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*FROM PROPOSAL TO PRACTICE: EDUTECH AS A SPACE FOR TRAINING,
INNOVATION, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE CITY OF SANTA
MARIA/RS¹*

**DA PROPOSTA À PRÁTICA: O EDUTECH COMO ESPAÇO DE
FORMAÇÃO, INOVAÇÃO E EMPREENDEDORISMO NA CIDADE DE SANTA
MARIA/RS**

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ABSTRACT

The text aims, first, to present EduTech's proposal as an educational unit linked to the Municipal Education Network of the city of Santa Maria/RS. Secondly, it aims to present the work experience developed throughout 2024 as an indication of the relationship between proposal and materialization. The text is the result of initial and exploratory documentary research, where the official documents governing EduTech are placed alongside the perceptions that the work experience has indicated, especially from a look at the official agenda of events, training, and other activities. As a preliminary result, the formative nature of the activities carried out stands out, both those involving the main thematic axes such as innovation, technology, and creative entrepreneurship, as well as others on diverse topics but with permanent interfaces with the demands of the educational context.

Keywords: EduTech, education, training.

RESUMO

O texto tem como objetivo, primeiramente, apresentar a proposta do EduTech enquanto uma unidade educacional vinculada à Rede Municipal de Ensino da

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cidade de Santa Maria/RS. Em um segundo momento, expor a experiência de trabalho desenvolvida ao longo do ano de 2024 como indicativo da relação entre proposta e materialização. O texto é resultado de uma pesquisa documental inicial e exploratória, onde os documentos oficiais que regem o EduTech são colocados paralelamente às percepções que a experiência de trabalho vem indicando, especialmente a partir de um olhar sobre a agenda oficial de eventos, formações e demais atividades. Como resultado preliminar, destaca-se o caráter formativo das atividades realizadas, tanto as que envolvem os eixos temáticos principais como inovação, tecnologia e empreendedorismo criativo, quanto outras sobre temas diversos mas com interfaces permanentes com a demanda do contexto educacional.

Palavras-chave: EduTech, educação, formação.

INTRODUCTION

The EduTech (Municipal Center for Innovation and Creative Entrepreneurship) has established itself as a training space and a center for promoting innovative practices within the municipal education system of the city of Santa Maria, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Located in the building of the former Vila Belga Public Market, the Center's overall purpose is to integrate the past with the present and the future. Historical heritage sites of Santa Maria, Vila Belga and the Gare are part of the Centro-Gare Creative District, a project aimed at enhancing these spaces as part of the city's culture and memory (Santa Maria, 2022).

From this perspective, EduTech is part of this movement, emerging from the revitalization of the current building that transformed it into a space that is not only historic but also dedicated to training and professional development. This is evidenced by the Center's own areas of work: innovation, technology, and creative entrepreneurship. These areas branch out into other interconnected themes, forming a network of possibilities, such as the creative economy, culture, scientific development, and research. The work is also guided by the general competencies of entrepreneurship: opportunity seeking and initiative;



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persistence; commitment; information seeking; and independence and self-confidence.

The present text is the result of an initial and exploratory documentary research⁶. Documentary research seeks, through the analysis of written records such as archives, legal documents, promotional materials, and official and unofficial materials, to enable the interpretation and production of knowledge that has not yet been clarified (Gil, 2002). Exploratory research, in turn, according to Zamberlan et al. (2014, p. 95), aims to:

[...] investigate a situation in order to provide proximity and familiarity with the subject, fact, or phenomenon and thereby generate a greater understanding of it. Due to its exploratory nature, it is especially useful in areas where there is still little accumulated and systematized knowledge, thus allowing the refinement of ideas [...].

From this perspective, we approached the theme of this text with the objective of relating discourse to practice, the proposal to the materialization of the work. To this end, we examined the official documents governing EduTech and its centers, particularly the Center's internal regulations (Municipal Department of Education, 2023). In a second stage, we conducted a brief retrospective of the activities carried out based on photographic records (EduTech, 2024a) and an examination of the Center's internal agenda (EduTech, 2024b). This retrospective provides an understanding of the organization, nature, and flow of the activities developed between January and September 2024.

For this discussion, we present two sections: first, the proposal of EduTech as a center for innovation and creative entrepreneurship and its

⁶ The text is an adaptation of an article previously presented at the 5th Educar e Empreender Conference, held in the city of Santa Maria from September 26 to 28, 2024. The conference is an official municipal event organized by the Municipal Department of Education, aimed at highlighting the initiatives carried out in schools by children, students, and teachers. The text can be accessed in the conference proceedings, available at: <https://www.even3.com.br/anais/5-espaco-educar-e-empreender-487511/952713-inovacao-tecnologia-e-empreendedorismo-criativo--a-proposta-e-a-materializacao-do-trabalho-do-edutech-como-espac/>.



