



**POVERTY. GROWTH AND TRAINING DEVELOPMENT  
IN LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES**

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## FOREWORD

The purpose of the present paper is to outline the changes undergone by the institutionality of vocational training in the last few decades, in consequence of its historical calling of contributing to social integration and equity. It also tries to sketch out the various alternatives of social policies in training that have been experienced in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Although the commitment of vocational training with sectors afflicted by poverty has been a long-standing challenge, it has not ceased to be complex. Perhaps one of its most difficult aspects is that training has always been torn between the modern and the traditional, faced with the dual needs of responding to productivity, competitiveness and quality but also providing education for productive work for the neediest sectors of society.

Even at times of great fragmentation of public policies, vocational training always remained as one of the few threads that joined together economic growth and modernisation with national aspirations of social development in an all-embracing, integrating sense.

Historic confirmation of the above is the role played by Vocational Training Institutions (VTIs) of the region. In the beginning, nearly all of them made important efforts aimed, on the one hand, at giving priority attention to young people that had not joined the regular education system; they did so through apprenticeship schemes. Furthermore, the first institutions that emerged in the region had the express purpose of structuring such apprenticeship, that so far had only been dispensed in a ready-made fashion in some branches of expanding industries.

In the first few years, the shortcomings of regular education systems compelled VTIs to deliver introductory “levelling” courses, in order to impart elementary skills in reading and writing and mathematics, to give candidates the rudiments required to profit from their training courses. Very often VTIs carried out literacy and adult education campaigns, either on their own or joining forces with Ministries of Education.

As recently as some ten years ago, social policies in vocational training could practically be equated with the actions implemented by VTIs. Some countries had already undertaken important changes in the institutionality of vocational training, by means of privatisation processes of the original VTIs, relegating the State to a subsidiary role, at most as a facilitator of training activities that had to be organised according to

market rules. That created a gap in those countries in the implementation of social policies in vocational training, which together with the social consequences of adjustment policies, made it necessary to apply correctives.

It was precisely in those corrective or remedial measures that lay the seed of the new approaches to social policies in vocational training, and the institutionality required to sustain them. Most of those policies were organised around Ministries of Labour, which through units or specialised services assumed the task of managing and administering them, delegating the executing function to private social or non-governmental agents. This possibility of managing public funds in a more decentralised and participative manner explains to a great extent the proliferation of new training offers.

The new approaches have had many positive effects. Above all, they paved the way for a critical analysis of the situation of VTIs, and in many cases led to significant processes of institutional transformation. However, the application of different models of social policy in vocational training makes it now possible to draw up a balance sheet and identify critical areas where there are still problems to be solved.

On the one hand, the institutionality developed around Ministries of Labour shows certain signs of policy weakness and it is difficult to control the fragmentation of the training offer it brings about. Although there are exceptions, many programmes pursue immediate goals which may be justified by urgent situations but fail to become reconciled with the sustainable long-term efforts of a lifelong education. Likewise, and simultaneously with the leading role played by Ministries of Labour in training, in various countries Ministries of Education have been withdrawing from conducting training policies and programmes.

On the other and, the shorfalls that became evident in many VTIs regarding a high degree of bureaucratisation, lack of flexibility of their training supply and problems of obsolescent contents in many programmes, are now being countered by encouraging developments. It is precisely within the institutional framework of those VTIs that the most important innovations are taking place to co-ordinate training with innovation, development and the transfer of technology. It is also there that most progress has been made in new technologies and methodologies applied to training programmes. Apart from which they are predominant in the training of trainers and in the adoption of recent novelties regarding management, organisation and technological innovation in the realm of work and production.

This underlies the need to improve current levels of dialogue and co-operation among different institutional areas, and to make closer contacts with the new players that have burst into the training field. Although we are still far from that goal, there have been various concrete experiences that indicate a certain *rapprochement* and a common ground for learning together. The complexity and vastness of poverty and exclusion phenomena in Latin America and the Caribbean leave us no other alternative, since no single actor or institution could cope with the huge challenge of developing and sustaining overall and modern training systems with all the coverage and flexibility they require. Several such experiences are summarised in the boxes included in the text.

The paper consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 refers to the specificity of vocational training, as an area connected simultaneously to the productive/economic sphere and to the social sphere, and the way in which this special circumstance has conditioned its institutional history. Chapter 2 analyses how changes in socio-economic geography have contributed to institutional changes and to the emergence of new approaches regarding social policy in vocational training policies. Chapter 3, in turn, proposes a way out of the discussion as to which are the most appropriate institutional arrangements to wage war against poverty through vocational training. It further considers that the various approaches are not mutually exclusive, it analyses their positive aspects and unresolved problems in order to extol the virtues of greater institutional complementation and integration. Chapter 4 looks into the consequences that the institutional changes currently under way may have for the different leading players on the training scene. Chapter 5 tries to describe in a generic manner the main characteristics of innovative experiences in the struggle against poverty through vocational training. Finally Chapter 6, "Lessons learned", summarises the main conclusions that may so far be drawn regarding the combined effect of the various institutional approaches and arrangements of social policies in vocational training. The paper also includes several boxes illustrating VT programmes, being conducted on the subject of poverty and training, in some countries of the American region.

This paper was specially drafted for the meeting of the Working Group for International Co-operation in Vocational and Technical Skills Development, scheduled for 2 to 3 March 2000 at Washington D.C., United States of America, organised by the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and USAID.

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING: BETWEEN PRODUCTIVE POLICIES AND A SOCIAL POLICY

The history of any social institution always admits more than one reading. Vocational training in Latin American and the Caribbean is no exception, and it has been approached and described from very different angles.

From an economic point of view there is a generalised consensus in linking the movement of creation of national vocational training institutions (VTIs) to a particular international juncture. This resulted in the adoption of a development strategy defined as “inward looking”, i.e. encouraging the emergence of a national production with greater added value, basically destined to the domestic market and imports substitution. This in turn posed the challenge of getting the skilled and semi-skilled human resources that the incipient productive systems of the various countries required, which found a solution in the creation of public or state bodies that tackled the task of training manpower at national level.

There is still, however, one other interpretation more closely connected to a social view of things, in which institutionalised vocational training appears as a complement and reinforcement of the efforts in education and literacy that took place in the region at the same time.

In many of our countries, the old formal education systems were unable to cope with at least two important aspects: firstly, to make effective the universal coverage they aimed at, especially regarding the more disadvantaged population groups; and secondly, linking their contents more closely and effectively with the productive and labour reality that had started to evolve.

From an economic viewpoint, **the so-called Vocational Training Institutions (VTIs) were able to meet successfully the demand for qualified and semi-qualified personnel that the imports' substitution strategy imposed.**

From a social point of view, VTIs played a leading role in the literacy campaigns of several countries, and also made an important contribution to look after young people that were not included in the regular education

system, through apprenticeship schemes and the implementation of numerous “preliminary levelling” courses.

