

## Participation and decentralisation

The changes in the organisation, management and conception of vocational training that we have outlined in this document are directly related to the transformations that have taken place in their respective contexts.

Such is the case of the phenomena underlined in Chapter I, on training scenarios, where we showed that training has been adapting to the new concept of lifelong education, to the ways and the speed at which the processes of innovation, development and transfer of technology are occurring, and to the emergence of different and complex labour relations systems.

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In our approximation, in the second Chapter, to a typology of regional training, we noted that training is currently endowed with a more varied and heterogeneous cast of players, which has notoriously influenced the organisational arrangements that are being adopted.

It seems obvious, on the other hand, that educational, technological and occupational transformations as well as those relating to the roles of historic players in training, and the advent of new players, in turn stem from changes of a more global kind. They govern not only the new reality of training, but practically all areas of political, social, economic and cultural activity in our societies. In that respect, we cannot but mention the progress of globalisation and internationalisation of economies; the frequent modifications of the development strategies of countries of the region and the speedy growth of information, knowledge and technology flows, and their influence on the new forms of production and work.

This scenario of multiple and interdependent transformations includes other dimensions that also point to the changes experienced by the training

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dispensed in the region. Two of them are fundamental and complementary: **a) there are today greater decentralised levels than before in the management of programmes and institutions; b) this situation stimulates and enables higher levels of participation by greater numbers of more diverse players.**

Decentralisation of training management has at least two main approaches: delegation of administrative, financial or operational tasks to territorially scattered units; and focalisation of efforts, personnel, resources and infrastructure on specific productive sectors.

72 Whatever the type of predominant arrangement in a given country, we can always find many cases of territorial decentralisation. Many vocational training institutions have begun to hand over higher levels of responsibility to their regional, state or provincial departments. Likewise, policy guidelines laid down by the specialised bodies of Labour Ministries, are interpreted and adapted in accordance with active employment policies that include training components at regional or federal state level. In Brazil, employment and occupational education plans sponsored by several state labour secretariats are an example of this. Another example is the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the regional departments of SENAI, SENAC or SENAR *vis-à-vis* their respective national departments. A great debate has taken place in Brazil, in recent years, as a result of which the concept of “occupational education” has been adopted on a consensus basis; it has been defined as an essential component of a new model of capital-labour relations, based on negotiation, and placed within a context of social democratisation, as a strategic element for the defence of citizenship.

Also in the INA of Costa Rica, the SENA of Colombia and INTECAP of Guatemala, among others, administrative and operational responsibilities have been handed down to regional departments.

Although these processes are in some cases the result of the federal structure of countries like Brazil or Mexico, they also take place in other countries with a historically centralist tradition. In any event, it allows training bodies to get closer to the specific cultural, social and economic characteristics of territorially limited districts and facilitates the involvement and participation of a whole range of players who find a natural space for action: local authorities, neighbourly associations, chambers and unions, non governmental organisations, etc.

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Examples of decentralisation in sectoral terms are also increasingly frequent. As opposed to old training centres that housed a wide diversity of specialisations, there are now centres and even institutions focusing on sectors like construction, textiles, automotive industry, graphic arts and hotels. In Chapter II we already mentioned the advantages of this concentration in terms of technological updating and diversification of services to the sectors in question. But there are additional advantages in provision of new and fruitful opportunities for participation both by employers and workers and their respective associations.

It seems impossible to give an exhaustive account of the wealth and diversity of experiences of such processes in a document of this kind. We shall try, however, to sketch out the forms and contents of this participation by a wide range of agents whose activities were not described in previous chapters. They are: the private training suppliers; action by non-governmental organisations, and employers' and workers' organisations. We shall finally devote a paragraph to local management of training.

## **1. Workers' organisations and vocational training**

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the interest, involvement and participation of workers' organisations in vocational training is notoriously higher than two decades ago, if we consider their determination and rigour in dealing with the subject, and the different ways in which they participate. Strictly speaking, these organisations have always had as a central item of their vindications, to make education accessible to all the population as a mechanism to ensure a better distribution of opportunities regarding employment, earnings and personal and social development. Workers' organisations have played a leading role in the history of vocational training in the region. Nevertheless, their participation has had ups and downs directly related to the political, social and economic circumstances that both training and trade unions went through along the years. Trade unions were part and parcel of the pioneering efforts in the region that resulted in the creation of a great number of national vocational training institutions, and continued to take part in their development from the governing boards of many of them.

This involvement, however, was undermined in the mid-seventies by a number of factors, mainly the detriment in several countries of public freedom in general and trade union rights in particular.

### **Argentina: union management of training programmes**

A clear example of the role that labour organisations can manage to play in the field of vocational training, is that of the Education and Training Foundation for Construction Workers, linked to the Construction and Related Branches Workers' Union (UOCRA). This Foundation is, today, the main and most solid training offer for the sector in Argentina. Established in 1992, at present it applies the funds included in the Research, Training and Safety Fund for the Construction Industry (FICS), in accordance with an agreement on equal terms established between the UOCRA and the Chambers of Employers in the sector. The main lines of action of the Foundation are as follows:

- Management, co-management and/or supervision activities of the different vocational training centres exclusively for the construction sector, within the framework of the process of decentralisation of educational institutions from the national to the provincial or municipal levels.
- Training programme through mobile units, performing training actions in places where there is no basic educational infrastructure.
- Participation as a training institute in the Youth Project and the Micro-Enterprise Project, promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.
- Specific training arrangements with firms, generating projects addressed specifically to fulfilling genuine employment and training demands, subsidised directly by the participating firms and with the assistance, as relevant, of state bodies and other fora.
- Technical advisory and training areas on the subjects of the Environment, Employer Assistance and Data Processing.

