not just for the business world, but for life, making them better able to face challenges and create innovative solutions in a variety of areas.

On the other hand, the perspective of school managers is crucial to the effectiveness of these innovative practices. They are the ones who, in many cases, make decisions about curricula, methodologies and resources, and their view of the relevance and options of entrepreneurial education can determine the success or failure of such initiatives.

In this way, this article seeks to shed light on the perception of school managers in basic education in relation to entrepreneurial education and innovation, understanding their challenges, resistance, motivations and, above all, their vision of how these elements can be effectively integrated into everyday school life, in other words, to investigate how school managers in basic education perceive the importance and impact of entrepreneurial education and innovation in their institutions.

Basic education, provided by the stages of early childhood education, primary education and secondary education, represents the initial and most important phase in the formation of the individual. It is during this period that the cognitive, social and emotional foundations are conditioned, providing students not only for the commitment of studies at more advanced levels, but also for their insertion and active participation in society.

In Brazil, basic education has faced a number of challenges, from infrastructure issues to the quality of teaching and student engagement. In an increasingly interconnected and ever-changing world, it is crucial to compensate and restructure the educational model in order to ensure that students are able to navigate this dynamic scenario.

In this panorama, school managers have a prominent position. They are the leaders who guide the direction, culture and strategy of their respective institutions. In addition to their administrative and operational responsibilities, school managers are agents of change, in charge of implementing pedagogical innovations, promoting entrepreneurial educational practices and ensuring that the school is aligned with the contemporary and future demands of society.

The analytical perspective of school managers is therefore crucial to understanding the direction and potential of basic education. They are the decision-makers who can catalyze or impede the implementation of entrepreneurial innovations and practices. Thus, exploring their visions, evolution and experiences provides valuable insights into how entrepreneurial education and innovation are being incorporated and experienced in today's school context.

The dynamic nature of the educational field requires precise and focused research to ensure a comprehensive and applicable understanding of the phenomena under study. In the context of this work, the focus lies on the intersection of three key areas: entrepreneurial education, innovation in the school context and the perspective of school managers in basic education.

Therefore, this study seeks to understand how entrepreneurial education and innovative practices are perceived, valued and implemented by school managers focusing exclusively on the basic education segment, encompassing early childhood education and primary education. The analysis focuses on the perspective of school managers, i.e. principals, pedagogical coordinators and other leadership positions within the school environment.

II. Theoretical foundation

Entrepreneurial education has been the subject of growing interest in academic literature and is defined as a set of practices and pedagogical approaches that aim to instill in students the characteristics and skills associated with entrepreneurship. Contrary to what many might assume, the focus is not restricted to the creation of new businesses, but rather to the development of a proactive, creative and resilient mindset in the face of challenges. Entrepreneurial education is interpreted differently depending on the level of education or the context of vocational schools. At each educational stage, students are expected to expand their set of knowledge, behaviors and skills, building on already established foundations, following a process of maturation and continuous development. Regardless of the perspective, the fundamental purpose of entrepreneurial education is to cultivate entrepreneurial expertise. This view is corroborated by both American and European experts, emphasizing the importance of developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and individual qualities appropriate to the students' stage and progress (CONSORTIUM FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION, 2004; BEST PRACTICES IN THE EU, 2002).

Entrepreneurial education differs from traditional education mainly because it is based on the student's practical activity, offering a more experiential and contextualized approach to the real world. This type of teaching prepares the individual to face uncertainties, scarcity of resources and the challenges common at the start of an organization or initiative. It also encourages imagination and analytical skills (FILLION, 1999).

Entrepreneurial education, as pointed out by Lopes (2010), stands out for its focus on teaching methodologies that encourage "learning by doing". This approach allows the individual to face challenging situations that push them to think in alternative ways and to learn through their own experience. This perspective is aligned with the concept of experiential learning proposed by David A. Kolb. In addition, it is linked to other pedagogies, such as Action Learning, Contextual Learning - which focuses on the construction of

meaning from social and experiential interaction - Problem-Centered Learning and Cooperative Learning, which emphasizes group work and the development of skills such as communication and leadership.

Thus, Entrepreneurial Education refers to a teaching-learning methodology that aims to cultivate entrepreneurial skills among managers, teachers and students. This approach enables individuals to discern opportunities, value innovations, express creativity, foster self-knowledge and resilience, mobilize human and material resources, structure and manage projects - whether in personal or professional spheres - and cooperate collectively.

Entrepreneurial learning is characterized as a dynamic process that encompasses awareness, reflection, association and application. This approach aims to transform experience and knowledge into effectively learned results. This process incorporates both knowledge and behaviors, along with an affective-emotional dimension of learning (COPE, 2005 apud HEINONEN and AKOLA, 2007).

