

PROLOGUE

The book in your hands is about the relation between training and local development. It is based on the understanding that training contributes to strengthening, differentiating and improving the competitiveness of the productive network in different geographical spaces, and thus to generating greater possibilities for work and for welfare in local communities. Therefore, special emphasis will be placed on problems and opportunities in regions and places with lower levels of development.

In recent decades, strategic focuses and local development policies have come to the fore. This is not a passing trend, but the result of the undeniable fact that there are enormous differences in development and welfare between one region and another, and between different places in the same country, differences that 'poverty maps' for example can show with great precision. In fact, in Latin America and the Caribbean, there is a gap in economic growth and social welfare between many isolated places and the capitals of the countries they are in, and this gap is very often greater than the gap between those capitals and cities like New York, Los Angeles or London. We talk of an underdeveloped world (despite the term is becoming disused) but we could just as easily talk of wide geographical and population sectors which constitute underdevelopment within underdevelopment.

The indicators that show this economic and social deprivation and depression are more than well known. The outstanding ones are (a) the segmentation of markets (of work and of capital and technology), which means that it is in these least developed areas and places that we find the greatest concentration of bad jobs and the lowest levels of financial and technological assets, (b) the majority of the population in these areas are in the two lowest deciles of the income distribution structure and of homes in extreme poverty, and (c) there is an evident lack of all kinds of infrastructure. All in all, perhaps 'deficit' in training would best describe the deprivation and depression in these areas and their populations, since their lack of training is closely connected to their limited potential to improve their situation.

Why should there be this unequal development not only in social terms (development without equity) but also geographically (unequal development)? Ob-

viously, this prologue is not the place to analyse the genesis of unequal development but it is possible here to sketch the broad outlines of why this inequality exists.

Massive migration from the countryside into cities has been going on since the middle of the 20th century and it is being driven by a progressive worsening in the terms of exchange between rural areas and cities. Accelerated urbanisation in underdeveloped countries has created not only medium sized cities but also great mega- cities. This urbanisation has so much accentuated political and administrative centralisation that the point of view from which political decisions are made always gives priority to the interests of the populations of these huge urban conglomerates. This has led to an unequal distribution of knowledge and of the institutional structures responsible for promoting the development and socialisation of knowledge (public and private schools, technical and vocational training centres, research institutes, universities, etc.). In addition, investment is unequally concentrated, and urban centres receive a disproportionate share of physical, economic and technological infrastructure and public services. Private investment has gone mostly to urban areas, where most internal demand and most of the infrastructure necessary for business initiatives are concentrated. The net result is what we have today, a very unequal distribution of physical, economic and social assets (in terms of knowledge), and also areas and places that are totally excluded and made redundant by the development process.

Some academics and politicians attribute this unequal development to different factors different from those outlined in the paragraph above. They consider that the main cause of social and economic deprivation and depression in certain regions is that markets are not functioning properly and those places are not being allocated the resources needed for development. Besides, this defective functioning is mainly due to rigidity caused by State regulations (laws, decrees, etc.) in the different areas of national life.

Other people think that the main reason for this situation is that the State is too centralised and that, because of political cronyism, it concentrates its investments -specially those in infrastructure for communications and services- in the most densely populated urban areas.

These differences in focus have given rise to an interesting theoretical discussion that has been going on for some time about the best policies and strategies for dealing with this problem and for fostering local development. There are three main positions in the debate. One, which we can call the neo-classical, holds that markets are the best way to allocate resources and that therefore the responsibility for promoting local development, should be left to the market. State intervention should be limited to removing obstacles which hinder the efficient functioning of markets in backward geographical areas and places. The second posi-

tion can be called the 'developmentalist' view, which champions strong external intervention from the start to build up infrastructure for communications, economic activity, education, health, etc. The assumption here is that if the underdeveloped areas had these packages of outside aid they would be able to develop more economic activities and would have better links to the economy as a whole. In brief, they would be able to 'get on the development train'. The third position is that of endogenous development, and this is analysed in chapter 2 and subsequent chapters in this book. Its basic assumption is that State intervention is necessary to equip these districts and places with the outside aid they need for development, and that the utilisation of endogenous resources and potential ought to be fostered. In other words, the local economic network itself, the human resources of the area and the local institutional structure, should be activated. It must be obvious to the reader that this book is undoubtedly, and I believe rightly, in favour of this third alternative.

As mentioned above, one of the factors or endogenous resources which should be incorporated into the local development focus is human resources. This has led the author of this book to the subject of the development and distribution of knowledge. In the areas and places that are most marginalized, the educational and training system is usually limited to just primary and secondary public education (which in many countries is of low quality) and to a very few technical and vocational training programmes. However, until just a few years ago, even these training experiences or programmes were oriented to getting human resources in the area to 'do better what they were already doing' as regards economic and productive activity. The problem was, and in many countries still is, that the productive activities of people in these areas are scarcely viable economically even if the people involved acquired higher levels of training and skills. I think this applies especially to smallholding subsistence agriculture (which is important in many countries like Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and in Central America), to small scale mining and to traditional small scale fishing. Therefore, according to the new focus, knowledge should be developed from the perspective of the acquisition of competencies which would allow people to take new initiatives, undertake new ventures, and which would increase their capacity to successfully take new risks in economic and productive activities. This is not just to 'do better what they have always done' but rather to 'do well things that they have never done before', things that have potential for economic success, for higher income, improved welfare, and, consequently, for development.

Technical and vocational training for young people is especially important in this context. For instance, this is the population sector that is most predisposed, and perhaps most disposed, to undertake new initiatives and to take risks in the search for new avenues of productive activity. Moreover, because this is the population sector most inclined to emigrate if economic openings cannot be

found in the home area, and if they do emigrate the main productive resource of that area will be lost.

The gender perspective is important in the context of local development, above all when it comes to technical and vocational training for young people who live in underdeveloped areas. If the situation of young people is difficult and their possibilities for personal realisation are limited, then the situation of young women, especially those from rural areas, is even more serious. For many of them, the best that they can hope for in life is to emigrate to cities and work in domestic service very often under conditions of extreme exploitation.

In the context of local development, the author stresses how important it is to adjust focuses and strategies to the individual cultural, social and productive characteristics of each region, and also to bring the population there into the process of designing and implementing these strategies. In other words, the author makes a point of warning the reader against succumbing to the temptation of one-dimensional and general focuses. Therefore, he recommends that local development should become a dynamic and participative process adapted to the conditions of the soil in which the seed of development will germinate.

To sum up, in this Cinterfor/ILO book, the reader will not find a definitive and complete solution to the problems of development which the most backward regions and places are faced with, but he will find a rigorous analysis of the criteria, focuses and strategies for tackling those problems. In this context, the author believes that technical and vocational training, especially training that is not just for young men but for young women as well, ought to be given priority. This book, then, is in many ways innovative, it is recommended reading, and, most important of all, it should be read and used by anyone who is responsible for making practical decisions in this ambit.

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