



Reviews

SANTOS REGO, M. A. (Ed.) (2016). *Knowledge society. Learning and innovation at university level*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 256 pp. ISBN: 978-84-16647-75-0

It has become usual that the literary editor of this collective work, Miguel Ángel Santos Rego, brings together qualified experts on issues that are at the forefront of the debates about the future of educational institutions in their social context, deepening the demands that the new ways of learning, producing and relating arise in the school and family context, or within non-formal education spaces, with the aim of achieving more self-regulated, ecological learning, committed to their environment. This time, it was the turn of the university and, by extension, to higher education, the text reflecting a new panorama of models, modalities and methods developed within the framework of the knowledge society.

In the introduction, Professor Santos Rego begins by addressing the issue of the changing identity and mission of the university, in a historical moment of global flows that move through networks. In this scenario, the university institution is not the only one that leads the communication of knowledge, but it reaches the citizenship through numerous technological channels –often controlled by large corporations–. Starting from these observations, the editor defends the need for change of the university, with the consequent overcoming of nineteenth-century structures and procedures; he highlights its status as a learning organization; and recommends its constitution as a stabilizing agency in the public space.

The development of these preliminary ideas is expressed in eleven chapters grouped into two parts. The first one, whose responsibility is assumed by authors affiliated with Spanish and Latin American institutions, includes six chapters referring to the competence of learning management that is assigned to the university in the current knowledge society, reflecting the most recent theoretical approaches and tendencies,

along with their corresponding implications for government, modalities and methodologies. This block identifies, as common features of the new higher education models, the progressive convergence in the space of virtuality, the flexibilization of training spaces, and the incorporation of new forms of organization and curricular planning. On the other hand, the teaching methods of these models, focused on learning, were able to improve the students' strategies, attitudes and capacities, as well as their self-regulation. Along with the concepts that describe and explain learning, innovative suggestions are also provided, such as replacing the idea of centrality of the student by that of mediation between the student and the objectively valuable, thus getting the learner on the path of the world of life.

The second part of the work, comprised of five chapters, focuses on the social responsibility dimension of higher education, procedurally specified in terms of service-learning methodology. The text revises dimensions of responsibility which are often neglected: the training of socially responsible graduates and the return that society deserves; and a university that promotes civic engagement. As a methodology aimed at this end, in connection with the performance of university students and their professionalization, Service-Learning is defined and characterized through its pedagogical and organizational dynamism. Specifically, one of the chapters refers to an already implemented process of institutionalization of this methodology through six dimensions: mission and philosophy; teachers' support and involvement in Service-Learning; students' support and involvement; institutional support; community participation and partnership; and national debate, politics and collective support.

In short, we are faced with a text that, while helping to understand the contextualized dynamism of the university institution, stimulates in-depth reflection on its ethical mission in an interconnected and complex world. In addition, the work is attributed the virtue of creating the opportunity for the development of critical awareness about the social projection of the university, and it could be concluded that Professor Santos Rego, once again, has succeeded in the design and execution of a collective project of communication of sociopedagogical knowledge.

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TOPPING, K., BUCHS, C., DURAN, D., & VAN KEER, H. (2017). *Effective peer learning: From principles to practical implementation*. Londres: Routledge. 186 pp. ISBN: 9781138906495.

For some years now, cooperative learning has emerged as a methodology willing to transform educational practices and to contribute to the development of cooperation, core competence for the knowledge society –according to UNESCO and OECD. Numerous research studies support its potential, but there are still multiple barriers that hinder its widespread application in practice. Although a multitude of methodological proposals have been developed, it is easy to drift in a wide sea of methods and techniques. With the book *Effective peer learning: From principles to practical implementation*, Topping, Buchs, Duran and van Keer come to rescue, offering a guide that aims at helping practitioners establish well-structured and effective peer learning projects using a variety of methods.

The book is organised into four sections. In the first section, peer learning is introduced, describing mutual interactions –cooperative and collaborative learning, in chapter 1– and directional interactions –same-age and cross-age peer tutoring, in chapter 2. In the second section, the general principles for peer learning are presented, focusing both on preparing learners for constructive interactions –chapter 3– and organising peer interactions in academic tasks –chapter 4. In the third section, practical propositions for the classroom are shown, in cooperative learning situations –chapter 5–, same-age peer tutoring situations –chapter 6– and cross-age peer tutoring situations –chapter 7. Finally, in the fourth section –corresponding to chapter 8–, conclusions and onward directions are gathered, pointing out the advantages, problems, potential and challenges of cooperative learning, and advice to maximise benefits and reduce difficulties is given.

This organisation, as the authors suggest, allows each chapter to be read separately with different purposes, focusing on cooperative learning or peer tutoring. Far from adopting a prescriptive tone, the authors manage to link theory and practice to invite the reader to reflect. A coherent and careful itinerary progressively takes us from the conceptual delimitation of cooperative learning to the practical level, through an exquisite clarity of exposition that allows integrating a wide variety of bibliographical sources and methodological proposals. The closure section puts the finishing touch, summarising the main learnings and

explicitly stating their usefulness to carry out peer learning programmes successfully.

Focusing on the examples of peer learning projects, gathered in the third section of the book, it is important to highlight the wide variety of the twenty proposals, which come from different countries –United States, United Kingdom, Spain, Scotland, Mexico, Belgium, Israel, Canada, France and Switzerland– and aim at different educational stages –primary education, secondary education and university– and disciplines –reading, foreign languages, mathematics, psychology, statistics, physical education, argumentation, educational sciences and medical training. As in the other sections, it is worth mentioning the clear presentation and organisation of the content –using tables and figures to facilitate the reader’s understanding–, as well as the link between educational research and practice, which in this case takes form at the end of each proposal in a subsection which gathers scientific evidence that supports it.

In conclusion, this book is highly recommended for a wide variety of audiences: from those educational professionals who want to start using cooperative learning at any educational stage, to those who already use it and want to improve their practices, and even for those who are not convinced about its application in the classroom yet. As the authors warn, the book may have –desirably– a potential impact on the reader’s environment, since the reader becomes a model for helping other people learn to use cooperative learning. In short, Topping (University of Dundee), Buchs (University of Geneva), Duran (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) and van Keer (Ghent University) present a work with international projection that masterfully linking theory and practice gets to answer many professionals’ concerns and encourages us to row together to progress with the implementation of cooperative learning in our classrooms.

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