

Training in socio-emotional skills through on-site training (1)

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SUMMARY

Socio-emotional skills are highly prized on the labour market these days; many writers say that competencies of this type help to increase individuals' employability, but educational institutions consistently forget their responsibility for providing training in them.

Most jobs call not only for knowledge and specific technical competencies, but also for a certain level of social and emotional skills enabling workers, for example, to work in teams, to motivate themselves when confronting problems, to solve interpersonal disputes, and to tolerate high levels of stress.

The best way of developing socio-emotional skills is through experience, appropriate training and practice. For this reason, we argue that the time spent undergoing on-site training is a perfect opportunity for tutors to help students and recent graduates to develop their socio-emotional skills.

Key words

Social skill, apprenticeship, vocational training, work-based training, personal development, vocational guidance, mentoring

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Introduction

Hand in hand with the recent technological revolution and economic globalisation of the 20th century, the concept, structure and work dynamics of organisations the world over have been re-defined; at the same time, changes have occurred in kinds of work, in organisational and intangible technologies and, logically, in the skills profiles required of young people and workers.

Our society needs more and more professionals endowed with a wide range of skills, and in particular with those skills that are not restricted to the technical content of their jobs, but which are also related to the way of working, to attitudes towards work and others, to the quality of relationships, and to flexibility and the capacity to adapt. It is not simply a question of knowing how to do something (know-how), but also of wanting to do it and knowing how to be. Education must meet this demand, and guidance in particular may be seen as an appropriate educational tool for addressing the demand.

The importance of skills training has been highlighted by various leading international institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the European Union itself. In short, an interest has been clearly expressed in what has been called the 'skills focus' at an international level (García, 2003; Irigoien and Vargas, 2002).

The emphasis in the European Union today is on the need to give skills training to young people and workers, irrespective of whether they work by preference with things, ideas, data or people. On the one hand, the need to have both standards of professional qualification and standards of higher (university) education has been established in the European context. Specifically, in Spain, Organic Law 5/2002 of 19 June on Qualifications and Vocational Training (*Ley Orgánica 5/2002, de 19 de junio, de las Cualificaciones y de la Formación Profesional*) states that the policies to be developed must ensure that the competences, knowledge and attitudes (crucial for national and European competitiveness) of all segments of the population are strengthened.

On the other hand, the Tuning Educational Structures in Europe project on the implementation of the 1999 Bologna Declaration at university level is also based on the skills focus; one of the project's key objectives is to help develop European university qualifications that are easily comparable and comprehensible, and based on the design of occupational profiles, learning outcomes, and skills that are desirable in terms of generic and specific skills relating to each area of study or occupational sector (González and Wagenaar, 2003, p. 28-33).

The skills focus

Research into the role of non-cognitive and personality variables in the performance of employment duties got under way in the 1970s when the skills focus was beginning to gain in importance (McClelland, 1973). Indeed, this focus has received a new lease of life in the last few decades (Boyatzis, 1982; Fletcher, 1991; Wolf, 1995; Levy-Leboyer, 1997; Tejada, 1999; Pereda and Berrocal, 1999, 2001; García, 2000, 2003), finally being applied by European education and vocational training policies (Blas, 1999). Although the skills focus has attracted serious criticism (Barret and Depinet, 1991; Barnett, 1994) - for example, it is frequently referred to as a 'fad' (Del Pino, 1997) - its usefulness, as many writers have pointed out, is becoming increasingly self-evident and incontrovertible: *la gestión por competencias es una moda del management, pero es una moda que 'sirve' para apoyar e instrumentar la nueva organización de la empresa y la nueva realidad de la gestión de personas en la organización laboral* [management by skills is a style of management, but one that 'serves' to support and structure the enterprise's new organisation and the new reality of person management in workforce organisation] (Jiménez, 1997, p. 347).