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organizational structure; and second, a brief report on how the work has been materialized during its first year of operation.

THE PROPOSAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF EDUTECH

Initially, the inaugural proposal of EduTech identifies teachers and students from the municipal school system as its target audience, for whom the Center seeks to offer training courses, learning pathways, continuing education, projects, and other actions, always focused on interfaces with education.

From an organizational standpoint, EduTech is structured into the following working units: the Pedagogical Practices Center (NPP), the Project Evaluation, Approval, and Monitoring Center (NAP), the Childhood Research Center (NUPI), the Audiovisual Center (NAV), and the Municipal Educational Technology Center of Santa Maria (NTEM). All these centers operate under the general coordination of the Center, which, according to Article 11 of the EduTech Internal Regulations (Municipal Department of Education, 2023, p. 5), is responsible for “coordinating all actions developed within the unit, as well as personnel management, exercising this mandate on a full-time basis.”

The NPP is responsible for “supervising, authorizing, monitoring, and coordinating the learning pathways to be offered, as well as guiding teachers in addressing their difficulties” (Municipal Department of Education, 2023, p. 5). In addition to the learning pathways designed for teachers, projects are also offered to both teachers and students. This work is carried out by the NAP, which is guided by the project call published at the beginning of each academic year (Municipal Department of Education, 2024). This center is responsible for “authorizing, monitoring, and coordinating the selection and development of projects and programs involving the themes of innovation, technology, and creative entrepreneurship” (Municipal Department of Education, 2023, p. 5).



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Activities specifically directed toward early childhood education teachers and special education educators are the responsibility of NUPI. According to the Center's promotional materials (EduTech, 2024c, n.p.), its purpose is dedicated to:

[...] the exchange of experiences, dialogue, and research focused on pedagogical practices with children. This center was created to provide a collaborative environment where educators can explore and develop new approaches to working with children.

NAV, in turn, focuses on audiovisual matters at every stage, from training to production. It is the responsibility of this center to "supervise, support, and monitor the processes of training, creation, recording, documentation, production, post-production, broadcasting, circulation, and audiovisual distribution within the Municipal School System of Santa Maria" (Municipal Department of Education, 2023, p. 6). Since its work includes documenting the activities carried out by the other centers, NAV operates in an integrated manner with the other units already mentioned.

Finally, the coordination of EduTech's technology area is carried out by NTEM, a computerized structure originating from PROINFO (Executive Decree No. 03/2005). The center is composed of an

[...] interdisciplinary team of Teacher Trainers qualified in Educational Informatics, which works in the continuing education of teachers from the municipal school system and provides pedagogical support regarding the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), as well as technical support for software updates. Its main objective is to contribute to the digital inclusion of education professionals by reflecting on the impact of new technologies on society and their use in pedagogical practice (Santa Maria, 2023, n.p.).

Although the work is organized into specialized centers, for better systematization the proposal is that all activities be carried out in a global and collaborative manner. Therefore, all centers, in addition to reporting to the General Coordination, are also supported by the Center's Internal Administrative Support Office. The purpose of this office is to facilitate communication between EduTech, schools, and other partner institutions. It also assists in monitoring



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attendance of participants enrolled in learning pathways, courses, projects, and other activities, while coordinating administrative workflows.

In terms of physical infrastructure, the Center has two maker-style rooms and one creative room for meetings and training sessions. It also includes two rooms named “Connections,” intended for online work meetings or consulting sessions, and two auditoriums for activities involving larger audiences. The staff members who make up the centers mentioned above are allocated across three rooms, where essential training resources such as notebooks, speakers, and projectors (data show), as well as more specialized materials such as 3D pens, virtual reality headsets, and smartphones, are available.

THE MATERIALIZATION OF THE WORK THROUGHOUT 2024: EDUTECH'S FIRST YEAR

In its first year of operation, EduTech worked on many fronts and hosted numerous training sessions and events at its headquarters. These activities are evidenced through an examination of the Center’s internal agenda (EduTech, 2024b), which served as the basis for describing the nature and flow of these activities. We also drew upon photographic records (EduTech, 2024a) that illustrate some of the work carried out.

Even before the official beginning of the municipal school year, in January, the Center was already welcoming new teachers from the municipal school system for courses and training programs. Also serving other audiences through a proposal developed in partnership with the Municipal Department of Culture, it hosted computer training activities for early childhood education and elementary school teachers, a photography course, a screenwriting techniques course, a human potential development course, and activities related to the “White January” campaign.



