

CONCLUSIONS

1. In Latin America and the Caribbean, training has characteristic and original traits that differentiate it from what can exist in other regions of the world. This is evident both in its history and in the present of its institutional geography, as well as in the concepts and links it has with other spheres of the social and economic life of the countries of the region. There have been original conceptual advances in this field, that have led to the current understanding and practice of training as a labour, technological and educational occurrence. The institutional history of training in the region is unique, as are also unique the ways in which the different countries of the region are facing the challenges of phenomena such as economic globalisation, technological change, or the new forms of organisation of labour and production. The region is today, in respect of training, an authentic nursery of innovative experiences in methodologies, organisational arrangements, financial schemes and strategic alliances among players.

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2. The new systems of labour relations adopted in the region clearly include training as a central subject, a strategic element connected to all the issues that are the object of negotiation: employment, wages, productivity, competitiveness, occupational health, working conditions and environment, social security, etc. Training is also an issue to be negotiated, and figures as such in national or sectoral agreements on employment and productivity, in labour legislation and in collective labour agreements. The various players in these systems also consider it something of their own. Ministries of Labour, through specific units, deal with training, and in many countries it is a priority subject in establishing policies and strategies. Workers' and employers' organisations have increasing participation both in vocational training institutions and in the new training approaches that have emerged in the region, apart from promoting their own training initiatives.

3. A good part of the more systematic and important efforts of innovation, development and transfer of technology in the region, take place in training spheres. One of the most fruitful examples in that respect are the technological development centres, experiences focalised on different sectors that aim at integrating training services into a perspective of overall attention of the requirements for applied technologies of enterprises and communities. This action is jointly carried out by vocational training institutions, entrepreneurial chambers and technological institutes, and seeks to establish methodological co-ordination between the training and development of human resources, and technological development.

4. These experiences are marked by one of the most important conceptual and methodological innovations of recent times in the field of vocational training: the clients of vocational training are no longer, or exclusively, individual workers or young people who wish to acquire skills. Preferential attention is also given to productive units as a whole, as well as productive and services chains.

5. In educational terms, the regional history of vocational training has many instances of deep commitment and a long history of co-operation with regular education systems. At present, the educational nature of training is enhanced by the new concept of lifelong education. This can be seen in the way vocational training institutions adapt teaching and learning methodologies and strategies, to make their offer more flexible and modular. Examples of co-ordination between vocational training and regular education systems, are secondary technical and technological schools, adult education and new institutional offers of vocational training at higher education level.

6. Regional vocational training has today much higher levels of decentralisation and participation than in the past. This makes it possible to explore the potential of sectoral and local management approaches, which brings rewards not only regarding improved management of financial, human, technical and infrastructure resources but also (and more importantly), in promoting the active incorporation of an ever greater number and diversity of players, with their own views, interests and resources, who come to enrich the field of training with new dimensions: citizenship, community development, strategies for local insertion in a globalised context. The sectoral approach becomes manifest in the training units included in centres for the overall attention of specific economic sectors, such as the textile industry, metal mechanics and automotive industries, hotels and tourism, graphic arts, etc., where links with productive and labour players are closer and contacts

more frequent, and higher levels of mutual involvement are achieved. Local management of training also implies introducing training strategies into integral community contexts, linking them to local economic and productive development processes, as well as to processes for strengthening the capacities of organisation and citizens' participation of those communities.

7. A description of the organisational reality of vocational training, its links with regular education systems and its financing schemes, admits several types of approximation. This document submits some attempts at establishing a typology of what is happening in this respect in the region of the Americas. Whatever the type of approach, we may conclude that:

i) The scenario of regional vocational training is today more pluralistic and heterogeneous than twenty or thirty years ago.

ii) Within that scenario, several players have gained growing importance. Foremost among them are Ministries of Labour, employers' and workers' organisations.

iii) Organisational arrangements in countries of the region do not fit into a single model, but reflect instead their respective political, economic and social contexts.

iv) Progress made in raising the quality, relevance, integrality and capacity to attain the economic and social goals of training does not directly relate to any particular organisational arrangement; each one has its own strengths and weaknesses.