

I. Challenges and opportunities of a vocational and technical training policy in Latin America at the turn of the century

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Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to address the material and epistemological scenario which surrounds the intervention model developed by the FORMUJER Programme, to which this book is devoted. As is pointed out in the Introduction, the in-depth analysis of that scenario and of the methodological developments to which it led, is undertaken in the series *Conceptual and teaching materials*, as also in articles included in Cinterfor/ILO publications¹. Moreover, the contextual peculiarities of each of the countries that co-execute the Programme are addressed in Chapters III, IV and V. Therefore, on this occasion a quick review is undertaken of the determining features of this scenario from the perspective of its condition as a conceptual framework and as a rationale for the Programme and the intervention model proposed, and in order to visualise the challenges and opportunities to which a response was sought.

1. The new reality of labour: living with uncertainty, heterogeneity, exclusion and the redefinition of gender relations

The last twenty years have represented, for the world as a whole and Latin America in particular, the most concentrated and radical historical period as regards social and economic transformations: we refer to the questioning of known models of knowledge production, of the morphology of society, of social economic development, of the production system and, mainstreaming them, of gender relations and representations. Each of these paradigms has an impact on the others in a mutually modifying relationship that causes the concepts of development and welfare to be redefined, creating a problem regarding access to them for significant sectors of the population. These changes are expressed with an unequalled intensity in the world of work because it is in that world that socio-cultural, educational and economic aspects that condition and provide a framework for social interrelations converge and interact.

¹ Especially in "Género y empleabilidad: desafíos y oportunidades para una política de formación profesional y técnica en el siglo XXI en América Latina", in *Boletín Técnico de Cinterfor/ILO, Formación Profesional, Productividad y Trabajo Decente N° 153*, which is the reference document to which this chapter applies and that this chapter synthesises.

The nature, structure, organisation, culture and actual sexual division of labour have changed with globalisation and the new world scope of the economy, permanent technological innovation and massive female entry into economic activity.

As a result of globalisation, time and space are compacted, economic and cultural distances are reduced and the decisions and activities of any point of the planet affect and redefine national and regional development processes, generating opportunities and, simultaneously, reinforcing certain precarious aspects. “The convergence of world economic integration with technical progress can generate instability and difficulties regarding the maintenance of employability of a large part of the active population of a country”².

Knowledge becomes the basis of human labour, but it also becomes increasingly evident that knowledge must be in context and relevant. Education becomes the centre of a new society, and what definitely distinguishes the poor from the rich –be they individuals or countries– is now not only whether they have less capital but also whether they have less knowledge and what they have is of poorer quality. People who cannot produce or consume relevant knowledge run an extremely high risk of exclusion.

There occurs a profound social reordering of the professions, that questions the traditionally positive relationship between schooling-rent-status. *More and better knowledge is demanded, state of the art training, at the same time as there is an important social reordering of many traditional professions along with which salaries decrease and status declines, experience is devalued and there is unconcern and waste in already trained human resources.* This reordering is closely linked to the accelerated obsolescence of knowledge, the increase in the average level of information and formal education, the questioning of extreme specialisation, given the need for constant learning, as well as the dissemination by mass media of scientific knowledge in an accessible language, the retraction of social investment and its impact and relationship with the increase in female participation.

² ILO, World Employment Report, 1998-1999.

The known model of permanent employment³, which rises and is predictable, and mass labour, reaches a crisis:

- Life in this context involves a transitory condition and short-term projects. Mobility between enterprises, between formal and informal labour, alternate periods of employment and unemployment and the appearance of alternative ways to relate to labour (part time employment, home work, working by task) are the new features.
- Although weighted differently among developed and developing countries, urban informal labour becomes a substantive part of employment, partly due to the new practises of entrepreneurial organisation and, also partly, as an escape valve regarding the reduction of the pace of growth in formal employment.
- Employment is created in small amounts –almost job by job– and in its generation the small, medium (SMEs) and micro-enterprises and local development processes become the great protagonists. This widespread area of activity demands organisations and individuals capable of adapting and changing permanently, allowing them to face the world of labour and be capable of taking a position regarding the multiple modes of work.
- At the same time, new activities begin to take shape linked to sustainable development, to information and communication technologies, as well as to the new needs arising from social change. The entry of technology to homes (technification) and the migration of domestic tasks towards public spaces are leading to an increasing acquisition of services in the market that were traditionally performed at home. All of which opens up universes of alternative insertions that call for new competencies which will have to be strengthened and/or acquired.

