



Teaching & Learning Guide for 'Can a Knowledge Sanctuary also be an Economic Engine? The Marketing of Higher Education as Institutional Boundary Work'

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Authors' introduction

The marketing of higher education refers to a structural trend towards the adoption of market-oriented practices by colleges and universities. These organizational practices blur the boundary between knowledge-driven and profit-driven institutions, and create tensions and contradictions among the three missions of the 21st-century university: knowledge production, student learning, and satisfying the social charter. In this article, we highlight the historical contexts that nurtured the marketing of higher education in the US and Europe and explore the dilemmas that arise when market logics and business-oriented practices contradict traditional academic values. We demonstrate that managing these dilemmas is a contested process of policing borders as institutional actors struggle to delineate the proper role of the university in a shifting organizational climate.

Authors recommend

Arum, Richard and Josipa Roksa. 2011. *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

A book that asks a fundamental question in higher education: "How much are students actually learning?" The results do not reflect well on the institution. Arum and Roksa conduct longitudinal tests of critical thinking and analytic reasoning skills on a cohort of students at a variety of universities and colleges. They find that a majority of respondents demonstrate little to no improvement in learning outcomes. Even students who improve show modest gains. The authors' analysis of student surveys suggests that a major culprit is a combination of low rigor in the curriculum, a lack of effort among students, and the overly modest expectations of instructors.

Barnett, Ronald. 2010. 'The Marketised University: Defending the Indefensible.' Pp. 39–51 in *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*, edited by M. Molesworth, R. Scullion and E. Nixon. New York: Routledge.

Barnett suggests that debates about the effects of marketization on higher education often reflect pre-existing ideologies about the nature of markets in general. He presents numerous arguments in favor of the conception of students as consumers. For example, the increased power students receive in choosing where and from who to take classes may encourage accountability and actually improve the learning experience as students take a

more active role in charting their own course through their education. Barnett also reminds readers that different institutions create different contexts and the extent to which market models of higher education are applicable are largely dependent on these different contexts.

Berman, Elizabeth Popp. 2012. *Creating the Market University: How Academic Science Became an Economic Engine*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

An in-depth historical sociology of the entrepreneurial university, this book explores when and why academic science become increasingly tethered to commercial interests over the last four decades. Berman focuses primarily on patenting trends and the political history of patenting law, as well as the development of biotech entrepreneurship and the emergence of university-industry incubators. She argues that the trend toward an entrepreneurial model were largely driven by the ideals of government officials about the importance of translating scientific and technological innovation into economic growth, along the way creating the organizational environment necessary to enable market-oriented research to flourish.

Kleinman, Daniel Lee. 2003. *Impure Cultures: University Biology and the World of Commerce*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Kleinman provides an in-depth look into the daily work culture of a plant pathology lab at the University of Wisconsin. This participant observation study includes ambitious critiques of the dominant agency-oriented approaches within science and technology studies by focusing on issues of structural constraint and institutional power. This study is especially good at demonstrating how university biologists are deeply, although indirectly, constrained by commercial interests. The influence is not easily found in conflicts of interest or day-by-day decision making of scientists, who by and large conduct themselves ethically and in the fashion predicted by Mertonian norms of science. Instead, the culture of commerce impacts an array of daily lab practices, including the baseline epistemological assumptions around what is a “significant” finding. In the world of plant pathology, a successful trial is determined in relation to the metrics established by the field’s resource dependency on the agro-chemical industry.

Leslie, Larry L. and Gary P. Johnson. 1974. ‘The Market Model and Higher Education.’ *The Journal of Higher Education* 45:1–20.

This landmark article is among the first to interrogate the use of a market model as it applies to higher education. The authors trace several key legislative measures that altered federal funding practices and gave students discretion in choosing which schools would receive the most funding. While the authors draw similarities between market practices and the process of funding higher education through students, they also question the extent to which a market model of higher education is applicable. Drawing a contrast between higher education funding practices and a perfectly competitive market model, they provide an important critique of a funding system still in use today.

McMillan, Jill J. and George Cheney. 1996. ‘The Student as Consumer: The Implications and Limitations of a Metaphor.’ *Communication Education* 45:1–15.

This article warns of the dangers involved in recasting students as consumers. McMillan and Cheney synthesize arguments about the traditional goals of education and how treating students as consumers can threaten traditional classroom relations and alienate students from the learning process. Implicit in their discussion is an argument for more traditional classroom approaches to fostering democratic citizenship skills through critical analysis and

communal sharing of ideas. They explicitly reject the notion of education as a product (rather than a process) and the demand for professors to deliver the product in the most entertaining and efficient manner.

