

PUBLICATION CONTENTS SUMMARY

Tontxu Campos

Head of the Department of Education, Universities and Research

Taking into account its continuity and the path carved out by the Plan Vasco de FP (Basque Vocational Training Plan) 2004-2007, Tontxu Campos, who was appointed Head of the Department of Education, Universities and Research a few months back, considers the infrastructure of Basque vocational training to be exemplary. Its priorities are to continue making progress in quality and innovation, to increase participation, and to equip the Basque Country's vocational training system with its own legislation to allow for greater "speed and ability to adapt" in crucial areas, such as the qualifications system, among others.



"We need our own Vocational Training Law"

You have said that, out of the three main pillars that will form the basis of your team's work over the next few years, vocational training will receive a boost. Are there any plans to change the previous team's work in this area? What are the immediate priorities of your department?

Over recent years, the Department of Education's most innovative area has been vocational training, which has introduced quality systems such as ISO 9000, EFQM, Investors in People, 5S, etc. We have also introduced three vocational training sub-systems, and I honestly think that this has been a success. A very high proportion of the Plan Vasco de FP of 1997, which received the support of social agents, was actually implemented, and the results could not have been more satisfactory. We are very happy with the work of the previous team and many of its members are still working at management level. As for this term, the strategic areas we will be working on have already been set down in the Plan Vasco de FP 2004-2007, and we will continue the development of these aspects. Our current priorities are to get to work on the new Ley Vasca de Formación Profesional y de las Cualificaciones (Basque Vocational Training and Qualifications Law) and to renew the Basque Council of Vocational Training.

You mention the integration of professional academic, continuous and occupational training. What degree of integration do you consider to be the best?

Well, a great deal of progress has been made. The current situation reflects how the our centres' dynamism, their

relationships with business, the need for technological and organisational training and updating, and certain proposals from companies and government bodies – regional governments, city councils and the Department of Justice, Employment and Social Security of the Basque Government – have created an exemplary basic, continuous and occupational training infrastructure. We encourage coordination between institutions as there is a need for this, and I think this new legislation will give our vocational training centres what they want and what they deserve.

The Plan Vasco de Formación Profesional 2004-2007 had a budget of close to 870 million Euros. Now that we are more or less halfway through the Plan, would you say that this budget has been sufficient or are you considering allocating more funds to the Plan?

Financial resources are always tight and this is particularly the case in such a dynamic sector with very high installation costs. However, we have a good budget and continuity is the key here too – that is, we are certain that this is a strategic focus, that the plan will continue, that it has funds and that it will be evaluated so that, if necessary, improvements will be made and financial needs will be adapted to the projects and plans.

Do you think that the current system of qualifications can adapt quickly enough to the changing needs of production sectors?

In this area, we are somewhat limited by the laws of the State Government. There is a basic regulation that we cannot surpass and hence, respond with the speed and ability to adapt. Nonetheless, we are always innovative and pioneering: we suggest, we try, we evaluate, sometimes we do make mistakes, but we keep trying all possible ways of facilitating training and keeping the people working in production up to date.

Innovation and quality are two of the pillars of the Plan Vasco de Formación Profesional. Are the progress made in these areas and the results obtained meeting the expectations and objectives of the Plan?

I think these two aspects are the strong points of our vocational training. We have been innovative with our quality management systems: we now have 40 centres with ISO 9000 certification, 35 centres with a silver Q, four with a gold Q, five with Investors in People certification, four with ISO 14000, many centres with Ecoskan, etc. Important efforts are also being made to introduce technological and organisational innovation to our centres, by all agents involved: management, teachers, non-teaching staff...

Despite good employment figures, improved vocational training results, a high degree of employer satisfaction, promotional campaigns, etc., the number of students enrolling in vocational training, leaving aside demographic adjustments, has not really taken off. Does vocational training have a marketing or image problem, or should we look to other reasons?

Over recent years, the number of students opting for vocational training has risen; they have seen vocational training as an attractive option with good employability, a far cry from the poor reputation it had a few years back. This is because we have invested in it and because the public has seen the good results. However, it is also true that we need a higher percentage of vocational training students if we are to reach the levels of other European countries. We would like around 60% to opt for vocational training and, once they have learned about the diverse professions and undergone training in the workplace, those who feel truly motivated and ready, would embark on university careers. The high degree of employability can sometimes work against students and prevent them from continuing their studies, but we try to juggle with both sides.

