



Educational Neuroscience connecting Kurt and me: Thankfulness from China

By Jiaxian Zhou

Professor of educational neuroscience

Center for Educational Neuroscience

East China Normal University, Shanghai, China

2020-04-03

August 12, 2008, just one day after we watched the opening ceremony of Olympic Games in Beijing, I found myself at Harvard University, listening proudly to the people talking about it at Cambridge. The dream that learning to do research in the emerging promising field connecting mind, brain and education at Harvard University finally came true.

The question how to connect education and neuroscience puzzled me since 2001 when I was a doctorate student at East China Normal University(ECNU) after I decided to focus on it as my doctoral dissertation. I searched the website, trying to seek the answer and finally found the papers and researches that Kurt has done. I wrote to Kurt for help and his encouragement inspires me to keep on exploring in this promising field till now. After I graduated from East China Normal University and got my PhD degree, I quitted my job in Shanghai and left my family in order to fulfill my dream by doing postdoctoral research at State Key Laboratory of Cognitive Neuroscience and Learning

at Beijing Normal University. The most important thing to study in the State Key Lab is to solve the many puzzles I met when I wrote my first book “Introduction to educational neuroscience” based on my doctoral dissertation that I finished in 2004. I chose all the courses in the State Key Lab. The more I learned, the more interests I became to the researches on cognitive neuroscience, however, my questions about how to build educational neuroscience as a field were even accumulating. So I applied for the visiting researcher and supported by the foundation in 2007 from China Scholarship Council, State Education Ministry.

My family and I enjoyed the life in Boston, happily and comfortably with four beautiful seasons in a year and my son was very exciting about the heavy snow in winter which he had never met before. On thanksgiving day, Kurt and his family invited all the international students and visiting scholars to his home. We ate and played cheerfully just as we were at our own home.



Getting together at Kurt’s Home on Thanksgiving Day, 2008

Left: Jiaxian Zhou;

Middle: Kurt Fischer;

Right: Bruno della Chiesa from OECD.

Harvard graduate school of education is a super place to study. I chose the courses I needed to fulfill my goal and found a lot of opportunities to talk with the researchers and professors there, such as Bruno della Chiesa, learned a lot and thought a lot. The courses taught by Kurt and other professors at Harvard and MIT and lectures by the professors from the world dissolved my puzzles bit by bit. Finally, I published my first book “Introduction to educational neuroscience” in May, 2009 in the Publishing House of ECNU.

The most impressive thing happened to me at Harvard was the talk invitations from Kurt and Bruno della Chiesa. One of the talk was given on March, 6, 2009 entitled “Educational Neuroscience: The Construction of a New Field”. After the talk, Kurt invited me to organize a symposium to discuss the new field in the coming Biennial Conference of International Mind, Brain and Education Society. This was the first time we discussed the construction of educational neuroscience at the conference of IMBES. I invited Bruno della Chiesa (Europe), Todd Rose (America), Christina Hinton (America) from different cultures, different disciplines (neuroscience, psychology and education) to discuss it. Thanks for all these scholars, the symposium attracted a lot of attendees and was so successful that I was invited by Ms Ross to attend the dinner with Kurt and other Key leaders of IMBES. We spent a happy night to eat the delicious food while discussed the charming cultures around the world. These were really an unforgettable experience in my life!



