

**Confederación General de Trabajadores – CGT  
Central Unica de Trabajadores – CUT  
Força Sindical  
Secretaría de Empleo y Relaciones de Trabajo del Estado de São Paulo  
Proyecto de Fortalecimiento Sindical para el Diálogo Social - OIT/ACTRAV-AECI  
CINTERFOR/OIT**

---

**TECHNICAL MEETING  
"WORKERS AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN LATIN AMERICA"**

**17 to 19 May 2000  
Sao Paulo, Brazil**

---

**REFERENCE DOCUMENT / 3**

**UNION PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL  
TRAINING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE  
CARIBBEAN**

**CINTERFOR/ILO**



## Index

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
Presentation	3
1. Training and labour relations	4
2. Vocational training as an educational fact	6
<u>3.</u> The renewed union commitment to vocational training	8
4. Levels and characteristics of union participation in vocational training	13
5. Training in national agreements	21
6. Training in collective agreements by sector of activity or industry	23
7. Some open questions about union participation in vocational training	26

## **Presentation**

This document has been specially prepared by Cinterfor/OIT as a contribution to the Technical Meeting “Workers and Vocational Training in Latin America”, which is to take place in Sao Paulo, Brazil, between 17 and 19 of May 2,000. It aims to answer three basic questions: What factors have contributed to a revival of interest and participation in vocational training on the part of the unions? What are the current levels and characteristics of trade union participation in this area? What are the challenges, and what are the aspects that are currently under debate in the heart of the unions, in connection with this participation?

Point 1 deals with the links which exist between vocational training and systems of labour relations, while point 2 analyses the outstanding recent changes in the educational dimension of vocational training.

Point 3 analyses the causes of the diversification and growth in trade union experiments with participation in this area, while points 4, 5 and 6 describe and analyse the extent and the characteristics of this participation.

Finally, point 7 tackles those “open questions” which are currently giving rise to debate within the trade union movement, as to vocational training and the participation of workers’ organizations in it.

## 1. Training and labour relations

**Nowadays, training is a central and a strategic component of labour relations systems.** This is confirmed by the interest and the increasing involvement in this field of companies, of workers, of the organizations representing companies and workers, and of the Ministries of Labour through their organs which are specialized in the field, their programmes of training and qualification and the new active employment policies, the latest labour legislation, and the increase in collective agreements which contain accords on training.

This is very different from the way things were until approximately two decades ago, when the activity of training rarely came into negotiations. It was scarcely mentioned in collective labour agreements, and in labour legislation there were only a few references which were basically declarative, or which stipulated the institutional environment, usually an entity which was public and national, that might be a framework for such training. In a number of countries the workers' and employers' organizations maintained keen interest for decades, but at the end of the day this was limited to having delegates on the governing bodies of vocational training institutions.

This situation of participation and interest on the part of workers and employers held sway in systems of labour relations in a context where:

- a) The state played a central role in a number of areas which included collective bargaining, the production and the direct rendering of services, and the protection of national production through tariff barriers.
- b) Companies developed in a strongly protectionist environment. They were geared to their internal consumer markets, and consequently they were not under great pressure from consumers or competitors.
- c) Workers and their organizations fought to extend and to strengthen their rights. They adopted a basic assumption, which was also adopted by the state and by the employers: namely that production and employment would have to grow steadily, beyond any eventual cyclical crises. Besides this, the unions were in the process of getting stronger as organizations, because it was thought that industrial production as well as contracts based on salaries would grow indefinitely, and therefore so would the base of union representation and power.
- d) As a consequence of this "inward" development strategy, the imperative to technological innovation and development seemed only moderate, the life cycles of the products were rather long, and the demands for training and above all for retraining the work force were not very high when it came to being up to date in new techniques, tools, materials or the ways in which the work was organized. In any case, the challenge was quantitative: to provide sufficient numbers of skilled and semi-skilled staff for industry.

In the last twenty years, practically all the aspects of this panorama have changed radically, and, along with other consequences, this has led to a revaluation of training within labour systems, and a growing interest in it on the part of the different protagonists. Why?

First, because **the economies of the region have changed their strategies of international insertion.** Whether it be through policies of unilateral opening to trade, or in the context of processes of regional integration, national production has come to be exposed, more or less drastically, to different kinds of rules, and this has created a demand for urgent measures to increase competitiveness. This has generated an intensification in the rhythm of technological changes being applied to production, and a reduction in the life cycles of the products. As a consequence, there has also been a reduction in the life cycles of the skills needed, and this has created constant pressure to update them.

Second, **the relative importance of the «knowledge factor» within the new forms of the organization of production and work has grown considerably.** The control of information and knowledge has become strategically important, just as is the past it used to be the control of land and of the means of production that mattered. The capacity to generate knowledge, and to manage it within the organizations that are learning, is considered a key strongpoint in competitiveness, and has given rise to a revaluation of human talent. This is why the interest of the different protagonists in access to decision making as regards the design, the implementation or the financing of training has become vital.

Third, **the idea of sustained and indefinite growth in production and employment – or rather in the direct relation between them – has turned out finally to be invalid.** Even though production may continue to grow, as in fact it is doing, the generation of employment does not follow correlatively, and in many cases a new and worrying phenomenon has appeared; economic growth and an increase in production accompanied by a rise in unemployment. The increase in employment in those sectors which show the most economic dynamism often does not manage to compensate for redundancies created by the new relation between capital and labour. This relation is affected by the introduction of technological innovations, and by closures which occur in sectors which are unable to resist competition from foreign goods. In the old situation it was enough, during the periods of crisis, to apply compensatory policies such as unemployment insurance or emergency employment programs. Nowadays a new generation of active policies in the labour market have emerged, and invariably their most central and most strategic elements are training and instruction.

In this new context, the positioning of management and of workers has changed, bargaining has become more complex, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to deal with subjects like salaries or labour stability in isolation. Nowadays, a lot more attention is being paid to the relationships between employment, salaries, productivity, production, competitiveness and quality etc. It is in the context of this new state of affairs that training is being revalued and is coming to be perceived as a strategic question. Training is being incorporated into an increasing number of collective agreements, and it is also included in labour legislation. There are more and more examples of social dialogue and agreement on training, and these are developed and sustained even in situations of great conflict.

## **2. Vocational training as an educational fact**

Training has been an eminently educational activity ever since its conception and origin, and the institutions of vocational training played an active part in the literacy programmes which were implemented from 1950 until the start of the 1970s. They were the main and almost the only source of education for those large sectors of the population that were the most economically and socially disadvantaged.

