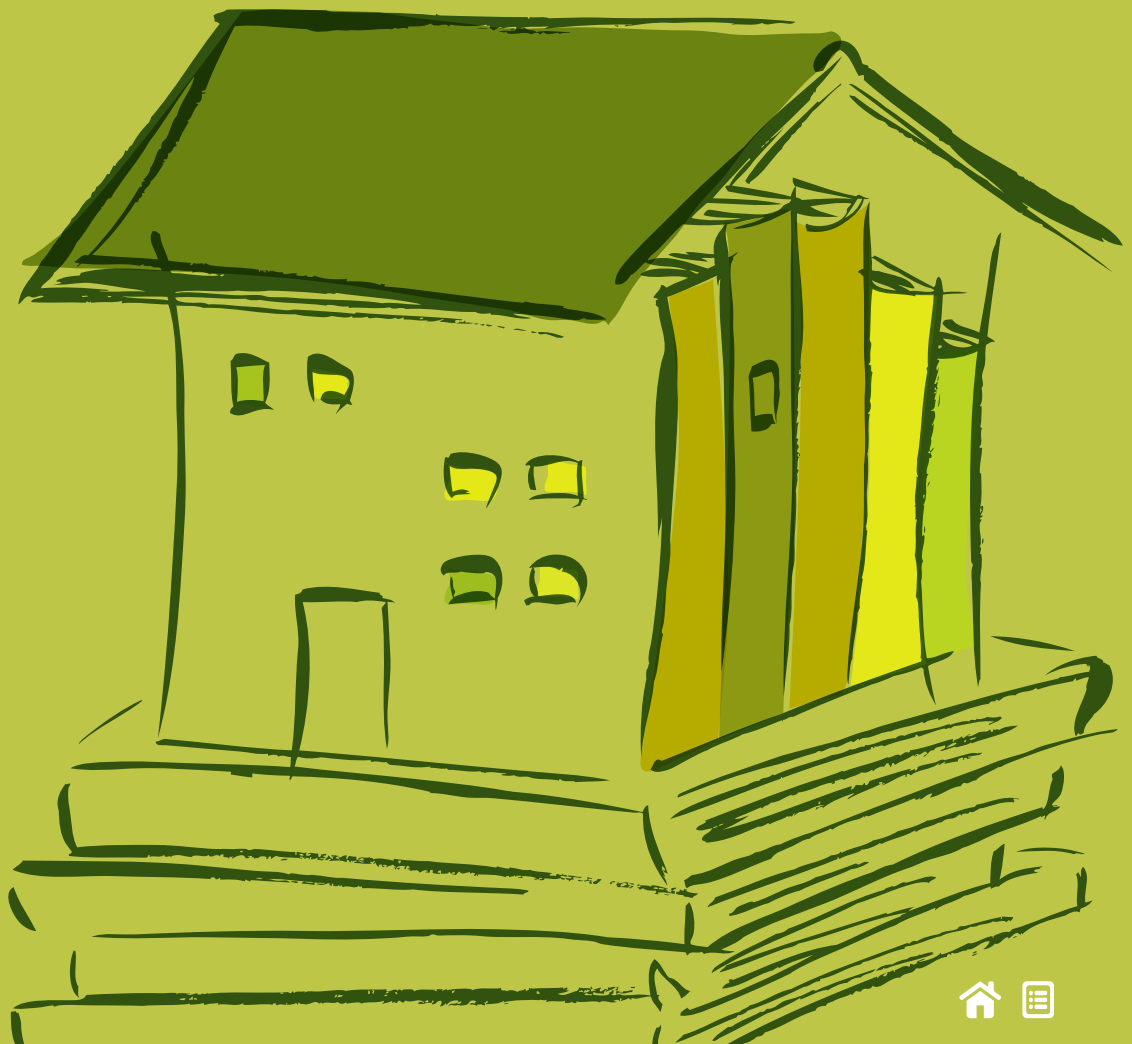
EDUCATION

Basque language recovery IV

Garabide Elkartea



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FOREWORD

When we start sharing experiences with our friends on other continents who have their own native languages, it always helps to speak in the first person, and I find that the most graphic example I am able to give is that of my own personal school trajectory. When I was born, the Basque language was illegal, I belong to that first generation of children who grew up in ikastolak with makeshift premises and no textbooks; now I work in Basque at a university, doing my research and teaching in Basque. These two pictures were separated by four decades of hard work, triumphs, joys and frustrations in the process of recovering our language and culture. We have seen many seemingly utopian aspirations come true, but despite that we are not out of trouble yet. We are people who have grown up hand in hand with the flourishing of the ill-treated Basque language.

There is an international dimension to this specific experience. Internationalism is a position, a broader layer of what we are and what we do. Sometimes when you have begun building bridges to the world you realise that the resulting exchange of ideas and feelings is productive, that someone's experience may be particularly significant for someone else, or that another person's questions are also your questions. Some subjects have many loose ends for the tying of international knots, and one such is Basque education.

The pillars of Basque language recovery were set in place during the worst of the Franco dictatorship at a time when everything seemed to be going against it, below the law and above it, and no support whatsoever was to be had from the official administration. In such circumstances one of the main pillars of this renaissance, Basque education, grew and developed under the wary eyes of the state, without the benefit of any of its resources.

Our parents' generation, who started all this from scratch, entertained one great idea: in the new kind of school they were going to create, the Basque language would come first, it would not be a second language. Even in those difficult conditions, they were not going to take the path of bilingual education. The language that had been practically absent from public life and forbidden, the Basque language, would be at the core of their children's new education, and school would be almost entirely in Basque. And thus they began, with money provided by community members scratching up pennies here and there, without a school building, producing many young teachers from wherever they could. That is where we came from to get where we are now. Today we have a massive, complex Basque education system that is producing results all the way up from infants' school to the university.

Today this subject is on the table for many of the world's languages, which are in danger of disappearing unless they find a way to undertake recovery, and most perceive formal education to be one of the main keys to the revitalization of their culture. But how can school education be revolutionized to convert it from being the thing that has doomed their language into the road to its salvation? Where are we to begin? How can we overcome the endless obstacles along the way?

The country of the Basque language does not possess the answers. But it has a story to tell, made up of little events, details, experiences, turning points, materials, which bear witness to a positive message: it can be done, it is possible to create an education system in which one's own language is central. In terms of its linguistic demography Basque was not better off than many native languages in the world today. Processes of revitalization are feasible. Besides this success story, Basque education is also a repository of many anecdotes, strategies, shortcomings and controversies.

And what can we learn? Have we placed too much emphasis on formal education while neglecting to focus on the family, nature, spirit? Have we created an overly standardized education in many respects? Has the idea of uniformity led us in other ways to create a uniformist school? What do you have to teach us in your educational dream?

When talking about ours, if I had to stress one thing in the story of Basque education in these rope bridges of internationalism, it would be the intuitive impulse and strong determination at the start. The promoters of our parents' generation brought together dreams, self-confidence, commitment and skill. These things are needed everywhere, for it is easy these days to talk a discourse of transformation but real life poses a great many practical challenges along the way.

In this fourth volume in the series, Alberto Barandiaran tells the story of an endeavour that was put into practice. I hope it will provide a good companion to other such endeavours.

Jon Sarasua

INTRODUCTION

"Baina nik, izkuntza larrekoa
nai aunat ere noranaikoa;
yakite-egoek igoa;
soiña zaar, berri gogoa;
azal orizta, muin betirakoa"[1]
Lizardi

"The language is the soul, the essence; without language we cannot perceive what we feel, what we think, and when we say we feel alright with ourselves what we mean is that we have participated in a rite or ceremony in which the language is used, and have communicated with the gods and godesses or spiritual beings. Therefore, language is a tool that gives value to thought. For we do not think like the white people."
(Nasa people, Colombia)

We are humans because we speak. Language is the tool used by human beings to relate with each other. Thanks to language, we consider another person one of us. We use language to think, yet the language does not belong to anyone, it is something we share in common. It is the resource of the group. Thus, groups may use language, change it, enrich it, degrade it, disfigure it, but never kill it. No group or community willingly abandons its own language. Nobody wants to kill the language that makes possible a relationship that is at the heart of the human species. Languages are only abandoned under obligation, by force, because of colonialism, on account of a deliberate tendency to marginalize a language community or because of a civilizations's political, economic or military pressure. So languages have been lost in all periods and places, or language shifts have taken place, but there is a reason for the ecological aspect of language. Loss of a language is similar to the extinction of a species. The world becomes a poorer place, because every time a language is lost the pos-

[1] *But I, oh uncouth tongue, wish you to be for everywhere; rising on the wings of knowledge; old in body, in spirit new; weathered skin, undying soul.*

sibility of thinking about the world in a different way is gone with it.

