

InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability

*Modernization in vocational education  
and training in the Latin American and  
the Caribbean Region*

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE – GENEVA

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## Foreword

Since the 1980s, but particularly in the 1990s, the panorama of vocational training and education in Latin America and the Caribbean has registered deep and important changes. Competitiveness became a decisive factor in the progressive transformation of the economies in the region, which became more and more exposed to the globalized world. This has reflected in policies and strategies directed to the development of the labour competencies through vocational training.

From a region characterized by the participation of institutions, usually public, in offering vocational training, it has evolved gradually toward a region with a variety of models for the delivery of professional education. These new models maintain a wide range of characteristics that differentiate them from the traditional training systems. New institutional arrangements set up with the participation of social partners, which were not involved before, emerged. New financing sources related to key industrial sectors, direct funding from international sources, and/or tax and fiscal incentives to investment in training are some of the financing practices currently experimented. Government agencies, such as Ministries of Labour and State Secretariats of Labour, have recently begun to play an active role in contracting vocational training, specially directed to target groups affected by lack of professional education and employment. Trade unions have started to include the right to vocational training within the collective bargaining negotiations. More and more agreements or “labour pacts”, including new employment oriented competency-based training for decent work, have been set up. Unions have been also involved in funding directly the execution of training programmes. Enterprises have also assigned increased importance to the development of competencies and to their certification. Industrial sectors, particularly those linked to the external market and interested in improving their international competitiveness, are seeking to improve their level of quality and competitiveness by means of human resources development. As they consider labour competence the key element in their modernization process, they are prone to support new training programmes to develop or enhance workers’ skills and the development of a transparent institutional framework to certify these competencies.

The present report presents a well-structured overview of the new trends and experiences in VET in the LAC region. It emphasizes current changes, such as (i) the participation of social actors; (ii) the modernization of the delivery process; (iii) the adoption of a competency-based approach; and, (iv) distance learning and the use of new information and communication technologies.

The report provides a regional panorama of recent changes and current situation of professional education and training in LAC. This report includes also the description of the best experience on employers' and workers' initiatives to either intervene in professional education assigning resources, celebrating alliances with VET institutions, or developing certification systems, etc. It describes some of the most important experiences of employers' and workers' participation in professional education by sector, its distinctive characteristics, results and the respective role played by the actors involved. This study clearly demonstrates the enormous diversity of the LAC situation in terms of VET and the different and original/new approaches in this area.

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## Introduction

Providing an overview of the current situation of vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean endeavouring to single out the main transformation and innovation aspects occurring therein necessarily implies approaching the matter from different angles.

Vocational training may be analysed from the point of view of its objectives, its methods, the organizational forms it adopts or the management and financing models it takes on. In addition, vocational training can be described as a “crossroads” because it has the peculiarity of pertaining to the field of social science, by virtue of its potential contribution to integration and social cohesion, as well as to the realm of productive and labour policies, due to its functionality in attaining the goals of increased productivity and improved competitiveness. Furthermore, although it does not by itself generate employment, it is nevertheless of strategic importance for any active, labour market policy.

As opposed to what happened decades ago, when vocational training was seen as a specific area reserved for specialists, it is currently included in the most diverse fora and in the considerations of various agents, and is a matter of interest to many disciplines. Its links with labour relations systems are studied, as well as its role in innovation, development and transfer of technology processes. Different means are sought to co-ordinate it efficiently with regular education schemes, under a concept of lifelong education.

In this document, the three main sections describes the state of the art of VET in LAC according to three fundamental aspects:

- the institutional or organizational forms that vocational training has adopted throughout the region;
- its links with labour, technological and educational structures;
- the processes of decentralization and greater participation of many actors in the design, negotiation and implementation of VT.

Finally, in the concluding section, we try to summarize the main trends despite their variety and dynamism.

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## I. New institutional picture of training in the region

Any attempt to describe the ways in which training is currently being structured and organised in Latin American and the Caribbean is inevitably more difficult and complex than it was in the past. Until at least two decades ago, a typology with only three categories was sufficient to represent, in an approximate manner, what was going on in the field of training in most of the countries. The typology was as follows:

- countries where training was centrally designed, planned and implemented, by a public body, formally dependent on the Ministry of Labour, with tripartite management, financed by a specific levy on payrolls, of national coverage and with varying degrees of administrative and functional decentralization. Such were, among others, the cases of Colombia (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje, SENA); Costa Rica (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje, INA); Ecuador (Servicio de Capacitación Profesional, SECAP); Guatemala (Instituto Técnico de Capacitación y Productividad, INTECAP); Honduras (Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional, INFOP); and Nicaragua (Instituto Nacional Tecnológico, INATEC);
- countries where training was dispensed by one or several entities with the same characteristics of the above, but managed by the main corporate organizations of the country. Such were the cases of Brazil (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje Comercial, SENAC, e Industrial SENAI); Peru (Servicio Nacional de Adiestramiento de Trabajo Industrial, SENATI); and Mexico (Instituto de Capacitación de la Industria de la Construcción, ICIC), and others;
- countries where training was included in the structure of regular education, especially secondary technical education, without becoming a mainstream trend. Such were the cases of Argentina (Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Técnica, CONET) and Uruguay (Universidad del Trabajo, UTU).

Although it was not an exhaustive typology covering each and every case, whatever left out could be considered an exception. For example, the Instituto de Cooperación Educativa (INCE) in Venezuela was an autonomous body attached to the Ministry of Education, comprising a number of specialized sectoral institutes also connected to other public and private organizations. In Peru, the Servicio Nacional de Capacitación para la Industria de la Construcción, (SENCICO), attached to the Ministry of Housing, is another exception. In Cuba, the Centro Nacional de Capacitación y Superación Técnica (CENSUT) is an example of training sectoral body, linked to the Building Ministry.

Already at that time, however, this orderly and relatively simple institutional picture was beginning to show signs of change in the region. In Chile, although INACAP had seen the light as a public institution, as a result of the promulgation in 1975-76 of the Social Statutes for Enterprises and for Training and Employment, the role of training institutions was modified, and the Institute underwent a process of political, institutional and administrative transformation. It broke away from the State and began to act under similar conditions to those of other technical executing agencies recognised by governmental authorities. Simultaneously, the Servicio Nacional de Empleo (SENCE), started operating in 1976 under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, as a regulatory, administrative and financial body of the national training system. This was by itself an anticipation of what would later become a regional phenomenon: the greater participation of Labour Ministries in the field of vocational training.

In a similar manner, the Manpower Secretariat (SMO) was created in Brazil under the Labour Ministry in the sixties. Its continuation is today the Vocational Training and

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Development Secretariat (SEFOR) that seeks to find a new form of state action, promoting the supply (both public and private) and the demand of training through various programmes. Different units and services quickly emerged within the Ministry to deal specifically with the subject.

Partly as a result of the programmes themselves implemented through Labour Ministries, aimed at promoting training at enterprises or targeting specific population groups, an overwhelming supply of private training started to grow, stimulated by a double incentive: public tenders, and training services that were tax deductible.

After these two new elements came into play, the above typology began to change drastically. Training institutions fulfilled the function of providing national guidance regarding policies for the development of human resources, and were at the same time hegemonic in implementing training actions; this situation began to falter. On the one hand, Labour Ministries took a leading part, sometimes displacing institutions, sometimes Coexisting with them, so that their predominance declined. On the other hand, In so far as a private training offer emerged, their hegemonic role was put in question.

Considering just the appearance of Labour Ministries on the training scene as leading players, two further categories have to be added to the former typology:

- that of countries (like Chile) where the national public institution (INACAP) becomes a private body comparable to any other in the market – at least formally – and where the Labour Ministry (LbM), through a specialized service (SENCE) lays down the rules of the game in connection with training supply, offers special programmes for certain population groups and manages a system of tax incentives to encourage training demand;
- that of another group of countries (like Brazil) where also the LbM, through a specific unit (SEFOR), assumes a central role in the setting of guidelines for training and the development of human resources, manages training funds and conducts programmes for different populations, or promotes the implementation of training projects by other agents (like trade unions), along with the activities that the older institutions (SENAI, SENAC, SENAR or SENAT) continue to carry out.

The growing complexity of the regional training scenario does not come to an end here, however. In all countries of the region productive and labour players have shown a renewed interest in the management of funds and resources allocated to training. Many entrepreneurial organizations – as well as trade unions – have at some time or other questioned the way in which national training bodies were being managed. In some cases, criticism has led to processes of deep institutional transformation, it has adapted institutions to new challenges and requirements that had been raised (case of the INA of Costa Rica). In others, the process culminated in a modification of the nature of institutions, which from public and tripartite turned into private and non-profit, managed directly by national or sectoral corporate chambers (case of INFOCAL, Bolivia).

## **A typology of organizational arrangements in Latin America and the Caribbean**

The diversity and richness of regional training experiences would justify a detailed, case by case description of the progress and innovations attained. Nevertheless, in order to develop a typology of what is currently happening in Latin America and the Caribbean we must necessarily observe a certain degree of abstraction that inevitably leaves out many of the specificities of a case by case analysis. Abstraction also implies adopting a number of criteria to gather examples from the different countries on the basis of common traits that

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have to do, precisely, with the way in which training is organised at national level. To be useful for building a typology, those criteria have to be restrictive.

Besides, in that task definition of the analytical unit is decisive for the categories that make up the typology. There are three alternatives that could be used for units: countries; organizational arrangements; and training players. We have opted for organizational arrangements as analytical unit, rather than the countries that have adopted them or the players on the training scene.

