

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.

