

Training Policies and Practices in Large Enterprises — Current situation and future

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ABSTRACT:

This article aims to outline an initial perspective of the training situation in large enterprises and to provide a critical contribution to the understanding of the logic underlying such training policies and practices. It is based on the results of an exploratory study held in 26 large national and transnational enterprises operating in Portugal. It was possible to acquire knowledge on what is happening in the field of enterprise training through the information that was collected, and also to identify a set of tendencies. In order to help understand this reality, a typological proposal has been presented, providing the initial aspects to be followed up in the characterization of the policies and practices of in-service training. The types of training encountered were classified in: *Traditional and Utilitarian Training*, *Strategic Training Geared towards Problem-Solving* and *Training Geared towards Personal and Social Development*.

KEY WORDS:

Adult Education, Ongoing Training, Training Policies, Human Resources.

This study fits into the scope of current research in the area of Adult Education under the PhD in Educational Sciences. It sets out to understand the training logics given to workers by companies. Over the last few years studies and research on in-service training have been characterized by general conclusions drawn on the basis of statistical analyses and quantitative data. This study aims to explore the concept of continued training and the logics and practices of training in large companies through a qualitative approach.

Within the scope of current research, we began with an exploratory study, whose theme, methodology and results are presented in this article, in which 26 semi-structured interviews were carried out with managers of Human Resources (HR) and training in large enterprises. In the first part of the article, continued education, in the context of large enterprises, is addressed and the various perspectives, depending on different entrepreneurial strategies, are taken into consideration. In the second part, the methodology and results of the exploratory research are presented and a typology proposal is presented for the different training logics. Finally, this study is expected to continue and some guidelines have been pointed out to further the work to be accomplished among a small set of enterprises.

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING: PERSPECTIVES

Training, as a theme, urges a discussion on the concepts of education and training. If education is referred to as “the development of the person in a global sense, without any specific connection to work” (Pineda, 1995, p. 23), it is interesting that training may, indeed, contain this aspect of education, general training and personal development. The term *training* normally implies change on a professional level. However, we feel that it would be beneficial for training to have a personal and social nature which may, in some form, be related to the current or future work of individuals

As far as the concept of *training* is concerned, some definitions are really very restrictive and too simplistic in terms of the dimensions the concept may cover. Such is the case given by the Cedefop Thesaurus which states that “in-service training is the entire professional training (...) provided on the company’s premises to someone who has the status of worker or employee” (Viet, 1988, p. 72). This perspective is based on a simplistic vision which does not take into consideration, for example, the aims or results that are expected of training. Another equally limited and *functionalistic* approach is that which regards the continued training of workers as being related to their ability to correctly perform their profession and carry out the duties demanded of their work (Buckley & Caple, 1991; Pineda, 1995). With this point of view, the concept addresses

current needs, but may not be in a position to foresee future needs.

The *rationalist* vision is another possibility and is geared towards improving the company's transactions and economic results. Included in this perspective are the definitions referring to the acquisition of skills for improved performance, such as what may be found in Anglo-American literature "training is defined as the systematic acquisition of skills, rules, concepts, or attitudes that result in improved performance in another environment" (Goldstein, 1993, p. 3). This is a much fuller definition in that it covers the several acquisitions of knowledge and contains a reference to the results which are likely to be noticed, *a posteriori*, in a real environment.

Given that the purpose of training is to bring about changes in the worker which will be reflected in his/her work, such need not occur solely through a technical kind of training. Personal and social training may also contribute to improvements in work. Nowadays, the utilitarian conception, according to which there is only interest if the person gains personal, short-term benefit, is now out-dated in many organizations, and training has come to be regarded as a set of learning skills which makes the development of personal life projects possible "where the working aspect is a bonus, but is not the only aspect and for some, not even the most important" (Camps, 2005, p. 36).

Thus, it may be verified that the actual training concept can be restrictive and emerge associated with interventions where there is a trainer, content and where the aim is to change behaviour. Nevertheless, it does not have to be necessarily so: training need not be technical in its content, nor do its aims and objectives have to be restricted to exclude an educational dimension. This position does not mean that a technical type of training geared towards the task is less important or of less value. Indeed, it is important and necessary and, more often than not, extremely useful.