There are reasons for not having chosen countries or players. The first alternative – taking countries as analytical unit – has the drawback that apart from what has been called “predominant arrangements” there is a whole range of heterogeneous training offers with varying degrees of maturity and development. To design a typology covering all those possibilities is particularly difficult; if achieved at all, it may include too many categories with too few cases each, which would be more like a case by case description than a general classification.

In turn, the alternative of taking the players as analytical unit raises another type of problem. Although in countries where the training offer, both in terms of policy definition and operation, is in the hands of a single player, the task could be quite easy, the truth is that the model does not apply to many countries of the region. In fact, an updated and useful typology to understand what is going on in the field of training, has to account not only for existing actors but also – and fundamentally – for the roles they have taken on and the interrelations among them.

This does not mean, however, that it is not possible to make classification efforts on the basis of the two alternatives that we are discarding, with different criteria from our own.

In opting for organizational training arrangements as analytical unit, we have accepted two basic criteria regarding categories:

- first, a distinction between two levels within each one of the arrangements: (a) the level of decision-making on training policies and strategies and; (b) the operational level of direct execution of training activities;
- second, specification of which are the players that in the last resort assume responsibility for the actions included in the two previous levels.

The organizational arrangements included here are, on the other hand, those that may be considered “predominant” in each country, on the basis of the coverage and impact they have within the training offer.

We must also make two comments concerning the final form of the typology and the distribution of countries within it. Firstly, in no way are we making a value judgement or trying to establish which kind of arrangement is “better” and which “worse”. The social, economic and political contexts in which they emerge are too complex to justify opinions that, to say the least, would be extremely rash. The various types of arrangements submitted here, have shown different drawbacks, hits and misses that we will not go into now. Secondly, there is a number of dimensions that we are not taking into account here, such as: quality of the training imparted, public or private nature of the bodies in charge of activities; management structure (tripartite, bipartite, state, entrepreneurial, trade union); financing schemes; degree of administrative and functional decentralization; etc. There are at least two weighty reasons for this omission: one, including them would mean – once again – to build a typology requiring a category for every single case, that would be useless for the purposes of classification; two, all those dimensions are considered elsewhere in

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this document, in contexts that seem more relevant, or they are mentioned in the concrete clarifications justifying the inclusion of certain cases in some categories. The four resulting categories are:

**A. *Arrangements wherein responsibility both for defining policies and strategies and implementing direct training actions is concentrated in a single body, usually national or sectoral institutions***

This type of arrangement is embodied in the region by: INFOCAL, Bolivia; SECAP, Ecuador; INSAFORP, El Salvador; INTECAP, Guatemala; INFOP, Honduras; INATEC, Nicaragua; INAFORP, Panama; SNPP, Paraguay; SENATI and SENCICO, Peru; and INCE, Venezuela.

As already mentioned, over and above common characteristics regarding the organizational arrangement of training there are differences in other aspects. For example, in connection with management schemes, as in some cases they are tripartite institutions, and in other they are managed by entrepreneurial organizations. Although most of these arrangements are national institutions – covering production and service – sometimes they are sectoral bodies

However, these institutions constitute the training offer with the widest coverage in each of these countries, and the one that includes the greatest number of specialisations. They are also the arena where vocational training policies and strategies are defined and where most of the training is implemented.

**B. *Arrangements wherein the definition of strategies and policies is concentrated in a single body, which also plays a predominant role in execution of training actions, where it has the complement of shared management and collaborating centres***

Examples of arrangements of this kind are: HEART, Jamaica; INFOTEP, Dominican Republic; SENA, Colombia; INA, Costa Rica.

Up to a point, this category is subordinated to the previous one, In so far as each one of these institutions is the main player in the field, both regarding the definition of policies and strategies and the implementation of training action. The difference lies in that in these four cases, each institution seeks to find its place in the respective national training system, which also includes extra-institutional supply. They do so through various mechanisms such as: outside contracting of courses, accreditation of training activities and institutes, cooperation agreements, support to upgrading of training, etc.

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**C. Coexistence and interrelation of two predominant arrangements with different rationale: One of them is normally associated with Labour Ministries, that through specialized bodies define policies and strategies without ever implementing training action; training is carried out by a multiplicity of agents; the other one, associated to national or sectoral training institutions that may fall into the descriptions for arrangements (A) or (B)**

Cases in this category are to be found in at least three countries: Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay:

- Brazil, where the LbM through SEFOR designs policies and strategies without implementing any actions (which are carried out by private agents, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, etc.) and the so called "S" system (SENAI, SENAC, SENAR, SENAT) characterised by two fold approach: on the one hand, designing training policies and strategies at their respective sector (manufacturing – SENAI; commerce and services – SENAC; agriculture – SENAR; transportation – SENAT), and on the other hand, implementing training programmes;
- Mexico, where that coexistence is represented, on the one hand, by the Secretariat of Labour and Social Security through its National Office of Training and Productivity, and on the other by the Secretariat of Education through its Technological Education System (CONALEP, CECATI, CETI, CBTI, etc.);
- Uruguay, with the National Employment Office (DINAE) on the one hand, and the Council for Technical – Vocational Education (CETP-UTU), COCAP and CECAP, on the other.

The distinguishing characteristic of these countries is precisely the coexistence of both types of arrangement. But this should not lead us into thinking about separate, independent entities. Everywhere, the links and overlaps of the two arrangements are in a state of flux, which inevitably raises deep and enriching discussions about the present and future of vocational training in the respective countries. Some of the main items on the agenda of this debate are: ties between vocational training and technological secondary education; the development of national systems for the standardisation and certification of occupational competencies; management and financing schemes.

On the other hand, in nearly all these cases there are no “watertight compartments”. Quite the contrary; in analysing tenders for courses, and the mix of executing agents of programmes sponsored by Labour Ministries, we find large participation by training institutes belonging to the other predominant arrangement.

**D. Arrangements wherein definition of training policies and strategies is wholly in the hands of Labour Ministries through specialized bodies, that do not carry out any training action. Implementation is assumed by a large number of agencies and players**

Cases in this fourth category, and specialized bodies performing the tasks described are: Argentina, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, through the Secretariat for Employment and Occupational Training, and the National Office of Employment Policies; and Chile, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, through SENCE.

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Both in Argentina and in Chile there are specialized bodies under the aegis of the respective Labour Ministries that have, among other responsibilities, that of laying down the “rules of the game” regarding training supply and demand. Although financing is different, in both cases close links are established between training actions offered and active employment policies. This is done on the one hand by encouraging the demand of training by enterprises, to be implemented either with internal resources or contracting out services with executing agencies. On the other hand, training and employment programmes are designed, financed and managed for special groups, such as unemployed workers, young people, micro-enterprises, rural workers, ethnic minorities, etc.

The first conclusion that may be drawn from the current situation of organizational forms of training policies and systems in the region, is that they are far more heterogeneous than in the past.

The present diversity is significantly due to the plurality of agents acting in the training area in all countries. At a moment when national vocational training institutions are ceasing to be leading players in the supply of training, and Ministries of Labour, employers’ and workers’ organizations have appeared on the scene, as well as private training offers, the map of alliances and coordination inevitably changes.

This variety also expresses a different opinion as to which are the most efficient ways of conducting social policy and looking after the training requirements both of the productive sector and society as a whole. On the other hand, it echoes a discussion as to which ought to be the areas and forms of action by the State, what can and/or must be left to the forces of the market and – although more recently – what can be performed by civil society through its various organizational patterns.

The model based on a subsidiary role for the State emerges from a highly critical context of schemes that handed over responsibility for the design, planning and implementation of training policies to a national, public or para-state body. Such plans were denounced for their self-referral, for not paying enough attention to the demands of the labour market, for lacking a culture of evaluation of training results. Their national, centralised structures were blamed for a lack of flexibility to meet customised training needs. Although such criticisms were aimed at vocational training systems, they fitted into a wider debate concerning the role of the State in general.

After a period of harsh faultfinding with the older model of vocational training institutions – mainly ideological criticism – several things can be seen at present. First of all, some characteristics of that former model are redeemed taking into account the historical moment when that model saw the light and grew. Secondly, it has been understood that national vocational training institutions are no longer the same and are all undergoing deep transformation processes. Furthermore, sufficient progress has been made to draw a balance of the virtues and shortcomings of the models that were proposed as their substitutes.

To begin with, it is a mistake to equate the continuity of the organizational model based on a large national training institution, to the persistence of a supply-side approach. All national institutions have substantially changed their action-guiding principles. They have developed more or less sophisticated mechanisms to deal with the demands of markets and societies.

Policies promoted by Ministries of Labour have contributed to swell the private training offer and have diversified the agents operating in a new market that has emerged, to a large extent, from novel forms of action by the State. This fact has allowed for the creation of more immediate and concrete coordination mechanisms between supply and demand, such as short, intensive courses to meet real needs detected in the market.

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Ministerial policies have also fostered the culture of evaluating training results, mentioned earlier.

The above traits maybe considered to be positive characteristics of the new models of training systems. Nevertheless, there are certain areas in which they cannot substitute for national training bodies. One of them is the need for any system to incorporate suitable mechanisms of curricular development and updating, as well as technical and pedagogic development. A capacity for storing knowledge and experience can only grow adequately in enduring institutional contexts, based on a medium and long-term strategic horizon, rather than in the framework of a fragmentary, institutionally weak training offer, whose vision of reality does not go beyond the immediate demand of firms and enterprises.

