

## INTRODUCTION

---

Vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean has a long history of searching, discoveries, successes and challenges. It is a story with no end, and the changes are coming faster and faster. It can have no end because vocational training is connected to conditions in employment, production, technology and society that are constantly changing. Moreover, it is increasing in speed because technological development is accelerating and spreading, and new technologies are not only coming into production and work but also into training systems themselves. Besides, the opening of countries' economies and the globalization of trade have had a big impact on labour and productive structures in the region, and hence on the lives of the people. "*At issue is the value and the dignity of work in our contemporary societies.*" (Report by the General Director of the ILO at the 93rd International Labour Conference).

If we analyze just the last two decades of the history of vocational training we find a constant flux of innovations in institutions, in management models and in pedagogic approaches, and all of this has been the subject of intense debate. Vocational training is in ferment at the moment because it has become a very dynamic field for experimentation and innovation, and because it has come to involve a very wide range of actors who are trying to find solutions to numerous challenges. What is expected from this phase is either alternative solutions, or contributions to solutions, to problems such as the scarcity of jobs, low productivity, poverty and social exclusion. Therefore vocational training is expected to make a contribution not only to economic development and production at the local level, in countries or even in the region, but also to the integration of people into the economy and society. Some of the manifestations of these expectations and of the importance which vocational training has on national and international agendas is that it is discussed at high level meetings between government representatives, and also that tripartite and bipartite collective bargaining about training has developed considerably in the last ten years.

The great weight of all these expectations is causing tensions in vocational training, and this has accelerated innovation and change in the institutions, organizations and actors that participate in defining and running policies in this field. However, while it is important to recognize and maintain this rhythm of innovation, it is probably just as important to take the time to reflect about what is going on, and to try to identify the purposes and aims that guide us.

This study is intended as a contribution to the ongoing search for answers to a number of questions that come up again and again: What is vocational training? What are the objectives it should contribute to? How can we improve it so it will be better able to help towards those objectives? This study is only a contribution, so rather than seeking to give definitive answers it seeks to clarify areas in the debate, and hopefully to help in the collective construction of alternatives.

## CHAPTER I

---

# Vocational training on the road to quality, relevance and equity

*Members should identify human resources development, education, training and lifelong learning policies which: (a) facilitate lifelong learning and employability as part of a range of policy measures designed to create decent jobs, as well as to achieve sustainable economic and social development; b) give equal consideration to economic and social objectives, emphasize sustainable economic development in the context of the globalizing 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; (Article 3 of ILO Recommendation 195 concerning Human Resources Development: education, training and lifelong learning).*

### 1. An integrated approach

Whatever institutional and organizational models are adopted, whatever suppositions may lie behind methodological approaches, and whatever training modality is chosen, all vocational training policies have a common denominator that is made up of at least three basic guiding principles or aims. These three elements are becoming increasingly inter-dependent, to the point that it is not possible to pursue one of them in isolation from the other two.

First, **training institutions have always tried to improve the quality of the services they render and the functions they discharge**, even at times when resources are scarce. There is a tension (that is well known to people who work in this field) between the demands of achieving high quality and the demands of widening coverage. It has never been easy to solve the problem of how to continually expand the coverage that institutions provide while at the same time

maintaining quality in all the processes involved. These processes include the management of institutions, the training of instructors, technicians and directors of local centres, the design of materials and other didactic tools, curricular design, identifying and catering to the requirements of the productive and social environment, and constructing pedagogic strategies. In the last analysis, the effects of good quality will be felt in the competencies acquired or developed by the trainees, in the performance that will flow from these competencies, in the improved employability of those who are trained, and in higher productivity in enterprises. Quality is also a key factor in how institutions respond to the needs of their various clients, whether these are individuals, enterprises, sectors, productive chains or communities. Thus good quality has always been, and still is today, a goal and a challenge for vocational training.

Second, the people who manage, design and execute vocational training policies and activities know that quality cannot be attained or cannot be fully comprehensive if the training offer is not both useful and opportune, not only in economic but also in social terms. This is why **relevance is another of the guiding principles of vocational training**. This is being pursued all the time, although the means of attaining it vary. Debate about the criteria of relevance in training is inevitably linked to the way the demand for training is conceived, and what the most suitable mechanisms to identify this may be. This is the source of a lot of the tension in vocational training at the moment. There is tension between the present situation of production and the labour market on the one hand, and the future situation on the other (what is urgent versus what is strategically advisable), between the symptoms from the world of production and symptoms of a social kind, and between the differing perspectives and interests of the various economic and social actors involved.

**There are two dimensions to relevance and they are equally important.** The first is how vocational training can respond efficaciously, efficiently and opportunely to the problems, demands and needs of **the productive, technological, labour and socio-cultural environment**, and also how it can promote links between trainees and that environment. The second dimension is that training also has to be relevant as regards **the characteristics, conditions, needs and expectations of the trainees themselves**, and as regards how these are considered in curricular design, preparing didactic materials, adapting pedagogic approaches, and adjusting the functional and management systems of the training institutions. Therefore training has to be pertinent in two senses: it has to cater to

the productive and social environment and it also has to cater to the students. It is in this dual relevance that the essential function of training lies. It has to be a meeting point between the supply and the demand for labour, and it has to be a space where the productive system and those who produce are coordinated. This dual relevance is, at the same time, a condition for quality and equity.

Another aspect of the question is that the target population is not a single uniform group; it is very diverse and heterogeneous. Therefore **vocational training would not be playing its role correctly if, as well as constantly seeking to improve quality and to maintain relevance in the two senses described above, it did not also include an equity approach.** It has often been said that besides being an instrument of economic policy, vocational training is at the same time an instrument of social policy. Sometimes the demand for equity has been attributed exclusively to the social dimension, but this is incorrect. Equity is a guiding principle that is common to both dimensions, and this is spelled out in Article 3.b of ILO Recommendation 195, which was cited at the beginning of this chapter.

From a social perspective, vocational training is a tool of the very highest order for promoting equal opportunities by integrating people into the labour, social and citizenship spheres. The effects of this integration are not limited to mere full exercise of basic rights in an overall situation in which there is extreme inequity in gender relations, and extreme social inequity as regards access to decent work and basic services (education, health, social protection). They also constitute the foundations for productive development, economic competitiveness, and the fight against poverty. A country or a particular area is more or less competitive in function of the extent to which it can remedy the deficiencies mentioned above and thus help to relax the social and political tensions that are rooted in them. A country will also be more competitive if it can take advantage of the basic productive and creative potential of all its male and female citizens in an efficient way.

On the other hand we can examine the situation from the perspective of the economic sphere. Not only does inequality affect specific sectors of the population, but it also affects vast sectors of the economies in the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than half of these economies are made up of micro- and small enterprises, and most of these are working informally. These vast sectors are suffering from serious problems as regards productivity and access to financial and other services, and very often the jobs involved in them

are extremely precarious. Therefore vocational training is critically important in strategies to raise the level of competitiveness of micro- and small enterprises for example, to make it easier for these businesses to establish links with productive chains so as to achieve greater added value, and to help them to regularize their situation. In short, training is vital if the bases for comprehensive and integrated economic development are to be established.

**It is clear that the three dimensions, quality, relevance and equity, are closely interrelated, and that the specific objectives of each cannot be achieved or fully satisfied unless all three are linked together and coordinated.** The effects that vocational training policies pursue are felt in this critical area of integration, and these policies are aimed at attaining simultaneous integration. There are different objectives and dimensions involved, and it is very often difficult to coordinate these in the practical situation. These effects are always geared to the clients of vocational training. Regardless of whether we are talking about people, enterprises, sectors, productive chains, or specific regions, the client has to be catered to with **good quality processes and results**, and with systems that are geared not only to demand and need but also to the client's characteristics and conditions. That is to say, vocational training must be **relevant**. Besides this, **an equity approach** is needed when tackling obstacles and overcoming problems that lead to inequality of opportunities and inequitable treatment between men and women, young people and adults, urban and rural sectors, ethnic groups, and between enterprises and workers in the formal as well as in the informal economy.

## **2. Quality, relevance and equity in vocational training institutions**

Since they first came into being, the vocational training institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean have been geared to supporting development not just in the productive sphere but in society as a whole.

These institutions have constantly tried to tailor their supply to the technical and technological requirements of the different sectors, and to continually keep up to date with the changes and innovations that are taking place. They have also made an effort to adapt their pedagogic approaches, materials and didactic tools, their teaching timetables and their connected services to the characteristics, problems, needs and expectations of their clients. There have been difficul-

ties, but the vocational training institutions have persevered and they have always tried to ensure quality and relevance in their work.

Vocational training institutions have been making an unflagging effort to widen their coverage by reorganizing teaching centres, and this includes the network structure, mobile teaching systems (which have turned out to be particularly useful), the diversification of training modalities, and the development of different schemes to cooperate with other bodies and institutions. They have also made an effort to reach the economic sectors and social groups that have the greatest difficulty in accessing the benefits of training, technological development and work.

A detailed analysis of subjects like institutional change, pedagogic innovation, adjustments and improvements in teaching tools and didactic materials, and the training of trainers shows clearly that vocational training has always been anxious to do the job properly, not only as regards relevance and equity, but also by constantly improving the quality of management and results. An initial step in this analysis is presented in the next three sections.

### **3. Quality approaches in vocational training**

Since the concept of quality first emerged in the last century there has been considerable change in the definition of what exactly it is. When it was first applied, quality was understood as “adhering to standards”, that is, adapting to the established specifications of a product. Later on, when the concept of who the product was aimed at took shape (an idea that goes beyond the product in itself) quality was defined as “the satisfaction of the requirements and demands of the client”. Thus the quality approach was widened to include processes and not just products. It was understood that a good process that was run consistently could lead to a quality product. Later still there was another change, a move to replace this with the concept of excellence, understood as “the best possible” in terms of combinations of the different dimensions of organization: the best components, the best processes, the best management, etc. These three phases can also be seen as complementary dimensions of how the concept of quality is conceived. In other words, they can be seen in the construction of a quality approach which involves the quality of process management, the quality of the products or results, and the quality of standards aspects and orientation to the client.

These ideas can be applied in the field of vocational training, with the necessary adjustments to consider its specific characteristics, and we can identify three dimensions to be taken into account:

- *Standards quality or conformity.* The training, and the trainer, need to have some basic minimum content (concepts, skills, dexterities, attitudes and values) and some basic methodological techniques or strategies for guiding or tutoring (psycho-pedagogic and didactic aspects, and a sociological analysis of the real situation where training takes place). These minimum requirements should be an integrated whole that can be easily assessed for the development of its function, for coordination and teamwork, and for improvement and innovation based on collecting data relevant to these criteria. These requirements should be jointly agreed upon by prestigious internal and external recognized experts in the subject or field in question. This area could also include adhering to the processes laid down in a standard like the ISO 9000 (which specifies the minimum processes necessary), and the consistent execution and due documentation of these could reasonably determine which good processes lead to good results.
- *Quality as adaptation to the needs, expectations and motivation of the client.* In vocational training the “client” means the different actors that the training system is connected to, that is to say the productive system, enterprises, organizations, the family, and the society into which the trainees will have to be inserted. And obviously the trainees themselves, with their individual traits and specific needs, are included. In addition, there are “internal clients” who should be borne in mind, such as the other members or teams in the training institution. This need to respond to a wide range of requirements and expectations creates a tension in many training institutions since these requirements and expectations have changed and are changing very much and very rapidly indeed.
- *Quality understood as a response to personal and social expectations and motivations through the creation of attitudes and knowledge.* This is the idea of quality understood as training which fosters attitudes and values that enable the trainee to acquire knowledge. These benefits would be portable, and the trainee could apply his or her new capabilities in other contexts and organizational scenarios, and to other problems. This knowledge would also have added value in that it would have a positive impact on the family and on the social and organizational environment (the neighbourhood, enterprise or



organization where the individual works). It would also have a labour and technological impact in a social or productive group or sector, not just because of the intrinsic content of training but also in management and organizational processes such as teamwork among the members of the teaching institution, and, even more important, by generating a culture that can integrate all the members of the institution and make them responsible for their roles, generating innovative ways of managing training.

To sum up, quality training is training that has sufficiently high technical levels and the capacity to adapt them to different scenarios, that is able to respond adequately to the demands, needs and expectations of its clients (individuals, enterprises, sectors, productive chains, geographical areas), and that makes it possible for the people who are trained to develop new expectations and needs that may be personal or social, or connected to vocational development.

The progress in the application of the quality approach that many institutions in the region have made has often been put forward as an example of good practices in improving quality in a way that is centred on the definition, documentation and ordered execution of these institutions' processes. In fact, more and more vocational training institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean are acquiring the ISO standards certification of quality. In some cases it is the central administration of these institutions that has pursued quality certification, and from there they have expanded the application to their different services and in particular to their other centres. In other cases the quality approach and the pursuit of certification has first taken place in experiences in specific centres, services or processes, and from there has gradually been brought into the whole structure of the organization. In these cases the institutions have sought to develop the basic processes that make up the tasks, both in the technical-pedagogic ambit and in the administration of resources, in a consistent way.

But the interpretation and acknowledgement of these achievements would not really be complete if the only approach was concern for the standards and process-centred dimension of quality. These institutional efforts have always been guided by the aim of continuously trying to keep the training supply up to date, by striving for relevance in the relation with the context and the participants, and by improving everybody's access to knowledge. Hence, improving quality in processes is understood as an instrument to ensure quality in results.

The various vocational training institutions that have experiences involving the certification of quality have established connections with each other and they

## **VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT: PROGRESS AND MUTUAL CO-OPERATION**

The concept of quality in training has been manifested in many ways in the region and one of these ways that has been most widespread is quality management within a framework of world class standards. At the same time, however, training institutions have also incorporated quality elements into their daily routines and into their products.

The last two years have continued to mark the way of the vocational training institutions (VTIs) towards quality management. Besides the trend towards adoption of practices that ensure the definition and execution of the processes associated with training, the VTIs have kept to their commitment to co-operation and exchange of experiences. There have been several findings along the way to quality that have been identified during this period:

1. There are already more than 250 training centres and technological service laboratories throughout the Latin American region that have quality management processes certified under ISO standards. At least nine countries in the region have initiated processes of certification of their centres in their national training institutions.
2. The technical co-operation provided by pioneer institutions allowed other new institutions to begin the process of certification of their quality, and this witnesses to the vocation for co-operation and exchange that on specific subjects is developed in the training institutions of the region. The VTIs network in Latin America and the Caribbean is also a learning community. This has been proven by their collective capacity to accumulate knowledge and, of course, to spread it.
3. In developing the concept of quality, other services or areas of institutional development have been activated simultaneously or sequentially, such as providing advisory services to enterprises interested in certifying their quality management process or the adoption of new standards in areas such as the environment or social responsibility.

The effect of quality training on the competencies of students is undeniable. Training centres that have achieved certified quality status achieve stable and consistent processes regarding training execution. Their physical aspect, their appearance and the care taken of their premises allow more adequate learning areas to be generated and transmit to the participant an overall sensation of order and organisation that is internalised in their occupational behaviour and in their subsequent passage through the enterprises.

take each other as points of reference in this field. This is yet more evidence that there is an authentic Latin American vocational training community with vitality in its mechanisms of horizontal cooperation. What is learned in a particular institution and country is efficaciously documented and disseminated in the region through publications and conferences and in various computerized systems. This is a process of collective and cooperative construction involving countries throughout the region, but it also contains a wide variety of national elements, which is yet another sign of how dynamic these training institutions are.

It is also clear that, out of a wide range of public bodies and organizations, it has been the vocational training institutions themselves that have acted decisively and taken the lead on the path towards ensuring high quality in the rendering of their services. First, they have made efforts to improve the quality of their own **institutional management**, which is one of the aspects involved in the ISO standards. In the approach that these standards promote –quality management in processes– there are four main elements: management responsibility, resource management, the actual production of the product, and measurement, analysis and improvement. This focus is based on the idea that an organization that adheres to the principles implicit in the quality standard will consistently ensure that its products are of good quality and that its clients are satisfied. Consequently, this illustrates a connection between the way processes are managed and the dimension of being guided by the demands of clients.

Another illustration of the growing trend towards quality management is the fact that the family of ISO standards for education is growing wider and countries like Peru, Argentina and Chile are already working with local versions of the ISO standards that have been adapted to the processes in their educational institutions. This makes it easier for the language of training to be understood and it facilitates interpretation when it comes to applying the certification process. Thus we should refer to an ISO group called the IWA-2 which has successfully adapted a generic quality standard to the requirements of educational establishments.

The certification of a centre, service or institution constitutes the most recent –but not the last– of the steps taken by vocational training institutions in an ongoing process. The vocational training institutions that have adopted the quality management philosophy are tackling their own processes, defining them, documenting them, and making sure that they are carried through in a systematic and consistent way. To achieve their objectives they are dealing with the *inputs*

of training. Standards of quality are usually applied within a wide conception of quality management which employs basic principles that mainly have to do with the consistent systematisation of processes. They set up a method to standardize the organization's activities and give their clients confidence as regards the expected quality of the product they supply or the service they render.

