The marketplace in education:
The multiplicity of metaphor in discourse

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Overview

- Some examples of the marketplace metaphor in education
- Principles of metaphorical reasoning
- How marketplace metaphor shapes education
- Metaphorical lessons for policy discourse

Consider this…

“Does it matter whether the academy thinks of itself as a business? Yes, it matters. **How we in higher education perceive of ourselves conditions our behavior**.” … “Continuing claims by the mainstream higher education community that "education is not a business" and is not susceptible to market forces will increasingly be viewed as a Luddite fantasy.” … “If higher education is to lead its own renewal, **it *must* think about its people, its property, and its productivity in business terms**.”

Milton Greenberg, 2004, EDUCAUSE Review

… and this …

"If we look at higher education purely as a business venture, and not as laudable social enrichment, one would easily say that we should eliminate funding in certain areas. But **public higher education is not a business, it is not run like a department store, nor should it be**. Those who make decisions on such funding should understand that.

But also, there is a clear responsibility that **those who operate and provide the services within the system** must recognize that today's **higher education marketplace** is much different. The **consumer**, meaning the student, has far more flexibility to travel beyond the borders of one state for a quality higher education. And unfortunately, in many cases they are doing that. We **need to be more competitive**, and **at the same time understand our mission** and responsibility to the general public. It takes two to complete this dance."

Robert A. Weygand, Chronicle of Higher Education, 2002

… and this …

"In a private school, education is a business where parents directly pay the school to have their educated according to certain standards. On the other hand, in public schools the parents do not directly pay for to have their children educated and often do not any say-so concerning the quality of education. **Both private and public education should be considered businesses, where the parents get their money's worth in the education of their children.**

… it is important that the school **treat the parents as customers** and respond to their desires instead of regarding them as meddlers. **Even public schools must be run as businesses** that try to satisfy their customers and **make sure children get a good education.**"

Ron Kurtus, School for Champions, 2003

… and also this!

“Longtime readers of this site know that **education is a business**, with billions in transactions that involve vendors, management companies, consultants, and universities. Pretending that it's not -- that "public education" is entirely public and that there's a bright line between it and the private sector except for vouchers or charters -- doesn't do anyone any good in the long run. It just means **you don't know what's really going on**, for better or worse.”

Alexander Russo, 2007, http://blogs.edweek.org

EDUCATION IS BUSINESS

Business

- Product
- Customers
- Profit
- Production / management processes
- Sales
- Competition
- Innovation

Education

- Knowledge, certificate
- Parents, students
- Tuition / Social change
- Teaching
- Hiring consultants
- School vouchers, paying attention to parents
- Using computers in schools

Metaphorical reasoning

- Metaphorical reasoning is the process of mapping two domains of experience (source – target) onto one another
- Important inferential structure is inherited from the source domain in projection
- The projection from one domain to another is partially consistent with the topology of both domains
- Projection is a general cognitive process used across all kinds of reasoning
- Metaphors have both a conservative and an innovative element
- Metaphor is manifested in multiple empirical realities

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Metaphorical inheritance

“University is a business and it gets students as part of its business and anything that makes it look better is a business purpose.”
(about 2002 US federal court ruling in Madey v. Duke on use of patented technology in teaching, NPR programme on intellectual property)

More about domains: Frames

- All knowledge is organized in structured conceptual frames
- Frames are structured by 4 principles (Lakoff, 1987):
  - Propositional structures
  - Image schematic structures
  - Metaphorical mappings
  - Metonymic mappings

- Image schemas
- Images
- Scripts, scenarios
- Folk theories, stories
- Salient examples, paragons
- Roles and relationships
- Categories and hierarchies

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More about mapping: Integration

Online processing

- Frames instantiate a mental space in online processing
- The mental space is structured by the conceptual integration (blending) of activated frames

Principles of blending

- Inheritance of structures
- Partial
- Opportunistic
- Schematic
- Gives rise to new structures containing elements of the old as well as emergent properties

Short history of metaphor studies

1651

- Hobbes – “metaphors, and senseless and ambiguous words are like *ignes fatui*; and reasoning upon them is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention and sedition, or contempt.”

1960s

- Black, Schön, Scheffler, Ricoeur

1970s

- Goffman, Turner, Ortony (ed.) 1979 *Metaphor and Thought*

1980s

– *Metaphors We Live By* 1980 Lakoff and Johnson

1990s – 2000s

– Conceptual blending – Fauconnier and Turner

– Framing – Lakoff *Moral Politics* (and others)

Metaphor controversy

- If metaphors are central to our reasoning and structure much of our knowledge, how do they determine our actions?
- Does each textual use of metaphor refer to a “live” conceptual structure with strong inferential potential?
- How do metaphors interact with “literal” text?

Multiple realities of metaphor

- Cognitive
- Social
- Textual

The controversy can only be resolved if we look at metaphor through multiple perspectives. It is not simply enough to assert that metaphors are psychologically real. It is also important to investigate their reality in social interaction and the construction of text.