The identity of a human group comes alive in its language. Its personality. Therefore no human group has the right to divest another human group of its language, for to do so is to divest it of an essential part of its being. And everybody has the right for the continuity of their culture to be ensured.

For languages are not just means of interchanging ideas, wishes and experiences. A language is a product rooted in a culture and the main tool for transmitting that culture. Thus it is the basis of a community's identity. People see the world around them through the prism of their language.

What is more, language is culture too. Culture's first manifestation. We speak because we have a culture, because we are cultured. Language is the first foundation for having a culture. Without it, how could we receive our parents' knowledge? And their experience? What other way is there for us to become recipients of the accumulated knowledge of all the inhabitants of our land? Language is the way in which all that information, everything that has been learnt from generation to generation, is transmitted.

But all that knowledge and experience is varied, just as countries vary. The accumulated life experiences of men and women living in the Amazon rainforest have little in common with those of the Inuit in Greenland, the people of the Maghreb, the Navajo people, the Basques, the inhabitants of the Himalaya valleys, or the citizens of London, Quito or New Zealand. So languages are very different because each must respond differently to a particular kind of experience. Each language is the reflection of the inherited wisdom of a language community, and when one of them disappears a body of knowledge disappears with it, a whole library of tremendous value that will never be repeated.

The importance of education

The importance of education for the future of a language cannot be overestimated. Education complements what is learnt at home and through our culture, and so produces complete speakers of the language. It also gives speakers confidence to use their mother tongue and be creative in it. But schools have often been used to exclude languages. Indeed, schools have surely been the most powerful and most often used means of stamping out languages that are not the language of those in power. This is because schools have been used to spread one language's prestige and have served as an effective instrument for imposing the dominant culture and the ruling ideology at any given time.

Historically, in schools and especially in higher education, only dominant languages have been taken into account in the past. One of the main purposes of school was to teach to read and write as a way of adding to the "important" language's greatness. Hence other languages have no place in the school system. That policy started to be encouraged deliberately from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, underpinned by the ideologies that stood behind the system of education. This happened principally in Europe or in countries under the influence of western civilization: schools taught the dominant language and that language alone, and pushed bilingual communities, or those speaking a minority language, in the direction of monolingualism and away from their own language. Why? Because it is widely believed that supporting the education of minorities undermines the unity of the state; that this is a threat. In general, monolingualism has come to be regarded as the normal and natural situation.

But the truth is otherwise. Multilingualism is the usual situation in the world as a whole, and most of the world's countries are multilingual. Think about it for a moment: there are six thousand languages in the world and only two hundred sovereign states. Even in countries that only have one official language there are usually groups with different cultural traditions, and as we already know, language is a manifestation thereof. Moreover, knowing one's neighbours' language formed part of the tradition in all cultures that were not permanently isolated.

Respecting the language rights of its minority language communities can enrich a country

So saying that monolingualism ensures a country's unity reveals a narrow-sighted point of view. Honouring minority language communities' language rights can actually guarantee the survival of such communities' cultural, economic and political autonomy. Thus it may make the country culturally richer. And diversity is strength, ecological and cultural strength.

And here is another false belief: that uniformity is necessary for progress in the modern world, while differences only create problems. Not true! Linguistic diversity enhances humans' creative capacity, by giving it colour and nuance. Diversity provides more resources to address challenges with, because the total amount of accumulated knowledge is greater.

Education stands at the centre of this debate. In the past some have seen a school that respects cultural minorities and language rights as a threat, and in many places some people still see it that way:

as a step towards the disintegration of the state. To that we can respond that a monolingual state destroys the chances of cooperation and trust between ethnic groups; it inflates the community of the big, official language with arrogant, ethnocentric and racist attitudes. This typically results in contempt for the smaller communities, which can lead to the extinction of minority languages. Stopping children in minority language communities from receiving a school education in their original language is a clear violation of human rights because it leads to linguistic genocide. Linguicide, which produces cultural genocide.

International legislation

These ideas are not merely rights demanded by a community or a group of activists or ideologues; they are supported by international legislation. The 1996 Universasl Declaration of Language Rights, for example, recognises the right of all language communities to use their language in order to strengthen it. It recognises the right of any language community to decide on the presence and use of the language of the community at all levels of education.

However, education receives different treatment from other areas in language rights. For example, the article on education in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights says nothing about language: "1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. 2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."

In recent years many interesting things have been said in reports about minority language rights in education. For instance, the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child says in Article 30 that children of minorities and indigenous populations have a right to have their own cultural life, practice a particular religion and use their original language. In the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the signatories undertake a commitment to use a minority language as a language of instruction, but the details are unclear since the charter distinguishes between different levels of commitment.

The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities (1996) also recommends schooling in the language of the home, to be applied at all levels of school education, and considers it the state's obligation to require teachers to be bilingual. Points 5 and 6 of Annex II of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity speak of "safeguarding the linguistic heritage of humanity and giving support to expression, creation and dissemination in the greatest possible number of languages. Encouraging linguistic diversity – while respecting the mother tongue – at all levels of education, wherever possible, and fostering the learning of several languages from the earliest age." However, it should be pointed out that these are more like negative rights referring to avoiding and penalizing discrimination and exclusion than positive rights giving recognition and protection.

THE STATE OF TEACHING AROUND THE WORLD

But what is the real situation? In a report called *Hizkuntzen mundua* [The world of languages] from Unesco Etxea (2005), information about 800 of the world's languages was gathered through a questionnaire. From this it can be surmised that one third of the world's language are completely excluded from the education system. A quarter are only used in pre-school or in the first years of elementary education. In many areas legislation permits the use of a language in the schools but in practice the language in question is not implemented. There are also cases of languages that were once used in school but no longer are. In the case of languages that are completely excluded from education it is often widely believed in the community that school education is only possible in certain languages. Only twelve percent of languages are used throughout the education system and most minority languages fall outside of that twelve percent. Another seven percent are only used orally in schools and only while the main language taught by the school is being learnt. Thus their objective is not for children to develop further at school the language that they bring with them from home, but rather for them to assimilate to the language taught at school.

It is true indeed that most languages have managed to survive without any support from schools and that a language will not stop being a language just because it is not used in education. It is also true that school is not the most important place for the learning of a language: for this, friends and family are more practical and more efficient; but the school is where culture is trans-

mitted, acquires prestige, and the status of the language is raised. And in modern times, school is very important in helping languages to retain their strength and vitality.

It is also true that in some communties schools are not held in high esteem as an institution. They are viewed as instruments of assimilation, opposed to the retention of one's own culture and sense of community. But it is also true that most communities consider it important for their language to be incorporated into the school. It may be said that each community needs to build its own school based on its own language and culture.

Different kinds of teaching

What kinds of teaching are there? How is a language taught at school? How are children around the world taught at school, in addition to the traditionally dominant language, another language, whether it be their own or a second language?

- On the one hand there are **repressive programmes** whose objective is to get children to cultivate only the school language while relegating the language of their home to the sidelines. Spanish-only school programmes in South American and Central American countries are of this kind, where children who are minority language speakers and children who speak the dominant language are thrown together, although in other cases separate special classes are provided for children speaking a minority language. The dominant language is taught just as if all the children knew that language from their homes, with no allowance for the fact that this may create an obstacle for the schooling of these children; these are school models that only seek homogeneity, uniformity. This system is bad for children's linguistic development, and frequently results in failure at school because no steps are taken to improve or develop the language skills of a child who speaks a minority language. This results in the spread of social exclusion, while favouring the transmission of the majority language at the minority language's expense. Often parents who are speakers of a minority language are offered no other choice for the schooling of their children, and are not informed about its long-term effects.