With the broad perspective you have acquired with your responsibility over the education system, what would you say to those who consider vocational training to be "inferior"?

I don't think that people nowadays regard vocational training as "inferior". In fact, I would say that the opposite occurs – there is the idea that heavy investments have been made, which have been worthwhile, and that we need to continue working to offer first-class, innovative vocational training with good results.

Vocational training brings together very diverse agents and interests. Is the "Basque network of vocational training", as we could call it, now sufficiently well-established?

The vocational training network is well-structured and established and we are starting to replace the individual methods of some centres and even some teachers with

network collaboration. In fact, this network collaboration has been decisive for many of the objectives we have reached. We also now have TKNIKA, the centre for innovation and training of teachers of vocational training, which is carrying out an excellent task along the lines of collaboration between centres and teachers.

The Plan Vasco de Formación Profesional was recently submitted to the European Commissioner for Education. How was it received and what was his impression?

That's right, this was in mid-November and the plan was received very well, thanks to the contacts of our regional office in Brussels. We spent an hour presenting our vocational training system and the new Plan Vasco de FP 2004-2007, and I think he was surprised by our employability data and the approach of our plan. He also liked our collaboration with companies and other agents, and his overall impression was very good. If we can arrange a suitable date, he may pay us a visit at the end of 2005/06.

Although the new LOE (Organic Education Law), maintains the essential design of vocational training established in the LOGSE (General Education Law), will the new text need revising in the interests of Basque vocational training?

In theory, it will be left as it was established in the LOGSE, but we also have Ley 5/2002 de FP y de las Cualificaciones (Vocational Training and Qualifications Law), which is currently being developed. Hence, we would like our own vocational training legislation to include our integrated system, which is giving us such good results.

"Round-table discussion with trade-union representatives"

Representatives of the trade unions CCOO, UGT, STEE-EILAS, ELA and LAB were invited by IKASLAN Gipuzkoa to discuss their opinions on a crucial issue for colleges and teachers: the problems caused by staff instability and possible solutions. The debate also covered matters brought about by this situation that go beyond mere procedure, such as the system of allocating posts, defining the profile of posts, and application of the protocol.



Patxi Vaquerizo, Secretary of IKASLAN Gipuzkoa and Director of the IEFPS Usurbil vocational training college that hosted the discussion planned it as an opportunity to work together to find solutions: "This meeting is not intended to substitute any other way of working, we know that the intermediaries between the Government and ourselves are you, the trade unions, but the colleges are also aware of the labour instability and believe that anything we can do to improve this stability will be positive for everybody – the workers, the colleges and above all, our students – because if we want to raise the standard of education, improve safety for teachers and pupils, and ensure that projects are continued, we need to increase staff stability, though we are also aware that this is a difficult issue to resolve".

Along these lines, **Maite Pérez (CCOO)** started off the open-floor discussion, stating that "some time ago, this trade union said that it was in favour of negotiating stability in colleges and that what had already been achieved by experimental means in some colleges should be extended to all the others, because we sometimes found situations where teachers had started a course but had to leave the following year because they did not have a place on the lists that would enable them to take up the same position, etc.. We also said that substitutes were becoming a kind of all-roads vehicle, spending time planning courses without being able to finish any of them... Therefore, CCOO is in favour of affording stability to training courses, with all due caution and after negotiating what needs to be negotiated".

Koldo Olaskoaga (STEE-EILAS) indicated that "stability in colleges is not only positive for vocational training, it is good for all forms of education. We do not wish to distinguish vocational training from other education systems and think that this issue should be discussed in a sector-wide debate, a field where we haven't had any negotiation for years and where stability is not discussed – though it is a very important issue for the field. We understand that when we talk of stability in colleges, we are talking about a balance between the needs and wishes of the colleges, and the rights of the employees filling the positions. Cutting corners with this issue, which is what the Directorate of Vocational Training has done over the last few years, has generated mistrust, because the Department has regularly made decisions without consulting the sector as to how certain situations should be regulated. It is a very important issue for everybody and one which requires agreement between the social element and the Department, and a change in the latter's attitude, if it is to generate the confidence needed so that when we sit down to a discussion, we don't get the feeling that what is actually being done is the opposite of what we are proposing". On the same subject, he went on to say that despite the problems, stability in colleges had increased since 2002 and suggested that "perhaps we need to understand that there will always be limits to stability because colleges can keep the same staff from one year to the next but the composition can vary, and this also affects the civil servants. Therefore, we will always have a mobility problem and we need to reach an agreement on how far we can go: What is our target?"