It can then be concluded that *the new work aims at diversity, flexibility and instability, requires intelligence, polyvalence, self-responsibility, initiative and enterprising capacity, as well as having to manage uncertainty and change. It is closely linked to local determinants and to the new fields of employment and has specific characteristics and connotations by gender*, given that women and men

³ In FORMUJER Publications, unless stated otherwise, the term will be used in its broader sense of wage work in the market productive system.

face different demands and possibilities, arising from social hierarchies parcelled out by roles, spaces and responsibilities.

Women are no longer a secondary labour force, they have consolidated the “double presence” model facing the difficult relationship between work cycle and family life; they have increased remarkably their levels of education, especially in young generations and even attend vocational training activities more than men. This translates into an irruption of new identities, new styles of living, new reproductive patterns and a reconfiguration of the relations of men and women with things public and private.

Likewise, *the changes in the world of labour offer women both advantages and discriminations and risks.*

- ➔ They allow the development and diversification of their vocational and personal options that are no longer conditioned by physical strength but rather by knowledge and skills.
- ➔ Competencies that women have been exercising for a long time are required and valued (integration, teamwork, motivation, diversified attention, etc.), and the value of those competencies can better be made an objective.
- ➔ With the development of computer science and the services sector new and improved employment opportunities are opened up to them. At the same time, the introduction of state of the art technology and quality systems, even in those sectors in which they have been traditionally a majority, is relegating them to a second level and outsourcing circumscribes them to less qualified tasks and/or enterprises. Similarly, their access to positions of management is clearly limited.
- ➔ The combination of increased female schooling and the persistence of wage discrimination translates into the incorporation of women into work for which they are overqualified and for which they receive similar or lower wages than those of their male peers with less education.
- ➔ The high technification of homes and the migration of domestic chores to the public sector has simplified the administration of daily life and the tasks of attention and care. At the same time, the transformation of habits, towards an increasing acquisition of services which were traditionally rendered within the home and are now purchased in the market, has become

a very important source of female work, constituting one of the most fertile universes of alternative insertions that, already now are calling for new competencies that men and, especially, women have to strengthen or acquire.

- The new modes of work (telework, home work and part-time work) in which women play a major role, contribute benefits such as new employment niches, access to technology, greater compatibility with family obligations, flexible work schedules, etc., but they tend to be precarious, badly paid, with scant or nil social protection and high hourly intensity. Their transfer to the domestic environment makes it more difficult for women to discriminate and place limits between private and public life.
- The depreciation of traditional academic degrees and the scant relevance of secondary education regarding the requirements of the world of labour affects them especially because their educational efforts have in the main been directed towards both.
- Although female vocational diversification has increased and they are rapidly entering into technology and the “hard” sciences, this presence does not avoid the gender biases because their labour insertion horizon continues most probably to be teaching and when they have access to research activities they are involved in handling the least costly projects with the least impact.
- Adjustment policies have strongly affected attention and care services – via the reduction in the public supply that makes them its own and the wages that are paid– that are those which produce goods with a greater social externality, in which women are a majority and to which they devote two thirds of their unpaid working hours.

2. Contextualisation in Latin America: high unemployment, growth of informality and of the participation of women and their interdependence

As is pointed out by the ILO, the labour performance of Latin America since the mid-nineties, in a scenario of rapid economic opening, has been erratic: the economic recovery processes were and continue to be interrupted by successive crisis and the resistance of unemployment to decline persists, even in the stages when the economy is strengthening. Thus, the second year of the new century closed with a weighted average unemployment rate of 9.2% that is the highest recorded during the last twenty years, exceeding that recorded in the previous years where a generalised recession prevailed. Rates of between 15% and 21.5% were recorded by Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela and only in Brazil, Chile and Mexico were they lower. It is estimated that 17 million persons are unemployed, young people and women being the most affected. Among the factors with the greatest weight that explain this situation are the disappearance of the public sector as a net employer and the adjustment through reduction of employment of the enterprises of larger size, facilitated by technological innovations and organisational changes designed to increase productivity⁴.