- **Transitional programmes** are another type of teaching whose main purpose is to make children learn the dominant language. When they start school children are allowed to speak

the minority language of their home but as they get better at speaking the dominant language the place of the minority language and the attention paid to it is reduced. The ultimate goal is for children to develop proficiency in the dominant language in the belief that this will lead to equality of opportunities for them in society. This system is widely used in the United States with members of indigenous minorities ("Indian" children) and in classes of immigrant children. In some cases the children's home language is used throughout most of primary school, but usually the transition takes place earlier. Teachers are generally bilinguals who gradually nudge the children towards the dominant language. The system sends out subtle messages about prestige: the principal and the people in charge are all English speakers, whereas the kitchen and janitorial staff are speakers of the minority language.

In regions where there is a real will to recover the language, immersion programs are the most widely used approach

- **Language survival programmes** aim to keep the home language alive while children learn the dominant language. Thus the minority language is maintained, for instance by using it in teaching, but it is made sure that children learn the official language. Such systems may be

found in Euskal Herria (in areas where Basque is the dominant language), Canada, the United States (e.g. in Navajo and Spanish schools), Wales and New Zealand. In such cases the community's minority language is fairly widespread and is usually the general language of the community. The dominant language does not lose out and it is a way of complying with smaller communities' rights.

- Programmes which teach minority-language-speaking and majority-language-speaking children through both languages are known as **double immersion programmes**. The object is for everyone to learn both languages. Thus not only do children who are speakers of the minority language maintain their language and learn the dominant language, but the idea is for children who speak the dominant language to also learn the minority language. Teachers are fluent in both languages. Often class time is split half and half between the two languages, or more attention is paid to the minority langauge, but the essential point is that there is a clearcut separation between the two languages. In such a system, one of the languages might be used on certain days and the other language on other days, for example. Teachers do not mix up the two languages. It is also possible to separate the languages in terms of the curriculum, by teaching certain subjects only in one language and other subjects only in the other. The double immersion system is not very widespread because often majority-language-speaking communities are not very keen on or interested in learning the minority language. Experiments of this kind have been tried out in Bolivia and South Africa, but the main trend today is heading the other way, towards learning of the majority language by minority language communities.

- **Immersion programmes** are those in which pupils are not taught in the language of their home but in a second language. The pupil's home language is valued and defended, for the objective is not to exclude the home language but simply to learn both the home language and the school language. Subjects are taught in the second language, while the home language is taught as a subject in its own right. Teachers are bilingual, and as far as the curriculum is concerned this is no different from the first-language curriculum. Of course parents' wishes and decisions are essential; achievement in the second language by children who are educated and immersed in a language that is not their home language is valued positively, not only in the children's home but in the society at large. This system was first pioneered in the sixties in Saint-Lambert School in Montreal, Quebec, where children whose home language was English began attending a French-language school; the school became famous worldwide owing to its bilingualism and its educational success. The goal of this system is bilingual development, a fundamental point that needs to be grasped in order to understand its success. There is no break between the language and culture of the home and that of the school. The system was set up in an area where both languages, English and French, are prestige languages, major languages we might say, but the Basque experience has demonstrated that good results can also be achieved where a minority language is conerned. It has been said that the immersion system is especially effective for ensuring the transmission of minority languages in contact with bigger languages. Implementing this model is a major challenge for communities since the language training needed by teachers and the creation of didactic materials involve a lot of work.

- It is important to understand the consequences and use of these systems in order for a community to choose what kind of education it wants its children to have, but let it be said loud and clear from the outset that in those parts of the world where there is a minority language and a clear desire in society to recover that language, language immersion programmes are the most widespread approach. This does not necessarily mean that exactly the same solutions are appropriate everywhere and in every situation. Every gradation imaginable exists, including all the following possibilities: a) the original language has been lost and the community wants to recover it; b) the community has conserved its original language; c) cases falling between these extremes. Therefore this system has to be adapted and adjusted locally to each particular type of situation.

WORKING TOWARD A BASQUE SCHOOL

In Euskal Herria, special importance has attached to the Basque school movement, which has stood at the centre of the fight to recover and spread Basque language and culture. It is its heart. Steps taken in Basque education have halted the fall in the number of Basque speakers, thanks to which many thousands of people have learnt Basque. Today most children in Euskal Herria who start going to school learn Basque, although this varies according to the region. As a result, the numbers of speakers has been boosted.

But the sociolinguistic panorama of Euskal Herria is a very varied one, with areas that are mainly Basque speaking, other Spanish speaking areas, and mixed areas. Language use is therefore governed by numerous variables, and today our greatest concern is these speakers' use of Basque, because the school has no way of guaranteeing that the Basque speakers it produces will use the language outside school. But it is important to see how the road to Basque language recovery has been pursued, and some see it as still the first path that needs to be followed. Any recovery process must begin there. So now we will look at the story of the ikastola schools which many parents, from the sixties onwards, supported and built. We are also going to talk about what has been done, since the eighties, by local government institutions, especially the Basque Government and the Government of Navarre, to introduce the Basque language into the public school system as well.

The birth of the ikastolak

In the early sixties a great movement in support of Basque language and culture got underway in Euskal Herria, after intellectuals, leaders and others started warning that, unless serious

steps were taken, their language's days were numbered. Without official status, they said, prohibited and persecuted, in the absence of linguistic awareness Basque would not last another forty years. It was vital to ensure transmission of the language to the new generations, yet that alone was not enough. Knowledge of the language must increase, it was necessary for it to reach the cities. And where to start? With education.

There was already a precedent. In the ninteeen-thirties, centres for learning the Basque language had been opened in many Basque towns. Classes were taught in private homes, with almost no books as there were no special resources or teaching methods: a teacher would take an exercise book in her hand and gather a few children in her kitchen to give them basic training in Basque. This had planted tiny seeds, and so once again in the sixties, despite prohibitions under the dictatorship in Spain, many underground schools of this kind started springing up all over Euskal Herria: classes in empty rooms, without teaching materials or trained teachers, under the initiative of parents. News of them was transmitted by word of mouth, with parents themselves as the principal doers: these were ordinary people who wanted to give their sons and daughters an upbringing in Basque, and who in the heat of moment had boldly decided to give their support to Basque language education. Few in number at first, little by little there became more and more of them. At that time most people believed the Basque language to be doomed, but in many parts of the country an iron will took shape to guarantee the language's survival.

A second important motivation was the desire to develop a different kind of education. At the time, practically the only choices in schooling were the rigid model imposed by Franco's authoritatian regime or else private education provided by members of some religious order or other. Parents backing the ikastola movement had in mind a different kind of school: innovative, different, new. The very name is suggestive: a learning (*ikaste*) workshop (*ola*).

One of the founders of that period put it like this: "What was done to us in school? We were hit with a stick for speaking Basque, we were made to copy a hundred lines saying 'I will not talk in class'. We didn't want our children's to go through the same thing we had; we knew we needed to do something though we didn't know what, and what happened as a result eventually became an ikastola." So the people who started the ikastolak were parents seeking a third way.

The importance of personal choice

Personal choice thus played a crucial part in the birth of the ikastolak, which represented the dream of a new, self-made, Basque-speaking school. Then there were the times they were living in. Throughout the 1950s and particularly from the sixties onwards, a plethora of grassroots initiatives started up in Euskal Herria, all bolstering up and drawing attention to Basque identity: they ranged from folk dance groups and music groups to language classes and hiking clubs. A vigorous wave of collective awareness swept across the country, and people felt ready to challenge Spain's dictatorial regime and find a way forward for the Basque Country. This gave rise to a new Basque social network.