Although a large number of definitions may be found in the literature on the concept of 'skill', most emphasise that all skills are learned, or are capable of being learned and developed, and necessarily involve the appropriate (and observable) performance of particular types of activity and task. According to some writers, for example, skills are *los comportamientos que se llevan a cabo cuando se ponen en práctica los conocimientos, aptitudes y rasgos de personalidad* [behaviours that are carried out when knowledge, aptitudes and personality traits are put into practice] (Pereda and Berrocal, 1999, p. 75); others say that they constitute the *conjunto de conocimientos, procedimientos, destrezas, aptitudes y actitudes necesarias para realizar actividades diversas (ejercer una profesión, resolver problemas) con un cierto nivel de calidad y eficacia, y de forma autónoma y flexible* [corpus of knowledge, procedures, competences, aptitudes and attitudes that are needed to carry out various activities (e.g. doing a job or solving problems) to a certain degree of quality and effectiveness, and in an independent and flexible manner] (Bisquerra, 2002, p. 7). Repetto, Ballesteros and Malik (2000, p. 60) take the view that the word 'skill' mainly refers to the integration of the three levels of human functioning usually referred to by the acronym KSA (knowledge, skills and attitudes), and originally described by Bloom et al. as the 'cognitive, psychomotor and affective' fields (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl, 1956; Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, 1964; Dave, 1970; Simpson, 1972; Harrow, 1972):

- knowledge, the outcomes of perceptive and conceptual processes such as attention, selection, symbolisation, codification/decodification, reflection and evaluation;

- execution of competences, the outcomes of the psychomotor process that enables individuals to give clear responses, and possibly to offer a tangible product that may be observed and assessed by another person;
- attitudes, the products of emotional responses to events and other specific objects.

In this context, Roe (2002, 2003) proposes a comprehensive skills model whereby the skills (and sub-skills) that develop through practice in the workplace flow from an expression of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and from a combination of capacities, personality traits and other personal characteristics like motivation, energy state and level of vitality. However, we believe that it is also important to stress that skills are not stable characteristics (traits), but rather the demonstration of an appropriate performance in particular contextual/situational conditions, despite the fact that this performance is only carried out thanks to the prior existence and combination of personal and contextual resources. With regard to skills, therefore, it is important to bear in mind that their acquisition, development and expression (or inhibition) depend at all times both on personal characteristics, such as contextual or situational characteristics, and on the dynamic interaction between both fields (personal and situational).

To put it in another way, and in line with the proposal put forward by Pereda and Berrocal (1999, 2001), it is important to point out that for a person to demonstrate skill in a job, function or role, s/he not only needs to master a series of conceptual (knowing), procedural (knowing how to do something (know-how)) and attitudinal (knowing how to be) knowledge, but must also, firstly, be motivated to act (wanting to do something) and secondly, be endowed with personal characteristics (cognitive skills, emotional intelligence and personality traits) and with contextual characteristics minimally appropriate and favourable to the performance to be carried out (able to do something). In this way, experience and practice in different (real and simulated) situations allow a person to be trained to link all these resources with a view to facilitating on each occasion the transfer of his/her skills to new, albeit similar, situations and demands.

With regard to theoretical approximations of the study of skills, the authors have concluded, following a review of the literature, that there are three main theoretical perspectives or models (see Vargas, Casanova and Montanaro, 2001; Jiménez, 1997; Del Pino, 1997; Royo and Del Cerro, 2005):

- a) the conductist, analytical or molecular model, originally from the United States, in which the emphasis is laid on the molecular elements of skills. According to this model, skills are seen as a coherent corpus of 'observable' behaviours which allow a particular activity to be appropriately carried out. This is the perspective that gave rise to the skills focus itself, and as a reaction to the 'focus on traits' in psychology (McClelland, 1973; Pereda and Berrocal, 1999). In this model, the accent is placed both on behavioural observation and on interviews