The following situation determines the context and foundation of the FORMUJER Programme: at the time the Programme was designed, 1994, the average unemployment rate in the region was 6.6%; when it began, in 1998, it was already 8% and its growth was a constant that ran parallel to the entire process of execution, actually doubling during the stage when the training actions occurred. In Argentina the increase was exponential.

Simultaneously, changes in employment structure have been remarkable: employment was privatised –ninety-five of every one hundred new jobs were generated in the private sector–; labour demand –especially of non-qualified workers– in the structured sector decline strongly and modern employment contracted sustainedly. Outsourcing, informalisation and precariousness continue to increase: of every hundred new jobs, ninety-six were generated in the tertiary

⁴ ILO, Labour Overview 2002. Latin America and the Caribbean, ILO/Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2002.

sector; only six out of every ten had access to social security services and only two of every ten individuals working in the informal sector are covered by social protection. A reading by sex shows that, in terms of access to social security, women have been the most damaged: in the five-year period 1995-2000, while the percentage of men involved, diminished by one point, that of women did so by three.

Informalisation is the decisively determining feature of employment in Latin America: of every ten jobs generated since 1990, seven have been informal. Between 1990 and 1998, growth in the informal sector was 3.9% a year compared with 2.1% in the formal sector. By the end of the 20th century, 46.4% of urban occupation was in informal activities; the proportion in the case of women rose to 50%⁵. As stated by V. Tokman, in the decade of the nineties formality in Latin America must be visualised as a minimum from a double perspective: from the logic of survival and from the decentralisation of production⁶. In the first case, informality is the result of pressure brought by excess labour in a scenario of insufficient productive employment generation and strong limitations or inexistence of unemployment insurance. It is expressed mainly in working for oneself, with little qualification and low quality. In the second case, it is associated to the need to face the demands of competitiveness in a global scenario that encourages the introduction of more decentralised, flexible and efficient production systems and promotes polarisation in terms of human resources qualifications, salaries and the quality of employment. Decentralisation leads to externalising and subcontracting services and production, entrusting them to ever smaller firms, family firms and homeworkers. The search for flexibility and efficiency, moreover, has encouraged the proliferation of de facto changes in organisation, in modes of work and in reforms of the regulatory frameworks of the labour market to introduce new forms of contracting, flexible working days, internal mobility, methods that adapt to wage setting, individual bargaining of labour contracts, changes in dismissal policies, etc.

Nevertheless, despite the increasing incidence of informality proceeding from productive decentralisation, “the logic of survival has been and continues to be a determining factor in the development of informal activities”⁷. If we add to

⁵ ILO, *Employment and social protection in the informal sector*. Governing Body, Geneva, 2000.

⁶ Tokman, Victor. *From informality to modernity*, ILO, Santiago, Chile, 2001.

⁷ Tokman, V., *op.cit*

this the accumulation of non-declared and precarious work, we can understand why *the dominant tendency in Latin America is the association between informal work, low productivity, low quality, absence of opportunities, low pay, precariousness and vulnerability.*

Regarding the reality of Latin American female unemployment, at the close of the century, women made up 45% of the urban EAP and its rates of labour and occupational participation have experienced a constant increase although with strong differences according to economic strata, educational level and age⁸.

Schooling levels have been growing more rapidly than those of men which –despite the fact that their willingness to insert in the labour market increases and participation is facilitated– does not guarantee more and better jobs. Women have become an economic co-provider and, in many cases, only provider in the household, which is confirmed by the reduction of the participation gap between poor women and the remainder of the population.

Nevertheless, *this growth has been concomitant with the systematic increase in unemployment rates. In 1990 the female unemployment rate was 20% above that of the males; in 1998 this gap grew to 40% and the gap between poor women and men and young people was even higher.*

Given the increasing importance of women as providers in the household and sustainers of themselves, the increase of unemployment and its implications for their lives are ever more visible. Among them, the low self-esteem caused by protracted periods of unemployment that, in turn, leads to the acceptance of precarious jobs with low wages.