The economic situation also contributed to this. In the period in question the Basque Country underwent a process of industrialization and urbanization which brought economic wealth to many families. Hence the first ikastolak began in big towns, where they could garner support from the middle class: the cities became the heartland of Basque nationalist feeling. But it wasn't all the doing of the nationalists alone; the ikastola, a school created by the people for the people, drew enthusiastic support from people in all walks of life and different ways of thinking. After all, a broad, powerful consensus was needed to start a new school, a school entirely in Basque, in the middle of a long period of dictatorship (of all times!); and the way this was achieved was through community work, parents, teachers, workers and simple citizens all throwing their weight behind the drive to make a dream come true. Everything had to be done and there was something for everybody to do: working together they scratched and scraped to obtain premises, fix them up, obtain funds, find teachers, and win new families over to the project.

The first ikastolak started up in the large towns with support from the middle class, as part of the nationalist movement

In the beginning different formulae were tried out, but the ikastolak soon settled into a definite pattern for the most part. This is how it worked: parents wanting their children to go to school in Basque sought out other parents in their own town or neighbourhood who felt similarly; once they had formed a group, they would rent a place, at first maybe no more than a single room in a house somewhere. Next they would look around for a teacher: typically she would be a local young lady with no prior training for working as a school-

mistress. Parents agreed to pay a sum of money each month, out of which the mistress had to be paid and sometimes the rent too. Often it wasn't enough, so groups of parents had to keep very busy with fundraising activities: they would set up food and drink stands in the local fiestas to raise money for their cause, hold raffles, and organise cultural events. By the way, the legality of all this was very dubious. In 1965 an ikastola in Bilbao, Euskal Herria's biggest city, became the first to obtain legal permission to operate.

The ikastola movement was also the beginning of a new idea about schools in general. Built from the bottom up, they entailed a different concept of ownership: the parents were the owners of their new school, and their involvement was not limited to putting in money or finding premises: they also participated in the education process, having a say about what textbooks were used and who the teachers would be. The ikastola movement began to spread by word of mouth, the opening of an ikastola in one town often leading to another being started in the next town. In the early years each school found its own way forward, but from 1970 onwards moves were made to set up a coordinating body linking the schools; most of the ikastolak were structured as cooperatives. The idea of the cooperative was that everybody, parents and teachers alike, were equals in the ikastola when it came to decision-making. This idea lent strength to the cooperative movement.

At first the ikastolak started out with three-year-old girls and boys mixed together; this was itself unusual at a time when normally girls and boys were put in separate classrooms. Teaching methods were improvised, but innovative educational concepts were also tried out. Education was not seen as an activity enclosed within the four walls of a room, but as something applicable to all the child's activities. The main goal was not rote learning but rather stimulation of the child's natural curiosity. Instead of the teacher being the protagonist and the pupil being treated as an object, the child became the subject and centre of the education process. Games, songs, outings and cultural activities were everyday happenings at an ikastola. As coordination between ikastolak developed and improved, the teachers worked together more, but at the beginning different methods grew up autonomously in each such school.

The ikastola was a school for both learning Basque and learning in Basque. It was the project of Basque-speaking parents, who wanted their children to be educated in the language of their home. But the ikastola was initially an urban phenomenon, and in the towns and cities of Euskal Herria the Spanish language had, as it still has, a stronger presence. Consequently, more and more Spanish-speaking families who supported the Basque language started enrolling their children in ikastolak. That was perfectly natural and straightforward in cities like Bilbao, Gasteiz (Vitoria), Iruñea (Pamplona) or Donostia (San Sebastián), but less so in small towns in the back country of the Basque-speaking provinces of Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, where now a big issue emerged: in schools that had been created for the purpose of defending the right of children to learn in their mother tongue, this situation led to a system with two "speeds", because children who did not know Basque from their home could not keep up with language classes aimed at native Basque-speaking children, so a solution was needed.

Teaching

In fact, pedagogical concerns were a foremost issue for the ikastolak from the start, since they were not founded with the sole purpose of recovering the language. Cultivation of Basque identity and the nurturing of self-awareness were among the parents' chief aims; their central purpose was to regain Basque-speaking customs and spread Basque culture. So when they began to seek funds to pay for teachers and schools, they did so by reviving and promoting local festivities, and by taking part in local activities until they developed into cultural and social centres for these localities.

Getting started was not easy. The first ikastolak began in basements, rooms loaned by the local church or perhaps someone's garage or a spare room. Classrooms were equipped with chairs and tables that had been foraged from somewhere or other. There was no official assistance, and many administrative impediments. Those running the ikastolak at first had to engage in constant fights with school inspectors to get them to acknowledge the value of the education given to ikastola pupils and grant the children qualifications. Some ikastolak were attended by children up to the age of six, others up to nine. After that they were forced to start going to official schools if they wanted an official school qualification. Often the

names of pupils, or their number, were not declared properly in a ploy to keep the inspectors at bay. In other cases it was the teachers at the official schools who told on the ikastolak. But still the ikastolak kept going.

At that time teachers who were capable of teaching classes in Basque were few and far between, and teachers were forced to learn from practice as they proceeded. Working without social security and earning minimal wages, they forged ahead through sheer militancy and commitment. At first these teachers had to supply teaching materials out of their own pockets: lesson plans, rough notes (hand-written at first, typed up later),

The ikastolak marked the beginning of a new way of understanding school. The school was owned by the parents, many of whom took part in building them up

and sometimes the odd book if someone was lucky enough to get hold of one.

To go some way towards addressing these needs, in 1964 the Joanes Etxeberri Teacher Training School was opened in Donostia to provide training to ikastola teachers; here they began learning about Basque language and literature, local history, geography and anthropology,

theories and methods in child education, and other school-related subjects. There were nine teachers in the first promotion. Ten years later, there were forty-five.

Of course that wasn't enough, and so the ikastolak turned to the Catalans and to the French pedagogue Célestin Freinet hoping to benefit from their support and experience in developing an educational model for the ikastolak. They exchanged ideas with educationalists from Catalonia, and learnt from Freinet, whose goal was to make the pupil the subject, dismissing over-rigid methods and preferring a flexible approach. This fit in very well with the ikastola philosophy.

Textbooks

In the drive to strengthen the ikastola schools, teachers soon became aware that the need for teaching materials was one of their most urgent problems. They lacked textbooks suited to their new kind of school, indeed they lacked teaching materials generally. At first a reader called ***Xabiertxo*** that had been first published in 1925 was the only Basque book they had. Although widely used, it was not particularly suitable for the new times. For a school trying to offer something different, its frequent religious quotations or essentialist references to nature did not make it an ideal text. The leading figures in the ikastola movement of this period therefore became preoccupied with matters relating to how to write textbooks, design them, publish them, and so on. They asked themselves what kind of material they should create for their pupils to learn from.

It was the teachers themselves who responded to this pedagogical challenge. In the late sixties a group of teachers came together to form the **Gordailu** association, whose goal was to make advances in pedagogy and teaching methods, and they began to produce books. First of all they published the *Ikastola hiztegia*, an "ikastola dictionary", which was an important attempt to establish scientific and technical terms that Basque needed and didn't yet have. Then they started publishing a series called *Ikastola Liburutegia*, the "ikastola library", which consisted of books about natural sciences, social sciences, geography and history. They were reference books, not textbooks, because the members of Gordailu believed in active pedagogy, that is, in practical teaching: the child was to be the protagonist of his or her education. Such teachers believed that the pupil didn't need a textbook; pupils were to make up their own textbook as they went along, drawing from a variety of materials and sources. The idea was to aim for student autonomy, to spark off pupils' initiative, with the teacher acting merely as a facilitator. It was an approach that aimed to do away

with domination by the teacher and a passive attitude on the part of the pupil.

It may have been too progressive, for the teachers themselves were not well prepared for such a teaching style, and after a few years passed it was decided that they needed "real books" after all, and so the ikastolak began translating textbooks produced by mainstream publishers into Basque. But there were problems with these books: they had been produced outside the Basque Country, whereas the ikastolak wanted to maintain their own pedagogical approach. This led to the ***Saioka*** project, which proposed to provide the ikastolak with an entire curriculum of their own.

