

The NEW ILO RECOMMENDATION 195

Human resources development:
education, training and lifelong learning



International Labour Office



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“This Recommendation is a forward-looking and policy-oriented instrument that addresses the enormous challenges we face in developing the knowledge, skills and employability of all people in the twenty-first century”

Juan Somavía, International Labour Conference, 2004.

INTRODUCTION

National and international objectives to achieve full employment, secure social integration and promote sustainable economic growth become complex and more demanding within the framework of the multiple economic, social and technological changes that unequally affect different societies. The need to adapt politically and institutionally to respond to the new needs and take advantage of the new opportunities involve increasing agreement as regards the fact that acquisition of competencies and investment in education and training are the key to economic and social development.

In the new ILO Recommendation 195 concerning the development of human resources, suggestions and recommendations are made linked to different socio-labour topics and problems that constitute crucial axes for the development of strategies and policies in the areas of training, labour relations and the world of work. Among them the role of training in the economic and social development of each country is to be highlighted, as well as its link with decent work and the many mechanisms to be developed to generate efficient and effective training processes.

This publication was produced mainly with the objectives of dissemination and promotion in mind. In order to fulfil them, and to publicise and provide incentives for the execution of the contents of Recommendation 195, it is aimed here at developing the conceptualisations that are explicit and implicit in this new standard, in order to enrich and provide details regarding the scope of its innovations. To do this the background and justification of its creation shall be set forth and the main conceptual contributions referring to training and its link to topics such as productivity, equality and social inclusion and decent work, among others, shall be described (Chapters I and II). Also to be highlighted are the contributions to the configuration of training systems and policies addressing the subject of lifelong learning and competency-based training and certification, as challenges of education and training, as well as the role of vocational guidance and services to support training (Chapter III), without forgetting the importance assigned in this Recommendation to the social dialogue (Chapter IV). The closing chapter of the publication is devoted to resources for the sustainability and continuity of training policies, where a description and analysis is provided addressing the Recommendation’s treatment of subjects such as economic and tax incentives regarding training, research and international co-operation in matters of employment and training policies.

International labour standards, adopted by the International Labour Conference in the form of Recommendations, do not impose on member States the same kind of obligations as those imposed by Conventions, and nor do they require ratification by those States. The Recommendations tend to provide guidance for State policies in the field they are addressing, and in this sense the new Recommendation concerning the development of human resources sets forth innovations and important challenges in matters of employment and training policies for countries of all regions, with no exception whatsoever. These contributions are anchored in the systematisation of efforts and good practices advanced in the last decades by the various actors in vocational training in the world. In this sense, the training institutions and agencies of Latin America and the Caribbean have been making inroads into several of the main conceptual aspects and practical recommendations of this new governing instrument of the ILO to an extent that has varied over time, insofar as the comprehensiveness of approaches and the results obtained is concerned. From this point of view, Cinterfor/ILO believes that the recovery of some of these work experiences constitutes a substantive contribution both in terms of the framework and grounding of the proposals of the Recommendation and of strengthening and boosting the innovation and continuous improvement which these proposals call forth.

Because of this, this publication aims at spreading and promoting an exceptionally useful instrument for training agencies of the region, and to recognise in these agencies actors who are often pioneers and innovators in the world of training on a global scale.

I

ADOPTION OF A NEW RECOMMENDATION¹

1.1 Background and justification

The present Recommendation 195 concerning the development of human resources, follows upon Recommendation 150, adopted in 1975. The defining feature of the latter was that it broadened the framework of action of education and training determined by passing from “vocational skills” to “human skills” and “individual skills” and by leaving aside restricted consideration of employment possibilities to refer to the search for comprehension of working conditions and the social milieu in order to be able to exert an influence on them.²

The Recommendation 150 replacement process is running a decisive course since the end years of the nineties and the need for change is linked to recognition of the “worldwide” or “globalisation” effects and of the new challenges that these processes imply for enterprises and the economy in general. The changes in the ways things are produced and in market structuring, technological innovation, new ways of organising work, changes in the functions of the State regarding financing and promoting training programmes are added to various macro-social and macro-economic processes that altered the objectives and strategies of vocational training and made it necessary to adopt new policies and strategies in the sphere of education and vocational training.

Recommendation 150 began to be insufficient as a reflection of new approaches to training, and although some provisions of the Recommendation continued to be valid, the ILO proposed the need for a new and more dynamic instrument. The States and the social partners needed an instrument that was easy to apply for formulating and executing their human re-

¹ See the complete text of Recommendation 195 in <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convds.pl?R195>.

² Recommendation 150 concerning vocational guidance and vocational training in the development of human resources was approved in the 60th ILO General Conference and replaced Recommendation 117 on vocational training (1962) and the Recommendation on vocational guidance of 1949. The latter –that left aside training in agriculture– were central to the choice of a profession and in preparing to do a job, without addressing guidance and training regarding all the economic, social and cultural activities and without including in its scope all levels of vocational qualifications and responsibility.

source development policies and that allowed it to be integrated into other economic and social policies – especially employment policies. Therefore, the new instrument should be supplemented by a repertory of practical recommendations and a database that the ILO could update continuously as part of its routine duties.

The new document should address the training and education needs in the modern world of work, promoting social equity in the world economy as well as fostering the concept of decent work by means of a definition of the mission of education and training. Moreover, it should promote lifelong education and the enhancement of employability in response to economic challenges, by recognising responsibilities in the matter of investments in education and training, promoting national, regional and international qualifications frameworks and strengthening the capacity of the social partners to establish associations in the field of education and training.

Therefore, on the basis of the discussion regarding human resources development and training that took place during the 91st meeting (2003) of the International Labour Conference and in accordance with Article 39 of the Conference Regulations, the International Labour Office prepared and sent to the governments of the Member States the text of a draft recommendation on the development of human resources and training. The governments were invited to send, prior consultation with the most representative employers and workers organisations, amendments or remarks to the said text and the Office, incorporating the suggestions and corrections received, finally produced the text that became the basis for discussion at the 92nd meeting of the Conference (2004).

Instances of debate and exchange of opinions between groups of employers, workers and members of governments were used to propose suggestions for changes in the content and in the way things were worded in several chapters of the new resolution, which made it necessary to assign great importance to the exchange of experiences and lessons and to the debate on arguments and rationalisations for inclusion or exclusion of certain conceptualisations and/or recommendations of the document.

This new Recommendation gathers together rights and principles enshrined in various standards and documents of the ILO, among which the following are mentioned in the preamble: the Convention on the Development of Human Resources, 1975; the Convention and the Recommendation on Employment Policy of 1964; the Recommendation on Employment Policy (supplementary provisions), 1984, and the Convention and the Recommendation concerning paid leave for studies, 1974. It also alludes to the ILO Declaration concerning fundamental principles and rights at work, the Tripartite Declaration of principles concerning multinational enterprises and social policy and to the Conclusions concerning training and the development of human resources, adopted by the 88th meeting (2000) of the International Labour Conference.

1.2 Summary of contents and innovations

Notwithstanding the fact that several of the matters proposed in this new standard are connected in one way or another with subjects that have been dealt with since a few years ago in the training institutions and systems on a global scale, the new Recommendation helps to fill a vacuum regarding a solid conceptualisation of topics, among others those associated with life-long learning, employability, recognition of competencies and quality management in training. Therefore, it can be expected that such definitions may serve as a normative framework and encourage even further the progress of concepts and technique in training.

It is significant to point out that Recommendation 195 is an important instrument that serves as a polestar, as a guide to countries as they structure their training systems and design, manage and evaluate their employment policies, both from a technical-operational point of view and of that of the principles that must govern them. And regarding the issue of principles it is advisable to stop and analyse some innovations and stresses contained in the new Recommendation that are extremely interesting.

In the first place, the call to ILO Members to recognise that education and training are a right for everyone, and to make an effort to assure that this right is fully exercised by the population. It is important to point out that the inclusion of this principle is not only a political-normative matter to ensure respect for one of the fundamental human rights such as education and training are – which in itself is of intrinsic value – but rather, as can be seen below, when analysing the relationship between training and other dimensions of the world of work, access to quality education and training is today also an indispensable requirement for exercising other fundamental rights such as decent work and active citizenship.

This leads us immediately to point out another extremely important aspect of the new Recommendation, i.e., the integration of economic and social objectives. Training and development of human resources must indeed play a central role in matters of economic development, due to their influence on technological innovation and organisation of work, on productivity and on competitiveness, to mention only some of the dimensions brought up in the new standard. Also however, and simultaneously, education and training must address social development goals, seeking to propitiate personal development, access to culture and active citizenship and to facilitate seeking and retaining decent work for the whole population, as the main ways to prevent social exclusion and overcome poverty. Sustainable economic development and social development are, from the perspective of the ILO and within the framework of the agenda to promote decent work fostered by this organization, two objectives that are inseparable and cannot be achieved in isolation from one another.

However, exclusion from the labour market and poverty affect various groups within the same society in a different way. Because of this, equity in access to quality training and education becomes particularly important in measures to combat social exclusion. The new Recommen-

dation is very sensitive to present inequities in all countries regarding training and employment, and although Recommendation 150 already broached issues related to non-discrimination, Recommendation 195 is much more emphatic and exhaustive regarding measures that should be adopted by countries to overcome discrimination, of whichever type it may be, in access to lifelong training as well as to different opportunities and treatment in the labour market.

In terms of subjects of an eminently technical nature, and regarding lifelong learning and labour competencies, this new Recommendation highlights and incorporates the importance of creating measures to promote their respective development. In that respect it must be pointed out that the concept of competencies becomes interestingly precise on the basis of the definition adopted that believes it to be *“the knowledge, skills and know-how applied and mastered in a specific context.”*(art. 2b)

The conceptual scaffold surrounding the notion of labour competency implies a substantive innovation regarding the earlier Recommendation 150, that together with the importance assigned to lifelong learning – that includes formal training activities as well as non-formal and informal training activities -, and the development and recognition of qualifications, establish the grounds of the concept of employability as it is used in Recommendation 195.

With a view to contemplate the new social realities and reach a consensus on labour perspectives linked to training systems, the new Recommendation contains advances in processes linked to certification and recognition of skills and aptitudes, and to quality management of education and training systems. What cannot be left unsaid, as a conceptual advance developed in the years separating Recommendation 195 from 150, is the notion of National Qualifications Frameworks, which is taken up and promoted in the new instrument. The concept of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) reflects the existence of a national policy tending to recognise all achievements regarding learning and to establish equivalencies between learning acquired in different training environments. The adoption of an NQF indicates that a country has a single system to express the competencies of its workers and that it establishes equivalencies between formal educational levels and competency levels.

Regarding the role of the State and of the social partners, the Recommendation reflects the existence of new relations among them, considering the associations that they may develop and the drive without precedents that is acknowledged in vocational training service providers. The importance is mentioned of assuring that all persons should, throughout life, be able to share and access information and guidance, placement services and employment seeking techniques. Moreover, some training services continue to be the “main responsibility” of States as in the case of training prior to employment and attention paid to the most disadvantaged social groups (the unemployed, the disabled, women in a situation of poverty or heads of household, young people, immigrants).

As a consequence of the “decentralisation” occurring in functions which used to be performed by governments, the role assigned to social partners has increased and it is their responsibility, together with the government, to promote the diversity of the supply of training. Therefore, the new Recommendation has an ample supply of examples of the protagonism expected of the social partners because they are given special participation in education and training matters prior to employment, in the identification of competencies, in the incorporation to the labour market of the unemployed, etc. However, in the matter of responsibilities, Recommendation 195 also innovates regarding 150 because it underlines the need for persons, considered individually, to assume an explicit commitment to develop their competencies and vocational careers.

As another novel aspect, standards are proposed for evaluating the conditions under which micro-enterprises act. Assistance in the progress of this sector leads to promoting efficient and competitive enterprises that, when fostering education and training of their human resources, improve their productivity and competence possibilities in world markets and – at the same time – raise individual productivity and wage rates. The result of the development of entrepreneurial capacity and the incursion into the field of entrepreneurial training is an absolute innovation in comparison with the previous recommendation, that only contained a specific set of rules for a special type of workers (supervisors) in relation with their functions in the enterprise.

One cannot disregard the incorporation of a new clause on research into the development of human resources, education, training and lifelong learning, through which measures are suggested to evaluate the impact of the interventions of each country, and recommendations are proposed to survey relevant information for the diagnosis of vocational training needs. This topic of research is addressed at the national and international level, accompanied by suggestions to increase international and technical co-operation that allow the development of activities to be enriched and expanded in that and other areas connected with the development of training and human resources.

Finally and with decisive emphasis, the promotion of equal opportunities, the definition and management of training policies and the importance of vocational training linked to the development of effective employment policies are constantly related to the importance of promoting the social dialogue and the active participation of social partners both at the national and the international level. Strengthening of employability of women and men as well as their condition as citizens and active members of society is thus conceived as one of the main aspirations in matters of learning, education and training.

II

MAIN CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF RECOMMENDATION 195

In this chapter some of the main conceptual contributions of Recommendation 195 shall be analysed regarding configuration of policies and training systems, and inputs shall be provided to broaden the analysis of the large majority of subjects brought up in this governing instrument. To do so, some categories of great interest shall be addressed (decent work, competencies, employability, gender perspective, quality management, etc.), linking them to the suggestions proposed in the Recommendation and providing information on Latin American and the Caribbean experiences that exemplify some processes and results recommended.

The new Recommendation proposes innovations and challenges that are important for the countries of all regions in matters of training and employment policies. Nonetheless, Cinterfor/ILO is convinced that several of the main conceptual aspects and of the practical recommendations of this new governing instrument of the ILO are being adopted and developed by vocational training institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. Because of this the experience accumulated by them has been gathered up in many of the rationales of the revision process and has oriented the approaches adopted by the Recommendation. Among them, and by way of example, the focus on employability can be mentioned as an expression of the conception of lifelong education in the area of training for work, gender mainstreaming in the design and management of policies, crossing of gender and competency-based training approaches, etc. These facts can be verified in the examples of the *modus operandi* of the institutions of the region that have been included together with the conceptual development of the principal themes collected in the Recommendation.