- concerning critical events, with a view to determining the behaviour profiles of successful workers and high fliers. From this perspective, *se concibe el desempeño competente como aquel que se ajusta a un trabajo descrito a partir de una lista de tareas claramente especificadas* [performance is deemed to be competent when it adjusts to a job described on the basis of a list of clearly specified tasks] (Vargas et al., 2001, p. 24), and these tasks are described as very concrete and meaningful actions (e.g. 'recognising and altering an incorrect accounting entry' for somebody working in bookkeeping, and 'smiling at customers and calling them by their name' for people dealing directly with the public;
- b) the personal qualities and attributes model, originally from Great Britain, and described as 'functionalist' by Royo and del Cerro (2005). Under this model, skill is seen as a combination of attributes (traits) which underlie successful work, and are usually defined more broadly and generically in such a way that they may be applied in different contexts. Examples of these attributes are leadership, initiative and team-working;
 - c) the holistic, or integrated, model, which has its roots in France, but is also applied widely in Australia and England. This approximation of the skills focus embraces skills such as the skill to integrate both tasks carried out (behaviours) and the person's attributes, and simultaneously takes the setting into account. In short, this model sees skills as the outcome of dynamic interaction between separate masses of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and aptitudes and personality traits mobilised according to the characteristics of the context and the work that the individual is engaged on (Vargas et al., 2001, p. 28).

Our theoretical approach to socio-emotional skills is structured by the holistic, or integrated, skills model. We agree with Le Boterf (2001), for example, when he says that skill is a construction: the outcome of a combination and dual mobilisation of incorporated and personal resources (e.g. knowledge, know-how, personal qualities and experience) and contextual resources (e.g. documentary networks, databanks and tools).

As for the typology of skills, a distinction is drawn, depending on their level of applicability, between generic skills and specific skills (Lévy-Leboyer, 1997), this being terminology that is shared by institutions such as the OECD and the European Union under the Tuning project. Given their possible transferability to various contexts and situations, generic skills are those used in any occupational activity; specific or technical skills are those whose content is linked to a specific area of work and to a substantive activity, even though they are not easily transferable and are normally acquired through occupational specialisation.

However, the afore-mentioned generic skills, which are transferable to a wide range of jobs, include particular social skills and emotional skills, or 'socio-emotional skills if they are being referred to as a whole (Repetto and Pérez, 2003). In the Tuning project, for example, some of these socio-emo-

tional skills are contained in the group of interpersonal skills (e.g. team-working and interpersonal skills) and in that of systemic skills (e.g. leadership, initiative and motivation to succeed).

Many writers and institutions also use the phrase 'key competencies'. This mainly refers to those generic skills that warrant special recognition for their outstanding importance and applicability to the various areas of human life (educational and occupational, personal and social). Indeed, the words 'generic' and 'key' are sometimes used synonymously. In one of its papers, the Information Network on Education in Europe, Eurydice, outlines its position as follows: 'Despite their differing conceptualisation and interpretation of the term in question, the majority of experts seem to agree that for a competence to deserve attributes such as "key", "core", "essential" or "basic", it must be necessary and beneficial to any individual and to society as a whole' (Eurydice, 2002, p. 15). However, we think it is important to make clear that 'basic skills' are not the same as 'key competencies'. Most experts usually talk about 'basic' skills when referring to the sub-group of generic or key competencies that are instrumentally essential in a given culture for every person and job, and particularly as we use 'basic' skills to communicate with one another and continue learning. Classic examples of basic skills are 'carrying out basic arithmetical calculations (adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing)' and 'reading and writing in one's mother tongue'. Since the 1990s, at least two more basic skills, the outcomes of both economic globalisation and accelerated technical progress, have come to the fore: 'speaking English' and 'using electronic office tools'.

In our view, a large number of socio-emotional skills (e.g. perception of the emotions of others, regulation of one's own emotions, empathy and self-motivation) are also 'key' competencies.

Lastly, we must mention another term used in the field of skills that is less orthodox, but which is nonetheless sometimes used: meta-competencies. According to some writers (Fleming, 1991), this refers to higher-level competencies that make it possible to call on a corpus of other competencies of narrower scope. Others (Cardona, 2003) say that the word refers to a person's traits that precede the acquisition, development and performance of any kind of competency (namely decision-making skills, integrity and emotional intelligence).