However, over the years a division opened up between the institutional duties of regular education and non-formal education, and often this verged on an almost total compartmentalization and a lack of coordination and communication. General education was always oriented to formal schooling and had academic characteristics. Non-formal education, especially vocational training, was connected much more closely to the world of work and production, and was itself defined as education for work.

The changes in the labour markets and in the speed of technological innovation and development are having a big impact on both systems. The crisis caused by these changes seems to be even deeper in the area of regular school education than in the field of vocational training. This is largely due to the fact that vocational training always had a more or less close link, sometimes dormant, sometimes more active, to the spheres in which these transformations were taking place.

Currently, throughout the whole region, there are trends which can be concisely summed up as follows:

- A progressive coming together of methodologies, contents and strategies between the fields of vocational training and of technical education.
- A revision in other areas of general education. On example is adult education, which has changed from having an assistential and remedial focus to concentrating more on education for productive work.
- A widening of the spheres of educational activity on the part of the institutions of vocational training. This is moving into intermediate levels (e.g. technologists) and even to higher levels (e.g. technological and post graduate engineers), while still dealing with early and professional training.
- A reformulation of the basic concepts of training. These were previously more connected to the idea of "instruction", and now they are acquiring a wider and more integrated focus which is represented, to a large extent, by models of training by work competences.

The blurring and the interconnectedness of the frontiers between general education, vocational training and technological development, has also begun to leave its mark in the organizational and institutional sphere. It is imposing a new model of management for this multidimensional scenario whose basic instruments are articulation and concerted action.

If we really wish to construct guidelines which allow for updating and improvement throughout a person's lifetime, with entry and exit from the training process, and which recognize the different areas and practices which facilitate and stimulate the

incorporation and appropriation of new practices and of innovative knowledge, supra-institutional arrangements are needed to make this new conceptuality operational.

Insofar as the barriers disappear between manual and non manual, between thought and execution, between technical knowledge and academic-scientific knowledge, it is becoming increasingly clear that knowledge is the fruit of a balanced combination of social aptitudes, fundamental learning, and the mastery of the latest technologies. Faced with this situation, the systematic generation of a new structure has already begun in some countries, a structure which reflects this necessary articulation, and stimulates the co-ordination of effort and proposal. Besides this, it distributes responsibilities and resources to cater for and to tackle integrated training and the constant updating of human capital, through the recognition of specific details and strengths in the different areas of scientific, technological and/or methodological knowledge. To sum up, the idea is to reflect the concept of the integrability of objectives, resources and strategies in organizational terms.

If it is possible to impart a mastery of the basic codes of the modern world from primary school onwards, it is vital to establish a continuity in the teaching-learning process which begins in childhood and continues throughout the whole lifetime. To do this, it is becoming increasingly indispensable to articulate and to distribute responsibilities between basic education, vocational training, and higher education. It is also necessary to take advantage of national systems and integrate them with provincial and/or local ones, to share financing between the public and the private sectors, to combine strategies of basic mass education with remedial or circumstantial activity, and also to have recourse not only to school education but also to the methodologies of unconventional teaching (correspondence courses, interactive teaching, multi-media resources, etc.).

### 3. The renewed union commitment to vocational training

The organization of this Technical Meeting on “Workers and Vocational Training in Latin America” constitutes, among other things, a clear sign of the interest which the subject of vocational training is currently exciting within the workers’ movement.

Although union organizations have throughout their history maintained a strong commitment to the objective of promoting egalitarian access to knowledge for all workers, male as well as female, it is clear today that this commitment has been renewed, and is being made much more explicitly than in the past, not only in extent but also in the diversity of actual practice.

This has a direct connection with the aspects analysed above. Union organizations are revaluing vocational training and the need to participate in and to influence it, because vocational training has become in itself a central subject of negotiation, and the decisions about it are taken in places from which it is possible to have an effect on other aspects covered in the systems of labour relations. Besides this, as the mentality which separated regular education from vocational training, academic education from education for manual work, has lost ground and given way to the idea of education as a permanent and lifelong activity, there has also been a revaluation of the educational function of vocational training, and its possible contribution to integral and permanent education.

Since its foundation, Cinterfor/OIT has endeavoured to study, to document and to publicize the transformations which have taken place in Latin America and the Caribbean in the field of policies and systems of vocational training. This ongoing task has permitted the study of the changes in the roles assumed by the different protagonists over time, and also of the relations established between them at each historical stage.

This confirms that the changes in the levels and in the forms of union participation in vocational training are not an isolated phenomenon. Quite the contrary, the characteristics and the extent of intervention of the other protagonists have also changed profoundly:

- **States have reduced the extent of their direct involvement in vocational training, just as they have pulled back in other areas of social policy such as health, education, housing, social security, etc.** If previously they were considered to be the main agents responsible for the planning, the administration and the execution of training, they are currently assuming a subsidiary role in a number of countries. In such countries they normally operate through the Ministry of Labour, they establish certain “rules of play”, they administer funds earmarked for training either unilaterally or in a tripartite system, but they are withdrawing from direct implementation. In those countries where powerful national vocational training institutions still exist, their share of the total training market has fallen, at least in relative terms, due to the emergence of considerable private and non-government competition in the educational field.
- **Employers have also substantially changed the character and the extent of their involvement in this area.** In the first place, those employers who are most dynamic, and most connected to the most modern sectors of production and services, tend to

take upon themselves the responsibility for developing internal training plans for their staffs, and this has led to a concomitant boom in training centres inside companies, in the workplace, and in activities of professional updating. In the second place, employers' confederations have taken a strong initiative, either participating more actively in the governing bodies of public institutions of vocational training, in some cases even pressing for a direct takeover of the administration, or by developing their own institutions, foundations or training centres. Management has also grown in conceptual terms, and they have constructed their own scenario as to what ends, methodologies and organizational structures are most suitable, from their point of view, for the implementation of vocational training.

- There is a third element, another sector, which cannot really be classified as a “protagonist” because it embraces a plurality of protagonists: **the private and non-governmental training sector**. Following the withdrawal of the State from the direct implementation of training, the appearance of financial stimuli to training, and the general spread of a “training culture” in management circles and even among the workers, a large number of private agencies and non-governmental organizations have emerged in all countries, offering an extremely varied range of services. This new supply is, in certain cases, a response to the growing demand for training, but besides this it has been stimulated by new public policies, which have stemmed from the above-mentioned retreat of the State from the implementation of training activity.

When we focus on trade unions we find that, in spite of their historical commitment to access to knowledge for male and female workers, their involvement in the area of vocational training in the region has had its ups and downs over the years.

