

# Cooperative Training Combines Tradition and Innovation

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Traditional, centre-based vocational education and training (VET) has frequently been criticised. It is said to be expensive, insufficiently linked with the world of work, certificate driven, satisfying only the needs of a minority of school leavers and job entrants. The return on investment is claimed to be considerably lower than in basic, primary and secondary education.

Individual countries might decide to support such centres in strategically important occupational areas, or for training in strategically crucial qualifications. But centre-based long-term training is definitely not financeable by any country on a larger scale if it is to satisfy the needs of a majority of school leavers, job seekers and people earning their living in the informal sector.

If formal centre-based training is not the ultimate answer, what are the alternatives for occupational skills development? Amongst other choices, policy makers may want to:

- leave all aspects of VET and occupational skills development to the market, and restrict public efforts to general education,
- introduce a fully modularised competency-based training system,
- improve curriculum development processes in order to reduce the mismatch between training and the world of work,
- provide fee-paying training,
- introduce dual or apprenticeship training systems at national level,
- introduce and promote any form of co-operative training.

The present article attempts to draw lessons from a specific type of cooperative training projects supported by Swisscontact and SDC in different countries. Swisscon-

tact has analysed projects in Ecuador, Mali, Pakistan, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and the Philippines for this purpose. The projects in Ecuador and Mali represent the most advanced models and are referred to more specifically.

## Cooperative training defined

Basically, there are two extreme forms of unilateral, non-cooperative skills development strategies – one being centre-based training, the other one being learning-by-doing in traditional apprenticeship schemes or other non-formal workplace-based arrangements. In cooperative training, the two strategies are combined in one way or the other, and training providers and employers (along with their organisations) enter a co-operation on several issues.

Generally speaking, cooperative training is an attempt to develop financeable skills development mechanisms in accordance with the needs of enterprises, in particular of small ones, and at the same time to reach school leavers and young workers who would not have access to any formal education or training otherwise. The combination of two learning venues, e.g. through internship arrangements in enterprises, is possibly the lightest form of cooperative training, whereas a fully developed dual or apprenticeship training system as practised in Switzerland or Germany is its maturity stage. Such a fully developed dual system can neither be exported as a system, nor can the maturity stage directly be introduced as a comprehensive or national system. Cooperative training must grow bottom-up, and the development speed depends on the readiness of entrepreneurs to participate.

The Swiss supported cooperative training

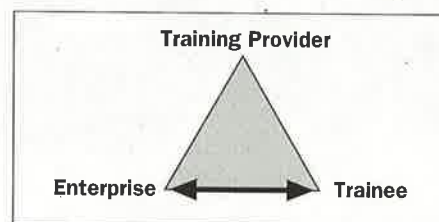
projects in Mali, Ecuador and Nicaragua are characterised by cooperation in three core areas:

- Learning venues
- Steering mechanisms
- Co-financing mechanisms

## Common features of cooperative training

### Employment contract as prerequisite

Trainees are recruited by employers and not by the training centre, and an employment contract in any form is an indispensable prerequisite for the participation in cooperative training. Accordingly, cooperative training takes place in a triangular relationship:



### Combination of learning venues

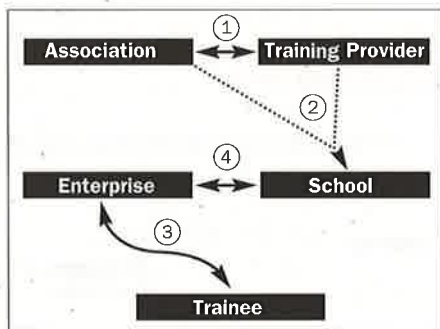
Cooperative training encompasses at least two learning venues. The core element of cooperative training is workplace-based learning in an enterprise, complemented by courses in any form, be it evening classes, morning classes, day-release classes, sandwich courses or weekend classes. Workplace-based learning usually takes place through the participation in the production process, it is not organised in the form of systematic training. The centre-based courses may feature

- general education subjects (including alphabetisation)
- technological knowledge
- entrepreneurial and business administration skills
- occupational skills.

It is important to understand that courses can be offered in one or more of the above areas, they don't have to comprise all of them. The synchronisation between the different learning venues is one of the great challenges of cooperative training at operational level.

### Ownership and steering mechanisms

The ownership of cooperative training systems remains with the enterprises and their organisations. The individual actors enter agreements with each other, be it in the form of mutual agreements or of formal contracts. The steering mechanism in the case of Ecuador looks like this:



- ① Associations and training providers enter a formal agreement on cooperative training
- ② The agreement between associations and training providers constitutes a "school" or a "training centre". Such a "school" is an organisation with its own budget, but it is housed within the premises of the training provider. The "school" offers the centre-based training components of the cooperative training
- ③ The individual enterprises have an employment or trainee contract with the trainees
- ④ The individual enterprises also enter contracts with the school, where they agree to send their trainees to classes and to pay the respective fees.