The definition presented by the OECD (1997, p. 19) is far broader, in that it covers other dimensions beyond technical skills. It views training (and development) as "all the various processes by which an individual develops the competencies required for employment-related tasks". It includes all the training activities which are geared towards

the acquisition of skills and current or future competencies. Since it is quite a general definition, it can include all the training categories: formal and informal training, training in the workplace and training in a conference room, specific training and general training. Even so, the definition does not clarify whether the type of competencies referred to include an educational dimension or general training, in the sense of being comprehensive and providing a global vision.

Sarramona (1988), quoted by Pineda (1995, p. 24), referring to the aims of training within the company, presents a more balanced perspective in which the dimension of professional and personal development is introduced. He believes that as well as progressively preparing workers to accomplish the most important tasks, training should also be a source of professional satisfaction and improve personal conditions while covering the needs of the workplace. Even so, consultation of a wide range of bibliography shows that the concept of *training* rarely emerges where the comprehensive development of the person is taken into consideration, as is the case in *education*. According to Buckley and Caple (1991, p. 2) training is more geared towards the person. As far as these authors are concerned, while training approaches knowledge and techniques in order to accomplish specific tasks, education has more theoretical and conceptual structures created so as to stimulate the analytical and critical skills of people. Training should encourage the autonomy of people so that they, themselves, are always in search of more.

Hence, training may also fit under a logic based on social action, in that it favours professional promotion and raises the qualification levels of the workers. The people, companies and country may obtain greater benefits if training also acquires this component of education or general training with a view to preparing one for life and active citizenship.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND PRODUCTIVITY

Nowadays, it is common for training and learning to be associated with the possibility of contributing to the economic development of countries and enterprises, the work market and employability. OECD studies, for example, have disclosed that

the countries which invest more in training and have more developed education and training systems are the ones that continue to be more competitive in the global economy (OECD, 1994). Almost all research is unanimous in considering that highly skilled labour is a macroeconomic growth factor and a sign of individual prosperity. This is also the point of view of the human capital theory.

Training geared towards productivity, towards the modernization of economy, connected to the production of skilled labour and employability, corresponds to the “productive economic model” (Sanz Fernández, 2006), which can also be sub-divided into vocational professional training, with a professionalizing nature, normally made available by job centres, training centres or entrepreneurial associations, and into continued training, encouraged by the organizations and enterprises and aimed at the workers themselves. According to Eurofond data and the 4th Report on Working Conditions (2006)¹, Portugal is the 4th in 31 countries with fewer skilled workers. According to the same report, training was funded by the employer for only 15.1% of the workers.

On a European level, the *Lisbon Strategy* confirmed the central role of education and training on the European agenda for growth and employment. The guidelines encourage the member States to broaden and improve investment in “human capital” and to adapt education and training systems to new demands in terms of competencies. In addition to the high rates of low skilled unemployment nowadays in Portugal, there is also a low level of skills and qualifications among the employed population. Following the *Lisbon Strategy*, the actual European Council of 2004 established the political priorities for employment, defining an increase in the skills and adaptation of workers and enterprises, investment in “human capital” and “life-long learning” as priorities.

However, there are a number of authors (Canário, 2003, 2006a, 2006b; Charlot, 2005; Finger & Asún, 2003; Lima, 2005) who criticize the *instrumental rationality*² that is dominating the market and to which Adult Education is subordinated. This is due to the fact that the latter is also strongly connected to the economization of social life (Finger & Asún, 2003, p. 16), or because “(...) it gives priority to the training of human resources, it takes on schooling modalities and is geared towards

individual skill acquisition” (Canário, 2006a, p. 33). Lima (2005, p. 45), along the same lines, criticises “state education as an instrument of ‘human capital’ production”. These authors refer to the instrumentalisation of Adult Education both by means of the “functional subordination of education and training policies to economic rationality” (Canário, 2006a, p. 29), and due to the fact that “continued training is increasingly fuelling enterprises — a tendency illustrated, for example, by the fact that most European Union funding for training is channelled to enterprises and unions, thus, transforming continued training into a lucrative business” (Finger & Asún, 2003, p. 116).