Socio-emotional competences

Types of socio-emotional competences

With regard to the classification of socio-emotional competencies, it is important to bear in mind that it varies from one writer to another, and from one theoretical approximation to another. Increasing interest in Emotional Intelligence (EI) since the mid-1990s has also contributed to the rediscover-

ery of emotional skills in particular and, by extension, to that of socio-emotional skills. We set out below a summary of the main theoretical models of socio-emotional skills to be found in the specialist literature.

As for a typology of emotional skills, the evolutive psychologist Carolyn Saarni (1999) says there are a total of eight: awareness of one's own emotions; the ability to discern and understand others' emotions; the ability to use the vocabulary of emotion and expression; capacity for empathetic involvement; the ability to differentiate internal subjective emotional experience from external emotional expression; capacity for adaptive coping with aversive emotions and distressing circumstances; awareness of emotional communication within relationships; capacity for emotional self-sufficiency.

From the perspective of educational interventions aimed at developing socio-emotional skills, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL; www.casel.org), a research body of international standing in school programmes on 'socio-emotional education', has drawn up a list of socio-emotional skills and competencies that fall under four headings: knowing oneself and other people (an example of this is the skill to recognise and label one's own feelings), taking responsible decisions (for which it will be necessary to have, for example, appropriate emotional regulation), caring for other people (in which empathy is a key factor) and knowing how to behave (a group including verbal and non-verbal communication, the management of interpersonal relationships, and negotiating).

The cognitive psychologists Mayer and Salovey (1997) do not speak about skills in the real sense of the word, but of four large 'emotional' competences, or branches of EI: a) the perception, assessment and expression of emotions; b) the emotional facilitation of thinking; c) an understanding of emotions and emotional knowledge; and d) the reflexive regulation of emotions.

As for skills more accurately referred to as 'social', Bunk (1994) says that examples include the capacity for social adaptation, a disposition for cooperation, and team spirit. As Caballo (1993) describes, social competence (or social skills) mainly incorporates a corpus of behaviours carried out by an individual in an interpersonal setting; these behaviours express the individual's feelings, attitudes, desires, opinions and rights, in a manner appropriate to the situation (e.g. a context involving the family, education or work), while at the same time respecting the same behaviours in others, and generally resolve problems that can immediately arise in the interaction, thereby minimising the possibility of problems occurring in the future.

Using their international experience of working for international human resource consultants and earlier research conducted for the Hay Group consultancy (Boyatzis, 1982; Bethell-Fox, 1997) as a basis, Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee (2000), all leading disciples of the school of David McClelland, have concluded that the main socio-emotional skills required

Table 1: Classification of socio-emotional skills under the Goleman (2001, p. 28) model

	Personal skill	Social skill
Awareness	Emotional self-awareness Self-assessment Self-confidence	Empathy Orientation towards the client Organisational awareness
Management	Emotional self-control Formality Responsibility Adaptability Motivation for success Initiative	Development of others Influence Communication Conflict management Leadership Catalyzing change Building alliances Team-working

for success at work may be summarised in a series of 20 skills, which in turn fall into four general blocks: emotional self-awareness, self-management or self-government (self-control), social awareness (empathy), and management of social relations and skills. This is one of the most frequently employed models in human resources in organisations, despite the fact that insufficient empirical research has been carried out with a view to supporting its validity.

Following an analysis of the content of the main models of emotional intelligence trait (EI trait) in the literature (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995; Bar-On, 1997), Petrides and Furnham (2001) have recently drawn up a list of the 15 most important socio-emotional dimensions for this construct: adaptability, assertiveness, emotional assessment of oneself and of others, emotional expression, the emotional management of others, emotional regulation, low impulsiveness, the skills required to form relationships, self-esteem, self-motivation, social skill, stress management, empathy, happiness and optimism.