The sexual division of labour is fundamentally responsible for associating women and poverty: their greater vulnerability to fall into situations of poverty has to do with their social disadvantages vis-à-vis men to access and control productive resources, with their lesser participation in institutions and with the lesser social value placed on their activities and skills and, therefore, with their

⁸ For an in-depth development, see: FORMUJER, *Incorporación de la perspectiva de género en la formación profesional – Materiales didácticos*, Cinterfor/ILO, Montevideo, 2001, and Silveira, S., “La dimensión de género y sus implicaciones en la relación entre juventud, trabajo y formación”, in Pieck, E. (Coordinator) *Los jóvenes y el trabajo. La educación frente a la exclusión social*, UIA-Unicef-Cinterfor/ILO-RET-CONALEP, Universidad Iberoamericana, México 2001. http://www.cinterfor.org.uy/public/spanish/region/ampro/cinterfor/temas/gender/eventos/jov_mex.pdf

greater difficulties to accede and remain in the market. Of the 1,300 million poor people that were estimated to have lived in the world at the end of the 20th century, 70% were women, and in this sense the agricultural societies coincided with the industrialised societies. This feminisation of poverty is a response, among other things, to the increase in female heads of household, to adolescent maternity, to the deterioration of the social policies that made it necessary for them to take charge of social responsibilities as the role of the State in matters of social welfare diminished, etc.

A clearly distinctive feature of female labour is their persistent concentration in the tertiary sector: 97% of new jobs for women in the last decade were generated in that sector and, in 1998, when FORMUJER was just beginning, more than half (52.7%) of total female employment was concentrated in community, social and personal sectors and almost one third (27.2%) in trade. Another outstanding feature to be mentioned refers to the wage difference between men and women (in 1998, female average income was 64% of male average income).

The difference between the female collective according to the different segments of the labour market is also marked: women occupied in the informal sector earn less than half those working in the formal sector. This leads one to think of the quality and the conditions under which females work: to compensate low salaries they work more time, which leads to greater physical wear and tear on the part of female workers, who are in general badly fed and have few hours of sleep and rest.

If level of education is compared to access to the labour market, there is generally a positive relationship between number of years of study and formal occupation access possibilities, both for men and for women. However, *on average, women need a substantially higher number of years of study than men to be able to insert themselves in the formal sector. The gap is even greater among those who achieve post-secondary studies, which is a result of the conjunction of vocational segmentation by gender and the loss of quality and relevance of education in general.*

Likewise, women are over-represented in the informal sector: in 1998, while more than half (52%) of female employment was informal, for men that figure was 45%. Thus, in the region as a whole, the proportion of women working in micro-enterprises in 1998 was 12% and within that figure a distinction must be made

between owners and employees. This figure shows that owners received higher income than employees, and that women are concentrated in the latter category. *Even if both men and women micro-entrepreneurs are exposed to numerous difficulties conditioned by poverty, women turn out to be much more vulnerable. This is because the cultural and social pre-concepts regarding the activities typical of each sex not only limit their choice but also do not promote in them risk-taking capacities, decision-making, etc.; their family responsibilities also generate an overload of work, lack of time, irregular distribution of time, reduced mobility and insufficient access to information systems and important vocational networks, as well as lacks and limitations for vocational training in modern and dynamic sectors.* As a result, micro-enterprises led by women are typically small, they grow irregularly and there is in them no clear division between the enterprise and the household. They tend to be devoted to developing activities in those sectors in which there are fewer barriers to access, where rudimentary techniques are used and labour is very poorly qualified, providing low income and unstable employment.⁹

Among expressions of labour flexibility, homework is taking on renewed importance. Added to the traditional homework in the textile and clothing sector, there are now the new technological services (telephone sales, consulting, Internet, etc.), the outsourced manufacturing productive phases, low transport cost in-bond production and other manufactures linked to the transfer to the productive area of many domestic activities. This generates a highly heterogeneous spectrum, both in terms of condition and of pace, as in educational and training requirements. *Even when precise information is not available on the magnitude and characteristics of that type of work, it is acknowledged that it is a kind of employment that includes mainly women of a child-bearing age, with major territorial mobility restrictions and who face limitations to match family and job responsibilities. In this case work is not only done “at” home but also “in” the home, where the borders between paid work and domestic occupations become diffuse.*

Better conditions prevail in activities that require greater technological intensity and qualification. Thus there are written contracts in place, benefits

⁹ Gehriger, Anita; Romer, Doris; Stetter, Hilmar: *El enfoque de género en la promoción de la pequeña empresa*, FD IBU/HIF BSM, 1999.

and social security payments similar to those for persons working in the firm and with pay competitive with the local market. The greater instability and lack of social protection are concentrated in sectors where qualifications are in less demand. In general, contracts are oral and do not refer to any kind of social protection or minimum income and pay is by the piece or for piecework and upon delivery.

