

Michel Thiollent
Rio de Janeiro Federal University, Brazil)

Changes on working and on professional training in Brazil.

In Brazil, productive activities have faced deep changes during these past years. The organization of working conditions are brought up-to-date, new technologies replace the old ones and informatization spreads itself very rapidly. As the unemployment rate increases, the need to cope with new professional techniques becomes urgent. Great part of the active working force in Brazil has only reached low educational standards: illiteracy still exists and the greatest part of workers (about 60%) has not concluded primary school. This fact places Brazil in a lesser favorable competitive position if compared to other emerging countries and is also a handicap in terms of citizenship. The weak educational levels of primary school result in adaptation difficulties for most workers involved with new technologies or with new organization methods. Nowadays, it has become each time more evident that primary school is essential when learning specialized technologies later in life. This fact is both realized by the government and by the employers and trade unions. In the educational system, a reformatory law known as the "LDB" (Law of Directives for Basic School) intends to modify the teaching concepts and the teaching methods, specially for secondary school. The results, however, are to come on the long run.

Furthermore, different initiatives which seek to adjust primary and secondary school to higher levels are being financially supported by employers themselves and these initiatives are largely difused throughout television programs.

Trade unions, on their side, which had not taken part in this professional formation problem, have managed, since 1996, to play an important role elaborating formation and qualification programs together with school and universities.

Trade unions are not interested on training instruction courses in terms of claim. They also want to propose and execute such programs. In this context, training skills are seen as a question of citizenship.

Accordingly to the training programs proposed, language skills play an important role at all levels. As a matter of fact, these programs concern "alphabetization teams" in different cities - specially the ones in the industrial zone of Sao Paulo - the leveling of primary and secondary school as well as short-living specialized technique formation courses.

It is well known that the modern organization methods demand new specific skills from workers who are now highly demanded to be acquainted to communication skills, full control of oral and written language, team work and etc.

It is still commonly found among working relations subordination to authoritarian forms of command. Incoming technologies and quality management programs, however, demand more participation and communication. In Brazil, there are important debates about the changes on the production systems, informatization, new skills, etc. In order to adapt the adult formation and the professional formation to the new economical, social and technological scenario, there has to be a great effort on research and pedagogical techniques, specially those related to language skills. These techniques can be understood in following different aspects:

- learning to read and reinforcement of language skills by means of pedagogical theories based on practical actions;
- development of new vocabulary related to economy, working (labour) organization and to the new technologies, specially informatics;
- development of new communication and relationship skills as demanded by the new working conditions;
- closer exposure to foreign languages, notably English and Spanish.

A new conception of an appropriated professional formation can not limit itself to exlusevily dealing with wage-earning employees of modern companies. This new conception shall also take into consideration the possibility of placing unemployed workers within tertiary activities.