Moreover, it must be pointed out that the Latin American and Caribbean region has a large institutional history that at the same time is a great strength in vocational training matters. At present, the majority of the countries in the region have at least one national training institution³

³ Since the decade of the forties, as of the creation of the SENAI (1942) in Brazil, the model of institution specialised to provide training spread rapidly, independently of the formal educational system, with its own funds and autonomous management. After the creation of the SENAI, specialised in the industrial sector, there came the SENAC (1946) for the trade sector, the SENA in Colombia (1957), the INCE in

the experience of which has allowed the rapid adoption –in the last few years– of one of the most notable innovations that have occurred in the area of training in the last decade: the modernisation and updating of training programmes in such a way that they express packages of labour competencies, i.e., capacities to achieve results where performance is the fundamental source of evidence. This is one of the many expressions of the pioneering effort made by the American vocational training institutions. The effort has simultaneously encompassed the adoption of the most modern, efficient and flexible schemes of institutional organisation and management, the development of a culture of quality that seeks to reach both the processes involved in providing training services and the results obtained, the search for mechanisms that assure the relevance of that supply and a constant concern to strengthen the role of vocational training in relation to the achievement of greater social equity and the assurance of decent work for everyone, both female and male.

2.1 Training, development of human resources, economic and social development

Vocational training is what has been called a “crossroads” since it possesses the peculiarity of belonging both to the field of social policy, because of its contribution to the personal and vocational development of individuals, to social integration and cohesion, and to the field of productive and labour policies, because of its functionality in terms of the objectives of increasing productivity, enhancing competitiveness and generating labour insertion opportunities. Although it does not in itself generate employment, it is potentially able to manage, by means of an integrating and systemic approach, the knowledge, efforts and resources of the different actors and instances, and, therefore, is strategic for any active labour market policy.

Differently to decades ago, when vocational training was believed to be a specific field reserved for specialists, it is at present included in the discourse of the most varied actors and is a matter of interest for many disciplines. Its links to the labour relations systems are discussed, as well as their function within processes of innovation, development and transfer of technology, and the way to dovetail them effectively with regular education systems, in a perspective of lifelong or permanent education.

The most innovative experiences at the regional level regarding training conceive the latter as part of a package of technological transfer actions, both of work and of production,

Venezuela (1959), the SENATI in Peru (1961), the INA in Costa Rica (1963), the INACAP in Chile (1966), the SECAP in Ecuador (1966). Following that, in the seventies, other countries adopted the institutional model of training for work: The SNPP was established in Paraguay (1971), the INFOP in Honduras (1972) and the INTECAP in Guatemala (1972). More recently the INFOTEP was established in the Dominican Republic (1980), the SENAR in Brazil (1991), the INATEC in Nicaragua (1991), the INAFORP in Panama (1993) and the INSAFORP in El Salvador (1993).

adaptation and innovation. This is marking an abrupt change of direction both conceptually and methodologically in the action of institutions, training centres and technological education units that incorporate in this conception of training the contents and methodologies that belong to what has been called “technological education.” To summarise it can be said that technological education involves recording, systematizing, understanding and using the concept of technology, historically and socially constructed, to turn it into an element of teaching, research and extension, in a dimension that exceeds the limits of simple technical applications: as an instrument of innovation and transformation of economic activities, to benefit individuals as well as workers and countries as a whole.

In conceptual terms, these experiences are characterised by possessing a certain degree of specialisation towards certain economic sectors (metalmachinery, cellulose and paper, leather and footwear, chemistry, construction, etc.) that allows them, among other benefits, a greater degree of technological updating in machinery, equipment and materials, but also in knowledge and techniques applied to production. That updating, supplemented with new strategies of rapprochement and co-operation with the productive sector, is making possible the supply of a series of services that complement the traditional supply of training.

Various institutions in the Latin American and Caribbean region are diversifying significantly their institutional mission, broadening the limits of their modus operandi as a vocational education institution and also receiving recognition as an instrument of technology generation and dissemination. Technological incubators, islands of production integration technology and digital information transportation systems are, among others, some of the institutional initiatives designed to consolidate that function. Therefore, the mechanisms for instrumentation, training and technological support developed by training institutions serve to support and train the entrepreneurs, and in some cases entire productive chains, so that they can face with greater assurance the obstacles that are placed between the world of research and entrepreneurial reality.

Training, productivity, competitiveness and development

It is important to analyse the role of vocational training in strategies to improve productivity, the latter being understood as the relationship between production obtained by a system of production or services and the resources used to obtain it. We can also define productivity as the efficient use of resources – labour, capital, land, materials, energy, information – in the production of various goods and services or as the relationship between results and the time taken to achieve them. Although on occasion productivity is linked to labour intensity, this alludes (mostly) to an excess of effort or “increase” in work, which usually involves very small increases in productivity. Thus it is often said that the essence of the improvement of productivity is to work more intelligently and not harder.

There is a direct and positive relationship between education, training and productivity that can be verified when countries are compared and the best results in terms of productivity and economic growth are obtained in those where the people are better educated. Technology, the other factor invoked as a key factor for raising productivity is no more than a result of education, culture, creativity and systems of administration.⁴

Various approaches advocate the idea that wagering on quality jobs can be profitable thanks to advances in productivity, for which investment is proposed in two key factors: vocational training and safety and hygiene at work. The former concentrates a large amount of the suggestions of the new Recommendation for the development of human resources, focusing attention on the development of competencies, lifelong learning and the close relationship between quality jobs, quality of life and equity.

Through its effect on increasing productivity, the role played by training in the development of competitiveness is verified. In its more literal meaning competitiveness refers to the capacity to compete of the enterprise, sector or country in the framework of the economy. It also alludes to the capacity to generate (without ceasing to be open to international competitiveness because of it) some sufficiently high levels of employment and income.

The dynamics of growth show that, in the long run, the international competitiveness of a country is closely linked to its living standard, and to be competitive it must adapt to the new circumstances of world competition arising from the liberalisation of trade and technological progress. It is because of this that a country's possibility of successfully attracting, assimilating and taking advantage of direct foreign investment and the subsequent transfer of technology will depend, above all, on its own "technological capacity" in which the qualifications and technical know-how of its active population are included.

Among its main suggestions, Recommendation 195 proposes a duty of member countries: they must define policies for the development of human resources, education, training and lifelong learning that "*emphasise sustainable economic development in the context of the globalising economy and the knowledge- and skills-based society*" as well as "*the development of competencies, promotion of decent work, job retention, social development, social inclusion and poverty reduction*" (art. 3, b).

The above also harmonises with the conclusions of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation, created as an independent organ at the instance of the ILO, and that are reflected in the publication "A fair globalisation. Creating opportunities for all" in the sense that "*people must be trained so that they may benefit from globalisation,*" and in particular

⁴ However, in many countries structural adjustment policies and those that lead to an opening towards the global economy incite to a ceaseless restructuring of large enterprises, which is often accompanied by a reduction in the staff payroll, affecting millions of workers. This often cuts down the operations and achievements of the enterprise, undermining confidence and the spirit of the workers and also diminishing productivity.

regarding the new competencies the report stresses that *“At present, men and women need overall qualifications that can be adapted to the rapid changes in economic requirements, as well as basic qualifications that enable them to benefit from information technologies.”*

The importance of innovation, competitiveness, productivity, economic growth, the creation of decent work and the employability of individuals, are thus highlighted, *“considering that innovation creates new employment opportunities and it also requires new approaches to education and training to meet the demand for new skills”* (art. 3, c).

Although the concept of competitiveness has always been relevant for all eras, it acquires greater importance in the present context of economic globalisation, where the opening-up processes allow both strengths and weaknesses of enterprises, productive sectors and national economies to be revealed with greater evidence. In that respect there are different approaches as regards which the most adequate strategies are and, above all, the combination of measures that may turn out to be most effective.

On the one hand, we find examples of strategies that are fundamentally based on macroeconomic measures that tend to lessen the costs of production, such as decisions regarding exchange rate policies, tax exemptions or labour cost reduction (wages, dismissals, etc.). On the other hand, the need to make efforts that aim towards a strategic horizon marked by the achievement of what has been called “systemic competitiveness” is affirmed. This latter approach does not depend on a restricted and relatively simple set of measures, but rather on a complex range of policies that, applied together, would locate the economy in a globally more competitive position. Policies of investment in public and private infrastructure, of innovation and technological development, of integration of sectors and productive chains, of investment in the development of human capital (education, training and skills development) are some of the most typical instruments proposed by this approach.

It is within the systemic competitiveness approach that vocational training has a clearer and more central role to play. It is believed that investments oriented to raise the qualifications of the population are in and of themselves an action that tends to increase competitiveness and, in turn, reinforce the effectiveness of other supplementary policy lines. Therefore, although vocational training is a good bet in any context, its beneficial contributions to society and the economy are better able to show up in the framework of long term strategic approaches.

The idea of vocational training as a specialised field of activity that is to a certain extent self-referent is also losing ground in the face of the conception that what is involved is something at the same time interdisciplinary and inter-institutional and that must, as such, seek to insert itself in the framework of strategies of attention that are an integral part of the economy, productive chains and sectors, enterprises and the community.

Therefore, vocational training is betting on two types of integration: one that is vertical, to the extent that it seeks to offer answers not only to different situations but also to the transformation itself of those situations (lifelong training); another that is cross-sectional and where the

search involved is in the sense of dovetailing with other fields of social and economic policy, with various institutional areas and affecting different disciplines. Such are, in short, the two main dimensions of a process of transformation of vocational training that seeks to locate it in a strategic and functional horizon, among other aspects, to achieve systemic competitiveness.

Taking into account the strong relationship between training and aspects such as productivity, competitiveness and, ultimately, the economic and social development of countries and the quality of life of individuals, it is not surprising that already in the preamble of the Recommendation a need is explicitly expressed for educational and training policies to be a part of and be consistent with *“comprehensive economic, fiscal, social and labour market policies and programmes that are important for sustainable economic growth and employment creation and social development.”*

The relationship between training, competitiveness and productivity has been the axis of development of various institutions of Latin America and the Caribbean that have established an increasing relationship with productive technological development, involving among its main functions that of teaching vocational training through the transfer of the technology to be applied to the productive processes of enterprises of all sizes and technological complexities.

On occasions their actions are centred on supporting sector Conventions on competitiveness, applied research in partnership with other entities and special co-operation agreements. These activities tend to be executed mainly by training centres and sector technological services that have comparative advantages to advance development activities and possess equipment and facilities that allow them to establish strategic alliances with enterprises and technological development and productivity centres to stimulate actions within the framework of innovation and development.

Finally, although training can play an important role in topics related to employment from a quantitative perspective, that is what has mainly been referred to so far, no less important is the role it has to play in the qualitative dimension of human labour. The insufficiency of an exclusively quantitative approach to employment and the world at work has propitiated new types of approaches that stress the importance of also taking into account the ethical and value dimension when addressing the study and research of the world at work as well as at the time the policies are drawn up that tend to mitigate the difficult situation of collectives that are particularly disadvantaged regarding employment. The notion of decent work of the ILO is inscribed in this framework.

2.2 Training and decent work

The idea of decent work may be introduced as an integrating concept that involves and dovetails various objectives, values and policies or as a dynamic concept the content of which evolves with the social and economic progress of a given country. In any of its meanings it

possesses an obvious ethical content: to promote decent work involves the clear adoption of a valuating position very closely related to the dignity and the quality of life of human beings.

As quality employment that respects the rights of workers, both male and female, and fosters the development of forms of social protection, if we refer to decent work we must combine aspects relating to rights, employment, protection and dialogue. Therefore, it can be said that it is a concept under construction to which the following features have been attributed: productive and safe work, respect for labour rights, equity, adequate income, social protection, social dialogue, trade union freedom, collective bargaining and participation.

Decent work is, even in its more synthetic formulation, at least work of sufficient quantity and quality, and it presumes that the following rights are in place: the right to work or employment; equitable working conditions; fair or sufficient pay; safe work (meaning that which guarantees safety and hygiene); social protection; vocational training; and other rights and principles such as trade union freedom and collective bargaining.

Vocational training is a fundamental human right and, at the same time, an instrument that promotes and facilitates exercising the other rights that also constitute decent work. That is why there is insistence that decent work implies recognition of rights and not only compliance with those established in labour laws in force, nor in the convenience of establishing new rights, but rather it is connected to the conception that fundamental rights exist that must be recognised although they are not proclaimed in the legislation, given that they are innate in any fair and inclusive society.

Therefore, recalling that decent work for all workers all over the world is a fundamental objective of the International Labour Organization, Recommendation 195 alludes to the responsibility of governments regarding training and especially enhancement of the employability of the population “*to secure decent work, in the private and public sectors, through such measures as incentives and assistance*” (art. 10, a).

Training and employability

Although, as has already been stated, training policies cannot by themselves generate employment, they can and must support individuals so that they become detectors of opportunities, passing from the status of passive subjects, dependent on an external intervention to provide them with an insufficient job offer, to active subjects, builders of opportunities and insertion strategies.

This leads us to centre our attention on employability and to define it, as per the Recommendation 195 proposal, as “*portable competencies and qualifications that enhance an individual’s capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work, to progress within the enterprise and between jobs, and to cope with changing technology and labour market conditions*” (art. 1, d).

The definition clears up any type of confusion regarding whether to consider employability to be a synonym of employment or of achievement in a job and centres it on the set of personal, social and technical competencies that allow individuals to themselves manage their processes of occupational and vocational development in a scenario where employment needs to be created through entrepreneurial capacity and co-operation strategies.

This new type of learning can no longer be circumscribed to a stage at the beginning of professional life but rather involves lifelong training, permanent learning. Moreover, it cannot be the sum of specific training actions since it seeks, on the one hand, that the person be able to achieve the results required for his or her vocational performance and, on the other hand, that he or she understand the reason why they are doing it, what the implications and impacts of their actions are, and that they develop the capacity to relate what has been learned, to transfer it to other situations, to adapt to new social and labour contexts.

Employability is related to processes occurring at different levels: structural, governing, cultural. But it also links up with factors of a personal and relational nature, that dovetail with the specific contexts of the life of each individual, with the result that differences and inequities are found in the possibilities of access to resources, in employment opportunities or in the generation of productive activities, in participation and decision-making regarding issues involving their community or the group to which they belong.

The enhancement of employability should be, therefore, one of the fundamental objectives of training policies and also, because of that, necessarily require analysis from a gender perspective.

To improve employability implies to focus attention on an individual located in and conditioned by his or her gender, economic and cultural milieu, age, etc. As is proposed in the following point, this is a contribution of the gender perspective that, additionally, shows that women have been subjected to particular cultural barriers in matters of hiring and have traditionally found themselves to be far from the channels of creation and use of wealth. Because of all that, employability competencies complement each other and dovetail with needs to insert themselves and participate socially.