As can be seen, the Education and Training Foundation for Construction Workers is a sample, not only of the levels that union initiative can attain in the field of vocational training, but also of the degree of confidence that the initiative can generate in the employer and Government sectors, that channel through this body a goodly part of their training demands.

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Secondly, the different manner in which economies of the region found access to international markets, through open trade policies, radically upset the characteristics of local markets and labour relations. Until then, the representative membership of those organisations had been urban, industrial wage-earners, predominantly male. After these processes the industrial sector began to lose weight in terms of employment; participation of women in the labour force increased, as well as new contractual arrangements, self-employment, informal work and unemployment. Faced with all these developments, many trade union organisations found it very difficult to adapt to the new situation and lost bargaining power in various ways.

In the third place, together with the above transformations new notions were accepted in the region about economic development strategies and labour and production management, that were diametrically opposed to the old productive paradigms. Although they strongly emphasised technology and qualification, they tended to consider training as something almost exclusively dependent on productivity and competitiveness strategies, objectives normally linked to the employers' viewpoint. The fact often led unions to see occupational training as one more instrument at the service of capital, so that imparting it was more the responsibility of enterprises than of workers.

There is therefore a turning point, and what until the mid-seventies had been a situation of equal participation by employers and workers (although in contexts of strong State intervention) became a scenario in which workers' organisations drifted away from decision-making in vocational training, and employers took the lead in that respect. This picture saw some positive changes in recent years, owing to a number of factors, namely:

- There is a new conceptual volteface that reinserts training in the educational scenario, bringing its players and arrangements closer to regular education systems, and propounding a new idea: lifelong education. Insofar as training is recognised to be an educational fact, it is also envisaged as a tool for building a modern and democratic citizenry.

- The emergence of new forms of organising labour and production that place knowledge at the centre of productivity and competitiveness strategies, have also turned training into a key element for access to employment. Although training does not seem to directly ensure the creation of new jobs, it is possible to favour equal training opportunities, and thereby attain greater social equity in connection with employment, earnings and personal and social development.

### **Brazil: trade unions and vocational training**

Brazilian unions have gone a long way in the matter of action in the vocational training field. There are at present several examples which may be mentioned of performance both at the training programme and project execution level and regarding formulation of proposals and their submittal to and debate within diverse negotiation and dialogue arenas. Among other experiences, it is worthwhile to refer to the Workers' Schools, conducted by various unions included in one of the country's main federations, the CUT, that constitute an important precedent, both because of their conceptual and methodological innovations and because of their increasing scope. Conceived as a response to problems arising from new production techniques and the new economic context, these schools have been recognised by the competent educational agencies, maintained with union resources and have been going through re-structuring and re-sizing processes on the basis of in-depth discussions of their nature and function. Created as of 1989, these schools are part of the Workers' School Board and are currently seven in number: Norte I; Norte II "Chico Mendes"; Nordeste; Centro-Oeste; Sudeste "7 de outubro"; Sao Paulo and Sur.

Other examples of union action regarding training are the following:

*Vocational Training and Interaction Project:* begun in 1996 by the Piracicaba (Força Sindical) Metallurgical Workers' Union and Caterpillar of Brazil, its main activities are actions complementing schooling, in the fields of vocational training, educational levelling and personal and social training.

*Sao Paulo (Força Sindical) Metallurgical Workers' Union Vocational Qualification School:* established in 1992, this school trains and develops skills of employed workers, unemployed workers and young people, and provides courses for workers' children. Besides offering vocational training, the school provides first and second level supplementary schooling, the latter through the Telecurso 2000 system, in an arrangement with the Federation of Industries of the State of Sao Paulo (FIESP).

The *Project for Competencies' Negotiation*, promoted by Força Sindical, is aimed at defining, on a negotiated basis, new competencies for the metallurgical sector, resulting from a programme of vocational education that has also been the result of negotiations. This Project intends to train union leaders of the Central Union for bargaining with employers and the Government regarding new occupational competencies. It comprises six stages: awareness; sectoral diagnosis; training of leaders; dialogue with the

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Government and employers; negotiation of programmes, and further training and retraining of workers.

*Overall Occupational Training and Retraining Programme – Sao Paulo Project*, begun in 1996 by the National Metallurgical Workers' Confederation (CNM/CUT), it is financed by the Workers' Assistance Fund (FAT). It targets both employed and unemployed workers, through vocational training and first level education activities.

*Vocational Training Project for Bank Employees*: begun in 1992, this is an initiative of the Rio de Janeiro Bank Employee's Union (CUT), which also finances and provides certification of the courses.

Besides these and other projects which are being carried out by Brazilian union organisations, it is also important to mention the increasing inclusion of vocational training as an item in the patterns of union negotiation with employers.