Cognitive nature of metaphor

- automatic
- unconscious
- ubiquitous
- central
- representing a continuum of analogical reasoning
- special case of conceptual integration

Social nature of metaphor

- high-profile
- negotiated
- purposeful
- folk-theory laden

Textual nature of metaphors

- generating cohesion vs. coherence
- local vs. global
- textual vs. conceptual
- overt vs. covert
- interacting with other tropes

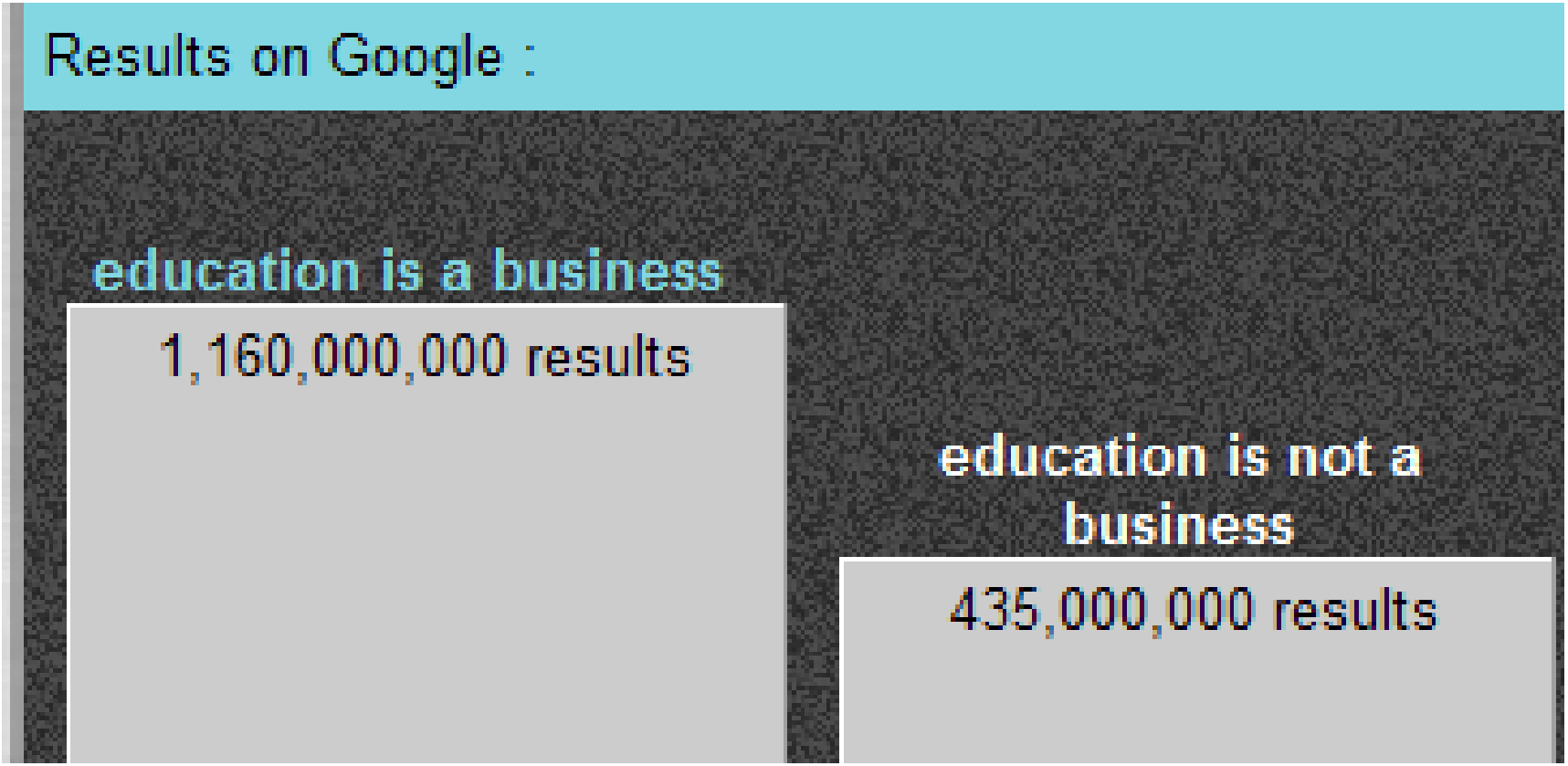
Metaphors in educational policy 1

- Global source domains
  - Market place
  - Medicine
  - Government and public affairs
- Target domains
  - Curriculum
  - Teacher training
  - School funding
  - Research
  - Organization and logistics

Metaphors in educational policy 2

- Local (primary) source domains
  - Conflict
  - Construction of edifices
  - Transmission of objects
- Local (primary) target domains
  - Nature of knowledge, curriculum
  - Organizational hierarchies
  - Approaches to teaching

Market metaphor: Google fight



Market place and moral values

Kenneth Baker introducing Education bill in 1987: “We must give **consumers of education** a central part in **decision-making**. That means **freeing** schools and colleges to **deliver the standards** that parents and employers want. It means **encouraging the consumer to expect and demand that all educational bodies do the best job possible**. In a word, it means **choice**.”

