

Chapter 1: Introduction. Constructions of truth in early childhood education: A history of the present abuse of neurosciences ^[1]

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Source: Innovations in Early Education

Format: Book / booklet

Publication Date: 4 Mar 2019

AVAILABILITY

Access full-text on ResearchGate ^[2]

EXCERPTS

This is not about neuroscience. Rather, it is about how neurosciences have been used or misused – often by scholars and policy makers who are not neuroscientists – in the constructions of Truth about the early years. It critically deals with the impact of the discourse, which is inspired by these Truth constructions, on how we think about children; on how we think about the relations between families and the state; and on how we think about the very meaning education in general and of early childhood education in particular. I deliberately write Truth with a capital T. In doing so, I wish to highlight that Truth, as I use the concept here, is not an objective fact, but a construction, a way of seeing, and thus – inevitably – a way of not seeing (Burke, 1984). It needs to be clear that the objective of this chapter – and thus of this book – is neither to criticise the claims made by neuroscience, nor to amend the progress that neuroscientists have made in understanding how the brain develops and works, progress that is illustrated by the contribution of Wim Fias, further in this book. Neither has this introduction any intentions to criticise the people who call themselves neuroscientists, nor the scientific methods they use. Nevertheless, the intention is to offer a critical look at how the neurosciences are popularised for advocacy reasons, and how brain sciences are used to make political claims (about what equal opportunities mean for instance); or how they are misused, narrowing the meaning of early childhood education (as a machine for early learning for instance) and parenting (as a series of skills for instance). This book also aims to offer a critique on how this so-called abuse of neurosciences has influenced our understanding of poverty (as a result of educational poverty and thus intergenerational, rather than as the result of an unequal distribution of material resources and other goods). Or, as Helen Penn argues in her chapter, how it has obscured the discussion on poverty.

Related link: Constructions of neuroscience in early childhood education ^[3]

Region: International ^[4]

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