- The explicit tie established between training and employment and earnings in the new systems of labour relations, opens up avenues for action by specialised bodies of trade union organisations to unlock a situation in which workers were losing ground. Having a closer look at the current challenges and problems of enterprises and national economies, and knowing what role training policies play therein, provides workers' organisations with a clearer insight –and consequently more clout– to play an active role at the various negotiation levels: enterprise, sector, country, even international.

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This greater involvement of trade union organisations with institutional training, can be seen both in conceptual development and in the plane of action. There is a notorious increase in the number of specialised bodies dealing with the subject in various union organisations of the region; they carry out diagnostic studies and research, produce analytical documents and make trade union proposals in that connection. A growing number of trade union workshops, forums and seminars are organised to discuss training and its links with aspects of strategic importance to unions. Trade union training activities also deal with vocational training, and are beginning to consider the links among the different types of education and training.

Regarding trade union participation in decision making and implementation of training activities, there is a wide range of experiences, in varying stages of development, showing that union players are determined to play a leading role in the field of training. The following is a summary of the different forms of trade union participation in training:

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### **Chile: corporate management in rural sector training**

An example of direct participation of the corporate sector in vocational training is the Rural Sector Social Development Corporation (CODESSER), now called National Agriculture Society Educational Corporation, although the former initials are still used. It is an affiliate of the National Agriculture Society (SNA) of Chile, which is more than one hundred years old, and was established in 1976 with the purpose of “co-operating for the improvement of educational and cultural conditions and the technical and vocational training of people linked to rural activities; promoting, organising and co-ordinating occupational training to benefit agricultural workers; facilitating technical, health and hygiene assistance; and contributing to the improvement of rural living conditions, seeking the overall development of the rural population and its effective incorporation into the national community.”

These objectives go way back: the SNA was founded in 1838. Very soon its General Board, on the basis of an analysis of the importance of labour as the main factor in the production of goods, added another responsibility to those established at the time of its foundation: *“to improve the rural sector population, the main instrument of its work, and without the operations of which Society’s efforts would be in vain and its labour and meditations would be fruitless.”*

CODESSER activities are focused on forestry, agriculture and livestock, and agro-industrial education at the middle and upper levels, and on training of young people, employers and workers throughout the Chilean rural area. The establishments it manages (16 secondary schools through which 19 educational units operate) include 90% of the arable land of the country, and its educational activity is addressed to students of middle and higher educational levels; employers interested in updating their knowledge, renewing technologies and upgrading agricultural business management; unemployed youth; men and women involved in the SENCE training programmes; and agricultural workers interested in specialising according to their own needs. The institutional activities of the Corporation are performed in four large areas: management, education, production and community relations. The educational area includes four types of services: formal education, training, teacher development and transfer of technology.

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This institution has been recognised by the National Training and Employment Service (SENCE) as a technical executing agency (OTE) and is accredited by the Centre for Pedagogical Research and Development (CPEIP) as a teacher development executing body. It is the institution in charge of national co-ordination of technology transfer groups (GTT) which use, as their operational headquarters, the establishments that the National Agriculture Society Educational Corporation manages throughout Chile.

With regard to its projection into the future, CODESSER plans to concentrate its endeavours on formal education and teacher development; to incorporate a larger number of employers into education; and to strengthen its schools as centres that provide a link with the rural world. On this last point, it plans to expand the educational process to the entire area of the establishments it manages, changing student screening processes in order to provide greater opportunities to individuals coming from distant rural sectors whose education is more deficient but who have a real vocation for agricultural, agro-industrial or forestry work.

- Inclusion of vocational training in collective agreements –already mentioned in Chapter I– has been to a large extent the result of trade union concern about the matter, and consequent pressure in negotiations, to have clauses ensuring access of workers to training.

- The same can be said about recent labour legislation, where the establishment of vocational training as a fundamental right of all citizens, is in many cases due to active participation and lobbying by trade unions.

- Revitalised trade union participation in the directive bodies of VTIs of several countries, partly encouraged by the sectoral focalisation processes of those institutions, facilitates participation by intermediate levels, like the federations of the respective sectors. This can be seen in the summit committees and liaison committees at the INA, of Costa Rica, and at decision-making levels in many vocational training institutions of the region: INOFTEP (Dominican Republic), INAFORP (Panama), INFOP (Honduras), INATEC (Nicaragua), INTECAP (Guatemala), SENA (Colombia), SNPP (Paraguay), INCE (Venezuela), SENAR (Brazil), and others.

- Instances of direct management of vocational training institutions, foundations and programmes by trade unions. Examples of this are, in Ar-

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gentina, the Construction Training Foundation, dependent on the construction workers' union (UOCRA), as well as similar undertakings by the commerce and services, insurance, metal mechanics and other unions. In that country, workers' organisations that implement important institutionalised training activities come together in the "Trade Union Forum for the Integral Training of Workers", which acts in the sphere of the Instituto Arturo Jauretche of the General Labour Confederation (CGT). In Brazil, three of the main union federations (CUT), Força Sindical and CGT, carry out training programmes both at central level and through their branch affiliates. These experiences have considerable weight. This is particularly evident in Argentina, where the vocational training offer by trade unions is the only one that has attained permanence and a significant coverage. In fact, and although CONET still existed, enrolment in trade union programmes was larger than in public training institutes.