Socio-emotional skills, performance at work and employability

The importance of socio-emotional skills to the growth of socio-economic benefits is well established in other western societies: 'American industry currently spends around USD 50 billion every year on training, and much of this training focuses on social and emotional skills' (Cherniss, 2000, p. 434). Spain has no tradition of conducting research in these skills, but in the last ten years, important, well-researched studies on the subject have been written in Anglo-Saxon countries, with the United States in particular taking the lead. A leading player in these initiatives is CASEL, under whose aegis dozens of socio-emotional training courses have been

developed; the institute is currently focusing particular attention on research into the assessment of these programmes (Zins, Travis and Frep-pon, 1997; Zins, Weissberg, Wang and Walberg, 2004; Zeidner, Roberts and Matthews, 2002).

A number of studies (Pérez, 2003) refer to the involvement of emotional intelligence and socio-emotional skills in leading a satisfactory life, mental health, career development, doing one's job, effective leadership, dealing with work-related stress, and the reduction in the level of aggressiveness in organisations. Scientific contributions to this field have so far found evidence of important relationships between socio-emotional skills, personal development, performance of duties at the workplace and effective leadership in organisations (Wong and Law, 2002). It is also worth pointing out that the ongoing development of tools for evaluating emotional intelligence is making a major contribution to the expansion of this field of research (Pérez and Repetto, 2004; Pérez, Petrides and Furnham, 2005).

Generally speaking, socio-emotional skills are felt to be critical to the effective performance of most jobs (Cherniss, 2000). Accordingly, it is reasonable to conclude that personal development, the quality of life at work, and the development of leadership of members of an organisation may be facilitated by training courses aimed at developing socio-emotional skills.

Although cognitive skills in the world of work are clearly very important, especially at a time when work is becoming more complex and requiring decisions to be taken continually (Gottfredson, 2003), it is believed that, to achieve and maintain good relations at work and obtain high levels of performance, professional development and organisational learning as well, there is also a need for other social and emotional skills. The development of such socio-emotional skills plays an important part in boosting an individual's success in an organisational context. The need for skills of these types covers a wide range of tasks including the management of groups, team-working, tolerance of work-related stress, negotiations, conflict resolution, planning one's own professional career, motivation for one's own work, the motivation of others, and dealing with critical situations.

In most organisations these days, there is an inescapable need for team-working and cooperation with, and coordination of, others - in short, the implementation of socio-emotional skills that will facilitate and optimise both work and the quality of relationships.

It is clear, then, that socio-emotional skills are important for professional development, and probably for vocational integration and employability as well (Palací and Topa, 2002; Palací and Moriano, 2003). For an initial approximation, we may define 'employability' as *la capacidad de un candidato para conseguir y mantener un empleo o sucesivos empleos a lo largo de toda la vida profesional* [an applicant's ability to find and keep a job and subsequent jobs throughout his/her professional lifetime] (Sánchez, 2003, p. 274). Although there is no absolute consensus on the subject, the

essential characteristics of employability may be summarised under three headings:

- 1) a predisposition towards mobility;
- 2) the knowledge, skills and competences applicable to various employment contexts;
- 3) updated knowledge of the labour market.

However, it is important to bear in mind that employability does not depend solely on the individual: after all is said and done, what makes a person employable is his/her ability to match the variable demands of the labour market. On the other hand, the fact that a person possesses the skills most widely in demand on the labour market gives him/her a huge advantage and the flexibility to find and keep a job. As has been noted above, socio-emotional skills are deemed to be both generic skills and key competencies, and therefore to be useful in a wide range of jobs and professions. However, the field of vocational training is notable for at least seven occupational families in which socio-emotional skills probably play a major role as they are normally used in situations of team-working and work involving direct and/or personal contact with customers. These seven families are: a) administration; b) commerce and marketing; c) communications, audio-visual; d) hotels and tourism; e) personal image; f) health; and g) socio-cultural services and the community.

In all of these, the promotion of guidance and training in socio-emotional skills is recommended during the period of on-site training.

