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## Learning by Teaching: Evidence and Implications for Education

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Date of publication: June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Edition period: June 2015 - October 2015

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**To cite this article:** Miquel Bertran, E. (2015). [Book Review of the book Aprender enseñar. Evidencias e implicaciones educativas de aprender enseñando by David Durán] *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 4(2), 223-225. doi: [10.17583/ijep.2015.1574](https://doi.org/10.17583/ijep.2015.1574)

**To link this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/ijep.2015.1574>

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## Review

Duran, D. (2014). *Apreñseñar. Evidencias e implicaciones educativas de aprender enseñando*. Madrid: Narcea Ediciones.

From the widespread perception that teaching can be a good way to learn, David Duran invites us to discover through scientific evidence that actually the two actions, in certain circumstances, happen simultaneously. For this reason the book has been titled *apreñseñar*, a neologism that the author has fabricated for the occasion, and which summarizes his idea<sup>1</sup>, the possibility of learning by teaching.

David Duran Gisbert, Doctor in Psychology and professor in the Educational Psychology Department at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, has developed extensive research and teacher training based on peer learning. He founded the *Research Group on Peer Learning (GRAI)*, for which he is the coordinator. The piece of work reviewed reflects Duran's concern on a theme that he has spent a long time reflecting about, thanks to direct experience as a teacher, trainer and researcher.

The book exemplifies real experiences where the action of teaching brings learning to the acting teacher, but also states that this phenomenon does not always occur. A very important aspect that determines this possibility, which the author develops in the second chapter, is the conception that the teacher himself has about what it means to teach and to learn. If we think that teaching refers to the unilateral transfer of knowledge from an expert who has been previously trained for it, we would be led to anchor ourselves to a hierarchical and static view of the teaching role.

Situated as we are nowadays in the era of the knowledge society, we now know that we must learn throughout not only the longevity but also the breadth and depth of our lives. Hence lies the basic argument used by the author of the need to extend to all contexts and all people, the ability to interact to construct Collective Zones of Proximal Development, where the processes of learning and teaching are bidirectional and complex. Therefore,

we all have to learn, but not only through professional teachers, we must be aware that it is our responsibility not only to learn but also to teach.

At this point, the argument is clear: we must incorporate learning by teaching, *aprendeñar*, as standard practice, both in formal and informal education. In Chapter 3 some scholarly experiences are reviewed wherein students act as teachers of their peers (peer tutoring situations), and help to form the first scientific evidence of the neologism that the author has called *aprendeñar*. Also a gradation of student-tutor actions is proposed that brings ever-increasing benefits from learning while developing the role of the teacher. From the first step where it is argued that learning for the purpose of teaching is better than learning for yourself, the author has found that it's better if you can explain, and better yet if you can interact. Finally, we can promote even deeper learning if we reflect on the whole process.

The fifth chapter of the book goes further deepening into evidences on the instructional value of peer interaction, emphasizing cooperation between students as a good way to learning by teaching. Finally, the last chapter addresses how teachers can *aprendeñar*, presenting organized and clear, common situations of our teaching activities as learning opportunities for ourselves.

We can't fail to mention that, basically in Chapter 4, the book also brings a wealth of experiences in the informal context that generate opportunities to learn by teaching to others, mainly through the technologies of information and knowledge. From his analysis, the author identifies some characteristics of these experiences that should be seriously considered in formal educational environments.

In short, we are in front of a book that makes for a pleasant and orderly read. A strong foundation on the subject while very clear discussion of a huge volume of contrasted information. At the same time, the author offers 359 opportunities to expand or clarify the reading, that number is the total number of notes that are encountered throughout the book. Definitely a piece of work that invites us to rethink our social interactions inside and outside the working environment, making them more attractive if we perceive them as opportunities for continuous personal development.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>A Spanish neologism, as could be *learnteach* (“aprender” means learn; “enseñar” means teach).

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