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- Participation of trade union representatives in tripartite bodies created by Labour Ministries, dealing with training, among other things. Examples are: the National Training Board (JUNAE), tripartite entity of the M. of L. and Social Security (Uruguay); trade union representation on the governing boards of the Fund for the Protection of Workers (CODEFAT) at national, state and municipal levels (Brazil); participation in the tripartite National Training Council, advisory body of the M. of L. and Social Security of Chile.

- In Mexico there is another tripartite experience, also in connection with the Secretariats of Labour and Social Security and Public Education: it is the Council for the Standardisation and Certification of Occupational Competencies (CONOCER), which promotes participation by all stakeholders in the development of training based on standards of competency, and certification thereof.

- First instances of bipartite management of training in the region. Example: the Foundation for the Training of Construction Workers and Employers, in Uruguay.

- Participation in new bipartite bodies, regulated by law, at the level of enterprises: Joint Training Committees, of Mexico, and Bipartite Training Committees created in Chile pursuant to the Training and Employment Statute, which establishes that programmes agreed upon with the enterprise's bipartite committee, entitle the enterprise to deduct up to an additional 20% of the expenses incurred, apart from training costs.

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- Some central unions have also managed to develop institutional mechanisms that, among other things, do research in training and related subjects, provide conceptual information to trade unions on them and act to a certain extent as “think tanks” for workers’ organisations that seek to play an active role in spheres where vocational training is discussed and negotiated. Examples are: the Instituto Jauretche, of the Argentine CGT; the Inter-union Department of Statistics and Socio-economic Studies (DIESSE), of the three main Brazilian central unions; and the Institute for Higher Trade Union Studies (INAESIN) of the Workers’ Central Union of Venezuela (CTV).

- At international level, the two main regional trade union organisations, the **Inter American Regional Workers’ Organisation (ORIT/CIOSL)** and the **Latin American Workers’ Confederation (CLAT)** have recently highlighted training in current union discussions, both through their chief delegates, trade union training activities and awareness promotion.

This listing is only part of the examples that might be quoted in a more exhaustive description, but the instances included are proof of the great efforts of trade union action in Latin America and the Caribbean to take part in vocational training. This is auspicious and positive for workers’ organisations, but most importantly, it is also beneficial for training itself. Union participation helps significantly to strike a balance among the interests at play around vocational training, already stressed by the various objectives it has to fulfil. Among other things, trade unions might contribute in promoting integrating conceptions and practices to mitigate the risk of polarisation in our societies. This refers both to individuals and enterprises. Regarding individuals, to prevent a widening of the gap between those who have access to knowledge and employment and those who are condemned to social exclusion. Regarding enterprises, to prevent the consolidation of a situation in which some have good human resources policies and make flexibility and competitiveness a banner for everyone, while others do not invest, become ossified, do not modernise and are doomed to disappear in a competitive market, thus increasing the problem of unemployment.

## **2. Employers’ organisations and vocational training**

At present, in all countries of the region employers are being encouraged to play a leading role in various spheres, vocational training among them.

Historically, the move to create vocational training institutions started in the region with the birth in Brazil of two bodies associated to employers’

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organisations: the National Industrial Training Service –SENAI– in 1942, and the National Commercial Training Service –SENAC– in 1946. These institutions that, as pioneering experiences, left a deep mark in the region, were since their inception attached to the respective employers’ federations of the industrial and commercial sectors, and remain so to this day.

Along subsequent decades, the corporate sector continued to have great influence on vocational training, and although most of the institutions created later did not adopt the management pattern of their Brazilian forerunners, they did opt for tripartite mechanisms wherein employers lent permanent support and co-operation.

82 The changes described earlier concerning the way in which regional economies became internationalised through open trade strategies, brought about new imperatives and challenges. Significant among them were those relating to the speed of technological innovation and the requirements for updating occupational skills and qualifications. Training then appeared as a central element in strategies to raise the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises. This led enterprises and their organisations to become increasingly involved in aspects like the management, financing and methodologies of training, and to participate more actively in vocational training institutions. They also took the lead in processes whereby the management of former public institutions was taken over by employers’ organisations, or in some cases training bodies issued forth from those organisations.

In any event, and whatever the nature of training institutions (public or private), those that have most successfully adapted to the current productive, labour and technological context invariably owe their success to a permanent dialogue and interaction with enterprises, that have become priority objects of their attention.

Apart from these corporate initiatives and efforts, training practices implemented by enterprises have expanded. Sometimes, services are outsourced, but on other occasions in-house training is developed. This is a growing trend, empirically associated to the most successful competitive strategies.

On the other hand, the interest of employers in training goes beyond the concept of a tool solely devoted to improving workers’ skills. Quite the contrary, it is seen as an instrument that can also upgrade middle managers, executives and even employers themselves.

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### **Mexico: training for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprise**

In this country, the activities to support micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises have increased significantly since the implementation, beginning in 1988, of the Integral Quality and Modernisation Programme (CIMO), originally called Industrial Training of the Labour Force, and promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. In response to training, information, consulting services and technical assistance needs of these firms, CIMO has promoted a scheme to link integrated services that enables them to upgrade the quality, productivity, market know-how and modernity of management and labour relations.

The action of CIMO is carried out through a structure of Training Promotion Units (UPC), distributed in strategic locations throughout Mexico, within intermediate entrepreneurial organisations, in order to take advantage of their mustering capacity to constitute groups of firms by branches, groups of suppliers, subjects or problems in common.