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In February, it began its activities with internal meetings of the Municipal Department of Education (SMED) staff, a meeting with principals of schools participating in the Aprende Brasil Program, and training sessions on the Educar Web System. On February 15 and 16, it started welcoming all teachers from the municipal school system for the beginning of the 2024 academic year, including newly hired teachers. During the third week, it held an internal seminar with the team comprising the SMED Pedagogical Department and welcomed pedagogical coordinators for the first working meeting of the year. February concluded with training for school management teams on the Aprende Brasil System and the beginning of a management course offered by the **Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE)**. School administrators also participated in the year's first meeting with the **State Court of Accounts (TCE)**, and special education teachers attended their first area-specific training session on February 29. Below is a record of one of these meetings:



Figure 1: Reception for newly hired teachers organized by SMED (February 15, 2024).
Photo by Paulo Tavares.

The month of March begins with the learning recovery project, which continues until mid-April. The SEBRAE “Life Project” learning pathway also begins, and throughout the month internal meetings of the Municipal Department of Education (SMED) Pedagogical Department, training sessions with school principals, and meetings with pedagogical coordinators take place. Meetings of



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the Municipal Council for Environmental Protection (CONDEMA) and the SMED Continuing Education Center also begin and continue to be held regularly. Activities related to International Women's Day were also held, including one organized by the Santa Maria Military Brigade and another by the Municipal Department of Culture.

The NTEM launches the Programming Literacy (LetProg) initiative and the inaugural classes of the Student Monitor project; and the Special Education Coordination provides additional training opportunities. In the evening, coordination meetings for Youth and Adult Education (EJA) take place, including meetings of literacy teachers and of the EJA Leaders' Fellowship (CONLEJA) itself. At the end of the month, activities promoted by the Cooperative Credit System (SICREDI) on women's entrepreneurship, as well as meetings of the Municipal Education Forum and the Educarweb System, are also held.

During the month of April, several meetings related to the Aprende Brasil System take place for both teachers and school administrators. The SEBRAE training course for school principals continues, as does the training program for school management team elections offered by SMED. Activities related to Autism Spectrum Disorder Awareness Week are held, along with meetings concerning projects such as the interdisciplinary Orienteering Sports project, as well as working meetings of the Education Committee for Ethnic-Racial Relations (which begin to be held regularly), the Municipal Education Forum, and the Association of Municipalities of the Central Region of the State (AMCENTRO).

Throughout the month, training activities and events become more intensive. In terms of training, these include Gov.br system training, the Second EJA Coordinators' Meeting, the Initial Training for the Use of the Mangahigh Platform, training sessions for mathematics teachers, and Educarweb training for school principals. Regarding events and other meetings, these include Conecta Iconografia, the INOVARS Program – Food Service Categorization Workshop,



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activities related to Creativity Day, the SEBRAE activity entitled "Teachers of the Future," a meeting of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet UNESCO), the launch of the "Traffic and Education" Project, and the Meeting of Local and School Coordinators of SICREDI's União Faz a Vida Project (PUFV).

It is evident that in March, and more specifically in April, the flow of activities at EduTech increased considerably. As the Center gained greater visibility due to its status as a space shared with the Municipal Department of Culture and through its partnerships with other institutions, new themes emerged and gradually became part of its daily routine. The focus remained on training in the most diverse fields, especially those related to education, reinforcing the Center's educational mission while simultaneously hosting events during all three daily shifts (morning, afternoon, and evening).

The increase in the flow of activities was partially interrupted in May as a result of the floods that devastated Rio Grande do Sul between late April and early May. Some schedules and activities were canceled, while others were rescheduled. Even so, activities such as the training program for school principals (SEBRAE and SMED) held in-person meetings at the beginning of the month. Technical classes for Youth and Adult Education Integrated with Professional Education (EJA EPT) also took place, as well as subject-specific training sessions for teachers of natural sciences, English, Spanish, and Portuguese, in addition to specific training for special education teachers and atelier teachers in early childhood education. On May 24, the opening of the 51st Santa Maria Book Fair also took place. At the end of the month, a joint training session was held between the pedagogical departments of SMED and the 8th Regional Education Coordination Office (8th CRE). Below is a record of one of these training meetings:



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Figure 2: Training course for school principals organized by SEBRAE (April 9, 2024).
Photo by Paulo Tavares.

The month of June begins with the “Astronomical Chat” activities and with the continuation of the training program for school principals. As part of the Conecta Cidade Universitária initiative, a variety of activities are offered to students, including the Inner Development Goals (IDG) with the theme “skills for creating a sustainable future,” programming workshops, communication workshops, career planning workshops with vocational testing, as well as startup and maker missions. The event also included the launch of Santa Summit.

The week beginning on June 10 is filled with pedagogical training sessions by subject area: arts, history, geography, English, and Spanish; in addition to Aprende Brasil System training with the SMED Pedagogical Department. The following week features the largest event held at EduTech's facilities, Santa Summit, occupying all four floors of the building. Due to the impact of the 2023 edition, the event is also held in the adjacent building, the former Consumer Cooperative of Employees of the Rio Grande do Sul Railway Company (COOPFER), now the V. Belga Food Hall. The month of June concludes with working meetings (Educating Cities Working Group, Municipal Education Forum, and the Alfabetiza Tchê Program), subject-specific training sessions (mathematics, physical education, and SEBRAE school administrators), and training for the “Explorador Kids” project.