Male and female training converge as never before with training of citizens of both sexes. The right to work is one of the substantive aspects of the rights of citizens and the issue thus involves that the work performed not undermine a person, allowing him or her not only to make their living but also enabling their personal development and autonomy, meaning the capacity to think and act on their own, to choose what is valuable for each of them.

To behave as a citizen conscious and respectful of diversity, as also for insertion in the current labour market, it is required to have the capacity to express oneself and communicate, to make decisions, to make choices, to understand the milieu in which one acts, systemically address reality, work in a team, show solidarity, participate, take care of oneself and of others, etc. Because of this, employability, citizenship and gender are interdependent concepts that should be conceived as cross-sectional approaches of the teaching-learning process.

Employability thus becomes a fundamental dimension for personal development and social integration,

From this point of view, to train for employability in the present context means:

- to strengthen the capacities of individuals so that they may improve their labour insertion possibilities through the development of key competencies that reduce the risk of obsolescence and allow men and women to remain active and productive throughout their life (not necessarily in the same job or activity);
- to train for permanent and complex learning that implies learning to learn, learning to be, learning to do and learning to undertake;
- to support individuals so that they may identify inner and outer obstacles, the demands and competencies required in the world at work, and so that they value their skills and knowledge;
- to stimulate and strengthen the capacity of each individual to define and manage their vocational career.

There is therefore no doubt that by means of training for employability the competencies the workers require are increased in terms of having greater possibilities to keep their jobs or to obtain a new one as well as to access better paid jobs with adequate working conditions.

Nonetheless, training programmes have the best results when macroeconomic policy fosters employment growth, to which must be added the need for training programmes to resort to other services related to the labour market, as, for example, help to find a job, professional advice, a subsidised labour experience, etc.

Regarding employability, since the nineties the experience of the OECD shows a concern to find a new set of indicators of the real capacities of individuals. Such indicators must have greater explanatory power and deliver information beyond the traditional indicators of schooling, coverage, desertion, etc. In this line, after several studies in the framework of the project “Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo)” in 1994, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was carried out in the belief that literacy incorporates something more than the capacity to decipher written symbols and, therefore, to overcome the traditional concept of reading learnt at school.

The IALS defined the concept of literacy as: “*The capacity to understand and use printed information in daily activities, in the home, at work and in the community; to achieve personal objectives and develop knowledge and the potential of each.*” The concept of literacy includes the capacity to perform tasks typical of daily living. For example, the instructions to operate electronic equipment, as well as those involving arithmetical operations such as those appearing on a daily basis in writing, for example, calculations involving simple interest rates, and also comprehension of selected fragments of prose.⁵

⁵ The IALS was applied in Chile (1998) and its results are reflected today in a goodly part of the plans and programmes that, on education, were designed in this country in the last few years.

Some countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region have implemented strategies to improve computer literacy. These are included in a set of measures designed with the purpose of becoming digitally developed countries. Such purpose is associated with development and trade integration policies that are complemented in other areas such as in education, in which teaching the English language is encouraged. Insofar as information technologies are concerned, training and certification in key competencies is promoted for a wide spectrum of labour performance.

Along this same line, the FORMUJER Programme⁶ has developed an intense process regarding the identification and construction of employability indicators. Taking as a reference the construction of the Occupational Project, the following group of competencies was defined to inquire into evaluating the strengthening of the employability of the beneficiary population of training actions:

- Diagnosis of itself and its context of family, community life, groups it belongs to, as well as the productive and occupational milieu (competencies regarding reading and analysis of context, interpretation of information, comprehension of messages, interpretation of data on facts, problem identification, etc.).⁰
- Planning objectives and goals as regards work and training, choice of training and/or occupational careers, feasibility analysis (competencies involving knowledge and interpretation of information on facts, organisation of time, bargaining, planning, analysis of alternatives, decision making, solving problems, argumentation, use of resources).
- Management and execution of activities for the development of the project, programming, organisation of time and of resources.
- Solving problems linked to training and to work, in the labour area, in the family and/or community environment (competencies involving analysis of problems and alternatives, bargaining, decision making, linkage with others, communication).
- Teamwork/partnerships: listening capacity, capacity to incorporate the contributions of others, co-ordination competencies, bargaining competencies, etc.
- Autonomy/bargaining/decision making: changes of position regarding the labour market, training, family, etc.
- Communication: changes in ways of oral, written, body expression, arguing capability, transmission, etc.

All these considerations are present in Recommendation 195 when it calls on countries to define human resources development policies that “*facilitate lifelong learning and employability as part of a range of policy measures designed to create decent jobs, as well as to achieve*

⁶ See box

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYABILITY IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN LATIN AMERICA

Strengthening institutional competencies and social partners to design and implement quality training policies addressed to enhancing employability and gender equity has been the central purpose of the FORMUJER and PROIMUJER Programmes executed by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Argentina (MTEySS), the INFOCAL Foundation of Bolivia and the INA of Costa Rica, and the second one by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security/JUNAE of Uruguay. Both initiatives have been co-ordinated and technically supervised by Cinterfor/ILO. By means of participative management and a common conceptual and methodological framework at the regional level, and differentiated emphases, management strategies and demonstrative actions in keeping with national realities, a *model of policies for enhancing employability and gender and social equity* was built collectively and has been validated and adopted in very varied contexts and contains a wide repertory of methodologies and management strategies applicable on a broader and more diversified scale.

Some of the main results of this trans-national effort are:

- 1) **Argentina:** The MTEySS institutionalised equal opportunities as the governing criterion of its policies, and reformulated the Labour Intermediation Services; training for employability and the Occupational Project device were incorporated into the Protocols of the National Training System, in the Male and Female Heads of Household and Educational Terminality National Programmes as well as for the areas responsible for training and employment in the provinces of Cordoba, Mendoza and La Pampa.
- 2) **Bolivia:** the INFOCAL included gender equity and employability as strategic and cross-sectional objectives of its modus operandi; it incorporated the "Training modules for employability and citizenship" and the development of competency-based training curricula in its training supply; it implemented a Labour Information and Orientation System and drew up a proposal for a Single Classifier of Occupations from the point of view of competencies and gender. These approaches and capacities were transferred to national policy, through the technical support and staff trained, to the Programme for Strengthening Technical and Technological Training executed by the Ministry of Education.
- 3) **Costa Rica:** the INA incorporated the systemic approach of the policy, the gender perspective as a cross-sectional axis, and training for employability and the occupational project in its modus operandi and in government initiatives under its responsibility: the "New Life" University for Labour Programme and the fight against poverty. It transferred these approaches to and achieved their adoption by the National Information, Guidance and Intermediation of Employment Policy, the Research and Improvement Centre for Technical Education and the Guides for Orientation and Seeking Employment of the ILO MATAC Project for Central America, Belize, Panama and the Dominican Republic.
- 4) **Uruguay:** the MTySS has continued to execute specific training actions for women whereby the PROIMUJER Programme is no longer a pilot experience and the gender perspective has been adopted by many skills development entities and is beginning to be promoted as a cross-sectional dimension for other decentralised programmes financed by the JUNAE/DINAE.

sustainable economic and social development” and “give equal consideration to economic and social objectives, emphasise sustainable economic development in the context of the globalising economy and the knowledge- and skills-based society, as well as the development of competencies, promotion of decent work, job retention, social development, social inclusion and poverty reduction” (art. 3, a and b).

Training, equal opportunities and social inclusion

If quality education and training are to be a relevant instrument for improving general social and economic conditions and preventing social exclusion and discrimination, they should encompass all people as well as assure the inclusion of the most disadvantaged groups. Because of this, the new Recommendation proposes that countries should “*recognise that education and training are a right for all and, in cooperation with the social partners, work towards ensuring access for all to lifelong learning*” (art.4, a) and “*promote equal opportunities for women and men in education, training and lifelong learning*” (art.5, g).

The place where these specifications position both statements reinforces their axiomatic nature and speaks of impressive changes and advances regarding Recommendation 150. The earlier Recommendation proposed that countries adopt policies and programmes for guidance and training that bore a close relationship to employment and that took into account the needs, possibilities and problems of employment at the regional and national level; the phase and level of economic, social and cultural development and the relationship between the development of human resources and other economic, social and cultural objectives. That is to say that the focus was on employment and on the contributions that training could make to increase it. Now, as this text has already analysed, it is believed that training policies must address equally the economic and social objectives and that stress is laid on individuals as holders of rights and on development of their competencies to attend, in that way, to the problems of employment and economic development.

If training is a fundamental right one must ensure that all human beings, without distinctions of any kind, may have access to it. Hence the inclusion of equal opportunities among women and men as a specific point of the set of objectives and definitions of policies in matters of education and training. This is a crucial conceptual and strategic contribution of this instrument through which the countless efforts made and lessons learnt are brought together, especially those of the last decades of the last century and in all continents, to progress towards effective equality between the sexes. Although we are still far from making it a reality, what has been achieved is a unanimous discourse regarding women and men having the same rights and that they should therefore be treated in the same way and given the same opportunities in all areas of expression of economic and social organisation. The open gap between

formal or legal equality –that has not been universally achieved either, as we all know– and real equality is the great challenge that countries face in the 21st century. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean the regulatory prohibition to discriminate against persons or groups on the basis of some characteristic feature they might display has been consolidated. Therefore, the removal of obstacles and barriers and the adoption of measures needed for equality to be effective, i.e., proactive behaviour, are in full swing and there is still a long way to go for them to become “unnecessary.” That is why it is so important that the new Recommendation adopt the promotion of equality between the sexes as an objective of the policies and programmes that, therefore, must be part of the guidelines or governing principles of all their actions, and of all areas of intervention, on an equal footing with lifelong learning, employability, development of competencies, innovation, competitiveness, etc.

In Recommendation 150 promotion of equal opportunities between women and men appeared as a specific point (VIII), very distant from formulations on policies, after having addressed special groups and before migrant workers. However, what is more revealing is that it was conceived as a part of the set of measures that governments should take to improve the employment situation of women and not as a responsibility or concern of training policies.

These formulations, that are so different, are witness to the recent evolution, both in theoretical and practical terms, of the opinion of the social partners and the international community in the field of development and in the distinction between sex and gender. That evolution has meant that the stress is transferred from focusing on meeting basic needs to affirming fundamental rights. The new “focusing on rights” means that women cease to be considered passive “beneficiaries” of development policies, and are recognized as participants or active subjects with full rights to receive their benefits. Moreover, it means moving from considering equality of rights and opportunities as a question of social justice to conceiving it as a prior condition for attaining sustainable development centred on individuals. Concretely in the world of work, the broad lines of this evolution have been: in the fifties the stress was on protecting the reproductive role of women; in the sixties on the participation of women in development and on corrective actions to reduce the gap with men; at the beginning of the seventies, and since there has been better knowledge of the poverty phenomenon and of the belief in the need to formulate effective strategies for its eradication, recognition was reached of the specific conditions that affected poor women and the fundamental role they played in supporting the household, at which time assistentialist policies began to be orchestrated in matters of training and employment. As of 1980, the integration of women into the process of development began to be considered essential if the potential of available human resources was to be used to effectively materialize the development possibilities of countries. In 1985, the United Nations established the decade of women and with the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century attention was centred on the historical inequalities between men and women in terms of access to resources and to the benefits of development. Thus the concept of gender arrived as a constitutive element of social relations based on an unequal distribution of power, and it is expressed in representations and

cultural symbols, in governing concepts, in policies and institutions and in subjective identity. While sex is a biological category, genetically transmitted, that establishes functional differences in live beings (male and female), gender is a social construction that ascribes and assigns values to roles, attributes and capacities of men and women hierarchically. This unequal circumstance is in place from the beginning of socialisation, is transmitted from the home, is confirmed by education and is expanded by the mass media. Because of this it is internalised and conditions the distribution of spheres and vital, vocational and professional options. Men and women, then, are immersed in a social system where they produce and reproduce gender relations. Precisely because it is social this process may be the object of reflection and, therefore, of change. By “denaturalising” this assignment of roles and attributes, by incorporating a new point of view, the places of men and women are changed.

Gender is a perspective, a critical instrument of analysis of social relations and a basic dimension on which all other conditions that generate relations of power and differences (ethnics, race, age, income, socio-economic condition, educational level, etc.) act, empowering themselves. Because of this, the achievements of gender equity find their stopping point in the survival of other inequities and vice versa. Gender is therefore not a synonym of woman, is not a module, nor does it mean to add a feminine component to policies. Rather it is a conceptual and methodological framework that guides decision making and leads to valuing all the implications any action planned has for men and women, whether it is legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.

For all these reasons, the gender perspective must necessarily be cross-sectional and, as is established in the Platform of Action adopted in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, integration of gender issues must be guaranteed as a global strategy that allows understanding and, therefore, operation with greater relevance to promote equality by right, opportunities and treatment between men and women and to change social reality, that of the world of work as well as of education and training.

Recommendation 195 is responding to this epistemological framework when it incorporates the promotion of equal opportunities between the sexes as an objective of human resources development policies, but also when it incorporates for the first time in this type of instrument, the concept of gender, alerting to the presence of gender biases in the evaluation of labour competencies.⁷ When mainstreaming the gender perspective in training, *individuals are being considered as subjects located* in a social reality that conditions them, but they are able to change on the basis of personal and collective learning and strategies. Their adoption claims simultaneous action on the comprehensiveness of interventions and on the qualification of spaces for constant reflection, attention and evaluation to promote change in the paradigms in force, but also to orchestrate specific actions and methodologies to attend to the initial disad-

⁷ See points 3.3 and 5.2

vantages of women, especially poor women, with low educational levels, heads of households, adolescent mothers, rural women, etc., as well as the specific problems of the female collective such as occupational diversification, access to management positions, to technologically innovating areas, to the field of science and technology, to training for micro and small enterprises.⁸ The incorporation of this approach in training routines fuels a conception of curriculum planning as a dynamic process, that begins with simultaneous recognition of the demand of the economic sectors and of the needs of individuals, and extends up to labour insertion based on capacities and not on issues of gender. When mainstreaming the gender perspective a change is being generated in the ways of performing training, in the conception and practice of teaching, whereby its quality is being improved and innovation in educational technology is being boosted.

Based on the belief that, besides considering systematically the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women, social inclusion and the fight against poverty also require focused actions and those that discriminate positively, Recommendation 195 sustains the need to “*promote access to education, training and lifelong learning for people with nationally identified special needs.*” Among them it lists youth, low-skilled people, people with disabilities, migrants, older workers, indigenous people, ethnic minority groups and the socially excluded, as well as workers in small and medium-sized enterprises, in the informal economy, in the rural sector and in self-employment (art. 5, h).