In the same way Cunningham (1993, p. 9) also refers to adult education as having become more and more an accomplice of industry and private businesses. With training in the workplace, the enterprises dip into governmental funding for Adult Education for their own benefit: “Adult educators who now call themselves Human Resource Developers (HRD) claim that workplace learning is more than the acquisition of skills and I believe that they are correct in their assertion. But what they do not seem to realize is that much of today’s work is done outside the market and that we do not question the relationship of work to the life interests of society’s members versus the profit interests of capital”. According to this perspective, the training of people nowadays is conditioned by learning practices geared towards earning more, and is shaped by the need to make profit.

These authors (Canário, 2003, 2006a; Finger, 2005; Finger & Asún, 2003; Lima, 2005, 2006) criticize, above all, the submission of education issues to the economic and productive system and the fact that people are viewed as “human resources”. Canário (2006a, p. 29), for instance, questions the existence of a direct, linear relationship between investment in the qualification of human resources and “economic growth”, “development”, the eradication of “backwardness”, “employment”, “productivity”, “competitiveness” and “social cohesion”. Lima (2006, s/p) states that nowadays, “adult education training in Europe is a sub-chapter of human resources management”.

More and more training is being left in the hands of each individual and it is gradually ceasing to be

the responsibility of state policies. Each individual is expected to be responsible for his/her own training. *Society of knowledge, information, qualification and learning* are terms that are part of the lives of people in general, and in work contexts in particular. According to Finger and Asún (2003, p. 111), “learning is becoming a private or purely personal issue, thus abandoning all its collective dimensions, while, at the same time, this tendency is reinforced by market pressure towards privatization, as the education of adults has ceased to be the responsibility of state administration and has come to be handled by private entities”.

If it is accepted, nowadays, for enterprises to adopt an important role in the definition of competencies, it is crucial for policies to be integrated and encourage not only the acquisition of working skills, but also qualification and education, in the broader sense of the term.

So, companies need to provide workers not only with specific training in order to address the challenges of the company and the current workplace, but also to take the responsibility for providing a broader type of training that will contribute to personal enrichment as an entity. Benefits will emerge for the organization, but also for the individual and society at large. People improve their performance through learning and, hence, their activity and result in the areas of work and within the company. Training will enrich the individual as new horizons become available to him/her in the field of knowledge and will help to make professional activity “a source of personal satisfaction” (Sarramona, 2002, p. 23). This is what may happen, for example, if training helps to resolve professional problems, if it contributes to the development of personal interests or even if it makes career promotion possible.

Consequently, and in accordance with results obtained from recent research of the Chartered *Institute of Personnel Development* (CIPD, 2005) and by Reynolds (2004), in the growing *knowledge-based economy*, when individuals acquire knowledge and skills that contribute to the aims of the organization, the latter acquires *competitive advantage*. Indeed, training is meant to have this important, supplementary role: to contribute, simultaneously, to implementing individual and organizational learning.

If, on the one hand, the instrumentalisation of Adult Education and professional training can be criticized as being hostage to the economic and productive system (Canário, 2006a; Finger, 2005; Finger & Asún, 2003; Lima, 2005), on the other hand it is important to acknowledge the existence of organizations that encourage a type of training which contributes towards the human and social development of citizens. It is necessary to find out whether companies are taking on their responsibilities, defining policies and encouraging training and knowledge. In the current context in which the development of skills ought to be a *continuum* at any stage of life, it is up to the enterprise to provide the basic, general and professional skills, but also to promote the desire to learn.

BUSINESS STRATEGIES AND TRAINING

As far as the aims and objectives for which many enterprises provide training are concerned, many managers are of the opinion that the central aim of all in-service training is to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies for workers which are necessary so that they may correctly perform their duties, prepare them to be transferred or promoted to other workplaces, and to help them to get used to the work team, department and company in which they work (Edwards *et al.*, 1983, p. 103).

