

I. Introduction

Recommendation 195 concerning Human Resources Development: Education, Training and Lifelong Learning recently replaced Recommendation 150, which was adopted in 1975 along with the convention on this subject that is still in force.

It is interesting to study the new recommendation for a number of reasons.

First, because it yields solutions in the process of standards revision and updating which the ILO began several years ago. We will describe this process in chapter II.

Second, the recommendation contains a series of new elements as regards subjects and focuses in vocational training, and these deserve study. These core elements of the new instrument are the right to vocational training, lifelong learning, labour competencies, the certification of aptitudes, and decent work.

A system of double discussion was used in preparing Recommendation 195, and the debates that took place in this framework have yielded a wealth of learning. For one thing, we must definitively abandon the idea that training is a field where it is easy for the actors in the world of work to agree. Although employers and workers are both interested in promoting training, this does not mean it is free from the controversies that occur in labour relations or that it can avoid being linked to other problems that countries have to face. This is clear from the ups and downs that are characteristic of the discussion of subjects like collective bargaining and foreign debt.

The adoption of a new recommendation also makes it essential to keep careful watch on how the ILO is dealing with problems in the world of work. Thus the ILO stance with respect to human resources development, education, training and lifelong learning highlights the current importance in the ILO of subjects like the new allocation of responsibilities and functions between governments and social partners, the new role of business training and the market, and the

decent work focus. The point is not just that these focuses are in some way novel in the ILO, it is that they have acquired a new regulatory dimension.

There is one more aspect of the situation that must be mentioned. At the end of this book we touch on some problems of interpretation, and some that go beyond interpretation, which stem from adopting a new recommendation that was created in the framework of an international agreement that was made all of twenty-nine years ago. It is no easy task to harmonize two sets of provisions that are separated by such a long interval of time, and the differences between the two instruments may contain the seeds of future challenges for the ILO and for governments and social partners.

To sum up, in our opinion, what is interesting about Recommendation 195 includes but also transcends matters of vocational training, leaning and vocational guidance.

The aim of this book is not just to provide information about the new instrument and the novel elements it contains, but also to stimulate the reader to reflect about the complex question (whose ethical and normative dimensions are summed up so well in the concept of decent work) of the ways in which people's work is regulated in the international ambit (which, after all, is precisely the function of the ILO).

The fact is that since vocational training involves the interests of people, enterprises and society as a whole it has the characteristic –and this has been dealt with in other Cinterfor/ILO publications– of being “hyper-textual” in the sense that it is linked to numerous aspects of labour and social life and cannot be limited to just one single dimension.