allocation. However, we are very critical of what has been done and are very angry. We believe that the responsibility lies not only with the Department, but also with the colleges". Citing some specific cases, he said that "measures have been adopted furtively and treacherously, which have given stability to certain posts without taking into account trade unions and the measures agreed. This type of manoeuvre has led this trade union, which was in support of the stability measures, to instantly question the validity of anything proposed by this Government and by Ikañeta, because we have enough information to know what has been going on. We cannot allow this type of action and have reported it. The Government does not deal with the area of negotiation and has no respect towards the trade unions. We will openly acknowledge that vocational training, like the other stages, has specific characteristics and needs, and are in favour of stability measures in colleges. One of these is the stability agreement although this needs to be debated because in our opinion, it does not satisfy the real needs. However, we need to continue along these lines and promote other measures giving stability to colleges and staff so that education can be taught how it should be, adhering to the principle of respect for workers' rights. However, to be able to negotiate this, all parties must have a respectful attitude and no steps must be taken that could call into question the workers' rights, which is what is happening at the moment".

Patxo Eguía (UGT), linked the improved stability to a reduction in labour insecurity, recalling that the civil servant round-table discussion "has already agreed that we need to reduce the non-civil servant proportion of staff to a maximum of 8%" and



For Xabier Expósito (ELA), "the stability issue is probably the chief issue that needs to be tackled by trade unions in the public sector at this time". Concurring with the inconvenience of "cutting corners", he added that "over 20,000 people work full-time in Basque public education, although the list of posts published in the Bulletin contains just over 16,000 places. Therefore, almost 25% of the real posts in colleges are provisional, though they actually aren't, because they exist structurally and are paid year upon year. We believe that while the Government in general and the Department in particular insist with their policy of freezing staff numbers and fail to introduce real policies to deal with permanent needs using staff with open-ended contracts, it will not be easy to adopt measures to solve this problem and increase the stability required by the colleges and by the teachers in their contractual relations. Nonetheless it is true that the characteristics of education – and particularly vocational training with its diverse courses, families and different specialisations – are such that certain fluctuations are inevitable, as they are with civil servants. Bearing this in mind, agreements such as the current stability agreement, which establishes the right to be fixed at a college but excludes substitutes, have allowed progress to be made and should therefore now be extended to substitutes. In cases where it cannot be applied and problems arise, we need to adhere strictly to the principles of equality, merit and skills".

Esteban Agirre (LAB) reminded those present that "we said that we were willing to introduce measures to increase stability at colleges and even made some suggestions for this, indicating how we considered it necessary to define post profiles adequately in order to measure their incidence on post

indicating that "another line being studied is the possibility of a second route of access to the civil service that would not involve the traditional examination, which would allow us to reduce the insecurity of those who have been in the education system for years". "We all want to avoid insecurity" he said, "for one reason or another". Where these coincide, trade unions and colleges will work hand in hand and where they don't, we'll need to find a middling solution. We want to improve the stability of staff at colleges and avoid employee uncertainty. But we need to negotiate this issue with the seriousness it merits and with the aim of reaching solutions".

The moderator, Patxi Vaquerizo, put to the trade-union representatives the possibility of introducing one-off measures to reduce instability and insecurity, such as trying to ensure that substitutions for certain fixed periods – such as teaching substitutions for management members, trade-union discharges, etc. – are awarded to substitutes for the whole period and not renewed each year. The trade unions were generally in favour of studying this and other types of additional measures, but they all coincided in that, before measures were evaluated and adopted, all the circumstances and consequences would need to be studied in detail and with guarantees for the workers.

QUESTIONS ABOUT APPLICATION

After hearing general considerations on the problems raised in colleges and for teachers by the current instability of a high percentage of vocational training teachers, and possible ways

to solve this, the second part of the discussion focused on issues related to the above but which were more practical considerations referring basically to the procedures used at the start of the course, such as the calculation of posts, the defining of post profiles, allocation of posts, and the protocol applied in the event that teachers do not suit the profile of the post in question. Generally, all of the trade-union representatives coincided in that they regarded some of the mechanisms and procedures put in place over recent years as positive – with the exception of the post allocation date, which they considered to be too late. They were, however, very critical of the manner in which these mechanisms and procedures have been applied on numerous occasions.