Among other examples of CIMO achievements along these lines, the following may be mentioned:

- The Tlaxcala Quality and Productivity Centre, constituted by twelve manufacturing companies and their respective association, conceived as a CIMO guidelines implementing agency. The mission of this Centre is to become an instrument of support and stimulus for the constant upgrading of the competitiveness of firms, businesses and producer organisations in the region. It is achieved through overall support programmes adapted to the needs of each firm, catering to it directly or linking it up with the providers of services needed.
- The Puebla Competitiveness Development Centre (CEDECOM) is the result of joint work carried out by CIMO and the National Chamber of Manufacturing Industries (CANACINTRA). It arose from the CIMO Training Promotion Unit (UPC) that undertook, in Puebla, systematic and sustained work in the framework of training, quality and productivity programmes with micro-, small and medium-sized firms of the most representative sectors and

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branches of the region. Regarding these advances, CEDECOM is considered to be a new stage of development and consolidation.

As can be seen in the examples above, this is a pioneer activity. Although CIMO was originally a Government initiative, its approach is participational, decentralised and flexible, enabling joint action with employers' associations and the firms benefiting from it. Moreover, the UPC's are not local representations of a central agency, but rather local fora that promote a methodology of work seeking to be appropriate for the firms themselves and their organisations.

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But the influence of corporate players covers more aspects than those directly related to management, financing and implementation. Employers' organisations have also introduced their own concepts and notions of training in the diverse spheres where the subject is discussed, whether they be national tripartite or bipartite agreements, sectoral arrangements or bargaining at enterprise level. It is probably in this respect that there is the greatest asymmetry between employers' and workers' organisations. This disparity has only been lessened in the last few years, owing to the new measures taken by trade unions, as we saw above.

The following can be mentioned among the many examples of employers' participation in the field of training in Latin America and the Caribbean:

- The management of some vocational training institutions has been directly taken over by entrepreneurial chambers. This was already the case of SENAI and SENAC, in Brazil, but in recent years they have been joined by ICIC (Mexico), INACAP (Chile), INFOCAL (Bolivia), SENATI (Peru), SENAT (Brazil), CIED (Venezuela), and others. This has given corporate organisations an extremely powerful instrument regarding both infrastructure and coverage, as well as in the prior accumulation of human capital, methodologies, teaching material and knowledge.

- Various sectoral chambers have been enlarging the repertory of services they offer to their members. For instance, they have entered the areas of research and development, and technical education and training. By way of example, we can mention:

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- In Chile, the services offered by the **Chilean Construction Chamber**, through three corporations (Construction Research Corporation; Construction Educational Corporation and Construction Training Corporation); action by employers of the agricultural sector under the **National Agricultural Society**, that through its **Social Development Corporation for the Rural Sector (CODESSER)** and just in the area of education lends support to formal schooling, training, teachers' further training and technological transfer; and the far reaching activities of the **Production and Commerce Confederation**, through INACAP.

- In Venezuela, the above mentioned initiative of the companies of the SIVENSA Group, through the **FUNDAMENTAL Foundation** and the **International Centre for Education and Development (CIED)** dependent on the State enterprise Petróleos de Venezuela.

- In Mexico the **National Chamber of the Textile Industry (CANAINTEX)** through the **Textile Training Centre (CATEX)**, which besides training services has technological and quality management services; as well as ICIC, dependent on the **National Chamber of the Construction Industry**.

- In Argentina, the companies under the Graphic Arts Chamber of Buenos Aires have provided strong support to training in their sector through the **Gutenberg Foundation**.

- In Colombia, there are entrepreneurial initiatives in the graphic arts, plastics and rubber sectors, with their Technological Development Centres **IFTAG** and **ICPC**, respectively, that promote training, among other activities.

- Besides initiatives directly related to employers' organisations, there is a great number of experiences of in-house training programmes, particularly in the larger enterprises.

- Experiences in bipartite management are beginning to be known, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, in sectors like construction and pulp and paper (Uruguay); or new management formulas at enterprise level (Chile, Bipartite Training Committees).

- Finally, the tripartite arrangements at the level of Labour Ministries where employers take active part: JUNAE (Uruguay), CODEFAT (Brazil) and National Training Council (Chile), among others.

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The main conclusion that can be drawn from this brief outline of entrepreneurial participation in vocational training, is that employers have assumed a leading role and are the players that have increased their influence to the largest extent, whether in terms of infrastructure, knowledge, conceptualisation or political influence.

Having said this, however, we must not overlook two great problems that underlie this strong entrepreneurial sway in training. The first one is that, from the point of view of the general interests of society, it is advisable that the other players involved should also have a solid presence, that can be felt in the various decisions regarding training, in order to reserve its dual role of contributing both to the competitiveness and productivity of enterprises, and to social integration, cohesion and equity.

86 The second problem lies in the very diversity of the entrepreneurial universe of the region. In that respect, there is undeniable evidence that very large entrepreneurial sectors are still barred from access to technology, credit and training. Considering that those sectors, made up by formal or informal small and micro enterprises, not only give employment to the majority of our countries' populations, but are the only ones where employment grows to a certain extent (though not much), it is clear that they should be the object of active modernisation policies. Many of the corporate organisations mentioned above are implementing action for their benefit, but it seems obvious that in order to overcome these situations, a combination of efforts, resources and experience is required that must also come from the State, workers' organisations and civil society.