Many training institutions have explicitly proclaimed a quality policy, and they practice the strategic management of quality. To make progress towards their objectives they set up internal and external standard reference points, and implement decisions that combine the two.

Bringing the quality approach into an organization is not just a matter of defining and documenting processes and procedures. A number of analyses have identified a key characteristic that underlies this move, which is that adopting the principles of quality (and subsequent progress through the certification process) generates results from which the organization can learn valuable lessons. These findings were analyzed recently in the literature on knowledge management.

In various experiences in which ISO standards have been applied it has been recorded that it was immediately necessary to train all the workers. This learning is connected to how the processes are structured, made up, improved and documented. The personnel involved in these tasks must make the procedures explicit, document them and then apply them. In this there are overlaps and gaps in the activities, and the search for solutions involves group analysis which involves the application of new knowledge and previous experience. The complexity that goes with process analysis demands new ways of learning; therefore training institutions can take advantage of this new knowledge and re-apply it to strengthen teaching. Thus ways of learning like "lessons learned" or "good practices" make up what is called "knowledge created in work processes". The work that is done on documenting, analyzing and continually improving processes amounts to an extraordinary learning opportunity for vocational training institutions, and in fact it makes explicit a lot of knowledge which remains in the institutions and is applied in daily labour routines.

This is exemplified in the development of processes of introduction, registration, evaluation and the development of didactic materials and methods. Nowadays, the analysis and improvement of these processes has allowed institutional capabilities to develop, and this is reflected in the design of workshops, training centres, electronic teaching systems, assessment materials and so on.

The justification for the above is that vocational training must relate to a labour market that is growing complex and organized in a less traditional way. In this market people have to develop the capacity to manage their jobs and careers themselves. The old distinctions between work time and study time, between the workplace and the home, and between the workplace and the learning space are now becoming increasingly blurred.

Another factor is that the actual number of institutions offering training has increased. The traditional vocational training institutions no longer have the field to themselves. In some cases the increase in the number of institutions offering training is a response to increased demand, and in others it is because there are complementary funds available to contract training services.

These new alternatives offer a wide and varied range of training, and both the clients and the public sector bodies that contract training services need a reference point so that they can gauge the quality of what is on offer. Here the demand for good quality comes not only from those who want to be trained but also from entrepreneurs who are providing funds to invest in training for their workers. This is another reason why mechanisms for certifying quality are being increasingly applied: certification is a measure of recognition in a very crowded market.

#### **4. Quality with relevance**

The very fact that a training programme exists, no matter how small it may be, presupposes prior knowledge about its aims, its purpose and its content, about what deficiencies have to be overcome and what resources have to be strengthened in the person being trained. Good quality vocational training demands knowledge of the requirements and expectations of the productive sector and also of those who actually produce, the male and female workers. This axiom has always given cause for concern in the formulation of training policies and programmes, but since the last years of the 20th century it has become a greater challenge and has led to a questioning of the role, organization and methodologies of vocational training.

Just as people who are faced with a crisis in their search for permanent, stable, formalized employment with prospects for advancement meet this challenge by developing and strengthening new competencies and become manag-

ers of their own employment strategies, so training policies have to generate new capabilities in order to be able to carry out an accurate and systematic assessment of the productive world that the training supply is geared to. They also have to help their students to identify and open up new spaces for labour insertion. That is to say, relevance must be pursued in such a way as to cover not only the realities and determinant factors of the environment (economic, social, labour, technological, cultural) but also the characteristics, conditioning factors and expectations of the trainees.

In the modern world, work is a basic component in a person's life, self-assurance and social valuation, and this applies to women as well as to men. It is also a key factor for social inclusion, and therefore it is an area in which inequities are expressed most clearly. Hence an accurate assessment of the world of work, and therefore of training itself, does not seem possible unless the gender perspective is applied systematically across the board. Gender is an element that underlies social relations insofar as it expresses the collection of psychological and cultural characteristics, the functions and the roles that a given society attributes to men and to women. It is through these that people's activities are valued and rated. The gender perspective is an instrument of analysis that puts the approach on the trainee, who is located in life and conditioned by his or her personal, family and labour situation, and by his or her socio-cultural and economic situation. Therefore gender is one of the foundations that underlie the other variables that generate differences (such as ethnicity, age, educational level, income, or being in a rural or an urban location), because obstacles and changes in the gender ambit influence the other conditioning social factors, and vice versa.

In recent years, training institutions have put great effort and resources into assessing the demand for training, and this had led to the emergence of new modalities in the organization of training and to the fact that competency-based training, quality management (with relevance as an intrinsic requirement) and the implementation (to varying degrees) of labour guidance have become the most important elements. The purpose of the first two is structural adjustment (of content and methodology) between labour supply and demand, through an updated matching between training profiles and the requirements of the labour and productive sphere, and labour guidance seeks to facilitate contact and communication between the supply of work and the demand, and thus reduce unemployment. The need for this matching is clear, but it is also clear that there are methodological and strategic difficulties, and that the costs will be high in terms

of trained human resources and the time needed first to identify the requirements and then to transfer these into didactic form in a situation marked by uncertainty, the very fast obsolescence of knowledge, and changes in or the disappearance of occupational profiles and jobs. At the moment it is generally accepted that - regardless of the methodology applied- the most suitable solution is competency-based training, a field in which constant progress is being made in the definition of profiles and the development of training curriculum.

This is based on the increasingly widespread conviction that if people's labour or professional lives are to develop not only must they be permanently nourished with new knowledge but also, and most critically, a new kind of learning is needed. This would be a kind of learning that, rather than being geared to employment that is predictable and stable, would foster the capacity to continually assimilate new knowledge, and would train people to be able to pursue flexible and changing careers in these uncertain times.

In short, what is needed is training for employability. This is spelled out in Article 2.d of ILO Recommendation 195: "*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*".

This conception of employability rules out any chance that it might be taken as a synonym for labour insertion. Employability has to do with a group of personal, social and technical competencies that people need to be able to manage their labour and professional development themselves, in a situation where employment needs to be created through the capacity to initiate undertakings and adopt cooperative strategies. Hence to use the concept of employability is to put the approach on the *learner conceived as an integral being located and conditioned by gender and economic and social situation* who takes advantage of his or her capabilities and life experiences, knowledge, feelings and values, through which he or she may be able to change and improve their conditions of social and labour insertion. This means recognizing and strengthening the active role people can play in overcoming personal and social obstacles and limitations through recognizing these conditioning factors, developing suitable competencies, and adopting individual and collective strategies for change. These collective strategies for employability, and the competencies that are brought into play in them, are why training should aim not only at the trainees but also at the projects they undertake.

This new kind of learning cannot be limited merely to one stage at the beginning of labour life. On the contrary, **it involves lifelong training and learning**. Learning cannot be just the sum of specific training geared to a person knowing how to achieve the results required in his or her job performance. He or she should also understand why things are being done, the implications and the impact, and he or she should develop the capacity to relate to what has been learned, to transfer it to other situations, and to adapt to new social and labour ambits.

The required competencies have to do with the situations in the life of each individual, and therefore they should complement and be coordinated with the need for social insertion and participation. Never before has the training of workers of both sexes come so close to training for citizenship. In both of these fields, work has to be done in the three dimensions that are vitally important for development in life – relations with oneself, relations with others (participation in family life and in the wider social space), and relations with society as a whole. What is needed in all these dimensions is the capacity to express oneself and communicate, to take decisions, to make choices, to understand the immediate environment of activity, to evaluate complexities, to have a systematic approach to situations, to work in a team, solidarity, participation, looking after oneself and others, and so on. Hence training for employability and training for citizenship should both be approached with gender equity and social equity criteria.

Employability and citizenship are related to processes that take place on different structural, normative and cultural levels. But they are also related to factors of a personal and relational nature that are connected to the specific life situations of each individual, resulting in differences and inequities in possibilities of accessing resources, in opportunities for employment or to undertake productive activities, in participation and decision-making in questions that have to do with the group or community the person belongs to.

## **5. Quality and equity**

From the perspective of an integral quality approach, the impact of training can be evaluated in three areas or levels: personal, organizational and social.

**On the personal level quality training brings about deep changes in people, that enable them to develop professionally throughout their lives.** Hence “learn-



ing to learn” is continuously important, but so is also “learning to unlearn”, being able to revise what has been established so as to be able to discover new possibilities in thinking and doing.

**This also applies to the ambit of the organization. Quality training institutions are not limited to just transmitting knowledge: they are organizations that generate and manage knowledge.** They do this by maintaining permanent contact with scientific and technological progress, with the world of production, with the society they are in, and as well as this, with themselves, with their own experience that is being constantly revised. Thus they become *learning organizations*, releasing collective processes in which tacit knowledge, the know-how of the people and teams that make up the institution, are transformed into explicit knowledge that can be revised, examined and re-worked collectively. Besides this, formalised and explicit knowledge is transformed into tacit knowledge, the actual know-how which is applied in daily work in the organization.

**At the social level, quality and equity are inseparable.** Quality training is training that fights against inequality, and in effect it serves as a bridge between needs and productive possibilities of the immediate economic environment and those who produce. It is a link between jobs and people, between the productive structure on the one hand and individuals and social groups on the other. The local environment conditions people and training but it also challenges them and can be changed by people’s actions. Quality training presupposes analysis and coordination of the productive and labour structure, the characteristics of the individual trainees, social and gender conditioning and how these figure in the content and modalities of the training offer. Therefore a priority goal of training policies should be to improve and/or strengthen employability and citizenship.

Vocational training is a key instrument for development, which is understood not just as economic growth but also as creating more opportunities for all men and all women. That is to say development that is inclusive, that is centred on people.

To design and implement training policies that are centred on the trainee means adopting a double logic: to bring the gender perspective into the mainstream, and focalizing both methodology and activity. Bringing the gender perspective into the mainstream means bearing in mind and valuing, in all dimensions and factors of development, individual characteristics, capacities, strengths and limitations on participation. It also involves an egalitarian valuation of the contributions that men and women make. In valuing the personal and relational

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF YOUTH

Vocational training policies addressed to youth have evolved constantly during the past few decades due to a series of concomitant processes such as the changes that occurred in labour markets in terms of employment structure and availability, demographic dynamics and their influence on the size of the juvenile labour supply or the appearance of new ways to approach the concept of "youth."

The evolution to which we first referred is manifested - among other aspects - in the definition itself of the targets of these policies. That young people (or certain groups of them) are the target population of certain policies or programmes varies in the degree in which this fact is made explicit. The supply of learning courses that many institutions offered and offer have been on demand mainly by young people who seek to insert themselves at an early stage in the labour market, but that is more a consequence arising from the initial nature of this training and of its format, rather than of an explicit definition in that sense. Skills development programmes for young people (urban working class, rural or female heads of household among others) have been designed after identifying and making explicit as a goal the problems that those juvenile collectives have in matters of employability.

Secondly, these policies also changed gradually from their universalistic nature, i.e., a supply open to any individual that in certain cases drew mainly young people, towards a focussed nature, as shown by the types of programmes mentioned above. That movement was the result of making the assumption that, in general terms, the free play of supply and demand of training would achieve an acceptable adjustment. Focusing of certain programmes then seems to be an instrument of correction and/or compensation regarding population groups for which such adjustment was not achieved.

However, just as processes of change and adjustment of vocational training policies in general do not come to a halt, the same is true of those aimed at youth. On the one hand, vocational training institutions have been incorporating innovations that seek the objective of double relevance and, to that extent, develop focusing strategies. On the other hand, focused programmes boosted by the Ministries of Labour have in many ways been reformulated, particularly as regards dovetailing their actions with other training offers, whether or not formal, as a way to enable the construction of training and vocational itineraries.

The local development space is a space in which opportunities are appearing to develop strategies tending towards vocational training and youth employment. When the specificities from the economic, productive, social, cultural and institutional points of view characterise a territory are considered, the actions designed may be explicitly oriented towards young

people and inscribe them in the context of more general strategies, such as economic and social development of a community and its territory or that of productive chains and those aggregating value in place in the same territory. This endows those actions, programmes or projects, not only with greater relevance, but also with the acquisition of a greater share of meaning, both for the community in general and for the young people themselves. It is not the same to be the subject of individual attention of a programme because it is believed that the person "carries" certain handicaps, than when collective projects look at people more from the viewpoint of their potential than of their lacks (not because of this do they cease to take the latter into account). The issue is, in the final instance, to go from the concept of "youth with disadvantages who receive assistance," to that of young people who together with other young people and other players become active subjects of their own development and that of the community.

factors that have an influence on people's careers, the gender perspective leads to a different and wider understanding of development and productivity, and brings about a change in the conception of training for work and in pedagogic practice. **The gender perspective is a condition and a force for innovation and for continuous improvement in training policies and technologies.**

Focalizing methodologies and action will make it possible to cater to the needs and individual characteristics of the sectors of the population that are disadvantaged and discriminated. It will also foster genuine equality between people in terms of conditions and opportunities. This means designing and implementing specific methodologies and strategies, and also allocating resources to give assistance to improve the different situations different people start from.

Many of these inequities are rooted in gender discrimination and discrimination in other dimensions like class, age, cultural differences, ethnic origin and so on. These are by their very nature very different but they are inter-related, so the methods and strategies for tackling and remedying them will also have to be diverse and specifically geared to the different situations.

Employment and training policies have traditionally resorted to subsidies or grants to compensate for differences in people's starting point, but these have mostly been seen as just one more instrument, and they have been administered in a standardized way.

In recent years, experiences in Latin American and the Caribbean have led

to this kind of instrument being revised from a gender perspective so it can be used to tackle problems that impede or limit women's access to or retention of jobs. This has to do with limitations and demands stemming from the obligation to care for children or the elderly, and also with the stereotypes and barriers that restrict vocational options, access to management positions, access to technologically innovative areas and to science and technology, and so on. The aim is to re-state roles, goals, operating modes and ways of managing.

Thus the incorporation of the compensatory strategies component into training policies was conceptualized and validated. The aim is to design and implement a range of responses (methodologies and action) and/or different contributions that are pedagogic, economic, cultural or organizational. This would tackle inequality at its roots and make it easier for people who are socially and economically disadvantaged to enter and remain in training, improve their employability, and help towards equity of opportunities.

To the extent that competency-based training was developed, and innovative elements like the "Occupational Project" scheme (which is dealt with in greater depth in chapter III) were formulated, it has been found that the subsidies - which were originally conceived in line with the competency-based training and gender approaches- could become a strategy, a didactic tool to overcome obstacles to occupational projects, to strengthen employability competencies and men's and women's capacities to manage their own lives. The competencies that are promoted include identifying problems in the family and in public ambits, recognizing knowledge and resources, the ability to solve problems, strengthening decision-making about one's own income, promoting negotiation competencies, and empowerment (with its message of the right to choose and to decide). Institutions can also cooperate with the different actors on the scene to tackle a variety of factors (child care, transport, health care, loans, complementary training for micro-enterprises, and so on) and thus become strengthened in their roles of promoting networks and potentialities at the local level.

From these perspectives training that embodies quality, relevance and equity is training that:

- promotes **the full participation of the trainees** in the world of work, guiding them as they learn to recognize and acquire knowledge and skills;
- seeks to **remove inequities** which stem from stereotyped ideas rooted in sex, origin, social situation, knowledge, etc., about the roles that different

people play. These ideas constitute obstacles to free access to training and work for everybody;

- fosters **equality of opportunities**, participation in democracy, multiculturalism, and attention to disadvantaged groups to promote their social, labour and economic insertion;
- is construed as a **tool that is sensitive and therefore relevant** to the requirements of the labour and social worlds and of their different actors;
- seeks to improve the impact, coordinating its work with wider strategies for **local or collective development**.

#### TRAINING QUALITY AND EQUITY PROGRAMME (TQEP)

The TQEP is a distance training and action initiative, developed by Cinterfor/ILO, with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, with the aim of strengthening quality control and the equity of vocational training policies. On the basis of an evaluation of a long period of inter-institutional co-operation, Cinterfor/ILO adds this effort to its central objective of monitoring, supporting and dovetailing the actions and lessons of the vocational training system in Latin America and the Caribbean, promoting dialogue and the exchange of national and regional experiences and progressing in socialization and innovation of knowledge and good practices.

The TQEP seeks to strengthen training policies methodologically and strategically, proposing a new approach that is a hub point for a *systemic approach, the double relevance with the milieu and individuals, the gender and social equity perspective, competency-based training and employability and citizenship*. With this in mind it defines the construction and teamwork as a condition for participation and as a teaching methodology, in the understanding that individuals and teams must act as multipliers of learning and agents of change inside the institution. At present, its first edition is being finalised. (11/2004 to 10/2005). Sixteen teams are participating from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, thus involving a diversity of public and private organisations, and reaching Ministries, National Training Services, National and Sector Training Institutions, local educational entities, NGOs. The common denominator is commitment to a continuous improvement of their practices as well as work with populations in unfavourable or vulnerable conditions.