Patxo Eguía (UGT) started off the discussion session by pointing out, in no uncertain terms, "it really gets my back up what starts off in June or July and ends with the competition": it ends up as a few posts that nobody can get their hands on, with so much confusion and questions left unanswered that even I, a vocational training teacher, can't understand. In this sense, I think there are things that colleges aren't doing properly, posts that shouldn't be substituted are being substituted, and I think that if we are talking about stability, the primary stability should be with the college. A college with unstable courses, etc. cannot have a stable workforce, and this generates further instability in the whole environment".

Maite Pérez (CCOO) also referred to "poor-quality posts" as one of the "main problems", since "nobody can take them on with any degree of security, though sometimes the colleges create them specifically like this because then the dreadful post ends

allocation process for substitutes has been an improvement on previous courses".

Xabier Expósito (ELA) coincided with the STEE-EILAS representative in his criticism of the "opaqueness of the post identification process, which was previously conducted with a certain degree of transparency – at least in Gipuzkoa. Now, the situation is quite the opposite: we are finding out what is going on through our members, and this clouds our vision a great deal because members come to us when they detect irregular situations and the problems are already there". On the issue of dates and how posts are calculated and allocated, the ELA representative indicated that "teachers have problems with finding out their position so late on, and it not only affects substitutes, because it is becoming increasingly possible for civil servants to be in the same situation, finding out what they are teaching and where they need to go very late on. I don't think that bringing the date forward is a problem for the trade unions; it is the Government that has problems with this as, to a certain degree, they are concerned with enrolment. Nonetheless, moving it from September to July, like primary, would bring more advantages than disadvantages, although clearly problems may arise when it comes to adding the final details to planning. We agree with the school pact mentioned by CCOO, so long as teachers do not have to assume the consequences by teaching more hours to make up for poor planning. Nonetheless, despite the problems, we think it is a good start".

In line with the previous two contributions, Esteban Agirre (LAB) said that "we need to demand that trade unions are able



up as a concrete position. And this is wrong, because we think it is an attempt to create stability by irregular means. However, we consider it more serious that posts are allocated as late as they are, since those who are awarded substitutions only find out at the start of September and have just a few days to prepare. We have been asking for a school pact or arrangement for a long time, so that posts can be allocated earlier. We know that enrolment has an important bearing on post calculation, but we think that it could be done in July, so long as the Government realises that one year it might need to fund an extra teacher at a college or that a college may need to cope with one less resource".

Koldo Olaskoaga (STEE-EILAS) highlighted the fact that "while, a few years back, the way vacancies were calculated before allocation was fairly transparent, nowadays, the criteria are approved and sent to the trade unions around April or May, and then the entire application is completely taken out of the hands of the trade unions, because we are not given any more information. Before, we could at least give our opinion, but now this lack of information is widespread. We are given a list of posts over which we have absolutely control and we also get the impression that the inspection is not doing its job properly. We have come across cases where the timetable distribution at some colleges goes against the regulations and yet, the inspection says nothing and just carries on. We are not informed about the open-ended hiring of certain individuals, and, in the case of vocational training, there is a series of services commissions that are not explained in enough detail. Nonetheless, we do think that this year's centralised final post-

to monitor posts, because there is no kind of control, and to do this, we need to activate the regional planning commissions. We cannot move forward under these conditions, we feel more like investigators than trade unionists. Returning to the previous topic, the stability measures would reduce the number of posts marketed and this would simplify management". According to Agirre, the lack of information also extends to the defining of post profiles, "because if this information is not specified at the time of allocation, people don't know what post they are taking on. It is often the case that they turn up at the college and realise that the job has nothing to do with what they expected – and this leads to serious problems. Profiling is necessary, but we need to be sure that it is a technical and serious task, and this union has many questions about whether the original reasons for profiling are being taken into account. We think that on occasion it is used to generate a tailored design of the post. These are digital profiles – and not in the technological sense. We think the same of the services commissions. We said yes to the services commissions because some posts are difficult to allocate, but we need guarantees – and we don't have them at this time. Another area mentioned is the protocol of action for cases where the profile of the person does not match the profile of the post. We supported this protocol, which had a very clear purpose, but nobody told us that it would include, for example, the head of studies deciding by the use of an examination. A few years back, practices such as these were one-offs, but they are becoming increasingly widespread. We cannot allow somebody to say to a teacher 'you're worthless' and leave them in the corner, because this is workplace bullying and it will not be tolerated. We agree to the protocol, but wish

to point out that it is being used in a fraudulent and perverse manner that we cannot allow because of the respect required for workers and because after all, it breaches all legislation and regulations. If we continue in this manner, our trade union will break off negotiations saying that, until the regulations change, the only condition that can be required to fill a position is the relevant qualification".