A second point to be made is that, although the market and its needs ought to be taken into account, they cannot be the sole guideline for vocational training systems and policies. Markets have short-term views and reasons which, if followed unconditionally, may lead to decisions apparently correct for immediate purposes but counterproductive in the long term. The necessary matching of training supply and demand at micro level must not be taken as a substitute for serious long-term policies.

In all the various types of organizational arrangements adopted by countries of the region, multiplicity and diversification of the training offer is a reality. Nowadays, preventing that diversity from turning into fragmentation is a significant challenge.

Regarding state policies for the training and development of human resources, there are a number of strategic guidelines about which countries of the region are trying to reach a consensus.

- First of all, the equity conditions provided by systems in connection with access to training opportunities. These constitute a fundamental key to ensure socially fair conditions for the employment and full integration of citizens into social and political life.

Expansion and diversification of the training supply greatly contribute to ensure training coverage as compared to policy models centred round hegemonic institutions. However, an increase in the number of suppliers does not of itself guarantee higher levels of equity. State intervention continues to be essential for correcting market slants, regarding both different population groups and economic sectors.

- Secondly, the coordination between training policies and economic and productive development policies aimed – among other things – at raising entrepreneurial and national levels of productivity and competitiveness.

This implies a search for the necessary convergence of the bid made by countries to succeed in adapting to the new conditions of a globalised economy, and the training policies that are every day more fundamental for such an insertion. Of particular importance are the links and synergy that may be established between training, innovation and technological development.

- Thirdly, ensuring the political and economic sustainability of efforts made in the training area itself. The advent of new organizational models in different countries meant in many cases the end of both the policy arrangements and financing schemes that had supported training for decades. There are countries where the national institution model survives, despite the fact that its management and funding arrangements have been severely questioned. Nevertheless, either through institutions, Ministries of Labour or intermediate solutions new relational arrangements seem to be emerging. They are based on the realisation that rather than

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a specialized field, training is an area for social dialogue, agreement and negotiation that has been gradually enlarged to include employers, workers, academic education, technological development, economic policies and labour relations systems.

- Finally, a multiplication of funding arrangements has become apparent in the region. On the one hand, the system of public financing for in-plant training subsists, with resources raised through para-fiscal levies with specific destination, side by side with public financing from the general Treasury. But new schemes have emerged like tax incentives, such as reimbursement of training expenses upon filing in tax returns (the case of Chile). Other combinations are also possible especially in connection with VTIs (vocational training institutions) that explore mechanisms to open up systems and make them more flexible.

#### Quality management in vocational training

The Latin American and Caribbean scenario has been greatly modified in recent years. Over and above the economic, social and political reforms that have been set off, the growing exposure of national economies to international competition has resulted in more stringent requirements for those who design and implement vocational training policies.

The characteristics of economic activities and new social needs bring training to the fore owing to its capacity to include people, mobilise knowledge, create better conditions for employability and facilitate options for social dialogue.

However, the greater complexity of current circumstances has also exacted more strenuous efforts from training bodies to keep updated and offer services in accordance with demands. The last years of the millennium have also witnessed frequent modernization attempts undertaken by training institutes, or imposed upon them by circumstances.

The gradual incorporation of new actors to the training supply, the availability of a mix of financing sources and the necessary relevance expected of training programmes are some of the factors that have led to the modernization and transformation of training institutes. Methods of transformation and adaptation to change are nowadays priority items on the agenda of training bodies.

On the other hand, the users of training want to know about the best offers, those ensuring the greatest efficiency. Both employers and workers are looking for signs of efficiency. Financing providers are also interested in the best possible use of the funds they invest in training. Well managed institutes give them a social assurance of efficient public spending. The same can be said about funds from the private sector: they must go to bodies accountable for relevant, effective and efficient training procedures.

Hence that vocational training institutions should be interested in improving the efficiency and relevance of their activities. This has been recently reflected in their adoption of management mechanisms aimed at ensuring quality.

The trend is reflected in the adoption of management and participation measures using tools and actions intended to nurture a quality culture. Such measures – usually embodied in a rationale of ongoing improvement or in institutional modernization processes – imply personnel training, identification of critical factors, spelling out of a mission and objectives entailing the qualitative upgrading of the institution.

Closely connected with modernization processes, the total quality philosophy has been gaining ground as a highly valuable tool to bring about constant improvement, institutional education and the culture of a job well done. The adoption of a quality approach is evident in many of the activities implemented by training bodies.

Some of them take part in national mechanisms of evaluation and quality control for their centres and other operational units. They likewise participate in other evaluation systems. The National Training Institute of Costa Rica, for instance, was given top rating in an evaluation based on indicators carried out by the Costa Rican National Evaluation System (SINE) among 29 public institutions of the country.

Other VTIs adopt mechanisms, indicators or systems for classifying results in order to monitor the quality of responses. Such is the case of the evaluation system used by the SENAI, of Brazil, that grants Gold, Silver and Bronze awards to Model Centres of Vocational Education or National Technology Centres. The SENA of Colombia has also devised a system of indicators to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of its Training Centres and regional Centres. Along similar lines, and in accordance with its own modernization process, the INTECAP of Guatemala has adopted what it calls "philosophy of the 5 'S's' to promote a quality culture".

There are institutions that have become involved in national quality drives and work in association with national standardisation and accreditation bodies. Such joint work has resulted in the accreditation of the Technological Centres of training institutions to offer services in metrology or testing, as required for compliance by various products with quality standards in national and international markets. Such is the case of the SENAI National Technology Centres (Brazil) and the SENA Technological Development Centres (Colombia). VTIs have provided training and consultant services to firms for the implementation of quality control systems. This is a service of increasing frequency rendered by institutions, like the SENATI of Peru, whose Service Centres for Small and Medium Enterprises deliver training with an emphasis on quality.

At the same time, VTIs have sought for an external quality guarantee, verified and audited by some outside organization. They have usually resorted to the ISO 9000 standards.

New experiences in certified quality management can be detected from Central America down to the Southern Cone. The following are some examples:

The National Training Service (SENAI) of Brazil provides one of the first examples recorded in the region. It started in the state of Santa Catarina with the application of the "Five s's Programme" and subsequent ISO 9000 certification by the German firm TUV RHEINLAND. The regions of Paraná, Espírito Santo and Pernambuco have also been given awards of the ISO series. More recently, the SENAI National Direction at Brasilia adopted a quality control standard (ISO 9001) that was audited by the BVQI which resulted in a recommendation to carry out certifications according to the following scheme: Planning, Development and Coordination of Strategic Projects and Operational Improvement.

The SENAI also has an internal system to acknowledge the quality of its Training Centres whereby they are given – after suitable evaluation – the title of "Model Centres of Vocational Education" or "National Technology Centres". The system is based on the criteria of the National Quality Programme, which include, among others: Management of Processes, Management of People, Leadership, Strategic Planning, Focusing on the Client and the Market, Results and Information Management. There are three progressive levels of compliance, called Bronze, Silver and Gold in ascending order.

In Peru, the National Industrial Training Service (SENATI) has been awarded the ISO 9001 quality standard by the Veritas Quality International Bureau. After an intensive nation-wide drive, this VTI obtained this certificate in all its Zone Offices for its Programmes of Vocational Training and Education, namely, Dual Apprenticeship, Training of Employed Workers, Industrial Technicians, Industrial Managers, Industry Officer, Engineering Technician, Ongoing Training, MultiMedia Training, Computer Science and Employment Exchange. SENATI's Technical and Non-Destructive Tests Services have also been certified, as well as its Advisory Services to Small and Medium Firms in the Lima-Callao area.

After conducting a number of activities aimed at institutional modernization, which among other things favoured its acceptance of a mechanism for the accreditation of other public and private training bodies, the national Training Institute (INA) of Costa Rica embarked upon a quality assurance process, and achieved in 1998 certification of its Accreditation Unit by INTECO and by the Spanish Standardisation and Certification Association (AENOR), in accordance with the ISO 9002 Standard.

The Council for the Standardisation and Certification of Occupational Skills (CONOCER), of Mexico, was certified in February 2000 by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance (LRQA), in recognition of its adoption of efficient systems that are proof of its capacity to ensure the quality of its processes in the design, production and distribution of its products, as well as in the rendering of associated services.

The National Service of Training and Employment (SENCE) of Chile was the first public department in that country to obtain a certification of the ISO 9000 series. In effect, in January this year it was awarded the Veritas Quality International Bureau (BVQI), testifying to the fact that "the process of constitution of Technical Training Organizations in the Metropolitan Region, complies with the ISO 9002 quality requirements".

In its modernization programme, the Technical Training and Productivity Institute (INTECAP) of Guatemala adopted a number of measures to develop the "total quality culture" within the organization. They include a clear-cut definition of the institutes' vision and mission, and implementation of the programme known as "the 5 s's", a management philosophy that lays down the foundation for a total quality policy.

### Selected TVET Highlights from the Caribbean

A number of changes have taken place over the past few years to challenge vocational training institutions in the Caribbean. The results have led to a more proactive TVET system which is being reflected at both national and regional levels in vocational skill delivery, skill qualification recognition, and the promotion of greater institutional linkages.

Major changes include a shifting of training delivery from the public sector to the private sector; lessening of opportunities for low skill low income jobs; strengthening of policies on human resource development that encourage people to participate in their own development; and a move to a CARICOM single market and economy. Each of these issues is not only redefining the workplace but is also changing the way people are preparing themselves for employment.