The proposal behind this form of teaching is to foster in students the capacity for introspection and protagonism, allowing them to become aware of and active in their reality, adopting an entrepreneurial stance. Therefore, entrepreneurship education stands out in basic education programs, with the aim of training students and young people to make efficient decisions and solve problems, thus contributing to building a more evolved society (LOPES, 2010).

It is recognized that the importance of entrepreneurial education in students' education transcends the mere business context. According to Lopes (2010), such education prepares students for life, equipping them with essential skills such as decision-making, critical thinking and the ability to innovate. In this sense, this type of education is perfectly aligned with the demands of the 21st century, which is marked by rapid change and uncertainty.

In the context of holistic training, entrepreneurial education serves as a catalyst for students' personal and professional development. The skills cultivated, as stated by Lopes (2010), not only boost students' careers, but also enable them to face and adapt to various life situations, making them more autonomous and responsible citizens.

According to Reina and Santos (2017), entrepreneurial education also contributes to the formation of active citizenship. By encouraging students to think creatively and identify opportunities, they become better able to identify problems in their communities and propose innovative solutions. This perspective is in line with the contemporary vision of education, which advocates civic engagement and social responsibility as central components of the curriculum (SANTOS and ALVES, 2022).

2.1 Innovation in the School Context: Concepts, Benefits and Challenges

Innovation in the school environment has been the subject of intense discussion and analysis in recent academic literature. According to Costa et al. (2022), innovation in the educational context does not only refer to the incorporation of cutting-edge technologies in classrooms, but encompasses a broader redefinition of pedagogical practices, teaching methods and the school culture itself. This view is corroborated by JESUS, and AZEVEDO (2021), who argue that educational innovation should be seen as a reconfiguration of pedagogical approaches in order to meet the constantly evolving needs of students.

The educational innovation paradigm has been explored by several researchers (Ramírez-Montoya and Lugo-Ocando, 2020; Carrier, 2017; Lindfors and Hilmola, 2016; Caldwell and Spinks, 2013), many of whom base their approaches on the conceptualization proposed by Rogers (2003). The latter, recognized for his pioneering study on the diffusion of innovations, categorized innovation as "an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (p. 12).

In a meticulous study, Tavares (2018) carried out a bibliographic review of the application of the term "innovation" in the field of educational studies, analyzing scientific articles published between 1974 and 2017. This survey made it possible to discern that educational innovation can be understood from four different perspectives: initially, as an intrinsically positive aspect; secondly, as a synonym for transformation and reformulation in the educational sector; thirdly, as a revision of curricular proposals; and finally, as a change in conventional pedagogical practices in a given community. Tavares, at the end of his research, stated that the term "innovation" encompasses a wide range of interpretations, intrinsically linked to the various epistemological conceptions and ideologies relating to the educational process.

The benefits of innovation in education are many and varied. As highlighted by Nunes and Abramovay (2003), schools that embrace innovative practices tend to have more engaged students, since the methods adopted are more in line with contemporary learning styles. In addition, such practices also prepare students for a globalized and digitalized world, where the ability to adapt quickly and think critically is essential (SILVA; BILESSIMO; ALVES, 2019).

However, the journey towards innovation is not without its challenges. Leite (2012) emphasizes that one of the main barriers is resistance to change, both on the part of educators and educational managers. Implementing new technologies or pedagogical approaches often requires a significant investment in training

and resources, and not all institutions are prepared or willing to make such commitments (SILVA; BILESSIMO; ALVES, 2019).

In addition, there is concern about the effectiveness and relevance of the proposed innovations. As pointed out by Carvalho, Reis, and Cavalcante (2011), not every novelty results in significant improvements in learning outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial that schools adopt a critical and reflective approach when considering new practices or technologies, ensuring that they are in fact beneficial to the student body.

Despite the challenges, the need for innovation in the school context is undeniable. In an era marked by rapid technological and social change, it is imperative that educational institutions renew and adapt, ensuring that students are prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century (PÚBLIO JÚNIOR, 2018).

2.3 The role of the school manager in promoting an entrepreneurial and innovative culture.

The role of the school manager is multifaceted and central to determining the direction and climate of an educational institution. In the last decade, the literature has focused on the importance of this role in promoting an entrepreneurial and innovative culture in schools. According to Mafra and Tibola (2019), the manager is the catalyst for change in institutions, and their commitment to an innovative approach is fundamental for this to permeate the entire school environment.