The big idea in *Saioka*'s pedagogical approach was that the pupil is not "taught", the pupil learns through action. The goal, then, was group work aimed at increasing the pupil's critical capacity. These were progressive materials written in standard Basque; often the teachers ran into trouble because new terminology had to be created in Basque and some of these terms sounded alien to some of them, but at least for the first time there was a method, an overall approach, thanks to which *Saioka* was successful and effective.

This method demands involvement and commitment from the teacher, and requires proper training. The authors of the *Saioka* books gave training courses themselves. The teachers themselves were the main protagonists. Often they created their own materials, each in their own manner, depending on their needs. Each of these efforts represented a contribution to the main corpus. They were small steps, but much needed ones, which made them gigantic too. It was thanks to the experiments that took place in those classrooms that technical Basque and specialized Basque started to develop.

Basque in the public schools

The ikastola system underwent rapid growth in the 1970s. Ikastolak opened in practically every town and district throughout the country and enrolment numbers shot up; the movement's pedagogical foundation became increasingly robust, its teachers better trained, and as a result it disposed of more and more resources. However, most ikastolak were still cooperatives run by parents and teachers, and only ten percent of the country's student population were enrolled in them.

But the concern about education was much broader than this. Asked what measures needed to be taken to support the Basque language, the great majority of people at the time would have answered: "Schools". The seventies saw the rise of the phenomenon of adult Basque language classes which turned out "new" Basque speakers (*euskaldun berriak*). This phenomenon wasn't entirely new, as there had always been some individuals who managed to learn Basque and eventually came to live in Basque, but now thousands of people became Basque speakers thanks to the growth of adult language schools within the grassroots Basque movement. These were active bilinguals who had deliberately chosen to become Basque speakers, who could use Basque not only orally but in writing too, and their cultural contribution was crucial. These people wanted the Basque language to serve for everything, and they had no hangups about that. They wanted Basque to be in the public school system as well. The symbolic impact of *euskaldun berriak* was also important: their existence seemed to demonstrate that, if even adults whose native language was not Basque could master the language, what could the schools not achieve!

We need to remember the obstacles and official impediments still faced by the ikastolak. For all their progress, there was still no all-round, general permission to study in Basque, and often there also wasn't a suitable building in which to accommodate pupils; teachers' salaries were modest, there were no official subsidies, and there was a shortage of teachers. Development of teaching materials was still an ongoing process. Everything remained to be done, and the ikastolak were still being kept going by the original drive of people's ethusiasm, through self-organisation, non-hierarchical structure and the sharing of functions. The ikastolak were for many children the home of Basque: that is where such children's main, or perhaps only, contact with Basque was. An attempt was made for the teacher, the cleaner, the principal, the worker, all to speak Basque always: that was a very important thing.

When the Basque Government came into being in the 1980s, it was this trend, started by the ikastolak, which egged it on to seek to address such wishes and aspirations within the public schools. That was when the new government came up with the idea of so-called "language models" for the schools. The recently created Basque parliament passed a law in 1983 establishing that all children in the three provinces under its jurisdiction, Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba, must be given the opportunity to know and learn both Basque and Spanish, for which purpose three alternative types or "models" of bilingual education were defined, labeled A, B and D. In Model A all school subjects were to be taught in Spanish except for Basque language. In Model B, both Spanish and Basque were to be used as languages of instruction, while in Model D all subjects would be taught in Basque, with the exception of Spanish language. The goal was for all children reaching the age of sixteen to be able to speak, read and write in

both Basque and Spanish. The different models were basically motivated by an attempt to take into account pupils' first language, Model A being intended for children coming from Spanish-speaking homes; the purpose of Model D was for Basque-speaking children to be able to get their entire education in Basque; while Model B was meant to satisfy those parents who wished for both languages to be given equal weight.

One major obstacle to carrying out this scheme was the lack of teachers, for in the early eighties most teachers in Euskal Herria could not speak Basque. To train teachers, the Basque Government set up a special centre called IRALE, and the Eskoriatza Teacher Training College within the HUHEZI faculty likewise did a lot of work in this area, as did UEU, the Basque Summer University. The government handed out subsidies for the production of textbooks and school materials in Basque. A wide range of projects for extracurricular activities in Basque were also supported, including school drama groups, verse singing (a traditional Basque form of entertainment), language immersion camps, and school visits by Basque writers.

This system of language models broke away from the idea, which had hitherto held sway, that all children ought be giving schooling in their mother tongue. The experience in Quebec had already demonstrated that in cases of language revitalization where the language of school is not all the pupils' native language, excellent results can still be obtained. That is to say, school achievement was no worse for children who were educated in a second language. This finding was confirmed when the same system was implemented in other countries, including the Basque Country: pupils learnt a language that was not their native language without any negative effects whatsoever on their intellectual and linguistic development. Henceforth the great challenge was to improve the level of Basque of pupils whose home language was not Basque.

Things have come a long way in the thirty years since these language models were first implemented in public schools. Today, with some reservations, it may be said that it is possible to be educated entirely in Basque all the way from infants' school up to university. In a few cases everything, including university, can be done in Basque, because some degrees are offered completely in Basque by the University of the Basque Country, the University of Deusto, the University of Mondragon and the Public University of Navarre. In other degrees there are options to do certain subjects in Basque.

Time has revealed the strengths and weaknesses of each of the language models:

- In 1982, 80% of pupils were enrolled in Model A programmes; today that figure has plummeted to under 20%.

The rise of Model D has been spectacular: today **more than 60% of children are enrolled in Model D.** Within the public schools this figure is even higher, 80%.

- In this period of time it has become evident to the public that the best model for children is the immersion system, namely Model D. Statistics have shown that only in an immersion system do children acquire the ability to get along in both languages, and so it is the only model that helps them to become Basque speakers. Model A is useless for learning a second language: children who go to school in this model fail the Basque language proficiency tests.
- The success of Model D has been borne out by experience, proving that children **learn a language better when they receive it in large doses**. In other words, they learn the second language a lot better if they spend a large proportion of their school hours learning in it. It is also clear that they do not lose their native language in the process. Obviously the situation is different for children whose native language is the dominant language. In the case of children whose mother tongue is Spanish, going to school in a second language (i.e. Basque, in our case) presents no impediment to their development in the dominant language (Spanish), the status of which is ensured by its presence in society, at home and in the public

administration. In a country like Euskal Herria this is self-evident. In the opposite direction this is not the case at all: if children who speak a minority language are sent to a school in the dominant language, this usually has a very detrimental effect on their mastery of their native language.

- The results also show that only immersion models can guarantee a positive result for the original language. The Basque experience has demonstrated that children who learn Basque **as a school subject** – children whose schooling is in Spanish but who are taught Basque as a subject – do not achieve better school results on account of this. On the contrary, they **fail to learn Basque.** To sum up: immersion is the only effective way to produce bilingual, Basque-speaking children.

In many American countries, the law allows for children to study in their local languages. This is called bilingual intercultural education. But a lot of people have recognised the failure of this system. In many regions, in Ecuador, Guatemala or Colombia, this form of teaching has given rise to de facto ghettos, because only children whose native language is, say, Quechua are placed in classrooms, on the pretext of giving them classes about local customs and language for so many hours a week, while the teachers mostly do not speak Quechua. The upshot is that these children do not improve in their native language and the quality of teaching is very poor. In the last resort this is merely teaching to bring about their transition to Spanish, with no pedagogical basis, no resources and no motivation whatsoever. Consequently, since the teaching offered is so bad, parents prefer to have their children go to an ordinary school.

In Navarre, another area of Euskal Herria, local legislation opened the door to teaching through Basque in the public schools, but the number of children enrolled in Model D today is lower than 25% because of the fact that the territory has been split into different zones with different language policies in each zone, and because the public administration has not campaigned properly to promote Basque language learning. In the northern Basque Country, which is in the French state, the situation is even worse: there, in practice the only way for children to study in Basque is to enrol in an ikastola.

Turning Spanish speaking children into Basque speakers

When Basque found its way into the public schools, some ikastolak "went public" and became schools in the state school system, but the majority preferred to maintain their original character as self-run cooperatives. This opened up a debate about the language models. The options in the public schools were in theory set up to address the variety of home situations: Model A for children from Spanish-speaking households, Model D for Basque-speaking children.

