
Adoption of a new Recommendation

1.1 Background and justification

The present Recommendation 195 concerning the development of human resources, follows upon Recommendation 150, adopted in 1975. The defining feature of the latter was that it broadened the framework of action of education and training determined by passing from “vocational skills” to “human skills” and “individual skills” and by leaving aside restricted consideration of employment possibilities to refer to the search for comprehension of working conditions and the social milieu in order to be able to exert an influence on them.¹

The Recommendation 150 replacement process is running a decisive course since the end years of the nineties and the need for change is linked to recognition of the “worldwide” or “globalisation” effects and of the new challenges that these processes imply for enterprises and the economy in general. The changes in the ways things are produced and in market structuring, technological innovation, new ways of organising work, changes in the functions of the State regarding financing and promoting training programmes are added to various macro-social and macro-economic processes that altered the objectives and strategies of vocational training and made it necessary to adopt new policies and strategies in the sphere of education and vocational training.

Recommendation 150 began to be insufficient as a reflection of new approaches to training, and although some provisions of the Recommendation con-

1 Recommendation 150 concerning vocational guidance and vocational training in the development of human resources was approved in the 60th ILO General Conference and replaced Recommendation 117 on vocational training (1962) and the Recommendation on vocational guidance of 1949. The latter –that left aside training in agriculture– were central to the choice of a profession and in preparing to do a job, without addressing guidance and training regarding all the economic, social and cultural activities and without including in its scope all levels of vocational qualifications and responsibility.

tinued to be valid, the ILO proposed the need for a new and more dynamic instrument. The States and the social partners needed an instrument that was easy to apply for formulating and executing their human resource development policies and that allowed it to be integrated into other economic and social policies – especially employment policies. Therefore, the new instrument should be supplemented by a repertory of practical recommendations and a database that the ILO could update continuously as part of its routine duties.

The new document should address the training and education needs in the modern world of work, promoting social equity in the world economy as well as fostering the concept of decent work by means of a definition of the mission of education and training. Moreover, it should promote lifelong education and the enhancement of employability in response to economic challenges, by recognising responsibilities in the matter of investments in education and training, promoting national, regional and international qualifications frameworks and strengthening the capacity of the social partners to establish associations in the field of education and training.

Therefore, on the basis of the discussion regarding human resources development and training that took place during the 91st meeting (2003) of the International Labour Conference and in accordance with Article 39 of the Conference Regulations, the International Labour Office prepared and sent to the governments of the Member States the text of a draft recommendation on the development of human resources and training. The governments were invited to send, prior consultation with the most representative employers and workers organisations, amendments or remarks to the said text and the Office, incorporating the suggestions and corrections received, finally produced the text that became the basis for discussion at the 92nd meeting of the Conference (2004).

Instances of debate and exchange of opinions between groups of employers, workers and members of governments were used to propose suggestions for changes in the content and in the way things were worded in several chapters of the new resolution, which made it necessary to assign great importance to the exchange of experiences and lessons and to the debate on arguments for inclusion or exclusion of certain conceptualisations and/or recommendations of the document.

This new Recommendation gathers together rights and principles enshrined in various standards and documents of the ILO, among which the following are mentioned in the preamble: the Convention on the Development of Human Re-

sources, 1975; the Convention and the Recommendation on Employment Policy of 1964; the Recommendation on Employment Policy (supplementary provisions), 1984, and the Convention and the Recommendation concerning Paid Educational Leave, 1974. It also alludes to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and to the Conclusions concerning training and the development of human resources, adopted at the 88th session (2000) of the International Labour Conference.

1.2 Summary of contents and innovations

Notwithstanding the fact that several of the matters proposed in this new standard are connected in one way or another with subjects that have been dealt with since a few years ago in the training institutions and systems on a global scale, the new Recommendation helps to fill a vacuum regarding a solid conceptualisation of topics, among others those associated with lifelong learning, employability, recognition of competencies and quality management in training. Therefore, it can be expected that such definitions may serve as a normative framework and encourage even further the progress of concepts and technique in training.

It is significant to point out that Recommendation 195 is an important instrument that serves as a polestar, as a guide to countries as they structure their training systems and design, manage and evaluate their employment policies, both from a technical-operational point of view and of that of the principles that must govern them. Therefore, regarding the issue of principles it is advisable to stop and analyse some innovations and stresses contained in the new Recommendation that are extremely interesting.

In the first place, the call to ILO Members to recognise that education and training are a right for everyone, and to make an effort to assure that this right is fully exercised by the population. It is important to point out that the inclusion of this principle is not only a political-normative matter to ensure respect for one of the fundamental human rights such as education and training are –which in itself is of intrinsic value– but rather, as can be seen below, when analysing the relationship between training and other dimensions of the world of work, access to quality education and training is today also an

indispensable requirement for exercising other fundamental rights such as decent work and active citizenship.