In Ecuador the whole system is steered by two committees:

#### Management committee:

It consists of three persons, i.e. one representative of the association, one representative of the training provider, and the "school" manager. The management committee is in charge of all administrative issues, including finances.

#### Technical committee:

It comprises representatives of associations, training providers, enterprises, and of Swisscontact as well. The technical committee is responsible for contents, training

plans, monitoring mechanisms and the development of the necessary instruments.

### Co-financing mechanisms

Traditional apprenticeship schemes and other non-formal skills acquisition arrangements are based on a bilateral agreement between individual enterprises and trainees, and their financing is bilateral as well. In cooperative training, a third actor representing public interests is a key player. Very much like the organization of co-operative training, its financing is also effectuated in a triangular relationship.

Cooperative training requires public co-financing out of any possible source. In Mali, a skills development fund has been established, while in Ecuador, co-financing comes from the levy funds. Other countries finance training providers directly.

### Favouring environment for cooperative training

Theoretically, there are no specific requirements for the introduction of cooperative training. Cooperative training can either be established by improving traditional apprenticeship systems or by developing new models. Nevertheless, some favouring factors for the introduction of cooperative training were identified:

#### Institutional and human resources

Training providers ready for cooperation with enterprises are an indispensable prerequisite for cooperative training. It is easier to motivate training providers when they are under any sort of reform pressure, be it for political or financial reasons.

#### Organisations of the world of work

Organisations of the world of work are key players in cooperative training. Therefore, cooperative training works best if such organisations (associations, chambers, clusters) already exist.

#### Funds for co-financing

It must be possible to mobilise public funds from any possible source for the co-financing of all centre-based training components of cooperative training.

#### Traditional and other non-formal skills acquisition schemes

Although the existence of traditional appren-

## Bolivia

### Formación profesional dual (Dual-type vocational education)

**Implementation:** Swisscontact  
**Financing:** SDC

In 1993, the initial intention was to introduce dual training as known from the Swiss model into the Bolivian VET system. It was expected that dual-type training would be cheaper than completely centre-based training of a similar standard. In several regional centres, dual-type apprenticeships have been introduced in metal and car mechanics and woodworks. Other economic branches, such as textiles have recently been added. All centres have been encouraged to develop further training courses – on the one hand to improve their degree of auto-financing, on the other hand because offering charged courses tends to force the teaching staff to keep up-to-date with technological developments. Dual training has been officially recognised. Tracer studies show that more than four fifth of graduates work in the learned or a similar profession. In 1999, about 1% of new entrants to the labour market were trained in dual mode.

Therefore, the current 1999–2002 project phase tends towards more flexibility (courses of two years with the possibility to leave with an officially recognised certificate after one year, and optional modular specialisation instead of the initial 2-year single-entry and single-exit courses), shorter courses (the new apprenticeships in textiles last 1,5 years), and lowering entry barriers by offering catch-up courses for those who have not finished primary school. System development support has become more important because another important donor recently stopped supporting the national VET foundation.

**Budget (1999–2002):** CHF 2'700'000.–  
**Project staff:** 1 expatriate, 3 local staff.

#### Partners:

- INFOCAL, the National Bolivian VET Foundation, and its regional departments.

## Nicaragua



Photo: Swisscontact

With ATEMEC apprenticeship, young auxiliary workers can follow recognised professional training.

### ATEMEC (Aprendizaje Técnico de Mecánicos)

**Implementation:** Swisscontact

**Financing:** Liechtenstein Development Service (from 2000)

This project has been part of a crafts promotion project which started in 1991. Cooperatives of informal sector enterprises offer their member services such as credits, the common purchase of spare parts and other items, further training and the ATEMEC apprenticeships scheme that allows young auxiliary workers to follow a systematic and recognised professional training. ATEMEC was initially created for the sons of the entrepreneurs who formed the cooperatives and was carried out completely within the service organisations. It has now become a cooperative training programme leading to an officially recognised

diploma. Training lasts two years. Students receive theory instruction on Saturdays and two practical courses in state-owned vocational training centres in addition to the practical training in their workshops. The state used to finance part of the training costs, but has considerably reduced its contribution to training institutions. As employers and students already contribute within their financial possibilities, the programme would have to find other sources of income in order to become financially sustainable. The current follow-up phase will end in 2002.

**Local budget (2000):** CHF 52'000.–

**Project staff:** 1 local employee.

**Partner:**

– CECOPEMENIC, central organisation of cooperatives

ticeship schemes is not an indispensable prerequisite, improving existing systems is easier than introducing new ones.

#### Regulation of the training market

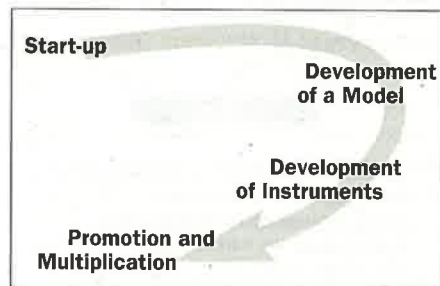
The development of cooperative training requires niches and works best if the training market is sparsely regulated.