In this respect, Xabier Expósito (ELA) said that, "given the diversity of vocational training, it is a good idea for profiles to be defined for posts; having a lot of information about a post is good for everybody: for the teacher, the college and particularly, for the students, who are the ones we need to answer to afterwards. However, the composition of the post must be that indicated in the decree and what candidates must be capable of. As regards application of the protocol, there are some very worrying practices in certain colleges and we even have reports of psychological damage caused to individuals not only by the fact that they have been turned down, but also for the way in which they have been treated. In these situations, we cannot bury our heads in the sand, nor should the management of the colleges. There is another important issue too: the vast difference in the number of cases in which the protocol is used from one region to another – and not only in terms of numbers, there are also differences in the way it is used. For example, it is disturbing that a teacher at a certain college can be considered incapable of teaching certain modules, while in another, he is considered capable... This is starting to pass by our objectives. I would also like to add that, at least in Gipuzkoa, the procedure has been left in tatters this year. This is not a criticism of college management, but rather of the operation of the regional office".

Koldo Olaskoaga (STEE-EILAS) recalled that his trade union regarded as "positive the agreement to define profiles for posts and determine a protocol for cases where it was suspected that the person allocated to the post was unsuitable. It was better than the 2001 agreement, which established teacher profiling and led us down a one-way street. The protocol also looked like a means to solve problems, some of which were very difficult, that had arisen and had sometimes led to harassment. However, the current series of problems shows it only in a negative light. If it is used properly, it will solve a great deal of

problems, but as it is being used now, at least in Gipuzkoa, it cannot offer guarantees. Our impression is that inspections are currently a mere procedure and if they are not doing their job, if they are not reporting on the veracity of what has been introduced – something which we believe to be a very important step forward – if it is not being used as agreed, then it no longer of any value to us".

As regards the regional differences in application of this protocol, Maite Pérez (CCOO) indicated that her trade union was not aware of any particularly serious problems, "although it is true that there are individuals who have been unable to do their job properly because the post did not correspond with what they had been told when they were allocated the position".

Lastly, Patxo Eguía (UGT) insisted that many of the problems discussed could be resolved by trying to allocate posts before the summer, "something which is already being done in Autonomous Communities with many more teachers than ours, so I don't believe what the Government says, unless we are very complicated over here and the others are just more intelligent than us. Since there are others that have everything organised for July, there must be some kind of procedure for doing this and ensuring that teachers know where they are going to be working in the next school year before they break up for the summer, and there is more time to sort everything out. It is true that we have the problem of private education, which doesn't allow any other form of enrolment or enrolment in regional offices, but perhaps we need to try and work around this stumbling block".

This round-table discussion ended by taking into account the existence of important nuances (the differences in the school map of the Basque Country and those of other Autonomous Communities, the issue of language profiling, the special characteristics of vocational training or the lack of definition regarding who should take responsibility for the mismatching that moving the date forward could produce and how this should be done) and with a general stance that favoured moving the allocation date forward. Patxi Vaquerizo hoped the discussion would be "a starting point so that, insofar as this is possible, we can all work to obtain the best working conditions for teachers and vocational training colleges".

Emotional intelligence

To bring emotions back into the limelight, to rescue them from their forgotten status due to the glorification of intellectual skills, and to transform them into a means of personal and collective improvement; these are the aims of Emotional Intelligence, a discipline much more than a mere fad, and one for which Gipuzkoa is paving the way in a pioneering tradition.



José Ramón Guridi, Director for the Promotion of Innovation and Knowledge of Gipuzkoa Regional Government and Richard Boyatzis, one of the world's most renowned emotional intelligence experts.



A project set to continue and grow

In January 2005, the Department for Innovation of the Regional Government of Gipuzkoa introduced a pioneering project aimed at building emotional intelligence in schools with the aim of generating emotional environments that would encourage creativity and entrepreneurial spirit with creative dynamics.

