Metaphors in/of education

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Outline

- … in education
  - overview of metaphor inquiry in edu
  - metaphor as a tool for instruction
- … of education
  - TEACHER IS … (cognitive metaphors)
  - school should be … (generative metaphors)
- … there and back …
  - towards a classification of metaphor use

Uses of Metaphor in Education

- Make sense of the world
- Express complex meaning
- Construct alternatives
- Organize systematic concepts
- Invite interaction
- Add dramatic effect

adapted from *Cortazzi and Jin 1999*

Context of Metaphor in Education

- Theory building
  - generative
  - exegetic
- Policy debates
- Teacher training
- Personal identity/motivation
- Organization and presentation of instructional content

Research of Metaphor in Education

- Metaphors as an instructional tool
- Metaphors in the language of instruction
- Metaphors in conceptualization of self in teachers (new and experienced) and students
- Metaphors in educational discourse
  - Public discourse
  - Policy debates (not all conceptual)
  - Conceptualizing innovation (dtto)
  - Conscious and unconscious metaphors

Metaphor as an instructional tool

- Design of instructional content (Locus of classic debate)
  - Presentation to students for ease of understanding
  - Adapting ‘literal’ scientific content to ‘pedagogic’ level
- Method of inquiry to allow students to find personal meaning (both of academic content and own life)

Cognitive Metaphors of Education

- SCHOOLS ARE PRISONS, GARDENS, FACTORIES, SOCIETIES, FAMILIES
- TEACHERS ARE PARENTS, GUIDES, DIRECTORS, ACTORS, ANIMAL TRAINERS
- STUDENTS ARE CONTAINERS, PLANTS, ANIMALS TO BE CONTROLLED
- LEARNING IS GROWTH, FILLING UP, LIFE, ACQUISITION OF GOODS, BUILDING A PORTFOLIO, BUILDING A STRUCTURE

Education as a Source Domain

- LIFE IS A TEACHER
- EXPERIENCE IS A SCHOOL
- COMPANY IS A SCHOOL (The learning organization)
- EMPLOYEES ARE PUPILS

- BEING ABLE TO DO SOMETHING IS BEING ABLE TO READ (functional literacy, emotional literacy, numeracy, computer literacy, academic literacy, oracy)

Generative Metaphors of Education

- Market metaphor
- Growth metaphor
- Family metaphor

- Engineering/scientific metaphor
- Society metaphor (education for democracy)
- Moral/humanistic metaphor (education to ensure moral humans)
- Ad hoc generative metaphors

Metaphors and educational policy

"**Diverse** and sometimes **contradictory metaphors** on schooling and school improvement dominate the **thinking of policy makers**, scholars and practitioners." (Wincek, 1995)

"It was Napoleon who once famously described Britain as a nation of shopkeepers. Successive governments, since the premiership of Mrs Thatcher, have **accepted this grocer-like** view and attempted to turn every social institution into a commercial enterprise." ... "This is a classic example of what philosophers call 'category error', the mistake of discussing - or in this case planning - one area of activity in the language and terms and with the concepts which are appropriate to another. ... It is **a seriously fallacious form of reasoning**." (Kelly, 2004)

Market metaphor

- Product
- Consumers
- Manufacturing
- Trade
- Currency
- Efficiency
- Marketplace
- Business theory
- Parents
- Students
- Society
- Government
- Knowledge
- Information
- School
- Employment

Examples of discourse

- “A **school** has to decide what kind of organization it is (a **factory, a work community, a market-place**?), who its **customers** are, what they want and how that is to be **delivered** and **measured**.” (Handy&Aitken, 1986)
- "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**." (Kenneth Baker introducing Education bill in 1987)
- “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)

Areas of policy influenced

- School vouchers
- School choice
- School (academic) performance and league tables
- Performance-related pay
- 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
- Teacher training
- Assessment

Growth (organic) metaphor

- Organic nature
- Nourishment
- Care
- Biological theory
- Birth
- Illness
- Health
- Death
- Learning
- Becoming adult
- Being mature
- Being a useful member of society
- Being a responsible citizen
- Being able to learn
- Mind/body

Examples of discourse

- "Plants are shaped by **cultivation** and men by **education**. If man were born big and strong, his size and strength would useless to him until he had learned to make use of them." ... "The **education** of man **begins at his birth**; before speaking, before understanding, he is already learning."

  (Rousseau, 1762)
- "The **object and reward of learning** is continued capacity for **growth**." (Dewey,1916)
- "We **teach children**, not subjects." (Progressivist slogan)
- "The growth metaphor in itself thus embodies a modest conception of the teacher's role, which is to study and then **indirectly to help the development of the child**, rather than to shape him into some preconceived form..."

  (Scheffler, 1960)
- "**only true education** comes through the **stimulation of the child's powers** by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself" (Dewey, 1897)

Areas of policy influenced

- Child-centered education
- Textbook design
- National curriculum
- Teacher training in child psychology and physiology
- Physical education in the curriculum

Family metaphor

- Parents
- Children
- House rules
- Obedience/Duty
- Love
- Rearing/behavior control
- Society

- Teachers
- Students
- Principals
- School rules
- School allegiance
- Love for knowledge
- Society

Examples of discourse

"The family metaphor is fundamental to education since **society requires that school personnel and parents act as co-guardians of children.** Even legally, school personnel act ***in loco parentis***." ... "Mega Center's **children** developed a strong sense of **loyalty** to their **individual family of learners** and to the **schoolwide family**. The school's principal, teachers, and staff expressed both in words and in practice their conceptualization of **school-as-family for the children**. Although, the **teachers and staff** related to children as family, **their relationships with one another did not flow from the family metaphor**. Neither were parents and guadians of the children viewed through the lens of the family metaphor."

(Wincek, 1995)

Areas of policy influenced

- School environment
- Teacher role
- Parental involvement
- Corporal punishment
- Proportion of moral education in the curriculum
- Proportion of socialization as a purpose of education
- Sex education
- Breakfast clubs
- No child left behind / Every child matters

Mixing metaphors for diversity

- "it is undeniable that modern technology plays an increasingly important role in the process of wine-making, yet there is a definite limit to technical intervention. We are in fact operating within a triangle: **nature, technique and care**. Only the combination of these three can explain why **each year, each winery, and even sometimes each bottle brings a different wine**." (Leirman, 1993)
- "Metaphorical language, it seems, has served as a **vehicle for introducing concepts** -- usually emanating from academic circles--into the parlance of practice. In decade after decade, scholars have **clothed their newly developed ideas** about leadership in **metaphors from earlier eras**." (Beck and Murphy, 1993)

Metaphor Theory After Education

- Metaphors before Lakoff&Johnson
- Affective and higher cognitive role of metaphor
- Metaphorbility – Aptitude for metaphor
- Consequences of metaphor (Metaphors and actions)
- Metaphors and the nature (mental representation of understanding)
- Metaphors in use vs. metaphors in mind
- Classification of metaphor use
  - Cognitive
  - Interpersonal
  - Textual

Consequences of Metaphors

- Metaphors influence actions
  - People who think of language as a tool are more likely to be pro-reform than those who think of it as a person
- Metaphors interpret actions/states
  - Teachers are more likely to see students as container than students who might see themselves as such
- Metaphors and actions/states cooexist
  - Experienced teachers see learning in a behaviorist way rather than constructivist way