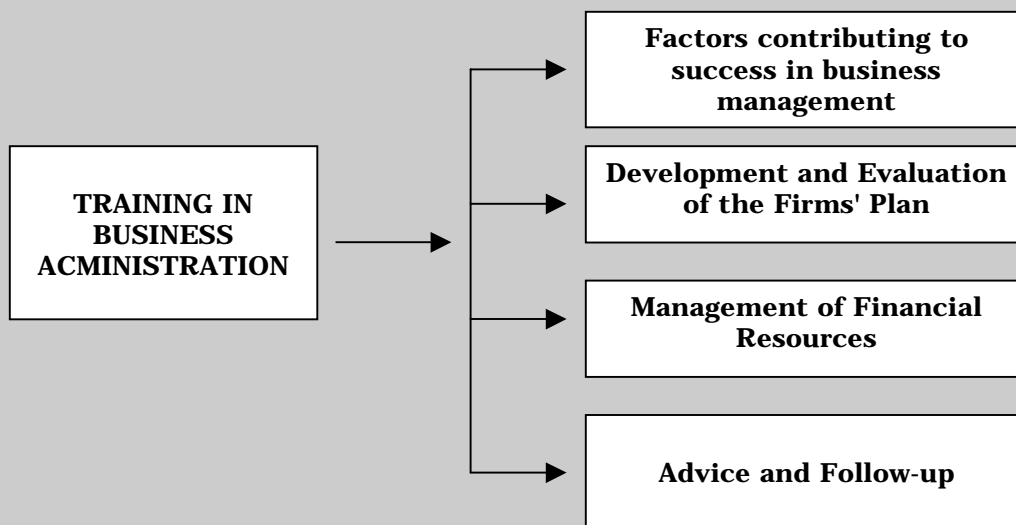
The subsequent “release” of resources intended for elementary education programmes, due to a considerable extent to the substantial improvement in the levels of schooling of the population at large, did not necessarily mean that VTIs paid less attention to disfavoured sectors. Quite the contrary, **it implied a gradual and better focalisation of their programmes, aiming at aspects more closely related to their specific and original purpose, namely, training for productive work.**

The stress to which VTIs were submitted after their creation, and the fact that during almost four decades the most significant training action took place within their scope, undoubtedly contributed to give them very special characteristics, as they were simultaneously inserted in the spheres of economy, production, industry and social policy. However, current circumstances seem to have brought about – among other changes – an increasingly blurred demarcation between these spheres of public policy, which also implies new orientations for vocational training.

Social and economic exclusion phenomena, that can be seen through an increase of unemployment and underemployment and informal activities have, among other effects, that of undermining the very competitiveness of the countries’ economic, productive and industrial policies, as well as endangering their social balance. In this new approach, **remedial or assistance strategies, excessively local and disconnected from national drives to bolster competitiveness, invest in science and technology and upgrade people’s skills, turn out to be sterile.**

The preceding reasoning leads quite naturally to the conclusion that efforts to bring together integration and social justice imply a greater degree of co-ordination among organisations operating in the different areas of public policy. Nevertheless, the task does not end there. Current times are characterised by a much more active participation by private and social players in the most diverse fields. This necessarily means developing alliances and joint action schemes, involving not only public sector bodies but also firms and enterprises, workers organisations and civil society organisations. Training is a particularly favourable field to make progress on that front, which is clearly reflected in the new institutional forms that have been emerging in it.

### Costa Rica: Public Workshops of INA



#### Public Workshops

During the 1980's and in response to the economic crisis that afflicted the country, the National Training Service (Spanish acronym INA) of Costa Rica created its Public Workshops. This training approach, which differed from the traditional methodological conception, implied great flexibility and offered persons in disfavoured population sectors of both urban and rural areas, an option to improve their earnings and employment possibilities.

Through the training activities implemented in those Workshops, INA intends to raise the overall living conditions of the Costa Rican people. This general objective can be broken down into several more specific ones. The idea is to offer training in productive trades and activities that may increase individual and family earnings, crafts production in a small or medium scale, self-employment on a personal or associative basis, and in some cases to provide marginalised groups with skills enabling them to join the work force in productive activities. The model for these programmes lays down four types of basic services:

- Cutting down of family expenses through the manufacture of items for family consumption, as a form of expenditure substitution or

**economising.**

- **Obtaining supplementary income by producing goods and services for the informal market.**
- **Setting up of small firms or enterprises providing self-employment on an individual, family or associative basis, and integrating them to the semi-structured market.**
- **Incorporation to the informal labour market, by providing additional, higher technical training after regular INA courses, enabling persons to join the formal labour market.**

**The methodology consists of implementing an open, non-schoolroom programme of training activities, with very flexible tuition and hours, to fit the needs of the students, but within rational limits.**

**The role assigned to the instructor(s) is essentially to facilitate the training process and co-operate in it, rather than to act in a traditional teaching function.**

**In summary, the purpose of the Workshops is to adapt teaching methods and techniques to the educational level and characteristics of the trainees, to the technical requirements of each trade and the objectives of each student.**

**On the other hand, the methodological process of the Workshops assumes participation by the communities in which they operate, as well as the intervention of key private organisations that may lend support to them, to the trainees and the community.**

CHANGES IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY  
AND THEIR EQUIVALENT IN THE INSTITUTIONALITY  
OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Something that can be verified in any one of the countries of the region is that the institutionality of vocational training has changed substantially. This means to say that VTIs are no longer the only actors to be considered, insofar as – even when they retain considerable weight on the training scene – they have lost their former hegemony, in other words, they are not any more the guides that monopolise the supply of training programmes in their countries. Side by side with them there are nowadays training systems built round the activities of Labour Ministries. Also to be noted is a much more active role played by firms and their corporate organisations, as well as by trade unions. The private, non-governmental training offer is constantly growing and becoming consolidated.

These changes in the institutional nature of vocational training also lend themselves to more than one interpretation regarding cause and effect relationships, (as did the origin itself of vocational institutes). On the one hand, processes of greater economic openness, with their consequent exposure to the conditions of international trade, plus diminished State intervention, have forced firms and enterprises to redefine their trade strategies. Domestic markets are no longer “captive” domains, and very often a firm’s survival depends on its capacity to conquer markets in other countries. Consumer preferences and changes in taste become fundamental guidelines for the organisation of production, which grows much more flexible and varied, as opposed to the mass production and repetitiveness of previous decades. The rate of technological innovation has accelerated and caused a deep mutation in the organisation of labour. In this new scenario, **the relative importance of the knowledge factor in production has increased remarkably, awakening a renewed interest of employers in the subjects of vocational education and training.**

This boom of vocational training in corporate circles has resulted both in an expansion of in-plant training and personnel development plans, a much more active participation by employers in VTIs, and in the creation of training bodies managed by corporate organisations. But above all, a greater demand for training has become apparent, which encourages the development of private offers through a large number of institutes, academies and training centres.

The overwhelming importance acquired by knowledge – and in consequence by training – within productive processes and strategies to improve competitiveness, has become evident in labour relations systems. **The ties of training with areas such as wages, labour security, working conditions and environment, occupational careers and quality inevitably make it an object of negotiation, and a focal point in the attention of employers, workers and their respective organisations.**

Evidence of the above is the more active participation of trade unions in the life of VTIs, the increasing number of collective agreements that include training provisions, and the expansion of labour legislation on the subject. Equally significant are the independent experiences in training of labour unions, bipartite and tripartite management of training, and the participation of unions as executing agencies of public training and employment policies.