Caetano (2000, p. 295) concludes that “companies are primarily concerned with increasing the skills which correspond to their short-term needs, and not so much with the development of competencies or an increase in the qualifications of the workers as professionals”. According to Sarramona (2002, p. 20), normally the managers expect the skills and knowledge acquired to be applied in a direct and immediate manner. The problem is that there is not always transference of the knowledge acquired to the workplace, since the training is not, or can not be “applicable” to the work, and the results are not visible for the organization. Such may be due to method or content where there is frequently an abundance of information but little learning, or, perhaps, owing to a number of unrelated factors between training and work.

In the training provided by large enterprises, there are several underlying logics which do not

only determine the quantity and investment in training, but also the type of training and the aims set out. In addition to the tradition of the sector and the historical and cultural issues of the organization, there are also other factors which influence the type of training, such as the structure and nature of the group of workers, industrial relations, management attitudes and actual government policies.

In the implementation of the training policy, some companies opt for the organization of random courses or workshops, which are generally de-contextualized from the real needs and are geared towards meeting legal obligations or simply accomplishing training projects defined by a training elite, which is frequently out of touch with the world of work. There are other enterprises which, based on the perspective of training as continued improvement and on the ground intervention, highlight how the world of training and the world of work come together in full articulation, with the reality of work as the backdrop, often including a slant towards personal and social development in the training of workers.

In addition to the motivations and aims, within in-service training, two, distinct logics seem to be at work: those geared towards individual learning for workers and which encourage employability and individual performance (Lima, 2005) and those aimed at promoting collective change, which may lead to social mobilization and worker participation. This is the closest logic to the principles of popular, humanist and emancipatory education, regarding Adult Education not as a repair activity, but as foreseeing an improvement and change in the organizations of society.

Familiarization with the company's strategy and how it is related to training is of utmost importance in order to understand whether the training itself is a result of company strategy or limited to sporadic needs. When integrated in the global strategy for company development, training is presented with plans, programs, and budget and is supposed to have a defined evaluation system. If the aim is for training to fit under the company's strategy and to resolve or anticipate problems, the *training* function must be immersed in the actual work processes. In order to accomplish this, managers at the top need to guarantee support and backing so that training

can be fully carried out throughout the entire organization.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on the analysis of different training experiences in a number of enterprises, this study sets out to analyse the policies and practices of the training and development of workers in large companies.

The work has stemmed from an exploratory study and the collection and analysis of information obtained from 26 large companies, through semi-structured interviews with their human resources or training managers. 5 are national public sector companies, 8 are national private sector companies while 13 are transnational. The companies belong to a variety of sectors and branches of activity ranging from those related to energy, food, tobacco and civil construction to electronic, machine, metallurgical, chemical car, textile and clothes industries, also covering new technology, trade, services, tourism, transport and communications.

A report was made after each interview and an analytical grid drawn up in order to compare and analyse the data. The grid was made up of a set of categories which made it possible to classify and compare the material from the interviews. The development and definition of the categories was not done *a priori*, but rather constructed and changed on the basis of the information being collected.

The analytical grid and its set of categories made it possible to classify and compare the interview material. Initially, we decided to start by analysing the interviews with richer content (those providing more research tracks), and it was on the basis of these that the collected material was classified and compared. Therefore, it is an "analytic description" (Maroy, 2005, p. 120) whereby the study does not stem from a pre-existing grid, but from practical issues in the interviews themselves. Indeed, different issues began to emerge throughout the interviews, some typical, others pertinent for the sector or the company which would not have been noticed if a pre-defined analytical grid had been used from the start. With a view to understanding the differences and similarities and the options regarding the policies and practices of

the different companies, as well as to being able to verify tendencies in certain sectors or management types through filters, the grid was created on an *Excel* calculation sheet. This grid made it possible to analyse the data according to the different types of companies: National state³, National private⁴ and Transnational⁵. The result of these comparisons led to the identification of new categories and concepts which had not been anticipated initially.

