

Urban Myths about Learning and Education

Citation for published version (APA):

De Bruyckere, P., Kirschner, P. A., & Hulshof, C. (2015). *Urban Myths about Learning and Education*. (1 ed.) ELSEVIER ACADEMIC PRESS INC. <https://www.elsevier.com/books/urban-myths-about-learning-and-education/de-bruyckere/978-0-12-801537-7>

Document status and date:

Published: 04/03/2015

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Document license:

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- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
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Urban Myths About Learning and Education

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Abstract (Preface)

In this book, the most common popular myths relating to learning and education are discussed with respect to whether there is any truth in the myth and what good educational and psychological research has to say about them. Examples of such myths range from: learning styles to neuromyths such as left-brain/right-brain and brain-training programs, how large or small classes and schools should be to the explanation why schools do change (no, really!). This book is written in a concise, humorous, and accessible style, but at the same time based on an extensive scientific review of relevant empirical research. By the way, did you know that there are no pyramids in the work of Maslow and that the NTL has no data to back up Dales' learning pyramid?

Not only does the book debunk most of these Urban Legends in Education, it also discloses some interesting facts about learning and education that do have a proven effect. This book is neither progressive nor conservative; it only attempts to get the facts straight and present them in a way that those involved in teaching and education can understand and use them.

The book consists of four content-based sections (i.e., groups of chapters), with each chapter examining a particular genre of myth. The four content based sections are: 'myths about learning', 'neuromyths', 'myths about technology and education' and 'myths about educational policy'. A fifth and final section discusses why these myths are so persistent (i.e., nearly impossible to eradicate) and possible strategies to combat them.

Besides the basic 'need to know'-text, throughout the book, there are also 'info-clouds' with 'nice to know' information adding background information, additional facts and humorous anecdotes.

Many teachers do good work, but all too often on the basis of incorrect theories.

(Pedro De Bruyckere. Paul A. Kirschner & Casper Hulshof)

Thus science must begin with myths, and with the criticism of myths; neither with the collection of observations, nor with the invention of experiments, but with the critical discussion of myths, and of magical techniques and practices.

(Conjectures and Refutations: the Growth of Scientific Knowledge (2002) – Karl Popper)

"But the Emperor has nothing at all on!" said a little child.

"Listen to the voice of innocence!" exclaimed his father; and what the child had said was whispered from one to another.

"But he has nothing at all on!" at last cried out all the people.

(The Emperor's New Clothes (1837) - Hans Christian Andersen)

In religion and politics, people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination, from authorities who have not themselves examined the questions at issue, but have taken them at second-hand from other non-examiners, whose opinions about them were not worth a brass farthing.

(Autobiography of Mark Twain (1959) - Mark Twain / Samuel Langhorne Clemens)

No amount of belief makes something a fact

(James Randi - retired stage magician and scientific skeptic)

Acknowledgements

This book – and its Dutch predecessor - could not have been written without the critical help of many people. For this reason, we would like to thank (in no particular order) Amber Walraven, Jeroen Janssen, Jeroen van Merriënboer, John Sweller, Dick Clark, Frederik Anseel, Stijn Dhert, Wouter Duyck, Bert Smits, Tommy Opgehaffen, Erwin Taets, Martin Valcke, Dimo Kavadias, Dirk Terry, Elke Struyf, Fredo Fredonis and the GentM-mob, Patrick Vermeren, Daniel Willingham and Donald Clark.

Strange to relate, this book was a real Twitter-work. Not only did the three authors first meet each other via this medium, but it was also later the channel for much of the input exchanged and received. If anyone still doubts that technology can assist knowledge creation, we are now in a position to assure them that it does!

We dedicate this book to the people who still help us to learn every day.

Pedro thanks Helena, Clement, Emile and Remi.

Paul thanks Catherine, Femke, Jesse, Mara and Aron for really appreciating why good education is so important.

Caspar thanks Petra, Myrthe, Benthe and Jessie for the much needed distraction.

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