EDITORIAL. CLINICAL AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF REUVEN FEUERSTEIN’S MEDIATED LEARNING EXPERIENCE THEORY: CURRENT SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

JO LEBEER

On April 29th 2014 Reuven Feuerstein passed away in his 93rd year. He left many with a feeling of “being orphaned”, as witnessed by the innumerable condolences which arrived from all over the world at the International Institute in Jerusalem which he had founded in the early sixties under the name of the Hadassah-Wizo-Canada Research Institute, and later was renamed into “The Feuerstein Institute”. Letters written by parents of children with developmental or learning disabilities, or adults with sometimes severe brain damage, testified how his approach had changed their lives. Equally, innumerable letters of teachers, psychologists, therapists and colleagues, who had learned with him and from him, showed how widespread his influence was. Some critics compared him with a guru. Indeed, he was “the father” of a school of thought: structural cognitive modifiability and mediated learning experience, who also developed a unique combination of innovative assessment and intervention methods, and created an international institute where these methods could be taught and applied. But above all, Reuven Feuerstein was in the first place a man who wanted to help disadvantaged children & adults, to go beyond their actual barriers to learning. Barriers could be there for various reasons: a genetic origin, acquired brain damage, lack of learning opportunities due to socio-economic deprivation, or just plain shortcomings in environmental favourable conditions. He had a drive to help these unfortunate individuals to escape from a self- or others-defined status of passive acceptance that “nothing can be done”. But quite different from a guru, he had a never-ending endeavour to look for a scientifically grounded theory.

1. University of Antwerp, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, Belgium