The TQEP develops an *inter-learning model* addressed to sharing and establishing a dialogue about learning, experiences and practices accumulated by the regional and international vocational training system, for which purpose it offers integration of training services, bank of materials and observatory of experiences, exchange and feedback among participants and technical advisory services. Permanent and personalised monitoring of the participating institutional teams is effected by the distance co-ordinating and tutoring team. It offers a reference model with a large toolbox that provides standards such that each team may appropriate and adapt to its institutional culture the approaches, products and strategies used and tested with success in other institutions.

It adopts the construction of projects as a strategic device to generate changes and provides instruments to the participants for designing and managing an Institutional **Project for Intervention (IP)** by means of which actions and processes of revision and methodological innovation and of management methods are oriented and organised. The IP is, at the same time, a result of participation in the TQEP, a product which each institution shall possess and the teaching methodology adopted to strengthen individual and team competencies.

The training programme has also been structured in phases, like a project. *Phase 1* starts out with the recovery and valuation of the individual paths of the members of the team and of the policies and practices of the participating institutions, promoting, through readings and practical activities, a critical analysis of the situation at the start, that makes possible the development of a new and common approach to vocational activity and to training as a system. At the same time, dialogue and interaction have led the teams to remove and question prior concepts, ideas, experiences, ways of conceiving things and even personal and group identities.

In *Phases II, III and IV* the teams go into further depth regarding the knowledge of the reference model and its toolbox and perform an experience by designing the IP and planning the Innovation Plan, identifying the stresses and strategies of intervention that are most suitable for each institution. From a logic of process and of spiralling progress –that implies maturing and enrichment on the basis of practical theoretical feedback and of the dialogue with the tutorship– the teams face the challenge of translating learning into action.

From the present state of progress of the TQEP, it is established that the space of encounter proposed has promoted a different institutional dialogue, personal and institutional competencies have been strengthened, a new look at institutional policies and practices has been incorporated and the teams are taking up a position as multipliers of the approaches and tools supplied and in institutional agents of change.

## CHAPTER II

# The integrated approach to vocational training in its labour, technological and educational dimensions

*(...) education, training and lifelong learning contribute significantly to promoting the interests of individuals, enterprises, the economy and society as a whole, especially considering the critical challenge of attaining full employment, poverty eradication, social inclusion and sustained economic growth in the global economy... (Second paragraph of the preamble to ILO Recommendation 195 concerning Human Resources Development: education, training and lifelong learning).*

It has been stated in Cinterfor/ILO papers presented at Technical Committee Meetings and other events, that vocational training is simultaneously of a labour, technological and educational nature. This assumption is not only based on conceptual reflection about the nature of this field but also on the concrete expression of these aspects in experiences in different countries and regions.

There is no doubt that training activity geared to developing personal and collective capabilities, involving pedagogic strategies and a variety of didactic resources, is educational in nature. But training has also a definite orientation; it is closely linked to the world of work and production. In short, it is an educational field that has to satisfy the demand for labour competencies in the labour market and in society in general.

All productive and labour situations, at any time and in any place, have a technological dimension. The productive structures in our societies involve technologies that may be traditional or modern, simple or complex, and hard or soft. There is no way to develop knowledge and capabilities for work without direct and close reference to the techniques, equipment, materials or programmes that are essential to be able to manufacture a product or to render a service.

## **SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

Decades of tripartite or multipartite management in several of the vocational training institutions of the region have made this field one of the most stable scenarios for social dialogue. Besides this important fact, during the last fifteen years there has been a great expansion and diversification of the social dialogue spaces involving training or that include it as a strategic matter.

Firstly, in several vocational training institutions instances of participation and social dialogue have been created, linked both to sectors and productive chains, and to states, regions or provinces.

Secondly, many of the employment and training policies promoted by the Ministries of Labour are under tripartite management, either at the national level, or in states, provinces or municipalities

Thirdly, collective bargaining linked both to productive branches and to enterprises, have increasingly been incorporating contents referring to vocational training and skills development, linking it to subjects such as career development, safety and health and strategies for the enhancement of productivity and competitiveness. In some cases training has even been linked directly to wages received by workers.

Fourth, and as a result of agreements recorded within the collective bargaining process itself and to other specific agreements between employers and workers, bipartite management entities have been created aimed at either providing skills development, or at orienting existing supply, in order to address the demand for qualifications in various sectors.

Fifth, on a local level, and besides what has been mentioned regarding vocational training institutions and policies promoted by the Ministries of Labour, diverse experiences of different institutional arrangements continuously arise on training matters. They generally seek to dovetail resources and capacities in place in the territories regarding training, with the purpose of linking supply more efficiently with demand for qualifications, as well as to coherently insert vocational training policies in economic and social development strategies at the local level.

Sixth, social dialogue on vocational training has also reached the supranational level. Despite different degrees of advancement, in the regional integration processes taking place in the continent specific instances are created that deal with this subject and, in some cases, instruments have been approved that contain guidance and recommendations on vocational training policies.



From the above one can conclude that social dialogue in the vocational training field is not only stable but also has tended to expand, diversify, and increase its depth.

Moreover, as both Latin American and extra-regional experiences show, dialogue on training can become a sort of “learning space” for social players that allows for dialogue on subjects that are usually more conflictive. Indeed, dialoguing in vocational training has in several cases permitted its expansion to subjects such as productivity, employment or wages.

These nexus are reinforced in function of changes that are both internal and external to the world of work. New approaches in how work is managed and administered call for new competencies from the workers, which is why lifelong learning is more and more important, and these approaches themselves constitute technological innovations that have an impact on production spaces, materials and equipment. The introduction of technological innovations in machinery for example, or in new materials, demands that new knowledge be developed or old knowledge updated, and very probably brings about changes in the way that work is organized and in the structure and content of labour relations.

This aspect is present in each of the three dimensions, alongside the need for quality, relevance and equity, as will be seen in the sections below.

## **1. Quality, relevance and equity in the labour dimension of vocational training**

The fact that **vocational training has to do with work** is one of the main reasons why it is different from other kinds of education. This labour dimension is present both in connections to the different areas of labour relations, and in the fact that vocational training is itself an element in negotiations between employers and workers. Proposals about training have been increasingly coming into collective bargaining, which typically involves workers’ and employers’ organizations and Ministries of Labour, and training now figures in various tripartite national or sectoral pacts and agreements about employment, productivity and labour relations. These days an increasing number of collective agreements explicitly include clauses about training. Labour legislation is moving in the same direction, there are stipulations about the right to training and how this can be

put into practice, and there are bipartite and tripartite talks and agreements about this whole question.

These trends were recently recognized and explicitly promoted when ILO Recommendation 195 was passed. One example of this is Article 5.f which is a call to “*strengthen social dialogue and collective bargaining on training at international, national, region, local and sectoral and enterprise levels as a basic principle for systems development, programme relevance, quality and cost-effectiveness.*” And in Article 9.c members are called upon to “*support initiatives by the social partners in the field of training in bipartite dialogue, including collective bargaining.*”

In addition, there are clear conceptual and empirical links between training and fields like productivity, competitiveness, wages, occupational health, work conditions, work environment, social security, employment and social equity, and these make training even more important in current labour systems in the region.

In this context it can be said that *education and training are the cornerstone of decent work* (Paragraph 3 of the Resolution Concerning Training and Human Resources Development, 88<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference, 2000). Training that is of good quality and is relevant is part of the very foundations of productive work, good working conditions and job safety. What is more, good quality training is not limited to what goes on in the classroom or the workshop, rather it serves to complete and unite what takes place in the process insofar as it is combined with workplace training, and this is always linked to good quality work. In Recommendation 195, Article 9.f, it is stated that the members should “*...promote the expansion of workplace learning and training through (i) the utilization of high-performance workplace practices that improve skills.*”

It follows from the above that relevance should not be understood as a non-critical reading and acceptance of any demand. Although relevance is invariably tied to the notion of demand, training, in the correct sense of the term, should not function in such a way as to replicate ways and conditions of working that run counter to respect for basic and fundamental human rights. Quite the contrary in fact, training should always be geared to improving the quality of such ways of working and job content.

Vocational training has an important role to play in changing labour markets where there is inequity in access to employment, or in wages, or in decent working and living conditions. Inequity has a direct negative impact on social and economic development, and it ultimately undermines the foundations of

genuine competitiveness. This is probably the greatest challenge that vocational training has to face at the present time, and there is no doubt that inequity is the most important area where relevance must be pursued in public training policies and the institutions that put them into practice.

This point is dealt with in Article 3 of Recommendation 195: *“Members should identify human resources development, education, training and lifelong learning policies which:*

*a) facilitate lifelong learning and employability as part of a range of policy measures designed to create decent jobs, as well as to achieve sustainable economic and social development;*

*b) give equal consideration to economic and social objectives, emphasize sustainable economic development in the context of the globalizing 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;”*

The degree and the ways in which vocational training (and therefore the guiding principles of quality, relevance and equity) has been brought explicitly into labour relations can be considered on at least four basic levels: first, in how employers' and workers' organizations and Ministries of Labour are becoming more interested in training; second, in how it is assuming greater importance, and yielding concrete results, in collective bargaining; third, in the increase in the number and scope of labour legislation standards about training; and fourth, in the importance that vocational training has assumed in active labour market policies.

- When it comes to interest and participation on the part of actors in the labour ambit, what stands out is **the fact that Ministries of Labour have been emphasizing vocational training since the beginning of the last decade**. Their previous role was limited to intermediation in the relation between capital and labour, and the topics of negotiation were wages, job stability and working conditions. But now ministries are expanding their role and tackling the training dimension from the perspective of active employment policies. This change is apparent in the fact that there are more regulations, and also in the institutional structure of the public bodies themselves, which now have a variety of secretariats, boards and services that have been set up to cater specifically to vocational training and its relation to other aspects of labour.

- **Interest in training on the part of the entrepreneurial sector** has gone beyond the old idea that it was nothing more than a tool to be used to enhance workers' skills. The situation now is quite the reverse; training is seen as an instrument which can also play a part in improving the skills of middle- and high-level personnel, and even of the entrepreneurs themselves.  
But the influence of entrepreneurs as actors in training goes beyond aspects that are directly connected to how it should be managed, financed and executed. Employers' organizations have also been able to make their own conceptions and ideas about training felt in a very wide range of ambits where the subject is discussed, ambits that include national and sectoral agreements, bipartite and tripartite talks, and negotiations at the enterprise level.
- In addition, **workers' organizations are very much more committed to vocational training**, and they play a more active role in this area than they did twenty years ago. This is clear from the effort and seriousness of their approach to matters of training, and also from the increase in modalities and spaces where workers participate in training. This increased involvement of union organizations in the institutional spaces connected to training and skills can be seen in the progress that has been made not only conceptually but also in concrete action. There has been a great increase in specialized training-related bodies in many different union organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean. There is research and diagnosis, and studies analyzing union plans in this field are being produced. There are more and more workshops, forums and union seminars about training and its links to other subjects that are strategically important for workers' organizations. Labour education activities also include the subject of vocational training, and another dimension of the discussion is what the link between the two types of training should be.  
There have been a wide range of experiences of union participation in decision-making about training and in the actual training itself. Some of these are just in their initial stages and others are further developed, but whatever their situation they are a clear sign that the unions have resolved to play an important role in training.
- The trend for vocational training to become increasingly incorporated into collective bargaining is another aspect of the growing "labourization" of training. Because training is a subjective right for the worker and an obliga-

tion on the part of the employer, and because it directly impinges on other labour rights and conditions of work, it could be, and indeed should be, regulated autonomously. For example, numerous collective agreements have been made at the level of enterprises or branches or sectors, and these agreements not only acknowledge this right but include dispositions about questions like paid study leave, on-the-job training, guarantees of equal access to training opportunities, and even collective agreements that (alongside traditional subjects like pay, holidays and labour career) include a bipartite commitment to set up continuing training mechanisms in function of the strategic objectives of developing production in a specific sector.

- **Vocational training is also figuring more and more in labour legislation.** This can be with a view to obtaining guaranteed access to training opportunities or to regulate how the training offer functions (whether this offer is public or private). As a consequence the different roles of the actors who are involved in this field are being re-defined and re-assigned. However, headway in the training aspects of labour legislation is not limited just to what happens inside countries. Progress is also being made in setting standards and in the declarations, recommendations and practical measures adopted in the framework of setting up regional trade blocs and also in international agreements and standards. The clearest and most recent example of this international aspect is ILO Recommendation 195.
- To the extent that ministries of labour **have active labour market policies** and can participate in defining broad national guidelines they can make strategies for development and productive change. When they also start to operate in the area of strengthening and modernizing the training offer they have the possibility to act in a coordinated way to tackle the various main facets of the problem all at the same time.

There are different reasons for intervening in the labour market through active policies. One is to cope with problems that arise from the transition when a country's economy is opened up to foreign trade, another is to respond to situations of social risk by implementing re-distribution policies, and a third is to correct maladjustments in the market both with regard to the link between the supply of and the demand for labour, and also with regard to training. Within the new concept of active labour market policies, the areas where Ministries of Labour have made, and are making, their biggest and most wide-ranging impact include training programmes and

projects geared to employment for the young, re-training programmes for unemployed workers, technical support and training for workers and entrepreneurs in small scale productive units, mainstreaming the gender approach, training for low income women heads of households, and the ongoing training of active workers.

To sum up, the fact that labour actors are participating more and more in training, and the consequent impact this is having on collective bargaining about vocational training, is making a big contribution to clarifying the diverse range of interests that those actors represent in fields such as collective bargaining, labour legislation, and active labour market policies. And there is no doubt that collective bargaining is one of the most powerful tools available when it comes to tackling questions like quality in the development of vocational training, adjusting vocational training to the social and productive environment, responding to the demands and needs of individuals, enterprises, sectors and specific regions, and contributing to greater economic and social equity.

## **2. Guiding principles in the technological dimension of vocational training**

**Training is a crucial and strategically important component in innovation, development and the transfer of technology.** Many vocational training institutions, and many other similar organizations that have come into being more recently and operate in the same field, do not restrict themselves just to training.

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean there are many different experiences in centres or technological providers that these organizations themselves have set up to offer a wider and more integrated range of services not only to enterprises but to the community in general. There are materials testing laboratories, certification services for products and processes, technology trade fairs and the like, specialised publications, data banks with technological resources, consultants in various fields, technical support services, etc. Besides this, some technological institutes have shifted their approach onto research, developing and adapting “hard” technology like materials, tools and equipment, and “soft” technology like information and computer programmes, not to mention all that has to do with management, development and training of human resources.

Two of the most important and innovative ways of reinforcing this move by training institutions to render technological services are, first, the development of specialized technological centres, which are very often located in industrial or technological estates or areas with some production speciality, and second, the creation of enterprise incubators, in particular those that have a technological base.

The former are training centres that have been converted so they can cater in a focalized way to specific sectors or productive chains. This changeover favours technological specialization in these organizations, both as regards facilities, equipment and materials, and as regards the skills of the personnel. These centres still run training courses, but their offer has widened and diversified in a number of ways. First, they have become centres for technological services such as information and diffusion, consultancy, technical and technological support, the development of prototypes and moulds, or applied research such as materials testing, environmental impact studies, ergonomic studies, etc. Second, they have turned out to be excellent spaces for specialized training, so much so in fact that many universities use their facilities and capabilities to run postgraduate courses, and different enterprises send their professional personnel to be brought up to date on the latest technology in a particular sector. Third, they are also innovation centres in areas like pedagogy and training materials, and this has developed to the point that they now serve as sources of pedagogic, curricular and didactic innovation for other teaching centres. In most cases these technology centres are to be found in geographical areas or spaces where production is specialized in one particular field, and when centres are located in technological parks they complement the other types of services that are available there.

A second kind of experience that is relatively more recent than the one described above is that training institutions are including enterprise incubation services as part of their offer. In some cases these are virtual incubators, and in others there is actual physical space and resources available for the enterprises to be set up. But whatever the situation, the offer includes general services to identify opportunities, to analyse feasibility and to train management, and also technical services like market analysis, design, sales strategies, technical and technological support, applied research and entrepreneurial information. Some of the most advanced experiences are approached on incubating technology-based enterprises, and this usually presupposes having highly trained partners and staff, and high added value for these products and services. The enterprises in

the incubator are usually expected to have a close connection with the productive fabric of the geographical region were they are located so that they can contribute to developing and strengthening the added value chains that are already in operation there. Financial support for these incubated undertakings may come from public funds, international bodies or private sources.

However, it is no accident that vocational training has drawn closer to innovation, development and technology transfer services. In the productive sphere it is now just common sense that “human capital” is a critical and defining component in the productivity and competitiveness strategies of enterprises and economic sectors. Therefore, training is seen as a vital tool both for developing some or other new technology and for taking advantage of a particular technological innovation and utilizing it efficaciously.

It follows that one of the most direct connections is between technological updating and the quality, extent and relevance of the offer of training. In the first place, students on a training course can become familiar with equipment, materials and programmes that are in use or that are coming into use in different productive or service sectors. Secondly, the approach on quality in processes and in products is increasingly tending to spread into areas beyond training, and into the rendering of technological services on the part of the training institutions.