The combination of working for oneself and homework, neither professional nor technical, is in diverse countries of the region the feminised space par excellence.

Lastly, domestic service (a category in which the pay levels and social protection are lowest in the informal sector) concentrates a significant percentage of employed women and accounted for 22% of new jobs for women generated between 1990 and 1998.

Even if brief and restricted, the information presented does not allow any doubt regarding the following:

- the role of the non-structured economy as an almost exclusive labour solution for a growing and major segment of the population of Latin America –and, especially, for women and those who are also heads of household– who must resort to informal activities in order to be able to ensure survival and mitigate the effects of poverty;
- the interdependence and even feedback between precariousness, lack of protection and low income levels –which are true of the wide majority of the jobs in the informal sector in Latin America– and the conditions of economic and social inequity and vulnerability that continue to define the female participation in the world of work.

All of which confirms that if direct discrimination is better “controlled” day by day in education and in the labour market, indirect discrimination remains and does so with indisputable force.

Because of this, *the reduction of the deficit of “decent work” –as understood by the ILO to mean productive work that allows men and women not only to take care of their sustenance and the sustenance of their families, but also to do so in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity and with possibilities of personal development– is, at one and the same time, the greatest and most*

urgent regional challenge and one of the most potent mechanisms to combat exclusion and marginality. The last data handled by ILO point out that this deficit “that in 1990 affected 49.5% of total workers in the region, increased to approximately 50.2% in 2002. Under these conditions it is estimated that the increase in the deficit reached 15.7% of the urban labour force in the period. In other terms, the decent work deficit of 2002 affects 93 million Latin American and Caribbean workers, 30 million more than in 1990.”¹⁰

*Generating conditions for men and women to be able to satisfy their right to a “decent job” is, therefore, an essential element of sustainable strategies against poverty. For this reason, the world of labour requires active employment policies that include, as one of its unavoidable components, equality policies, and the latter, in turn, to be relevant and of quality, need to incorporate the gender perspective, because gender is a component element of social relations, a social construction that operates both at the social and individual level.*¹¹

¹⁰ ILO, *Labour Overview 2002, Latin America and the Caribbean, op.cit.*

¹¹ For greater depth, see Point 1, Chapter 1: The notion of gender, gender as social construction, in FORMUJER: Gender and training by competencies, Cinterfor/ILO, 2003, and FORMUJER, v The gender perspective: base variable and critical instrument of analysis in the Prologue of FORMUJER: *Incorporación ..., op cit*

3. The impact of changes in vocational and technical training in Latin America

The conjunction of active employment policies and equality policies converges in the policies of training for work because they are the space of articulation, the point of encounter between needs and possibilities of the productive system and of those who produce, both men and women. And, to fulfil this function they must attend simultaneously to their two pillars, employment and people.

The profound metamorphosis of the world of work not only raises the challenge of generating employment itself. Rather, it has a fundamental bearing on the shaping of new identities, new life and consumption styles that are reflected in family relationships calling for a re-configuration of the link between men and women and public and private affairs and, therefore, of the gender relations themselves.

Work in its present context requires individuals who actively construct the course of their work, being capable of identifying and valuing their resources and capacities, while searching for supports and the will to overcome their limitations in such a way that it positions them as managers of their own employment opportunities.

Uncertainty, diversity and heterogeneity can only be addressed from a position of autonomy, understood to be the capacity to think and act on one's own, to choose, and to do so self-knowledge, independence, responsibility and decision-making capacity are needed. These capacities are as indispensable to access and remain in the world of work as they are to be socially included and to exercise the right to citizenship.

The absence or weakening of these personal and social competencies mark a significant difference regarding the incorporation into the world of work or lack of it and, at the same time, determine inclusion or marginality in the prevailing economic and social development model. Recognising the favourable personal incidence of the possibilities of accessing employment and social integration does not imply, in any way, to lay blame or guilt on those who lack that capability and to exonerate the system and the socio-economic policies of their role and responsibility in the provision of opportunities.