Skills training

As Pereda and Berrocal (1999, 2001) and García (2003) show, skills training is based on the use of active, participative methodologies. The most important skills training techniques include 'real-life work experience' or, in their absence, 'simulations' (e.g. role-playing, business games and outdoor training), which promote experiential learning and modelling (observing more experienced work colleagues, or watching videos), which in turn foster learning by observation and social learning. The context of on-site work is ideal for developing skills as it provides a real work setting in which the skills required by a given job must be put into practice.

Skills training is based on practice and 'action', and on-site work experience therefore offers a unique opportunity to develop skills as students are enabled to 'experiment', 'try out', 'apply', 'test', 'acquire' and/or 'extinguish' skills (behaviours) in a real work setting.

Workplace training

On-site training played no systematic part in vocational training [Formación Profesional] (FP II) in Spain until the 1980s. This was when an emphasis began to be placed on vocational training, and an atmosphere of closer and more active collaboration between entrepreneurs and educa-

tional institutions first emerged (Martínez, 2002, p. 46). In substantive terms, the establishment of on-site training (*Formación en Centros de Trabajo*, FCT) arose out of Article 34.2 of the Organic Act 1/1990 of 3 October on the General Organisation of the Education System (*Ley Orgánica 1/1990 de 3 de octubre, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo*, LOGSE), which sought to promote learning in the workplace and in the classroom. Today, this system of alternating classroom and workplace training has fortunately become widespread in vocational training in Spain. It may be partly because of this that vocational training qualifications, which were once much less highly regarded, have gained greater social acceptance in Spain in the last few decades.

Moreover, according to figures from the Ministry of Education and the Eurydice report for 2005, the last few years have seen an increase in the number of Spanish students studying vocational training, although many fewer than those opting for the *Bachillerato* and going to university (approximately 38 % as compared with 62 %). However, *la formación profesional tiene un mayor potencial de inserción laboral que la universitaria* (vocational training has greater potential than a university education for enabling people to enter the labour market) (Informe Infoempleo, 2005, p. 24).

Like Sobrado and Romero (2002), we believe that practical work and on-site training are both key elements of vocational integration guidance and an excellent opportunity for developing personal and key competencies. When students and recent graduates of vocational training and higher education take part in on-site training, they have a chance to learn from experience, although it has to be remembered that experience in itself involves no learning nor is it educational. For the experience of on-site training to become a genuine learning process, it must boast at least three characteristics (Álvarez Rojo et al., 2000):

- a) integrating well planned and coherent experiences with skills to be developed;
- b) promoting reflection over experience;
- c) facilitating the integration of experience through self-assessment, the analysis of consequences, and the promotion of transference to other situations.

Initial Specialised Vocational Training (*Formación Profesional Inicial Específica*) in Spain aims to fulfil these three requirements by promoting on-site training through FCT modules. Spanish legislation on the subject currently differentiates between four separate blocks of training, or 'Professional Modules' (*Modelos Profesionales*) (MECD, 2003b, p. 5):

- a) professional modules linked to a unit of skill, and consisting of specific, professional skills training designed to enable students to acquire the professional behaviours set out in the unit of skill;
- b) a basic, or transversal, module consisting of knowledge of a particular technical field, and on which a number of course's specific modules are based;
- c) a Training and Vocational Integration Module (*Módulo de Formación y*

Orientación Laboral, FOL), a training package aimed at providing students with more comprehensive preparation for entering the labour market and developing appropriately in the world of work;

- d) an On-site Training Module (*Módulo de Formación en Centros de Trabajo*, FCT), which seeks to consolidate and complement students' professional skills acquired in the educational establishment through the performance of productive activities at the workplace.