Although experience had already shown that immersion was the best solution for children who did not bring Basque with them from the home, at that point the ikastolak decided to re-examine the issue from a pedagogical point of view, posing the question: What can we do to turn children who do not speak Basque at home into better Basque speakers? At this stage the ikastolak set going a new method of second language learning called ***Haurtxoa***.

The new scheme did not signify any backsliding in the determination for all children to spend as much time as possible speaking Basque, which at school meant a minimum of 80% of the time, but in terms of the treatment of the language different forms of development or grading were introduced: for young children whose mother tongue was Spanish, a much more gradual process was envisaged up to the age of six, at which point all children were mixed together in the same class. The *Haurtxoa* project consisted of new teaching materials in all areas, which was of one type for originally Basque-speaking children and another type for Spanish speakers. It was described as a two-speed language teaching programme.

This project was first set going in five ikastola schools, and within four years had expanded to over a hundred schools. It even spread to the public schools, and by the 1990-91 school year the materials were reaching about ten thousand pupils.

THE CURRICULUM

One of the first key decisions for anyone planning to start an education project concerns materials. What kind of materials are they going to work with: oral, written or a mixture of both? What will the role of teachers be: simply to transmit knowledge, or to educate? And what approach will be taken? But first of all it is necessary to decide what the children should be taught. What events and concepts will sixteen-year-olds need to know about by the time they complete their compulsory education, what procedures must they know how to carry out and what skills must they have acquired, and what values and attitudes are they to have mastered? Planners must first identify the set of abilities, knowledge and skills that must be acquired by young people within the school community. Or here is another way of looking at it: what set of customs, perspectives, beliefs and behaviour patterns does one generation wish to pass on to the next? This is called a curriculum. The ultimate purpose of education can be summed up and synthesized in the curriculum.

This is naturally the first step for anyone who wants to organise a system of education, but in Euskal Herria this was not the starting point. The curriculum came in to play after the language models explained above had been incorporated into the public school system; the ikastolak, however, got started much earlier than that. All the concerns about pedagogy and the curriculum came later. Maybe there was no other way: it would have been impossibe to reach a consensus regarding the curriculum in the period when the ikastolak started up, and if they had had to wait for such a consensus perhaps we would not be here writing this book now! It couldn't be done, and maybe this is the lesson to be learnt: provided the will and determination of a people or a society is there, each one of us can find our own way forward.

UNESCO says, with regard to the curriculum, that the main job of education is to facilitate the development of the individual as a part of society, and that education is the vehicle of cultures and values and the road to socialization. The 1996 Universal Declaration of Language Rights says that every language community has the right to use education to enable the thorough knowledge of one's own cultural heritage, including one's history and geography, literature and all cultural forms. So each community can decide what its children, the people who

are destined to guide the community in the future, should learn at school.

Of course, societies do not develop in a vacuum but in particular cultural and historical contexts, and the school system should recognise the importance of the world in which the local community lives. We must bear in mind that the language is also learnt at home and in the family, in the place where one lives and with one's friends, and all this makes up the first and most immediate locus of language transmission. School provides a means of teaching to respect and promote cultural and linguistic diversity, and that is where the curriculum comes in. According to the internationally accepted definition, the curriculum should rest on four chief goals or "pillars", called *learning to know*, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.

- Learning to know means coming to possess sufficient broad, general knowledge, and being given an opportunity to acquire deeper knowledge of certain selected subjects. This makes it necessary to learn how to learn in order to be able to benefit throught life from the available educational opportunities.

- The school must also teach ***how to do things***, not just in order to obtain professional qualifications but also to deal with many different situations in which individuals may find themselves, and also to acquire the abilities that will allow them to work together in a team.

- *Learning to live together* is another of the major tasks of school, by developing an understanding of other people and learning to communicate with them, acquiring the skills that make it possible to work towards shared goals and to analyse conflicts; pluralism, respect for nature, mutual comprehension and respect for peaceful values.

- Lastly, one must *learn to be*, so that one can better express one's own personality and learn to act with more and more capacity for autonomy, hold opinions and take on personal responsibilities. To this end, each person's gifts and abilities should not be underestimated, whether it be memory, reasoning, a sense of aesthetics, physical ability, capacity to communicate, and so on, not forgetting respect for the land.

Education, then, is not just about receiving knowledge but also concerns learning to do things, to live together and to act as an autonomous individual. A curriculum must therefore be designed in such a way as to make explicit reference to the sociocultural characteristics of one's own community. The main task of pedagogy is to prepare pupils who are active, critical, and ready to take part in the transformation of oppressive social structures, so that they may become historical actors in the building of a better society.

Building a Basque curriculum

In Euskal Herria the curriculum, or "educational programme" as it may be called, has long been a subject of concern for the Basque community – unsurprisingly, since the people who exerted themselves most to achieve a Basque curriculum were the same people whose dream it was to have a Basque school in the first place: the creators of the ikastolas.

There are actually several curricula in the Basque Country owing to administrative fragmentation. There is one in Navarre and a different one in Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. 55% of the curriculum for these four provinces is im-

posed by the Spanish government, while the administrations of the two autonomous communities are left to supply the remaining 45%. Finally, in the northern Basque provinces of Lapurdi, Low Navarre and Zuberoa there is yet another curriculum, determined by the French state.

The first move to establish a Basque curriculum commenced in 1992 at the Second National Conference of the ikastola movement; at the Third National Conference, four years later, it was decided to undertake a study aimed at creating a Basque national curriculum. The object was basically to come up with a definition of what it is that we wish to transmit, as a group, as a society, as a culture, from one generation to the next.

The members of the research group were clear about one thing: none of the curricula currently in effect were valid for an educational project that intended to strengthen and reinforce the country and the community. But they also understood that the new curriculum was not to be focused exclusively on the local culture and traditions, but needed to be a Basque curriculum centred on the society of the future, combining local and universal elements.

So it was decided to begin with an analysis of the existing curricula, to see what content was being studied by Basque pupils, what things were played up or down, according to what principles. The curricula of the different regions of the Basque Country were examined and it was concluded that there was no common culture present in them, nothing that could be called a "Basque dimension".

For instance, the term Euskal Herria itself, which is the customary way to refer to the Basque community, was used in very different ways in the curricula in question, in some of which it didn't appear at all! The authors of the study came to the conclusion that, in general, it was merely a development, adaptation and specification of the treatment of fields and subjects that appeared in the Spanish curriculum. There was no attempt in them to produce a real Basque curriculum at all. Not a curriculum that had been thought up by the Basque community. Even when the language was studied through texts the sociolinguistic and historical aspects of the language were mentioned, but only in the case of the Basque language, not when looking at Spanish texts.

When it came to the curriculum of the northern Basque Country, the authors of the study drew attention to the fact that there was no reference at all to other cultures and languages, and certainly not to the Basque language or territory. There was no trace in it of diversity, which is of so much importance to the ikastolak and the Basque community, nor to Basque symbols. In short, the study concluded that Basques in northern Euskal Herria were given very little opportunity to learn through their curriculum about the Basque language, Basque identity or Basque culture, while that which the Basques of the south had in common in theirs was basically the Spanish curriculum.

Thus members of the ikastola movement concluded that official Spanish and French curricula were a far cry from a Basque curriculum, and the official curricula of the Basque Autonomous Community and Navarre were also found wanting. They concluded that a Basque curriculum was all the more necessary. They nicknamed this Basque curriculum *kixkia*, a word which refers to the central part of a traditional pelota ball or the innermost layer of an onion: the kernel, core, heart, soul! The Basque Country was in Europe, it was a part of western culture, yes, but the *kixkia* was the part that makes it *Basque*. And to remain Basque, it was essential to ensure its transmission to every child; every ball must have its *kixkia*, they said.