The demands that are made of training services as regards opportunity and utility also apply to the technological services that are coordinated with and that strengthen those services. These technological services also have to strive for relevance.

The guiding principle of equity (and the challenge that this involves) is also very important in the technological dimension of training. In a context in which many productive units, and particularly small scale units, find it difficult to access new technologies or information services that are suitable and timely, the role that training institutions play in providing technological services is an important factor in combating inequities in this area. In addition, we should not lose sight of the fact that training is in itself a technological activity. It operates with the principles of equity both on the level of people, especially those who are most vulnerable due to their age, sex, race or socio-economic situation, and on the level of the productive units that have the greatest difficulty in recruiting qualified personnel to promote or strengthen their technological development.

Another related point is that action is urgently needed to narrow the digital gap. The concept of the “digital gap” has to do with the inequalities which stem



## TOWARDS QUALITY STANDARDS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING SECTOR

Together with the trend towards quality management, it is being demonstrated that the continuous improvement in vocational training requires the same principles needed to improve any process in industry or services.

In several countries of the region, versions of standard ISO 9000 have been or are being adapted for their application in education and in the vocational training process. By way of example the following may be mentioned: ISO IWA 2 (*International Workshop Agreement*) a working group that produced the standard ISO 9001 version for education, the Argentine standard IRAM 30000 "*Guide for the interpretation of standard ISO-IRAM for education*", the Chilean standard NCh-2728, the certification of which is necessary for any skills development executing agency that seeks to submit its candidacy for public funds assigned to training programmes; as well as the "*Guide for application of NTP-ISO 9001:2001 in the educational sector*" of Peru.

The advantages of initiating and sustaining processes to assure quality are increasingly known and understood. A brief review of the eight basic principles of quality standards reveals their full coverage of the training process.

1. Focus on users, referring to knowledge and care of their needs.
2. Leadership, to create and maintain an internal environment inclined towards quality management.
3. Staff participation at all levels.
4. Processes based approach, requiring the definition and application of processes in training.
5. System approach to management, conceiving and relating the processes as a system.
6. Continuous improvement.
7. Approach based on facts for decision-making.
8. Mutually beneficial relations with the supplier.

from some sectors of the population having limited access to technologies, and it reflects the patterns of inequity and inequality in society. New terms have evolved: the "techno rich" and the "techno poor". The former are people who have access to the infrastructure and education that are needed to be able to take advantage

of the new technologies, while the “techno poor” are people who cannot share the benefits of these technologies for reasons that are economic, education, cultural, and so on.

As the General Director of the ILO has said, the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) revolution has opened up genuine possibilities, but it brings with it the risk that a significant proportion of the population of the world will “come out losing”.

Therefore we must increase our knowledge about the potential opportunities for countries that ICT might open up, and about the real impact of these technologies on different local situations and social groups. It should be borne in mind that access to ICTs is closely linked to social inclusion, and increasingly to the handling of community and citizens’ affairs. For everybody, women as well as men, the old as well as the young, the rural population as well as city-dwellers, in the current world situation being unable to manage ICTs is equivalent to being illiterate.

### **3. Training as an educational fact and the need for quality, relevance and equity**

It is clear that the current trend in training organizations in Latin America is towards developing a wide and flexible training offer. These institutions offer training that ranges from beginner’s courses through middle and high level training to the top levels where even university professionals can be brought up to date on the latest developments in a given field. Moreover, there are countless cases of cooperation between institutions and other public bodies like Ministries of Education in fields as varied as secondary technical education, non-university technology teaching, adult education, and work with enterprises, with unions, with non-governmental organizations, and so many other areas that they simply cannot be listed here.

We must acknowledge that **an element of training that has always been part of education is being reinforced** not only through the offer from specialized institutions themselves but also as a result of the search for improved coordination and cooperation with other bodies, organizations and teaching modalities that are working in this field.

It follows that in this dimension of education the challenge of adopting an

integrated quality, relevance and equity approach is greater. It is clear that in all our countries the educational systems are facing this same challenge, and it is also evident that, because of its specific area of action, vocational training can make a special contribution to educational efforts in different countries.

There are important historical antecedents to vocational training making a contribution to greater equity in education. For example, past campaigns to combat illiteracy were sometimes supported by vocational training institutions that made their infrastructure, capabilities and experience available. Another example is the fact that vocational training has usually been the main, if not the only, educational alternative for disadvantaged sectors of the population.

At the moment, the vocational training institutions are working on ensuring quality in their products and processes in a way that is wider and goes deeper than what is taking place in the systems and organizations of general education. This trend is gaining momentum, and it could spread from vocational training to general education. In fact, this is already happening and the quality approach is being adopted more and more in technical and technological secondary education.

Vocational training has also made progress and gained experience in promoting the relevance of the training and technological services it offers, and this has made it a shining example and a paradigm for education and even for the university system.

However, a full picture of the strategic importance of developing and consolidating an integrated approach in vocational training based on the principles of quality, relevance and equity would not be understood unless it is seen in the light of a conception of what a fair proportion of societies today expect from education in general and vocational training in particular, namely **lifelong learning and the concomitant challenge of providing quality basic education for everyone**.

It is less than twenty years since vocational training institutions first took note of the challenge posed by the progressive erosion of the permanent employment pattern (the model of people staying in the same job all their lives). Nowadays the world of work is being transformed by accelerating technological change and by increasing exposure to the competitive conditions of a global economy. In response to this challenge the training institutions have structured their offer in such a way that they are no longer rendering services to train people during a limited period before active economic life begins (qualifications that, in the past,

had a more delayed useful life). Instead, they are rendering services that are flexible enough to cater to a demand that is not only wider and more diverse but also in a permanent change.

There is general consensus on the political level and in society as a whole, that the offer of education and training should be re-structured to make it flexible enough to respond to a demand for learning that is diverse and ever-changing. Nowadays nobody expects the initial stock of knowledge they build up in their youth to serve them for the rest of their lives. The rapid changes in the world of work and production mean that knowledge has to be continually brought up to date, at a time when the basic education of young people is tending to get longer. In fact education and training are mutating, the learning possibilities on offer outside the school ambit are multiplying, and the traditional notion of specialization is being replaced in many modern sectors by the notion of evolving and adaptable competencies.

This is basically a qualitative change. In the past it was enough to teach specific technical knowledge and certain manual skills so that people would be able to go into a job that was there waiting for them. But all that has changed and in the modern world it is essential to develop a whole range of competencies that were never sufficiently emphasized before such as initiative, creativity, the capacity to initiate an enterprise, and patterns of relating to and cooperating with others. Besides these, there are new generic competencies that are relatively less specific than in the past such as languages, computer skills, logical reasoning, the capacity to analyze and interpret different codes, and so on.

Therefore it is essential to provide people with the means to manage their own labour careers and vocational development trajectories. This involves finding a first job, changing jobs, starting a business, taking courses to improve specific skills, and being trained all the time, whether they are employed or unemployed, and whether this takes place at home or in the workplace. This concept of lifelong learning is very clearly summed up in Article 2.a of Recommendation 195: *“The term “lifelong learning” encompasses all learning activities undertaken throughout life for the development of competencies and qualifications.”* This turnaround in training is both conceptual and practical, and it has a series of consequences that should be made explicit, namely:

- First, while in the past the dominant trend was to specialize, **today it is necessary to have a series of basic and general competencies that serve not only to be able to perform more autonomously in a job and to cope with**

**unforeseen situations that have to be handled as they come up, but also to be able to “navigate” in a labour market that is difficult and competitive.**

Training of the specific kind is still necessary but the trend is now to acquire skills on the job, and enterprises are becoming aware of the advantages of taking responsibility for this. Training institutions and many specific programmes are starting to move closer to the sphere of general or regular education, both in content and as regards their institutional setup. General education is also being reformed and re-structured, and it is benefiting from this closer connection to vocational training to the extent that it can take advantage of the experience that vocational training has in the area of relating to the productive sector. In other words, there is a beneficial synergy for both parties.

- **Second, responsibility for training is now being shared much more: it has necessarily become an area of coordinated action and cooperation.** Now that people are not trained only in study centres but learn at home or at work, responsibility for training is shared among training organizations, entrepreneurs, governments, and individuals themselves (and the organizations they belong to and that represent them). This has revitalized bipartite and tripartite systems, and new forms of managing training have emerged. These do not conform to one single model. For example, there are social and political agreements that have led to alternating or dual training modalities, there are training and production centres that are co-managed by employers' organizations or by unions, there are foundations managed by unions but co-financed by the entrepreneurial sector, and there are national tripartite management systems. But whatever form of management pertains, one thing is certain: the trend is towards making alliances that allow resources that different actors in society control to be taken advantage of so they can be used more efficiently and be put at the service of lifelong and holistic training for the people who make up society.
- **Third, by its very nature, for lifelong learning to be possible at all the offer of training services must be flexible and dynamic.** The progressive blurring of the frontiers between the basic competencies needed in different branches of the productive structure means there are countless ways in which individuals can accede to the same kind of work. These people's demands for training are difficult to standardize. In order to cater to this wide range of requirements the training offer ought to be a sort of self-service menu

from which each individual would be able to choose items to meet his or her individual training needs in a wide variety of circumstances, at different times, in different subjects, and at different levels of study. Another dimension here is that the demands on training have also expanded and diversified in function of factors like the greater importance that information and knowledge now have in production processes, the fact that large numbers of young people are coming into economically active life particularly in the less industrialized countries, employment in the public sector is shrinking everywhere, workers have been made redundant from firms that are undergoing conversion or have disappeared, and new modalities of employment and self-employment have been emerging. The challenge is to cater to the whole of the active population, the employed as well as the unemployed, in modern sectors as well as in backward ones, in the formal and in the informal economy, and to adults as well as to young people. But this challenge cannot be met efficiently by one single actor, even in those rare cases when sufficient financial resources are available. Hence, yet again, there is no alternative to trying to coordinate the efforts of a range of actors who, each in his own specific sphere and with his own specific resources, can contribute to constructing a training system that is wide-ranging, flexible and diversified enough to cater to the increasingly heterogeneous demand for continuing education.

It is clear that the possibility for the large disadvantaged sectors of the population to have access to lifelong learning depends on two key factors. First, as was mentioned above, the offer of training services should be flexible, diverse, up-to-date and equitable. Second, **these people themselves should be provided with the basic competencies that are essential as a base for subsequent learning.**

Hence lifelong learning presupposes coordination and inter-dependence between the different levels and forms of education and vocational training, and this includes the key area of basic education. This is made very clear in Article 6.2 of ILO Recommendation 195: *“Education and pre-employment training include compulsory basic education incorporating basic knowledge, literacy and numeracy skills and the appropriate use of information and communication technology.”*

In general, the countries of the region have made considerable progress in basic education coverage. This has enabled a number of national institutions to approach on their most specific task: training for work. In the past, this was not

the case because much of vocational training was necessarily geared to remedying the deficiencies in literacy and basic schooling that afflicted large sectors of the population.

Good progress has been made across the board, but at least two basic problems are still with us. First, there are many backward rural and urban population sectors that still do not have access to basic education, or if they do, a large proportion of children do not complete the primary education phase. Second, there are great differences between the quality of the education offered to social groups that are at different socio-economic levels.

This segmentation in access to good quality basic education is a factor in the perpetuation of a two-level society in which one level is disadvantaged in terms of training, labour market insertion, social and political participation, and therefore ultimately in terms of income. It follows that all efforts to build an education and training offer that seeks to meet the challenge of lifelong learning with quality, relevance and social equity will necessarily have to include investment in basic education for those people who are currently excluded from it, who delay in completing it, or who are generally being denied basic educational services of reasonable quality.





## CHAPTER III

# Innovation in the framework of the integrated approach

*Members should identify human resources development, education, training and lifelong learning policies which...*

*(c) stress the importance of innovation, competitiveness, productivity, growth of the economy, the creation of decent jobs and the employability of people, considering that innovation creates new employment opportunities and also requires new approaches to education and training to meet the demand for new skills; (Article 3.c of ILO Recommendation 195 concerning Human Resources Development: education, training and lifelong learning).*

The idea that the tensions caused by numerous challenges are a powerful incentive for innovation in vocational training has often been confirmed, and there are examples that date from long ago as well as more recent experiences. Adopting an integrated approach, which simultaneously promotes the inter-dependent goals of quality, relevance and equity, means that vocational training institutions inevitably have to be bringing in new innovations all the time.

Vocational training institutions are not just a space for constant innovation in activities that have to do with their own specific field of action; they have now become an integral part of national innovation systems. Through their training offer they contribute to consolidating the innovation chain in the application to products and services phases, both by incorporating new equipment and materials and by new approaches in the way work is managed and administered. But they also contribute by rendering technological services to support applied research and the diffusion of these innovations.

It is beyond the scope of this study to give an exhaustive list of all the innovations that have been made in recent years in the vocational training ambit in general and in the training institutions themselves. Nevertheless, it is possible to give a general outline of the ones that are most important because of their results

due to their possible impact in the future. Some of these innovations are:

- the increasingly widespread adoption of the labour competencies approach;
- the validation and inter-institutional collective construction of new learning approaches and methodologies such as training for employability and citizenship and the Occupational Project (OP) scheme;
- innovation in the management of training centres mainly in the area of institutional projects that are usually coordinated with local and/or sectoral economic development strategies;
- the spread and diversification of experiences in utilizing both new and traditional information and communication technologies (ICTs).

### **1. The role of the competencies approach as a nexus between education and work**

Whichever path is taken towards providing training and education to meet the challenge of lifelong learning, a series of difficulties will inevitably appear and will have to be overcome. Some examples of these are the following:

- To find ways to coordinate the different modalities of training, and to coordinate these with other offers in education (the construction of vocational itineraries).
- To find out what labour performance yields the best results in terms of productivity and quality, and also what the organizational and environmental situations are in which this performance has the best chance to be expressed and developed.
- To have tools that will enable us to find out what combination of knowledge, skills and dexterities are needed for this performance.
- To adapt training schemes as a whole so they will be able to contribute effectively to developing these combinations.
- To construct mechanisms and codes that will enable the world of education and the world of work to communicate with each other, so as to be able to adapt training and to set up systems whereby personal capabilities can be recognized regardless of how or where they were acquired.

In short, this means constructing information and guidance systems whereby enterprises will be able to associate one particular performance with achieving

certain productive ends, vocational training institutions will be able to develop a range of services to provide the skills needed for this performance, and people will have clear and transparent frames of reference to be able to develop their vocational itineraries throughout their lives.

The labour competencies approach has spread throughout Latin America and the Caribbean since the second half of the 1990s. It is probably the most consistent response to this need that has emerged in the region, and it has come from vocational training institutions. The fact that it has grown and developed demonstrates the extraordinary capacity of these institutions to create, accumulate, transform and apply knowledge that is useful in teaching and learning, and in the development of training programmes.

In recent years in the region, vocational training has been growing in experiences, debate and achievements in areas such as the link between education and work, support for the lifelong learning philosophy, the recognition of competencies, and other matters that have to do with developing human talent in these countries. These subjects have been clearly formulated in ILO Recommendation 195 about human resources development. This new recommendation provides a synthesis from many fields that are already part of the conceptual progress in training.

Analysis of the modernization of training was already well under way in the 1980s, when many institutions were heavily criticized for not being responsive to the training demands of the economy. The methods used to create occupational profiles and the very good work in curricular design that had lasted for decades proved to be obsolete in the face of rapid change in the techniques used in work, and in how work was organized.

Since then, the competencies approach has provided these institutions with a new way to approach how programmes are defined, how knowledge is recognized, and how the different levels and sources of training can be harmonized. After 1996, a number of training institutions took it upon themselves to update their programmes and to create new ones, and they were guided in this by the labour competencies approach.

Other training institutions that were relatively up-to-date gradually became aware of the advantages that could be gained from approaching training on results rather than on tasks, and that this would have a positive impact on the development of competencies for employability and citizenship, on recognizing the importance of basic competencies, and on flexibility in modular design.

### **COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING: A REAL TECHNICAL-PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION**

Rapid progress in incorporating new technologies, new qualifications required for performance and new work organisation structures, are, among others, the trends that have dominated the vocational training area during the past few years. If one were to ask how training institutions have responded, one of the most marked and decisive replies would be that among the many actions undertaken what has doubtless stood out has been the modernisation of training programmes through the adoption of the labour competencies approach.

The notion of labour competency as an achievement, result, and overall, labour capacity, is without a doubt an interpretation of work that is in keeping with present times. Training institutions have once more resorted to consultation with the entrepreneurial and labour milieu to draw up their programmes, research methodologies on the contents of work have been renewed and, nowadays, progress and products are revealed that were for many years not witnessed in the region.

Indeed, in one way or another, all the countries of the region have incorporated the labour competency approach into their vocational training programmes; the same is being done in several programmes of technical education and even of university education. A complete collection of technical materials to prepare programmes oriented towards performance and work well done, may be found in the "labour competency" section of the Cinterfor/ILO web page which in many cases refers to web sites of national institutions.