In some countries, union initiatives in the field of vocational training go back almost to the beginnings of the first trade unions, at the start of the century. These were usually union training centres and schools, where the principles of workers' education, with its components of political and union teaching, were generally integrated with elements more connected to specific training for the job

These experiments continued throughout the century, with ups and downs which were connected to the economic, social and political contexts in which the union movement operated, and to the ideological definitions and tactical considerations assumed by the workers' organizations. This meant that the unions sometimes gave priority to autonomous activities, usually with a greater emphasis on the education of workers than on job training, while at other times they sought a connection with the public systems of education and vocational training.

From the 1940s onwards, openings for trade union participation in the heart of the emerging national institutions for vocational training began to appear. In Argentina in 1944, the Comisión Nacional de Aprendizaje y Orientación Profesional – CNAOP (National Commission for Learning and Vocational Orientation) was created, and the government of the day offered the union movement a seat on it for one representative. Although the CNAOP was absorbed at the start of the 1950s by the organs of the Ministry of Education, in other countries in the region there was a movement for the creation of similar entities, which also provided opportunities for union participation.

This was the case of the SENA in Colombia (1957), of the INCE in Venezuela (1959), SENATI in Peru (1961), INA in Costa Rica (1963), INACAP in Chile (1966), SECAP in Ecuador (1966), SNPP in Paraguay (1971), INFP in Honduras (1972), FOMO in Bolivia (1972), INTECAP in Guatemala (1972), and IFARHU in Panama (1973). In Brazil, the pioneer institutions in this field constitute an exception: SENAI (1942) and SENAC (1946) were appointed from the beginning to the respective federations of employers in the industrial and commercial sectors.

This characteristic of the Brazilian institutions, that they functioned in the private sphere, has become less of a rarity in recent decades. In a number of countries in the region the old public institutions with tripartite management systems also came to be managed directly by the employers' federations, or at least their administrative systems were modified to give these federations greater pre-eminence.

What had been the distinctive and characteristic field of union involvement in vocational training for nearly four decades began to show signs of ebbing in the mid 1970s. In 1976 in Chile, the administration of the national institution of vocational training was put under the control of the top employers organization in the country, the National Confederation of Production and Trade. This meant that union representation disappeared and government representation lost relevance. In other cases, like the SENATI in Peru or the INFOCAL in Bolivia, the employers reached a position of dominance which gave them greater powers of control over the work of the institutions.

A brief overview of union participation in the governing bodies of vocational training institutions shows that, even in the periods when that involvement was at its height, there were factors which weakened a better positioning of union participation in vocational training. Although it is important to have representation at such levels, it is true that in more than a few cases the union delegates did not manage to effectively involve their organizations in the life of those institutions. Union representation became a specialized function which usually did not manage to effectively place the subject of vocational training on the trade union agenda, or on the agenda of negotiations with management in collective bargaining.

Certain institutional changes which have tended to focus action in specific production sectors partly make up for this kind of deficiency. In the case of the INA in Costa Rica, intermediate levels of participation were established in function of productive sectors or technological areas, through the so-called Liaison Committees. Something similar has happened with the INCE in Venezuela and the SENA in Colombia. When the activity of the institutions of vocational training is seen in these terms, the participation not only of the union federations but also of the federations and confederations for industrial sectors is made easier. Their arrival brings new representatives who have the chance to influence decisions which are more familiar, and nearer to the concrete problems of work and to the union field of activity.

However, in order to grasp the current situation of union participation in vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is not enough just to consider the traditional forms of representation in the governing and intermediate levels of national institutions. The panorama is really much wider, and it shows that vocational training is well on the way to establishing itself as a priority question for the labour movement.

In fact, union participation in the field of vocational training today shows greater diversity of forms and levels than in the past. This might seem paradoxical, above all when it is recognized that the starting point was the above-mentioned reduction in participation in national institutions, which used to be the classic providers of vocational training.

A first plausible explanation of this apparent contradiction might be found in **the weakening of those institutions within the training system of each country**. Even in cases in which these institutions have conserved their position as a main protagonist of national importance, and maintained the systems of financial support which have been the basis of their economic power and capacity for action (taxes for specific ends, levied on the payroll of companies), it is true that they have not retained their old hegemony in the provision of training, or even in policy making in this field. In the market place of today they coexist and compete with private and non-government institutions. When it comes to intervention in the area of policy, the activity of the Ministries of Labour is clear. This could be causing the union organizations to seek a wider field in which to develop and coordinate their activity, given that these institutions, while still important, are no longer the only representatives of “the” policy or the national system of vocational training. Even though this might be a relatively important factor, there are other explanations for the forms and levels of union participation in vocational training.

The second explanation is necessarily more complex. It concerns the fact that vocational training has become a subject of central importance for the union movement, not only in itself but also in function of its links to other areas. In this, a number of factors have played a part:

- Within the new systems of labour relations, there is an explicit connection between instruction and training on the one hand and matters like employment or wages on the other. This has opened up a field of action in which the union organizations can break free from a situation in which they were progressively losing their room for manoeuvre in negotiations. In getting a closer view of the current challenges and problems that companies and national economies face, and what role training policies play in them, the workers’ organizations have gained more knowledge, and consequently more power to actively intervene in the different areas of negotiation, whether these are on the level the individual company, the industrial sector, the nation, or even internationally.
- The emergence of new forms of organization of work and production, which give the knowledge factor a pivotal role in strategies for competitiveness and productivity, has also made qualifications into a fundamental key for obtaining work. Even though training does not seem to directly ensure the creation of more employment, it is possible to proceed in a way that will create equitable access to opportunities for training, and so contribute to the attainment of greater levels of social equality when it comes to access to employment, wages and personal and social development.
- There is a new conceptual change which is restoring training and instruction to their place in the educational landscape, bringing their protagonists and arrangements closer to the systems of regular education, and suggesting the development of a new idea; that of lifelong education. To the extent to which the actual educational nature

of training is recognized, it can also be seen as an instrument for the creation of a modern and democratic citizenry.

This greater involvement of union organizations in institutional areas connected to training and instruction can be seen not only in terms of conceptual advances but also in the action. There has been a notable increase in specialized petitions on this subject from the various trade union organizations in the region; they conduct evaluations and research, and they produce analytic studies and make union proposals on the subject. More and more workshops, forums and union seminars are being organized, where the subject of training itself is dealt with, as well as its connections to other questions which the union considers strategically important. Union training activities also cover the area of vocational training, and there is increasing discussion about what the link between different types of training should be.

Union participation in decision-making and in the execution of training activity is very varied, in some cases it is just beginning and in others it is more developed, but it is a fact that unions everywhere are determined to become active players in this field.

#### **4. Levels and characteristics of union participation in vocational training**

A first level of union participation in vocational training is **on the national level, where there is control over the administration of policies and programmes for vocational training, and over the administration of public funds**. There are already a number of countries in the region in which the State organs that are in charge of the formulation and development of employment and vocational training policy have converted to a tripartite structure. This has come with the realization that the participation of labour and management is indispensable not only in order to adjust policies to the national reality, but also to ensure the committed participation in policy development on the part of the actors involved.