Activities in the public sector are at present much more diversified than before. Specifically, Ministries of Labour have become leading players in training. They do not act as direct executing agents – a role taken over in all cases by private and/or non-governmental bodies – but as managers of systems, encouraging both the demand and supply sides of training. They may be unilateral or tripartite administrators, as well as generators of training programmes for disadvantaged groups (young people, women that head households, micro-enterprises, ethnic minorities, unemployed workers, etc.).

### **Uruguay: Youth Training and Employment Programmes**

**In view of the training and employment problems of young people in the poorer strata of society, and the example of youth employment projects supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in Chile and Argentina, the National Youth Institute (Spanish acronym INJU), of Uruguay, dependent on the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) launched in 1994 a Training and Labour Access Project called OPCION JOVEN, with resources from the IDB Multilateral Investment Fund. The pilot project contracted for training courses and reached a coverage of 4,090 young people in 1995 and 1996.**

**The instruments and methodologies that would subsequently be applied, with important adjustments, in the PROJOVEN Plan were tried out in the framework of OPCION JOVEN. The contracting out of courses through public tenders, training approaches closely connected with the labour market, control and follow-up mechanisms were all tested and evaluated during that pilot run.**

**The decision was adopted in 1996 of launching the PROJOVEN Programme intended to train young people and facilitate their access to jobs. It was developed through an**

**inter-institutional agreement between the Ministries of Education and Culture and Labour and Social Security. It was to be financed mainly with resources contributed by workers and employers of the private sector to the Occupational Retraining Fund managed by the National Employment Board (Spanish acronym JUNAE), a tripartite body including representatives of workers (PIT-CNT trade unions), employers and the National Employment Office.**

**A Programme Co-ordinating Unit was created to manage the scheme, based on a co-operation agreement between DINAE (National Employment Office), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and INJU.**

**PROJOVEN is one of several decentralised programmes that JUNAE is implementing to promote employment. It gets resources from the National Fund for Occupational Retraining. This Programme also has some international technical co-operation and the support of the PREDEG Programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries for the courses it offers in some specific areas, such as technical training in agriculture.**

**The objective of PROJOVEN is to help young people from low-income sectors to improve their possibilities of accessing the labour market through cost-free occupational training in keeping with demands detected in the jobs market.**

**The Programme is aimed at:**

- **strengthening the co-ordination between the training of young persons and the changing requirements of the labour market.**
- **supporting the management capacity and links with the productive world of the training institutions that deal with the target population.**
- **co-operating with firms and enterprises in the processes of absorbing semi-skilled young people and offering them an initial work experience.**

Simultaneously and concurrently with the changes in the commercial sphere, as well as in the organisation of work and production, technology and labour relations, deep social transformations have also taken place. **In the “modernising” approach in vogue more than two decades ago, poverty was seen as a phenomenon denoting the “backwardness” of certain social groups in connection with the goals pursued by society concerning economic, social and cultural progress.** Such goals were reasonably conceived as embracing the whole nation. Therefore, the objective of social policies was to make available to all the population, through universal coverage, the resources and mechanisms to extend “modernisation” to all strata, regions and productive sectors.

Awareness of the existence of chronic poverty cores, subsisting through generations and “immune” to any battery of public policies, led to rethinking the situation. Criteria of focalisation, the development of special

methodologies and institutional designs were adopted. However, the current complexity and scope of the “social question” does not stop there. Unemployment, which historically had been a cyclic and circumstantial phenomenon, that appeared in economic recessions and was only marginal in growth stages, became an independent variable. Structural and chronic unemployment came on the scene. In an increasingly larger portion of unemployment statistics, it has become alarmingly persistent. Indications then are that there is a growing number of permanently unemployed persons.

In turn, the development of the informal sector of the economy in countries of the region appears as a crucial problem in this end of century. Although not strictly and conceptually equivalent to poverty, this tendency is in fact closely associated with it. A variegated mosaic often permeated by the formal sector, informality encompasses various forms of economic activity that in most cases employ poverty stricken groups: low productivity micro-enterprises, self employed individuals, non-registered personal services, and so forth.

A better understanding of the problem of poverty has uncovered its multiple causes and the diversity of concrete situations that underlie statistical figures. Aspects such as **age, gender and ethnic origin are not only associated with poverty but reinforce social exclusion.**

If, as indicated earlier, besides its productive and economic role vocational training always played a clear-cut social part, providing an educational offer for disfavoured groups, this challenge has nowadays a greater complexity that necessarily implies institutional changes.

Since VTIs were the main tool of public policy in the field of occupational training for disadvantaged sectors – at least until the ‘seventies - the social and economic changes that have occurred since then and better knowledge of existing problems have revealed their shortcomings in at least two areas:

- Insufficient coverage, even in the case of VTIs with large infrastructure and personnel, regarding aspects affecting considerable sectors of society.
- Lack of flexibility and diversity in their training response to heterogeneous situations (chronic poverty, young people looking for a job for the first time, micro-enterprises in the formal and informal sectors, workers displaced from work posts, women heading households, migrants and persons displaced by armed conflicts, etc.)

But it would be historically inaccurate to say that the mere consideration of this kind of shortcoming resulted in the succession of institutional changes that occurred subsequently. The truth is that such changes in the

institutionality of vocational training were also –and mainly – the upshot of what was going on in other areas of public policy. In the same way as the State had played a leading role in the economic sphere – either through measures to protect domestic production, by means of tariff barriers or acting directly as an entrepreneur – public policies were entirely developed as an eminently State responsibility.

In that respect, the vocational training policies implemented through VTIs were no exception to the rule, in times when health, housing, social security and education policies were planned, designed and implemented by public departments or ministries.

**The new approaches adopted since the mid-seventies by most countries of the region introduced a significant change in the role of the State both in economic matters and social policies.** Public works in infrastructure and housing were increasingly implemented through tenders and concessions to private capital. Public utilities in telecommunications, electric power or insurance were privatised in many cases. And regarding social policy, new models emerged in which the State played a subsidiary role, setting the “rules of the game”, managing and financing without directly undertaking execution, and outsourcing even monitoring and evaluation tasks.

It is in this framework that the institutional nature of training began to evolve, torn between its commitment to economy and production and its role in social policies. Training and employment programmes for the young are particularly revealing in connection with such transformations. They started with the Chilean experience of a programme called “Chile Joven”, and extended quite rapidly to other countries of the region. Through a specialised service attached to the Labour Ministry (the National Training and Employment Service – SENCE -) the Chilean State introduced a new type of social policy quite different from previous ones. Until then, such policies had tried to be “universal” (including all people that shared some very general characteristics), but the new programmes or projects focused on very specific population groups. Whilst in the past training policies had been implemented from beginning to end within some public body or organisation, in the new approach the State – usually through specialised units or services dependent on Labour Ministries – defines the main components and characteristics of the projects, finances and manages them, leaving implementation to private or non-governmental agents that bid for such task.

This change in the way of carrying out social policies through training – as well as in meeting the needs of the productive sector – has been described as a shift from a “supply side” approach to a “demand side” one. Which means that while in the past there was a rigid, predetermined supply of

courses from which young candidates, workers or firms had to choose, the new process consists of, first of all, fine-tuning the mechanisms to “read” existing requirements, and then designing training responses as close as possible to the characteristics and needs of the target population.