The *kixkia*

What, however, was this *kixkia*? What was this inner core that makes the Basque Country Basque; our specificity vis-à-vis the other countries of Europe? It has traditionally been supposed that the subject areas most closely related, or most obviously so, to the ethnic, territorial and cultural identity of Euskal Herria are Language and Literature, Geography and History, and in a broad sense, Anthropology, so these had

already been previously marked off as signs of "Basquehood". Thus these were also the areas on which the ikastola members started concentrating, although other areas were not ignored completely. All other areas of knowledge were also considered Basque, even when they were universal: these were "universal, and so also Basque". How is this achieved? By transmitting all those areas of knowledge through the Basque language, for the very same reason that the Spanish or the French underline the universality of this knowledge by transmitting it through *their* respective languages.

Naturally, the first step is to train teachers. It is the teacher who develops the curriculum in the classroom and puts it into practice, and the authors of the Basque curriculum realised that the central principles and objectives of the Basque curriculum needed to be incorporated into teachers' training if the ideas were ever going to reach the pupils.

This was a tough problem because most of the young men and women who became teachers had themselves not studied using a Basque curriculum, nor had they been trained in one. So the Basque curricululm was a project that required in-job training and updating, an ambitious plan which made it necessary for the staff and management in all areas of education to undergo retraining.

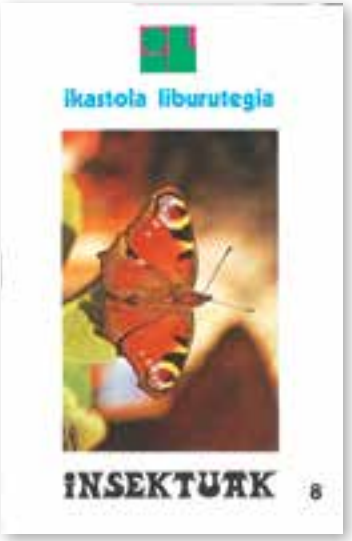
Teaching materials also came up for discussion. Teaching without any materials is impractical, since teachers can hardly teach without resources. It is almost impossible for teachers to come up with all the materials needed for their class themselves. The importance of materials is even greater when a language is going through a normalization process, because those materials — such as books, teaching units, audiovisual materials, dictionaries and encyclopedias — are the very references through which normalization is seen to take shape.

Many things had already been done in the area of materials at the time when the subject of the ikastola curriculum came up for study. There were many ikastolak, where a great many pupils went to school, and numerous publishers inside or outside Euskal Herria had dedicated themselves to creating books and other materials in Basque. Besides which, in the public schools also, at different rhythms and with different goals in each of the administrative areas to which the schools were subject, there was also teaching through Basque. The number of pupils studying in Basque was on the rise, all the way up from infants' school to university, and a lot had been accomplished in the way of textbook production, although there were clearly shortcomings in the materials when examined from a Basque perspective.

In them, for example, there was no uniformity, or application of standard criteria, regarding the geographical borders or names of parts of the Basque territory. When we come to the treatment of Basque culture, or history or the organisation of society, it was the same thing. In many cases textbooks published in Basque were nothing but mechanical translations of Spanish textbooks. In the teaching materials published by local publishers too, although the Basque dimension was allotted more space, the main point of reference was the official Spanish curriculum, and in the opinion of the ikastolak the Basque dimension was not adequately covered in that curriculum. What room is there for the use of translations, and which are the fields in which priority should be given to the creation of original materials? How should the analysis of content of textbooks be structured? These were some of the questions they had to grapple with.

Developing the Basque curriculum

These were the foundations of what, in the opinion of the ikastolak, was needed to ensure the kind of teaching that the Basque community required. After much work, in July, 2004 the Federation of Ikastolak presented the result, a 700-page report called "The Basque Curriculum: A Cultural Roadmap. Experts' Report", which brought together the opinions of 63 specialists about what constituted the body of knowledge about Euskal Herria and the world that an educated Basque person should possess. This was the kixkia,



but now came the next step of inserting it inside the ball! In other words, specifying the Basque Curriculum of Compulsory Education.

The specialists who authored the report focused on competences (or abilities). Competence stands in contrast to content: it refers to a set of skills drawn from life experience in connection with the educational domain or the immediate community, based on the premise that the school is not just a place for receiving information or knowledge but also for being taught to relate and adapt to our context and surroundings. It is essential to learn these things, and one place for doing so, although not the only one, is the school.

The ikastolak listed the following competences or abilities:

- Learning to learn and to think
- Learning to communicate
- Learning to live together
- Learning to do and to act
- Learning to be oneself

When talking about the main objectives of the curriculum it was pointed out that Basque culture is not transmitted in the official curricula, or not in an adequate fashion. It was also observed that it is necessary to incorporate competences needed in order to live in a Basque society integrated in Europe and interacting with the world at large. Also in connection with the subject of competences, the report

The school is not just a place to receive content and knowledge, it is also where we learn how to relate to others and adapt to our surroundings

recalled a basic issue discussed in the report drawn up for UNESCO under the leadership of Jacques Delors, which is that transmitting language and culture is not the only function of education, for it must also serve to prepare pupils for all areas of life and develop the ability to learn how to learn. This is necessary in order to understand our own human nature, to encourage critical thinking, to develop creative skills and to make us responsible for our own actions.

Putting all this into practice we end up with a "ball" made up of three layers:

- **The Basque Curriculum as a whole.** This is a selection of Basque processes and products from a given perspective on the world (in this case a Basque perspective). Of these cultural processes and products, some are specific to the Basque Country, some have been borrowed into it, and others are universal. The biggest proportion of any curriculum is universal, and this is also true of the Basque Curriculum. The influence of Europe and the West is considerable. What differs is the way in which that content is perceived, interpreted and expressed.

- **Basic and common components.** Those curriculum components are called basic which are important for personal development, living together with others on a daily basis, or work, or which are essential in order to be able to learn other things and go on learning throughout life. Common components are those which promote solidarity and unity among all pupils and favour equality of opportunity.
- **The Specific (special, particular) Basque Curriculum.** The Specific Basque Curriculum consists of content related to Euskal Herria, whether originally its own or adopted into it. In other words, those things which make us different from other cultures.

At first work on this Curriculum received support and assistance from the Basque Government's ministry of education, but later that cooperation was interrupted.

MULTILINGUAL OBJECTIVE

Most countries in the world are bilingual or multilingual. Whether in the Amazon, Central Europe, the Caucasus or large parts of Africa, it has been the norm to know several local languages because this is useful for peaceful coexistence. Hence education should not only make sure pupils know their own language but make provisions for them to know another language as well. The only thing that must be made perfectly clear is that learning a new language should under no circumstance entail the loss of one's native language.

A lot of languages are studied as second or third languages; in consequence of social relations resulting from coexistence between different groups, immigration or particular educational policies, many members of society become bilingual or multilingual in the course of a lifetime. The reasons that lead someone to learn another language may be social, occupational, commercial, scientific or political. But every language learning experience should be a process of growth, a cultural broadening: a path of entry into another culture, never a giving up of one's own.

What is more, when the members of another community learn a minority language and when the community members themselves who have lost the language learn it, this gives that language more prestige. And that is decisive in language recovery processes. It is difficult, though not impossible, to revive a language and recover it fully, and in such initiatives the role of education is absolutely vital. The stories of Hebrew, Maori, Basque, Welsh and Catalan all prove the point, as do Mapuche, Sami and Trique.

Another positive effect of teaching a minority language in school is that it strengthens children's self-esteem, and helps nurture a positive attitude to another culture and language besides one's own, accepting and respecting differences. Schools are points of resistance to language loss and strategic points for the implementation of language policy, since they serve to spread knowledge

of the written language and carry out standardization, to train teachers from the indigenous community, and to elevate the status of languages that have been subject to discrimination or persecution.