Although in the presentation and analysis of the data we have sometimes grouped the companies according to the type of management (transnational and national state or private), since there were practices and perspectives that were more common and stood out in certain companies, we felt the need to order and classify the information according to relevant criteria (Schnapper, 2000, p. 13), which is conveyed in the construction of a typology proposal.

Given the large amount of information collected and the diversity of cases, we decided to present some of the overall results of the several aspects that were analysed in this study. Even so, these results highlight the importance of the study, in that they reveal some of the dimensions of the problem that we had not previously been aware of. As far as the training characteristics are concerned, we are dealing, mainly, with a traditional model in which presential training predominates. However, in some companies, training goes much further than the perspective of training by catalogue where, confronted with the supply of defined and structured courses, a set of people enrol or apply with the intention of learning something. In some companies, the integration of training in the company's strategies is well-known and the main concern is for results. Other companies are starting to invest in training that is not restricted to the technical content inherent to the professions being developed. Equally, there seems to be a tendency to share training responsibilities and development. As far as the studies and diagnoses made with a view to carrying out training courses are concerned, the fact that staff and leading company members collaborate and actively participate in the process is worth mentioning. Nevertheless, this is often accomplished without the necessary involvement of those for whom training was originally intended.

In some enterprises, the organization of work is found to condition the organization of training. Since they have to work in projects, the continued training of engineers ends up being of a broad and general type to cover all the aspects of project management, thus, going far beyond the main type of technical and specific engineering training. On the other hand, companies with low, often sub-contracted, specialized labour and with a high rate of staff rotation and routine tasks practically do not invest in training at all. There are great disparities in terms of the target group for training and the argument that training is more important in the company the higher the specialization level of its workers or tasks is, seems to be gaining consistency. Training may be given just to some functional groups, normally those that are more specialized, according to company strategy.

It is also commonly known that the more important and defined the training strategy is, the more it takes on a number of forms in order to accomplish its mission, as well as titles of a broader *training* concept. By the same token the technical departments, due to their being specialized, can always organize training programs, and can even have a more dominant role than the actual HR/training area. This is confirmed both by the structure and organization of training, which is often restricted or even non-existent, or, otherwise, the responsibility of other departments and through the important role given by the interviewees to managers for future training courses. As for evaluation, in the majority of companies there are no practices for evaluating the transference to work or the impact of training on the organization. Often, difficulties regarding the understanding of evaluation issues are identified, going beyond the evaluation of satisfaction. The fact that the interviewees mention that certain effects are achieved does not mean to say that the results obtained are directly related to the accomplishment of training.

On the basis of the interviews, it is possible to identify a set of *problems* relative to social and political issues and to training strategies. Based on the perception of the interviewees, we have grouped the concerns displayed and the aspects referred to as being problematic, and have summarized them in the following points:

- Company demand *versus* individual development level
- Developing company competencies *versus* those of the worker or teams
- Training taken into consideration in the social balance
- Training and new code of labour
- Relationship with education/universities/training centres
- Co-funded training

One of the aims of the study was to identify the *tendencies for future training* and this issue was systematically put to the interviewees. On the basis of the perspectives each person had in relation to the theme, it was important to find out the opinion of these experts since they are the ones who have the decision-making power. Therefore, the tendencies presented are also based on the subjectivity of the interviewees.

The tendencies deriving from the work involving the analytical grid and comparison were grouped into categories and constructed from the answers. They are summarised in the following points:

- Training for knowing how to act
- Training for know-how
- The role and responsibility of the company/HR
- The individual responsible for his/her own training
- The role and responsibility of management
- The role and responsibility of trainers
- Training for anticipation of problems
- Distance training

Clearly, what needs to be followed up is whether the ideas discussed are actually put into practice.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING POLICIES AND PRACTICES: TYPOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