Regarding youth, the behaviour of unemployment, as well as of underemployment, informality and precarious labour insertion is quite different in terms of the internal heterogeneity that the juvenile collective itself possesses. If the single fact of being young implies a greater probability that they will be affected by these problems, in many cases this probability is reinforced and increased by other concomitant factors, such as sex, race and socio-economic level.

In that which concerns individuals with different capacities, the principle of equal opportunities and treatment in training must be considered a part of human rights. Because of this it is necessary to visualise the obstacles and discriminations that affect them as circumstances that it is necessary to recognise, interpret and work with to ensure the feasibility and sustainability of plans and programmes and to take advantage of the real circumstances in which these persons live as well as their specific competencies.

Many institutions of the region, encouraged by the ILO and Cinterfor/ILO, implemented a programme to promote standardised integration to training of people affected by this condition.

⁸ Although the participation of women in training has been increasing sustainedly, it is still insufficient and is fundamentally characterised by double horizontal and vertical segmentation, which implies concentration in a small number of occupational profiles but also in actions of lower quality or level, of short duration and that do not enable, even in feminized areas, access to the new technologies and/or decision making positions.

Training for the informal economy

Although it is inscribed in the relationship between training, decent work, equity and inclusion because of the significance it has acquired in the configuration of the new employment and training reality, the informal economy merits special attention. It is extremely difficult to provide a precise definition of what the informal sector is or in broader terms the informal economy. This is because there is no generalized consensus regarding its definition, both conceptual and operational, and that therefore in different countries the informal sector is considered and measured in different ways.

In the ILO report prepared for discussion of the subject of the informal economy in the International Labour Conference of 2002, stress is laid on the lack of criteria shared among countries at the time statistics are gathered on employment in the informal economy area.

That report sustains, for example, that in some of the latest data published by the organisation on employment in the informal sector, information is included on countries that use as a criterion to define the informal sector that of non registered enterprises (exclusively, or in combination with other criteria such as the small size of the enterprise), and of countries that, differently from the former, use the criterion of the small size of the productive units (exclusively or in combination with others such as non registered enterprises).

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, the ILO publishes data on the structure of non agricultural employment, and for that purpose considers the informal sector to be composed of self-employed workers (except for administrative, professional and technical workers) and family workers, domestic service and employment in micro-enterprises (enterprises of up to five workers).

Perhaps it is more interesting in a study of this type to analyse, not so much the different operational definitions of the informal sector, but basically what features the workers of the informal economy have in common, what risks and contingencies all individuals who carry out their productive activities in this environment must face, the enormous diversity of activities and productive units that make up the informal sector is simultaneously recognizing.

In this sense, the ILO has sustained that what the workers of the informal economy have in common is that they are not recognised or protected within legal and regulatory frameworks. However, it stresses that this is not the only feature that defines informal activity. The main and most important one is that informal workers and entrepreneurs are characterised by their high level of vulnerability.

The subject of vulnerability, that appears frequently in the literature on the informal sector, is intimately linked to security and social representation, which its members often lack.

In terms of the security/insecurity of informal activity, the ILO has identified seven dimensions that appear with particular significance.

- Labour market security: refers to good labour opportunities that arise from a high level of employment, the result of suitable macroeconomic policies.
- Employment security: protection against arbitrary dismissals and, in general, labour laws that regulate hiring and firing.
- Occupational security: involves the opportunity for insertion in a vocational segment and the possibility of developing a sense of belonging as a consequence of vocational enhancement.
- Safety on the job: possibility of being protected against labour accidents and vocational diseases.
- Security for the development of competencies: opportunities to maintain and develop vocational skills and knowledge by means of lifelong training actions.
- Security of income: involves the possibility of accessing adequate income for the worker and his/her family.
- Security of representation: possibility to exercise the right to collective representation of workers and employers through independent organisations, as well as the right to collective bargaining and the social dialogue.

The ILO intends to analyse labour in the informal economy in terms of the vulnerability and lack of security described above, fundamentally on the basis of the deficit of decent work. And this perspective may be seen reflected in the new Recommendation 195, where it is established that *“Members should identify human resources development, education, training and lifelong learning policies which: d) address the challenge of transforming activities in the informal economy into decent work fully integrated into mainstream economic life; policies and programmes should be developed with the aim of creating decent jobs and opportunities for education and training, as well as validating prior learning and skills gained to assist workers and employers to move into the formal economy;”* (art. 3, d).

Besides there being differences in the conceptualisation of the informal sector, there are also different positions, or different stresses, regarding its origin, the forces that lead to its form and growth. When analysing the evolution of the diagnoses and interpretations of the informal sector, at least three perspectives may be identified to address the subject. The first one does so mainly from the logic of survival: in countries where there is not enough work for everyone in the modern sector of the economy and where unemployment insurance (and social protection in broader terms) is inexistent or insufficient, people seek their own solutions, producing or selling something that allows them to obtain some income to live.

Another position stresses productive decentralisation. As a result of globalisation and the international division of labour, modern enterprises have needed to have flexible (due to demand instability) and efficient production systems. Production process decentralisation allows a

reduction in costs of production and transfers to outside the enterprise the problems and risks of the changes in the demand of the products produced by it.

In the particular case of Latin America and the Caribbean, there are authors who, when addressing the subject of productive decentralisation, sustain that the insertion of national economies in the global market developed the “maquila” as a way to dislocate activities that require low levels of qualifications. They also add that a part of the work done in the home is located in the last links of this chain.

A third conceptual logic or approach places the stress on the operation outside the legal framework. The stress on the regulatory perspective involves the risk of assimilating the informality with the illegality, when in point of fact this occurs both in the formal and the informal sector and in reality what predominate are the grey areas in matters of legality/illegality.

Finally, it is necessary to highlight, particularly in the case of the American continent, the relationship between informal economy, poverty and female labour. As ECLAC indicates, the region has not advanced in the process of overcoming poverty. On the contrary, it has been stagnant: between 1999 and 2002 the poverty rate diminished by only 0.4% and extreme poverty grew by 0.3%, encompassing 18.8% of the regional population. The evolution of poverty and indigence was characterised by relatively small variations. Moreover, the situation of poverty and indigence systematically affects more women than men. If persons who have no income of their own are analysed, in poor and not poor households, what stands out is that this affects mainly women. The percent of women of more than 15 years of age with no income of their own exceeds amply that of men. In urban areas 45% of women lack any income of their own, compared to 21% in the case of men. Regardless, it is interesting to note that women who do have an income of their own contribute significantly to the reduction of poverty of households. The data available show that, without the female contribution, poverty would increase by more than 10 percentage points in several countries of the region.⁹

In the year 2001, 49.7% of female employment was informal, while for men this figure was 43.8%. Inside the informal economy, in turn, women were concentrated in the most unstable, unprotected and precarious categories wherefore their insertion conditions were even lower than those of males. Moreover, they are more inclined to work in small scale economic units where their contribution is invisible and they are almost not taken into account. Frequently they work in agricultural activities that in many countries of the region are not even considered within statistical systems. Inside the informal sector *work at home, self employment and domestic labour* are proportionately the most important categories in the total of working women. *Work at home* offers women the best possibility for them to make their domestic and family responsibilities compatible with paid activities. To the traditional tasks of the textile and garment sector, the new technological services (telephone sales, consultancies, Internet, etc.) are now added, as well as the outsourced productive manufacturing phases, the

⁹ ECLAC. Panorama Social de América Latina 2002-2003. Santiago de Chile, 2003.

low level “maquila” work and other services linked to transferring to the productive area many domestic activities, which generates a highly heterogeneous spectrum both in terms of conditions and pace and in educational and training requirements. In the activities that require greater technological intensity and qualifications conditions are better, there being for instance a written contract, benefits and social security payments similar to those of the workers of the enterprise and competitive pay as regards the local market. For women *outsourcing* is also work *in the home*, which means that the limits between paid work and domestic occupations become diffuse. The men, however, work in the main in a special workplace, although it may be close to their home, and normally they have an assistant which makes the workday shorter. *Self employed women* were those who point-blank led the growth, generating 9 out of every 10 new jobs for women. In sectors where less qualifications are required, conditions of greater instability and social disprotection are concentrated. In general, contracts are verbal and do not contemplate any kind of social protection or minimum income and pay is by the piece or as piecework and cash on delivery. Furthermore, *domestic labour* (the category which receives the lowest levels of pay and social protection in the informal sector) accounts for 22% of new jobs for women generated between 1990 and 1998. Because of this, in the same manner as the other dimensions and strategies of training policies, in terms of the informal economy, the incorporation of the gender perspective is fundamental to improve quality and relevance.

Support strategies for workers and enterprises of the informal economy tend to include a series of actions usually designed for different collectives and productive units that are a part of it same, among which the ILO has pointed to a) support for productive development of the micro-enterprises of the sector; b) development of social welfare of workers in the informal sector, that includes above all programmes against poverty, fundamentally designed for particularly disadvantaged collectives in the labour market (here there is a predominance of programmes that target women and/or young people of low income and scant qualifications); and c) actions on the regulatory framework (trade, labour, tax and property rights legislation are particularly relevant). In turn, the programmes that support enterprises of the informal sector tend to have three types of components: credit, advisory services and training.

If the analysis is centred on training for micro-undertakings of the informal economy, it can be shown that the methodology usually tends to begin with a diagnosis of the original or starting situation of the micro-enterprise, its lacks and possibilities. What is sought is both the personal development of the micro-entrepreneur and that of the undertaking as a whole, often through workshops adapted to different economic needs and activities.

Training and skills development courses and workshops for these collectives tend to encompass subjects such as accounting, finance and marketing, technical-productive skills development (in the area involved as, for example, leather, garments, metalmechanics): entrepreneurial management skills, among others.

The components mentioned above show differences in the levels of importance according to the type of micro-undertaking that is being considered. This type of courses are above all impor-

tant and useful in the case of micro-enterprises that are closest to the modern sector of the economy, those that are more stable and consolidated. In the case of net subsistence undertakings they are not as suitable since many, if not the majority, of their members and directors do not have the competencies needed to incorporate this type of knowledge.¹⁰ It is due to this that it is so important to strengthen, prior to initiating the type of skills development actions mentioned above, the key competencies of employability and citizenship (reading and writing, applied mathematics, communications and social skills, etc.) of the individuals taking part (or who could potentially take part) in micro-undertakings in the area of the informal economy.

Thus the close link between training for work in the informal economy and education of adults and the retention and quality of basic education in the formal educational system emerges clearly. This fact is recognized and addressed by Recommendation 195 when, as was mentioned in the previous point, it includes among the persons with specific needs “*workers in small and medium-sized enterprises, of the informal economy, in the rural sector and in self-employment.*” (art. 5, h).

¹⁰ In various ILO empirical studies on training for the informal economy this fact is pointed out. For further information the ILO series on Informal Economy of the Infocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability may be consulted at the following address:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/informal/publ/index.htm>

III

LIFELONG LEARNING AND OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE CONFIGURATION OF TRAINING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

3.1 Developing lifelong learning: challenges for education and training

The continuous and rapid succession of changes in the configuration of work and in the contents of occupations exceeds the traditional response provided by training by way of courses with a certain beginning and end and certifications of permanent validity.

Thus the need to learn throughout life or, to say it in a different way, to have mechanisms available that facilitate permanent access to training opportunities, is an unavoidable requirement for any system of training and labour skills development.

To refer to the dual function of education and training for employment is equivalent to referring both to a proactive role and to a role that operates in favour of equality. While the former involves developing knowledge and the productive and social capacities of individuals, organisations and the economy as a whole so that they can increase their productivity and competitiveness, to take advantage of the potential opportunities of globalisation, of more open markets, etc., the latter aims at developing the capacity to obtain/improve the income and opportunities of individuals and undertakings that are in a more disadvantaged situation in the labour market.

Although both functions are complementary, in both lifelong learning is an unavoidable condition that poses to both to the formal education system and to the various vocational training systems highly important challenges. Within the latter, the greatest is probably the generation of open supplies and continuous access to facilitate not only initial training but also permanent updating. But there is also the increasingly felt challenge to adapt and update the contents of curricula and the certifications offered to the new labour profiles arising as a consequence of transformations in the productive world and the new reality of employment.

The multiplication of learning possibilities offered by society outside a school environment and the notion of specialisation in the traditional sense, are being replaced in many modern sectors of activity by evolving competency and adaptability. If before it was enough to transmit certain technical lessons and certain manual skills so that individuals could take on a job that was waiting for them, now it is necessary to deliver a whole range of employability competen-

cies that were previously not sufficiently stressed. Moreover, the change in current educational practices should contemplate the possibility of preparing individuals to follow non linear vocational careers and for the contingency of having to reorient their careers several times throughout their working life.

These trends that reinforce the concept of employability, that is so central to this Recommendation, also make it necessary to conceive training as an action to develop human resources and training throughout life similar to each and all the competency development activities carried out by individuals, regardless of the way they are accessed, the educational modality or the institution.

Differently to some decades ago, when the dominating trend was towards specialisation, today it seems necessary to be able to count on a series of basic cross-sectional and attitudinal competencies that enable individuals, both to act in work environments with a lesser degree of control, and in unforeseen situations that must be resolved on the go, as well as to “surf” in a difficult and competitive labour market. The development of abilities such as initiative, creativity, entrepreneurial capacity, patterns of relationship and co-operation must be accompanied by the new technical competencies required that are relatively less specific than in the past: languages, computer science, logical reasoning, capacity for analysis and interpretation of various codes,

etc. Regarding the technological speciality, updating is, increasingly, acquired on the job itself and some enterprises prefer to take charge of them.

Learning in the workplace as well as self-learning, facilitated by the opportu-

KEY DEFINITIONS IN RECOMMENDATION 195

- a) the expression “lifelong learning” encompasses all learning activities undertaken throughout life for the development of competencies and qualifications;
- b) the term “competencies” covers the knowledge, skills and know-how applied and mastered in a specific context;
- c) the term “qualifications” means a formal expression of the vocational or professional abilities of a worker which is recognized at international, national or sectoral levels, and
- d) the term “employability” relates to portable competencies and qualifications that enhance an individual’s capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work, to progress within the enterprise and between jobs, and to cope with changing technology and labour market conditions.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

facilitating recognition and certification of competencies.

The following training institutions carrying out actions regarding recognition of competencies acquired as a result of experience, usually known as “Certification of Competencies” may be mentioned: SENA of Colombia with its National System for Training for Work, SENAI of Brazil with its System of Certification of Persons, SENCE in Chile with its work in Chile Califica, the INA in Costa Rica with its area of Certification, INFOTEP of the Dominican Republic with its occupational certification actions.