A manager's trajectory and behavior are influenced not only by their academic background, but also by a series of experiences throughout their life. Aspects such as the family and social environment play a crucial role in defining how they organize and set their goals, even before they enter formal education (OLIVEIRA, FRANÇA & SILVA, 2018).

By adopting an entrepreneurial mindset, managers influence not only pedagogical practices, but also continuing teacher training, community relations strategies and the integration of technological resources into education (LÜCK, 2009.) This mindset, as Job (2011) points out, is not only centered on creating business opportunities, but mainly on cultivating characteristics such as resilience, adaptability and proactivity.

According to Lemos (1999), in a culture of innovation, innovation is often understood as a process involving the search, discovery, experimentation, development, imitation and adoption of new products, processes and organizational techniques. However, building an innovative culture goes beyond simply adopting new tools or methods. It involves creating an environment where students and teachers feel encouraged to take risks, experiment and learn from mistakes (INSTITUTO ANIMA, 2018). In this context, the manager plays a crucial role, establishing the vision and values that will underpin this environment.

According to Sanábio, Magaldi and Machado (2017), entrepreneurship considerably expands the traditional role of the manager by boosting results, involving aspects such as proactivity, innovation, the search for opportunities and creativity, but always maintaining compliance with current legislation.

The direct involvement of managers in school activities has also proved essential. By actively participating in lessons, interacting with students and being present in the day-to-day running of the school, they can identify opportunities for innovation and areas that need attention (Batista and Flores, 2016). This proximity allows for more informed decision-making that focuses on the real needs of students and teachers.

On the other hand, promoting this culture also entails challenges. Mafra and Tibola (2019) discuss the resistance to change often found in more traditional environments. To overcome such barriers, the manager's leadership, along with effective communication and constant training, is vital. In addition, the manager's responsibility extends to the school community. Involving parents and other stakeholders in the vision of an innovative and entrepreneurial school is crucial to ensure the support and understanding needed to implement significant changes (OLIVEIRA, FRANÇA & SILVA, 2018).

III. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out with school administrators in the municipality of Morrinhos/CE, specifically those participating in the Local Innovation Agent Program for Entrepreneurial Education run by the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE). This program held a meeting on June 1, 2023, at which eight managers were present and became part of the research.

Before defining this sample, a survey was carried out to find out the total number of managers in the municipality. Given the specific nature of the study and the objective, we chose to use the Convenience Sampling technique (MENDES; PAIM; MOREIRA, 2020). This technique is often used in studies that require a more practical approach, where participants are chosen based on their availability and ease of access. Although it has advantages such as agility and lower costs, it does not allow broad generalizations based on statistical rigor for the entire population, since participants are selected for convenience and not by statistical criteria.

Social representations were also used as a research model. Researching social representations requires the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data for a more holistic view of the cultural processes of the participants studied. The data for this research was obtained in two phases, using a form that applied a free word association test, as well as semi-structured interviews. As Abric (1994) points out, the selection and correct use

of instruments to collect data are essential to guarantee the validity of the conclusions. The combined use of these methods favored a detailed and structural analysis of the representational content, providing a richer understanding of the cultural aspects of the representation in focus.

The instrument developed to collect information was a Google Forms form. This is divided into three sections: the initial one is aimed at obtaining personal data from the participants; the subsequent one includes the free word association test, where the interviewees list words associated with an inducing term, classifying them in sequence of relevance and justifying the main choice.

According to Jodelet (2001), this methodology is often adopted in the structural study of social representations, since it highlights the semantic sets that form and interrelate in certain groups. This structural perspective makes it easier to understand the arrangement and prioritization of the symbolic components of a representation, bringing to light underlying or camouflaged elements in discourses (MOSCOVICI, 2015).

The form was used as a tool to reduce possible external distortions, although some resistance and interference was observed in the process. However, the collection of information was successful.

The semi-structured interview was chosen to explore the content of the representations, providing a dialog with the interviewer and delving into both subjective and collective aspects. This technique allowed participants to share their views on the topic without being limited by pre-established guidelines set by the researcher (FONTANELLA et al., 2011; MINAYO, 2010). This approach focused on the main issues of the study based on individual perspectives, collecting essential information.

Before being interviewed, the participants were briefly informed about the objectives of the research, ensuring an environment conducive to collecting information without disturbances. With the interviewees' consent, the conversations were recorded, ensuring that the answers were captured reliably. As Fontanella et al. (2011) point out, recording is valuable as it allows for a detailed analysis of the information shared and facilitates the detection of insights and additions to the data when necessary.