In **Brazil**, workers' organizations participate in the Consejo Deliberativo del Fondo de Asistencia al Trabajador – CODEFAT (Deliberative Council of the Workers' Assistance Fund). This is a tripartite body which is in charge of administering the Fondo de Asistencia al Trabajador - FAT (Workers' Assistance Fund), the largest public fund in the country. The resources of the FAT come from a deduction of 1% on company payrolls, and a part of this is earmarked for financing the policies of the national system of employment. These policies are job centres for the work force, unemployment insurance, vocational retraining, information on unemployment, and programmes to generate employment and income.

In **Chile**, the workers are represented on the Consejo Nacional de Capacitación (National Training Council), which was created in the wake of reform in the Servicio Nacional de Capacitación y Empleo – SENCE (National Instruction and Employment Service). The National Training Council is an body with a tripartite structure, and its function is to advise the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and coordinate general policy for public action in the field of instruction, especially with respect to the SENCE and to the Fondo Nacional de Capacitación – FONCAP (National Training Fund).

In **Mexico**, labour organizations participate in the Consejo de Normalización y Certificación de Competencia Laboral – CONOCER (Council of Standardization and Certification of Labour Competence), a tripartite body responsible for the planning, operation, fomenting and updating of the system of standards, and for the certification of labour competences in Mexico. The system covers the phases of identification of competences, standardization, training and certification, which gives it total jurisdiction over the various phases of worker competence.

Within this framework, an important role is played by the Standardization Committees, groups formed by workers and management, usually representatives of a branch or sector of activity, which, with the technical help of the CONOCER, carry out the task of identifying the competences and standardizing them according to norms.

In **Uruguay**, the union federation PIT-CNT participates in the Junta Nacional de Empleo – JUNAE (National Board of Employment), a tripartite body through which the Fondo de Reconversión Laboral – FRL (Labour Retraining Fund) is managed. This fund, which is made up of equal contributions from management and workers, finances training courses for workers, and makes payments for unemployment or in situations where access to work is particularly difficult.

Through its activity in the JUNAE, the PIT-CNT has been able to participate actively in the planning and administration of training, and influence the formulation of some active policies for employment and vocational training.

In **Argentina**, union involvement on the public level, with jurisdiction over vocational training, has been intermittent. There are no instances of continuous participation, but there has been a permanent point of reference from the union movement. The **Union Forum for the Integral and Permanent Training of Workers**, of the **Confederación General del Trabajo – CGT (General Confederation of Labour)**, has been an example of deliberation and proposals on vocational training which has enjoyed a continuity that does not exist at the government level. While the ways in which the Union Forum has intervened have varied with circumstances and changes in the situation, for ten years it has been Argentine unionism's fundamental tool for making proposals on the question of vocational training.

A second level of union involvement is **participation in the governing bodies of national or sectorial institutions of vocational training**. This, as was noted above, is the "classic" area where the unions have had the chance to influence national training policy for decades. However, there is considerable variation in this participation, it is not always on equal terms, and it is not always in the context of a "pure" tripartite set-up (government – management – workers).

Union participation on this level persists in **Colombia** (SENA), **Costa Rica** (INA), **the Dominican Republic** (INFOTEP), **Ecuador** (SECAP), **Venezuela** (INCE), **Panama** (INAFORP), **Guatemala** (INTECAP), **Honduras** (INFOP), and **Paraguay** (SNPP). All these bodies function in the public sphere. In the regional panorama one extreme is represented by the INFOTEP in the Dominican Republic, where the constitution of the directing council is strictly tripartite and jointly-run, and where resolutions must be adopted by consensus. At the other extreme there is the Consejo de Educación Técnico Profesional (Council of Technical-Vocational Education) (ex UTU). This did have a directing council with tripartite representation when it was first created in 1942, but following the modification of the Education Law it was reduced in 1973 to a technical vocational council of three members representing the government.

One point to note is that the labour sector actually appears much less unified in these representative organs than does management, due to the fact that there are a number of union federations on the national level. Besides this, the labour sector has been represented in a more diffuse way on some councils since the incorporation of representatives of cooperative and solidarity movements (INA), of the independent craftsmen (INAFORP) and of the rural workers (SENA).

A separate mention should be made of those institutions which have functioned either in the sphere of private law since their foundation, or which so do in virtue of ulterior legal changes. The most typical examples of the former are Brazilian: the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje Industrial – SENAI (National Service of Industrial Learning), the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje Comercial – SENAC (National Service of Commercial Learning) and the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje del Transporte – SENAT (National Service of Transport Learning). An example of the latter is the INACAP in Chile since 1976. The exclusive dependence of such bodies on management

has provoked different reactions from the union movement. The main Brazilian labour organizations (CGT, CUT, Força Sindical) have repeatedly advanced claims for participation in the running of these institutions. Their arguments tend to run along the lines that because the costs of the management contribution to finance are ultimately transferred to the consumers, these are really public funds and they ought to be administered in a public way. On the other hand, the trade unions in Chile have not advanced similar claims in connection with the INACAP since its transfer into the hands of the main employers' federation in the country.

A third level of union participation can be identified as what occurs in **public bodies for the planning, management and continuation of training policies at the regional or local level.**

An example of this comes from **Chile**, with the **Regional Training Councils**. These are bodies set up at the regional level which are made up of representatives of the State, the workers and the employers, and their task is to advise regional government on the development and application of the national training policy in the context of the region concerned.

In **Brazil**, the CODEFAT tries to pay out the funds which it administers (the FAT fund) in a democratic and geographically decentralized way. With this aim, it has promoted the creation of **Provincial and Municipal Employment Commissions**. These are tripartite bodies, and one of their main tasks is the evaluation of applications for credit for training enterprises on the provincial or municipal level. By the end of 1998, 2296 Municipal Employment Commissions had been created, which cover about 40% of the municipalities in Brazil.

Also in Brazil, there is the case of the **Public Experimental Centre for Vocational Training** which came about through an initiative by the **Secretary of Employment and Labour Relations in the State of Sao Paulo**. This was an attempt to cater for the increasing scale and diversity of the needs for training in that region. A group of 22 specialists representing employers, workers, the government and academics were assembled, with a mandate to outline the training policies to be followed. The interaction and combined work of these specialists gave rise to the idea of creating the Experimental Public Centre for Employment, within the framework of a **programme called "Learning to Learn"**.