Training in the workplace (FCT) corresponds to the on-site training module in Initial/Regulated Specialist Vocational Training (*Formación Profesional Inicial/Reglada Específica*); it lasts between 10 and 20 weeks, approximately 25% of the total workload for each qualification. *La característica más relevante de esta formación es que se desarrolla en un ámbito productivo real (la empresa), donde los alumnos podrán desempeñar las actividades y funciones propias de los distintos puestos de trabajo de una profesión, conocer la organización de los procesos productivos o de servicios y de las relaciones laborales, siempre orientados y asesorados por los Tutores del Centro Educativo y del Centro de Trabajo* [The key feature of this training is that it takes place in a genuine productive setting (the enterprise) where students may perform the real activities and functions of the jobs in a profession, and learn about the organisation of the productive processes or services and of employment relations, with constant guidance and advice from tutors in the educational establishment and the workplace] (MECD, 2003b, p. 6; MEC, 1994).

The aim of workplace training is to promote the vocational training of students in three areas (MECD, 2004): theoretical-cognitive (knowledge), practical (technical skill) and attitudinal (social attitudes and skills). Under this system, the development of socio-emotional skills only appears to be represented by the third area, where some attitudes are inter-mingled with certain socio-emotional skills. As we know, there is already a reference to affective and social factors in the official approach taken by workplace training (FCT), but it is far too restricted, not to say reductionist and simplistic, as is clear, for example, from the summary assessment form provided by the Ministry for workplace tutors to use when assessing students on workplace training (see Table 2).

The key role of the tutor

The learning process during on-site training calls for a form of tutoring that embraces features including coaching and mentoring. As Repetto and Pérez (2003, p. 104) explain, *en el coaching, el supervisor propone a su tutorizado, y acuerda con él, planes de acción concretos encaminados a mejorar su formación en determinadas competencias* [in coaching, the supervisor offers students, and reaches agreements with them about substantive action plans designed to improve their training in particular skills]. The broader process of mentoring may be defined as *el proceso continuo mediante el cual un supervisor, denominado mentor, informa y orienta a un compañero de trabajo, nuevo o de menor experiencia, en su proceso*

Table 2: Elements of current assessment of attitudes and social skills in workplace training. Extracted from MECD (2004: p. 26)

INDICATOR	ASSESSMENT				
	10	8	6	4	2 or 0
Initiative	Takes a large number of productive initiatives	Takes frequent, successful initiatives	Only sometimes takes initiatives	Very rarely takes initiatives	Rarely or never takes initiatives
Spirit of collaboration and team work	Great willingness and success	High level of willingness and success in most cases	Moderate level of willingness and relatively successful	Little willingness	Very little, or no, willingness
Attendance and punctuality	No incidences	1 or 2 minor incidences a month	3 or 4 minor incidences a month	1 or 2 major incidences a month	3 or more major incidences a month
Sense of responsibility and interest in the work	Very high	High	Acceptable	Low	Very low or none at all

de adaptación a su puesto de trabajo y a la organización [an ongoing process whereby the supervisor, who is known as the ‘mentor’, instructs and guides new or inexperienced work colleagues in their process of adapting to their job and to the organisation] (op. cit., p. 105). Lastly, the person carrying out the tutoring/guidance role in one way or another is known as the ‘tutor’. This approach is typically used as a strategy for intervening in workers’ continuing vocational training (García et al., 2003).

Moreover, tutors - that is to say both those who work in vocational training schools (teachers, tutors and advisors in Departments of Guidance) and in university-based Guidance, Information and Employment Centres (*Centros de Orientación, Información y Empleo*, COIEs) and workplace-based tutors - are deemed to be decisive factors in promoting the training of students and recent graduates in socio-emotional skills; to achieve this, they have to employ well designed and empirically validated programmes and courses in work-based guidance and training.

Tutors play a key role with students undergoing on-site training, offering them direction, guidance, assistance and support during their period of occupational training. This work carried out by the tutors needs to be offered to small groups of students and those who have recently completed their on-site training, although the tutors also give each student personal attention.