In order to assess the justifications provided in relation to the word seen as the most significant among the evocations generated, the content analysis technique was adopted (Bardin, 2016; Oliveira & Moreira, 2020; Gomes et al., 2021). This approach favors a systematic examination of communications, with the aim of discovering the underlying messages in the data.

The content analysis process proposed by Bardin (2016) unfolds in three stages: pre-analysis, exploration of the material and, finally, treatment of the results and interpretation. During pre-analysis, the material is initially organized, prioritizing the selection and preliminary structuring of the data (Bardin, 2016). Next, in the material exploration stage, the data is examined in more detail, taking into account the theoretical framework and the purposes of the study (Bardin, 2016). In the treatment of results and interpretation phase, an attempt is made to understand the meaning of the raw data, making inferences and shaping interpretations in line with the previously defined objectives (Bardin, 2016). This method of analysis is widely suitable for a variety of data and research objectives.

IV. Results

In this section, we will discuss the findings from the second section of the form used in this research. The purpose of this phase was to assess the respondents' reactions to the free word association test, in which they were asked to list words associated with the guiding concept "Entrepreneurial Education". By analyzing these responses, we were able to discern the core concepts that emerged from the words indicated, providing insights into the participants' most salient views and understandings of entrepreneurial education, as shown in Table 1.

Word	Frequency
Innovation	4
Teaching	3
Necessary	3
Fundamental	3
Learning	2
Self-management	2
Organization	2
Formation	1

Table 1 – Frequency

By analyzing the words evoked in the Free Word Association Test with the inducing term "Entrepreneurial Education", it is possible to identify three main central nuclei that emerge from the participants' responses. These central nuclei reflect the most relevant and recurrent conceptions on the subject:

Learning: Entrepreneurial education is perceived as a continuous process of acquiring knowledge and skills. The words "Learning", "Teaching", "Training", "Learning", "Investment" and "Improvement" emphasize the need for constant learning and personal development. This effort is perceived not only as an investment in entrepreneurial skills, but also as a path to personal and professional improvement.

Practice: Entrepreneurial education is considered to be an eminently practical field. The words "Innovation", "Productivity", "Self-management" and "Organization" highlight that, more than just a theoretical construct, entrepreneurial education is a field of action. Innovation and productivity are seen as direct results of this type of education. In addition, the concepts of self-management and organization suggest that the participants see entrepreneurial education as a form of empowerment, which provides them with the tools to organize and manage their own ventures.

Intrinsic value: This aspect is related to the perception of entrepreneurial education as something fundamental and necessary. The words "Necessary", "Fundamental" and "Important" show that entrepreneurial education is seen as an intrinsic and vital part of a person's education. In addition, the phrases "Education proposal that teaches entrepreneurship" and "Way of awakening ideas" reinforce this idea, indicating that entrepreneurial education has the power not only to transmit practical knowledge, but also to foster critical and innovative thinking.

01. What do you think entrepreneurial education is?

The analysis of the managers' responses, in the light of Bardin's (2016) method, reveals diverse perceptions of entrepreneurial education. It can be seen that there is an inherent concern for social adaptation and improvement, as expressed by the responses of G1 and G2. Both see entrepreneurial education as a vehicle for better coexistence in society and for personal improvement, showing that entrepreneurial training goes beyond the ability to generate business and is directly related to the ability to adapt and thrive in the social environment.

On the other hand, G3 and G7 highlight the importance of planning and management in entrepreneurial education. For G3, it encompasses a range of knowledge that can be improved through effective management. G7, on the other hand, sees entrepreneurial education as attentive school management that keeps up with social changes and devises strategies to address emerging challenges.

In addition, other managers, such as G4, G5, G6 and G8, highlight the intrinsic value of entrepreneurial education. For them, this training is seen as a necessary tool, a way of keeping focused on work, a means of instilling a vision of the future and a proposal that awakens interest and passion for entrepreneurship.

The responses provide a multifaceted view of entrepreneurial education, reflecting its importance not only as a management tool, but also as a means of personal and social development. These perceptions reinforce the value of entrepreneurial education in the contemporary context, where adaptability, foresight and management skills are essential.

On this issue, we highlight the following statements from managers:

G3- Entrepreneurial education comprises a range of knowledge that can be improved through better management planning

G7- It's the management of the school in an organized way, following the changes and prioritizing the most impactful ones and thinking of strategies to remedy them.

G8- It's an efficient proposal that awakens the pleasure of entrepreneurship.

In concluding the analysis of managers' perceptions of entrepreneurial education, some perspectives stand out. Entrepreneurial education is seen as a vast body of knowledge that can be optimized through planned management. This perspective suggests that the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education is intrinsically linked to its practical applicability, serving as a tool to improve the planning and execution of actions in the educational sphere.