Finally, a new and undoubtedly beneficial aspect of this new generation of social policies in training has been a **much greater emphasis on evaluation procedures**. During quite some time, evaluation in vocational training circles was a mere enumeration of actions carried out, number of trainees recruited, number of graduates or average hours of tuition per student. Nowadays the “common sense” of training projects, programmes and policies dictates that **a basic aspect of evaluation has to be their degree of success in providing job outlets, as well as ensuring subsequent occupational careers**.

### **Argentina: Occupational Workshops’ Programme**

**In order to promote institutional arrangements capable of raising the quality of training, on the basis of the genuine demands of productive sectors of local economies, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Argentina started in 1995 to lend support to lines of action at local, provincial or regional level, through associations of actors on the labour scene with other interested parties.**

**Such is the case of the Occupational Workshops’ Programme, which promotes the creation of associative groups, made up by the social players in the form of non-profit civil societies. They are small units with a simple structure, that encourage and disseminate new training approaches. With that end in view they promote an ongoing education that may develop people’s productive potential through the use of technological resources. They also endeavour to foster leadership and a spirit of co-operation among employers and workers to introduce training proposals in keeping with the productive requirements of each region.**

**The social actors that make up the governing boards of these Workshops are in charge of supervising the management and quality of the training activities they dispense. They must also ensure an inflow of resources to identify training needs, formulate projects and implement activities. There are at present 13 Occupational Workshops distributed in 12 Argentine provinces. The sphere of influence of each Workshop is usually confined to the localities surrounding their venues. Although most of them were set up to provide technical training for just one branch of activity, some have expanded their training offer across the board. In particular, they have aimed at the management and administration of small or micro-enterprises, or they have ventured into other economic sectors.**

## COMPETING PARADIGMS?

Arguments about the various models of institutional arrangements in the field of vocational training have been going on for at least twenty-five years. What has been a sometimes fierce debate has calmed down with time. However, in mapping out today the institutional reality of vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean a diversified picture is unveiled, still marked by two opposing approaches.

Nevertheless, those approaches have evolved from the form they took on, say, towards 1976 (date of promulgation in Chile of the Training and Employment Statute, with the creation of SENCE on the one hand and the privatisation of INACAP on the other, which can be taken as a valid starting point for our purposes).

On the one hand, former VTIs (in those countries where they have subsisted) are undergoing processes of deep institutional change at different rates. They have for instance left aside centralised management schemes, “flattening out” their organisational structure and making earnest efforts to have greater numbers of staff directly involved in teaching vis-à-vis administrative or support personnel. They have also developed innovative mechanisms to get closer to productive and social realities, and make their action more relevant to them.

Programmes of the new generation have also come a long way, which has made it possible to consider not only the advantages that allowed them to prosper in the first place, but a number of problem spots as well. Here reason counsels a “pause” to make up for shortcomings and to rescue much of the knowledge and experience gathered by other institutional forms.

### **Brazil: Workers’ Assistance Fund**

**The Workers’ Assistance Fund (Portuguese acronym FAT) is the largest public fund in the country. Its resources stem from a 1% levy on the payroll of firms and enterprises in the formal sector. Part of them are devoted to financing the policies of the National Employment System, manpower negotiations, unemployment insurance ad programes to generate employment and income. This fund is managed by a Deliberating Council of the Workers’ Assistance Fund (CODEFAT) of tripartite and equal composition. It is chaired on an annual rotation basis by the different parties involved. Its executive secretariat is run by the Ministry of Labour.**

**Resources are used and channelled through Federal States and Municipalities, which for that purpose must set up local committees to consider and discuss their application.**

**These committees are also tripartite and of equal composition.**

**This decentralised and participative manner of managing public funds has been an interesting stimulus for innovative experiences. For instance, in the State of Sao Paulo the Employment and Labour Relations Secretariat (Portuguese acronym: SERT), the ILO and the Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socio-economic Studies (Portuguese acronym DIEESE) have joined forces to launch a collective process to develop a new vocational training design for the State. The result has been the formulation of a programme called “Learning to Learn”, that comprises three Projects: a Public Experimental Centre on Vocational Training; a Permanent Observatory of Employment and VT Situations, and Basic and Specific Skills.**

**The Public Experimental Centre brings together the three projects in a joint undertaking. A decentralised, participative and democratic working approach has been elected and adapted to local conditions. It is not actually a school, and furthermore it does not require any fixed physical premises. It operates in a flexible and novel way: its role is to “contaminate” or pass on its conception and methodological proposal to other organisations. It has developed a new institutional arrangement bringing different actors together to negotiate the supply and demand of vocational training, and create alliances to meet their interests and needs.**

**It aims at serving a differential public, with new or specific demands to face the changing world of labour: young persons, adult workers (employed or unemployed), entrepreneurs and employers (from both the formal and informal sectors) as well as sectors that have been traditionally marginalised.**

Specifically regarding the struggle against poverty, these new policies have come up against an age-old problem in the social sphere: the deflection of actions towards population groups endowed with greater cultural and social capacity, that seize them for their own benefit. So it happens that sectors suffering from “harder” or more chronic poverty remain beyond the reach of the programmes.

Another problem has been attention of small or micro-enterprises, mainly in the informal sector, where their very nature places them outside training circuits, or when lack of capital prevents them from investing in training.

In the last resort, delegating execution to private agents, on the assumption that training supply and demand would balance each other spontaneously and efficiently, has turned out to be wrong. Slants have

become apparent in the offer of courses fundamentally channelled towards the services sector. This has not been a reflection of the obvious transformations of labour markets and productive structures, but rather a matter of costs. It is always cheaper, as far as infrastructure and equipment are concerned, to give courses for computer operators, secretaries or accountants, than to deliver industrial training. When that is not the case, there may be a proliferation of courses on repair of household appliances, footwear repair, clothes making, sewing, and the like. . These are at best more akin to survival strategies, declining output makeshifts, rather than the new forms of production organisation that require polyvalent skills, flexibility, initiative, teamwork, etc.

The fundamental issue, stated perhaps schematically, would be as follows: **Should we necessarily have to choose between two models of social policy regarding training? Is the alternative between, on the one hand, strong, hegemonic institutions with a supply of long, rigid courses and with a tendency towards a loss of up-to-dateness and, on the other hand, programmes targeting specific populations, with short, custom-made courses?**

The extension and complexity of the universe of poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean indicate, rather, that answers cannot be easy and, much less, be adopted according to restrictive criteria such as the above.

It is obvious that certain situations require quick, agile responses. Young people who do not manage to enter the labour market, who have early deserted their studies and who live in a personal and family situation which makes it imperative to find a source of income, are a clear example of this. In that sense, a programme which provides them with a chance to reach a certain level of technical knowledge quickly and have an initial job experience will be, surely, very welcome.