TOWARDS A SINGLE ROAD TO PROGRESS IN EDUCATIONAL LIFE

Several countries are already implementing agreements to establish a chain of progression in educational life.

In Colombia the SENA has agreements with establishments of Middle Technical Education to facilitate the acquisition of competencies by students with the quality of SENA programmes. In Costa Rica the University for work programme has facilitated the continuation of higher level studies by graduates of INA technical training. In Brazil, the Law on Basic Guidelines for Education is planning recognition of competencies to continue studies in formal education. In Chile work is proceeding in pilot applications to establish "foot bridges" between the different levels of education in specific occupational sectors.

nities provided by Information and Communication Technologies, spreads rapidly, requiring important changes in methodologies and training practices.

Therefore, if individuals are not trained exclusively in study centres—but also do so in their homes and workplaces—the responsibility for training is shared by the training entities, entrepreneurs, governments and the individuals themselves (together with the organisations in which they participate and that represent them). Consequently, tripartite management is revitalised, new forms of training management begin to arise, and it becomes a priority to provide means for

people to self-manage their labour and vocational development processes.

Vocational training institutions find in lifelong learning a new paradigm for dimensioning their work. Indeed, it used to be possible to fully measure action by the number of courses opened and the space offered to participants who, with few exceptions, never returned. Now the door must be opened for options of re-entry, updating, improvement, dovetailing with formal education and recognition of certifications in the labour market.

3.2 Lifelong learning in Recommendation 195 and the UNESCO and ILO perspective

Recommendation 195 refers to "lifelong learning" defined as "*encompasses all learning activities undertaken throughout life for the development of competencies and qualifications*" (art. 2, a) and, as has already been seen, recognises education and training as a right for all which the social partners of the different countries must make an effort to ensure.¹¹ Therefore, given the importance of the development of lifelong learning, we shall try to address the guiding principles of strategies and actions in the areas most involved in the subject: education (formal and non formal) and the world at work. In order to do so we shall dovetail the proposals of Recommendation 195 with the perspective of two recognized international organisations: the ILO and UNESCO.

¹¹ In the process of producing and correcting the text of this Recommendation (92nd International Labour Conference) the Member States interchanged various definitions of "*lifelong learning*", "*competencies*" and also "*decent work*" revealing various positions on the scope of those concepts and aiming at clarifying the text of the new recommendation (ILO, 2004).

We must highlight the importance of basic and initial education as a basis on which future knowledge and learning throughout the life of individuals shall be built. It is the foremost and fundamental element of the lifelong learning process since it is that which inculcates the “base qualifications” such as literacy, elementary calculations, civism, social competencies, the capacity to “learn to learn” and the readiness to collaborate to solve problems. Therefore, it contributes to develop the capacity of an individual to find and retain a job and also should aim at comprehension, from an early age, of the duties and rights of citizens.

The importance of training prior to employment is enshrined in Recommendation 195, when it establishes that the Members should “*recognise their responsibility for education and pre-employment training and, in co-operation with the social partners, improve access for all to enhance employability and facilitate social inclusion*” (art. 8, a).

Regarding the ILO and UNESCO perspective, both sustain that it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate teaching from training, especially because the notion of employment for an entire life is being substituted by the need to learn throughout life. Moreover, both seek to ensure that their guidelines and strategies in that regard arise from consultations between States that are Members of both Organisations, federations of professional associations, organisations of employers and workers and non governmental organisations.

Regarding technical and vocational teaching and training in the 21st century, UNESCO’s concern is centred on technical and vocational teaching – as an integral part of the world initiative of Education for All-, while the ILO stresses training for employment, decent work and the welfare of workers in the context of the World Employment Programme.¹² However, a large number of coincidences and similarities in the proposals of both entities can be noticed as regards the main guidelines and strategies that must guide training and education policies the world over.

In the first place, keeping in mind that UNESCO uses the expression “technical and vocational teaching” to encompass all aspects of the educational process, what stands out is the need to establish new relations between education, the world at work and the community in general. In this framework, technical and vocational teaching “should be a part of a system of learning throughout life adapted to the needs of each country and to world technological progress.”

In the second place, the acquiescence of UNESCO and the ILO in that lifelong education should not be considered an expense but rather an investment and that the government should assume primary responsibility to invest in basic education, is reflected in Recommendation 195 when it proposes that “*realization of lifelong learning should be based on the explicit commit-*

¹² These contributions come from the contents of a UNESCO/ILO publication that contains the main policy statements of these two specialised agencies of the United Nations system: the *Revised recommendation regarding technical and vocational teaching (2001)* approved by the UNESCO General Conference at its 31st meeting in 2001 and the *Conclusions regarding training and development of human resources* approved by the International Labour Conference at its 88th period of sessions in the year 2000.

ment by governments by investing and creating the conditions to enhance education and training at all levels; by enterprises in training their employees; and by individuals in developing their competencies and careers” (art. 4, b.)

The ILO emphasizes that the growth of investments in training could be an objective shared by the public and private sector. In that regard, UNESCO points out that development and expansion of technical and vocational teaching as lifelong training financed by public or private funds, both within and without the formal school system and in the framework of learning throughout life, should be a priority objective of all educational strategies for which it is necessary to establish policies aimed at improving technical and vocational teaching structures.

On the other hand, highlighting the importance of lifelong training, the ILO emphasises the need to guarantee that qualifications and competencies of individuals be kept up to date and improved as a result of job changes, technological change and changes in requirements for qualifications. Moreover, it stresses personal development as an objective of lifelong education, as well as the vocational life of workers, increases in productivity and income and social equity.

Both the ILO and UNESCO (as also many other national and international agencies) point to education and training of high quality as powerful instruments to improve general social and economic conditions and to prevent and fight against social exclusion and discrimination, especially in aspects involving the employability of individuals.

The ILO and UNESCO also agree in considering that the feasibility of strategies that foster lifelong education is linked to the existence of technical and vocational teaching programmes that not only aspire to provide scientific knowledge but that they do so with technical flexibility and aiming at the development of a core of basic competencies and generic skills needed for a rapid adaptation to the dynamics of constant vocational progress. To that is added the importance of acquiring a sense of vocational values and ethics and attitudes that prepare the pupil to be an autonomous and responsible citizen.

Both the focus of training throughout life and permanent learning are sustained by the need to maintain competitiveness in a world of changing products and technologies, the rapid obsolescence of knowledge, the devaluation of academic diplomas, the valuation of learning in the various environments in which individuals operate and the fight against unemployment.

The development of permanent learning is related to the establishment of dovetailing mechanisms (open and flexible) between technical and vocational teaching and the higher education programmes, the availability of various programme schemes (full time, part time, distance education), permits and facilities to train people who work, qualified teaching, administrative and advisory staff, and incentives for research regarding technical and vocational teaching, especially in terms of the possibilities that lifelong learning provides.

On the other hand, at the national level the preference for lifelong education implies an increase in the diffusion of information on programmes in place and the adoption of measures

with the participation of employers, professional associations and other important social partners, keeping in mind that there is no universal model of investments in training. The measures for the promotion of education and lifelong learning are an issue for social dialogue that, by means of collective agreements, bipartite and tripartite conventions, etc., facilitate the management of resources, the creation of qualifications frameworks, quality management and the achievement of objectives of equity in training and education.¹³

3.3 Competency-based training

The term “labour competency” refers, nowadays, to one of the most cited and recurrently analysed innovations in vocational training in the region of the Americas in the last five years.

New programmes or updating of those already in place that concentrate on the development of productive and social capacities verifiable in the context of labour have been implemented in one way or another throughout the continent, beyond the concern to merely transfer knowledge or develop skills.

At present, statements have been made by different actors and stakeholders regarding this subject; this has allowed the identification of several groups of initiatives that are being carried out by the private sector, the Ministries of Labour and Education and the Vocational Training Institutions. Several characteristics predominate in those initiatives that are clearly visible in the text of Recommendation 195:

- They are the result of public policies expressly devoted to vocational training and the development of human resources.
- They involve the participation of employers and workers in the definition of occupational profiles.
- They define training programmes that tend to facilitate access to and to remedy situations of unemployment due to lack of qualifications.
- They involve the use of new funds or financing funds already available to improve the supply of training.
- They tend towards the definition of frames of reference on qualifications, which are available for occupational areas, several groups of occupations and there is even progress made towards the definition of national frameworks.
- They include competencies centred on the conception and undertaking of new businesses, rather than the mere vision of a salaried job.

¹³ See chapter IV on social dialogue and vocational training.

DEFINITION OF COMPETENCIES AND PARTICIPATION OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERS

Competency-based training activated the establishment of arrangements with the participation of employers and workers in several countries.

Such is the case of the sector desks of SENA in Colombia, of which employers, workers and other productive and educational forces are members; of INA in Costa Rica with the establishment of Consultative Liaison Committees; of SENAI in Brazil where the Technical Sector Committees are organs that draw up the profiles sought in the productive sector.

Recommendation 195 defines the term competencies as “*the knowledge, skills and know-how applied and mastered in a specific context*” (art. 2, b). With greater or lesser approximations, different definitions of labour competency are to be found as adopted by the vocational training institutions when starting their programme development processes based on the concept of competencies. Many of the recent pedagogical innovations have come from applying or at least debating on competencies in the countries of the region.

In some cases innovation has been attained, for example, in the pedagogical area by incorporating strategies such as training by solving problems proposed as a project. In other cases a group of competencies that are of special value in performing a job has been identified, but they have no “hard” core based on skill or operation: rather they are in the area of conducts required to access and be successful on the job. These are known as employability competencies or key competencies.

There is a long series of conceptual contributions, although there is no universal definition of “key competency” (*core skill*). References to this concept are found by using attributes such as “generic”, “cross-sectional,” “key”, “central,” “essential” or “basic.” Primarily they are located on the axis of worker behaviour and allow him or her to get successfully involved in occupational and social life, benefiting not only the worker but society as a whole. Moreover, this group of competencies includes the capacity to permanently update knowledge and skills to keep abreast of continuous and rapid changes.

Said competencies facilitate the adaptation of the worker when faced with changes in technologies used, the organisation of work or the need to assume new responsibilities that require the development of specific skills. They are strongly connected to features of a personal or social nature such as communications skills, capacity for teamwork, self-esteem, critical thinking, creative problem solving and methodologies of work with computer technologies.

When identifying new competencies the effectiveness of dialogue mechanisms and collective construction mechanisms among workers and employers has been tested. No more testing is needed regarding the fact that it is the worker that may better explain and understand the daily problems of his actions. Therefore, decent work is also that which allows group identification, creation and improvement of processes and results obtained. That implies aiming at more flexible

training, the recognition of the different places where learning takes place and the identification of availabilities of time of the individuals who are to learn. Therefore, the identification of new competencies required for labour insertion makes the subsequent training highly effective.

Competency-based training or labour competencies is understood to be the process of developing curriculum designs, teaching materials, activities and practices in the classroom designed to strengthen a package of knowledge, skills, aptitudes and attitudes that the individual combines and uses to solve problems related to his or her occupational performance, according to criteria or standards from the vocational field. In that regard, it can be established that in Latin America and the Caribbean there are many experiences developed on this theme by various institutions.

NEW PROGRAMMES OF COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING

Practically all the institutions that provide or co-ordinate vocational training actions in Latin America and the Caribbean have reformed all or part of their training supply to involve the competency approach.

To be mentioned among others are HEART Trust/NTA in Jamaica, INTECAP in Guatemala, INSAFORP in El Salvador, INFOTEP in the Dominican Republic, SENA in Colombia, SENATI of Peru, SENAI of Brazil, SENCE in Chile.

In the Cinterfor/ILO website there is an observatory of experiences and samples of materials developed (www.cinterfor.org.uy)

Competency certification

Thus as it is clear that capacities and knowledge are acquired and developed by doing at work, the lifelong learning perspective has highlighted the need to create mechanisms that recognise and value such acquired knowledge. To do this systems have been developed that foresee the recognition and certification of said occupational capacities. Because their work is so important these mechanisms need to be transparent and objective.

The development of capacities is a unique opportunity to update knowledge on training and to renew the teaching strategies needed to stimulate competencies considered to be “core”. The certification of those capacities was commonly issued at the end of the teaching/learning process, once the participant had successfully passed all the evaluation tests and examinations. However, this conception, which is very close to the idea of training that ruled during the time the standardised production model was in force, does not agree with the finding that experience on the job is a source of learning.

The first attempts in Latin America and the Caribbean to recognise prior learning occurred with the so-called “validation” processes which concentrated on the evaluation of occupational capacities. Many national vocational training institutions carried out validation experiences during the seventies and eighties and most of them still do carry out actions of this type. Several

Ministries of Labour and Education in the region have also promoted the creation in some countries of instruments of public recognition of occupational capacities that facilitate the interchange between occupational supply and demand and provide greater transparency to working relations.

The government sector has shown an interest in playing a key role in the regulation of training and certification, and in many cases, that has been reflected in its active participation in the promotion of discussions and projects at the national level on training and certification systems. The motivations of the public sector can be summarized in the need to increase the quality and relevance of training and to make the industrial apparatus more competitive; improve the transparency in conditions in which the proliferation of training suppliers and different types of certificates make it difficult to establish the real competencies transferred to the training participants; and also to improve access to training and recognition of occupational capacities acquired at work.¹⁴

According to Recommendation 195, *“The Members should develop a national qualifications framework to facilitate lifelong learning, assist enterprises and employment agencies to match skills demand with supply, guide individuals in their choice of training and career and facilitate the recognition of prior learning and previously acquired skills.”* (art. 5, e). Moreover, this new Recommendation emphasises that *“Such an assessment methodology should be objective, non-discriminatory and linked to standards* (art. 11, 2). *The national framework should include a credible system of certification which will ensure that skills are portable and recognised across sectors, industries, enterprises and educational institutions* (art. 11, 3) [...]

CERTIFICATION AND RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCIES

Certification requires evaluation of the competencies of the worker. Previously the candidate should have become aware of the competency profiles and the requirements of practical performance and knowledge that he or she needs in the occupational area in which they would be certified. Such evaluation presumes gathering evidence on their practical performance and basic and applied knowledge required in their job. The result of the evaluation is compared to the occupational profile and a decision is made as to whether or not they meet the performance needs established therein. If necessary, the candidate is provided information and facilities to access training programmes that allow them to complete their competencies and access new opportunities of evaluation and certification.