This scenario questions forcibly the policies of training for work because it implies changes in what and how to teach and why; even though training was always related to context, today this relationship is determining and two-way. *The context conditions and determines training policies since they are not neutral but rather they respond to the economic and social development paradigm in force and reproduce values, standards and biases in effect in the society in which they are immersed, including the ideas and conceptions regarding female and male. Also, however, it questions and challenges them given that they must be relevant and in keeping with the requirements of economic and social development although, at the same time, they must become an instrument for struggle against the different manifestations of social exclusion and inequity that the same development model generates.*

To face this challenge, the vocational training system must:

- ➔ address a profound redefinition of its institutionality, its objectives, contents and modes;
- ➔ strengthen its role as an instrument of struggle against poverty and to overcome inequities.

3.1 Redefinition of institutionality, objectives and modes of training

This process has accelerated sharply in the region¹² since the middle of the last decade. Its main features are as follows:

- ◆ A search is in place for an articulation between demand and supply and, therefore, remarkable changes take place in the composition of the supply of training, with the tertiary sector prevailing in the weighting. *If traditionally vocational training was defined on the basis of supply, i.e., on the basis of the knowledge and resources available in institutions, today it*

¹² See Cinterfor/ILO, Modernization in vocational education and training in the Latin American and Caribbean Region, Document presented at the Seminar "Innovations in the management of vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean" Rio de Janeiro, 2000, http://www.cinterfor.org.uy/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/publ/sala/moder_in/index.htm and Cinterfor/ILO: *Training for decent work*, Montevideo, 2001, http://www.cinterfor.org.uy/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/publ/t_dw/index.htm

*is indispensable to identify demand for training from a double reading of the needs and conditions of the productive area and the individuals and organisations the training is serving. The labour competency movement as a response to this concern has spread and it becoming universal.*¹³

- ◆ Vocational and technical training is conceived, at the same time, as an educational, occupational and technological fact.
 - *Its educational nature is stressed by accepting that it converges with formal and informal education to enable a training continuum to take place that lasts as long as the life of a person and in which all spaces in which life takes place become educational. A “lifelong education” does not mean a sum of educational and training actions, but rather a balanced combination of basic knowledge, technical know-how and social skills, and that is what gives the person the general knowledge that is transferable to the job. This approach is sustained by the need to remain competitive in a world of changing products and technologies, rapid obsolescence of knowledge, devaluing of diplomas, and, at the same time, valuing of real competencies as well as the struggle against unemployment.*

This training continuum needs mechanisms that recognise knowledge and thus its articulation with labour competency, understood as the real capacity of a person to achieve an expected objective in a given labour context. The previous productive paradigm was essentially prescriptive: the people were considered qualified insofar as they proved their capacity to respect a rule of behaviour previously defined regardless of them. Today, they have to take complex decisions and assume personal responsibilities when facing unexpected situations, which implies a social attitude of involvement that mobilises the intelligence and the subjectivity of the individual. Simultaneously, *information and communications technologies (ICT) impose changes in the competencies acquired, in work systems, they facilitate the decentralisation of management, the individualisation of work, the personalisation of markets and, also, they are becoming the objectives,*

¹³ See: FORMUJER, *Género y formación por competencia*, op. Cit.

the methodologies and the organisational models of education and training. They encourage the redefinition of the teaching role, the integration of different teaching media and the equilibrium between standardised and massive models and the personalised attention of the learning individual, so that he or she can continue on his or her own along a process of permanent education.