The project was aimed at the management of educational organisations in Gipuzkoa and teaching staff of all levels and from all fields of education. Over recent months, it has produced 86 courses – organised into various levels, from beginner to "expert", the latter designed for trainers – which have been attended by 77 centres and 850 individuals. At the end of the course, the participants indicated a very high degree of satisfaction (8.13 out of 10).

According to José Ramón Guridi, Director for the Promotion of Innovation and Knowledge of Gipuzkoa Regional Government, "it has been shown that over 80% of professional and personal success is down to emotional skills, which reinforce the intellectual ones. Given the potential and impact of this discipline, we want Gipuzkoa to be pioneering in the development of emotional intelligence".

"Particularly important for education"

Bilbao-born psychologist Begoña Ibarrola is a member of the team that taught the first courses in Emotional Intelligence to Guipuzcoan teachers who signed up for the programme. Her conclusion, like that of the participants, is very positive: "People realise that it is useful, that it improves their quality of life, and that's important".



- Emotional Intelligence has achieved great success in very little time and has become a major trend. What would you say to those who consider it precisely that, a passing trend?

- Although it may look like a fad, it is actually much more than that – it is a need. Psychologists had pointed out that it wasn't enough for students to simply acquire knowledge, that they needed a series of emotional skills, like any other person, allowing them to feel good in themselves and maintain satisfactory social relationships. This type of skill – not normally taught in the classroom – is the focus of Emotional Intelligence, which is a kind of compendium of skills: getting to know ourselves, our emotional world, our temperament, our talents and limits, our aims in life... It is a series of intrapersonal skills – related to ourselves – and of interpersonal skills, such as learning to get on with others, learning to listen to others and understanding how they feel, knowing how to resolve and prevent conflict... It is a kind of big tool box that you will use throughout your life, beyond school and work, and in your private life. This is what we have gleaned from many years of observing how the individuals who acquired these tools or emotional skills made changes to many aspects of their lives – for the better.

- Compared to intellectual skills though, emotions are regarded as a secondary tool. Is it easy to deconstruct this preconception?

- That's right, emotions have been regarded as a hindrance, rather than a help. For generations, we have placed too much importance on cognitive aspects to the detriment of others. We have placed too much emphasis on knowing a lot about something, having a lot of masters' degrees, etc., and not enough on enjoying a healthy social, affective and emotional life. Fortunately, this is now changing. Over 200,000 studies have been conducted since the nineties, allowing neuroscience

Hence, the programme will not only be continued, but it will actually be given a boost during 2006, for which a target has been set of more than 10% of teachers and 30% of centres actively participating in the development of emotional intelligence. In addition to courses, the coming months will witness the introduction of coaching or tailored tutoring plans, specific materials will be created in Basque, and systems will be implemented to evaluate the impact of the programme's activities on centres, experience-sharing networks, Emotional Intelligence plans for centres, etc.

With the assistance of an expert guide

Gipuzkoa Regional Government has not embarked alone on this adventure of integrating emotional skills into teaching and other areas. It is being advised by top specialists, including Richard Boyatzis, one of the world's most renowned experts in the field, regular collaborator of Daniel Goleman, "the father of EI", and author of many best-selling books on the subject. On a recent visit to Gipuzkoa, Boyatzis pointed out that "the Basque Country has a culture of relations that makes it easier to introduce emotional intelligence here than in other places".

experts to confirm all the intuitions of psychologists and educators in areas such as that relating emotional health to physical health. However, there is clearly an innate barrier – people don't feel comfortable talking about their feelings. Nonetheless, our emotions are there and they are there for a reason. We need to learn to control and channel them so that they don't control us, although we have very little knowledge about our emotional world due to the lack of attention it has been paid. And this is particularly important in a world like ours, where we are constantly put under more and more pressure. It is difficult to get the message across at first because of these preconceptions, but when people see that handling their emotions correctly is a useful thing that makes them feel better and happier, all obstacles are overcome. It is also a very structured discipline. Emotional education can be approached from a variety of angles, using many different strategies, but perfectly systematised tools are always used. For teaching, there are various modules, activities, programmes for different levels, mechanisms for evaluation, etc. And obviously, the teacher's own creativity – this is why it is important that teaching professionals are properly trained in this area, although afterwards they continue to learn with their students.

- What is our current emotional shortcoming?

- I would say that we have a very big problem with self-esteem, which is causing lots of problems with harassment and abuse. There is also a major assertiveness problem: people just cannot say no and although we think people who say yes to everything are better and nicer people, we need to learn to say no and put limits on others. And very serious problems with self-control. Also, there is more and more evidence of problems with motivation and future planning. Many people are losing their hopes and dreams, they think that they cannot do anything because everything is given to them already packaged.