The Centre was conceived in such a way as to incorporate the principles of participative, democratic and multi-party work into its structure and functioning. There are government bodies participating in the Experimental Centre project, as well as the union federations CUT and CGT, institutions which belong to the "System S" and the CEETEPS, among others.

Some of the specific aims of the Centre are:

- To meet the specific and permanent demand for the training of young people, adults, and employed and unemployed workers, with the highest possible degree of flexibility, while at the same time seeking to develop active learning, and sharing in the exercise of thought, of work and of citizenship.

- To cater to all sectors of the work and employment market, and to have regional scope.
- To integrate and articulate the efforts and the resources present in the community in activities to promote the integral development of the workers.
- To become a centre for the diffusion of new initiatives in the field of vocational education and training, and a centre for discussion about the world of work, and to generate proposals for public policy in the fields of education, work, the creation of employment, and democratic public administration.

Another interesting example of union participation at the regional level, although strictly speaking it does not involve a State body, is the **Consejo de Capacitación y Formación Profesional de Rosario y su Región – CCFP (Council of Instruction and Vocational Training in Rosario and its Region)** in **Argentina**. This body is made up of workers' and employers' organizations, and it promotes the improvement of the occupational profiles of employed and unemployed workers in the Rosario region.

A fourth level of participation of workers' organizations on the level of public policies on employment and vocational training could be **autonomous union initiatives in training with public financing or co-financing**. These fall within the general lines of programmes defined in the governmental sphere, and they share the same goals and priorities.

This category or level would cover all the training programmes carried out by Brazilian union organizations which receive financing from the FAT. One concrete example is the **Programa Integrar (Integration Programme) of the National Confederation of Metal Workers CNM/CUT**.

The main objectives of the Integration Programme are the retraining of workers in companies in the metalworking sector, and to become an agent of change by building up a collection of projects which would enable unemployed worker to seek alternatives.

Among the specific objectives of the Programme are the following:

- To develop methodological proposals for participative research with a view to negotiated vocational training.
- To subsidize the formulation of vocational training projects to be negotiated and implemented in companies.
- To help in the construction of vocational training departments in the unions affiliated to the CNM.
- To contribute to the construction of stable channels of communication between unions and companies.
- To bring about localized and significant changes in the culture both of unions and management, while being fully aware of the conflicts inherent in the relation between capital and labour that are specific to each region.

A project of a similar kind is the **Proyecto Resgate (Rescue Project) of the Confederación General de los Trabajadores – CGT (General Confederation of**

**Workers**). This is aimed above all at young workers, both employed and unemployed, in the metropolitan and the rural areas of the State of Sao Paulo.

The main objective of the project is to provide integrated basic vocational education to groups of workers who are in situations of risk in the job market, fundamentally through the development of strategic alliances involving the federation and its affiliated unions, as well as companies, universities, and institutions of technological education.

The union federation **Força Sindical** prepared the **Project of the Negotiation of Competences** for the metal-mechanical sector, since this has been the area most affected by the restructuring of production, and also because it has significant union organization.

The aim of this project is to qualify the sector to negotiate the profiles of the new competences, and it will lead to a programme of vocational education for union leaders and all workers.

Moving on from the level of examples which in one way or another belong in the governmental or provincial sphere, we come to the level of sectors or branches of activity. Here there is a fifth level which is still more diverse, the level of companies, where there are **vocational training initiatives negotiated and run on a bipartite basis by workers' and employers' organizations**.

The oldest antecedents at this level are probably the **Mexican National Committees of Training and Instruction**, and, from 1978 onwards, **the Mixed Commissions of Training and Instruction by companies**.

The **Bipartite Training Committees in Chile** constitute a relatively recent example. These are set up at company level, and their task is to give advice and evaluate labour training programmes in companies, and also to counsel company management on matters related to training. Every company which has 15 or more workers will have to form a Bipartite Committee of Training, and those companies which put training plans which have been approved by the bipartite committees into practice will be able to deduct the costs of their training activities from taxes, up to a maximum of 1% of their payroll.

Another example, this time in **Uruguay**, are **the training programmes which are given for the workers of the company FANAPEL**, in the paper and cellulose sector. These came about through a collective agreement between workers and management, in an effort to avoid the loss of workers from the plant as a consequence of technological innovations. 80% of the training activity is financed by the Labour Retraining Fund, which is administered by the JUNAE, and the company is responsible for the remaining 20%.

Also in Uruguay there is the **Foundation for the Training of Workers and Entrepreneurs in the Construction Industry**. This foundation came into being in 1997, through a collective agreement between the workers and management in this sector. It will be in charge of the administration of vocational training, instruction and

the professional certification of workers and entrepreneurs in this industry on all its levels. It will also carry out any studies and research which may be necessary to reach its goals, so as contribute to the improvement of competitiveness, and the permanence of employment within a framework of fair labour relations.

The main objectives of the Foundation are to finance activities and instruments for the vocational training of workers and employers in the construction sector, and to issue, on their own behalf or by appointment, an “aptitude certificate” which would certify that those who had taken part had successfully completed the training course.

The bodies involved in this instance are the main employers’ organizations in the sector and the representative union of the construction workers.

In **Argentina**, the case of the **Consejo de Capacitación y Formación Profesional de Rosario y su Región – CCFP (Council of Instruction and Vocational Training of Rosario and its Region)** should be mentioned again. This has already been described in connection with administration on a local level, but at the same time it constitutes an important example of the bipartite administration of vocational training.

Finally there is the **level of union participation which we identify as autonomous union initiatives**, those which the workers’ organizations undertake on their own account, because they are considered functional for their objectives.

The examples given here refer to union training bodies, that is to say, we do not cite examples of associations of union federations with technical teaching centres through which union members receive some kind of technical training or teaching.

In **Argentina**, the **Unión de Obreros de la Construcción y Ramas Afines – UOCRA (Union of Construction Workers and Associated Activities)** manages and administers the **Foundation of Education and Training for Construction Workers**.

The mission of the Foundation is to tackle the workers’ most pressing training needs, to improve their knowledge and abilities, and thus to improve their quality of life.

Among the principal objectives of the Foundation the following stand out:

- To promote training, education, and human and social development, under precepts of quality, integrity and solidarity.
- To facilitate access to jobs for workers by giving them, through the employment of knowledge, tools which will allow them to deal with the new demands of the labour market.
- To provide the companies with skilled manpower, thereby generating higher productivity in the context of labour.
- To position education as the central core around which all the other activities revolve, and to establish as objectives in the programmes the transfer of knowledge and skills which serve to facilitate openings for labour and generate new jobs.

In **Brazil**, the **CUT** has set up a **Training Network**, which, insofar as it connects with vocational training, has been implemented through the Network of Union Schools. These make up part of the pioneer project for the training of instructors for vocational

education and instruction of advisers for the Provincial and Municipal Commissions of Work and Employment, which is called the Proyecto Integral (Integral Project).