#### Economic dynamism

As cooperative training is mostly driven by employers, it works best in sub-sectors of the economy which are either comparatively dynamic, or which are willing to overcome a current crisis.

### Cooperative training in the programme cycle

Experience in different programmes lead to the proposal of an ideal programme cycle:



#### Start-up phase

The readiness of employers to participate is the crucial element of cooperative training. Thus, projects initially have to focus on entrepreneurs and their interests. During this stage, enterprises should not only be perceived as potential partners, and as training venues for trainees, but also as beneficiaries. Traditional apprenticeship schemes and other non-formal skills acquisitions arrangements shall be explored for their potential to be improved and developed into a cooperative training model.

#### Model development phase

Based on the results of the start-up phase, cooperative training approaches are designed, developed and piloted in 2–3 promising sub-sectors of the economy. The perspective is strictly a sectoral one, and the donor preferably makes available sector-specific (expatriate) expertise. Model development requires time, and a considerable amount of trial and error has to be accepted.

### Development of instruments

If models in selected sub-sectors work, the instruments for promotion and multiplication can be developed. Activities may include:

- a precise description of the model for promotional activities,
- formulating terms and conditions for the cooperation between the different actors, including sample contracts,
- drawing up sample questionnaires or sample TOR for the assessment of the potential in interested sub-sectors,
- establishing models for cost calculation and co-financing mechanisms,
- designing instruments for controlling.

During this stage, the donor agency makes available expertise in organisational and institutional development, in business and VET administration.

### Promotion and multiplication phase

The developed model is being promoted. During the multiplication phase, the donor should make available expertise in curriculum development, instructors training, manager training, and HRD for cadres of associations.

### Remaining questions

#### Is cooperative training either "small and beautiful" or "big and ugly"?

Cooperative training must be developed bottom-up. Individual cooperative training sub-systems are always highly localised, be it sectorally or geographically. Multiplication is possible on the basis of developed models. Governments can create conditions which favour multiplication, they can make co-financing arrangements, but they cannot introduce cooperative training as national systems in a top-down approach. Only a jigsaw of many different "small and beautiful" sub-systems can develop into a cooperative training system which is not "big and ugly".

#### Can cooperative training systems be developed and implemented by training providers?

As has been mentioned above, the ownership of cooperative training systems has to remain with entrepreneurs and their associations. This does not prevent training providers from venturing into training approaches with internship and on-the-job arrangements in enterprises, but they cannot unilaterally introduce an employer-driven cooperative training system. ■

## La formation coopérative entre l'innovation et l'apprentissage traditionnel

Matthias Jäger, KODIS Consult

*On peut distinguer entre deux stratégies d'acquis de compétences professionnelles. D'un côté, il y a la formation professionnelle scolaire, et de l'autre côté, on se base sur la formation pratique qui reprend des modèles d'apprentissage traditionnel. La formation coopérative réunit ces deux stratégies en incitant les centres de formation et les employeurs (avec leurs entreprises) à coopérer à plusieurs niveaux.*

*L'idée principale de la formation coopérative (connu sous le nom de « formation par apprentissage » au Mali) est de trouver des mécanismes de développement de compétences qui sont abordables au plan financier et qui correspondent aux besoins des entreprises (surtout des petites entreprises). Avec ce type de formation on essaie d'atteindre des jeunes gens ayant terminé leur scolarité ou des jeunes travailleurs qui n'ont pas eu accès à une formation formelle ou professionnelle. La combinaison de deux lieux d'apprentissage, par exemple en introduisant des stages, est probablement la forme la plus souple d'une formation coopérative – tandis qu'un système dual développé comme en Suisse ou en Allemagne représente le concept dans sa pleine maturité.*

*(et pas le centre de formation) recrute les apprentis. Un contrat de travail est une condition indispensable pour la participation à une formation coopérative.*

*Les projets de formation coopérative soutenus par la Suisse (DDC et Swisscontact) au Mali, Equateur et Nicaragua encouragent la coopération dans trois domaines : les lieux de formation, le mécanisme de gestion et les mécanismes de co-financement.*

*En ce qui concerne les lieux, l'élément principal est l'apprentissage au lieu de travail, qui est complété par des cours dans des centres de formation. La coopération en termes de gestion se réalise avec des accords entre les acteurs individuels (entreprises, centres de formation, associations).*

*De toute façon, les droits de possession d'un système de formation coopérative restent dans les mains de l'entreprise et des organisations professionnelles.*

*Les frais de la formation sont bien sûr supportés par les entreprises et par les apprentis. La formation coopérative a besoin d'un co-financement par des fonds privés ou par des subventions publiques. ■*

### Du bas vers le haut

*Il est important de noter qu'un tel système ne peut pas être exporté dans son intégralité. La formation coopérative s'introduit du bas vers le haut, et son acceptation et sa mise en place dépendent de la volonté des entrepreneurs. Il est essentiel que l'employeur*