

6 CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown that ongoing, all-inclusive learning methodologies and instruments aiming at enhanced productivity and working conditions can be applied in Latin American organisations. Flexibility, adaptability, systematic management and a structure based on competencies have made such training processes functional and have yielded concrete and measurable results.

The two methodologies presented, ProMES and Self –Training/assessment Guides, are mutually complementary and have certain advantages and disadvantages. The first method can be put in place immediately, the second one requires a process of adaptation before application. While in the former training is extensive and refers to coordination at work and the solving of direct problems, in the latter learning is deeper and involves the understanding of phenomena of the work process. This helps individuals to develop sounder mental make-ups and contribute to collective learning through the interaction of tacit and explicit knowledge at higher levels.

The two methodologies were applied in modern organisations and in backward ones, in small and large enterprises, which bears witness to the universality of their proposal. This makes them attractive for TVET institutions of the region, that need effective methods that can be applied in different contexts. Scale economies can be generated and may bring down costs for mass application.

We may conclude that a proven methodological proposal of demonstrable impact for ongoing, all-inclusive learning is now of public domain. Enhanced productivity and decent working conditions can now materialise in organisations of the region. The possibility is no longer theoretical or a mere conceptual plan. It has given credibility to the messages of training institutions to the community of employers and workers.

Concrete realities of the pilot experiences are evidence that the methodology enhances learning in organisations. They show that it can be adapted to the het-

erogeneous context of Latin American enterprises and yield good results in individual and collective performance. Moreover, it can be applied without the organisations having previously become “first world” enterprises.

The proposal adequately meets the requirements of international quality standards regarding personnel capabilities, involvement and participation by workers, effectiveness of training activities, enhancement of working conditions and constant improvement processes. It also meets international demands in connection with social responsibility, that in some sectors (the garment industry, for example) have become an important value for end consumers, and that the ILO has been defending through the principles and philosophy of decent work.

The methodology has lived through changes of environment (change of company owners, new political administration) which is an indicator of its soundness. Nevertheless, in all cases there have been high and low peaks, which seems to be a characteristic of the application process. Many organisations are not culturally ready to recognise the importance of informal learning, and facing the slightest difficulty revert to traditional training schemes. Neither are they prepared for working on medium and long term projects, particularly in a context of sudden change. In order to respond to fluctuations that are bound to happen but cannot be foreseen, TVET institutions will have to resort to dynamic planning.

Application of the methodology has shown that the concept of institutional learning does not necessarily coincide with the pathway followed by a TVET institute. In the Dominican case, they both went hand in hand in the initial and expansion stages of the experience. In Mexico, however, the relation between the two has been less close. TVET institutions intervened peripherally, and institutional learning occurred through the participating enterprises, that have externalised their experiences and established informal networks of exchange and learning (to a great extent self-financed).

Significant institutional learning took place in application pathways both in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, a learning that can no doubt be transferred to other contexts. It was shown that it was valid to start at micro level in order to adapt the proposal to the context of a sector and to a country. After advantages and impacts have become evident at micro level, application can be extended. In both cases there was significant acceleration after relevant procedures and routines became established. However, acceleration has limits because the methodology implies changes in the work culture and is necessarily a slow process.

The institutional learning curve has reached a point where it is possible to solve the difficulties that appear when applying the methodology in a controlled context. The challenge is to extend it to uncontrolled situations. There are pro-

posals for replicating the methodology through networks of consultants within and without organisations. However, there have not been concrete experiences in that direction yet.

Employment is an outstanding issue that will have to be incorporated into the process of multiplying the methodology. It is difficult, but not impossible, to consider the objective at micro level within organisations, although sometimes it is opposed to the productivity they seek (which is in turn necessary to maintain employment levels). It is more feasible to consider the generation and conservation of employment at the level of sectors or regions, possibly using adaptations of the training instruments created in organisations.

Getting ahead in that direction and simultaneously consolidating initial experiences is the essence of our agenda for the immediate future. This cannot be divorced from adapting the operation of TVET institutions to the rationale of ongoing, all-inclusive learning in organisations, which is another outstanding issue on the agenda. Cinterfor/ILO can play an important role in the development and implementation of this agenda, being a focal point for the network of institutions involved in institutional learning about continuous, all-inclusive learning in Latin America's organisations.