The seven schools which make up the Network of Union Schools are:

- Southern Union School - Florianópolis
- CUT School of Sao Paulo – Sao Paulo
- 7th of October School - Belo Horizonte
- North-East School - Recife
- Central Western School - Goiânia
- Northern School - Belén
- Chico Mendes School - Porto Velho

The project has differentiated objectives when it comes to the training of instructors and the training of advisers for the Provincial and Municipal Commissions of Work and Employment. It gives priority to those elements which have more relevance for each one, in line with the training policy of the CUT.

In some Latin American countries, the union movement has produced initiatives which, starting from activity which is basically directed to union training, are accompanied by and contribute to the conceptual and actual development of unionism in the field of training. This is the case of **Colombia**, with the **Escuela Nacional Sindical – ENS (National Union School)**, which runs training programmes in a wide range of subjects of interest to the union organizations and to their members.

Some facets of the mission of the ENS bear on the consolidation of economic, social and political democracy in Colombia, on the promotion of collaboration as union policy, on the criteria of democratic participation in national decisions, and on the cultural, political and organizational renewal of unionism.

Among the programmes that the ENS offers are the following:

- Human and Labour Rights
- Current affairs and political training
- Collective Bargaining and Organizational Management
- Production and Work
- Programme of the Woman Worker

Besides these training programmes, the ENS has a service for the publication of books and magazines which have to do with the union movement and the world of work.

In a similar way, in **Venezuela** the role played by the **Instituto Nacional de Altos Estudios Sindicales – INAESIN (National Institute for Higher Union Studies)** stands out. This institution deals with the union training of leaders and activists, but at the same time it tackles subjects which bear on education, vocational training and employment.

In **Argentina** and **Brazil**, there are two institutions which are of a different nature. These are the **Arturo Jauretche Institute of the CGT** in Argentina, and the **Departamento Intersindical de Estadísticas y Estudios Socio-Económicos –**

**DIEESE (Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies)** in Brazil. On the one hand these are concerned with implementing union training activities, but at the same time they undertake a lot of research in fields which include but which go beyond vocational training, and they are real generators of input for the political and conceptual development of the unions on matters of vocational training.

Lastly, **initiatives which are starting to appear on the supra-national level** should also be mentioned. There is, for example, the activity of the **Coordinadora de Centrales Sindicales del Cono Sur – CCSCS (Coordinator of Union Federations in the Southern Cone)** in bodies belonging to the institutional structure of the Mercosur in which the subject of vocational training is tackled more or less explicitly. There is CCSCS representation in both the **Socio-Labour Commission of the Mercosur** and the **Sub Grupo de Trabajo – SGT (Work Sub-Group) No. 10** (of labour affairs, social security and employment), and both have the subject of training on their agendas for discussion and work.

In addition, the two main regional union organizations, the **Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores – ORIT/CIOSL (Regional Inter-American Organization of Workers)** and the **Confederación Latinoamericana de Trabajadores – CLAT (Latin American Confederation of Workers)** have put the subject of training on the agenda of current union debate, not only in the speeches of their principal leaders but also through the activity of union training and sensitization which has taken place recently.

Finally, it is interesting to deal with the inclusion of the subject of training in two areas where the workers' movement either promotes and participates (collective bargaining), or is occasionally convened (the tables of social dialogue at the national level). These are developed in the following two sections.

## 5. Training in national agreements

The subject of training has been incorporated as an important element in the various national agreements – usually tripartite, but in some cases bipartite - which were subscribed to in Latin America and the Caribbean throughout the 1990s.

In **Argentina** there have been examples of this, like the “Employment, Productivity and Social Equality Framework Agreement”, signed on 25 June 1994 between the unions and the government, and the “Record of Agreements” signed on 9 May 1997 between the CGT and the government. The latter has a clause entitled “Participation in vocational training” which lays down that “permanent and continuous vocational training will be fostered for the employed as well as the unemployed, in both cases with the active participation of the unions, to increase the efficiency and the administration of the expenditure and of the policies”.

In **Chile**, the two most important antecedents in this field are the Framework Agreement of 1990, and the Tripartite National Agreement of 1991. In the latter, it was agreed to develop initiatives on training policy and vocational training on an agenda of common interest, creating consultative bodies for the Programme of Training and the Development of Technical Education which is run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Servicio Nacional de Capacitación y Empleo – SENCE (National Training and Employment Service). More recently, in 1998, the new Statute of Training and Employment was enacted, which, after a thorough process of consultation and debate on the political and social level, introduces important modifications in a number of areas. These include stimulating the participation of the workers in Bipartite Training Committees, which would be involved in the creation of new formulas for running training on the level of companies. Besides this, the National Training Commission, which has a tripartite structure, was created.

In **Colombia**, in the tripartite “Agreement on productivity, prices and salaries” of 19 December 1994, chapter VII deals with agreements and definitions on productivity. It states that among the various factors which have a negative effect on productivity, the ones that stand out are lack of training of the work force, technological backwardness, and deficiencies in policies on science and technology. The training and instruction of the work force is defined as a fundamental instrument, in which the government, the workers and management have to work together in order to reach the objectives proposed. The parties assume a commitment to this end, and they have made a programme declaration whereby all three parties will develop joint programmes to foster an increase in productivity through training, among other factors.

In **Mexico**, a country with a long tradition of this kind of pact, the "National Agreement on Productivity" was sealed on 16 July 1990. This referred to making an effort in education through activity developed by national programmes aimed at the modernization of education, training and productivity. In 1992, the “Acuerdo Nacional para la Elevación de la Productividad y la Calidad” – ANECAP (National Agreement for the Increase of Productivity and Quality) was made. In this, it was deemed indispensable to promote, within companies and with the concurrence of the workers and of their organizations, permanent training policies at all levels, programmes for the retraining of the work force, induction programmes for specific jobs, new kinds of training in the rural sector and in medium-sized and small businesses, and the official

establishment of new forms of registration and reporting for training programmes, with the aim of promoting greater decentralization and wider information. Chapter VII of the 1995 agreement called the “Alliance for economic recovery” lays down concrete measures on the subject of training, namely the expansion of the programmes of “Scholarships for unemployed workers” and of “Integral Quality and Modernization”, and guidelines for the Council of Standardization and Certification of Worker Competence”. Finally, the agreement called the “Worker-Management Dialogue towards a new Work Culture”, of 13 August 1996, which has a tripartite set-up, also makes important explicit references to training.