Far from being considered a complete and coherent typology, we draw attention to the fact that it is based solely on exploratory interviews and, thus, on the perspectives of the interviewees. On the other hand, due to the diversity and complexity of the opinions, and also to the fact that the latter are not

always exclusive to each type, the typology lacks confirmation. In some aspects, the same company may have a particular orientation while in others it may have a different one. So, this is no more than a typology proposal, in which, from Weber's⁶ point of view, the meaning of the actions must be understood. It is a theoretical construction stemming from the particular analysed cases. Weber defends the use of the "idealtypus"⁷ so that relations can be established and the job of interpreting reality and action can be supervised. It is about ordering reality, organizing it so that it can be understood. The fact that the *ideal-type* is not a description of reality should be taken into consideration. The *ideal-type* is useful for understanding the events observed in reality and, in this sense, it is a priority instrument for *sociological understanding* (Schnapper, 2000). Knowledge about reality is achieved by indicating the degree of approximation of a phenomenon that is classified (as far as type is concerned) in relation to one or more constructed concepts (Weber, 1991, p. 12).

In an attempt to characterize training policies and practices in the context under study, and on the basis of some common aspects and other different ones, it was possible to identify 3 basic types (Table 1):

- a. Traditional and utilitarian training
- b. Strategic training geared towards problem-solving
- c. Training geared towards personal and social development

Traditional and utilitarian training

It is important to stress the fact that training is strictly connected to organizational problems and all the training that is carried out is geared towards achieving the goals of the business. In this case, the training of workers, such as in the hard HRM models, aim to increase skills so as to improve company performance. The workers, themselves, are seen as a resource ready to be used by the enterprise.

As far as the expected results are concerned, these companies provide training simply because they are obliged to do so and develop huge projects without any kind of articulation with the strategy and aims of the departments. In the end, they are concerned with attaining Training Metrics results

while the practical results for the organization are not measured. People are sent to training as a kind of gratification or to be prepared for change. However, training emerges as an isolated act and the

addressees are also people who apply through their own initiative. The training course is split and is run with a view to resolving company deficits. They are reactive companies which organize training as a way

Table 1
TRAINING POLICIES AND PRACTICES: TYPOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

	DIMENSIONS	TRADITIONAL/UTILITARIAN TRAINING	STRATEGIC TRAINING GEARED TOWARDS PROBLEM-SOLVING	TRAINING GEARED TOWARDS PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
TRAINING AND HUMAN RESOURCES {2, 3, 4, 5, 6,}	Concepts in use	Training/Professional Training	Training/ Development/ Competencies	Learning/Development/knowledge
	Training structure and resources	Centralized training, Reduced structure	De-centralized training, Variable structure	Decentralized training, Variable structure
	HR/Training role	Providing training	To promote training	Support for management posts
	Use of companies/ external trainers	Frequent	Frequent	Very frequent
	Permanent internal trainers	Not frequent	Not frequent	Not frequent
	Eventual internal trainers	Frequent	Frequent	Frequent
TRAINING POLICIES {7, 8,}	Strategic vision of Training	Need for workers to acquire duty-related knowledge	Need for change	Need to construct a better society
	Training and career development	Training in order to perform current duties	Career and future-oriented training	Training geared towards personal and social development
	Internship policies/ partnerships	Little or non-existent	Active/ the internship should represent development for both parties	Active/ the internship must represent development for the individual
TARGET GROUPS	Training addressees	Groups directly linked to production/ and staff frameworks and management posts	Groups directly related to activity and production	All groups
DIAGNOSIS	Diagnosis for training	At a given moment, holes are detected	Improvement areas for each person are continuously identified	The potential of each person is constantly taken into consideration.
BASIC TRAINING PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES {9, 10, 11,}	Integration in the company	Technical and duty-specific training	Training for knowledge of procedures, management posts and teams	Training regarding values, the mission and culture of the company
	Accomplishment of integration training	In the workplace under the responsibility of the management	Tutorial in the workplace, e-learning and/ or presential under the responsibility of HR/Training and may involve other areas.	Tutorial in the workplace, e-learning and/ or presential under the responsibility of HR/Training and may involve other areas.
	Initial training	Training according to necessary skills as	Training according to necessary skills	RVCC processes
	Accomplishment of initial training	In a real or simulated environment	In a real work environment	In a real work environment or other
CONTINUED TRAINING PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES {12, 13, 14,}	Continued training	Product knowledge and technique related to it	Systems and processes connected to a profession aimed at problem-solving	Activities with educational aspects and broad aims
	Accomplishment of continued training	Recourse to internal, external experts, suppliers	Under the scope of business units or project work	Recourse to experts and internal or external resources
	Non-formal and informal training practices	Hardly relevant	Mobility/ Internships in other departments, countries	Mobility/ Internet and Intranet/ Documentation centres
	Training modalities	On-the-job training, conference training	On-the-job training, training-action, Internal training in a conference room and workplace with experienced colleagues, participation in work groups	On-the-job training; self-learning; participation through a project team; getting to know practices in another country; debate forums
EVALUATION	Evaluation levels	Evaluation of reaction or knowledge	Evaluation of transference/ efficiency and impact	Evaluation of transference/ efficacy and impact
*		To train know-how	To train know-how and how to act	Training for appropriate behaviour

