

## CHAPTER I

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# 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.