**Panama** is another example, with the “Pact of Commitments for Development”, adopted on 6 December 1994, in the area of the Agreements for Collaboration (Bambito III). In it, enterprises and the unions agreed to assume greater responsibility for training, among other things, and later this led to the establishment of the bipartite Foundation of Work, which has generated important initiatives in the field.

## 6. Training in collective agreements by sector of activity or industry

A recent study on vocational training in collective bargaining, which was carried out by Cinterfor/OIT, establishes as a first conclusion *the suitability of the entry of collective bargaining into vocational training*. It also states that *since training is a subjective right of the worker and an obligation on the part of the employer, and since it is directly related to other labour rights and conditions of work, it entails the possibility – and the suitability - to be regulated by the trade union*. A number of concrete examples in the region can be cited, to give a partial account of the terrain which this study covers.

In **Argentina** for example, the **collective agreement in the gas sector** refers to training as the key to improving the workers' skills and to maintaining the quality of the service. When it comes to mobilizing resources to promote training, the norm is for the company to be in charge of the financing of activities. A significant fact is that, in all the cases that were analysed, the contributions by management to union funds for the setting up or maintenance of vocational training centres were covered by fulfilment clauses. The Marco Agreement of the Insurance Sector No. 191/92, signed by the professional organizations of management and workers (Insurance Union), includes a clause entitled Committee of Labour Training, which contains a really innovative mechanism of participation, aimed at bringing about the active participation of the parties in the definition of policies for the training and retraining of staff in that sector.

In **Brazil**, the **Collective Banking Agreement**, while it does not stipulate concrete mechanisms for training, does stipulate, among the regulations on economic matters, that the employees be given an "education payment" to reimburse them for the costs of their own first grade education and that of their children, in fee-paying establishments, and on the understanding that this is not in the nature of a salary payment. It also regulates the granting of special leave for reasons of study, on the basis that these release days be considered as effective work time.

Among relevant examples in recent years in Brazil, the **Agreement of the Automobile Sector** has to be mentioned. This covers the collective bargaining which took place in Brasilia (February 1993), between private companies and professional bodies for employers on one side, and workers' organizations represented by the CUT, by Fuerza Sindical and by the Sao Paulo Federation of Metalworkers on the other. This agreement is unusual in that it also included a third participant, the Federal Government, which was interested in promoting productive investment and employment through facilities and recognised guarantees to the private sector. The list of subjects agreed includes the raising of production levels, of the number of work posts, of salary levels and of commercialisation, and the lowering of taxes, of profit margins in the chain of production, and of prices to the consumer. This instrument also incorporates some regulations on matters of technology, quality and productivity. To achieve all this, the basic first step is to expand the space of the automobile sector in the "Brazilian Programme of Quality and Productivity", especially when it comes to the training and recycling of the work force employed. Through the creation of a technical-scientific body in the sector, or through the transformation of one of the bodies that already exists, there is an attempt to achieve technical standardization, the certification of quality and the implementation of programmes of quality, productivity and technology on a national level, including the representation of workers on the Deliberative Council of the Programme. This body has been assigned the task of managing and integrating the

resources and the qualifications of the organs of technology and quality that are in being. Among the working groups that have been created to develop the agreement and promote an agenda of continuity, there is one which covers aspects connected to technology and quality.

In **Mexico**, the collective agreement signed in 1996 by the **Ford Motor Company S.A.** (The Hermosillo Pressing and Assembly Plant) and the National Syndicate of Workers of the company includes special dispositions on training. Both parties commit themselves to fostering the vocational development of the workers through programmes of training and instruction, and to providing suitable means for this either during or outside of working hours. To these ends, the rotation of staff among the different operations in the work areas, on as well as off the production line, is promoted. A Mixed Commission of Training and Instruction is established, which has to set up the training and instruction programmes, in particular to foster skill and the observance of the norms of industrial safety, and has to provide installations and teams to carry out the teaching activity.

In **Paraguay**, the 1993 collective agreement of the **Administración Nacional de Electricidad – ANDE (National Electricity Administration)**, was one of the first and most comprehensive collective agreements made in a state enterprise in that country. In the chapter on “Training and Development”, some core principles are laid down, and what stands out is the declaration that training is at the same time, *a right of the worker and an obligation of the employer*. On this point, it is expressly stated in one of the clauses that “the parties agree on the importance of staff training in the institution, therefore the continuity of staff training, bringing them up to date technologically and administratively in every respect, is established as a right of the workers and an obligation on the part of the company”. Besides this, there are provisions for the creation of instruction centres, libraries, research laboratories, courses and scholarships aimed at the permanent training and instruction of the workers. The agreement also establishes the participation of the Sitrande (Union of Workers of ANDE) in the running of training, and agrees a timetable for instruction, with the granting of leave for the vocational training of the workers.

In 1995 in **Peru**, in the **copper company Magma Tintaya S.A.** which operates in the province of Cuzco, there was a declaration of understanding between the company and the workers’ union. This collective bargaining led to the setting up of a Joint Union-Management Committee. Among its main objectives are stability in employment and the improvement of the quality of life at work, within a framework that would make productive operations possible at a competitive cost. To this end joint action was undertaken, including the re-location of the staff affected, the opportunity to be trained for the new jobs, and in the last resort a placement service when no other alternative can be found.

In **Uruguay**, in line with the collective agreement of 27 June 1997 between management and workers in the sector, the **Foundation for the Training of Workers in the Construction Industry** was created on a joint basis. Its tasks are: a) to finance activity and instruments for the vocational training of workers and employers in the construction sector, and b) to issue on its own account or by appointment, an “aptitude certificate” which certifies the successful completion of the training course by the

worker. It is financed through equal contributions from employers and workers, 0.5 per thousand on take away pay in this sector to come from the employers, and 0.5 per thousand on take away pay to come from the workers, besides donations and projects for cooperation and the recuperation of costs for services rendered. Also in Uruguay there is an example in the cellulose and paper sector, where there was an agreement in an important firm, the **Fábrica Nacional de Papel – FANAPEL (National Paper Factory)**. The company and the union agreed to undertake a programme of training and human resources development, based on the central concept of worker competence.

Finally, there is a chapter on collective bargaining which has only recently begun to be written. This is the possible **development of instances of collective bargaining on a supra-national scale**. This was made possible by two contemporary phenomena. The first is the existence of transnational companies. Up until now these have been negotiating in different ways in each country, but they could start to come up against coordinated joint union action among workers who live in different countries but who are united in belonging to the same sector. The second phenomenon is the trend to regional integration, which, if it manages to get beyond matters that are solely concerned with tariff barriers, might progress to the discussion of schemes for complementary production and compatibility on questions of labour and education. Now, in the context of the Mercosur, there is already a first example of this: the **Collective Agreement which involves the Argentine and the Brazilian subsidiaries of the company Volkswagen, and the unions of the company in both countries**.