What competency-based training poses is a contemporary conceptualisation of what work means and its results. Vocational training has always been closely related to labour activity and it is in this way that it must be interpreted and programmes and contents must be generated, in accordance with the needs of employment, jobs, labour activities and other manifestations of work in enterprises and organizations. Recommendation 195 on the development of human resources recently assumed directly the concept of labour competency as also that of employability, recognizing the importance of broad-based vocational training to facilitate the access to a decent job.

The concept of labour competency is not exhausted in the definition and adoption of programmes. At present, the greatest challenge for training institutions is also to incorporate it into teaching practices, thus new approaches to learning begin to be manifested more closely to the notion of competency. Training based on problem solving and the training that is aimed at project planning and execution, appear to be necessary teaching strategies. In the same way training experiences that use information and communications technologies

are applying innovative teaching conceptions with a view to developing competencies rather than simply transmitting information.

Many training institutions have already incorporated teaching innovations when creating strategies of learning by projects, with working groups, with multidisciplinary interaction, with a teacher who facilitates and encourages and guides the participants to achieve competency development objectives. In this area the way still to be travelled is vast, but training institutions continue to show their capacity to accumulate and generate knowledge and to deliver daily new ways of learning that are proven in practice.

This move towards labour competency stirred up considerable debate, and fortunately this is still going on. Competency-based training brings entrepreneurs and workers into the task of establishing what the content of training programmes should be, so this capacity to generate debate has spilled over into discussion and the exchange of ideas. Subjects like workers' participation in defining competencies, or adopting personnel management models that are inspired by the competencies approach, were and still are subjects for analysis and negotiation.

Although discussion about the application of the labour competencies approach has not yet come to an end, what has happened in the last few years in Latin America is that a veritable critical mass of knowledge and good practices has been built up, knowledge that has to do with training and its relation to areas like productivity, employment and income.

Different training institutions in the region have adopted the competencies approach at different rhythms but there has always been a clear orientation towards improving relevance and quality, and these organizations have always sought to strengthen themselves as institutions. Many Ministries of Labour have adopted the competencies approach in the implementation of their active employment and training policies whose objectives include tackling inequities in access to training and employment. The guidelines and content of the technical education oriented by Ministries of Education reflect competency as a basic guiding principle in programme development. Various projects (with international financing) to foster training and raise productivity in specific sectors have adopted the competencies approach as an effective formula for achieving tangible results in training. More recently, the national education policies in various countries

## **DOVETAILING AND CO-ORDINATING EDUCATION AND LABOUR: MAKING LIFELONG LEARNING A REALITY**

Many have been the efforts deployed in the past few years to favour dovetailing between vocational training and education in Latin America and the Caribbean. These efforts have been strengthened by the increasing importance acquired by the concept of lifelong learning. This approach implies that each and all the training and educational events of persons, i.e., everything that increases their wealth of capacities and competencies, must be valued and acknowledged.

Thus it is that the traditional separation between academic education and training is giving way to new arrangements in which alliances are made so that the graduates of vocational training programmes may continue their training at further levels that are usually associated with higher level training.

The idea of lifelong learning is seen here reinforced by the possibility that the participants transit a training-educational pathway that allows them to progress, for example, from an initial training level in an occupation, and go through technical, technological and even university and post-graduate levels. For this purpose clear dovetailing is required between public and private institutions of either the vocational training or the educational area.

The most critical links in this "chain" are precisely at the levels in which the supplies of training institutions and technical middle education establishments come together. In this area strategic alliances are already being established among different institutions of the region and educational establishments. The key to these efforts is the mutual recognition of occupational profiles and the quality of programmes. Several countries are working on measures that will favour dovetailing training programmes with educational programmes. To be mentioned are the cases of Chile with "Chile Califica" in which SENCE participates actively, the Colombian programme with the National Vocational Training System and the concept of "training chains" promoted by SENA and, in Brazil, the Law of basic guidelines for education provides for mobility and dovetailing between vocational education and formal education.

Efforts and experiences are also to be witnessed between training institutions and universities to achieve the promotion of dovetailing. There are more instrumental aspects to be observed such as allowing universities to use workshops and equipment in some programmes, to more complex subjects such as the mobility that begins in higher technical level programmes and is dovetailed with university graduation offers. Participants in the programmes now find possibilities that are much closer to the concept of lifelong training and permanent learning.

The idea of lifelong education is finding an increasingly resonant echo in policies formulated

by the Ministries of Education and Labour as well as those that involve training and human resources development. The recent promulgation of ILO Recommendation 195 will doubtlessly have much to do with future progress.

have been geared to creating an education model that includes the philosophy of lifelong learning and also the principles of quality, relevance and equity.

The history of the development of the labour competencies approach in the Latin American and the Caribbean region may not be long but it has certainly been intense, and the concept of competency itself has evolved from an approach on standards to a more comprehensive view.

The definition of competencies as units made up of knowledge and/or qualities is now giving way to an understanding of the concept that is based on mobilized capacities. Competent work is now seen as consisting of a complex mix of attributes and abilities in certain tasks, and the capacity a person develops to bring this whole collection into play in his working life.

Competency seen from this perspective is not so much a question of the labour activity that a person does, nor is it what he or she extracts from the work done in a particular job, it is more a matter of an individual being able to mobilize his or her competency resources to successfully carry out the activity, task or operation in question. This notion of vocational or labour competency brings three dimensions into play, and all of these are important for quality, for relevance and, as we shall see below, for equity in training. These are the potentiality of the subject, performance, and social recognition.

Competency includes **the potentiality of the subject**. This is because it is not a question of specific knowledge derived from a single disciplinary area (academic knowledge), but rather a *combination of different kinds of knowledge derived from different sources* that the person brings into play in specific concrete contexts to solve problems that come up in the actual work situation. That is to say, it is an *action decided and performed by the person*, and not something that is given. In addition, a person's skills, knowledge, dexterities and attitudes must be "available" when he or she needs them, in other words, when in the performance of a job he or she is confronted with the need to tackle situations and solve problems whether they are foreseen or not. Lastly, labour, social, community and social practices are recognized as spaces for learning, and this is then integrated into what is learned in the classroom.

Thus competencies are not only manifested in **performance**, they are also constructed in performance. The process of acquiring competencies is not a phase of acquiring concepts followed by a phase of applying them in practice, quite the contrary, it is **in the application itself** that competencies are constructed. To determine what constitutes **competent performance** presupposes identifying and defining the components of training through the intervention of actors who stipulate what it should consist of, that is to say through **collective bargaining about training**. From their different positions employers, workers, experts, trainers and users all contribute to defining the skills and abilities that have to be brought into play in a particular activity.

Competencies can be accredited, they can acquire **social recognition**. In other words, they are validated in accordance with criteria in the productive and professional sphere, they are socially recognized and valued, and they are expressed in the form of standards. These standards operate as a guide for evaluating competencies and also for designing training offers, so in fact they constitute criteria for quality and relevance in training.

Knowledge and skills are built up culturally and socially, they are not generic and therefore there is no determinant relation between the sex of a person and his or her capacity to carry out a task. Men and women both have limitations when it comes to developing certain competencies. In the world of work a person's sex in itself seems to be a competitive advantage or disadvantage, and this is intensified if it coincides with a certain skin colour, belonging to a specific social group, and so on. The fact that there is a gender factor in what is "socially acceptable" for women and men to do, means that there is unequal development in the competencies that the two sexes build up in labour, community and family life. Hence it is social perception that gives gender attributes the nature of competencies. We should bear in mind that the knowledge derived from roles that are traditionally assigned to men or to women are not recognized socially and consequently are not regarded as labour competencies or taken into account when it comes to setting standards.

It follows from the above that the competency approach is strengthened by the addition of the gender approach. The union of the two approaches consolidates a conceptual and methodological framework for training policies centred on dual relevance, and therefore this makes a big contribution to improving equity.



When we perceive and evaluate the knowledge, aptitudes and skills of male and female workers barriers can be removed. Inequities that are rooted in stereotyped ideas about the capabilities that a person brings into play because of factors like sex, origin, social situation, knowledge, and so on, and which block free access to training and work options, can be overcome.

Developing or revising a study plan which incorporates the competency and gender approaches makes it possible to answer the following questions: Who is to be trained? In what subject? To what purpose? With whom? How? And When? In all these questions there are equity risks with respect to the target population, and it is necessary to be alert to these risks to be able to design the appropriate didactic responses to approach and cater to these people. Consequently, there has to be an intensive plan to train the people who plan projects and who write the curriculum, as well as the teachers, so they will be able to revise their roles, adopt the key approaches and apply them. These people have to be alert, in the design phases and in the classroom practice, to the different expressions of these inequities that are hidden in the curriculum: implicit sources of inequity that go beyond what is intended and beyond all the personal, relational and cultural factors that work in favour of or limit men's and women's employability and citizenship competencies.

The strategies and methodologies for defining profiles and requirements and for putting them into the curriculum can be very varied, and so can personnel training, but there is no doubt that they have to have a common goal: to attend to dual relevance and to expand opportunities.

Moreover, in the most recent research in this subject the configuration of collective competency is recognized. This explains the good results achieved by work teams and in ambits that foster motivation and productivity. The human resources management approach dwells on the need to develop these collective competencies, or to put it another way, on the collective subject, in order to make the extraordinary potential of tacit knowledge that is created –that circulates and is applied in work teams- as explicit as possible. One element that distinguishes the competencies approach from the traditional approach of management based on qualities and qualifications is that competency is linked to the organization's strategic objectives.

This linkage means that competency on the individual, collective or organizational level can allow information in the organization to be transformed into knowledge that can be utilized to promote competitiveness in the company. Or-

ganizations generate, store and administer vast amounts of information, and routines, some planned and others thought up by the workers themselves, developed in day to day interaction. The effort to improve competitiveness is an effort to transform this information into knowledge applicable to generating innovations. Individual, group or organizational competency becomes a powerful engine for learning, and therefore a crucial aspect of human resources management.

But if there is one point on which all the different competency approaches agree it is that competency acquisition is an ongoing process, an open-ended path towards improvement and constant updating. In the knowledge society, competencies are generated and changed with breathtaking speed, so competency certification has an expiry date, which means that keeping oneself up to date and developing constantly is itself a competency. It is listed as such in all development frameworks for human talent, for enterprise management, and in national efforts to formulate labour training policies.

## **2. Innovation in learning methodologies: constructing occupational projects and developing competencies for employability and citizenship**

A new social and labour situation has come into being through the emergence of the knowledge society, the crisis in the paradigm of stable and predictable employment for the masses, and the definitive and increasing integration of women into the economically active population. In this new context, the main responsibility of labour training policies is to become a meeting point between the productive system and the needs and potential of the individual and collective actors (people and enterprises) that make up this system.

This means that training must interact with the productive and social environment, read its signals, be sensitive to its requirements, and adjust and improve the quality of the training offer. It must adapt in such a way that occupational training plans are relevant and that they serve not only to raise productivity and competitiveness in enterprises, but also to improve people's employment situation. At the same time, training must also put the approach on the people who learn so as to (a) recover and strengthen competencies that transcend the old limits and take in different job performances in different occupational fields throughout working life, and (b) revise and modify the explicit and hidden messages in curriculum and in actual educational practice (which in some cases can

strengthen people's real potentialities but in other cases limits them) so as to generate and manage institutional knowledge in such a way that it can be combined with, and give value to and mobilize, people's knowledge.

From this approach of training for work, the design and management of training policies is oriented not only to incorporating training for employability and citizenship and the gender perspective, as inter-dependent approaches that can be brought into the mainstream of training, but also to establishing a vital nexus between quality, relevance and equity.

In order for people's labour and professional lives to develop they must be nourished with new knowledge all the time, so it is essential for them to have a new way of learning. In these times of change and uncertainty this new way of learning must be able to foster the capacity to constantly assimilate new knowledge, and must be geared to mobile occupational pathways, rather than to employment that is predictable and stable. What this means in fact is that people's employability will be strengthened when they are able to organize their experience, capabilities and needs in developing competencies to cope with the employment situation, when they see themselves as instrumental in constructing their own career paths, and when they learn to identify their own possibilities and difficulties and those of the labour situation.

One of the most recent and innovative strategies for developing employability is to give training and guidance so that men and women can construct individual or collective **occupational projects**, aimed at improving their employment situation or at finding a solution to unemployment. This strategy is based on **the human capacity to formulate projects**, and the aim is to mobilize people's competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) so as to improve their position in the world of work. This is especially necessary in times of crisis, change and uncertainty where people need to be more committed, autonomous and flexible.

The approach that orients this strategy presupposes that the trainees are conditioned by structural situations in the labour context, and that there are also spaces for relative individual and collective autonomy where they can operate and change the situation. Thus the occupational project is the result of a transaction between the limitations of the social and economic environment and people's potential in terms of attributes and interests.

The work of constructing occupational projects involves the different actors in the process in different ways. First, for **the trainees** it is a *plan of action, a collection of activities they will define and manage so as to improve their*

*employment situation and develop the competencies needed to do so.* Therefore, it is a coordinating core idea that promotes people's involvement in training and in labour insertion. Second, for those who **train and guide** it is a didactic methodology to help trainees to construct itineraries and projects that have to do with their labour situation in the context of their lives, to identify and develop key competencies for employability and citizenship, and to diversify their career options. This means that the quality and relevance of training for work can be enhanced to the extent that it gives sense and direction to the courses that people choose when a labour project is defined or consolidated. Lastly, for the **institutions** that implement this strategy, the construction of occupational projects is the guiding principle that coordinates the teaching-learning process, and it makes it easier for training to be personalized and made more flexible. The role of training is strengthened, becoming a hinge in that it caters to the requirements of people and also of the social, economic and productive environment that demands a leading role from its actors to initiate their projects and carry them through.

This methodology is based on the point where the competency and gender approaches intersect, and it underlies two dimensions involved in constructing a labour career: the incorporation of labour guidance as a component of training, and the strengthening of competencies for employability and citizenship.

The role of orientation and labour guidance is to accompany people and instruct them in the stages before, during and after training, so as to achieve the ultimate goal of creating better opportunities. This point will be dealt with in depth in Chapter 4.

What is needed to be able to design and run a feasible occupational project, from the view point of the trainees, are the key competencies of employability and to be able to exercise active citizenship. Putting this kind of scheme into practice involves access to the public labour world, connections with other institutions and people, and reflection and negotiation about what the responsibilities and rights in the work situation should be, solving problems, promoting participative leadership, teamwork, cooperation, and so on.

To sum up, in identifying the competencies that people need to develop to improve their starting situation as regards employment, personal limitations and those imposed by the actual situation have to be considered. These are what lie behind differences in opportunities to participate in the world of work and in society. Nowadays, people have to play a more active role in employment, train-

ing and community processes, and to do so they need new personal competencies that are behavioural and technical. These are necessary to be able to perform adequately at work, either in a dependent or in an independent capacity, and are increasingly important in what until recently were considered atypical models of employment (working from home, part time work, fixed-term contracts, distance work and so on). These competencies can only be fostered if the trainee is seen as the point of intersection between many factors that condition him or her as an individual, including gender, ethnic origin, social class, employment situation, being a rural or a city dweller, and also his or her personal history, the influence of family and community, etc. Therefore the competencies of employability and citizenship are of a *relational, contextual and dynamic nature*. They are *relational and contextual* because they come into play in people's interaction in the field of work, which is to say in the relations that people establish in specific productive, labour and social contexts. It follows that they cannot be defined in a universal or neutral way, nor can they be treated as a phenomenon that it is up to the individual to handle. Policy-makers have the responsibility to impart these competencies in an equal way to everybody. In addition, the competencies to be developed are *dynamic* because they can no longer be limited to those pertaining to one specific job, or regarded as valid for a lifetime, or seen as the only way to participate in social and community decision-making.

The outstanding characteristics of this view of the training and guidance strategy are as follows:

- it focuses on **the trainees**, who are inserted in a context that conditions them and that can be changed;
- it promotes the idea that **diversity** is an attribute of the trainees and of the social context that enriches social relations and therefore makes learning and exchanges possible;
- it recognizes and takes advantage of **different spaces for learning** and for producing knowledge;
- it facilitates the construction of **personal careers** that are adapted to different interests, profiles and environments of reference.

The situations that the occupational project scheme can be used to modify are, for example, recent or long term unemployment, the need to increase personal or family income, or to improve a person's current or future relation with work.

The starting point for working with this methodology is to define the employment situation of the individual who is going to construct his or her occupational project. It is most important to bear in mind here that these people's situations may be very diverse. For example, they may have been made redundant because of the shutdown of an employment source, they may have lost their job for another reason, they may be seeking a first job, they may be long-term unemployed, they may be in a group collectively seeking resources to undertake some self-employment initiative, or they may be looking for a way to make progress in their own career.

This working methodology may be used to help and guide people in all the situation profiles mentioned above, and it is important to keep this in mind when it comes to designing teaching and other activities, or proposing situations or cases to reflect upon and analyze. When trainees undertake their occupational project they will embark on a voyage, and they will be helped and strengthened by inputs from training and guidance services.