On the other hand, this practical vision associates entrepreneurial education with the ability to organize and adapt proactively to change. This ability to anticipate and respond to challenges, prioritizing the most impactful ones, highlights the strategic role of entrepreneurial education in the effective management of school institutions.

Furthermore, an emotional dimension is incorporated into the discussion. As well as recognizing the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education, this manager sees its potential to inspire and instill a love of

entrepreneurship. This perspective underlines the ability of entrepreneurial education to not only provide practical tools, but also to inspire and motivate those involved in the educational process.

Entrepreneurial education is therefore perceived by managers as a multifaceted field that offers practical, strategic and emotional benefits. These varied and complementary views reinforce the importance of integrating this approach into the current educational scenario.

02. How do you perceive the role of entrepreneurial education in the school context?

By analyzing the perceptions of managers about the role of entrepreneurial education in the school context, according to the approach proposed by Bardin (2016), a cohesive understanding emerges about the importance of this educational paradigm.

The majority of managers, including G1, G3, G5, G7, G8 and G9, emphasize the fundamental importance of entrepreneurial education in the school environment. They emphasize, almost in unison, that it is "very important", "fundamental" and "necessary". This unanimity suggests that, for them, entrepreneurial education is not just a complement, but a central pillar in building a robust and effective educational system.

In addition to its intrinsic importance, some managers, such as G1, G4, G6 and G9, highlight the crucial role of entrepreneurial education in school organization and management. They see this approach as a tool that helps with "demand management", facilitating both human and bureaucratic issues. Therefore, for these managers, entrepreneurial education is seen not only as a form of pedagogical development, but also as a management strategy.

On the other hand, G2 offers a slightly different perspective, relating entrepreneurial education to the individual's adaptation in their social context. This view broadens the scope of the discussion, suggesting that entrepreneurial education not only benefits the school environment, but also prepares students to face the challenges of society in a more integrated and adaptable way.

The consensus among managers is that entrepreneurial education plays an irreplaceable role in the school context, whether as a fundamental pillar of pedagogy, as a management tool or as a means of preparing students for a deeper and more adapted engagement with society.

On this issue, we highlight the following statements from managers:

- G1- Fundamental for better organization and development of the school
- G6- Managing our work as a management team in the best possible way
- G8- Very important, it only makes school management better and better.
- G9- As something of great importance that will help the students to organize themselves better in the future.

The analysis of the managers' statements reveals a deep understanding of the role of entrepreneurial education in the school context. It highlights that entrepreneurial education is fundamental to optimizing the organization and development of school institutions. This perspective suggests that the presence of an entrepreneurial mindset can lead to more efficient and progressive management in schools.

The managers emphasize the managerial aspect, indicating entrepreneurial education as an essential management tool. This view highlights the importance of approaching school management with an innovative and proactive mindset, which is characteristic of entrepreneurship. On the other hand, entrepreneurial education is seen as a lever for constantly improving school management. The emphasis here is on the continuous nature of improvement, indicating that the integration of entrepreneurial education can bring lasting and cumulative benefits to schools. Focusing on the benefits for students, this perspective suggests that entrepreneurial education not only improves school management, but also prepares students for a future in which they can organize and navigate more effectively.

Entrepreneurial education is therefore seen by managers as a multifunctional tool that meets the needs of both school management and students. This understanding underlines the importance of incorporating the entrepreneurial mindset and practices into the school environment in order to obtain wide-ranging benefits.

V. Conclusion

The incorporation of entrepreneurial education in the school context has emerged as a promising pedagogical aspect and, as explored in this article, plays a crucial role in the development and optimization of educational institutions. The analysis of school managers' perceptions showed that an entrepreneurial mindset not only promotes more effective and innovative management, but also prepares students to face future challenges with greater autonomy and proactivity.

In their statements, the managers emphasized that entrepreneurial education is fundamental for the continuous evolution of schools, for better adaptability in the ever-changing educational scenario, and for the development of essential skills in students, preparing them for the future.

This study underlines the importance of integrating entrepreneurship into the curriculum and school culture, not just as a pedagogical strategy, but as an imperative for the 21st century. As educational systems continue to evolve and adapt, the focus on entrepreneurial education will surely be consolidated as one of the fundamental pillars for preparing students for an increasingly dynamic and interconnected world.

Finally, it is important that we continue to research and deepen our understanding of the best way to integrate entrepreneurial education into schools, thus ensuring that it benefits not only managers and educators, but above all the students, who are, after all, the heart of the education system.

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