### **Honduras: Adult Education in Vocational Training**

**In Honduras, the Programme of Education for Labour (POCET) is a Central American example of this alignment between the regular educational systems, and especially adult education and training as life-long education. It is one of the first and richest experiences of integration between traditions among which historically there was little linkage and, at the same time, an experience of dialogue of those traditions with the new debates and paradigms that have involved cross-sectionally the spheres of education and vocational training, in which the new ideas regarding life-long education and training should be specially highlighted. In this case the Ministry of Public Education of Honduras and the National Vocational Training Institute (INFOP) have acted in an integrated manner, at the same time incorporating methodological approaches which are usually only to be found among nongovernmental organisations.**

**In this regard, the POCET programme is a central reference point for a whole tradition established around the principles of adult education, with its assistance-providing cast and its orientation towards literacy. POCET signalled the way towards integration of the contributions made at the time by all those linked to various forms of popular education with other currents -such as vocational training- with long experience in the field of education for productive labour. The latter currents are also deeply involved in profound debates arising both from the emergence of new production and labour paradigms and the employment market changes and from the persistence of groups and sectors that are left out.**

**But it is necessary to look a bit further: What chances will those same young people have to develop a training itinerary that, taking as its base the knowledge acquired in such a programme, allows them to access higher levels of qualification, in an on-going training perspective?**

If a case is to be made for the micro- and small enterprise sector, both of the informal and the formal sectors of the economy, it is clear that the answers have to be of an integrated nature. Not only is it insufficient to propose a course or succession of courses: training both of workers and of the employers themselves needs to be located within the aggregate of the requirements of the productive or services unit. It is therefore imperative that policies in this regard be inter-institutional, in such a way that demands in terms of skills development, administration, productive management, technological management, access to information, credit policies, *inter alia*, may be attended to in a relevant manner and adequate priorities may be set. Moreover, **the very concept of "subject of attention", from being the individual worker, becomes centred in the productive unit and, particularly, in assistance for linkage with other firms or production lines which may themselves be, and in this case are, the "target population."**

We are speaking, therefore, of a manner of acting that involves, besides quick answers to urgent situations, investment in curriculum research and development, in training of trainers, in methodological and institutional development which allows a linkage of the supply of training for these recipients with the modern approaches of labour management and organisation, in innovation, development and transfer of technology; it is clear that alliances must be developed that allow the resources and capacities existing in our societies to be linked and taken advantage of.

These findings have, obviously, profound implications for each of the players who act at present in the field of public vocational training policies addressed to the poverty sectors, an aspect that will be dealt with below.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS FOR THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING PLAYERS

The **Labour Ministries**, that have managed to become central players of many national training and employment systems are, undoubtedly, the most visible institutional manifestation of the new logic to deal with the subject of vocational training social policies.

The programmes managed by the labour authorities are, in good measure, responsible for the dynamism acquired by the private and non-governmental supply of training. As projects such as "Chile Joven" for training and employment of young people, or the "Cinco" programme for technical assistance and training for micro- and small enterprises in Uruguay - to name only two - begin to be implemented, a clear stimulus arises for private institutes and academies or non-governmental organisations to start developing a specific supply for these sectors with the purpose, even though an initial one, of taking part successfully in public bidding processes.

This multiplication and diversification of the training supply constitutes, without a doubt, a new potential in society to deal with the challenge to provide coverage to a demand that is also greater and more heterogeneous. As this supply is organised and acts within the framework of policies guided by the Labour Ministries, a gradual approach to national training systems would be expected. For the time being, however, only systemic features exist in some countries, provided by organisation around financing schemes and a certain homogeneity of the processes which serve to develop training actions.

One of the factors that have been undermining the consolidation of training systems under the guidance of the Labour Ministries lies in their relatively weak institutionalality. On the one hand, the executing function, exerted by private and non-governmental supply, has taken a long time to strengthen and act efficiently within the framework of the new public policies. Even in countries with greater experience with this kind of policy it has been necessary to traverse a long period in which actions both as a stimulus to their emergence and a later trimming of the agencies supplying training have been needed. It is the same road being travelled or beginning to be travelled by other countries where it is not possible to really speak of a private training "market," which raises questions regarding the features that the policies will assume during the transition periods.

### **Retraining programmes in Latin America: some evidences\***

During the nineties, many governments in Latin America implemented ambitious reemployment programmes for workers displaced by economic restructuring and technological change. These programs were aimed at assisting low-income redundant workers in rapidly finding the best new job possible. The two main reasons behind the need of implementing such programs were the imperfections of the labour market in terms of economic efficiency (caused by the economic restructuring programs and the technological change) and the social equity issues that arose as a consequence of those imperfections.

Although well intentioned, many of the reemployment programs seem not to have achieved their main goals. Even though accurate evidence is missing, there is a lot of partial data that suggests a wastage of public resources and a poor cost-effectiveness relation in many cases. There are different indicators of failed results that shows the complexity of the problem of displaced workers and enhances the need to extreme the care in the design and implementation of public reemployment programmes. The most common failures refer to the following aspects:

- **Difficulty to attract and retain participants.** Some programs have had to be reduced or discontinued either for lack of interest of the eligible workers or because there were not enough eligible workers fulfilling the requirements of the programmes.
- **Low employment rate of the participants in good jobs.** Sometimes the reemployability of the participants is hindered simply because the entire economy is in recession and there are not enough alternative jobs available.
- **Excessive or unnecessary expenses.** In some cases the crisis which caused the labour redundancy problem was transitory and the workers could return to their old jobs after a while. In other cases, public retraining programmes proved unnecessary because the employers of the workers would have been able to finance the necessary service.

Despite these facts, it is better to think that these failures do not deny the potential benefits of public programmes for reemployment, but rather that they provide important lessons and signs of alert regarding the risk that should be prevented when designing or implementing these programmes, in order to maximise its efficiency and avoid unnecessary costs.

Based on the experience of many public reemployment programmes carried out in Latin America, it is possible to extract some valuable lessons which can be summarised in the following principles:

- a) **Public reemployment programmes are justified only when these initiatives produce benefits for society as a whole, either in terms of a national productivity**

- gain or improved social equity.
- b) Not all displaced workers need or merit public assistance to find a new job. Subsidised public programmes for reemployment should be directed to low-income workers whose specific human capital has become obsolete and who fulfil the requirements to participate in the programmes.
  - c) The characteristics of employment crisis and of the individual workers affected by them are very diverse. Thus, strategies of assistance for reemployment that are effective in one situation may not be so in another.
  - d) Retraining is not the only nor necessarily the best public instrument to aid displaced workers. More successful strategies generally include a package of different services, such as: employment information and guidance, employment intermediation services; loans and grants for purchasing equipment and housing goods; tax relief or labour costs subsidies for potential employers.
  - e) The design and implementation of public programmes for reemployment should be carried out within the framework of an adequate budget and according to legal and technical norms allowing the timely provision of quality services to displaced workers.
  - f) Labour unions and employers organisations have proved to be valuable strategic allies for the design and implementation of public reemployment programmes.

In sum, the design and implementation of public programmes of assistance to reemployment of workers displaced by structural changes in the economy, is a complex task very prone to costly errors, the consequences of which are the frustration of the beneficiaries and the wastage of public resources.

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\* Eduardo Martínez Espinosa, *Experiences in retraining programmes in Latin America*. Montevideo, ILO/Cinterfor, 1997. (Not published yet).