#### Employment changes

- The impetus behind the changes in the operation of technical vocational education and training (TVET) institutions is part of a broadening strategic vision in areas related to employment-driven training. Such a vision is being articulated in the way people seek meaningful work through support from TVET institutions. The view in the region suggests that jobs need to offer both economic rewards and life fulfilment, through self-expression and dignity.
- In particular, this influence is being shaped by major organizational activities reflected in the development of TVET coordinating units, i.e. National Training Agency (NTA). Such Governmental organizations at the national level are created with a purpose of narrowing the skill gap by promoting a seamless educational infrastructure in collaboration with trade unions and employers' organizations. Such agencies are represented in the Caribbean by the HEART Trust/NTA in Jamaica, the National Training Agency in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Technical Vocational Education and Training Council in Barbados. The establishment of similar NTA type agencies is under discussion in Saint Lucia and Guyana.

In addition to the formulation of NTAs in Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago, the agencies are in the process of developing a competent workforce through establishing national vocational qualifications that are competency-based. Developed through tripartite initiatives, competency-based vocational qualifications are benchmarked internationally to ensure the end product meets the performance requirements of industry. The NTAs are also collaborating to formally recognize each other's national skill competencies/qualifications and have entered into discussions on formulating at some point a regional Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ). Together, these innovative initiatives have anticipated the current discussion by CARICOM member states regarding the free movement of skills and the implementation of Protocol II, while focusing on common vocational standards and accreditation.

Other selected actions and good practices by TVET providers in the region to address the HRD issues identified above include:

#### Trinidad and Tobago – The National Training Agency

- Thirteen national Occupational Standards launched in April 2001 in such areas as Welding, Food and Beverage Services, Information Technology, Industrial Instrumentation, and Process Operators. To date over 22 draft standards have been prepared by industry training organizations.
- A web page enabling readers to search for information on vocational qualifications, industry partners, and accreditation standards among other topics has been established. Contact < [www.ntatt.org](http://www.ntatt.org) >.
- A national skills bill to facilitate funding for workers wishing to improve their knowledge and skills is currently being planned for introduction to Parliament.

#### Barbados – The TVET Council

- The Council plans to introduce shortly Barbados' National Vocational Qualifications and is working with lead bodies in occupational areas of Information Technology, Tourism, Hospitality and Customer Service. The outcome is expected to result in National Vocational Qualifications that meet the local needs in Barbados while benchmarked against international requirements as well.
- The Council administers the Employment and Training Fund (ETF) that provides a grant and loan programme to support comprehensive labour force training and skill upgrading.

#### Jamaica – The Heart Trust/NTA

- Heart Trust/NTA serves as a model in developing and implementing competency-based skill standards and qualifications in the Caribbean. A list of curriculum packages and ordering information can be obtained via e-mail at [heart@uwimona.edu.jm](mailto:heart@uwimona.edu.jm) Web page [www.heart-nta.org](http://www.heart-nta.org).

- Heart Trust/NTA, through its instructor training institution, Vocational Training and Development Institute (VTDI), will in September launch a four year Bachelors Degree in Education specializing in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. For additional information, fax (806) 977-4303.
- Sharing of information and expertise to vocational agencies in the region has helped to make the Heart Trust/NTA a regional focal point on TVET issues. An example of this support was recently typified in the visit of a St. Lucian delegation to the HEART Trust /NTA to experience the Jamaica's tech-Voc model for adaptation in St. Lucia.

#### Saint Lucia

- Plans are underway to expand Technical and Vocational Education through a network of National Skills Training Centres by recent legislation of the TVET Council.

#### Information exchange

A source of TVET information in the Caribbean is the International Labour Organization's Caribbean Office web site. With over 100 TVET publications listed and still expanding, the site is worth a monthly visit [www.ilocarib.org.tt](http://www.ilocarib.org.tt).

## Funding of vocational training

During the nineties, and specially in the last few years, the financing of Vocational Training has become a very important item on the public policies agenda of the Latin American region. Until the preceding decade it had not been a priority, for several reasons:

- two large vocational training and/or technical education systems had become consolidated: a) that of Vocational Training Institutions (VTIs), with a tripartite regime and a financing mechanism via para-fiscal levy; and b) that of Technical Secondary Education (TSE) integrated into regular education systems, with their respective variants from one country to another, and their evolution in time. These two systems coexisted in most countries, with predominance by one or the other, according to the case;
- despite the fact that – as has always been the case – the direct effort of enterprises to train their manpower was obvious, the relative stability at the time of technological foundations, and of the organizational structure of the productive apparatus, turned training into a rather secondary activity, with a predominance of informal practices, that did not in general entail significant investments;
- private offers already existed of technical education and occupational training, but their scope and incidence were limited, so that cumulatively their incidence was only relative, both in terms of investment and number of paying customers;
- the above supply was basically sufficient and adequate for the skilled labour needs of economies whose change dynamics were weak and that enjoyed the protection of tariff barriers against the competitive pressure of international trade. It was also sufficient to meet the populations' demand for training and technical education services because, although demographic expansion was in full swing, demands for educational services converged upon general secondary courses, while at the same time the offers of VTIs and formal TSE systems abounded.

But as already pointed out, the situation changed drastically in the last decade. We need not dwell on the factors that caused the change: the internationalisation of trade, the acceleration of organizational and technological developments, the flexibilization of labour markets, the emergence of lifelong education as a paradigm in the occupational itinerary of workers and in the processes of productive development, etc.

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These factors have brought the training of human resources – and vocational training in particular – to the forefront of the agenda of development policies, which in turn has cast doubts about the capacity, relevance and importance of traditional public structures of training for work and has favoured the emergence of other offers, some of them already existing in a small scale, others quite novel and the result of economic, technical and social evolution.

Together with this questioning of the capacity of traditional, centralised public services to respond in an efficient, pertinent and timely manner to the needs of the productive apparatus and the demands of populations, came recognition of the emergence of a market of labour competencies with a variety of suppliers – some of them public but mostly private. They provided a decentralized offer: non-formal, private training bodies, expanding training services in firms and enterprises or at institutions financed by them, technological development centres combining innovation and transfer of technology through training, NGOs that provided training, etc.

This means that at the same time that a great amount of public resources continues to be poured into traditional systems, private investments grow in volume and diversity (unfortunately, there are no reliable studies to quantify them, even approximately). In any event, the economic drive does not seem to be lacking either by the State or enterprises and workers, in support of initial or ongoing training. Investments are made:

- by the State, in financing its TSE structures and – in the case of VTIs – in the application of resources from para-fiscal contributions;
- by enterprises, in in-house training, external contracting or other outsourcing mechanisms;
- by private training suppliers;
- by people who buy services in the private market.

We might draw the conclusion that the main problem in approaching the subject of financing of vocational training is not so much the volume or source of funding, but the rationalization of this cumulative investment. This implies rationalizing the supply of training, including quite naturally the reform of traditional structures.

This reform, however, is no internal matter of traditional systems: it pertains to their coordination and synergy with the new suppliers, and depends on the fact that they must link up with systems that had been relatively independent, like elementary and post-secondary technological education. In other words, we are saying that the problem of financing is subsidiary to that of institutional organizational arrangements, which in turn must be reconsidered by players.

The problem can be approached in many ways, and each way will appear differently in the various national contexts. In Latin America there are several possibilities that we enumerate below in a purely exploratory fashion. Different models could be derived to deal with the matter of financing in the more systemic context of national offers of occupational training:

- A. Subsistence of systems of public financing of training at enterprises, with resources obtained through levies or para-fiscal contributions with specific allocation. Allocation is not always direct and exclusively for vocational training; sometimes it covers areas like the re-adaptation of workers laid off as a result of industrial restructuring or state modernization, which include occupational retraining, managed now by new agents, like Labour Ministries.

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- B. Subsistence of the model of public financing of training at enterprises through formal TSE systems. The new aspect of this is the growing importance of decentralized administrations (federal states, provinces, departments, municipalities) in the financing of this service, either with their own resources or with transfers from the national budget, pursuant to decentralization policies.
- C. Emergence of systems of tax incentives, whereby enterprises recover their expenditures when they file in their tax returns. Such is the case of Chile, where enterprises that spend on training can get back their expenses when they pay their income tax, up to a ceiling of 1 per cent of the total payroll.
- D. Emergence of a number of permutations, particularly in VTIs, using mechanisms to open and flexibilize procedures. For example Brazilian enterprises can have exemption agreements with SENAI so that instead of paying in to that institution, they can use directly part of their contribution. But this must be authorised by SENAI, and that part can only be used to contract courses with it. In Colombia, enterprises can co-finance in-house training plans with SENA, and get reimbursements equivalent to 50 per cent of their para-fiscal contributions.

In various ways, some promising financing strategies are becoming apparent in the region, as they seem to fit in with new socio-economic and institutional developments. There are three main aspects:

- the setting up of alliances or associations of the State with private executing or intermediary agents, to support training. In this way enterprises taking advantage of tax exemptions (the Chilean case), VTIs, managing authorities of TSE or official agencies in charge of training programmes targeting special populations, as well as Labour Ministries, Social Solidarity networks, and others, are free to contract training services with a wide range of suppliers. This breaks away from the prevailing merging of financing and execution of training services, and promotes the autonomy of regulating, financing and executing bodies;
- the diversification of state agents in vocational training: they are no longer confined to Ministries of Education and VTIs; new players have entered the field, like Labour Ministries, Social Welfare Secretariats, or Solidarity Funds, that have become public financing sources. This has been aided by the tendency to engage public and private agencies, with which the traditionally large investments to launch training services seem no longer necessary; advantage is taken instead of private initiatives and resources, whether profit or non-profit making;
- greater participation by firms and enterprises as investors and/or executing agents in the training of their workers.