- Putting aside our private lives for the moment, are there any other areas in which emotional skills are particularly useful?

- Yes there are – education is one of them. Education today could be regarded as a 'high-risk' environment, where teachers themselves realise that they do not have the mechanisms and means to deal with many of the problems arising in the classroom. Obviously, some students bring their personal problems into the classroom, but we are also seeing group problems. For example, the notion of authority is losing ground and any form of regulation is seen as repression. With emotional intelligence, we try to make the discipline come from within, so that we do not need to use external regulations to govern conduct or impose fines. In this regard, children who work with their emotional skills from primary education act differently because they have learned to control themselves, to resolve conflict peacefully, to

relate to each other in a different way, to detect signs of stress and to control them... On the other hand, somebody with a very high degree of emotional tension who does not know how to manage it, cannot learn and cannot show what they know. Nonetheless, we need to talk about the general environment, an environment that does not respect our natural rhythm, where we have to do everything faster, where children, teenagers and adults are asked to do lots of things at the same time and quickly, where the concept of speed has been confused with efficacy. In this explosive environment, the traditional concept of intelligence is not enough, we need to be emotionally intelligent or intelligent in general, but also need to take into account our emotions.

- 16% of those who attended the courses were vocational training teachers. Does vocational training have a special connection with emotional education?

- I think so. Firstly, many teachers have an excellent technical grounding and knowledge but have weaker teaching skills, so they need other means to solve problems in the classroom. We also need to remember that vocational training has a direct link with the labour market, it is more 'hands on' than other systems, so it is a priority to equip students with the mechanisms for successful integration in the labour market where, at a very young age, they will need to work with different people, be put under pressure, make decisions... Likewise, the emotional profile of candidates for staff recruitment is becoming more and more important. Another specific aspect is self-esteem. Due to stereotypes and prejudices, which are fortunately now changing, we often find fairly low levels of self-esteem among vocational training students. Many of them deal with it and resolve it themselves, but if we are training boys and girls to enter the labour market, we also need to educate them to have a high self-esteem so that they can listen to others, exercise self-control, learn to say no when they need to... If we only give them knowledge, we are not being honest with them.

Are you are a student and you work? With the part-time course, individuals can complete their education at any age



Francisco, Carlos and Rebeca are 45, 30 and 27 years old, respectively. Their working day is never-ending. They work shifts in a multi-national company located on the left bank of the river Nervion — and they study too. Since October, either before the start or after the end of their working day – remember they do shift work - they swap their uniforms for books.

All three have started a part-time course at the Instituto San Jorge of Santurtzi, along with another twenty students, to prepare for the entrance examination for a vocational training course.

The initiative for studying this course came from the company they work for. As they themselves point out, it was the com-

pany that gave them the initiative and encouraged them to study. "The company opened our eyes," says Rebeca. "They suggested it to help us work our way up in the company", adds Carlos.

They had never heard of a part-time vocational training course before. Then, one day, they saw a notice on the bulletin board in the company where they work informing employees about the possibility of accessing vocational training without having obtained a school-leaver's certificate and despite giving up on studying a long time ago.

So, like the other part-time vocational training students, Carlos, Francisco and Rebeca have gone back to school after a very long break.

The three students have very similar personal backgrounds: they left school while they were still very young, to start work. One stopped studying at the age of 14, another aged 17. For them, this represents a turning point in their lives. A turning point that, according to their teachers, is helping them much more than simply giving them a professional qualification. It is also helping them as individuals.

Combining work and study

"Are you a student or do you work?" was a common line a while back, but with these students we need to ask, "How do you combine work with study?" They give an emphatic answer: with difficulty. "It's very hard, you don't have time for anything".

"It's quite hard, you have to juggle classes, your work, the house..." says Rebeca, "but we are doing as well as we can". Francisco, the oldest of the three, agrees that it is hard. He also adds what he sees as another difficulty: the age gap. "There comes a time when you don't have any free time, you can't even do the food shopping", says Carlos.

"All three of us are independent, it's not like when you live with your mum and dad. You have to clean the house and you don't have time to look after your own home, do your errands..." they add.

They have very little free time, but they say that they are happy. Their teachers agree and add that these students have a good mental attitude, they feel good within themselves, and they readily come to class. "You only have to see how they enter the classroom", says Karmele the sociolinguistics teacher.

