



ILO/Cinterfor Notes

Nº 13 June 2022

Date: june 2022



ILO/Cinterfor and its contribution to quality apprenticeships in Latin America and the Caribbean

Introduction¹

The structural situation of young people in the region's labour market has historically been characterized by low participation and employment rates, discouragement and withdrawal from the labour market, education and training, together with unemployment rates that are double (or triple) those of adults. In addition to the quantitative indicators of the labour market, there are qualitative considerations about the quality of employment to which our young people predominantly have access: precariousness, informality, job and income insecurity and lack of representation and voice are some of the notions that emerge when adopting this perspective.

The transition from the world of education to the world of work is particularly challenging and difficult for many young people in Latin America and the Caribbean; on the other hand, from the business world and employers, voices are heard referring to the difficulties in finding young people with the skills, knowledge, and technical and socio-emotional competencies they need. The skills gap and the mismatch between the training offered and that required by the productive fabric are concepts that appear frequently in the debate on vocational training and skills development in the region.

Faced with this reality, in the realm of public education and technical-vocational training policies, the training modality known as apprenticeship (also referred to as "dual training" in several countries of the region) have gained renewed impetus in recent years.

Indeed, this training modality² is experiencing a period of renewed interest on the part of those responsible for the formulation and implementation of national training policies in several countries in the region, both from the national vocational training institutions as well as from the Ministries of Labour responsible for active labour market policies and the Ministries of Education responsible for education policy in general and technical education in particular.

This is noticeable in many different ways: in initiatives to reform the regulatory frameworks governing apprenticeships in the countries; discussions on the public agenda on how to strengthen existing programmes and scale them up at national and sectoral level; how to organise the governance of apprenticeship programmes and incorporate the participation of the social partners in it; how to make it more attractive to employers; how to improve curricula and the training of trainers and tutors in companies; etc.

Likewise, in a region such as Latin America and the Caribbean, with a history of precarious youth employment and situations of disguised youth employment relationships through different forms of training contracts, it is also natural that this apprenticeship boom arouses fears or suspicions, especially when it is mixed or confused with other forms of work-based learning such as internships or traineeships.

ILO/Cinterfor has accompanied this movement with great interest, assuming a proactive attitude towards quality apprenticeships, which has manifested itself fundamentally in three ways: i) through the development

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² For the purposes of this Note, apprenticeship can be understood as any form of education and training governed by an apprenticeship contract that enables an apprentice to acquire the skills required for an occupation through structured training consisting of on-the-job training supplemented by off-the-job training leading to a recognized qualification. This definition is used in the proposed text of the Recommendation drawn up by the Office and presented in the report submitted to the 110th International Labour Conference.

of studies and research at regional level on various dimensions of apprenticeships; ii) through the design and implementation of capacity building initiatives (especially virtual courses and workshops) for vocational training institutions and for the tripartite ILO constituents (governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations), to strengthen apprenticeships in the countries of the region; and iii) through the promotion of horizontal cooperation between these same key actors, especially vocational training institutions that are members of ILO/Cinterfor.

In what follows, some of the main initiatives carried out by ILO/Cinterfor in recent years in each of these three dimensions of the promotion of apprenticeship in Latin America and the Caribbean will be presented.

Knowledge generation and dissemination

ILO/Cinterfor has historically been characterised as a centre for knowledge management in the field of vocational training, in its most diverse themes and aspects. Apprenticeships is no exception.

First of all, the publication of the ILO/Cinterfor's flagship book, published in 2018, entitled *Quality Apprenticeship: A practical perspective for Latin America*

Firstly, we could mention the publication of the ILO/Cinterfor's flagship book, published in 2018, entitled *Quality apprenticeship Toolkit: A practical perspective for Latin America and the Caribbean*³. This publication combines a conceptual exposition of what is meant by quality apprenticeships within the ILO in general and ILO/Cinterfor in particular, with the presentation of a series of practical tips and tools for vocational training actors in Latin America and the Caribbean interested in implementing apprenticeship programmes or strengthening existing ones.

More recently, in 2021 ILO/Cinterfor carried out two initiatives of comparative studies at country level in Latin America and the Caribbean aimed at generating knowledge on apprenticeships in the region and presenting practical recommendations for their improvement.

The first of these was developed jointly by ILO/Cinterfor and the Global Apprenticeships Network (GAN)⁴. It is a study on the legal regulatory frameworks for apprenticeships in six countries in the region: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic.

These comparative studies focused on analysing the legal frameworks for apprenticeships in these countries on the basis of a series of previously defined common dimensions, among which were: the conceptualisation

and definition of apprenticeship (or dual training, as the case may be) given in the regulatory framework; the definition of the key roles and institutions in the implementation of apprenticeship; the social dialogue and governance of the system; the systemic characteristics of the implementation of apprenticeship; the rights and duties of each party, established in the apprenticeship agreements/contracts; the dimension of social inclusion of disadvantaged groups that these legal frameworks might eventually contain.

In addition to analysing the legal frameworks, each national report contains some conclusions and/or recommendations, either for their improvement or for issues to be addressed in national debates on apprenticeship policy⁵.