This has led to the creation of veritable training markets, in which multiple public and private suppliers compete with each other. This trend is very favourable to stimulate the relevance, flexibility and efficiency of training, but there is a risk that market mechanisms, as well as greater leadership by enterprises, may result in a training offer aimed at those who can pay, or at meeting the more immediate needs of enterprises; or in low quality offerings, lacking sufficient added value or the cumulative knowledge of the training delivered by institutions.

For that reason, and owing to the need of injecting rationality into these markets, shaping them in consonance with the strategic need of providing integral training for the labour force, it is essential that the State should adopt an extremely active attitude, although completely different from its traditional role: it need no longer be the financing agent and supplier of training, but should instead play the following roles:

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- financing all training endeavours for the supply of basic, across-the-board skills, that in an open market private agents can hardly be expected to fulfil;
  - organization, regulation, technical assistance and quality control of the training offer as a whole;
  - creation and promotion of truly integral training systems of occupational training, incorporating the already described diversity of suppliers and financing sources in a synergic way.

All this implies deep changes in the institutionality of training, in concrete terms in VTIs. But it also emphasises that it is important that those changes should be guided and conducted by a public institutionality that – although renewed – may ensure compliance with strategic goals for national development, and provide attention to vulnerable population groups, in line with solidarity and social equity principles.

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## **II. Training: an occupational, technological and educational issue**

The relevance of training, within the labour relations systems of Latin America and the Caribbean, is today an indisputable fact. It suffices to consider the background of tripartite sectoral or national pacts or contracts on employment, productivity and labour relations that introduce training proposals; the growing number of collective agreements that explicitly incorporate training and skills development within their clauses; the development of labour laws referring both to the right to training and its implementation, or the appearance of various instances of dialogue and arrangements – bipartite and tripartite – in this field. The links of training with subjects such as productivity, competition, wages, occupational health, working conditions and environment, social security, employment and social equity, makes it increasingly a key element in present labour systems in the region.

Something similar can be said about the importance of training as a central and strategic component of innovation, development and technology transfer processes. Many vocational training institutions, as well as other fora arising more recently and operating in this field, are not restricted to providing a supply of training alone. Throughout the region it is already frequent to find diverse experiences of technological centres and services which these same bodies establish to offer a broader and more integral range of services, both to firms and to the community at large: laboratories for testing materials, product and process certification services, technology spreading events, specialized publications, data banks for technological resources and consultants in various areas, technical assistance and advisory services, inter alia. Likewise, some technological institutes have gone from focusing on the problem of research – development and adaptation of “hard” technology, such as materials, tools and equipment; and “soft” technology, such as information and computer programmes – to consider also everything regarding the management, development and training of human resources.

When we observe the present activities of various training bodies in the region we can see, among other aspects, that a broad and flexible supply of training has developed. One can find, within the curricula of these institutions, from initial training courses, through middle and upper courses, to offers of updating which could even interest university graduates. And, as though this were not enough, there arise countless examples of cooperation with other public bodies, such as Ministries of Education in the fields of middle level technical education, non-university technological education and adult education, with firms and cooperating bodies, with unions, with nongovernmental organizations, and so many other variations which it is impossible to record exhaustively in this document. It can thus be said that training has progressively reinforced an educational component which was always part of it, both through the supply itself of specialized institutions and through a greater interlocking and cooperation with other bodies, agencies and teaching methods at work in this area.

To analyse these dimensions and fields of action of training in greater depth, each one of them shall be dealt with below: training and labour relations; training and innovation, development and technology transfer processes; training and education throughout life.

### **Training and labour relations**

Training has always been closely linked to labour relations. Even in the pre-industrial stage, when production was crafts-like, there already existed the figures of the master craftsman and the apprentice, where the former gradually allowed and stimulated a

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progressive accumulation of knowledge and ability on the part of the latter who, finally, became the bearer and continuer of the tradition of the trade.

The development and rise of the industrial era, however, occurred jointly with the trends towards specialisation and greater levels of division of labour in society. Although learning never stopped being something important in work centres, at a certain time the responsibility for training people who were to occupy certain jobs began to be dislodged towards these other arenas, both physical and institutional, which became the training centres.

This latter trend, in Latin America and the Caribbean, occurred parallel to the first industrialising efforts, through the rise of specialized fora which began to take charge of the training function. The apprentice is, typically at this stage, a person, generally a young individual, who attends training courses in an institution for a certain period of his or her life and who becomes a worker when finally hired and located in a job where he applies the knowledge, ability and skills previously acquired.

Thus, referring to the stage of industrialisation which occurred at the onset of the development model, it might be said that, in a general way, training played a role which was to a certain extent disguised within the labour relations systems of the times.

In that context, training was an activity which rarely was a matter for negotiation; therefore, it was scarcely mentioned within collective bargaining agreements, and in labour legislation was only referred to in some basically declarative ways or specifying the institutional environment in the framework of which its implementation had to be resolved (normally a public and national agency).

It was a case, indeed, of labour relations systems inserted in a system in which:

- the State played a central role in several ways, among which were collective negotiations, production and direct provision of services, and protection of domestic production through tariff barriers;
- firms developed, precisely, in a heavily protectionist context, oriented towards the internal consumption market, and were therefore under no great pressure either from consumers or from the competition;
- workers and their organizations fought for an extension and deepening of their rights, making a basic assumption, which was shared by the State and employers: production and employment would increase continuously, beyond any possible cyclical crises. Unions were, furthermore, organizations undergoing strengthening, to the extent that it was also believed that both industrial production and contracts based on wages would grow indefinitely and so, therefore, would their platform of representation and their power;
- as a result of the same strategy of “inward” development, the imperatives of innovation and technological development were restrained, life cycles of the products tended to be long, and demands for qualification of the labour force, and particularly for its re-qualification, were not so great in terms of updating with new techniques, tools, materials or forms of labour organization. The challenge was in any case quantitative: to provide a sufficient number of qualified and semi-qualified workers for industry.

In the last 20 years this reality has changed radically in practically every way, causing, among other consequences, a revaluation of training within the labour systems and an increasing interest on the part of the different players in its regard. Why?

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Firstly, because **the international insertion strategies of the economies of the region have changed**. Either by means of unilateral trade liberalisation policies or in the context of regional integration processes, in a more or less drastic fashion domestic production begins to be exposed to other kinds of rules which require urgent action to improve competitiveness. This has led to an intensification of the pace of technological change applied to production, a reduction in the life cycles of products and, therefore, also of skills, generating constant pressure for their updating.

Secondly, **the relative importance of the “knowledge factor” within the new forms of organization of production and labour has increased markedly**. Information and knowledge control thus becomes strategic, as were of yore land control or control of the means of production. The capacity to generate knowledge, and to manage it within the concept of learning organizations, is considered a key strength for competitiveness and has resulted in a revaluation of human talent.

Thirdly, **the assumption of sustained and indefinite growth of production and employment – or rather of the direct relationship between them – has been shown at the outcome to be invalid**. Although production may continue to grow, as in fact it does, employment generation does not occur in correlation with it and, in many cases, we face the new and worrying phenomenon of economic and productive growth with rising unemployment. Employment growth in the most economically dynamic sectors is not enough to compensate, in many cases, the dismissals arising from the new capital-labour relationship, affected by the introduction of technological innovations and by the closings occurring in sectors incapable of counteracting the competition of goods from abroad.

In this new context, the position of the productive and occupational players changes, negotiations become more complex and it becomes increasingly difficult to deal with subjects such as wages or labour stability in an independent manner. Much more attention is paid to the relationships among employment, wages, productivity, production, competition, quality, etc. It is within this new state of affairs that training appears revalued and begins to be perceived as a strategic subject. It is incorporated into a growing number of collective agreements and also included in labour laws. Experiences of social dialogue and arrangement arise and multiply in the training field, and they prove to have a very large capacity for development and sustainability, even in contexts where conflicts are great.

As a feature within a more general process of restructuring and reassessment of the role of the State in social and economic life, but also regarding the revaluation of training in the field of labour relations, the Labour Ministries (Mintrab) have, in an increasingly generalised manner, become protagonists in the area of vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean, mainly concerning the definition of the general thrust of policies.

From the former mediation role in the capital-labour relationship, focusing on remuneration, stability and working conditions aspects, these Ministries broaden their competence to deal with, in this regard, training from the standpoint of active employment policies. This is expressed both in regulations and in the institutional structure itself, with the creation and development of secretariats, boards or services specifically addressing vocational training and its relationship with other occupational aspects.

This increasing incumbency began, precisely, when the labour authorities understood that **vocational training is a key feature in the formulation and implementation of active employment policies**.

In the mid-70s in Chile; approximately ten years later in Mexico, and particularly since the beginning of the nineties in other countries: Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, to

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mention a few, the Labour Ministries developed ambitious projects increasing their involvement in the field of public employment policy generation.

As a partial review, the following examples may be mentioned, among others:

**Labour Ministries in the field of active employment policies**

- In **Brazil**, the National Training and Vocational Development Secretariat (SEFOR) has a Workers' Protection Fund (FAT) administered by a Deliberating Council (CODEFAT) which is tripartite and in which management and workers are involved on equal terms.
- **Chile** has the National Training and Employment Service (SENCE), in charge of managing the various programmes such as those involving the use of tax concessions, youth employment and training (Chile Joven), among others.
- **Mexico** executes projects addressed to develop demand for training through ingenious mechanisms to strengthen and consolidate micro-, small – and medium-sized firms, as well as significant resources disbursed through scholarship programmes for the unemployed and an important national effort addressed to establishing a system of standardisation and certification of occupational competency.
- **Uruguay** takes measures through the National Employment Bureau (DINAE), of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and the tripartite National Employment Board (JUNAE), in charge of allotting resources from the Labour Reconversion Fund.