Besides pioneering experiences such as that of the INA in Costa Rica, the following can be mentioned among others: INFOTEP in the Dominican Republic, SENA in Colombia, SENAI in Brazil. Diverse experiences of a sectoral nature have also been carried out in the hotel, civil construction, mining, computer science areas in several countries of the region.

¹⁴ In these cases, the usefulness of the labour competency certificate is derived from its reliability and its capacity to represent real capacities shown by workers, regardless of the way in which they were acquired and with a high significance for occupational practice, which allows their possible employers to clearly understand the competencies involved.

Special provisions should be designed to ensure recognition and certification of skills and qualifications for migrant workers (art. 12).

Although certification has existed in the American region since the seventies,¹⁵ there still is no massive development of mechanisms to accredit learning arising from experience. What should, however, be clarified is that increasingly there have been new experiences of certification related to training institutions, with management of human resources carried out by many enterprises and with employment and training policies that are established by the Ministries of Labour.

Because of the role the State must play in the definition of quality levels and of the ways that enable the establishment of national training frameworks, an institutional arrangement must be in place that regulates the modalities, levels, means of access, definition of standards, equivalencies and other aspects needed to create scenarios of lifelong learning. That role is supplemented by training institutions that are efficient in providing training programmes and in their evaluation.

On the other hand, several enterprises or entrepreneurial groups are advancing labour competencies certification and training processes to enhance their conditions of productivity or to meet international standards usually associated with the security of individuals. In the first case, we have enterprises of the metalmechanics, petrochemical, automobile and pharmaceutical sectors, for example, that have developed labour competency models and have defined profiles in which workers can be certified to improve their possibilities of occupational mobility. The existence of competency certification processes is on very good terms with the execution of skills development programmes and with the definition of the occupational careers of workers.

Training and certification of labour competencies are also important for the labour sector. In the milieu of the information and knowledge society a certificate is an excellent means to assign a value to the knowledge and learning possessed and applied by the worker, beyond his or her academic achievements and assigning a value to their job experience. It can be an excellent instrument to guide efforts in matters of skills development and also to make effective the trend that is in place to include vocational training among the subjects that can influence bargaining. In such cases good vocational training leading to a labour competency certificate is highly appreciated.

We must also stress that certification of skills solves an information problem, making observable to potential employers the quality and quantity of the skills of workers. However, certification requires decisive institutional participation on the part of enterprises, workers and trade unions, in the design of the contents and mechanisms of accreditation.

Certifying labour competency is more than a verification process based on an evaluation: the recognition of competencies is not very useful if it does not become the basis for the workers to recognise their training needs as well and they are offered training options to overcome them. It

¹⁵ Already in 1975, Cinterfor/ILO carried out a project on occupational certification in which it was defined as: “*formal recognition of occupational qualifications of workers regardless of the way in which they were acquired.*”

is thus a matter of guaranteeing elements such as reliability, impartiality and validity, but also the availability of appropriate teaching environments, the connection with enterprises and knowledge of evaluation.

Regarding the competency certification experiences in the Latin American and Caribbean region, various institutions operate units specialised in providing certification services, by means of which competencies demonstrated by an individual are recognised, regardless of the way in which they were acquired. Moreover, various experiences of “occupational validation” have been implemented, in which “banks of evidence” are used to detect the capacities of the candidates regarding a standard, as for example the training programmes of the entities. Certificates of vocational skill are then awarded to the individuals passing the tests and complementation courses are provided for the skills that are needed.

National Qualifications Frameworks

The concept of national qualifications frameworks (NQF) is of relatively recent use and its adoption reflects the establishment of a national policy in which all achievements of an individual in terms of learning are recognised as having been obtained through education or outside of it, in a formal environment or an informal environment, but that in any case have been duly evaluated and recognised by means of a certificate.¹⁶

The concept of NQF is directly related to the purpose of lifelong learning that encompasses all learning activities undertaken throughout life in order to develop competencies and qualifications. One of its major benefits is to provide a referent for lifelong learning and the progression in occupational and social life. This definition includes all modalities of learning as sources for active citizenship, for social inclusion and for labour insertion.

On the other hand, the adoption of an NQF indicates that the country has a single system to express the competencies of its workers and that it accepts putting formal educational levels on an equal footing with competency levels. Normally countries that have an NQF express the capacities of their people in terms of levels of competency. Such levels can correspond to a stage of formal education and represent to the individual possessing them a certain combination of knowledge, skills and occupational capacities obtained at that educational level, or recognised by means of a certification process in which experience is included as a source of competency.

This type of initiative is one of the novel aspects of Recommendation 195 where the development of national qualifications frameworks is explicitly promoted as well as their necessary adaptation to technological change, the labour market and regional and local differences. It is thus

¹⁶ In Recommendation 195 “qualifications” are defined as “*the formal expression of vocational skills of the worker, recognised at the international, national or sector levels.*” (art. 2, c).

THE LEVELS OF COMPETENCY USED IN THE NTAs OF BARBADOS, JAMAICA AND TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

LEVEL 1. INSERTION. APPRENTICE, SUPERVISED WORKER

Includes competency in a significant range of occupational activities, performed in various contexts. They go from simple and routine operations to other more complex ones and not routine, that involve a certain degree of individual responsibility and autonomy, in which co-operation in a group or team is often requested. Requires considerable supervision, particularly during the first months, later evolving towards autonomy.

LEVEL 2. UNSKILLED LABOURER. INDEPENDENT SPECIALISED TECHNICIAN

Recognised competency in a broad range of technical and complex occupational activities, performed in various contexts, with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Often requested to assume responsibility for the work of others and assign resources. The individual is capable of working on his/her own, has skills to solve problems, plan, design and supervise.

LEVEL 3. TECHNICIAN / SUPERVISOR

Recognised competency in a broad range of technical and complex occupational activities, performed in various contexts, with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Is often requested to assume responsibility for the work of others and assign resources. The individual is capable of working on his/her own, has skills to solve problems, plan, design and supervise.

NIVEL 4. CRAFTS MASTER / EXECUTIVE / ENTREPRENEUR

Competency involving the application of a significant range of fundamental principles and complex techniques throughout a broad and unpredictable diversity of contexts. Substantial personal autonomy and frequent responsibility for the work of others and for assigning important resources, as well as personal capacity for analysis, diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation.

LEVEL 5. GRADUATE, PROFESSIONAL AND/OR EXECUTIVE

Capacity to exercise personal professional responsibility for the design, development or improvement of a product, process, system or service. The certificate recognizes technical and leadership competencies at the highest level and can be awarded to those who have occupied positions of the highest professional responsibility and have made significant contributions to the promotion and practice of their profession.

established that “*measures should be adopted, in consultation with the social partners and using a national qualifications framework, to promote the development, implementation and financing of a transparent mechanism for the assessment, certification and recognition of skills, including prior learning and previous experience, irrespective of the countries where they were acquired and whether acquired formally or informally*” (art. 11, 1).

The NQF, besides serving the interests of enterprises and workers because it facilitates lifelong education, helps enterprises and employment agencies to harmonise demand with supply and guide individuals in the choice of training and a career. Therefore, this framework should include appropriate competency standards that are vocational, transferable, broad and linked to industry, adopted by the social partners, and that reflect the qualifications that the economy and public institutions need, as well as the qualifications and competencies acquired, regardless of how or where they were acquired (formal and informal education and training, professional experience and training on the job).

The NQF are, primarily, a concept that is in the throes of being created in the region. Many countries initiated the modernisation of their vocational educational programmes guided by the labour competency approach, rather than towards the creation of a NQF. Notwithstanding, among the strengths encountered in the different experiences, the social dialogue with the stakeholders, employers and workers gives validity and reliability to the advances in matters of training and certification. To that must be added the change in the supply of the national training institutions to resort to the competency approach as a referent for the modernisation of programmes and the construction of the NQF.¹⁷

To be mentioned among the critical points in the development of qualifications frameworks is the need for co-ordination between the different actors, as also the connection between local efforts and/or sector efforts and national training policies. This must not disregard the importance of the social dialogue in the area of training and education and the development of the technical capacity of the Ministries of labour and national institutions.

Perhaps the most complete experiences on the way to building NQF in the Latin American and Caribbean region are the national vocational institutions of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, that have embarked jointly on training a competent labour force, by means of the establishment of vocational qualifications (national in scope) on the basis of competencies. The vocational qualifications based on competencies, developed on the basis of tripartite initiatives, are compared internationally to make sure that the final product agrees with the requirements of industry. These institutions also co-operate to achieve mutual recognition of their respective

¹⁷ Although this perspective has impregnated practically all the institutional structure of training, the production of new training programmes and teaching materials still have to be consolidated. Nonetheless, the activities undertaken by the vocational training institutions of the region to train its teachers, reproduce its programmes and re-initiate the dialogue –on occasion weakened– with workers and employers are an important advance.

skills, competencies, qualifications and ultimately arrive at the formulation of vocational qualifications for the entire Caribbean (CVQ).

The TVET community of the Caribbean has also developed significant experience and demonstrated capacity to accredit training programmes and institutions, evaluate and certify individuals, including the evaluation of competencies acquired as a result of experience. An effective dovetailing of the system with the different levels of employment, based on certified levels of competency, really motivates workers and contributes to the development of human capital as well as of individual and regional competitiveness. The national training authorities provide to countries and to the region flexibility to respond on a national scale facilitating training and re-qualification to the extent that new occupations arise or that present occupations and competencies become obsolete.

3.4 Quality management in training

Concern for quality is as rich and ancient as vocational training; said otherwise, quality has been of constant concern in training activity. Different moments in the stress laid on the subject throughout the history of vocational training in the region can probably be found.

In Recommendation 195, the importance of *“including quality assurance in the public system and promoting its development within the private training market and evaluating the outcomes of education and training”*(art. 14, c) is stressed. Moreover, a call is issued *“to develop quality standards for trainers”*, and actions co-ordinated with the various social partners are suggested (art.14, d).

The American region shows today a wide range of experiences in applying quality management in public and private training institutions. Motivated by an interest to be able to count on a mechanism that serves management, such as the application of ISO standards, and that they also be allowed to continue to enhance their processes, counting in turn on public recognition, the institutions have defined and documented their processes in order to facilitate consistent and quality performance.

There are already more than 250 training centres, operational units and technological development laboratories certified under quality standards. This has not only implied working with groups of teachers, technicians and executives but also an accumulation of knowledge on vocational training represented by the process manuals and by documents available on teaching / training activity. Furthermore, experiences are already being initiated on environmental management certification and social responsibility certification in national training institutions.

Several institutions have established an area within the functional structure that promotes quality assurance. Even in this perspective institutional values such as commitment, identity with vocational training and concern for the quality and user of the training are being strengthened and promulgated.

More recently an emphasis on quality by the Ministries of Labour has begun to be noted. The purpose of this emphasis is to assure the relevance and efficiency of the supply of the institutions that take part in public training programmes. Thus, the Ministry of Labour of Argentina established an area within its formal structure to deal with quality in employment and training and it is at present involved in a stage of public consultation regarding the respective quality standards especially adapted by and inspired in the ISO 9000 model. In Chile, under the leadership of SENCE, the technical skills development executing agencies that wish to take part in contests financed with public funds must be certified in quality management on the basis of NCh 2728.

Quality management centred on the definition and consistent execution of training processes has extended and continues to do so in the region; further to the training institutions and skills development agencies of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, where quality is certified, there has been a recent advance towards certification in training institutions and centres in Argentina, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.

THE INCREASING TREND TOWARDS CERTIFIED QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Quality management has been adopted in several countries under the process approach, that ISO 9000 standards work with, for the continuous improvement of vocational training.

Versions of the ISO standard, adapted to education, have been developed and approved by the respective national standardisation agencies in Argentina (Argentine standard IRAM 30000) in Chile (the INN adopted the NCh 2728), in Peru (INDECOPI adopted the guide for applying ISO 9000 in the educational sector). Furthermore in 2001 the ISO technical counsel approved the establishment of project IWA-2 "Applying ISO 9001 in education" that resulted in the approval of a guide for applying the said standard in education.

3.5 Vocational guidance and services to support training

The appeal to vocational guidance has a long history in the human resources training area, but it has been basically taken to mean an additional service and, thus, to be independent of the training process. Therefore, it could be lent or not and was circumscribed to what was vocational and to what was instrumental for seeking employment. Because of this, regarding support for the vocational option, the stress was laid on precise information on skills development and training specialities and courses and, as regards job seeking in particular, on drawing up a curriculum, reading job offer advertisements., handling selection interviews, etc. The target public prioritised children and adolescents and individuals who wished to enter the work force.

Thus, according to Recommendation 150, dated 1975, "Every Member should *gradually* extend its vocational guidance systems, including permanent information on employment, in order to ensure that complete information and guidance that is as broad as possible be made

available to all children adolescents and adults, including appropriate programmes for all the disabled”.

With the increasing participation of women in the world of work, vocational guidance became one of the central strategies to break the vocational stereotypes, to support them by re-insertion after withdrawal from the job market during long periods of time devoted to raising children and to increase their participation in training. The lessons learned and tools developed as of the decade of the seventies in the area of training women, were transferred to and fed training policies for young people and for populations affected by discriminations and vulnerability. Thus, the generation of massive skills development programmes for young people that were a feature of the last decade of the 20th century in the Latin American region, systematically included guidance actions, addressed basically to provide information on employment seeking mechanisms and skills and behaviour acquisition to enhance labour insertion opportunities. Moreover, with the first signs of the employment crisis, the development of Labour Intermediation Systems was intensified to support the rapprochement between supply and demand.

The current scenario, and that which is projected into the future both in the economic and social world and in the regional and interregional economic integration processes, is imposing new forms of labour organisation, new styles of leadership, new organisational cultures and, consequently, proposing changes in the behaviour of workers and new competencies that will be indispensable to perform in the labour milieu, that will allow new modalities of work to be faced successfully and, because of this, pose unprecedented challenges to the vocational training systems. These new competencies must at the same time contribute to the achievement of greater productivity and quality in what is produced, as well as to conquer a better quality of life, providing the principles of participation, sustainable development and equity, with special emphasis on gender equity, can become an integral part of this new ways of functioning of organisations.