Enrique, the technology teacher, is aware of the considerable individual effort they put in, since they arrive after work. They remind us that they all work and that's where their individual effort lies.

Motivation

The teachers see their students as being very motivated because they are doing something that they will be able to apply to their work afterwards. They say that they started going for work reasons, but that now they feel valued. "Going to class proves to them that they aren't stupid", says one of the teachers.

In just under a month, the teachers have already witnessed a major change in all of their students, who arrived at the course with a rather sluggish attitude, frightened of what people would say. Now, however, they contribute in class, giving their opinions and asking questions. "They laugh a lot, they laugh at the daft things they – or rather – we say. I think it makes them feel good" say the teachers.

Even when they are on afternoon shifts, they still have to get up early because classes start at 9 a.m. They finish school at 12:15 and rush off to eat so that they can get to work on time. When they work night shifts, they get out of work at six in the morning, go home, sleep and get up with just enough time to eat and rush out – this time to class.

This is all possible because the course is taught in two blocks – morning and afternoon – and is organised in such a way that they can swap blocks to suit the hours they have to work. The teachers of the morning and afternoon classes are the same and the topics are also the same. The same topics are taught in the morning and evening classes, which makes it easier to keep up with the subject matter.

This preparatory course for vocational training access consists of five subjects: Mathematics, Technology (drawing, machine operation, electricity, mechanics, pneumatics...), Natural Sciences, Spanish, Geography and History. The aim is to reach the equivalent of the 2nd course of ESO, Spain's compulsory secondary education. The teachers indicate that 95% of students have a basic grounding in the subjects that they gradually recall as they study the topics in greater detail.

At first it was difficult for them to follow the classes because they left school so many years ago. However, as the students themselves say, "you start getting back into it. The teachers also help us a lot; they give us notes with the most important

things highlighted. And we go over things all the time. It's not the typical class where the teacher goes on and on and you have to take notes".

The teachers highlight the good atmosphere in class and point out how the students understand everything and sometimes even finish the topic ahead of schedule. "Classes like these need a lot of preparation – more than a normal class would – say the teachers in unison. We can't afford to waste time. They are very participative and ask whenever they have a question about something".

Once they pass the exam, which they will sit in May, they can opt to study a training course to suit their specific possibilities in the company where they work. The company would like them to specialise in machining production. Their idea is to do a course that will help them to move up in their current position.

All three students mention this idea of improving, of progressing, when they explain why they are doing the course. They say they work in a company that is doing very well, which is modernising and introducing robots at a very fast pace. And seeing as the company is moving onwards and upwards, so are they. "Mine's an established position," says Carlos, "I have an open-ended contract but I can see that I need to prepare myself if I want to get promoted in the company. Otherwise, with things the way they are, the company could close tomorrow and I'd have to go and work somewhere else and watch how the people under me move up... You either get up to date or you get left on the sidelines".

The three students are happy with the decision they have made and realise that they are an example to others. Their teachers say that all three are willing to learn. Francisco, who only studied up to the eighth course of EGB and has worked since the age of 14, is an excellent example to others. "I sit down with my twelve-year-old daughter to do our homework, and when I go over my notes, she carries on studying". Francisco's teacher says the fact that the father studies too bonds him further to his daughter, since they study together and even share their books.

They are very aware that studying will give them the opportunity to move up in the company. This will, in turn, give them a better wage and a better quality of life. The students add that many of their colleagues are waiting to see their results. "We are guinea pigs in a way...they are waiting to see what happens to decide whether to go for it next year. Many of them didn't do it this year, but they ask us how it's going and seeing us encourages them".

More specialist workers

The teachers believe that there is a lack of more specialist, qualified workers, with less theoretical and more practical knowledge. And this is the aim of vocational training, which has led to this type of learning being more valued nowadays.

The teachers also believe that the standard of vocational training has improved greatly over recent years. Previously, students without their school-leaver's certificate could access FP-1. Now, however, to start FP-2, students need a school-leaver's certificate or else they must pass an exam.

The students say that they are delighted with the organisation of the course, which they believe suits their needs. They would like the next course, which they will start once they have passed the entrance exam, to be just as flexible, with morning and afternoon classes. This would mean that they shouldn't have to miss classes – since they know that there will be many more subjects and that if they don't go to class, they will risk throwing the entire course away.