Also important are tripartite actions which, co-ordinated by the Ministries, incorporate employers and workers to discussion and decision-making on policies being considered.

But what merits special mention is the present role of Labour Ministries through the already cited **active labour market policies**. To the extent that those Ministries participate in the definition of the larger national guidelines involving development and productive transformation strategies, as they begin to act also in the field of strengthening and modernizing the supply of training, they are able to act simultaneously and consistently on the different and major aspects of the problem.

The decision to intervene in the labour market through employment policies arises from different reasons: to address transition problems in the process of opening up the economy; to respond to social risk situations through redistribution mechanisms; to correct market defects, both in terms of the link between labour supply and demand and in the training area.

Within the new concept of active labour market policies, a field in which the Labour Ministries have taken, and take, measures of great importance and significance, is that of youth training and employment programmes and projects. Addressed to young people in a situation of structural unemployment and high social risk, they arose as mechanisms for compensating the harsh social effects of the policies of structural adjustment and opening up to international trade of the economies of the region, with their relevant processes of reorganization of state social services. Through a concentrated and intensive process of services involving skills development, training by psychosocial-type cross-sectional competencies, remedial education and on-the-job training, the programmes aim at increasing opportunities for labour insertion of this population. Some of the main characteristics are: the adoption as an indicator of the relevance of training to the detection of opportunities for on-the-job training in firms; the self-focusing of the target population; and non-concentrated execution regulated by market mechanisms.

The Labour Ministries of the region, in short, are acting decisively in the field of vocational training and contributing to its integration on the basis of higher and national strategies, related to productive transformation and the challenge to increase productivity

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and competitiveness of firms and economies, in order to ensure environmentally and socially sustainable economic growth.

## **Training and innovation, development and transfer of technology processes**

**The most innovative experiences at the regional level on the subject of training conceive the latter as part of a set of technology transfer actions, both of labour and of production, adaptation and innovation.** This marks a turning point, both conceptual and methodological, in the action of institutions, training centres and technological education units.

In conceptual terms, these experiences are characterised by specialising to a certain extent towards specific economic sectors (metal mechanical, pulp and paper, leather and footwear, chemistry, construction, etc.), which allows them, among other benefits, a greater degree of technological updating of machinery, equipment and materials, although also regarding knowledge and techniques applied to production.

Either as a conceptualisation prior to these changes, or as a practical result thereof, what is certain is that there is also a change in the notion of who the subjects are to which these units, services and centres cater. If previously the main population catered to consisted basically of individual workers, today these new experiences also conceive productive units (firms of various sizes and characteristics), their productive links and organizations, and the economic sectors themselves, as part of their primary audience.

Moreover, there is an effort to cater to this new audience in a more integral manner than in the past. Such are the cases of the National Technology Centres, of the SENAI, and the Federal Technological Education Centres, dependent on the Mid-level and Technological Education Secretariat, of Brazil; the Technological Services Centres of SENA; the Technological Nuclei of INA; as well as the activities offered to firms in Peru by SENCICO and SENATI, so that they may access not only training and skills development services, but also research and development, technical assistance and consulting, or technological information services.

Although this diversification of institutional services includes as a component a search for alternative financing, in many cases this is only an emerging component. Its greater potential lies in the processes of strengthening the updatedness, relevance and quality of the training itself. The dovetailing in an appropriate environment of training and education, labour and technology, enables mechanisms to be structured by means of which there is an acquirement of, besides solid technical and technological knowledge, the values, habits and behaviour inherent to the competencies which present historical circumstances require of workers, technicians and professionals.

A fundamental characteristic of this new conception of training, lies in the incorporation of content and methodologies belonging to what has been called “technological education.” Briefly, this involves *recording, systematising, understanding and using the technology concept, historically and socially constructed, to make of it an element of teaching, research and extension, in a dimension that exceeds the boundaries of simple technical applications: as an instrument of innovation and transformation of economic activities, to the benefit of man as worker and of the country.*

In the more integral conceptions in this regard that have been implemented in the region, there has been a move away from the notions restricted to skills upgrading, training and preparation of the labour force as a function of the immediate needs of the labour market. On the contrary, they seek to transmit to the worker different dimensions capable

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of making him or her able to cope with the scientific-technological evolution of the modern world and, in this manner, allow them to contribute their intelligence, creativity and effort inside the productive unit.

A survey of what is happening in the region allows us to see, on the one hand, that a goodly part of the training institutions, both public and private, are dealing with the challenge of establishing a closer link between the supply of training and the processes of innovation, development and transfer of technology. However, on the other hand, there is also a tendency for technological institutes and agencies related to sectoral employer bodies to begin to deal simultaneously with the subjects of technology and training and the development of human resources.

## Training and lifelong education

**Training is, in the final instance, an eminently educational activity, and both its history and its present status in the Latin American and Caribbean region confirm it.** In initial periods, almost all the vocational training institutions of the region made significant efforts to assign priority, on the one hand, to young people not incorporated in the regular educational system, by providing them with training. Moreover, the first institutions which arose in the region had as their main and explicit purpose to structure and manage the training which had so far been a casuistic endeavour, barely regulated, of some expanding industrial sectors. Training was clearly conceived for young people of between 14 and 18 years of age who finished primary education and had no possibility or aspirations to continue in the formal educational system.

Originally, the training thus offered was neither recognised in any way nor did it have equivalencies in formal education levels. It was conceived as a completely independent system of training for employment, with no pretensions to a parallel level in the regular system. However, the development of the situation and coverage of the regular education system did have important effects on vocational training. During its initial years, almost all the vocational training institutions were compelled to provide introductory courses for “prior levelling” to provide elementary knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics which would give the participants the rudiments needed to take advantage of the training offered. Moreover, in many cases vocational training institutions spent their time implementing literacy and adult education programmes, either of their own or through efforts undertaken by the Ministries of Education. In other words, **the experience accumulated by the attention paid to disadvantaged sectors, plus the mandate received from the highest spheres of government, made it possible for the vocational training institutions to become among the first sectoral public agencies to be called to promote social policies formulated to achieve equity and overcome poverty, through educational endeavour**

As the result of a substantial improvement of the levels of schooling of the population in general, the vocational training institutions gradually reduced their efforts to implement programmes of prior levelling and adult education, devoting their time to aspects more related to their specific and original mission: training for productive employment. Nevertheless, in many of the training programmes of the institutions of the region curricula related to mathematics and language still prevail, and on occasion they are the same as should be provided by the regular educational programmes required as a minimum to access vocational training. Indeed, the problems of approach, poor quality or insufficiency in the formal educational area are reflected when vocational training is applied in practice.

The educational nature of training was not exhausted, however, in the mere circumstance of its relationship to the regular educational system. The training provided by the institutions was never restricted to a mere training for a certain job. On the contrary, it

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always tended towards an understanding of the meaning of work and the environment in which it is carried out, contributing, as well, to an awareness and appreciation of productive labour, through the development of a taste for the occupation learnt, as well as a sense of dignity and professional pride.

Today, both the regular educational system and the various training systems are faced with a new context which poses challenges of great significance. Among them, probably the greatest is the adaptation and updating of curricular content and the certifications offered for the new occupational profiles arisen as a consequence of the transformations occurring in the productive world and the new employment reality.

There is today a consensus, both at the political level and at that of society, that it is necessary to restructure the supply of education and training in sufficiently flexible terms to provide an answer to the diversity and mutability of the demands for qualification. No one can expect today that the initial knowledge stored in the minds of young people will last them their whole life, since the rapid development of the world requires a permanent updating of knowledge, at a time when basic education of youth tends to prolong itself.

This is a basically qualitative change. If before it sufficed to transmit certain technical knowledge and certain manual abilities for the individuals involved to be given a job that was waiting for them, now it is necessary to deliver a whole range of competencies which were previously insufficiently stressed: initiative, creativity, enterprise, relationship patterns and cooperation. These have to be accompanied, moreover, by the new technical competencies required, which are relatively less specific than in the past: languages, data processing, logical reasoning, capacity for analysis and interpretation of different codes, etc.

It is thus a priority to provide the means for people to be able to manage their own processes of occupational and vocational development: to find a first job, seek a new one, initiate an enterprising venture, re-train themselves through courses, and train themselves permanently, whether employed or unemployed, in the home or at the workplace. **In what seems to be a play on words, at the same time as the concept of “lifelong employment” is disappearing, the concept of “lifelong training” is emerging.** This change in the conception and practice of training involves a series of consequences which it is necessary to highlight:

- In the first place, unlike some decades ago when the dominant trend was towards specialisation, today it seems to be increasingly necessary to be able to count on a series of basic and general competencies, which serve both to perform in working environments with a lesser degree of control and more unforeseen situations which must be resolved on the spot, and to “surf” in a difficult and competitive labour market. The specific training which continues to be necessary is acquired, increasingly, on the job itself, and firms prefer to be in charge of it. The training bodies, and many programmes, begin to approach, both in terms of content and institutionally, the sphere of general or regular education. As the latter is also in the process of being revised, it benefits from this approach to the extent that vocational training provides it with experience regarding its relationship with the productive sector. Said differently, there is a synergy beneficial to both traditions and institutionalities.
- Secondly, responsibility for training is beginning to be shared and it necessarily becomes an area of arrangement and cooperation. If the people no longer train exclusively in the learning centres, but rather do so also in their homes and workplaces, the responsibility for training is shared among training bodies, employers, governments and the individuals themselves (and the organizations in which they take part and that represent them). Thus tripartite management is

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revitalized and the rise of new forms of training management also benefits. They do not acknowledge unique models: we may be talking of social or political agreements that allow, for example, the development of alternating methods or dual training, as we can also speak of production training centres congested by chambers of employers or unions. There are foundations managed by unions which are financed by employers, as well as national systems with tripartite management. But whatever may be the form adopted, the truth is that the cases increase in which there is an establishment of alliances which make it possible to take advantage of the resources that societies possess through their diverse players, in order to use them more efficiently and at the service of the ongoing and integral training of its citizens.