The University of the Basque Counry's UNESCO chair has made a number of recommendations about language and education worth bearing in mind by those in positions of responsibility in the fields of education and culture:

- Multilingualism is the best preparation there is for defending cultural diversity and resisting globalization. Knowledge of languages should be the top goal for education for the new millennium.
- Multilingualism should be a general objective for everyone, not just minority language speakers.
- Minority language communities should receive support and assessment from public institutions to help them create and develop their own systems of education, while leaving those communities free to determine their own objectives.
- The lack of a writing system should not stop a language from being used at school; it should be a priority of education to promote oral language use, and all the more so in the case of little-used languages.
- The kinds of education system which produce multilingual or at least bilingual individuals are the ones that are most useful for the maintenance of linguistic diversity.
- For immigrants, pedagogical approaches using immersion are recommended, and it must be compatible with maintenance of their original languages.
- A monolingual school system is very bad for linguistic diversity.
- The school cannot guarantee a language's recovery or even its survival, but it will be difficult to save a language if there is no appropriate education system for the language community.
- The value of biodiversity is recognised throughout the world; similar recognition must be achieved of the value of linguistic diversity as part of mankind's cultural heritage.
- Being multilingual is very useful in today's world, for example for trading and commerce, social and political relations, or keeping track of new developments in technology and other fields of knowledge. Hence it is the job of the school to show how to appreciate and take advantage of all the levels of learning that are achieved through language study

The Eleanitz Project

Pursuing the objective of multilingualism, there have been several projects in the Basque Country to bring a third language into the school curriculum (besides Spanish and Basque). Today English is a compulsory subject for everyone in the public schools, but the amount of time spent on it varies widely depending on the type of school or the individual school. But we may generalize that English is becoming more and more important in the school syllabus.

The ikastolak are no less committed to this, and at present there is a star project called *Eleanitz* ('many languages' or 'multilingual') whose goal is to turn out not just bilingual but multilingual pupils. An integrated programme was developed for pupils with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds which included Basque language maintenance and Basque immersion programmes. Although most of the pupils' native language was Spanish, at school it was treated as a second language and children began studying it as a school subject from the age of eight. The objective of Spanish teaching was to consolidate proper mastery of its formal, academic register, that is, the register of the language which is not used in everyday life outside of school. From the age of four, children started learning a third language, namely English in this case. One reason is that children are believed to find it easer to acquire languages at such an early age; another was to increase the number of hours devoted to learning English within the compulsory school syllabus, but to do it in a way which would not encroach on the pride of place of Basque.

However, the early introduction of a third language is still a controversial issue. Some argue that in Finland, for example, children begin learning English at age eleven and still achieve excellent results.

The main idea behind this ikastola project was that Basque should be placed on the same level as Spanish and French which have a high international status, while at the same time Basque speakers should master another language and be able to use it properly, because otherwise Basque itself might be placed at risk.

With these things in mind, the ikastolak developed a Language Project in 2000 whose main goal is, in addition to developing pupils' ability to communicate, to make the language an effective instrument for all of life's situations and needs.

The ikastolak implemented the Eleanitz Project progressively, step by step and only in some places. For the first three years two options were offered, in both of which Basque was the primary language. In the first option, called Eleanitz-English, English was taught from age four to age sixteen, Spanish from eight or nine to fifteen or sixteen, and French from twelve to sixteen. In the second option, the only difference was that French was taught from age four to sixteen. The Federation of Ikastolak developed its own teaching materials.

Basque must be placed on the same level with other languages, but Basque speakers also need to learn another language, otherwise the Basque language itself may be put at risk

Tests have shown that 79.7% of secondary school students pass the Trinity College ESOL test, an oral test, and there is no perceptible difference between experimental groups who followed the multilingual programme and a control group in terms of global Basque language results.

HOW TO SET UP AN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Setting up an entire education system is a project full of challenges, of course. If it is to meet with success, the connections between the content of the language or languages to be taught and studied must be carefully analysed first of all. Success will have a lot to do with the sociolinguistic setting, particularly in the case of minority languages. For it is impossible to try to cultivate the teaching and learning of languages in a school environment without taking into account the sociolinguistic situation of those languages outside school. Needless to say, the weak sociolinguistic situation of a language can limit what can be done about teaching and studying it at school.

- While it is true that a language will not stop being a language just because it is not used in education, it should be borne in mind that the school is a place that can play a key role in the transmission of a culture and in helping it to gain prestige and status. In modern society the school is fundamental to keeping it alive and strong.

- Language immersion programmes are found most widely and used most often in those parts of the world where there is, in society, a clear and definite interest in fully recovering a language which has been turned into a minority language. In the Basque Country's experience at least, immersion is the only system that can lead to both languages being learnt properly: the language of the home and the dominant language. The results achieved prove that this system is in no way detrimental to pupils' progress. Quite the contrary: speaking more than one language is advantageous for the pupil, because it facilitates things and produces new skills, and even makes it easier to learn more languages later on.

- The first steps in setting up an education system are to develop teaching materials and train teachers, once a curriculum has been agreed upon. However, in the Basque Country things got going before all that. First the project got underway and then

the work of developing textbooks, teacher training and formulating a curriculum commenced. What this shows is that provided there is enough will and stamina in a society, every people can find its own way forward.

- It is important that the new school should be a space dedicated to one's own language and culture. It must not only be a place to learn, but a home for the language.

- The nature of the curriculum, the teaching materials and the educational approach are things that each community must make its own decisions about, including what place is to be allotted to its traditions, how to cultivate its own world-view and its relations with its environment, and how it will refer to other peoples and countries. Every community ought to have the right to organise its own education system as it sees fit.

- It is in most cases not just desirable but virtually essential for teachers to be bilingual. But though it may be essential, this isn't always obvious to everybody. In the Basque Country, for example, not even five percent of teachers in the public schools across the Basque Country could speak Basque, whereas today in the provinces of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa the proportion is over 80%. Given that a teacher normally represents a role model for pupils, it is absolutely essential that the teacher should both know and speak the minority language in order to be able to get anywhere at all.

Knowing another language is good for the pupil because it brings with it new skills and abilities

- What will happen if the teacher and the pupils speak different varieties of the language? This is something that often worries parents who are concerned that their children will stop talking the dialect of the home. Everywhere in the world today it is understood that the school is a place to learn to read and write and it is clear that a standard language is not only helpful but sometimes necessary, because that is what a standard, unified language is: a set of writing conventions. As for dialectal diversity, this may be seen as something that enriches the class, if we agree that it is a good thing to learn about different variants. Besides, we should remember that most minority languages haven't got a standard variety anyway, and this very concept of a standard language is often linked to written languages, and therefore, as often as not, associated with the dominant languages. Less than a quarter of the languages of the world have a standard form and a written literature. 19% of the world's languages are unwritten

languages, even though the indigenous peoples of America (or Abya Yala) claim that their beliefs, history and legends are told through symbols and drawings. So a standard language is a good tool for a school, but it is also possible to start up an education system without it. That is how things started in Euskal Herria and the standard language was created afterwards. But it is true to say that the standard language did prove very helpful to Basque teaching, and that Basque teaching in turn played a very important part indeed in consolidating and spreading knowledge of the standard.

- Schools based on oral transmission are another matter, however. When the first ikastolak got started there was very little written material to be had: teachers had no training or ability to produce textbooks. But if the truth be told, in general precious little attention was paid to oral teaching even then; too little, perhaps. In the case of the American indigenous languages, traditional oral texts may have great importance and be very useful for the teaching of such minority languages.

- Multilingualism is one of the world's riches, and education should not only ensure that people know their own mother tongue but also teach another language. But it must always be kept clearly in mind that learning a new language must not result in losing one's mother tongue.

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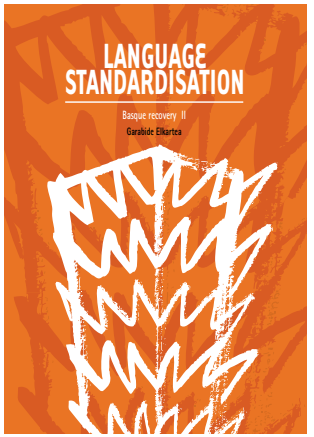

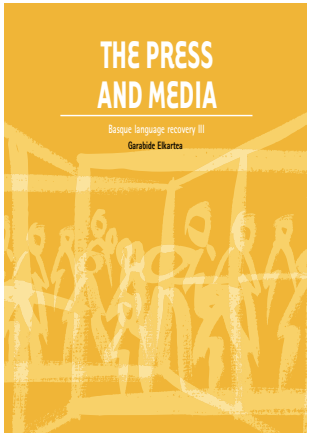

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