* TENDENCIES FOR FUTURE TRAINING

of addressing the problems that emerge. As far as the role of training and the trainers are concerned, many of these companies regard training as being restricted to itself, to the period in the room and the role of trainers as being limited to the duration of the training course. From this perspective, those occupying managerial posts believe that it is up to the training courses to resolve the problems of the company.

Strategic training geared towards problem-solving

These companies look upon training as a real strategic option for the development of the workers and the actual work processes in which entrepreneurial culture is geared towards the development of current and future skills. As well as being preoccupied with the number of courses held, these companies are really only interested in the results and the impact they have on work and the organization itself.

The technicians and trainers perform the training duty as well as their own work and are of the opinion that their work is only over when the training objectives have been met. The whole training process is developed in articulation with the productive process. There is a traditional passage of content to models geared towards facilitating the construction of knowledge and skills. They are models which attribute greater autonomy, responsibility and control to the workers themselves. Therefore, long-term training is a means which, in conjunction with other means and strategies, contributes to altering the work processes.

Training geared towards personal and social development

Continued training comes under this perspective and goes beyond that which is directly applicable in the company, but which could be an asset to the worker as an individual. It is training geared towards personal, social and relational development, from a sociability perspective whereby the skills of citizenship can be put into practice. Such is the case of training courses which encourage the development of free, responsible and autonomous citizens, open to dialogue and who respect their neighbour and his/her ideas, and who give value to the human dimension of work and the development of a democratic and pluralist spirit, through character and civil formation. It is training which aims to educate free, critical

and active citizens, open to the world and concerned about the future of the planet and social justice. Training practices may include themes or activities based on communication, art, interpersonal and family education, civil and environmental participation, guidelines and clues for the definition of educational pathways and career management.

Training takes the interests of the workers into consideration and has broader aims, focusing on personal and social development and which are not limited to the aims directly related to profit. In companies where this is the policy, beyond the organization there is the worker, the person and his/her self-development on the basis of a conscious reflection on spiritual, aesthetic, moral and civil values.

In some cases, there is concern in terms of competence recognition with a view to improving the qualifications of the workers. These qualifications often go beyond the direct and immediate benefit they might bring to the company. In the soft HRM models, there is also emphasis on the human dimension and, if the development of workers is geared towards improving the company, the workers are then seen as an asset and source of competitive advantage through their implication and adaptability. In these companies, workers are expected to have the skills to resolve problems and have enough autonomy to transform the problems into opportunities. Such is the case of the companies that invest in the training of staff by internal rotation which often implies experience in countries abroad, and where there is a clear intention to increase the autonomy of the workers.

CONTINUITY OF THE STUDY

The research is based on the accomplishment of a multiple case study of the sample on which this work is based. Given that the companies differ according to their history, culture, origin and even their location, in the exploratory work it became clear that when a company creates a training policy, it does so on the basis of internal specificities, its history or current situation and according to changes in the work itself. The role and purpose of training are almost always connected to the need of the workers to acquire new knowledge, behaviour or attitudes, or directly to the aim of producing change. From companies regarding

training as an expense to those which view it as an investment, it is important to verify to what extent they have a sufficiently broad idea which surpasses the mere construction of useful skills at a particular moment and according to business needs.