**The symposium to discuss the construction of educational neuroscience,
May, 2009**

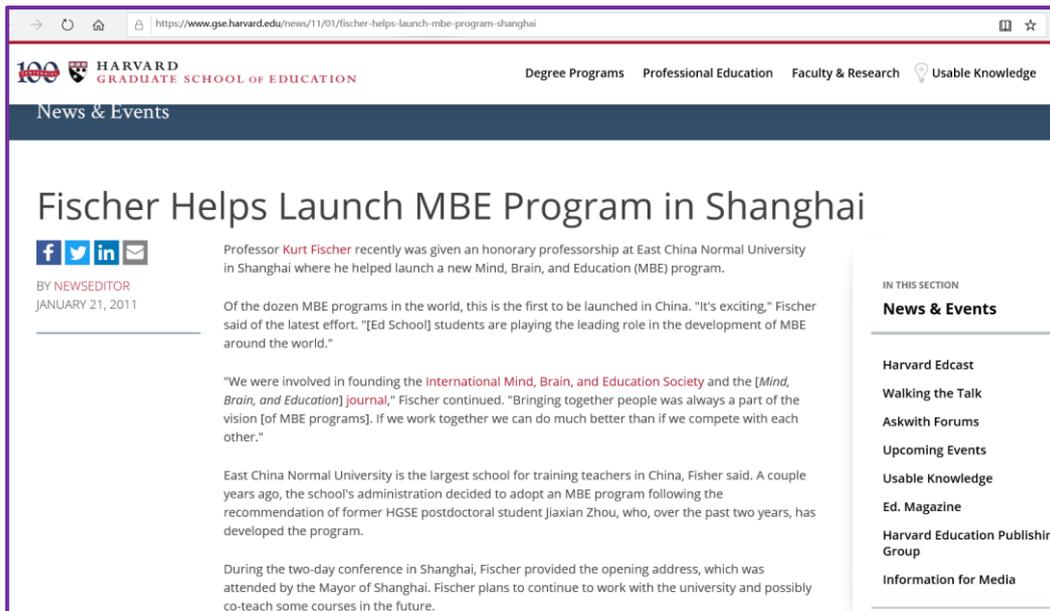
Left: Todd Rose (Harvard University)

Middle: Christina Hinton ((Harvard University)

Right: Jiaxian Zhou(China)

Bruno della Chiesa(OECD) was on the way to come.

Learning at Harvard made me more confident to delve deep into the new field and I know that I will devote the rest of my life to build this new discipline in China. After I came back to China, I was invited by Professor Lizhong Yu, the former president of ECNU, to build the first Center for Educational Neuroscience in China with my colleagues in 2010. I invited Kurt to our new Center at East China Normal University in Shanghai, China in January 2011, to launched the educational neuroscience program. He became one of the honorary professors at the Center for Educational Neuroscience.



Harvard news: Fischer helps launch MBE Program in Shanghai, 2011



Kurt was giving a lecture at the first International Conference of Educational Neuroscience at ECNU on Jan. 9. 2011



Together with the former Vice Mayor Xiaoming Shen, academician Antonio Battro etc., Shanghai City Hall, January, 2011



Kurt Fischer was given honorary professorship in 2011 at ECNU by president Lizhong Yu.



Kurt gave a talk at the ceremony of honorary professorship in 2011



Together with the president Lizhong Yu and faculties at Center for Educational Neuroscience in 2011



Together with graduate students at Center for educational neuroscience in 2011

Kurt is the second editor-in-Chief of the first big Chinese collection "*Educational neuroscience and the improvement of the quality of the nation*" (2016), guiding us to move to the right directions. He wrote the preface, which appeared on each of the 8 books, including:

1. *Educational neuroscience: The construction of a new discipline and innovation of education*
2. *Educational neuroscience: Mission and future*
3. *Educational neuroscience: Evidence-based educational policy and practice*
4. *Educational neuroscience: The innovation of second language education*
5. *Educational neuroscience: The innovation of mathematics education*
6. *Educational neuroscience: The innovation of moral education*
7. *Educational neuroscience: The innovation of music education*
8. *Educational neuroscience: The innovation of physical education*



Kurt was the second editor-in-chief of this collection includes 8 books on educational neuroscience (2016) , and he wrote the preface for this collection.

This collection was recognized as the State Key Books of Twelfth Five-year Plan in China and awarded the National Publication Foundation, the highest honor a collection of books can win. Several books in this collection were awarded various prizes, such as “Minyuan educational prize”, etc., after it was published.

Based on these books, I submitted a policy advisory suggestion to establish the yearly educational neuroscience project in National Science Foundation of China in 2017 and was accepted. From 2018 on, researchers who are interested in this new field can apply the support from the governmental Foundation, which is facilitating the development of educational neuroscience greatly.