Conservative reforms of 80s and 90s "sought deliberately to introduce **market relations** into **educational services at all levels**” … “The 'LEA **monopolies' of schooling were eroded** by the introduction of the grant-maintained sector.” (Bridges and Husbands 1996)

Marketplace domain I

- People buy things they need
- Things you can buy are food, goods, ideas, alliance, services
- People are free to choose what to pay money for
- People who sell things make a profit by acquiring for less and selling for more
- People who sell things try to attract other people (clients, customers) to buy them from them
- People who buy things will not buy more things if they’re not satisfied with the quality

Marketplace and effectiveness

"**From a business perspective**, the education system presents an **alarming picture**. It is one in which **too little is expected of too many**, **results are sacrificed to bureaucratic convenience**, and professionalism--particularly **teacher professionalism--is discouraged**. The system is not just failing a large number of students--those who drop out or fail to make satisfactory academic progress; it is failing dedicated teachers as well." … "**Today's high-tech firm is lean: It has stripped away middle management. It is decentralized, relying on the know-how and professionalism of workers close to the problem.** It is innovative in the deployment of personnel, no longer relying on limiting job classifications. It spends heavily on employee education and training. It invests heavily in research.

Successful firms have discarded the archaic, outmoded, and thoroughly discredited practices that are still in place in most of our large school districts. Those **districts are organized like a factory of the late 19th century**: top-down, command-control management, a **system designed to stifle creativity and independent judgment**." 1988 Education Week

Marketplace domain II

- Competition drives down prices and decreases costs
- Entities motivated by profit operate more effectively
- The more competition the more motivation for profit, the more effectiveness
- Over time effectiveness increases as companies learn during competition
- New techniques are more efficient than old techniques

Marketplace and choice

“The most important aspect of using the **market** model to improve education is **the incentives that come with competition**. The **only hope of changing a rigid, dysfunctional system** is by **empowering its customers to make choices** that **penalize dismal performers**. The mind-set that "public education is a social commitment that transcends individual interest and corporate gain" enshrines the system **at the expense of its intended beneficiaries**. Instead, we have to think about the "**education of the public**," which is crucial in a democratic republic. And we have to develop **mechanisms that enable consumers to use our tax dollars in the schools that best educate the individual child**.

“It is only **through the market mechanism of choice that we can get away from the stultifying and *inherently unjust* method of assigning children to schools** according to their ZIP codes.” Education Week 2002

Marketplace domain III

- Everybody has the right to choose freely
- People's choices depend on their individual needs, wants and desires
- It is immoral to deny people choice
- It is immoral to suppress individual needs, desires and wants
- People's choices determine what is offered to them

Marketplace and values

"Public education is a **social commitment that transcends individual interest and corporate gain**. It is highly probable that **schools designed to meet this responsibility are inherently unprofitable**. This does not mean the commitment should be abandoned. It means that, as **a human service**, education is grounded in a belief in human dignity that transcends the values and behaviors associated with markets. It means **public education cannot be squeezed to fit the market model and still meet the needs of a just society**."
Education Week, 2002

Marketplace domain IV

- Not everybody has equal amount of money at the start
- People who start with much money will acquire more
- People who start with little money spend it all on basic needs
- People with little money are denied free choice in their pursuit of satisfaction
- Having basic needs met is to lead a dignified life

Possible models and mappings I

- Education is the transmission of knowledge
- Knowledge is a thing to be sold
- Parents are customers
- Government is a customer
- Society is a customer
- Companies in need of workers are customers
- Students are customers
- Customers can choose what education they want

Possible models and mappings II

- Schools are companies
- Principals are CEOs
- Schools must operate effectively
- Schools must provide value for money (return on investment)
- Schools must have an attractive product
- Schools must compete with other schools
- Customers can choose which school they want

Possible models and mappings III

- Schools are products
- Parents buy schools
- Parents choose which schools to buy
- The more money parents have, the better school they can buy
- The better the school the more parents will choose it

Possible models and mappings IV

- Teachers are workers
- Students' results are products
- Teaching is a product
- Teachers are paid by students' results
  - Number of hours they teach
  - Number of students they teach
  - Number of points on a test

Generic frame elements

- knowledge is things
- learning is acquiring knowledge
- things can be bought
- ideas can be put into people's heads
- markets improve things
- markets are a model to emulate

Areas of policy influenced

- School vouchers
- School choice
- School (academic) performance and league tables
- Performance-related pay
- Evaluation of teaching
- Teacher training
- No strikes for teachers (as professionals)
- Effective administration (school/district/nation level)
- Economies of scale (Edison schools)
- Superheads
- Curriculum for needs of country i.e. business
- Competition in textbook design

Debating the market metaphor

- Using facts?
- Truth or aptness of educational description?
- Exposing the metaphoric links?
- Modifying the metaphoric projection?
- Understanding the market better?
- Offering a new source domain?

Alternatives to Market Metaphor

- Education as society
- Education as family
- Education as art
- Education as medicine
- Education as moral duty
- Education as civilization
- Education as sport or hobby