It is important to find out whether the companies only fulfil a “basic” aspect of their responsibility, that which is related to the legal and social obligations towards the workers, or whether they go any further. In other words, the question is whether investment in the training activity and development of the workers denotes a social and community concern that was not traditionally regarded as being part of the company domain. It is finding out whether learning experiences are included in their strategy and mission or whether they are only sporadic training courses for addressing problems that have emerged.

It would be interesting to know whether in general, managers, supervisors and workers share responsibility for training and development. If they do, it is important to understand how and to what extent they contribute to the development of others.

We are interested in analysing whether in-service training is an instrument geared towards the development of the worker in all aspects, or whether it only considers a single, specific dimension which merely serves the interests of the company.

Only some companies can contribute towards attaining all these dimensions. We are interested in following up this research with in-depth knowledge on how certain companies include this educational aspect in their training policies, strategies and practices. We want to learn about all the practices and dynamics in which companies invest on a day to day basis with a view to freeing their workers as men and women, so as to develop citizenship as well as the technical dimension which is focused on adaptation to the work and the duties involved.

On a macro level, it is important to analyse whether such involvement is articulated with all the other important actors, with a view to *promoting social cohesion* and also to developing a real *life-long learning* culture. This also implies knowledge regarding sources of state financing and regulations, which may and should play an important role in the promotion of company responsibility, through raising the awareness of entrepreneurs. However, in addition to the State and to the investment of each

individual company, membership drive may also play a decisive role. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of the unions and associations in terms of training and to find out whether they contribute to the establishment and development of in-service training policies. It would be interesting to know how far national professional training agreements have favoured the evolution of in-service training. It is also important to analyse the extent to which community support frameworks have adapted to the needs of companies.

It is common for discourse related to education policies and training to focus on quantitative aspects (the extent to which companies and entrepreneurs provide training or whether they invest more in qualified labour), and to conclude that *training leads to greater competitiveness*. We believe that there should not be so much emphasis on the training itself, but rather on the type of training given, how and why it is given and, therefore, on qualitative issues which are generally less discussed. It must be understood that it is not enough to provide a lot of training, it is the quality which has to be improved, thus, requiring an analysis of the various training dimensions. More than finding out the amount of training provided by the companies, it is important to understand the aspects contained within the actual concept of training and its practices. As far as training itself is concerned, it is more important to discuss the underlying motives and logics than to find out what is being done in the training course.

Although training in large companies is primarily motivated by productivity and profit criteria, there are companies which invest in the development of people and their personal and social well-being over the utilitarian logic according to which it is important to provide training at all costs. In their training policies and practices, the companies can promote the integral development of people, guiding themselves by broad values and adopting an educational dimension. In addition to the technical content which, of course, has its merit, but tends to focus on the development of specific work-related skills, companies can promote the development of workers as people and thus, attribute more value to them. By attending to their interests and needs, companies may contribute to their personal and also professional development.

ENDNOTES

1. *In Semanário Económico* 28/9/2007.

2. “Dimension of positivist epistemology considered by critical theorists to be one of the most oppressive traits in contemporary society. This form of ‘hyper-rationality’ implies an obsession for the preference of means over ends. Critical theorists affirm that instrumental/technical rationality is more interested in method and efficiency than purpose. It limits its questions to ‘how’, instead of ‘why’” (Kincheloe, 2006, p. 160).

3. Company created by the State with its own capital, or capital provided by other state companies, for the accomplishment of economic or social activities.

4. Company whose capital is held primarily by private economic agents, and whose ultimate aim is profit.

5. A transnational company is one which operates and/or manufactures in one or more different countries.

6. It is not the fact that companies provide training that is important in itself, but rather its social meaning. For Weber, the duty of sociology is to interpret social action, understanding the meaning of the action and not the action itself.

7. The relationship is logical and has nothing to do with an evaluative appreciation or a with a model that the term *ideal-type* might suggest. That is why Weber and other authors such as Schnapper (2000) propose the use of *type-ideal* and not *ideal type*.

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