Collective bargaining is increasing being called into question from the management side, and in many cases by government (at least in negotiations by sector), but at the same time it is one of the fundamental claims of the labour movement, so it is clear that bargaining on the supra-national or regional scale will not have an easy ride. There are some people, however, who argue that progress in this kind of negotiation can be made precisely on those subjects which are potentially less conflictive, as is the case of vocational training and instruction.

## 7. Some open questions about union participation in vocational training

One characteristic of the labour movement is its historical commitment to the goal of universal access to education and knowledge. In the specific field of vocational training, besides an increase in union participation and interest in the subject, there are also important qualitative changes.

It is one thing for union representation to remain limited to participation in the tripartite or multi-party governing bodies of vocational training institutions, and it is quite another for it to become involved in the running, the administration and the carrying out of public policy for vocational training and employment. It is one thing for the unions to monitor the vocational training institutions and make sure that they are carrying out their original task, but it is something else altogether to deepen the extent of the unions' own participation in a growing number of tripartite or bipartite situations, and even to act as executive agents in training activities.

Obviously this change in the extent and in the forms of participation would have its effect inside the unions, and indeed it has raised a series of questions which are being hotly debated today.

A first debate concerns the question of **the exact point to which the unions ought to become involved in the running and the implementation of vocational training policies**. Insofar as vocational training has sometimes been put on the same level as policies for the development of human resources, it can legitimately be asked whether this is not more than anything else a management responsibility, or at least a public one, understanding "public" to mean "State". On the other hand, when we take into account the educational dimension which vocational training has, we come to the opposite point of view, that the unions should not continue to stay out of decision-making in this field.

The intensification of this debate inevitably leads to its fragmentation into a number of sub-debates. For a start, the participation of the unions as direct agents in training activity is a whole question in itself. It is connected, on the one hand, to the question of whether or not there is a need for trade unions to diversify their services beyond their traditional function of representing and defending the interests of their members, and in a way this is similar to the arguments about the rendering of union services in the areas of health, education and sport etc.

This question is complex enough in itself, but it also has a financial dimension. To the extent that the unions take on the function of being executives of training activity, they turn themselves into administrators of public money. This has caused a lot of controversy, and it always leads on to a demand for transparency on the part of the unions. On the other hand there is also the question of whether or not the unions should develop their own infrastructures, didactic materials, teaching staff etc., or if, on the contrary, it would be better to seek complementary agreements with other bodies or institutions. The fact that there might not be any political guarantee of permanence for many of these public funds ultimately puts a question mark against the future sustainability of these efforts.

However, going beyond these controversies, one thing seems to be clear: **the inclusion of the unions in the execution of training activity has given them an understanding of the complexity of the subject, and broadened the horizons of action in such a way as to qualify them for more active and more efficient participation in the decision-making areas which they have come to occupy.**

A second important debate or question has to do with **the challenges which union organizations will come up against as they participate in decision-making on vocational training.** One of these challenges is that, as vocational training is cropping up more and more in collective bargaining, and as it is essential to discuss how this can be incorporated into labour legislation (e.g. in learning contracts), and as new instances of negotiation are opening up (and in some countries these run to hundreds), it is essential for the unions to have trained representatives qualified to assume representative functions in an area which is not without complexity. On this point, a number of federations and unions are implementing union training to cope with not only the number but also the conditions of the negotiating fronts which are opening up.

Another challenge is **to ensure that union intervention in vocational training should have its own distinctive nature, and that it should develop along conceptual and practical lines that are nearer to the stance of the workers' movement.** Here the question is whether the unions should limit themselves to giving only technical instruction, not too different to what would be given by a private academy or institute, or if, on the other hand, there should be integration and coherence between the training and the unions' other spheres of activity. One of the paths being explored is that vocational training might be accompanied by modules or systematic content on subjects more linked to the tradition of union training or of worker education.

On another level, it can be said that the union movement, at least in some countries, is regaining the ground that management captured in the direct provision of training (whether directly carrying it out or supervising it). However, when it comes to the labour movement developing its own conceptual vision on the subject of vocational training, there is not the same rhythm of recovery. **Studies which have analysed and made explicit the relation between vocational training and instruction and the behaviour of productivity, quality and competitiveness, are already well developed and widespread. However, analysis of the contribution which vocational training makes to social integration and the fight against poverty, its role within public employment policies, and its potential to contribute to the full and modern exercise of citizenship, is only just beginning.**

A third question of strategic importance is **the possibility that vocational training might become a tool whereby the workers' movement could recover ground for negotiation,** especially in a climate like the present one in which the unions have become weaker in a number of areas such as salaries, employment, labour legislation, etc. As has already been pointed out in this study, vocational training is becoming less and less a subject in itself, less self-contained, and more and more an interface between the spheres of labour, technology and education. But, especially in its connection with labour, the negotiation of vocational training would permit progressive advances to be made in the consideration of other subjects which are usually more conflictive.

This argument seems to be reinforced by the advent of new approaches to the organization of production and work, approaches in which the firm, for the sake of its production targets, is obliged to fall back on knowledge, expertise, commitment, and on what has come to be called "workers' knowledge", as a source of innovation, efficiency, and continuous improvement. It is understood that these changes could signify an about turn, and the labour movement might be able to recover from the expropriation of knowledge which the workers were subjected to under the Fordist-Taylorist systems.

The other side of the coin is the probable extinction of the kinds of work associated with the industrial age, and a reduction in employment. This is one of the biggest problems which is confronting not only the unions but society as a whole. However, there is not one attempted solution to this problem that does not adopt vocational training as a key element. Thus, while room to bargain on an equal footing over questions like employment or salaries is tending to disappear, quite often it is in the field of vocational training that an opening for union participation appears.

In fourth and last place there is a situation which pertains exclusively to our region: **the progress of the workers' movement in the field of vocational training is not homogenous among the countries and the sub-regions.** While in countries like Brazil and Argentina, and to a lesser extent Uruguay and Mexico, there has been considerable progress, albeit with varying characteristics, in the rest of the countries in the region the participation of the union movement, where it exists at all, is still at an embryonic stage. In many cases union participation is still restricted exclusively to representation on the controlling bodies of public institutions for vocational training, while in others, as a consequence of the privatisation of the old institutions, they do not even have this. So there is a challenge not only to the workers movement but also to international cooperation, and, specifically in our case, to the OIT. **Not only does it appear to be necessary to strengthen national processes for the active incorporation of the union movement into the running of vocational training, but also that there should be a new opportunity to develop mechanisms of solidarity between union organizations in different countries.** This might come about through the establishment of horizontal networks of technical cooperation and exchange.