- It is linked to productivity, competitiveness, wages, social security, employment and social equity and *becomes a key component of labour relations, the social dialogue and active employment policies.*
- *It acquires strategic values in innovation, development and technology (hard and soft) transfer processes and in the identification of new niches and employment alternatives generated by them. This is realised by means of articulations with the entrepreneurial sector to address research and advisory activities and also by conceiving the enterprises as population demanding training.*
- ◆ Although since far back, in the region vocational training sought to support economic and productive development and contribute to social integration, *the present scenario made it imperative to pay attention to the most disadvantaged sectors.* This has been translated into the execution of great training programmes, investing millions, in all countries, focalsing on specific groups or sectors (young people seeking work for the first time, unemployed workers, to address reconversion or technological innovation, for the promotion of micro enterprises and activities in behalf of oneself, women heads of household, etc.) which tended to affect the existence of comprehensive and long-term policies.
- ◆ The interrelationship of all these factors transformed the institutionality of training:
 - the role and signification of Labour Ministries changed as they took charge of co-ordinating and/or financing actions executed by the private or public sector although in a system of free competition,
 - financing is shared between the State and the private sector,
 - the positioning and roles of labour and productive players changes, and trade unions and entrepreneurial organisations begin to take an active part both in the definition and in the management of training.

All that has led to a heterogeneous panorama in which diverse organisational arrangements live together that Cinterfor/ILO has sketched out into four large categories:

- ◆ Concentration, both of responsibility for the definition of policies, and of direct execution, in a single instance which may be the Ministry of Education, of Labour, or a VTI with national coverage.
- ◆ Concentration of policy and strategy definition in a single instance that, in turn, is superior in the execution of actions although incorporating supplementing strategies through shared management and collaborating centres.
- ◆ Coexistence and interrelationship between two arrangements with different logical frameworks: one, associated with Labour Ministries that defines policies and does not execute them, and another, associated with domestic or sector VTIs.
- ◆ Assumption of the definition of policies and strategies by a specialised instance of the Ministries of Labour and execution by multiple suppliers and players.

This transformation has been unquestionable. In some countries it was practically total while in others the old and the new institutionality live side by side but, in those cases, the VTIs that survive have done so as of the beginning of reform processes guided by the search to deal jointly with economic, productive and technological and social imperatives.

The common denominator is the expansion and diversification of training supply that has improved coverage margins in comparison with previous policy models, centred in large hegemonic institutions. To a great extent, this expresses the various conceptions regarding the most efficient forms of making social policy and attending to the requirements of training, both of the productive sector and of that of the society as a whole. Moreover, it represents the discussion related to what the areas and forms of action of the State should be, what may be left to market dynamics and also, although more recently, may be left in the hands of the civil society with its earlier and new forms of organisation.

These transformations are in full construction. For this reason there are still no complete evaluations available regarding results in terms of quality and

relevance of teaching/learning, neither on their effect on the increase in labour insertion possibilities and the permanence of the activity in the different populations. However, there are enough elements to judge whether:

- the multiplication of present suppliers has not implied in itself greater levels of equity or uniformity of the quality and the relevance of training, showing disturbing levels of superimposition and de-coordination with little advantage being taken of human and financial resources;
- the problems targeted for specific populations, with inclusion of labour insertion as the single success indicator and condition for payment, have turned out to not to be very effective regarding whether individuals can face up to constant mobility in jobs and working conditions;
- it is not true that the market can be the only guide for training systems and policies, although there is no question that it must be addressed in a timely and efficient manner. In the first place, because it tends to reason in the short term and be conditioned by specific urgencies and, in second place, because the model of development and the market generate inequities and exclusions that must be corrected by training policies.

3.2 Training as an instrument against poverty and for overcoming inequities

In this economic, social and epistemological scenario, training policies are not responsible for generating employment but they must support individuals so that they become detectors of opportunities, going from the status of passive subjects, depending on an external involvement that approaches them to an insufficient labour supply, to being builders of employability structures. In this framework, employability refers to the ability to “find, create, preserve, enrich a job and go from one to another obtaining in exchange a personal, economic, social and professional satisfaction”¹⁴ and has to do with processes occurring at different levels: structural, economic, standardising and cultural although also relational and personal, the latter being directly involved in training for work.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ducci, María Angélica, “La formación al servicio de la empleabilidad”, *Boletín Técnico Interamericano de Formación Profesional, Cinterfor/ILO, N° 142*, Montevideo, 1998, pp. 7-24, <http://www.cinterfor.org.uy/public/spanish/region/ampro/cinterfor/publ/boletin/index.htm>

¹⁵ To find a broader approach, see Chapter III, *Formación basada en competencias y con enfoque de género en FORMUJER, Género y formación...* op. Cit.