All of this makes the role of vocational and labour information and guidance more intensive and complex, since it is they that must accompany and orchestrate the target population of the training during the entire process. This implies intervening at the moment prior to opting for a certain occupational area or speciality, during the development of training to enable the beneficiaries to gain knowledge of the world of work and of the behavioural and cultural patterns that govern it, and, lastly, after they have been trained, as an accompaniment to the stage of incorporation into the world of work. In this new paradigm and with more importance than ever, vocational guidance contributes in a fundamental manner to the identification and development of capacities and skills of individuals, so that they may become aware of the demands and potentialities of the labour market, reflect on their own competencies and limitations and on how they become strengths or weaknesses, in order to respond to that reality with greater possibilities of success and to make timely decisions that lead to an active, productive and

satisfactory life. However, to be able to accompany the subjects there is a need for inputs from a system of information on demand, on trends in terms of employment, technology, local development, etc. That implies insertion as a component of a comprehensive system of management of information on supply and demand, and to contribute to dovetailing the different dimensions that currently characterise training actions, in such a way that the development of individuals is approached from a comprehensive perspective. This means to leave behind actions developed in disconnected compartments and to decide to contribute to prepare individuals for a productive and organisationally dynamic context, one that is uncertain, that requires willingness and capacity for lifelong learning and a strong protagonism in the development of self-generating or associativity strategies for the generation of employment. Therefore it also becomes a process of learning so that the target population of the employment and training policies may develop competencies and exercise autonomy, behave as active and dynamic subjects in the development of their occupational projects and, thus, in insertion or re-insertion into the world of work. In this process the incorporation of the gender perspective is indispensable since it is the basis for addressing the individual, socially located and conditioned, and because the various social variables: age, educational and economic level, ethnics, rural or urban condition, etc. act on gender discriminations by increasing inequalities.

Depending on their characteristics, organisation and structure, training institutions can incorporate guidance tasks and responsibilities internally, i.e., directly, or in co-ordination or agreements with other areas of the public and private sector, with other entities and with various social partners.

Recommendation 195 makes important contributions in all these senses. In the first place and in comparison with the previous Recommendation that proposed “gradually to extend services” it proposes the need, regarding training prior to employment, to “*ensure provision of vocational, labour market and career information and guidance and employment counselling*”, and affirms its responsibility regarding the basic conditions for active citizenship and for respect of working rights when it establishes that the guidance must be “*supplemented by information on the rights and obligations of all concerned under labour-related laws and other forms of labour regulation.*” (Point III – d).

Moreover, in point VIII, it states that countries should “*assure and facilitate, throughout an individual’s life, participation in, and access to, vocational and career information and guidance*” –i.e., not only in childhood and adolescence or for those who seek employment for the first time– and joins it to placement services, to job seeking techniques and to services in support of training, among which a fundamental role is played by “*Research in human resources development*” (Point IX).

It states that all social partners have functions and responsibilities to fulfil regarding vocational information and guidance, as well as by providing training and employment services, and that these responsibilities must arise from consultation and dialogue.

Regarding the contents that guidance must provide throughout the life of individuals, it stresses “*providing information and guidance on entrepreneurship, promote entrepreneurial skills, and raise awareness among educators and trainers of the important role of enterprises, among others, in creating growth and decent jobs*” (point d). It also refers to the need to “*promote and facilitate the use of information and communication technologies*” (point b) which this Recommendation, in turn, believes are part of basic obligatory education (Chapter II, 6-2). Obviously if guidance has to promote capacities and competencies there is no doubt of its role in training, that becomes especially timely in a scenario in which employment is created by means of the capacity to undertake and strategies of collaboration and where micro-enterprises represent a significant percentage in the generation of labour opportunities. To learn how to undertake as well as technological literacy are core competencies of employability and citizenship.

Likewise, this relationship that the Recommendation establishes between information and communication technologies and guidance speaks, on the one hand, of the drastic changes in data processing and the enormous potential of the ICTs to relate and cross information – for example the supply of courses with occupational profiles that are most in demand in the market, the demand for workers who have graduated from training, trends and potentialities of local development of products or implementation of services, by persons individually or associated in micro and small enterprises, co-operatives, etc. On the other hand, it opens up a rich space in which to deploy methodologies of guidance at a distance. Through them individuals can be guided and supported in the design and management of their vocational career, by accessing updated information on training supply and on the responses provided by training, to the various requirements of personal competencies, specialisation and updating, vocational re-conversion, demand for cross-sectional competencies in other occupational families, etc.

In the last decade, the Ministries of Labour and vocational training entities of the continent have been paying increasing attention to vocational information and guidance as well as to services to bring supply more in line with demand. This valuation has been strongly promoted and facilitated by the centrality of competency-based training and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). We are dealing here with a process under development that responds to an incremental logic and with various degrees of maturity, both within the specific services provided and in systemic configuration. Slowly there is progress towards a conception of occupational guidance, not only as an instance of information prior to the choice of a vocation, but also as a tool to provide individuals with competencies and resources to better handle their labour history and do so more autonomously, increase their insertion opportunities or enhance their vocational situation. To do this different services or sub-components are dovetailed and interrelated: *Training supply, Labour demand, Labour Intermediation, Guidance per se or Training support*. Clear witness of this evolution is obtained when surfing the institutional web sites.

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Representative examples of the services that the entities of the region are implementing through the use of ICTs. The organisation responds to a cumulative and incremental logic, i.e., when there is an *Observatory* the latter includes *Articles*, and when **guidance/training support** is offered there is also **Intermediation** and information on **Supply and Demand**, and so forth.

1) Training supply

- *Availability of courses by specialities and levels, scholarships, other services.* Peru: SENATI; Uruguay: UTU; Venezuela: INCE.
- *Information on occupational profiles, competencies upon graduation, curriculum meshes, associated families, insertion characteristics:* Argentina: INET; Bolivia: INFOCAL; Brazil: SENAC.

2) Labour demand

- *Articles, documents, research, links:* Chile: INACAP; Mexico: STPS; Honduras: INFOP.
- *Labour market observatory:* El Salvador: INSAFORP.

3) Labour intermediation

- *Labour exchange:* Guatemala: INTECAP; Nicaragua: INATEC.
- *Specific attention desks:* Argentina: MTESS; Chile: SENCE.

4) Guidance/training support

- *Support materials for job seeking, for self employment and the development of entrepreneurial activities:* Colombia: SENA; Peru: SENATI.

5) Information, guidance and labour intermediation system

- *Conceptualisation, methodologies and tools for the design and management of policies for guidance and training:* Cinterfor/ILO – Gender, training, and work.
- *Electronic and/or self managing services:* Costa Rica: INA; Jamaica: HEART TRUST/NTA; Uruguay: MTSS –DINAE.

IV

SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND FORMULATION OF TRAINING POLICIES

4.1 The social dialogue and the ILO

Vocational training is a basic instrument of equal opportunity programmes and of policies of dovetailing, systematisation and certification of vocational knowledge. Since it is related to other aspects of traditional labour relations (category, productivity, competitiveness, wages, functional mobility, etc.) it is evident that it must be the object of collective bargaining and social dialogue between the actors involved. The aforesaid is without prejudice to the fact that what is perhaps the main and most important argument why training should be the object of social dialogue is that it is a right of all persons who work. As proposed, the Recommendation stresses it when it establishes that “*education and training are a right for all*” (art. 4, a.).

Despite the many difficulties involved in defining social dialogue univocally, we can state that it is an extremely broad concept and encompasses a combination of types of interaction between the actors of the labour relations systems (“social partners”). Those actors include entities such as workers’ organisations, employers’ organisations and the government and interaction between them may take place through disputes or by means of negotiation in the broad sense. The dialogue, then, includes forms such as the exchange of information, consultation, collective bargaining, concerted social action, etc. Therefore, a social dialogue experience involves the development of any of these types of interaction regardless of the specific results obtained.

Social dialogue has also been considered to be an effort to incorporate the perspective, interests and projects of the social partners in a common space for debate, under minimum rules of mutual recognition, of the perception of reciprocal need and the willingness to negotiate and agree on proposals. It must be added that “the permanence of social dialogue tends to be considered a sign of maturity and stability, since it indicates a certain degree of consensus and/or a good capacity to negotiate and manage dissent.”

According to the ILO, the main objective of social dialogue is the promotion of a consensus and the democratic participation of the main actors of the world of work. The social dialogue structures and the processes that have been developed successfully have allowed the resolution

of important economic and social issues, encouraging stability and boosting development. This allows it to be associated with a mechanism to “overcome poverty through work,” according to the annual report of the Director General of the ILO at the 91st International Labour Conference.

On the other hand, social dialogue, rather than a kind of institutionality is a process, a social experience that develops flexibly according to the social, political and cultural conditions of each type of society. Consequently, it is difficult to offer applicable recipes or exact formulas since the social partners and the governments must examine the possibilities and limits of their realities to be able to draw up policies and proposals which can provide an answer to their principal needs.

As far as the possibilities of enhancing labour conditions are concerned, the social dialogue becomes very important in the process of negotiating wages and functional mobility as well as in the ways of establishing legal obligations (laws or decrees, for example). Additionally, autonomous standards, - as for example a collective agreement between workers and employers – can be more effective and achieve greater compliance than heteronomous rules since they were approved with the consent and through the agreement of the actors to whom they would subsequently be applied.

Regarding vocational training, the social dialogue is a means to anticipate and overcome the difficulties arising from changes in the organisation of work, in working conditions and in employment models. Therefore, in most countries, training for work has become a key theme of the dialogue between the social partners and that has led to including the promotion of the social dialogue in the majority of the instruments defined and created by the ILO regarding vocational training. Recently, and in accordance with the above, dialogue has been fostered on new issues such as training in the workplace, the function of information and communication technologies in this process, and continuous education and training in the organisation of high performance work.

It must be scored that the social dialogue and the participation of the social partners in the management of the institutionality of training is at the very core of the genesis of many training entities in Latin America and the Caribbean. There are national, regional and sector institutions in this region that are administered on a bipartite (employers and workers) or tripartite (adding governments) basis, and the actors of the world of work also take an active part in the design, management and evaluation of training and employment policies from the orbit mainly of the ministries of labour in various countries.

Issues related to collective bargaining include an increase and an interchange of investments in lifelong education and training, the identification of qualifications needed to maintain internal or external employability and the creation of qualifications frameworks. Moreover, subjects such as equal opportunities and access to education and training as well as the organisation of continuing education and training are the object of social dialogue and collective bargaining.

Regarding bipartite financing of skills development by organisations of workers and employers, management and financing schemes at the sector and regional level have been increasingly

established in various countries. This innovation provides to employers and workers initiative and control over skills development, without the interference of the State, and also allows them to join together to establish joint management funds between workers and employers.

In matters of social dialogue and vocational training, as was mentioned earlier, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean display a diversified landscape of experiences related to the creation of bipartite and tripartite environments, that have facilitated and promoted the drive of training both among entrepreneurs and workers.

What may also be highlighted are the operations of tripartite instances of planning, management and monitoring of training policies at the national and regional level, usually circumscribed to the ministries of labour, and responsible for administering public funds designed for active employment policies of which training is an essential component.

4.2 Social dialogue and vocational training in Recommendation 195

The social dialogue as a constitutive element of the operation of the ILO leads to recognition that the drafting of the various Recommendations and Conventions is the result of a negotiation process between delegates of governments, employers and workers of the various Member Countries that meet annually at the International Labour Conferences. The importance attributed to the participation of the various sectors involved in labour relations is linked to a combination of different logics in the dovetailing of interests in a process of supranational negotiation of international labour standards that cannot be reduced to the classic confrontation/bargaining between sector representations of capital and labour, under the mediation of governments.

If we address once more the process of drafting Recommendation 195 it is possible to notice many signs of evidence that bets were on the social dialogue and collective bargaining between the actors involved in the suggestions of the new Recommendation. Reports and preliminary versions of the new standard were submitted for opinion and criticism to the different sectors (government, workers and employers) represented in the International Labour Conference who made many suggestions and/or corrections.¹⁸

The importance of the social dialogue linked to the development of human resources was one of the most debated aspects among the representatives of the Member States. For example, the conceptualisation and the implications of the social partners and of collective bargaining as basic components of the development of vocational training strategies (art. 5, f.) generated an

¹⁸ By way of illustration, as a result of the second revision of the document (92nd International Labour Conference) 194 amendments were submitted, of which 146 came from governments, 30 from the groups of employers and 18 from the group of workers. Likewise most of the government amendments corresponded to groups of countries (the Mercosur, Africa, the Caribbean, that submitted them as a group).

intense debate and divergences were made known regarding the subject, especially among the positions taken by the representatives of workers and the group representing employers.

The arguments brought to bear during the debate confirmed the importance of the social dialogue in the definition of vocational training policies and ratified the need for Recommendation 195 to suggest strengthening it at the international, national, regional and enterprise levels (art. 2, f). Moreover, social dialogue and collective bargaining are highlighted in this new instrument as basic principles for the development and quality of the various vocational training programmes and it establishes that Member States should *“provide support to the social partners to enable them to participate in the social dialogue on training”* (art. 5, i.).

Also regarding labour competencies the Recommendation establishes that Members should *“promote, with the involvement of the social partners, the ongoing identification of trends in the competencies needed by individuals, enterprises, the economy and society as a whole* (art. 9, a.) as well as *“recognize the role of the social partners, enterprises and workers in training”* (art. 9, b.).

Insofar as national qualifications frameworks are concerned, it is suggested that the Member States adopt measures jointly with the social partners regarding the promotion of transparent financing of the evaluation and recognition of vocational skills (art. 11, 1) and, referring to the providers of training services, Recommendation 195 suggests that the social dialogue should promote the diversity of the training supply and the recognition of national frameworks that allow quality in training to be assured.

Consultation with social partners is also sought concerning the promotion of vocational information and guidance (art. 15,c), the need to develop the analysis of trends in the labour market and the development of human resources (art. 17) and to contribute to *“dynamic lifelong learning policies, in particular in relation to the new dimensions of regional economic integration, migration and the emerging multicultural society”* (art. 21, e.).

V

**RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUITY
OF TRAINING POLICIES IN RECOMMENDATION 195**

5.1 Economic and tax incentives for training

The themes of financing vocational training and of the incentives for investment in training have acquired a particular transcendence in terms of the role that training plays at present and especially on the basis of the idea of lifelong learning. Because of this the new Recommendation 195 deals with sources of financial resources and investment in the development of human resources in several articles, scoring in the chapter assigned to educational and training policies that members should *“develop supportive social and other policies, and create an economic environment and incentives, to encourage enterprises to invest in education and training, individuals to develop their competencies and careers, and to enable and motivate all to participate in education and training programmes”* (art. 5, b).