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In July, the workshops “Photos in Practice” and “Seven Steps to Sell More” were held, along with the continuation of the SEBRAE school principals' training course and the “Ideathon” project. Educational activities included meetings for science teachers, arts teachers, Youth and Adult Education (EJA) teachers, pedagogical coordinators on the theme “Towards an Anti-Racist Education,” as well as seminars for educational advisors and administrators of rural schools, and the continuing education course in music promoted by the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM). Events for more specific audiences were also held, such as the meeting marking Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Awareness Day - organized by the Municipal Specialized Assistance Program (PRAEM) - and the CONLEJA meeting.

The month of July also included working meetings involving the Aprende Brasil System with the SMED Pedagogical Department, the Early Childhood Education and Persons with Disabilities Week Committee, and the production of the pilot podcast “Belgacast,” developed by the EduTech Audiovisual Center, in addition to the continuation of the “Explorador Kids” project.

The month of August featured the activity “Creativity in Focus: Celebrating Every Perspective” and the beginning of the audiovisual storytelling creation course promoted by EduTech itself. The “Young Creative Entrepreneur” project, promoted by Porão Criativo, also began. It took place on Saturdays and was directed toward students. Throughout the month, numerous training sessions were held for teachers, both by subject area and educational level, as well as on diverse education-related topics. Regarding subject areas and educational levels, meetings were held for teachers of geography, science, Spanish, arts, mathematics, Portuguese, as well as training sessions for elementary school teachers, pedagogical coordinators, and school principals.

Other specific themes were also addressed, including the entrepreneurship learning pathway for the Youth and Adult Education (EJA)



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audience, SEBRAE's socio-emotional competence program, training for the Resilient Schools Program, training promoted by the Research and Systems Management Center (NPGSI), a photography workshop, and an educational activity of the “Getting to Know Vila Belga” project. Working meetings of the interdisciplinary Orienteering Sports project, the Childhood Research Center (NUPI), coordinators of rural schools, and the Municipal Education Councils of the Central Region (AMCENTRO) completed the month's agenda.

It is evident that in July and, especially, in August, educational activities intensified, particularly those of a pedagogical nature, with teachers from the municipal school system as the primary audience. Pedagogical coordinators were also included among this audience, demonstrating the predominance of this professional profile in the Center's activities. Below is a record of another educational meeting:



Figure 3: Project “Young Creative Entrepreneur” Promoted by Porão Criativo (August 24, 2024)
Photo by Paulo Tavares.

Finally, during the first half of September, the SEBRAE training program for school principals concluded in an online format. Some courses and training activities continued, such as the audiovisual storytelling creation course, the SEBRAE Socio-Emotional Competence learning pathway, the Explorador Kids project, and the Young Creative Entrepreneur project. Pedagogical training sessions were offered to English teachers, elementary school teachers on the theme “phonological awareness and literacy,” and pedagogical coordinators.



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The working meetings focused on projects planned for the month of October, such as the interdisciplinary Orienteering Sports project, the “She Can” project, which focuses on women's entrepreneurship, and the project “EduTech – A Possibility for the Holistic Development of Students in the Municipal School System of Santa Maria,” in partnership with the Eny Foundation.

The month of September concluded with training sessions in the fields of arts and early childhood education, marketing training, a new module of the audiovisual storytelling creation course, the Fiscal Education Seminar, and EduTech's participation in the 5th Educare Empreender Conference.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It can be considered that EduTech has fulfilled its proposal of integrating the themes of entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology with education. This has been the fundamental principle guiding the Center, that is, when receiving proposals from different partner institutions, it always seeks to maintain connections with education, prioritizing teachers and students of the municipal school system of Santa Maria as its primary audience.

As demonstrated, the activities that have predominated during EduTech's first year have been educational in nature. Training meetings with pedagogical coordinators and school principals, subject-specific training sessions, and training for specific educational levels and modalities were the main activities offered with an educational purpose. With regard to students, educational activities involving culture, technology, innovation, and creative entrepreneurship predominated. Events addressing a wide variety of themes also had their place, especially through partnerships with EduTech's collaborating institutions. Technical and working meetings, in turn, complemented the Center's agenda.



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Given EduTech's educational mission, it is also expected that this audience will continue participating in future activities, such as the projects that began at the end of 2024 and will continue throughout 2025. Finally, it can be considered that EduTech has established itself as a distinctive space that, in 2024, took its first steps. Looking ahead, there are many challenges and new ideas that can strengthen the Center's educational proposal, which continues to work with dedication toward the municipal education system of Santa Maria.

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