Also in 2021, ILO/Cinterfor carried out another regional comparative study, this time together with the EUROSociAL+ Programme and the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB) of Germany, to learn about the experiences, perceptions, opinions and good practices of companies using this training modality and to reflect on recommendations to achieve a better coordination with this actor.

The study was carried out in Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Mexico and Peru. Among others, it had the following specific objectives: the generation of knowledge on the business perspective regarding the current functioning of quality apprenticeship programmes and experiences in Latin America; identification of good practices and proposals aimed at reducing gaps associated with gender, age and social class; generation of knowledge on business structures and their support role in the implementation of this training modality; linkages between enterprises and training centres and participation (or not) of intermediary entities that accompany young people in their insertion process; generation of knowledge inputs on how to structure adequate incentives for the participation of more enterprises in this training modality and on apprenticeships as a strategy for labour market insertion; elaboration of recommendations on the articulation and establishment of communication channels between the actors involved in the design and development of quality apprenticeships, as well as between companies and their representative associations; elaboration of a series of public policy recommendations on how to support companies of different sectors and sizes to implement apprenticeship programmes with special attention to the inclusion of women, disadvantaged groups and lagging territories, among others⁶.

Both studies will be released to the public shortly, together with the respective partner institutions.

³ The publication is available here: <https://www.oitcinterfor.org/en/publications/cinterfor/qualityapprenticeship>

⁴ More information regarding the Global Apprenticeship Network can be found here: <https://www.gan-global.org/>

⁵ At the time of writing this note, in June 2022, the national reports are being reviewed and edited, and will be published jointly by GAN and ILO/Cinterfor in the near future.

⁶ At the time of writing, the comparative component of the study is being prepared by the Interdisciplinary Centre for Public Policy (CiPP) of the Alberto Hurtado University in Chile for publication.

Capacity building

Capacity building within the vocational training institutions of the ILO/Cinterfor network, as well as the ILO's tripartite constituents, is another of the Centre's *raison d'être*.

In this field, since the COVID 19 pandemic and the impossibility of organising face-to-face technical assistance activities for much of 2020 and 2021, ILO/Cinterfor has been offering virtual courses and workshops on various topics related to vocational training.

Thus, in 2020, ILO/Cinterfor developed the first version of its virtual course-workshop on quality apprenticeships for Latin America and the Caribbean.

This virtual course-workshop is aimed at technical representatives of vocational training institutions, as well as representatives of workers' and employers' organizations that are part of their governing bodies. It seeks to provide a combination of conceptual elements and practical tips and tools to improve and strengthen existing apprenticeship programmes in the participating countries. A particular feature of these workshops, which gives them a special practical character, is that participants in each country team develop a roadmap or improvement plan for apprenticeships in their respective countries, which they then try to implement at the national level⁷.

The course-workshop was offered in Spanish in 2020 and 2021, and so far has had institutional participation from the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama and Uruguay.

In 2022, the course-workshop was offered in English, in partnership with the ILO Office for the Caribbean, with the participation of delegations from Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

Promotion of horizontal and South-South cooperation: Alliance for Dual Training in Latin America and the Caribbean and Community of Practice on Quality Apprenticeships

A third way in which ILO/Cinterfor fulfils its mission in the region regarding apprenticeships is through the promotion and encouragement of horizontal and South-South cooperation between vocational training institutions in this field.

In this regard, we should start by mentioning the formation of the Alliance for Dual Training in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2021. This Alliance was created in a process driven and led initially by the National College of Technical Vocational Education (CONALEP) of Mexico and the Federal Institute for Vocational Training

(BIBB) of Germany, with the aim of creating an instrument of cooperation between training institutions in the region for the promotion of this type of training and for their mutual strengthening and enrichment.

The Alliance, a highly pioneering initiative in terms of apprenticeships, was formally instituted at the International Colloquium on Perspectives and Consolidation of Dual Training in June 2021, and was joined by the following institutions, among others: CONALEP of Mexico, BIBB of Germany, SENAI of Brazil, INA of Costa Rica, SENA of Colombia, INSAFORP of El Salvador, INEFOP of Uruguay, INFOTEP of Dominican Republic, Fundación Chile Dual of Chile, Corporación Formados of Ecuador, INADEH of Panama and INTECAP of Guatemala. Upon completion of the Alliance, ILO/Cinterfor was designated to act as its Technical Secretariat⁸.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the community of practice that is being created among the alumni of the ILO/Cinterfor virtual courses-workshops on apprenticeships, mentioned above.

Indeed, the two cohorts of participants in these training activities have continued to meet regularly, through the Centre's platform and in synchronous meetings organized by Cinterfor, to share experiences, knowledge, lessons learned and good practices arising from the development of apprenticeships initiatives in their respective institutions. In this way, a sense of belonging to a collective has been created, which over time we are sure will benefit all participants individually and the vocational training community in Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole.

⁷ More information on this course-workshop can be found at: https://www.oitcinterfor.org/sites/default/files/CursoACalidad_Cinterfor_2021.pdf

⁸ An explanatory panel on the Alliance for Dual Training in Latin America and the Caribbean held at the ILO/Cinterfor Technical Committee Meeting of 2021 can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP_vEw-26xQ&list=PLarE9kcGh0CWjDFSXRjtZ-yyZ9I7PhHEv&index=15

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