### 3. Private and non governmental training offer

Something that has happened in all countries of the region is the **appearance in recent decades of a private market of education and training** (particularly training). The degree of development and consolidation of these markets differs from one country to another, depending on a number of factors. However, the main issue is not the number of private suppliers but their strengths and weaknesses to provide the different types of training that society and production require.

Anyway, the proliferation of this new training offer is clear evidence of the importance it has acquired at all levels, not only among enterprises, governments and the various productive, labour and social organisations,

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but in the population in general. Although education has always been visualised as one of the most efficient vehicles for social mobility, during a long period of the history of our countries the notion was linked to formal and regular education. To go up in the educational ladder meant having greater possibilities and opportunities of different kinds: jobs, earnings, prestige, social capital, participation. In that view, that reflected the economic and social reality of a certain period of our history, having a technical or professional career was seen with different nuances, according to the cultural values of each society and its perceptions about manual work versus intellectual activities, training for work and academic education. But it always implied, more or less, being “halfway up” in the scale of social, political and economic opportunities.

The situation has now changed radically. To begin with, we are witnessing what has been described as a “gradual devaluation of educational credentials”, meaning that they tend to lose relative value (precisely as tools to have access to certain levels of employment, salary, responsibility, prestige). This has caused a veritable “rush forward”, in which it is constantly necessary to reach higher levels of education in order to have access to the same opportunities. As educational offers are standardised, intermediate levels are “compressed” and lose differentiation in their capacity to provide that access to opportunities. It is increasingly necessary to reach the higher levels of qualification to be differentiated and to compete efficiently. Nevertheless, this is not the only alternative. The other one is to seek differentiation on the basis of an original professional profile, supplementing regular studies with a special combination of technical courses. This is also valid for different age groups: a young man or a young woman will do their regular studies, but insofar as they can they will try to take courses in languages, computer science, business administration, or technical training. An adult person, who perceives that the rules of the game begin to change in his work environment, and that the diplomas he obtained 15 or 20 years ago are no longer sufficient, will also try to grasp and handle those “new things” that new technologies bring with them.

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Building up a unique, personal profile to have access to more and better occupational opportunities, bringing knowledge up to date so as not to lose footing in the wave of technological progress are –perhaps rather simply stated– subjective reasons in the current social, labour and technical context, that explain why there is a great demand for training courses, which to a large extent has stimulated the emergence of a private market.

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Without getting to the bottom of this explosive growth of the private training offer, we must also point out that the conditions that provoked it did not exclusively stem from a “pure” market dynamics, as described in previous paragraphs, although that was also an important element. Also present in the last few decades was the advent and development of a new generation of public policies regarding training and employment; policies based on the assumption -or requirement- of the existence of a private market to reach their objectives. They resulted in programmes wherein the State had the prerogative of managing and financing, and delegated execution of training to private agents. This was no doubt a powerful incentive for the emergence and consolidation of the new offer.

An analysis of what has happened in this new sector of training offer shows that, on the one hand, it has the problem of being aimed almost exclusively at the commerce and services sector. Although this sector grows steadily in all economies, this training slant would seem to be due to a matter of costs and investments, notoriously lower to implement most courses for the tertiary sector than for industry or agriculture.

88 On the other hand, as already mentioned, it is a sector that grew under the protection of certain policies that subsidised and encouraged the emergence of a private offer: training and employment programmes for special population groups (young people, women, micro entrepreneurs, soldiers discharged from armed conflicts, etc.); and subsidies to enterprises for implementing training activities. This means to say, then, that the private training market is in most cases the result of a substantial change in State intervention, namely, withdrawal of the State from direct implementation, plus incentives and subsidies to the private offer.

Insofar as this change in the role of the State and this delegation of activities did not take place with a pre-existing private offer, but rather that the market emerged precisely as a consequence of changing public policies, weak spots have appeared in some places: low quality courses, lack of adaptation to the needs of enterprises, instability of training suppliers, etc.

These kinds of problems must be viewed in the context of a process whereby, in the medium term, a selection and consolidation of the private offer will take place. However, there are at least two aspects that remain unsolved, even assuming that private training offer will consolidate.

The first one is how to meet demands that are not immediately profitable. The typical case is the provision of training services for the more disadvantaged

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population groups. Except when –once again- there is a specific line of financing by the State, it is hardly to be expected that institutions that are mostly profit making may be interested.

To a certain extent, now comes on the scene the other type of agent that we enumerated among players in training: **non governmental organisations, and others.** These non profit agencies, very often pursuing the social and economic development of certain groups or communities, may offer training for that purpose. They frequently make methodological and conceptual innovations that are subsequently replicated elsewhere. But there is another problem here. As these organisations often have limited financing, and human resources that usually work on a voluntary basis, they are subject to a certain degree of instability, so that many of their experiences are successful for a while, but cannot be sustained.

Another aspect that cannot be properly looked after by relying solely on the private training offer, is the fact that **in order to have sense and usefulness, training services need at present to be complemented by other activities and services** As we shall see below, only the kind of training that gets deeply involved with technological innovation and transfer, that is conceived and developed in the framework of existing social relations, and that pursues long term training objectives, will reach an optimal degree of relevance, quality and adaptation to productive and social requirements.

