

A Positive Neuroscience Perspective for Child Development and Special Education

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Abstract : Traditionally, children's brain development research has emphasized the limitative aspects of disability and impairment, electing as an explanatory model the classical clinical notions of brain lesion or functional deficit. In contrast, Positive Educational Neuroscience (PEN) is a new approach that emphasizes strengths and human flourishing related to the brain by exploring how learning practices have the potential to enhance neurocognitive flexibility through neuroplastic overcompensation. This mini-review provides an overview of PEN and shows how it links to the concept of neurocognitive flexibility. We provide examples of how the present concept of neurocognitive flexibility can be applied to special education by exploring examples of neuroplasticity in the learning domain, including: (1) learning to draw in congenitally totally blind children, and (2) music training in children from disadvantaged neighborhoods. PEN encourages educators to focus on children's strengths by recognizing the brain's capacity for positive change and to incorporate activities that support children's individual development.

Keywords : neurocognitive development, positive educational neuroscience, sociocultural approach, special education

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