- In third place, because of its very nature, for lifelong training to be possible there must be an extremely flexible and dynamic supply. The progressive blurring of boundaries between branches of production at the level of basic competencies makes for infinite possibilities in terms of the itineraries covered by individuals to reach the same type of employment. To cater to the entire active population, employed and unemployed, of the modern sector and the more backward sectors, formal and informal, youth and adults, is not a task that can be performed efficiently by a single player, even when it has great financial resources (a situation which is moreover infrequent). There is no other alternative, even here, than to seek the dovetailing of efforts through concerted action among diverse players that, from the standpoint of their own specificity and with their own resources, may contribute to structuring a training system which is sufficiently broad, flexible and diverse so as to cater to an increasingly heterogeneous demand for continuous training.

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### III. Participation and decentralization

In the scenario of multiple and interdependent transformations experienced by the training dispensed in the region, the focus now will be put on two fundamental and complementary trends: **(a) there are today greater decentralized levels than before in the management of programmes and institutions; and (b) this situation stimulates and enables higher levels of participation by greater numbers of more diverse players.**

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

Whatever the type of predominant arrangement in a given country, we can always find many cases of territorial decentralization. Many vocational training institutions have begun to hand over higher levels of responsibility to their regional, state or provincial departments. Likewise, policy guidelines laid down by the specialized bodies of Labour Ministries, are interpreted and adapted in accordance with active employment policies that include training components at regional or federal state level. In Brazil, employment and occupational education plans sponsored by several state labour secretariats are an example of this. Another example is the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the regional departments of SENAI, SENAC or SENAR vis-à-vis their respective national departments. Also in the INA of Costa Rica, the SENA of Colombia and INTECAP of Guatemala, among others, administrative and operational responsibilities have been handed down to regional departments.

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

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

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

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## Workers' organizations and vocational training

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the interest, involvement and participation of workers' organizations in vocational training is notoriously higher than two decades ago, if we consider their determination and rigour in dealing with the subject, and the different ways in which they participate.

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

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

The following is a summary of the different forms of trade union participation in training:

### Trade unions' participation in vocational training

- Inclusion of vocational training in collective agreements – already mentioned in Chapter I – has been to a large extent the result of trade union concern about the matter, and consequent pressure in negotiations, to have clauses ensuring access of workers to training.
- The same can be said about recent labour legislation, where the establishment of vocational training as a fundamental right of all citizens, is in many cases due to active participation and lobbying by trade unions.
- Revitalized trade union participation in the directive bodies of VTIs of several countries, partly encouraged by the sectoral focalisation processes of those institutions, facilitates participation by intermediate levels, like the federations of the respective sectors. This can be seen in the summit committees and liaison committees at the INA, of Costa Rica, and at decision-making levels in many vocational training institutions of the region: INOFTEP (Dominican Republic), INAFORP (Panama), INFOP (Honduras), INATEC (Nicaragua), INTECAP (Guatemala), SENA (Colombia), SNPP (Paraguay), INCE (Venezuela), SENAR (Brazil), and others.
- Instances of direct management of vocational training institutions, foundations and programmes by trade unions. Examples of this are, in Argentina, the Construction Training Foundation, dependent on the construction workers' union (UOCRA), as well as similar undertakings by the commerce and services, insurance, metal mechanics and other unions. In that country, workers' organizations that implement important institutionalised training activities come together in the "Trade Union Forum for the Integral Training of Workers", which acts in the sphere of the General Labour Confederation (CGT). In Brazil, three of the main union federations (CUT), Força Sindical and CGT, carry out training programmes both at central level and through their branch affiliates. These experiences have considerable weight. This is particularly evident in Argentina, where the vocational training offer by trade unions is the only one that has attained permanence and a significant coverage. In fact, and although CONET still existed, enrolment in trade union programmes was larger than in public training institutes.
- Participation of trade union representatives in tripartite bodies created by Labour Ministries, dealing with training, among other things. Examples are: the National Training Board (JUNAE), tripartite entity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Uruguay); trade union representation on the governing boards of the Fund for the Protection of Workers (CODEFAT) at national, state and municipal levels (Brazil); participation in the tripartite National Training Council, advisory body of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Chile.

- In Mexico there is another tripartite experience, also in connection with the Secretariats of Labour and Social Security and Public Education: it is the Council for the Standardisation and Certification of Occupational Competencies (CONOCER), which promotes participation by all stakeholders in the development of training based on standards of competency, and certification thereof.
- First instances of bipartite management of training in the region. Example: the Foundation for the Training of Construction Workers and Employers, in Uruguay.
- Participation in new bipartite bodies, regulated by law, at the level of enterprises: Joint Training Committees, of Mexico, and Bipartite Training Committees created in Chile pursuant to the Training and Employment Statute, which establishes that programmes agreed upon with the enterprise's bipartite committee, entitle the enterprise to deduct up to an additional 20 per cent of the expenses incurred, apart from training costs.
- Some central unions have also managed to develop institutional mechanisms that, among other things, do research in training and related subjects, provide conceptual information to trade unions on them and act to a certain extent as "think tanks" for workers' organizations that seek to play an active role in spheres where vocational training is discussed and negotiated. Examples are: the Instituto Jauretche, of the Argentine CGT; the Inter-union Department of Statistics and Socio-economic Studies (DIESSE), of the three main Brazilian central unions; and the Institute for Higher Trade Union Studies (INAESIN) of the Workers' Central Union of Venezuela (CTV).
- At international level, the two main regional trade union organizations, the **Inter-American Regional Workers' Organization (ORIT/CIOSL)** and the **Latin American Workers' Confederation (CLAT)** have recently highlighted training in current union discussions, both through their chief delegates, trade union training activities and awareness promotion.

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

## **Employers' organizations and vocational training**

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

Historically, the move to create vocational training institutions started in the region with the birth in Brazil of two bodies associated to employers' organizations: the National Industrial Training Service – SENAI – in 1942, and the National Commercial Training Service – SENAC – in 1946. These institutions that, as pioneering experiences, left a deep mark in the region, were since their inception attached to the respective employers' federations of the industrial and commercial sectors, and remain so to this day.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Employers' participation in vocational training**

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

- Various sectoral chambers have been enlarging the repertory of services they offer to their members. For instance, they have entered the areas of research and development, and technical education and training. By way of example, we can mention: In Chile, the services offered by the **Chilean Construction Chamber**, through three corporations (Construction Research Corporation; Construction Educational Corporation and Construction Training Corporation); action by employers of the agricultural sector under the **National Agricultural Society**, that through its **Social Development Corporation for the Rural Sector (CODESSER)** and just in the area of education lends support to formal schooling, training, teachers' further training and technological transfer; and the far reaching activities of the **Production and Commerce Confederation**, through INACAP. In Venezuela, the abovementioned initiative of the companies of the SIVENSA Group, through the **FUNDAMETAL Foundation** and the **International Centre for Education and Development (CIED)** dependent on the state enterprise Petr leos de Venezuela. In Mexico the **National Chamber of the Textile Industry (CANAINTEX)** through the **Textile Training Centre (CATEX)**, which besides training services has technological and quality management services; as well as ICIC, dependent on the **National Chamber of the Construction Industry**. In Argentina, the companies under the Graphic Arts Chamber of Buenos Aires have provided strong support to training in their sector through the **Gutenberg Foundation**. In Colombia, there are entrepreneurial initiatives in the graphic arts, plastics and rubber sectors, with their Technological Development Centres **IFTAG** and **ICPC**, respectively, that promote training, among other activities.
- Besides initiatives directly related to employers' organizations, there is a great number of experiences of in-house training programmes, particularly in the larger enterprises.
- Experiences in bipartite management are beginning to be known, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, in sectors like construction and pulp and paper (Uruguay); or new management formulas at enterprise level (Chile, Bipartite Training Committees).
- Finally, the tripartite arrangements at the level of Labour Ministries where employers take active part: JUNAE (Uruguay), CODEFAT (Brazil) and National Training Council (Chile), among others.

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

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

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

## **Private and non-governmental training offer**

Something that has happened in all countries of the region is the **appearance in recent decades of a private market training**. The degree of development and consolidation of these markets differs from one country to another, depending on a number

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of factors. However, the main issue is not the number of private suppliers but their strengths and weaknesses to provide the different types of training that society and production require.

The proliferation of this new training offer is clear evidence of the importance it has acquired at all levels, not only among enterprises, governments and the various productive, labour and social organizations, but in the population in general.

We are witnessing what has been described as a “gradual devaluation of educational credentials”, meaning that they tend to lose relative value (precisely as tools to have access to certain levels of employment, salary, responsibility, prestige). This has caused a veritable “rush forward”, in which it is constantly necessary to reach higher levels of education in order to have access to the same opportunities. Building up a unique, personal profile to have access to more and better occupational opportunities, bringing knowledge up to date so as not to lose footing in the wave of technological progress are – perhaps rather simply stated – subjective reasons in the current social, labour and technical context, that explain why there is a great demand for training courses, which to a large extent has stimulated the emergence of a private market.