The article cited above refers, above all, to training of individuals that are already inserted in the labour market, which is complemented in this new Recommendation by addressing the role of training and education prior to employment. Indeed, the quality of employment to which an individual can aspire, as well as the possibility of acquiring quality vocational training and taking advantage of opportunities for lifelong learning that arise, depends to a large extent on the quality of the education that the individual has received in the training and education stage prior to employment. This fact is stressed in several passages of the Recommendation, and, specifically in that which concerns financing and investment in training, it establishes that Members should *“assume the primary responsibility for investing in quality education and pre-employment training, recognising that qualified teachers and trainers working under decent conditions are of fundamental importance.”* (art. 5, d).

When addressing the subject of financing training in Latin America and the Caribbean, it can be established that various models of vocational training and occupational skills development coexist and are combined. Therefore, when embarking on a schematic review of the way in which countries have organised financing of their training systems, it must not be

thought that the use of certain type of financing mechanism precludes the use, in a national context and at a certain time, of another type of measures tending to encourage investment in training. Rather, countries in this region have tried to obtain resources for training and lifelong learning by various means. These are reviewed below briefly under the label “models”, keeping in mind that in most cases training and lifelong learning are financed with measures that belong to more than one of them.

Thus, in the first place a model to finance training could be mentioned that does so by means of earmarked taxes, or parafiscal contributions, which mechanism gave rise to the so-called Latin American model of vocational training institutions. These taxes are usually applied to enterprises in the private sector of the economy (although in a few cases they are also applied to public enterprises) and are a certain percentage of their payroll (the percentages in the region vary between 0.5% and 2%).

Earmarked taxes also finance training in those models that assign resources through taxes on workers and employers to be invested in programmes executed by the ministries of labour. In this model, the funds are generally used, not only to finance labour skills development actions designed for certain collectives, but also for other measures involving active employment policies, as for example labour intermediation, vocational guidance and help in seeking a job, *inter alia*. The organs that manage these funds are often tripartite (with the participation of governments and the social partners) and in several cases their administration is also highly decentralised territorially.

In the second place a model can be mentioned that assigns funds from the national budget for vocational training. This financing mechanism is generally used in countries where vocational training is dealt with within the formal educational system, usually under the modality of middle technical education. In this model, resources for training may come both from the Central Government and from territorially decentralized political-administrative units such as provinces and states. Both administrative and management decentralisation and financial decentralisation were a trend to be observed in several countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region during the decade of the nineties.

A third type of mechanism for financing training are tax incentives to enterprises for their investment in training their work force, where the enterprises recover their training expenses after they have submitted their tax statements. In these cases there is often an option on the part of the enterprises to execute skills development directly or hire an external skills development entity which, together with the schemes of programmes financed by the ministries of labour, have fostered the appearance of an important market for training with a multiplicity of suppliers and private skills development entities. In some case, the training plans of the enterprises - that are submitted in order to obtain a tax reimbursement for the expenses on labour force skills development, - may be subject to approvals by bipartite organs at the enterprise level, made up of workers and employers, which is also an interesting mechanism for social dialogue on training.

In this brief review of mechanisms to finance training, private investment in skills development by enterprises and workers cannot be left out. In the case of enterprises, because they have realised that training and investment in the development of human resources is a sine qua non condition for increasing labour productivity and competitiveness. It is not enough alone to fulfil the objectives mentioned, but it is practically an assumption for incorporating new technologies into productive processes and for innovating the ways work is organised. From a different perspective, but for reasons similar to those just mentioned, workers are becoming increasingly aware of the need to update their competencies on an ongoing basis, as the only way to minimise the risks that are at this juncture inherent to the labour market and that are expressed, among other ways, in the possibility of losing a job or not managing to obtain one due to inability to follow the engine of technological innovation applied to work.

Regarding technological innovation in the world of work, it is increasingly recognised that information science and the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) are core competencies for employability. The new Recommendation is sensitive to this subject and in matters of financing it establishes that Members should define policies that *“promote and sustain public and private investment in the infrastructure needed for the use of information and communication technology in education and training, as well as in the training of teachers and trainers, using local, national and international collaborative networks”* (art. 3, e).

Finally, on the subject of financing training and the development of human resources it is extremely important to mention the subject of research on financing mechanisms (their effectiveness, efficiency and relevance in varied contexts), as well as the impact of training actions, both in terms of labour insertion of target populations of training programmes for labour reinsertion, and at the level of the productivity of the labour force used that takes part in training actions at the enterprise level. On research regarding financing mechanisms as well as on the need to establish parameters for comparison and evaluation at the international, regional and sector level, Recommendation 195 establishes that Members should *“consider benchmarks in relation to comparable countries, regions and sectors when making decisions about investment in education and training”* (art. 7); as well as support research in *investments in training, as well as the effectiveness and impact of training* (art. 19, d).

5.2 Research on development of human resources, education, training and lifelong learning

Monitoring actions and evaluating results have always been a concern in the design of social policies, but they are generally considered to be external dimensions, exerting control subsequently to the process of development and implementation. Because of this, most times they are not carried out or they are addressed in terms of complying with a formal requirement to close an intervention and, what is more important, the results are not proc-

essed as feedback for new actions. Thus, there are no inputs to serve as guidance for the process and, even less, for continuous improvement. Only by being aware of what is going on can things be changed. In the same sense, if no diagnosis in depth is available both of the characteristics, trends and perspectives of national and local development, and of the world of work, as well as of the target subjects of the policies, their relevance, quality and equity are affected.

Recommendation 195 is wide awake to this problem and because of it proposes not only *“to evaluate the impact”* of the policies but also *“to develop the national capacity and promote and support the development of the capacity of the social partners to analyse the trends of the labour market, human resources development and of training”*.

Generating capacities is essential to accumulate knowledge, identify lessons and good practices and, above all, develop methodologies and instruments that can be placed at the disposal of other countries and actors to advance collectively. Research, with the subsequent systematisation of its results, is the first and indispensable input of this process of lifelong learning. As a result, the instrument that we are dealing with makes suggestions on possible lines of research that address reinforcing and boosting the development of the general outline proposed.

By way of example the following are especially significant and innovative:

- *“policies, strategies and frameworks for human resources development and training”* (art. 19, c);
- *skills recognition and of qualifications frameworks”* (art. 19, b);
- *identifying, measuring and forecasting the trends of supply and demand of competencies and qualifications in the labour market”* (art. 19, e);
- *“learning and training methodologies, including the use of information and communication technology in training”* (art. 19, a);
- *“identifying and overcoming barriers to accessing training and education”* (art. 19, f);
- *“identifying and overcoming gender bias in the assessment of competencies”* (art.19, g).

The first two lines address reinforcing the double relevance of training with the milieu and with individuals, as well as a multiple player and comprehensive approach to development policies. The following two lines contribute antennas to anticipate and guide interventions. The inputs provided by these four lines of research are the basic condition for enhancing the quality of training policies and to position them as proactive tools for actors to dovetail their efforts and co-operate towards the common objective of *“promoting greater opportunities for women and men to obtain decent work”* (art. 21, b).

Likewise, the last two aim at equity in all its expressions. In this sense combining the labour competency and gender approaches configures a conceptual and methodological framework to improve the quality of employment and training policies, on the basis of relevance and equity

criteria, and to organize training supply in an open and flexible proposal, conceived within the framework of lifelong learning. The competency approach enables an encounter between the different actors of the educational and productive areas and has shown its efficacy in ensuring that training responds to the needs of the productive world and assigns a value to the capacities acquired by persons in various scenarios. In addition, the gender approach allows opportunities and limitations to be analysed in terms of development and valuation of the competencies that social reality, the world of work and training offer to men and women, and to influence the process of transformation of the point of departure and to overcome the obstacles arising from personal and social history.

Moreover, the new Recommendation includes suggestions linked to the need to increase research and studies on the diverse Latin American realities. This theme, emphasized in a novel manner, aims at promoting comparative studies that facilitate the recognition of similarities (at the national, local institutional and sector levels) that allow transferable methodologies and tools to be produced and differences to be surveyed that lead to diversified strategies and/or strategies adapted to each context, its actors and potentialities.

In a few words, the inputs, alerts and guidance contributed by research are the basic tools for the development of regional integration and of technical and international co-operation.

5.3 Technical and international co-operation. Training in regional integration.

Contrary to what might have been expected a priori, globalisation has caused, not only the emergence of a global scenario, but also the superimposition of several scenarios. Notwithstanding this, instead of substituting the national or global scenario the great challenge is the coexistence of both, of a “global” integration where attention paid to characteristics and mutual influences becomes a source of opportunities and not only of inequity and exclusion. To achieve this, as was pointed out in the previous point, a very effective strategy is to identify similarities that could be the base for a shared construction and a permanent improvement of knowledge, methodologies and good practices but that, at the same time, are flexible and adaptable when implemented. This information becomes a generator of capacities by means of training policies, technical co-operation, both bilateral and multilateral, between countries and regional blocks and international co-operation.

Recommendation 195 gives a strong boost to these lines of action when it proposes the new responsibilities and challenges that, in the present context, technical and international co-operation has to assume. The first, without which all the others would not be possible, and even less sustainable, is that of “*promoting national capacity building to reform and develop training policies and programmes, including developing the capacity for social dialogue and partnership building in training* (art. 21, c)”

The strengthening of institutional competencies is a condition for accumulation, so that interventions are not reduced to the short term, nor that they are implemented only while the support of financing or external cooperation lasts. Moreover, to the extent that institutions acquire design and management competencies they can recover and value their own practices, enhance them with what is being done in other contexts, not reiterate resources and efforts to always begin from zero, but rather adapt and enhance, in a spiralling process of continuous improvement, good practices and lessons learned. It is this collective construction of knowledge and its socialisation that the new Recommendation summons forth when it refers to the need to:

- “*strengthen the capacity of the social partners to contribute to dynamic lifelong learning policies, in particular in relation to the new dimensions of regional economic integration, migration and the emerging multicultural society* (art. 21,e) ;
- “*taking into account the specific problems of the indebted developing countries, explore and apply innovative approaches to provide additional resources for human resources development*” (art. 21, h);
- “*promote cooperation between and among governments, the social partners, the private sector and international organisations*” (art. 21, i).

Finally, and as another innovative and challenging contribution, this ILO instrument addresses one of the perhaps unforeseen effects of globalisation, despite which it is generating increasing tensions and inequities in national and regional environments: “*the adverse impact of the loss of skilled people through migration*” (art. 21, a). Globalisation of the economy and the worldwide extension of knowledge as well as the visualisation of regional and sub-regional integration as a need and opportunity led to mobility of the labour force beyond frontiers. But this mobility, in the case of developing countries, involves a systematic loss of its human capital that migrates seeking better labour opportunities and vocational development of better quality and currency. This has intensified inequities because, in fact, people who are best able to move are those who have most capital in the line of knowledge and skills for change or have the resources to increase their training in the most prestigious educational centres in the world.

In the case of the American region, the loss of quality and the strong social segmentation of formal education, the devaluation of traditional academic degrees as a result of obsolescence of knowledge and the vertiginous technological changes, led to a “flight forwards” of the years of education, when families that have the resources necessary were led to make an effort to enable their children to acquire post-graduate degrees, doctorates and specialisations abroad. Individuals who achieve those levels of competency find it difficult, subsequently, to apply them in their countries of origin and, especially, to achieve vocational and economic development in keeping with their capacities and with the financial

investment and efforts that they have made. At the same time, the successive economic crises and growing unemployment lead those who are most affected and, especially, young people, to seek new horizons and try to obtain abroad the income that they cannot make in their own countries and that, increasingly and forcibly, becomes the only source of resources for the rest of the family that stays behind.

The convergence of these two phenomena translates into a “blood-letting of talents” for the developing countries, which is why Recommendation 195 proposes an increase in assistance to the developing countries as the inescapable challenge for international and technical co-operation, in order to:

- develop “*strategies to strengthen the human resources development systems in the countries of origin, recognising that creating enabling conditions for economic growth, investment, creation of decent jobs and human development will have a positive effect on retaining skilled labour.*” (art. 21, a);
- promote “*coherent policies and programmes which place education, training and lifelong learning at the centre of development policies*” (art. 21, g).

Within this framework, many agencies and countries in Latin America are tending increasingly to integrate their educational and training policies, since the acquisition of competencies and training that are a response to reality must be based on quality basic education that is accessible to all. As has already been stated, many programmes to develop vocational qualifications are financed within the broader framework of the educational sector. The “Education for All” initiative, launched in 1990, has had very important repercussions on the development of qualifications and has caused a re-posing of the priority that was assigned so far to basic teaching.

Regarding training and regional integration, it is possible to pose as fundamental themes the diversification of employment policies, of spaces and of scenarios where they take place and the role of vocational training in these areas. This diversification should then aim both at the objectives and instruments that are traditionally called “employment policies” and to their connection with aspects sometimes considered autonomous but that, in any case, have a notable influence on the generation or destruction of jobs.

At the international level, it is possible to mention a tripartite consensus on guaranteeing universal access to basic education for all, initial training and continuing training, as well as to the increase and optimisation of global investment in this sphere. Moreover, it is increasingly important to create, at the national and local levels, structures in the manner of public entities and consultative organs with the participation of the sectors and agencies representing teaching and vocational training of the public and private sector.

In the same way, the development of national qualifications frameworks, of continuous education and training, of competency-based training and the support for policy formulation and institutional strengthening, instead of financing specific programmes to develop quali-

fications for formal employment, have begun in this last decade to be priorities for international co-operation.

Current regional and sub-regional integration conditions make it necessary to maintain and deepen co-operation efforts between countries and their training institutions. In this sense, Cinterfor/ILO can be considered to be one of the main instruments of co-operation for the development of vocational training. It was created at the request of the 17th Conference of American States Members of the ILO, held in Buenos Aires in 1961¹⁹, in order to promote active and permanent co-operation among vocational training institutions (VTIs) of the American region.

Cinterfor/ILO aims to promote and strengthen horizontal technical co-operation among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, oriented towards the development and modernisation of their VTIs, to contribute to the design of public policies and to the implementation of vocational training programmes through promotion of strategic alliances between the State and organisations of employers and workers. It also promotes the development and expansion of a regional information network on vocational training among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (by circulating information, experiences and technological innovations) and the development of research activities for the formulation of plans and programmes of institutionalized vocational training.

A clear example of how technical co-operation can facilitate the development of innovative approaches in training is the extraordinary vocation to support demonstrated by the training institutions of the region. The expression of a willingness to co-operate and support makes it possible today to count off regional and sub-regional technical seminars held annually and an abundance of technical products provided by the same entities and that have made it easier for Cinterfor/ILO to spread its work through its web page.

¹⁹The agency was established in Montevideo (Uruguay) in 1964 as the result of the agreement signed by the ILO and the Government of Uruguay in December 1963.

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