This leads us immediately to point out another extremely important aspect of the new Recommendation, the integration of economic and social objectives. Training and development of human resources must indeed play a central role in matters of economic development, due to their influence on technological innovation and organisation of work, on productivity and on competitiveness, to mention only some of the dimensions brought up in the new standard. Also however, and simultaneously, education and training must address social development goals, seeking to propitiate personal development, access to culture and active citizenship and to facilitate seeking and retaining decent work for the whole population, as the main ways to prevent social exclusion and overcome poverty. Sustainable economic development and social development are, from the perspective of the ILO and within the framework of the agenda to promote decent work fostered by this organization, two objectives that are inseparable and cannot be achieved in isolation from one another.

However, exclusion from the labour market and poverty affect various groups within the same society in a different way. Because of this, equity in access to quality training and education becomes particularly important in measures to combat social exclusion. The new Recommendation is very sensitive to present inequities in all countries regarding training and employment. Although Recommendation 150 already broached issues related to non-discrimination, Recommendation 195 is much more emphatic and exhaustive regarding measures that should be adopted by countries to overcome discrimination, of whichever type it may be, in access to lifelong training as well as to different opportunities and treatment in the labour market.

In terms of subjects of an eminently technical nature, and regarding lifelong learning and labour competencies, this new Recommendation highlights and incorporates the importance of creating measures to promote their respective development. In that respect it must be pointed out that the concept of competencies becomes interestingly precise on the basis of the definition adopted that believes it to be *“the knowledge, skills and know-how applied and mastered in a specific context.”*(art. 2b)

The conceptual scaffold concerning labour competency implies a substantive innovation regarding the earlier Recommendation 150, that together with the importance assigned to lifelong learning – that includes formal training ac-

tivities as well as non-formal and informal training activities -, and the development and recognition of qualifications, establish the grounds of the concept of employability as it is used in Recommendation 195.

With a view to contemplate the new social realities and reach a consensus on labour perspectives linked to training systems, the new Recommendation contains advances in processes linked to certification and recognition of skills and aptitudes, and to quality management of education and training systems. What cannot be left unsaid, as a conceptual advance developed in the years separating Recommendation 195 from 150, is the notion of National Qualifications Frameworks, which is taken up and promoted in the new instrument. The concept of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) reflects the existence of a national policy tending to recognise all achievements regarding learning and to establish equivalencies between learning acquired in different training environments. The adoption of an NQF indicates that a country has a single system to express the competencies of its workers and that it establishes equivalencies between formal educational levels and competency levels.

Regarding the role of the State and of the social partners, the Recommendation reflects the existence of new relations among them, considering the associations that they may develop and the drive without precedents that is acknowledged in vocational training service providers. The importance is mentioned of assuring that all persons should, throughout life, be able to share and access information and guidance, placement services and employment seeking techniques. Moreover, some training services continue to be the “main responsibility” of States as in the case of training prior to employment and attention paid to the most disadvantaged social groups (the unemployed, the disabled, women in a situation of poverty or heads of household, young people, immigrants).

As a consequence of the “decentralisation” occurring in functions which used to be performed by governments, the role assigned to social partners has increased and it is their responsibility, together with the government, to promote the diversity of the supply of training. Therefore, the new Recommendation has an ample supply of examples of the protagonism expected of the social partners because they are given special participation in education and training matters prior to employment, in the identification of competencies, in the incorporation to the labour market of the unemployed, etc. Moreover, in the matter of responsibilities, Recommendation 195 also innovates regarding 150 because it underlines the need for persons, considered individu-

ally, to assume an explicit commitment to develop their competencies and vocational careers.

As another novel aspect, standards are proposed for evaluating the conditions under which micro-enterprises act. Assistance in the progress of this sector leads to promoting efficient and competitive enterprises that, when fostering education and training of their human resources, improve their productivity and competence possibilities in world markets and – at the same time – raise individual productivity and wage rates. The result of the development of entrepreneurial capacity and the incursion into the field of entrepreneurial training is an absolute innovation in comparison with the previous recommendation, which only contained a specific set of rules for a special type of workers (supervisors) in relation with their functions in the enterprise.

One cannot disregard the incorporation of a new clause on research into the development of human resources, education, training and lifelong learning, through which measures are suggested to evaluate the impact of the interventions of each country, and recommendations are proposed to survey relevant information for the diagnosis of vocational training needs. This topic of research is addressed at the national and international level, accompanied by suggestions to increase international and technical co-operation that allow the development of activities to be enriched and expanded in that and other areas connected with the development of training and human resources.

Finally and with decisive emphasis, the promotion of equal opportunities, the definition and management of training policies and the importance of vocational training linked to the development of effective employment policies are constantly related to the importance of promoting the social dialogue and the active participation of social partners both at the national and the international level. Strengthening of employability of women and men as well as their condition as citizens and active members of society is thus conceived as one of the main aspirations in matters of learning, education and training.