When people know how far they have to travel between the knowledge and competencies that they already have and those they will need to acquire to be able to perform in a specific field they are better able to choose the training courses they need to generate employment for themselves (set goals), and using this as a base, they can plan what they have to do and consider the time element and resources they will need. This also contributes to getting them to monitor their own progress. In addition, it is important to note that constructing an occupational project is a dynamic and open process, that is to say the plan can be revised and adapted to the life situation of the person who undertakes it.

As was mentioned above, **the occupational project may be individual or collective** because it includes “learning to undertake” as a key competency for employability, and because it promotes the coordination of efforts and resources to create alternative ways in which the target population can achieve economic insertion. **Therefore it is a powerful methodology for designing training and employment policies, policies to combat poverty, and approaches to the informal economy.** In a general economic climate of recession and uncertainty about employment there are a great many collective projects to set up micro-enterprises, and to satisfy this demand the scope of training policies has to be widened to offer not only specific technical training but also, and on a large scale, a comprehensive and flexible menu of strategies and resources to deal with the

practical phase of training and to cater to the requirements of the trainees' occupational projects.

Therefore, supporting and promoting people's occupational project is a challenge, and if it is accepted it gives the training organizations a new reason to be. The organizations have to reformulate their role and see themselves as travelling companions for the projects and coordinators of a variety of resources and actors in the local scene. To achieve this goal it is necessary to overhaul linkages with the productive and social environment and make the necessary changes to curricular development, the teacher's role, and so on. The relation with the productive environment is vital to be able to identify and coordinate potentialities and capacities that are very scattered and widely spread, to become inserted into local development projects and join forces with social and community organizations so as to create the external conditions to make these training and job creation projects possible. Curricular development is also important because it is necessary to take account of the expectations and needs of the participants. Moreover, it is necessary to make it easier to enrol on courses and to leave them and to pursue occupational routes, trusting that the individual in question will know where to go to make good use of the technical, management or information services he or she needs to carry their project forward.

In other words, adopting the project methodology is innovative, improves the policy's quality and relevance, and it leads the training institution to reformulate its own project to adjust its mission and its management strategies.

### **3. Innovations in the management of centres**

It should be clear by now that if a philosophy of continual improvement is adopted not only in the management of processes but also in results, and including attention to the relevance of vocational training both as regards its relation to the productive, social, technological and cultural environment or context and as regards the characteristics and needs of trainees, and including pro-active measures to remedy inequities, the action taken has to reach all levels of the institution in general and the training centres in particular.

It is only possible to make progress in adopting innovations like competencies-based training and the development of new kinds of learning if at the same time there is a vigorous and sustained effort to make innovative changes in the modalities of management in training centres.

## OCCUPATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PROJECT SOME EXAMPLES

The Occupational Project (OP) is a training methodology developed by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Argentina, the INFOCAL Foundation of Bolivia, the INA of Costa Rica, within the framework of the FORMUJER Programme, and by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security–DINAE/JUNAE (National Employment Bureau/ National Employment Board) of Uruguay, on the basis of the PROIMUJER Programme execution. Its aim is to increase employability and participation as citizens of both women and men.

The evaluations made and the opinions of managers, teachers and students agree that its application:

- innovated training technology, re-defined the role of the teacher and boosted the re-definition of the role of the VTIs as a proactive tool for dovetailing the potentialities and resources of the productive milieu and of local development players in order to, firstly, identify viable occupational profiles and, later, add support to the OPs of the students;
- showed that the training space is effective and potent to promote and support the development of collective occupational projects;
- enabled quality training for vulnerable populations that is being imitated on a larger scale in executing institutions and in the entities and instances to which the approaches and inputs were transferred, especially in national training policies, policies against poverty and for the informal economy;
- generated changes and an increase in employability: women and men removed the main obstacles for access to employment (low self-esteem, invisibility or lack of competencies, blocks both personal and relational, gender marks, etc.); they incorporated an attitude of search for and generation of opportunities as well as recognition of their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to labour requirements in force; they were conceived as builders of their future and the competencies acquired were decisive for the individual and collective generation of employment itself.

As can be appreciated in the following examples, the OP methodology was applied in diverse contexts and appealing to multiple and creative strategies to involve players and resources. This was translated into a revision and innovation of training centres management, i.e., into formulating Institutional Projects addressing the improvement of the training supply according to criteria of quality, double relevance and promotion of equal opportunities.



- ▼ **Cooperativa Punha, Jujuy, Argentina.** A productive undertaking and a skills development entity in the crafts-work textile area as well as in jams and preserves, made up of indigenous populations, mainly unemployed women. It submitted its candidacy and was selected by the MTEySS (Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Protection) as one of the VTIs executing FORMUJER. Work was done together with its members on the recognition and valuation of their ancestral wisdom, their rights, on the problems of gender as well as on the improvement of techniques, designs, organisation and marketing. Craftswomen were turned into instructors which enabled the creation of new groups that made possible responses to increased demand generated by the enhancement of marketing circuits; Punha quality standards were produced to ensure the uniformity of the production of the various associated groups. Composition by sex of the management of the Cooperative was reverted, so that now a majority of managers are women; several leaders are taking part in communal government; gender skills development was incorporated into the PUNA network, with the membership of dozens of organizations of the region, and into provincial teacher training. At present, the Co-operative is a training entity for the Programme of Female and Male Heads of Households, entitling its beneficiaries to be incorporated in new productive undertakings.
- ▼ **Universidad de Quilmes, UNQUI-FUNDEMOS Programme, Gran Buenos Aires, Argentina.** As a result of the desire to link the University with the lower class sectors and to promote the applicability of scientific knowledge in basic productive experiences, it submitted its candidacy and was selected by the MTEySS to take part in the FORMUJER Programme as an executing agency. By working together with the street market community in Berazategui, two new occupational profiles were identified and developed: *specialist in micro-propagating of seedlings by biotechnology* and *commercial and productive techniques to obtain micro-propagating seedlings*, through which training for employability and in technical and scientific cross-sectional competencies are dovetailed for a large occupational family with the abilities and practical skills developed by the street market workers. As a result of the training provided, the women taking part developed a collective occupational project, realized in the constitution of the Vegetable Micro-propagation Co-operative –COMIVE– with which the UNQUI is working on the search for alliances to obtain the resources needed for the laboratory required.
- ▼ **INFOCAL, San Cristobal Mine, Potosí, Bolivia.** When a minefield of high potential was discovered, the international enterprise Apex Silver Mines undertook a

development project that, together with the benefits of the increased dynamics of the economy of the country, required the entire transfer of the village, with the consequent uprooting, unemployment and loss of the productive insertion enjoyed by a poor and poorly educated indigenous population. It requested the support of INFOCAL that proposed a broad programme of intervention for which the Andean Development Corporation was called upon as well, as also the members of the neighbouring indigenous communities. One of the first interventions was the Labour Guidance Programme to detect capacities and confront them with a demand for labour that had to be discovered on the basis of the possibilities of a new site and of the mining production. The work was done with a group of over one hundred women many of whom did not speak Spanish, with ancestral cultures and a logic of learning acquisition very different from that of the West. On the basis of strong reflection on their situation and encouragement towards associative and network activities, the participants, besides increasing their self-esteem and decision to study –with a multiplier effect towards their children– identified occupational projects addressing food service for miners, a workshop for producing uniforms, ecological and adventure tourism, hotel services and guided tours, given the closeness of the Salar de Uyuni. Later, INFOCAL provided the technical training needed and today many of those undertakings are operational, there is a Hotel in the new village and, moreover, three of the women taking part have become prominent community leaders.

- ▼ **PROIMUJER - CARDJIN Programme, Tacuarembó, Uruguay.** Within the framework of a strategy of public-private and multiple player alliances to implement training actions addressing the enhancement of employability and providing support to viable occupational projects for unemployed or vulnerable women, the ministry resources were dovetailed with the local entity, the forestry enterprise COLONVADE S.A, the Municipal Government of Tacuarembó, the University of Uruguay, the National Institute of Agricultural and Livestock Research, etc., to develop a project for “Producing and marketing aromatic and medicinal herbs.” The theoretical phase was implemented in the enterprise nursery and the practical phase on its own premises and in one common area assigned by CARITAS. The participants established their own co-operative SIEMBRA MUJER that is supported by means of training to learn to undertake and by a small fund for its first stage of formalisation by PROIMUJER and regarding technical and marketing aspects by the UNIR Agrarian Co-operative set up by the CARDJIN, with the active participation of players and of local and regional development bodies. The phase of production and marketing has already begun.

Because of this, the vocational training institutions of the region have made big changes which include progressive decentralization and the granting of autonomy to their various branches: schools, institutes and centres. To complement this, there have been programmes and efforts to strengthen the technical capabilities of management in these units so as to enable them to develop the capability to design and implement their own innovative projects in the future.

These reorganization projects involve much more than a mere internal restructuring of the work functions and processes. Their main characteristic is the search for close and fruitful links with the productive and social environment so as to transform the institutions into a strategic resource for local and/or sectoral economic development projects.

In centralist institutional models training units tend to function as places that run training courses that have been planned and designed at the national level. However, the current trend is quite the opposite and implies establishing general guidelines that cover all the training centres but leave a wider and wider margin for decentralized decision-making.

Training units have increasing scope for decision-making and autonomous action, and this includes the following aspects:

- how the training offer is structured (in terms of quantity and composition) and adapted to the characteristics and requirements of the local community and productive fabric where the training unit is located;
- the definition and implementation of new services such as those in the sphere of innovation and technological transfer, and also social and cultural services that contribute to a more efficacious response to the challenges that spring from economic and social development in communities and specific geographical areas;
- innovation in training and learning methodologies based on more approached and deeper knowledge of the trainees, which means greater relevance and the opportunity to promote equal opportunities;
- the creation of new and original modalities for participation and dialogue about training but also about economic and social development at the local and sectoral level, which are more fruitful the closer the contact and the more familiarity there is with actors in this area;
- linking training strategies, such as the various occupational projects that trainees formulate, to the actual realities of the social context which limit, condition and challenge the students as well as the training centres.

Thus, whatever efforts may be made in the central organizations of vocational training to promote constant innovation, and attention to quality, relevance and equity, it is probably at the decentralized level, (which may be local or sectoral) that most of the current innovations are taking place, not only those that we already know about now but those that will emerge in the future.

#### **4. Innovations involving ICTs in training**

As was mentioned above, the current social and labour situation makes it necessary for training institutions to cater to the growing and heterogeneous demand for continuing training. One valid strategy to respond to these needs is to incorporate information and communication technologies (ICTs) into training.

This idea is stressed in Article 6 of Recommendation 195: “*Education and pre-employment training include compulsory basic education incorporating basic knowledge, literacy and numeracy skills and the appropriate use of information and communication technology.*” Article 15 says that the members should “*...promote and facilitate the use of information and communication technology, as well as traditional best practices in career information and guidance and training support services.*”

There are four possible areas where information and communication technologies may be incorporated, namely distance learning through ICTs, pedagogic tools based on ICTs, educational administration and curriculum updating.

Bringing ICTs into the training process as pedagogic and strategic tools and not as an end in itself enables institutions to offer training that is more flexible, wider in scope, and adapted to the needs of the different trainees. This is to see ICTs not as an object of innovation in itself but as means to improve training.

Training based on or using ICTs means that the training offer must be carefully adjusted to the needs of the target population. In these modalities of training, as in traditional classroom teaching, if the offer is not relevant the results are very much jeopardized. This means that once a particular training demand is identified the target population should be analyzed to evaluate the levels and the suitability of bringing ICTs into the training courses.

Training programmes which take the characteristics of the target population into account will be more effective in improving social inclusion and reducing inequalities. The key elements to be considered include whether the trainees

have easy access to Internet, their levels of digital literacy, the competencies of planning, self-control, being pro-active and managing their own training project, and the availability of time and space for study.

Communication and feedback from the trainees can be improved by using ICTs. These technologies make it possible to simulate specific contexts, to develop interactive didactic materials that are flexible and allow collaborative work, to solve problems and to foster the development of key competencies, etc. All these tools help in constructing collective knowledge through virtual learning communities. The term “virtual” here does not necessarily imply distance training. Virtual communication is vitally important to enrich and to maintain continuity on courses that take place wholly or partly in the classroom.

The success of these programmes is based on planning and pedagogic and communication activity that uses appropriate ICTs tools in a way that is suitable and relevant to the target population.

In this way tools can be provided for quality training that is equitable, and these can enable people, groups and institutions to learn to learn and to “un-learn”. This means adopting an integrated epistemological framework that operates on the principles of significant learning, by competency-based training, and knowledge management.

The vocational training institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean have been running different experiences in this field. Some are stronger than others and involve more investment, but in all cases there is a conviction that it is necessary to use the advantages that ICTs offer to quality training systems.

This trend for vocational training institutions to bring ICTs into training is clear from the sheer number of very heterogeneous initiatives and projects that are under way. There are very successful experiences in fields that range from distance learning courses that are run completely with ICTs and are based on specially contracted platforms, to cases in which materials are distributed on audio CDs and in newspapers and supplements.

All these experiences clearly involve the task of adapting to the characteristics of the target population and the immediate environment and/or creating support teams to assess impact, relevance and coverage levels.

In general, what happens is that once the initial dazzling impact of ICTs has worn off, in all ambits there is a phase of discussion and reflection about the new technology. Given that there is no turning back when it comes to bringing ICTs into training, the emphasis should be put on identifying methodologies that will

**allow its real potential to be taken advantage of, so as to be able to develop relevant, quality and equitable training systems.**

## CHAPTER IV

# The integrated approach and its correlation with change and innovation in institutions

*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, competencies and experience; this framework should be responsive to changing technology and trends in the labour market and recognize regional and local differences, without losing transparency at the national level; (Article 5.e of ILO Recommendation 195 concerning Human Resources Development: education, training and lifelong learning).*

There is an ongoing effort in vocational training to adapt and seek new systems so as to respond efficaciously to the need for quality, relevance and equity, and this can be seen not only in its labour, technological and educational dimensions but also in the innovations that are taking place in pedagogic approaches and strategies, and inside the institutions themselves.

In the last twenty years there have been big changes in the region, and there has been much debate about what institutional arrangements are most suitable in function of the goals of quality, relevance and equity, and of the specific situations in each individual country.

Firstly, the most important part of the reform debate is the question of how roles and responsibilities should be distributed among the State, the market and society, and within these among the different actors such as specific training institutions, Ministries of Labour, employers' and workers' organizations, private and non-governmental training agencies, enterprises, and so on. This in itself is very different from the general situation at the end of the 1980s, when the

various phases of public vocational training policy (identifying demand, planning, design, management and implementation) tended to be concentrated within one single body. Nowadays, the standard is for functions to be divided, and the organizations and actors involved in the different phases listed above have been diversified. Thus, for example, the implementation phase may be shared among a number of public bodies and may be complemented by a private offer of training in specific fields.

Secondly, there has also been innovation in the modalities of management, and now the classic system of tripartite management in vocational training institutes (which still prevails in some countries in the region) co-exists with bipartite training organizations and networks, or even systems that are run by one single actor (for example employers' organizations or trade unions). New and original institutional arrangements have emerged at the sectoral and local level, which reflect the social, political and production complexity of different geographical areas.

Thirdly, the changes in the ways that the design, administration and implementation of vocational training policies and programmes are managed and run have opened the door to new schemes and modalities of financing. Until twenty years ago almost the only financing modalities were earmarked taxes (usually levied on payrolls) or allocations from the general education budget. But today there is greater diversity in this, and there are alternatives like tax exemption, the sale of services, or special funds built up from workers' and employers' contributions and the State.

The current possibility to tackle not only the assumptions but also the results achieved by various institutional approaches is a good opportunity to analyze future prospects in this area so as to bring the objectives of vocational training into the mainstream.

## **1. Institutional changes in the last fifteen years**

In the first half of the 1990s it was already clear that the typical format and management model of public vocational training policies that had served for forty years was giving way to a new trend that consisted in a great diversity of institutional arrangements.



In the middle of the 1990s many countries still had public or para-state institutions with national scope that were financed from taxes on the payrolls of companies, and in most cases these institutions were run by tripartite or multipartite systems. But new approaches and organizational arrangements were coming onto the scene.

Some institutions were being transferred to the private sector, the new non-governmental and private offer of training was growing, and, most importantly, new training policies were emerging which brought about changes in the ways that training was organized and run, and in the distribution of roles among the public and private actors in this field.

Cinterfor/ILO has been studying this question, identifying and publicizing the main trends in the changes taking place in vocational training, and in 1998 it suggested a list of the possible types of institutional arrangements that were coming into being in response to the new general situation at that time. At least four kinds of institutional structures in vocational training in the region were identified:

- arrangements whereby the same body that was in charge of defining policies and strategies was also responsible for directly implementing the training. In most cases this was a national or sectoral training institution;
- organizational arrangements whereby policies and strategies were all defined by a single body (usually a vocational training institution), and this same body also played the dominant role in the direct execution of training, but this was complemented by shared management schemes and collaborating centres;
- situations in which two predominant arrangements with different logic co-existed and were inter-related. On the one hand there were ministries of labour which had specialized bodies that defined policies and strategies but which did not execute the actual training (numerous different actors were contracted to do this). On the other hand there were national or sectoral training institutions with their typical ways of operating;
- Arrangements in which Ministries of Labour had total responsibility for defining training policies and strategies. This was administered through specialized bodies which did not directly execute any training but contracted many different institutions and actors to run the actual courses.