On the other hand, the governing function of the Labour Ministries has never been free from questioning and, above all, has been too linked to the political changes and those of approach presupposed by the various changes in the national administration. Thus, on some occasions, there has been an attempt to link the orientation of the incipient systems more to the strategies designed by the economic authorities or, on the contrary, they have been considered a special function of the education systems.

To summarise, although the action of the Labour Ministries has done much to link training to active employment policies, to stimulate the diversification of the supply and the growth and qualifications of training demand, as well as to promote the emergence of new arenas of dialogue and management with the participation of the labour players, **it is still a case of weak institutionality that is not yet acquainted with the stability levels which formerly characterised the VTI's**. This makes the future of this emerging institutionality somewhat uncertain, and hampers further development allowing other kinds of requirements to be addressed:

the establishment of training itineraries, the adequate use and advantage taken of existing resources and knowledge in other institutional areas (VTI's, technical schools, etc.), investment in innovation and transfer of technology, among other relevant aspects.

**The VTI's are, in turn, the player that has remained located in the centre of the discussion and, as well, has been most affected by the changes undergone.** The questions that have been posed regarding them, often taken out of historic context, have ended up hiding a dynamism and a will to transform that could well be considered a part of its most praiseworthy tradition. It is, moreover, a particularly complex task: the VTI's have not only had to continue attending simultaneously to the economic and social imperatives: they have also had to adapt their strategies of action in such a way that efficiency might be increased to obtain an active complementation with other players.

The present situations in the region in this respect are diverse. There is a first group of countries in which the VTI's, with all their limitations, are the only system to attend to groups in a poverty situation with an important capacity for action. In these countries, the most similar thing to a private training supply is in reality a fragmentary and dispersed universe of agents, without adequate quality controls regarding training actions and without guiding criteria to develop a medium and long-term strategy. **To set aside the only social capital, consolidated with much effort and time, in the field of vocational training can only augur, in these cases, an irreparable loss.**

A second group of countries has a private and non-governmental supply that is important in numbers, at least sufficient to allow a certain trimming or weeding of this type of supply until acceptable quality levels are reached. When there is also a VTI with long experience, capable of acting at the national and investment level in strategic aspects such as curriculum development, training of trainers, innovation and transfer of technology, the panorama is particularly promising. Several VTI's have been developing new institutional arrangements which allow them to increase their capacity of execution and improve their coverage, by means of shared management schemes and co-operation centres located, precisely, in the private sphere. This **allows appraisal of the development of veritable training "systems," through the concurrence of public and private players, with immediate answers to urgent problems, although also with a capacity to think and act strategically in the long run.**

There is, in the third place, a third kind of situation: that of the countries where the VTI has disappeared or, rather, has been privatised, resolving, among other dilemmas, that of simultaneous attention to economic or productive objectives, jointly with those of social integration. **The fact**

**that there is a finished transition of models does not imply, however, that the discussion around the very institutionality of vocational training is over.** How to achieve the use of the tax franchise mechanism by micro-entrepreneurs of the formal or informal sector, how to achieve an effective impact on the most difficult poverty communities by youth training and employment programmes, or how to manage to continue, through training itineraries, the basic training provided by those programmes, become crucial matters and the object of corrections and reforms.

The corporate organisations and the trade unions are, as has already been mentioned, players that, based on transformations undergone in the economic and social context, the labour markets and the approaches applied to the organisation and management of production and labour, have increased their participation in the field of vocational training. It can be said that the labour relations systems have incorporated training as one of their central subjects for negotiation. However, the discussion taking place in this framework does not take into account, at least directly, the role of vocational training in the strategies of the struggle against poverty. This is to do with the characteristics of these players and the transformation processes themselves that they are undergoing.

The entrepreneurial player tends naturally to focus its attention on the contributions vocational training may make to objectives such as quality and productivity. **Discussion regarding the social responsibility of firms, although existent, is still incipient in the region.** The union player appears, on its part, tied frequently to its historical features as organisations that represent workers active in the formal sector, still having a strong industrial identity and being mainly male. The growth of the informal sector, the magnitude reached by unemployment and, within the latter, by long term unemployment, the increase in women in the labour force and the loss of the relative importance of the industrial sector, makes it necessary for the union player to face major challenges if it wishes to maintain its effectiveness.

Thus the intervention of these players in training actions, the priority objective of which is to attend to groups in a poverty situation, is still limited. Withal it is necessary to point out that there are some innovative experiences that seek to encompass within their field of action sectors marked by certain types of exclusion.

To act among unemployed workers or those of the informal sector is, probably, a crucial issue for unions. However, it never ceases to be a complex task full of pressures for the organisation and its leaders. In this complexity, vocational training appears to be a key that several unions show an inclination to use increasingly. This occurs, almost always, within

the framework of public programmes. Some unions have embarked on innovative experiences, financed with public funds, that address the re-qualification of unemployed workers, as well as young people and women.

The firms participate mainly through the expedient of offering job internships to young people, although it is also possible to find examples of educational, technical and vocational training centres managed by boards addressing young people from poverty sectors.

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

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

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

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

**This institution has been recognised by the National Training and Employment**

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

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

An analysis of what has occurred with the **private and non-governmental supply of training and skills development** reveals a series of disfunctionalities that, in arrangements in which the execution of the quasi-totality of the training actions are basically entrusted to it, has made necessary the introduction of a series of corrective measures. One of these disfunctionalities lies in the tendency of this type of supply to address almost exclusively the trade and services sector. Although this sector grows sustainably in all the economies, this bias would be due more to a problem of the costs and investments necessary to implement courses, notoriously lower in the majority of courses for the tertiary sector than for the industrial or agricultural sector.

On the other hand, and as has already been mentioned, it is also a sector that has developed under the protection of certain public policies that subsidised and stimulated the emergence of a private supply: training and development programmes for special populations (young people, women, micro-entrepreneurs, persons demobilised from armed conflicts, etc.); and subsidies for the execution of training actions on the part of firms. It can be said, therefore, that **the private training market arises in most cases as a result of a substantial change in the way the State intervenes in the matter**: withdrawal of state action on the level of direct execution of training, and stimulus and subsidy of private supply.

To the extent that this change in the role of the State and this delegation of functions does not occur in the context of a pre-existing private supply, but rather that the latter arises precisely from a change in the forms of public intervention, features of weakness have appeared in the market in many cases: low course quality, lack of adaptation to the requirements of firms, instability of supplier firms, etc.

Obviously, this kind of problem must be appraised in the context of a process, by virtue of which, and in the medium term, both a weeding and a consolidation of the private training supply may be apparent. However, there are at least two dimensions that, even on the assumption of this consolidation of the private training supply, tend not to be duly attended to by the latter and require, also, corrective measures.

The first dimension involves the satisfaction of certain requirements the attention of which is not immediately profitable. Typically this refers to the provision of training services to the least favoured and most disadvantaged population groups. Except when - once again - there is a specific line of financing by the State of a supply for these groups, it is difficult to believe that entities that in most cases seek a profit will devote themselves to them.