In 2013, Kurt wrote a thought-provoking paper for “Journal of Bio-education” in China and serves in the Editorial Advisory Board of this journal. And also in this year, we worked together writing a paper concerning with the educational policy of UNESCO “*Culturally Appropriate Education: Insights from Educational*

Neuroscience”.

MIND, BRAIN, AND EDUCATION

ND EDUCATION

Culturally Appropriate Education: Insights From Educational Neuroscience

Jiaxian Zhou¹ and Kurt W. Fischer²

ABSTRACT— Culturally appropriate education focuses on educational competence needed in a global world and respect documents (Meriam et al., 1928; UNESCO, 1953, 2003; United Nations, 2008). “Culturally appropriate education” focuses

We worked together on a paper concerning to educational policy of UNESCO, 2013

教育生物学杂志 2013年3月 第1卷第1期 *Journal of Bio-education, Mar 2013, Vol 1, No 1* • 13 •

• Forum •

Constructing a scientific groundwork for learning and teaching

Kurt W. Fischer
Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Cambridge MA 02138-3752, USA



Expert profile
Kurt W. Fischer, Charles Bigelow Professor of Education and Human Development; Director of Mind, Brain, and Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education. He studies cognitive and emotional development and learning, and leads an international movement to connect biology and cognitive science to education. He is founding president of the International Mind, Brain, and Education Society and founding editor of the journal *Mind, Brain, and Education*

Kurt wrote a paper for our Journal of Bio-education, 2013

I have been heading a big team for these years to translate the key books into

Chinese in educational neuroscience or mind brain and education in order to facilitate the development of educational neuroscience in China. And indeed these books together with our own books and papers aroused a lot of interests and attentions from Chinese policy-makers, educators and researchers. Among them, seven of our books were recognized as “100 books that influence Chinese teachers”. For all these years, Kurt cooperated with me by writing two prefaces for my two collections “*Educational Neuroscience*” (includes 9 books) and “*Mind, Brain and Education*” (includes 4 books, more book will be adding). Three of Kurt’s books were published in our translation collection “*The new perspective of brain and learning sciences*” which includes 8 key books in this area, published by Educational Publishing House, the best publishing house in China: *Human behavior, learning and the developing brain: Typical development*” was recognized as “100 books that Chinese teachers love in 2013”, “*The educated brain: essays in neuro-education*” was recognized as “100 books that influence Chinese teachers in 2011”.



Kurt wrote the preface for these two full-book translation collections

Left: Collection “Educational Neuroscience” (includes 9 books);

Right: Collection “Mind, Brain and Education” (includes 4books, 11 more is coming)



Kurt's three books in this collection were translated into Chinese and two of them were recognized as "100 books that influence Chinese teachers"

Left: Collect: *"The new perspective of brain and learning sciences"* (includes 8 books)

Right 1: Book, *The Educated Brain: Essays in Neuroeducation*, 2011

Right 2: Book, *Human Behavior, Learning, and the Developing Brain: Typical Development*, 2013

Right 3: Book, *Human Behavior, Learning, and the Developing Brain: Atypical Development*, 2012

From 2008 to 2020, 12 years passed. I became a full professor of educational neuroscience in 2017 and took part in many important international events in this field. Kurt helped me a lot in my research and the development of the first Educational Neuroscience Program at East China Normal University. I was encouraged by his energy and enthusiasm for developing and facilitating the movement of MBE in the world. So sad to hear the news that he left us forever, because I was planning to see him in this March and gave him the collections newly published and tell him the good news about the fast development of educational neuroscience in China but blocked by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Reviewing all these things that you have done for us, I would like to say to you, Kurt:

"Thank you, Kurt, for teaching me how to do research and how to be a good people in the world; I still remember the day that we got together with your family and international scholars on thanksgiving day. I still remember what you have done to help

us launch the educational neuroscience program which I believe it will benefit the Chinese student generation to generation as more and more universities are planning to build the program in China. Thank you, Kurt, for supporting me to walk further and further in this new field and to make my dreams come true one by one. What I have learnt from you, I will pass it to my students.”