This typology is still valid today, but the category of shared management schemes has expanded. This kind of arrangement has been adopted by voca-

tional training institutions, who did not work this way in the 1990s, and the relative importance and extent of the role of Ministries of Labour has shrunk compared to what it was in that decade.

It ought to be noted that the fact that there were many different ways of organizing and running vocational training policies in the 1990s was a reflection of the intense debate between different conceptions and ideas not only about the extent of the role that the State and the market should play, but also about what should be considered the best strategies in terms of quality (the basic approach was on results), relevance (in terms of orientation by demand), and equity (in terms of coverage but also of focalization).

In the 1990s, the national vocational training institutions were criticized for being too big, for the fact that their structure was too heavy, for their lack of efficacy and their inappropriate logic of functioning. On the first point it was said that certain institutions were being used to expand employment in the public sector and the consequence was that they adopted excessively complex organizational organigrams which made for a heavy bureaucratic load and centralist logic in management and administration. There was a long list of criticisms: it was said that there was an excess of administrative personnel on the staff, and that decision-making and implementation was extremely slow. Another criticism was that there was a tendency to be more supply-driven than demand-driven, that is to say the system lacked relevance. Besides, there were no mechanisms to check on the quality of training results, and there was insufficient coverage, and this led to difficulties in catering to the most modern sectors of demand and also those sectors or groups that were most disadvantaged or vulnerable.

In contrast, the new policy models, which have been promoted by Ministries of Labour, are geared to trying to define a new way for the State to intervene in policies and in the training market. This is by way of a response to the criticism of the traditional State intervention system whereby all the phases of public policy were completely concentrated in institutions specialized in that area.

This new role has meant resigning certain functions and retiring from certain areas, but also adopting new systems and developing into new fields. This approach implies that the State is tending to withdraw from the direct execution of training, and this task is being taken up by different actors and organizations in the market and in society in general.

But, as was mentioned above, the State has assumed new functions:

- it controls the financial administration of public funds allocated to training policies. This includes funds from external sources, and public funds from the national budget or contributions from enterprises and/or workers;
- it has been implementing a series of measures to develop and strengthen both the supply and the demand for training through tax incentives, putting the implementation of projects and programmes out to tender, and programmes to train actors and organizations that render training services;
- taking action to correct deficiencies or biases in the training market, mainly in the area of attention to sectors that are vulnerable or at risk of social exclusion;
- expressly promoting social dialogue on vocational training and creating spaces for tripartite administration and management of public training policies and the funds to finance them.

As a complement, the tools that are proposed in the framework of this last approach should lead to results such as:

- greater coverage by what have come to be called “national vocational training systems”: ones that open participation and execution to the entire training offer that is available, whether public or private;
- greater equity, based on the idea that the market allocates training resources efficiently in function of demand, and the State is left to cater to the most vulnerable sectors of the population through specially focalized programmes;
- greater relevance in function of the fact that enterprises will have a wider range of training offers to choose from, and that because this offer is in a free competition regime the reading of demand (market studies) will improve. On the other hand, programmes that are focalized on disadvantaged sectors and groups will generally have to pursue the goals of labour insertion, learning contracts and systems of work experience;
- an improvement in the quality of results through inclusion in policy design because there will be mechanisms to follow up and evaluate the labour performance of trainees.

However, now that we are well into the new century it can be seen that neither of these two main approaches is dominant in the overall panorama of vocational training institutions in the region. What has happened in practice is that, on the one hand, the vocational training institutions have not remained passive in the face of the criticisms that were made, and nor did they merely

react to treat the symptoms. Most of the institutions in the region made a series of efforts to change their organizational structures and models of management, and this has largely made the criticisms obsolete (this does not exempt them from criticism, but new criticisms ought now to be re-formulated to take account of the new situation).

On the other hand, the approaches that were put forward in the middle of the 1990s have had the chance to be verified in practice, in terms of functioning and results. This has yielded a series of lessons as regards the extent to which the objectives that were set have been achieved, and also as regards the expectations that were raised.

These two processes, the changes and adaptation in vocational training institutions and the practical application of the model promoted from Ministries of Labour, have resulted in a rich and complex panorama which has opened the way for a new phase to start. In fact, it has already begun since the countries in the region now have a wealth of accumulated learning which provides them with the best possible base for designing vocational training policies to meet the challenge of the times.

When assessing the main changes that have taken place and their results, there are at least two aspects that have to be taken into account. First, and probably most important, is that the economic, labour and social situation that vocational training policies are connected and oriented to does not remain static, quite the opposite, it has been changing faster and faster. Consequently, there has to be constant attention not only to challenges and problems that are already known but also to new ones, or ones that are just beginning to become apparent. The second aspect is that although people talk about models and approaches, these do not remain static and unchanged either. The approaches are based on the perceptions and intentions of the actors that promote them, and on the assessment that these actors make of the way policies work and the results they yield.

## **2. The context of institutional changes**

When it comes to the general context in which all these changes are taking place the most important factor is the **definitive arrival of the so-called “knowledge society”**. This term is an attempt to give the simplest possible description of what is one of the clearest and most vigorous trends of our modern age: the

increasing importance of the knowledge factor in the new ways that production and work are organized and run, in the context of new rules of competition in the world and in people's lives.

Today, possessing knowledge is as important in economic terms as, in other periods of history, the possession of land once was, or the control of goods and capital or even of technology. In the race to increase the added value of products and services, and to be able to gain an advantage and compete effectively in the globalized world, it is knowledge, expressed in the capabilities that workers apply in different organizational, productive and labour contexts, that stands out as the main effective factor, and it can be increased without limit to contribute to the goals of productivity, quality and competitiveness.

In the past, the main factor that structured the economic, social and political shape of society was ownership of land or of the means of production, but today it is access to knowledge that separates those who are full members of society from those who are excluded.

It follows that whether the objectives are economic, like productivity or competitiveness, or whether the aim is to tackle the widening gaps and social exclusion that afflict society, it is access to knowledge that has become the key factor. Education in general, and vocational training in particular, are especially important now as instruments to obtain the privilege of access to knowledge. In fact, education's potential contributions to attaining objectives that may be economic, social or political make it attractive to the different interest groups in society. This goes a long way towards explaining why an area like vocational training, which before was limited to specialized institutions, has drawn in a whole range of other actors including Ministries of Labour, Ministries of Education, and employers' and workers' organizations.

**At the same time, labour markets seem to have completed a cycle of changes which, rather than solving many of the problems that were apparent at the beginning of the 1990s, have either brought more extreme versions of them into the spotlight or have raised problems of a new kind.**

The economies of different countries not only find it difficult to maintain sustained growth but also they always seem to be backward in their capacity to generate enough jobs in general, particularly decent jobs. Many ways in which work is organized, that up until the end of the 20th century were considered atypical, such as self-employment, labour relations that hide behind company law to disguise actual dependence, and different kinds of unregistered work,

have now expanded in the labour market at the expense of regularly-paid jobs in the formal economy.

Unemployment has now become a persistent phenomenon but it does not affect all sectors of society or the economy to the same extent. Those who suffer most are women and young people, especially young women, and adult workers who have been made redundant because certain sectors of the economy have declined or because work has been reorganized in such a way that there is less demand for people with lower levels of training.

What has happened in fact is that labour markets have tended to become increasingly separated into two levels. On the one hand, there are people from higher socio-economic levels who have access to education and training services and so are better qualified and have a better chance to become employable, and this gives them greater job stability. On the other hand, there are people who are in an inequitable socio-economic and cultural situation, who find it more difficult to get access to training, and who are consequently at greater risk as regards unemployment, or are working in precarious jobs.

Recent vocational training policies have been geared to responding as efficaciously as possible to the challenges that spring from this new composition of the labour market. Various different routes have been tried including designing programmes focalized on vulnerable sectors of the population, making agreements to cooperate so as to widen coverage, and modifying the methodologies behind intervention strategies. In some way or other these are all aimed at making a contribution to solving the problems outlined above.

### **3. Elements for a balance in the application of approaches promoted by Ministries of Labour**

The impact of policies that Ministries of Labour in various countries of the region have been promoting since the beginning of the 1990s is not limited to direct effects on labour markets and training services for enterprises, sectors or individuals. These policies have also raised questions about what had been done before, and have therefore given rise to widespread debate that has left none of the important actors in the vocational training field untouched. This is probably the most beneficial effect insofar as it has stimulated changes and modifications in institutions in quite a number of countries.

Let us consider the progress that has resulted from these policies. In the first place, **the store of resources, capacities and experience in society has been better mobilized and taken advantage of.** There is no doubt that the factors that have contributed to this are that training in enterprises has been fostered, the training offer has been diversified and widened, and in some cases inter-institutional cooperation agreements have been made. One of the consequences of this is that the coverage offered by training policies has expanded to reach specific population groups and sectors in a more direct way.

Second, **these policy approaches have contributed to opening up a greater range of sources of financing for training.** In the past, almost the only modality of financing was a tax on companies' payrolls, the proceeds of which were specifically allocated to training institutions. In the recent period, and in some cases even before, other schemes were implemented such as tax incentives and direct subsidies for training, and new funds were created from workers', employers' and State contributions.

Third, **the new policies helped to develop and widen collective bargaining about vocational training.** This had been going on before, in the framework of tripartite or multi-partite management schemes, but in the period, in most vocational training institutions in Latin America, new instances of collective bargaining came into being at national, regional and local levels, and in most cases this was a major new innovation.

Fourth, **in these approaches there was great emphasis on the need for the offer of training to become more relevant** and demand-driven. Although it is true that in some cases the criteria to determine demand were not wide enough, this sparked a reaction in the area of the design of programmes and action, and also in market research, which up to that time had not received enough attention.

Fifth and last, **these policies introduced new approaches and methodologies for assessing training and programmes.** These allowed greater attention to be paid to the effects that training was having in terms of the labour insertion or re-insertion of trainees, and on their income, subsequent careers and so on.

However, apart from the aspects that have been dealt with by the ministries, there are still other questions that need to be tackled or that involve problems as regards the effectiveness of open contract modalities of meeting training needs.

First, there is the **risk that the training scene could become excessively fragmented.** The mobilization of a greater quantity and diversity of resources and current or potential capacities, and relaxing the excessively centralist con-

trols that prevailed in the past, are all part of a positive trend. But there is a risk that adopting rules that are too lax might lead to the proliferation of lines of action run by a new, wide and diverse group of training providers, and it would be difficult to assess their performance in terms of quality, internal coherence in the network, their functional worth to national, sectoral or local development strategies, and the point at which services that complement each other come to overlap and uncoordinate the system.

The second question has to do with **the source and nature of the funds that finance public vocational training policies in a number of countries**. In some cases these funds come from contributions from enterprises and workers in the formal sector of the economy: a percentage of company payrolls is deducted. But the formal sector now has less weight in national economies as the unstructured or informal sectors are expanding, and the countries of the region are also fraught with economic problems, so the yield from these taxes is falling and consequently this source of funding is becoming more unstable. Another factor is that in some cases these funds are not allocated exclusively to active policies that include vocational training plans, but also go to finance unemployment insurance. Yet again, just when funds are needed most, they become scarcer.

The third aspect to be taken into account has to do with **the stability of this kind of policy model**. Unlike national institution models, which were set up through a special law that established clear and stable mechanisms for management and financing, the new policies tend to be closer to the definitions of a specific administration. It is true that, in the long run, setting up co-management and collective bargaining mechanisms could be a factor that helps to convert this line of action into State policy. However, this possibility has yet to be confirmed, even in the countries in which this kind of model has been developed the most.

The fourth and last question has to do with **the efficiency of these models that were conceived as “stimulators of the private offer” or simply as “contracting a third party” for training services, with control or management that is more diffuse than in national institutions, to take charge of a series of functions that have always needed institutions that are stable and have the capacity to accumulate experience and knowledge**. This question revolves around matters such as the training of trainers, the design and development of curriculum, the production of didactic materials, efforts to marry up training with technology, training in state of the art technologies whose cost is usually a barrier, ensuring quality standards, and the assessment and interpretation of demand.



#### **4. Adaptation and modernization in vocational training institutions**

There are countless examples of how most national vocational training institutions are undergoing far-reaching changes. Many of these institutions have demonstrated that they are capable of restructuring themselves to meet the challenges they are confronted with today. They have successfully changed their organization and administration at the national or provincial level, and they have changed their operative units (centres), how they plan their work (strategies and programmes), their technical and pedagogic management (methodologies, technologies, didactic materials), and how they train and develop their personnel (technicians, instructors and directors).

The first step for the national vocational training institutions in various countries was to **restructure their internal organization**. The many hierarchical levels that had existed before gave way to structures that were “lighter” or “horizontal”, which meant that numerous intermediate level offices and sections were eliminated. In the past, the logical structure of these organizations had been bureaucratic, but this model has been progressively replaced by an organigram based on processes like attention to the user, technological development and services, administration and finance, and training services. This is complemented by the adoption of modern management approaches, such as teams to ensure the continual improvement of services, and the pursuit of partial or total certification of the institution based on ISO standards.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the second main area of change has been to **do away with the centralist logic of most of these institutions and the structures this logic involves**. In general, other public institutions and services tended to be structured with the same logic and along the same lines. The reforms that brought about this change involved making the management and administration of institutions less concentrated and less centralized. Therefore local units and services have gained in terms of responsibilities, functions and resources, and they now have more room for manoeuvre so they can cater more efficaciously and efficiently, and above all more pertinently, to demand in their respective geographical areas.

Consequently, training centres are now seen as a resource in the community and the local fabric of production rather than as just the local extension of a monolithic national training institution. Where formerly they had been places where

centrally-designed courses were run, they have gradually changed into centres for another type of training services that respond pertinently and efficaciously to the training and technological development needs of local production and of the community.

The interaction between national vocational training services or institutions and the productive and labour sectors is always difficult beyond the level of contact between their central offices. But at the local level it is possible to exploit new alternatives that are potentially easier to identify and set in motion because the two sides are more familiar with each other, they are dealing with subjects they are closer to and have a common interest in, and it is possible to mobilize people and organizations that would hardly be able to participate in coordination or dialogue at a national or central level.

The approach whereby development is managed locally can produce new and original alternatives in critical areas such as the transition from education or training to work, or the interaction between schools and enterprises. In the former, for example, trainees could be helped in making important decisions if there was an improvement in information systems and guidance about educational and training systems and about labour markets and social needs. In the latter, agreements and connected activities could improve the interaction between schools and companies at the local level, while at the national level these links would be much harder to identify or activate.

In general, the activities of training centres should tend to open up and become progressively more connected with the development objectives and strategies that are run locally. This linkage could also be extended to the workings of public institutions themselves. Many public policies and programmes that are seen as independent on the national level can, on the local level, find opportunities to make connections in function of local development strategies. This may produce different kinds of combinations, but there will always be synergy involving training policies, technological development, technical support, access to credit and so on.

Therefore the challenge that training faces is to coordinate different areas and strategies to cater to the target population throughout the training process. This involves counselling, training and guiding the trainees so that they can construct *viable training and employment projects* aimed at improving and transforming conditions that are unfavourable for subjective or external reasons. Students would gradually build up a better collection of competencies which would al-

low them to improve their prospects in the world of work. This is the role of **Vocational and Labour Information and Guidance, whose aim is to help people discover and develop attitudes and aptitudes so that when the time comes to take career decisions they can be informed about the real demands of the labour market.** Hence the responsibility of labour guidance is to guide and give instructions to the target population as follows:

- from the moment people approach the training body, to give them help as to vocational options, information about the market and work, and above all about the possibilities and conditions of the different training profiles;
- while the training is under way, to provide the trainees with information about the world of work and the patterns of conduct and culture that govern it, and support to enable them to get real work experience;
- when training finishes, to supply the trainees with tools to enable them to search for paid employment, set up and run their own enterprises, or join with other people to pursue some productive activity (micro-enterprises, cooperatives, etc.). Besides this, labour guidance also helps trainees settle into the world of work and follows up their progress. This follow up is in itself an input for the training institution in that it provides an evaluation of the relevance and quality of the training, and information for the training supply to be brought up to date.

It is extremely important to incorporate the gender perspective into this process so as to promote vocational diversification, to combat segmentation, and through dialogue with the productive sector and/or as an element in labour guidance services, to contribute to breaking down stereotypes and occupational segmentation. This calls for a pro-active attitude which fosters change and “de-naturalizes” vocational options, opening the way to progress towards equality of opportunities.

From a systematic conception of the policy, this appreciation of labour guidance underlies the idea that it is an instance of specific learning that is vital for improving employability and equity. Understood in this way, labour information and guidance is a mechanism to coordinate specific technical training with training in the competencies that are essential to be able to resolve questions about planning and the organization of work itself in an autonomous and flex-

ible way. Therefore it must be part of an integrated system to manage information about the training supply and the demands of the local, regional and national labour market that involves and receives contributions from different actors, programmes and intervention committed to promoting and generating employment.