The second aspect that presents potential problems in a model that is entrusted strictly to the supply of private training, is that **the training services, to make sense and be useful, need at present to be supplemented with other activities and services**. Only training that is deeply involved in the processes of innovation and transfer of technology, that is understood and developed within the framework of existing labour relations in a society, and that seeks long term training objectives, effectively achieves an optimum of relevance, quality and adequacy regarding productive and social requirements.

### **Mexico: training for micro, small and medium-size enterprises**

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

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

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

- The Tlaxcala Quality and Productivity Centre, constituted by twelve manufacturing companies and their respective association, conceived as a CIMO guidelines implementing agency. The mission of this Centre is to become an instrument of

**support and stimulus for the constant upgrading of the competitiveness of firms, businesses and producer organisations in the region. It is achieved through overall support programmes adapted to the needs of each firm, catering to it directly or linking it up with the providers of services needed.**

- **The Puebla Competitiveness Development Centre (CEDECOM) is the result of joint work carried out by CIMO and the National Chamber of Manufacturing Industries (CANACINTRA). It arose from the CIMO Training Promotion Unit (UPC) that undertook, in Puebla, systematic and sustained work in the framework of training, quality and productivity programmes with micro-, small and medium-sized firms of the most representative sectors and branches of the region. Regarding these advances, CEDECOM is considered to be a new stage of development and consolidation.**

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

Non-governmental organisations, in turn, not guided by profit objectives and addressing in many cases the promotion of social and economic development of certain groups or communities, seek in several experiences precisely to facilitate access to training and skills development. Interesting methodological and conceptual innovations are to be found there which have frequently obtained an answer from other areas. The problem in this case is of a different nature. To the extent that this type of organisation works on the basis of limited financing and in many cases with volunteer human resources, they are submitted also to a certain degree of instability and more than a few experiences culminate successfully during a certain period only to later prove to be unsustainable.

Both types of players - private supply through institutes and academies, and social, community and non-governmental organisations - must therefore be considered as part of the new scenario of training and skills development, although mainly in that which refers to the level of execution of actions.

TRAINING AND POVERTY:  
OUTSTANDING FEATURES  
OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCES

Despite the difficulty of arriving at a regional balance sheet of progress in the realm of vocational training for sectors in a poverty situation, it is possible, albeit in a general manner, to establish which are the outstanding features of the innovative experiences that have produced the most encouraging results. Those features are not, moreover, the exclusive patrimony of a certain type of institutional arrangement. Very much to the contrary, they tend to identify with the existence of arenas of co-operation and institutional linkage and of concurrence of interests and resources both public and private.

The first distinctive feature is that the purpose of training for these sectors is understood to be **training for productive work and for social development**. That is to say that it must contribute to facilitate labour-productive insertion by its target population, in such a way that - besides offering immediate opportunities of employment and income - it contributes to the general development of the productive apparatus, at the same time as it helps processes of change that lead to overcoming its constraints, imbalances and inequities and, therefore, to eliminating the structural determinations that place these sectors and groups in a situation of disadvantage.

In the second place, these experiences assume that the only way to contribute to such a purpose is through **a pedagogy that considers the members of the target population to be active subjects that are participants in and responsible for their own development**, and capable of understanding the socio-economic processes in which they are involved. Training for work and development favours teaching-learning processes that focus on individuals, preferably in collective contexts, that develop their creativity and allow them to administer consciously their learning process adapting it to their own pace and their particular interests. This type of training is recognised, in turn, as part of the open and ongoing education processes and therefore seeks to foresee the best way to dovetail with other methods of education in order to complement and strengthen itself.

Thirdly, it has been found that **the traditional notion of teacher-instructor has been overcome, to be supplanted by the broad concept of training agents.** Thus the training process is involved with advisors on firm management, technical assistants, development agents from other institutions participating in integrated processes, community multipliers, *inter alia*. The collective configuration of the training agents, as an interdisciplinary team that intervenes encouraging, supporting, guiding and controlling the training process, contributes to facilitating the progressive autonomy of the target populations and to developing an interest in the subjects of co-operation and management. This configuration, despite it being open to dovetailing with new agents in different phases of the training process, is not left to chance but rather is based on careful selection and training processes and on work techniques by projects.

Fourth, **programming of training for work and development is of a functional nature.** It is constructed starting with the identification of the problems and critical scarcities in the forms of work and management used, and of the design of profiles improved by the incorporation of adequate technology. That is to say, the functional nature tends to assure the capacity of training response to problems that are real and felt by the target population.

#### **Chile: National inter-institutional policy with gender slant and focalisation**

The Occupational Training Programme for Women Heads of Households of Chile (Spanish acronym PMJH) is co-ordinated by a body called SERNAM (National Women's Service) and implemented by local municipalities. It has the backing of several State organisations, among which SENCE is perhaps the most outstanding. It started as a pilot plan in 1992 and began to expand gradually in 1994, to reach the communes of all the regions of the country. In its beginnings the PMJH had widespread political support that was expressed not only through its budget but also by being granted sufficient time to effectively design a pilot model, evaluate its results and subsequently launch a regular programme.

Its general objective is to improve the economic capacity of women who head households, and to raise their standard of living and that of their families, banishing any discrimination that may affect them.

More specific objectives are:

- Developing the abilities and skills of participating women to facilitate their access to labour markets and performance in them.
- Broadening and diversifying their labour options by training them in non-traditional trades and supporting independent activities.

- **Creating mechanisms to bridge the gap between labour demand and women in the Programme that require a change of job.**
- **Broadening and consolidating institutional support networks in the areas of health and child care.**

**The Programme's lines of action are as follows:**

- **Labour: Occupational Training (Municipal Team), Training in labour relations and wages negotiation (SENCE), Support of independent work ((Fosis), Levelling in elementary and secondary education (Ministry of Education, Municipalities).**
- **Access to health services.**
- **Child care.**
- **Legal advice.**

**Expected output are women graduates from the Training programme, socially and technically apt to perform with personal independence in the world of labour. Women are expected to know their rights and to use existing institutional networks.**

**The Programme's management and methodology emphasise:**

**An integral approach, as denoted by the implementation of five parallel and complementary lines of action (occupational training, child care, housing, health and legal advice)**

**Double focus on the more vulnerable social groups (low-income women heads of households) and territorial demarcation of areas concentrating poverty.**

**Participation, taking women as policy subjects and not just beneficiaries.**

**And the decentralised nature of the Programme and design of the Project, its execution at the level of local (municipal) authorities and co-ordination of public and private resources at local, regional and national level.**

**The total Universe of the Programme includes 245.000 women and its coverage had reached 37,000 women in 1998 in 86 Communes all over the country, representing rather more than 8% of all women heads of households and below the poverty line. A coverage of 63,000 women is expected for the year 2001.**

**The Programme is being implemented preferably in urban Communes of more than 30,000 inhabitants, with a high concentration of women below the poverty line acting as heads of their respective households.**

In the fifth place, training seeks to be integral, projective and flexible.

**Integral, since its contents not only include goods and services production technologies, but also place particular stress on the development and orchestration of productive and entrepreneurial management capacity. All of it is supplemented with contents referring**

to the social and economic contexts that frame and determine the labour-productive insertion of these groups. This configuration demands, moreover, that the programming also be integral in terms of foresight and organisation, around the ability and skills development processes, regarding the processes of development of knowledge and of attitudes and values.