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

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

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

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

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

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The first one is how to meet demands that are not immediately profitable. The typical case is the provision of training services for the more disadvantaged population groups. Except when – once again – there is a specific line of financing by the State, it is hardly to be expected that institutions that are mostly profit making may be interested.

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

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

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

## **Local management of training: A space for more actors and opportunities**

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

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

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

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

interaction is guided by the common purpose of improving the economic and social conditions of a given region.

#### Regional and local management of vocational training

- In **Brazil**, the **States' and Municipal Commissions for Employment**. These have been created as an instrument of decentralization and democratization of the activities funded by the FAT fund. These organisms have a tripartite structure, and one of their main tasks is to evaluate the requests for credits for training activities at state or municipal level respectively.
- In the same country, the long and far reaching experience of **SENAI**, **SENAC** and more recently **SENAR** in the agrarian sector, are examples of national action that finds concrete expression according to the reality of the different federal states. All these Brazilian institutions have a regionalised structure, in which the Regional Departments enjoy a high degree of autonomy vis-à-vis National Directorates. This independence is not achieved, as in other cases, by virtue of a central decision to delegate administrative, policy or organizational decisions; it is backed and legitimised by the fact that, in each state, the respective local industrial or commercial chamber is responsible for the management, infrastructure and resources of the Regional Department. This active involvement of local entrepreneurs in institutional management, is reinforced by the fact that this same decentralization and autonomy facilitates a whole range of cooperation and business schemes within the social, economic and cultural sphere of the State, with local authorities, trade unions or civil society organizations.
- In **Chile**, the **Regional Training Councils**, are tripartite organisms which have been created with the goal of advising the regional government in developing the national training policy at regional level.
- An interesting case of bipartite management of vocational training with a regional scope are the **Regional Vocational Training Councils in Argentina**. These are bipartite entities made up by union and entrepreneurial organizations, whose objective is the improvement and upgrading of the occupational profiles of the workers of the region in which they have been created (such as Mendoza, Rosario and Comodoro Rivadavia).
- In Colombia, the **National Training Service (SENA)**, through initiatives like the "Vocational Training Programme for Municipal Development", the "Programme for the Attention of families and special population groups" and the "Programme for the Attention of the social economy sector", has endeavoured to contribute to the development of the human resources involved in municipal management; support the promotion and development of associative economic units for the generation of employment, earnings and social promotion; and integrate disadvantaged persons or groups into the development processes of the country, in conditions of equality.

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

- *Training*: In Planning, Financial Management, Formulation and Management of Projects, Organizational Management and Community Participation in local management, with emphasis on the training of trainers and officials of departmental and municipal administrations.
- *Consulting services*: To departmental or municipal councils, on institutional development.
- *Technical assistance*: On aspects relating to the abovementioned priority areas.
- *Technological services*: At consulting level, to solve specific problems and criteria of municipal development.

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

- The "Programme for the Attention of the social economy sector", addressed at directors of social economy enterprises, affiliates of economic units and technicians belonging to public or private organizations and NGOs, offers:
  - *Training*: For the promotion of associative enterprises and second level organizations, for diagnosis and formulation of development plans.
  - *Consulting services*: For socio-entrepreneurial diagnosis, formulation and implementation of plans of action and development, and inter-enterprise integration at regional level.
  - *Technical assistance*: In areas pertaining to associative enterprises.
  - *Technological services*: To overcome difficulties in the design, quality control and modification of products and services.

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

To sum up, and in view of the above experiences, it becomes apparent that local players have knowledge and abilities that are best put to use if cooperation networks are established among them, and decision-making is delegated to their sphere.

Delegation of responsibilities and decision-making to local or regional level in vocational training encourages two things: firstly, better adaptation of training contents to local requirements and productive processes, and to specific aspects of regional production systems, and secondly, greater involvement and commitment by local players, In so far as they are themselves responsible for a good part of the training imparted.

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## IV. By way of conclusion

1. The transformations that have taken place in recent decades in the field of training in Latin America and the Caribbean have involved both the concept of training itself and the organizational forms it assumes. They have affected the financing schemes of training activities, their links with labour systems, innovation, development and technological transfer systems, regular education and the various players that take part in their design, management, funding and implementation.
2. The concept of vocational training seen as the orderly and systematic transmission of knowledge, abilities and skills to trainees during a certain period, normally before their active life, in order to qualify them to perform in specific work posts, has undergone deep modifications.
3. At present, the various national experiences point to a concept of training as a permanent adjunct in a lifelong process. It is addressed not only at the operational levels of occupational structures, but conceived as a vertical offer by productive sectors or technological areas. Rather than a bundle of skills, knowledge and abilities to perform in a specific work post, it is considered as a series of competencies of different levels enabling individuals to deal with a variety of jobs, occupations, labour situations and work posts. Rather than functional “coaching” within a scheme of labour division that made a clear-cut distinction between conception and implementation, it is viewed as the overall education of persons both as workers and citizens.
4. The institutionality or organizational forms of vocational training have also undergone deep changes and witnessed many innovations. From a relatively homogeneous picture throughout the region, with a strong presence of national institutions that monopolised the bulk of vocational training activities, we have now passed to a scenario of widely diverging organizational arrangements.
5. Side by side with the model represented by large national or sectoral training bodies, public or private in nature, Ministries of Labour have appeared on the scene as leading players, introducing a new logic in relation to the role of the State regarding vocational training policies and systems. Both workers’ and employers’ organizations also have a more active part in training, either managing or co-managing institutes, taking part in new tripartite or bipartite arrangements at national, sectoral or local level. As opposed to what happened in the past, many countries have seen a sprouting offer of training services in private and non-governmental areas, strongly supported by a new batch of public policies in the field. A veritable training market has been developing and expanding.
6. The financing of vocational training has also undergone a great diversification. Whereas in the past there were only two basic funding schemes, namely taxes or levies with a specific end or appropriations from the general budget of the Nation, at present those same mechanisms coexist with a wide range of provisions, incentives and tax rebates, the sale of consultant services, technical assistance, certification, etc. as well as alliances for cooperation and complementation of resources, and so forth.
7. Although vocational training has always been closely linked to the world of labour and production, its high visibility within labour relations is relatively recent. This becomes apparent, for example, in the expansion and more specific nature of labour legislation relating to vocational training; the incorporation of training clauses in collective bargaining and, in a more general way, the importance attached to the matter in various areas of social dialogue at the level of firms and sectors, locally or nation wide, and in regional integration processes. Another indication of this new “labour slant” of vocational training is the

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central position it has acquired in the agendas of Labour Ministries, trade unions and entrepreneurial chambers.

- 8.** From a notion of training as a supplementary field of activity, divorced from technological innovation and development, the various country experiences are now shifting to close integration of the activities of both realms. Without losing sight of its essential mission, some institutions include training within the overall framework of the needs of firms, sectors or productive chains. This has led to the development of new services, such as consultancy and technical assistance, applied research, technological information, etc., side by side with the training itself. The result is not only a more complete offer of services but also an incentive for the technological upgrading of the infrastructures, equipment, methods and contents of vocational training.
- 9.** With some exceptions, vocational training grew in the region as a separate system from regular education schemes. Although theoretically complementary to each other, they showed in reality a disparity of objectives, little coordination between themselves and very often different sets of social values. Both systems have had to face crises and criticisms. Nevertheless, coordination efforts have been made, and they have shared common subjects and debates that are leading to a coming together in the search for greater complementation of resources, experience and knowledge. The objective that seems to beckon is the building up of national permanent education/training systems, capable of meeting a growing, diverse and dynamic demand.
- 10.** In many countries of the region vocational training is witnessing decentralization processes that open up the field to more players than in the past. Regarding the execution of training activities there is nowadays a wider and more diverse scenario. Despite the fact that it is sometimes threatened by a risk of fragmentation and scattering of efforts and resources, training now has the possibility of attracting more actors within the framework of a national effort. But also in connection with decision-making and management, opportunities and tripartite openings have arisen through Labour Ministries, local and sectoral arrangements, bipartite agreements, dialogue and regional integration. Those are some of the novelties in this area.
- 11.** Trade unions have approached training not only vindicating the right of workers to it, but also trying to take part in it and negotiate its conditions. Furthermore, they have endeavoured to link training to aspects such as employment, wages, working conditions, occupational health and careers.
- 12.** Employers' organizations, for their part, have assumed that training is a key factor in strategies to raise productivity and increase competitiveness. They have consequently sought to play a more central role in the management and delivery of training, apart from taking part in negotiations about it.
- 13.** The private training and vocational education offer, that was formerly scant as compared to the scope of national training bodies, has now grown enormously in most countries. This development seems to be favoured on the one hand by the social and economic value newly ascribed to training, and on the other by the incentives provided by recent public policies in the matter.
- 14.** Experiences in local management of vocational training are still incipient, but they constitute a promising ground for innovation, regarding both the incorporation of new players and resources and the elaboration of new forms of meeting social and productive needs within the framework of local development schemes.

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- 15.** The countries of the region are therefore faced with an impressive challenge, i.e. the collective and negotiated erection of national (eventually supra-national) lifelong education and training systems. Such systems need to be versatile enough to meet a diverse, growing and dynamic demand, in consonance with the economic, social and political development objectives of societies of the region.