Besides this, and in a sectoral rather than geographical or policy administrative sense, **different institutions are converting their old multi-sectoral training centres into centres that are specialized in specific sectors or productive chains.** This fosters a better appreciation of the demands of these potential clients, more updated technology, and greater diversification in the services offered.

The greater potentiality of this diversification of services towards the technological area is based on better updating and more relevance and quality in the training itself. Coordination, in a suitable situation, between training and education, work and technology, means that mechanisms can be set up through which trainees can acquire solid technical and technological knowledge and the values, habits and conduct inherent in the competencies that the current situation requires of workers, technicians and professionals.

Technology today has gone past the purely technical dimension of experimental development or laboratory research. It now covers areas like production engineering, quality, management, marketing, technical support, purchasing, sales and so on, and this means it has become a vital vector of expression of a society's culture. The technological process itself could be regarded as an exercise in learning which modifies the way people see the world, characterized by theories, methods and applications. It is also regarded as knowledge, so there is the ever-present demand from the "spirit of research" about what is generated, transmitted and applied. Therefore what is needed is a closer relation between the fruits of scientific and technical knowledge on the one hand, and what is known by the people who apply this knowledge, whether they are students, instructors, researchers or workers, so these people can be better informed about their role in bringing technical progress into production and work.

**When it comes to collective bargaining on training,** the regional training institutions have not merely continued with their traditional tripartite and multipartite systems, quite the contrary, they have opened up new spaces for participation, coordination and dialogue in virtue of the new organizational arrangements linking them to productive sectors and productive chains, to specific geo-

graphical areas in the light of local economic development, and through the support that these institutions give to tripartite and bipartite agreements.

Many training institutions in Latin America have not lost sight of the need to coordinate information on the labour market with the need for training on the national and regional levels. There is one activity in particular that has come to the fore in bringing together governments, employers' and workers' organizations so they can better coordinate competencies with employment. This is the development of standardized vocational qualifications, and the training institutions have energetically undertaken this task.

## **5. New perspectives in vocational training policies and their institutional framework**

What are the basic elements that a vocational training policy should have, regardless of the institutional model that is adopted? To start to answer this question we count on the basis supplied by the revision made of the above analyzed problems as well as on the progress and innovations taken place during the last fifteen years in the field of vocational training.

But it is also necessary to evaluate what is learned against the guiding principles of quality, relevance and equity that have been stressed throughout this study. We can ask : what innovations and practices have contributed, or are contributing, to improving the quality and relevance of training and increasing its contribution to greater equity? What elements did not do this, or at least not to the extent expected? And lastly: what aspects show us the institutional path that should be followed if we are to make progress towards these objectives?

In the light of the current situation and of the experience gained, it is possible to establish the following common denominators:

- ➔ **Whatever kind of institutional arrangements are adopted they should be able to ensure quality in the provision of training and other services (for example, technological), and also in the results of the training.**

Many vocational training institutions in the region have already started on the path to ensuring and continuously improving the quality of their services (which involves the way institutions and policies are run), and they

have done so with great resolve, as is clear from the fact that a fair number of them have obtained certification.

When it comes to the quality of results, it seems clear that institutions and policies are going in a new direction, guided by labour competency approaches and strategies like the occupational projects. To do so the institutions have undergone a far-reaching process of opening up to learning and the creation of new knowledge. This is one of the clear strategic advantages of this kind of organization, and one that is crucial in its capacity to respond competitively to a market that is fraught with change and uncertainty. In training for work and in the current situation, an organization that learns and that manages knowledge is one that has the right individual and collective competencies to be able to constantly revise its conceptual premises and its tools, in other words its “way of doing training”. This kind of organization is able to adopt a new view of itself, to change its attitude, to “re-learn” and to regenerate itself. In short, it is an organization that encourages its staff to change, but which also assimilates the changes made by its personnel.

Consequently, what is involved here is complementing strategies like competency-based training and occupational projects (to make them possible), with institutional projects aimed at improving quality, relevance and equity. An institutional project has various aspects. First, it must ensure that the beneficiaries acquire the competencies that are needed for successful insertion into today’s world of work, and this necessarily means that the trainees should achieve their occupational projects. This involves revising the role of training to position it as a travelling companion, a promoter of coordination among actors in function of these occupational projects. It also involves revising the role of the trainer so he or she becomes the promoter of occupational projects, and this involves generating new design and management competencies in training centres. Second, if political, economic and social relations have changed, the ways in which people are taught and in which they learn will also have to change. If new systems of production and work appear, new educational, organizational and management approaches will have to be adopted. The vocational training institutions have to unlearn to be able to start learning anew, they have to change their management structures and mechanisms in pursuit of greater flexibility in the ways in which they respond to the challenge of constant change in society. They

have to move on from the pedagogy of certainty to the pedagogy of uncertainty. Nowadays, it is not enough just to teach, because society expects everybody to learn and to acquire the recognized social and vocational/professional competencies that enable them to develop employability.

- **Vocational training institutions and policies have to constantly improve the dual relevance of their offer.** Adopting a “demand-driven” approach is only the beginning of a quest that has no end because changes in the social, economic, labour and technological spheres will be permanent.

Another facet of this question is that the debate about what exactly should be understood by the concept of demand, and what the best tools to identify it are, is far from over. At least in their early stages, the policies that were promoted by Ministries of Labour, tended to regard demand as the individual requirements of enterprises, or else they accepted the assessments made by training providers. But today it seems clear that, as well as taking this important source of information and orientation into account, it is also necessary to carry out research and make projections as to the impact that particular technologies will have on production and work systems, and on the labour market. This approach has already been adopted. It implies that the training offer should be oriented not only in function of the needs of the productive sector or individuals, but that the demands and problems of sectors, productive chains and local economies also have to be taken into account.

It has also been recognized that conducting surveys among entrepreneurs is only one of a whole range of tools available for identifying demand and responding efficiently to it. Training modalities like dual training or on-the-job training contain mechanisms that can be used to identify demand, and this information can be used to make adjustments to the content and methodology of training. Moreover, institutional projects do not only take account of the expectations and needs of the diverse target populations, guide their occupational projects and implement compensatory strategies to provide focalized responses to their needs, they also have another powerful system for pursuing the goal of dual relevance, which is that they interact with sectoral or local development strategies. The technological services that many centres provide allow them to open channels for communication and the exchange of ideas with the productive sector, and these can be sources of high quality information and knowledge.

→ **All institutional models have to confront the challenge of lifelong learning.** The policies of the 1990s revealed that there is a vast and diverse infrastructure of resources and capabilities that could be used to respond to this challenge. They also taught us that while the offer may be vast and diverse, if it is also fragmented and lacking a clear orientation, the great prospective progress that this diversification makes possible could be nullified.

It seems evident today that, as well as being able to stimulate the offer of training, it is also necessary to have rector bodies that cannot be restricted exclusively to administrative, financial and control functions. There must be stable institutions with the capacity to accumulate knowledge so they can serve as reference points as regards quality, relevance and equity, and that above all they can permanently strengthen the capacities of organizations and actors to design and run policies.

Stable institutional ambits are also essential to attract sustained strategic investment, since an unregulated training market does not seem to be able to ensure such investment. This has to do with questions like the training of trainers, curricular innovation and development, the design of didactic materials and equipment, and coordination between training and technological innovation and development.

As was mentioned above, the challenge of lifelong learning implies not only catering to diverse demands at a specific time, but also coping with the changes that this demand undergoes over time. It is for this reason that public vocational training policies have to have numerous actors, capacities and spaces in which to operate, and also communication and cooperation mechanisms to give these institutions the flexibility to be able to help people construct their lifelong career itineraries. In this ambit, the construction of lifelong training paths is going to require institutions to maintain their capacity to coordinate with bodies like Ministries of Education so as to facilitate the design of mechanisms to coordinate training for work with ordinary education. In a number of countries this is already beginning to emerge as a continuum, without the traditional and obsolete differentiation between training for work and academic studies.



→ **The biggest challenge as regards equity is to strengthen it by adopting an approach that embraces quality, relevance, social inclusion and the opening up of opportunities as a necessary condition.** The best that can be achieved by training that caters to immediate needs is that people can survive economically. Such policies have never been effective in improving equity, and this is even more so today. On the other hand, when equity is brought into the mainstream through the gender and equal opportunities approach in policies that are of good quality and pertinent, the goal of equity is much nearer because what is involved is change in the middle and long term, and not just assistance geared to some emergency or some current situation.

The focalized development programmes of the last ten years that were oriented to young people in poor sectors, for example, or women heads of households, micro-enterprises in the informal sector or the unemployed, have yielded important methodological tools. But one supposition that does not seem to have been confirmed in practice is that these population groups would be able to escape from exclusion or the risk of exclusion through action that was limited, and not based on a systematic plan. Focalization is useful when it is taken as a route to the generalized application of the effective exercise of certain rights, such as the rights to education, to vocational training, to a decent job, so as to be able to respond in a better and more pertinent way to the needs and characteristics of the different target groups. But this kind of action has to be in a framework of orienting criteria with rector mechanisms to supervise the training offer, with the possibility to link this action to other interventions so that the whole may lead to vocational training and labour itineraries.



## By way of a conclusion

---

1. Of all the different forms of education and learning, vocational training is the one which is most closely linked to the world of work and production, and therefore to the labour and technological aspects of that world. Vocational training plays a key role due to the importance of work in how our social, economic and personal lives are structured. This role is not limited just to strategies to improve competitiveness and raise productivity in enterprises, sectors and the economies of different countries, it is also of crucial importance in constructing societies that are more equitable, and in improving people's quality of life.

2. But vocational training is subject to a complex array of challenges and tensions that have stimulated it to make constant efforts to change and adapt its conceptual bases, its methodologies and its institutions. These challenges and tensions are caused by the very rapid changes that are taking place in the spheres it is connected to. Vocational training has always had to be innovative, and there are at least three reasons for this: first, its links with work and production; second the challenges that spring from the constant changes in this ambit and the impact these have on social, economic and cultural life in our countries; and third, and no less important, that vocational training has been developing an institutional culture that makes it sensitive to signals from the economic and social environment, and disposed to react in a pro-active way.

3. This study is an attempt to synthesize and express the most important objectives, guiding principles and current challenges in vocational training. To do so the main emphasis has been on the adoption of an integrated approach which involves quality, relevance and equity.

4. There has been a process of accumulation and collective construction in quality approaches in training, and this now encompasses a great variety of dimensions and aspects. In the integrated approach, quality in training covers the management of the different processes involved, ensuring quality in the results, ensuring adherence to standards, and satisfying the demands and expectations

of clients (individuals, groups, communities, enterprises, sectors, productive chains and specific geographical areas). This builds bridges (or sets up interdependent areas) to relevance and equity. From this perspective it would not be possible to have quality management in training unless the content and methods in that training were relevant, and unless there was equity throughout the system.

5. Relevance is a pre-condition for quality, and there are at least two areas where relevance comes into play. First, vocational training is relevant to the extent that it caters to the characteristics, problems, demands and changes in the economic and social environment, and this basically involves the ways in which work and production are organized, the actual content of work, the technologies that are used in these fields, and the structure and dynamics of labour markets. Second, relevance also involves finding out about and handling the characteristics, needs and expectations of its clients and trainees, and suitably adapting the way training institutions are managed and organized, the methods used in training and learning, and the didactic content, materials and tools. The key factor in constructing an effective link between training and work is this “dual relevance”.

6. Vocational training can only be complete if as well as constantly trying to improve quality and relevance it also includes an equity approach. Vocational training is an instrument in economic policy, but at the same time it is an instrument in social policy. From the economic perspective, a particular country or geographical region will be more or less competitive in function of the degree to which it can eliminate inequity and thus lessen the social and political tensions that flow from inequity. It will also be more competitive to the extent to which it can efficiently take advantage of the productive, and above all creative, potential of its citizens of both sexes. From the social perspective, vocational training is an excellent tool for promoting equal opportunities through improving the quality of life of its trainees and the degree to which they are integrated into work, into society and into citizenship. Not only does inequity affect specific sectors of the population, it also makes itself felt in wide sectors of the economy and the business world in the Latin American and Caribbean countries. Most of the business in this part of the world is done by micro- and small enterprises, and most of these operate in the informal economy. These vast economic sectors have serious problems as regards productivity and access to financial and other services, and very often the employment situation in these sectors is precarious in the extreme.

Vocational training is vitally important in that it can support strategies to raise productivity in small and micro-enterprises for example, because of its links to added value chains, and because it can help in regularizing the situation of these enterprises. In short, it can lay the foundations for integrated economic development.

7. Thus quality, relevance and equity are a group of goals that are interdependent, and each one needs both of the others in order to be fully attained. To the extent that this is a general integrated approach it necessarily permeates the various dimensions of vocational training not only in the fields of labour, technology and education but also in the sphere of methodology (pedagogic approaches, learning modalities, mechanisms to identify demand, focalization strategies, etc.) and in the organization and management of the institutions themselves.

8. As regards the labour dimension of vocational training, what stands out is that training that is of good quality, pertinent and with an equity approach, plays a very important role in progress towards decent work. Besides, from the perspective of lifelong learning, new training spaces are becoming more important, particularly in the ambits of work and production insofar as these ambits are also becoming spaces for training (which is an integral part of the concept of decent work). In this study we have also commented on the increasing role that labour actors (employers' and workers' organizations and Ministries of Labour) are playing in public vocational training policies and in the lives of the institutions themselves, and that there is ongoing progress in collective bargaining on training. This participation on the part of labour actors, and this dialogue, is a stimulus to the adoption of approaches that are geared to quality, relevance and equity, and that strengthen the role of vocational training as regards the quest for decent work for all men and all women.

9. There has been a growing trend to bring technological innovation, development and diffusion into training, and this is making a crucial contribution to progress towards quality, relevance and equity. Training is now employing up-to-date technology, both in terms of "hard" and "soft" technologies, and this says a lot about the level of quality that the training offer has attained. This trend has direct repercussions for the relevance of training, not only in terms of adapting training content, resources and training methods to the technological reality of the world of production and work, but also by making these technologies

available to trainees and other clients. Lastly, access to these technologies is a key factor in how far our societies can progress towards removing inequities in the business world and in labour markets. Consequently, vocational training and the institutions that run it have a vital role to play in providing equitable access to these technologies.

10. The triple challenge of quality, relevance and equity applies to all the forms, modalities and levels of education. The need for lifelong learning makes it all the more important that the different dimensions of education should be inter-dependent and coordinated, so each dimension can contribute fully to reaching this goal. We have seen that although good progress has been made in the coverage given by basic education, there are still serious inequities in the quality of the education that disadvantaged sectors of society are receiving and even in their access to it. This has inevitable repercussions on the extent to which vocational training can be effective, since this kind of training requires trainees to have some kind of solid educational foundation. However, vocational training is probably still the best educational option for the most vulnerable sectors of our societies, and it is one of the main avenues available for these people to have access to knowledge. It goes without saying that this contribution to greater equity should necessarily go hand in hand with an effort to improve quality and relevance as well.

11. The subject of innovation is dealt with in Chapter III and in other parts of this study, and the approach is on the dynamics of the innovations that are taking place mainly on the conceptual and methodological levels in vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean. The labour competency approach and the gender equity approach are being increasingly adopted with great intensity. There are many experiences and methodologies that involve using these approaches to a greater extent in the construction of people's training and occupational projects, and developing their competencies for employability and citizenship. This is a clear case of the practical and concrete application of the combined quality, relevance and equity approach. When vocational training is guided by this philosophy the approach is on the trainee, new tools are used to detect demand, there are new learning and teaching tools and strategies, and new management models in training institutions.

12. The subject of institutional change was dealt with in Chapter IV. There is a brief historical overview of the different kinds of institutional arrangements

and a summary of the attempts to find the most suitable ways to organize and run vocational training institutions and policies so as to attain improved quality, relevance and equity. Summing up these various ideas we will now clarify some of the perspectives that feature in this area.

13. The first is that whatever kinds of institutional arrangements are chosen, they must be able to ensure quality in the rendering of training and other services (technological services, for example), and in the results of training.

14. The second is that vocational training institutions and policies have to constantly improve the relevance of the services they offer. Adopting the “demand-driven” approach is only the beginning of a quest that has no end, just as changes in society.

15. Third, all institutional models of training have to confront the challenge of lifelong learning. Therefore, regardless of which system is adopted in a particular situation or context, it is essential to establish mechanisms to coordinate the different modalities of education and training, and the different spaces or ambits where training takes place. That is to say, in order to build a training system that is sufficiently flexible and diverse, advantage must be taken of all the resources and capacities that are available.

16. The greatest challenge in the sphere of equity is to strengthen it by adopting an approach that combines it with quality and relevance as a necessary condition. This means that training would automatically involve attention to the quality of processes and results, and would also make adjustments appropriate to the situation of its trainees.

17. In general, it is clear that vocational training institutions which adopt institutional arrangements that promote innovation and creativity, internal and external interaction, and participation and collective bargaining, will be in a better position to respond efficaciously to the need for quality, relevance and equity.