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Consequently, both types of players –private offer through institutes and academies, and social, community and non governmental organisations– must be considered part of the new training scenario regarding execution of programmes and activities.

#### **4. Local management of training: a space for more actors and opportunities**

A part of the decentralisation processes that have been taking place in many countries of the region, is the increasing revaluation of local or regional spheres in the generation of both knowledge and wealth. Accumulated research on industrial districts and local productive systems shows the strong interconnection that exists between economic and socio-cultural phenomena, as well as the capacity of certain regions to produce, innovate and sell, regardless of the structural conditions of the country to which they belong.

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Factors like collective identity, a feeling of belonging, a spirit of collaboration and innovation, among others, facilitate the involvement and participation of a wide range of local players, without whom it would not be possible to attain the stage of systemic competitiveness that characterises paradigmatic regions regarding local development.

In this framework, occupational training, which is an important component of all active employment policies and an essential requirement for the promotion of economic productivity and competitiveness –at national or regional level– also becomes a matter of regional interest and importance. In this respect, there is a growing number of experiences in which training is planned and managed by local agents, or by institutions with national coverage that adapt contents and form to the specific requirements of the region in question.

Without necessarily including all, we submit below a number of experiences to give an idea of the way in which different countries have tried to deal with the social and economic development and training needs of enterprises and populations at local or regional level. We shall consider private initiatives by institutions or organisations, as well as the setting up of networks including a diversity of players of various kinds, whose interaction is guided by the common purpose of improving the economic and social conditions of a given region.

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In the Argentine Republic, the **Vocational Training Council of Rosario and its Region (CCFP)** was created in late 1997. It is a bipartite entity made up by trade union and entrepreneurial organisations, whose objective is the improvement and upgrading of the occupational profiles of all workers, both employed or circumstantially out of work; in the latter case they are retrained.

CCFP is directed by a Board of fourteen members, seven of which represent trade unions, the other seven, employers' associations.

Among activities on the working schedule of CCFP for 1998 were, first of all, activities of organisational and institutional consolidation and management with national and municipal authorities; management of foreign technical assistance; management of legal representation of CCFP, solving infrastructure problems. These items were followed by work guidelines for the direct improvement of occupational training in the region, with tasks such as: initial survey of training needs of the public and private sectors

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regarding basic, general and specific skills; strengthening of the training offer through actions aimed at improving curricula and encouraging competition on the basis of costs and quality of courses, and the installation of sectoral committees to identify specific competencies at the request of sectors.

### **Argentina: local management of technical-vocational training**

As from 1998, the National Institute of Technological Education (INET), of Argentina, has been promoting the development of projects called Local Systems of Educational Offers and Services (SILOSE). These systems are an alternative to overcome the fragmentation and shortcomings in the organisation of existing variants of vocational technical training (FTP). They are shared management schemes in which national and provincial authorities of a given branch come to agreements with local institutions for dispensing training (FTP) services in a zone or district.

The development of a SILOSE implies a process of association and integration of institutions allowing for increases of scale to organise varied, open and flexible training offers and services, capable of progression. A system of this kind requires strategic management, involving different public and private players, to upgrade diagnostic studies and fine-tune the relevance of offers, settle conflicts, optimise resources, keep links with the productive sector and introduce local strategies for teachers' training.

In its setting up process, a SILOSE transfers provincial decisions to local levels and endeavours to become a pluralistic agent of increasing importance in defining the FTP of its own community. In turn, its local scope enables it to design adequate scenarios for the involvement of corporate, trade union and local government sectors, as well as other community players. In terms of the convergence of general education with adults' education and vocational training, the coming together of the various institutions existing in a given district allows for a sort of co-ordination that would not otherwise be possible with the current configuration of educational services in Argentina.

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In Brazil, the long and far reaching experience of **SENAI**, **SENAC** and more recently **SENAR** in the agrarian sector, are examples of national action that finds concrete expression according to the reality of the different federal states. All these Brazilian institutions have a regionalised structure, in which the Regional Departments enjoy a high degree of autonomy *vis-à-vis* National Directorates. This independence is not achieved, as in other cases, by virtue of a central decision to delegate administrative, policy or organisational decisions; it is backed and legitimised by the fact that, in each state, the respective local industrial or commercial chamber is responsible for the management, infrastructure and resources of the Regional Department. This active involvement of local entrepreneurs in institutional management, is reinforced by the fact that this same decentralisation and autonomy facilitates a whole range of co-operation and business schemes within the social, economic and cultural sphere of the State, with local authorities, trade unions or civil society organisations.

92 Also in Brazil, the Training and Professional Development Secretariat (SEFOR) is sponsoring schemes to strengthen local management, in order to promote the involvement of new players in the administration, management and development of training programmes. One of the main lines in this connection is the creation of the **Public Vocational Training Centres (CEPFP)**, through the **States' Secretariats for Employment and Labour Relations (SERT)** of the states of Sao Paulo and Ceará, among others. They are designed as flexible sources of training supply to meet the specific and permanent demands of young and adult workers, employed and unemployed, independent workers and micro enterprises. It is a public, collective and co-operative training offer managed by the local community.

