



Report: Consultation for the National Service for Industrial Training¹ (*SENAI—Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial*)

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This impression of SENAI is a reflection of the quality of its staff and the excellence of its facilities. The experienced observer, accustomed to rather foggy and generally speculative ventures into educational unknowns is startled by the relative precision of goals and objectives and the intense and highly focused methodologies used in SENAI.

The fact that SENAI has survived, even flourished, in the face of several significant governmental changes over the past 32 years is an indication of its stability and progress. SENAI enjoys a wide respect precisely because it related specifically and significantly to areas of widely understood national need. Clearly, SENAI is a major producer of skilled labor and potential supervisors and foremen for the rapidly growing industrial complex of Brazil. SENAI of the state of São Paulo sits astride the greatest engine of the developing giant: urban Brazil.

In this limited contact (and lacking a competent comparative database) it is impossible to make independent judgments on one of the most important questions: cost-effectiveness. Clearly, 1% of the industrial payroll of such a state as São Paulo (which is more or less directly available to SENAI) constitutes an enviable financial base. It is not surprising that SENAI has been widely copied throughout Latin America. Yet, one wonders what the actual costs have been for the training of each of the half million certificated people trained by SENAI-São Paulo during its lifespan or the many more short-term, on-the-job, and skill-upgrading trainees. How have these investments actually affected the worth of the employment base of the state? What have been the consequences in economic development of the individuals?—of the industries?—of the state as a whole?, and of the nation? These are valid questions, though surely they are complex and will never be adequately answered with reference to the past. The means to answer them retrospectively is lacking.²

Unlike a free-marketplace training corporation that sells its services to those who feel that “the price is right” for the service received, SENAI is more like an organ of government, operating year after year from a haven of financial security created by a tax-based guaranteed income. Thus, SENAI is prone to the sort of creeping inefficiency that would put a free-market training organization out of business. Not surprisingly, inefficient and insecure training programs seek refuge in schemes of guaranteed income and low accountability. (Formal educational establishments are notorious in this matter!)

To the credit of SENAI-São Paulo, the development of a new unit in the administrative center will lead to the possibility of getting answers for the basic questions of learning effectiveness

¹ Prepared in the mid to late 1970s

² That the means to answer these questions for the past is lacking is not meant to put SENAI in a bad light. There are very few industrial or commercial training programs anywhere in the world that can point to substantial answers to these questions. The only exceptions are in reference to in-house training programs within given corporations.

and educational economics. Transforming the former Division of Register and Control into the Division of Research, Planning, and Evaluation is the topic of principal interest in the current period of consultation.

The leadership of SENAI seems to be very well coordinated and the Director of the new group, Professor Eloysio, appears to be effectively related to the whole of the SENAI-São Paulo leadership. Everyone seems to share the reasonable belief that the new group will need a period of up to one year in order to prepare itself to function in effective service to the rest of SENAI. There have already been, nevertheless, certain requests for evaluative services and a portion of the energies of the group are directed toward providing specific information at the request of operational units in the central administration of SENAI. (The need to keep this activity within limits is discussed later in the report.)

The emphasis on training this new team, consisting mostly of younger people with formal education in sociology, reflects an unusual willingness to subordinate or defer the answering of day-to-day questions in the hope of achieving a more substantial and more sophisticated and competent planning and evaluation capability.

It is intended by Dr. Tolle³ that some of the people in the new group will be provided opportunities for short-term specialized training in the United States. He is also determined to assure that his leadership people can utilize for themselves the extensive English-language literature in education and employment development. Toward this end, he has recently instituted a program of English-language training during working hours. Here is tangible evidence of what is occasionally speculated: Brazilian intentions to increase its profile and take a more visible role in English-language scholarly communications. We should welcome this sort of collaboration since it represents the unlocking of Brazilian interaction directly with large sectors of the world where English has been adopted as a language of international, professional, and scholarly communication.

As a matter of fact, we in the United States, stand to gain from Brazilian experiences and insights. In reference both to SENAI and SENAC [Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Comercial,] there are not other programs of employment training so largely conceived and so thoroughly executed. When one takes account of the excellent physical plants, the sophisticated equipment, and the highly experienced teachers, there is no close rival in the United States. While we would somewhat defensively observe that our situation is different, it does not follow that we have nothing to learn.

Recommendations

During the year of preparation, training, and development, the new Division of Research, Planning, and Evaluation should be encouraged to divide its efforts in three parts; and the group should be protected from excessive demands in reference to any one of the three parts or sectors:

- a) Development of a set of agreements with the various operating Divisions of SENAI to which it is expected to supply information services. The purpose would be to identify the specific categories in which research and evaluation processes could provide data that would help answer practical questions and affect decisions.
- b) Development of a systematic database on industries and students. A careful study is already under way in which the Division is attempting to find reliable sources of important data on

³ Em 1970 Dr. Paulo Ernesto Tolle foi nomeado Diretor do Departamento Regional do Senai, em São Paulo, cargo em que permaneceu até 30 de abril de 1992. Durante essas duas décadas, o Senai cresceu, expandiu sua rede escolar, criou a maioria das escolas técnicas, mantendo sempre alto padrão de qualidade e atendimento que o distinguiram como agência de educação para o trabalho. See <http://www.fiesp.com.br/noticias/escola-senai-suico-brasileira-homenageia-paulo-ernesto-tolle/>

employment status and trends. Other work will need to be undertaken to deal with the very difficult task of following the careers of former students in order to determine the benefits of SENAI training.

- c) In order to gradually gain experience in solving actual problems and helping with functional decisions, a sort of “fire department” (bombeiros) approach should be available for limited service to other divisions.