It is projective, to the extent that starting from the level of the immediate set of technical problems faced by the target population, or the immediate needs for subsistence production, they are capable of offering development possibilities to those who wish or need to supplement and deepen their training to access more demanding levels of technology and management. Among other effects, this definition has led to linking with external systems such as those of basic non-school education, those of popular education, etc., seeking to help provide the target populations with possibilities of access to basic training in notions of mathematics, reading and writing capacity, as well as to the development of abilities of expression and of handling of formal processes and of institutional environments.

Finally, flexibility refers to seeking the versatility necessary to adapt to a wide range of economic, social, technological and cultural situations of the target population and its methods of production. This flexibility, that presumes a diversity of content and training levels, is orchestrated through the modular organisation of programming, the only way to allow combinations and variations in the training processes, while maintaining control over them and ensuring strategies that are integral and projective.

In the last but not least place, these experiences combine three operational functions in their strategies of action: training, promotion and advice.

**Training** is addressed to raising the levels of competence of individuals for performance of the work related to the process of production of certain goods and services, for the management of the same process and for the tasks involving their own welfare and development. The training techniques not only include the traditional ones requiring presence (not because of that are they less valid) such as courses, workshops, seminars, etc., but also those which have been developed more recently, such as self-training techniques.

**Promotion** addresses the social integration of a population which is initially dispersed and its mobilisation around a development alternative, as well as the maintenance of cohesion regarding the accumulation of internal and external pressures that will affect it inevitably throughout the training process. The most frequently used techniques within the promotion function are: participative research-action, pedagogical

publicity, recovery of the oral tradition, organisational laboratories, training encounters and tours, etc.

The **advisory** function seeks to provide access to socio-economic and technological information that broadens the ever restricted panorama of training, due to its necessarily specific nature. It includes entrepreneurial advice or management advice and technical assistance addressed to helping to face the technical problems that - due to their urgency or level of complexity and specialisation - are out of reach or of the immediate possibilities of the target population, or cannot wait for the results of the training and must be solved "from the outside" by specialists. The advisory programmes are organised normally on the basis of the following types of events or lines of action: technological and socio-economic information, extension campaigns, training consultancies, technical assistance, social-entrepreneurial advice, *inter alia*.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Institutional transformations in the field of vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean have been marked by the dual characteristics of being simultaneously linked to economic and social objectives. From the beginning, vocational training was an instrument that contributed both to productive development and to the promotion of social integration and cohesion.

In the past, social vocational training policies rested mainly on VTIs. The experience accumulated by those institutes in looking after disadvantaged sectors, plus the mandate they received from governments, turned them into the first sectoral public bodies called upon to promote social policies in the pursuit of equity and the struggle against poverty through education.

The emergence of new approaches regarding training policies, particularly those addressed to the more disfavoured groups, has been in keeping with changes in the ideas about the role of the State. New conceptions place it in the subsidiary position of correcting matters by means of instruments focusing on specific populations or sectors, protecting them from the inequities that may result from a defective operation of the mechanisms of training markets.

To such defects also contribute phenomena such as the inordinate growth of informal sectors, the social sequels of economic adjustment policies and the appearance of long-lasting unemployment. Faced with such complex problems, the former institutional organisation revealed shortcomings, regarding both coverage, flexibility and relevance of its training offer.

As opposed to classic policies, the new approach has been characterised by a preference for focalised projects and programmes, instead of all-embracing endeavours. Actual delivery of the training has been mainly entrusted to private, non-governmental organisations, which have been thus promoted. Additionally, demand driven criteria have been adopted and a new and enhanced evaluation culture has been set in place.

Ministries of Labour have taken on a leading role in the design, implementation and management of those new policies. In some countries, institutional mutation has been practically complete, whereas in others the old and new institutionalities are still under discussion. When former VTIs managed to survive, they did so through deep transformation processes.

They were as usual driven by economic, productive and technological needs, but also envisaged social goals. At the same time, the last few years have witnessed a withdrawal of several Ministries of Education from the vocational training field.

Application of the new type of social policies to vocational training makes it now possible to draw up a balance sheet with positive aspects, but also important shortfalls. Some of those aspects are as follows:

1. On the one hand, new social policies have allowed to expand the training offer and in some cases upgrade it on the basis of quality criteria. It has opened fresh avenues for a more active participation of the social players, both in the management and in the financing and implementation of training. They have nurtured an evaluation culture based on the achievement of occupational outlets rather than on statistics of training actions carried out. And fundamentally, they have been a critical and stimulating presence that fostered transformations in VT management.
2. On the other hand, the institutionality built around Ministries of Labour has proved to be rather fragile. There is little capacity to make medium and long term investments in curricular research and development, teaching materials and resources, the training of trainers, etc. The implementation of training action rests upon a universe of executing agents that tend towards fragmentation and scattering, are unable to act strategically, and find it difficult to hoard knowledge profitably. In the face of the challenge of constructing a training system ensuring a lifelong education for all, it has not been possible to reconcile the immediate goals of many programmes with training itineraries of longer duration.
3. Greater opportunities necessarily stem from an attempt to complement efforts, resources and knowledge from different institutions and agents. Experiences in that respect do not abound. More often than not, the various institutionalities have been at odds with each other.
4. However, what has been difficult to bring off at the level of general policies, has sometimes occurred in concrete cases. VTIs have been known to adopt new methodological criteria and a more flexible curricular scheme to meet the needs of poverty sectors; some trade unions have managed programmes financed with public funds and have worked out operational agreements with VTIs; there have been examples of tripartite management of training programmes for the young, for women, for micro-enterprises or rural workers. These are new institutional arrangements, still weak, but they provide a common learning ground for non-traditional actors and bring together diverse points of view.
5. The traditional link between training and labour relations systems shows that training has become an object of negotiation and agreement.

This is due to the weight of the knowledge factor within the productive process, and its connections with aspects such as employment, productivity, labour legislation, quality, health and hygiene, etc. It is therefore quite natural that this situation should awaken the interest of both employers and workers. However, their involvement in it depends to a great extent on their own capacity to organise themselves and make their interests heard.

6. Attention of groups below the poverty line then requires strategies envisaging more than just the mere offer of courses, however well designed and promoted they may be. For such strategies to be reasonably successful and sustainable, they must also facilitate the transformation of such groups into actors capable of organising themselves, representing and defending their own interests. In other words, those people have to take development in their own hands and become responsible for it.
7. Considerable progress is being made in the field of VT in areas such as co-ordination of training with processes of innovation, development and transfer of technology, compliance with quality standards in management, training delivery, the application of new teaching technologies (multimedia, distance education, mobile or virtual actions), as well as in the constant updating of contents. With differences in their rate of development, VTIs are managing to put the region on the map regarding the latest training tendencies.
8. Consequently, it is a formidable challenge to prevent training policies from becoming additional segmentation factors through differential or unequal mechanisms to access knowledge. Essential factors to meet that challenge are institutional co-ordination and getting closer to complementarity among the various training approaches and policies. Over and above the immediate action required by urgent situations, sectors below the line of poverty deserve a road of access to modern knowledge.

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