Its principal mission is to co-ordinate the needs and requirements of all local players, and find joint solutions that may be available in the communities themselves, or in outside communities, such as state and federal universities. Training programmes favour a selective appropriation of scientific, technical and technological knowledge and more general information on man and society, that is essential to the education of the working citizen.

Apart from its training programmes, the CEPFP constitutes an information source for workers and employers, fostering greater integration between training actions, enterprises and communities. It also serves to co-ordinate among all education professionals who act on the formal side of training, or at enterprises, in trade unions and governmental organisations.

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Also of great importance is the **National Plan for the Further Training of Workers (PLANFOR)** that SEFOR began to implement in 1996. PLANFOR action follows three broad lines:

- **Conceptual development:** which includes the building and consolidation of a new conceptual and methodological approach to vocational education, guided by the effective demand of the productive sector (gathering together the interests and needs of workers, employers and communities), with a view to raising productivity and the quality of labour, improving workers' employability and the living conditions of the population.

- **Institutional co-ordination:** mobilisation and strengthening of a national vocational training network made up by public and private institutions having infrastructure and experience in the field, such as: federal and state public schools, universities, "S System", non governmental organisations, trade unions, foundations, etc.

- **Support of civil society:** aimed at enlarging the supply of flexible ongoing training through the above network, in order to train and retrain at least 20% of the economically active population every year, in particular those groups that traditionally have less chance of benefiting from training action.

Two mechanisms have gradually been consolidated for the implementation of PLANFOR. Their goals are participation, decentralisation and strengthening of local implementation capacities:

- **State Further Training Plans (PEQ)**, that comprise national and state further training programmes, to meet demands negotiated at Municipal Employment Committees or similar bodies, implemented by the local network of public and private vocational education, contracted by the Labour Secretariat in accordance with the legislation in force.

- **National and Regional "Parcerias" (partnerships)**, implemented through agreements, contracts, co-operation arrangements or protocols signed by CODEFAT, the Ministry of Labour, SEFOR, workers' unions, foundations, universities and other ministries, prioritising conceptual and methodological development and institutional co-ordination.

The **National Training Service (SENA) of Colombia**, through initiatives like the "Vocational Training Programme for Municipal Development", the

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“Programme for the Attention of families and special population groups” and the “Programme for the Attention of the social economy sector”, has endeavoured to contribute to the development of the human resources involved in municipal management; support the promotion and development of associative economic units for the generation of employment, earnings and social promotion; and integrate disadvantaged persons or groups into the development processes of the country, in conditions of equality.

The “Vocational Training Programme for Municipal Development”, addressed at municipal or departmental authorities, technicians of Public Entities and non governmental organisations, and organisations of the active social players in municipalities and departments, includes:

- *Training:* in Planning, Financial Management, Formulation and Management of Projects, Organisational Management and Community Participation in local management, with emphasis on the training of trainers and officials of departmental and municipal administrations.

- *Consulting services:* to departmental or municipal councils, on institutional development.

- *Technical assistance:* on aspects relating to the above mentioned priority areas.

- *Technological services:* at consulting level, to solve specific problems and criteria of municipal development.

SENA also takes part in the implementation of training and consultancy projects for municipalities.

The “Programme for the Attention of the social economy sector”, addressed at directors of social economy enterprises, affiliates of economic units and technicians belonging to public or private organisations and NGOs, offers:

- *Training:* for the promotion of associative enterprises and second level organisations, for diagnosis and formulation of development plans.

- *Consulting services:* for socio-entrepreneurial diagnosis, formulation and implementation of plans of action and development, and inter-enterprise integration at regional level.

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- *Technical assistance*: in areas pertaining to associative enterprises.
  - *Technological services*: to overcome difficulties in the design, quality control and modification of products and services.

Finally the “Programme for the Attention of families and special population groups”, addressed to persons who work with, or belong to some disadvantaged group, offers services of technical and organisational training to agencies that work with those populations: consultant services on the implementation of vocational training and community organisation methodologies and technologies; technological services focusing on the productive processes of those populations.

Also in Colombia, the experience of the **Paisajoven Corporation** was the result of a bilateral agreement between the Municipality of Medellin and the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ). It operates in the form of a network that includes municipal bodies, ONGs, foundations, universities and a number of agencies specialising in work with young people.

The objective of Paisajoven is to promote co-ordination among organisations, to professionalise its personnel and organise pilot experiences. The approach adopted by the Corporation implies the training of its personnel, reinforcing impact and co-ordination (development of institutional alliances) for the improvement of the services of organisations. To that end training services are implemented, as well as management consulting, tools grants, a diploma on methodology for the design and evaluation of projects, and courses and seminars by specialised institutions or agencies that work with the young.

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The main contribution of Paisajoven in the area of youth employment in Medellin has been a regional model of training for employment. It has identified lack of training as the main cause of structural unemployment, and singled out the local sphere as appropriate for meeting existing training demands. Although these initiatives are costly, they have impact in the medium term.

Training and employment are one of the fourteen lines of action of the Medellin Plan, jointly developed by the State and civil society. Thus, the Municipality of Medellin has promoted a pilot project on “Management model for the training and access to employment of the young”, which aims at inter-institutional co-ordination to improve the training offer, promote more efficient management of resources, and have influence in the medium term on structural unemployment.