Likewise, the economy and society in general, and also enterprises, have no *raison d'être* without the human resources capable of responding and sustaining their operation. Training for work is then a means to empower people, improve quality and the organisation of work, increase productivity and income of workers, strengthen the competitive capacity of firms and promote security in the job, equity and social insertion.

Because of this, the right to education and training have been recognised and institutionalised within the system of fundamental human resources by means of pacts, standards and international and national statements. And, in that sense, *it does not seem possible to think of a decent work that does not include the right to training and skills development. Thus, to address training of men and women requires to do so both from a vantage point of access and quantity and of the quality and relevance of the contents received. And within this dual approach, training for employability should be articulated and supplemented by training for citizenship. Democracy, development and respect for all rights are interdependent concepts that reinforce each other. To exercise conscious citizenship and respect for diversity, in the same way as for present work, a capacity to understand the medium in which one is acting is required, as well as valuation of complexity and diversity, systemic address of reality, communication, team work, solidarity, participation, self-care and care for others, etc.*

In turn, these requirements have contents, excessive demands and possibilities which are not the same for women and men. When the elements that come into play when requiring female personnel are analysed, a predominant role is assigned to the type of occupation that requires female labour, a reluctance to hire women because of the social costs involved, the predefinitions and stereotypes, etc. *All of this was forcibly manifested in vocational segmentation by gender that does not begin or end in the labour market.* Gender representations are the result of the interrelationship among, at the least, the following four dimensions:

- cultural symbols incarnated in multiple representations;
- standardising concepts that set polarisations and repress alternatives;
- institutions and policies that reproduce biases and the hierarchical valuation between men and women;

- the subjective identity that positions and determines life projects.

Vocational and technical training is also responsible for this segmentation, reproducing it and reinforcing it with its own internal barriers to a qualified, relevant and diversified female participation. These barriers could be the lack or insufficiency of an information system, vocational and occupational guidance with a gender approach that stimulates new options and breaks the stereotypes, the persistence of a sexist language and of stereotypes in the publicising and definition of the supply, in teaching materials, as well as in teaching practises and methodologies, the rigidity and lack of flexibility in the structure of courses, the lack of inclusion of supports – teaching, economic, logistical, cultural – for female needs and conditions, etc.

The Survey on the Participation of Women in Vocational and Technical Training,¹⁶ undertaken by Cinterfor/ILO and FORMUJER among sixteen Latin American training institutions, with the purpose of visualising the evolution of female behaviour during the past ten years shows, among other things, that:

- although female enrolment has grown sustainedly, there is still a quantitative inequity: women were 28% of enrolment in 1995 and are 39% in 1999;
- progress in diversification, although plentiful, has not been enough to overcome the concentration of enrolment nor the more intense expressions of vocational segmentation. At the end of the 20th century, the ten sub-sectors with the greatest number of female pupils report 77% of female enrolment, while the same parameter in the case of men is 51%.

For training to contribute to overcoming these discriminations and inequities, but also to improve quality and relevance, it must incorporate a gender point of view to the definition of its contents, to its methodology, to the construction of its supply and to all institutional practise. *To mainstream the gender perspective in employment and training policies means to understand that gender is a basic socio-economic variable which is influenced by or that interacts with the other variables that generate differences (income, educational levels, original cultural*

¹⁶ A synthesis of the basic document is to be found in Silveira, S. and Matosas, A, "Hacia una formación decente para las mujeres. Avances y asignaturas pendientes para la participación femenina en la formación profesional y técnica en América Latina", in Boletín Trabajo Decente y formación profesional, Cinterfor/ILO, N° 151, Montevideo, 2002.

capital, ethnics, social class, rural or urban conditions, etc.) whereby the achievements obtained in gender equity find they are hampered by the survival of other inequities and vice versa. For this reason, the gender point of view is a critical instrument of analysis, a conceptual framework that orients decision-making, which allows gender marks to be identified and modified.

If training policies commit themselves to these premises—employability, citizenship and gender as interdependent dimensions—they will be paying attention, in a comprehensive and articulated manner, to the conditions and competency requirements of the present labour market and those of the individuals, characteristics and demands of the new occupational profiles and to valuation, development and strengthening needs of individual capabilities. In this way, they will be contributing to the struggle against poverty and social exclusion, to the improvement of the conditions and quality of life of women and men, and progressing towards the construction of a more inclusive and equitable world.