On-site tutors are key players in workplace training: *se responsabiliza de organizar el puesto formativo con los medios técnicos disponibles, y*

con los fines propuestos en el programa formativo. Se encarga asimismo del seguimiento de las actividades del alumno [they are responsible for organising the training, using the technical resources available and complying with the objectives set out in the training programme. They also have the task of monitoring their students' activities] (MECD, 2003a). All of the foregoing means that the tutor has to carry out a number of functions (see Table 3).

Final thoughts

As both Vélaz de Medrano (2002) and Palací and Topa (2002) make clear, socio-emotional skills play an important role in vocational integration, remaining in employment, employability and professional development, and also in enabling workers to achieve adaptation and social inclusion as participative citizens of the system.

However, research including that of Echeverría (2002) shows that key competencies frequently required in a range of jobs are team-work and self-control, both of them socio-emotional skills. Echeverría also provides data relating to the discrepancy between academic, especially university-level, education and the demands of the labour market. Similarly, the work of Cajide, Porto and Abeal (2002), which is based on information supplied by a large number of enterprises, also highlights the imbalance between academic education and employers' requirements in relation to 'social skills', 'personal development skills' and 'employment skills'.

On-site training and initial work experiences constitute a unique context for the development of skills, and particularly of socio-emotional skills (see Ballesteros, Guillamón, Manzano, Moriano and Palací, 2001; Palací and Peiró, 1995), while guidance and tutoring activities are key elements in promoting the person's training and in encouraging his/her entry into the labour market or transition from an academic environment to the labour market.

Table 3: Functions of the on-site tutor in workplace training.
Adapted from MECD (2003a).

Functions	
Exclusive	Leading the training activities Giving guidance to students Assessing students' progress
Shared	Planning training activities Determining how many students can be supported at any one time Resolving technical and personal problems Completing monitoring and assessment forms

Guidance and tutorial processes have been clearly highlighted in numerous studies as significant factors in enabling people in employment and social contexts (Repetto, 1991; Rodríguez Diéguez, 2002). Accordingly, the roles of the practical skills tutor and on-site trainer are of vital importance in helping students and recent graduates to seize opportunities to learn socio-emotional skills (Slipais, 1993; Repetto, Ballesteros and Malik, 2000).

As for the importance of contextual variables in the development of socio-emotional skills and vocational integration, earlier studies have highlighted the importance of family variables among others (Osca, Palací and Hontangas, 1994). This is one of the reasons why a guidance intervention plan on citizens' socio-emotional skills for vocational integration and the professional development of young people should also take a look at contextual variables, and, as far as possible, give thought to coordination of the work of various institutions (the educational establishment, workplaces and employment activities, the family, and local bodies like the local authority and not-for-profit associations).

Workers' training and their likely employability depend these days on the development both of their technical skills and of their socio-emotional skills, especially when the performance of their duties frequently involves teamwork, cooperation with other workers, and/or dealing with, or having direct contact with, customers. Moreover, as a number of studies have pointed out (Bachman, Stein, Campbell and Sitarenios, 2000; Wong and Law, 2002), jobs characterised by 'emotional labor' (for a review of this, see Glomb and Tews, 2004; Martínez, 2001), such as managers, sales assistants, nurses, teachers, psychologists and debt-collectors call for a high level of socio-emotional skills generally, and of emotional skills in particular, to enable them both to control their own emotions and those of others appropriately in relation to the demands of the job, and to save them from emotional exhaustion and deteriorating health.

Given that the context of on-site training offers important opportunities for promoting the development of socio-emotional skills, we think it is appropriate and necessary to argue for the inclusion of guidance plans and socio-emotional skills training in vocational workplace courses, as long as they are supervised by a tutor/advisor/mentor, and flexibly linked to the rest of the planning of these modules. Similarly, on-site training for students and university graduates should include the same plans for guidance and training in socio-emotional skills.

However, given that skills of this type can, and should, be developed throughout a person's life from childhood to the third age, as has been seen at other times, what would be really desirable and useful for our present and future society would be for socio-emotional skills training to have begun earlier in schools at all levels (Repetto, 2003; Bisquerra, 2005).

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