Owen-Smith, Jason and Walter W. Powell. 2002. ‘Standing on Shifting Terrain: Faculty Responses to the Transformation of Knowledge and Its Uses in the Life Sciences.’ *Science Studies* 15:3–28.

An interview-based study of 80 scientists from two university campuses, this paper provides a typology of faculty identities and research strategies at the nexus of academic and commercial research within the life sciences. The typology includes “old” and “new school” orientations to commercial research as well as hybrid categories somewhere between these two extremes, such as “engaged traditionalists” and “reluctant entrepreneurs.” Eschewing simplistic analyses that either condemn or glorify the commercial engagements of academics, Owen-Smith and Powell point out that these various positions have created both novel fault lines and innovative research within the life sciences.

Radder, Hans. 2010. *The Commodification of Academic Research: Science and the Modern University*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

This book is an edited collection of essays on the history, extent, and contemporary impacts of commodification on academic research in the US and Europe. Most of the essays converge at the intersection of science studies and research policy, but are written by an impressively eclectic group of authors pulled from philosophy, sociology, government studies, epidemiology, genomics, and bioethics.

Vallas, Steven Peter and Daniel Lee Kleinman. 2008. ‘Contradiction, Convergence and the Knowledge Economy: The Confluence of Academic and Commercial Biotechnology.’ *Socio-Economic Review* 6:283–311.

This is an interview-based study of biotech science that develops a theory of the “asymmetrical convergence” that characterizes the two sides of the university-industry relation. Vallas and Kleinman describe the work situations of university and commercial scientists to show that there has been a convergence of norms and practices across academic and corporate institutional domains. The authors show that the open discovery ideals of academic science have been increasingly integrated the entrepreneurial values and practices imported from the private sector. Simultaneously, commercial laboratories brought scientific practices and concepts into their workplaces. However, the convergence is asymmetrical, in the sense that both fields of practice are dominated by the profit motive and bottom-line economic development rather than the communal norms of public science.

Online materials

Research Commercialization and SBIR Center

<http://center.ncet2.org/>

This web-based organization provides an online venue for faculty and students to take virtual workshops and webinars on how to engage in research capitalization and entrepreneurial training. The site includes a variety of resources for faculty and graduate students looking to transition into industry jobs. This site also provides researchers interested in the marketization of higher education a glimpse into a cottage industry that has emerged to provide training services for academics looking to capitalize their research and pedagogy.

The Institute for Triple Helix Innovation

http://www.triplehelixinstitute.org/thi/ithi_drupal/

An organization focused on facilitating cross-sector (academia, industry, and government) collaborations in the production and dissemination of scientific research aimed at economic growth. Another example of a cottage industry established to promote research capitalization and professional networks aimed at knowledge transfer and research capitalization.

Documentary, “College Inc.” (2010)

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/collegeinc/>

This 55-minute video from PBS’ Frontline series examines the emergence of, demand for, and debates surrounding the consequences of for-profit universities such as the University of Phoenix. Available streaming online until October 19, 2012, thereafter only as DVD purchase. Supplemental materials on the *College, Inc.* webpage include: (1) a teaching guide with lesson plans, discussion questions, student handouts, and lesson extensions; (2) responses from the colleges and universities highlighted in the video; (3) articles, reports, and documents related to for-profit education; (4) transcripts of interviews conducted with numerous investors, reporters, lobbyists, and college presidents; and (5) a transcript and audiocast of the full program.

Documentary, “Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk” (2005)

<http://www.decliningbydegrees.org/>

This 120-minute video from PBS examines the impact of market forces in higher education, specifically discussing factors such as declining government support for public education, changes to student loan programs, the pressure to attract students, college rankings, and college sports. The documentary shows viewpoints from administrators, students, and faculty. A companion book is available for purchase through the program’s webpage.

Sample syllabus

The “Marketization of Higher Education” article can be successfully incorporated in several types of undergraduate and graduate courses, including Introductory Sociology, Sociology of Education, Organizations and Institutional Change, and Science and Technology.

For introductory or education-focused courses, the article provides a succinct history of the relationship between higher education and the broader society while demonstrating how social institutions respond to social and cultural expectations/needs in different historical and national contexts. The article includes a short summary of the historical and contextual differences in the European and American models of higher education.

For more advanced students of organizations, the article provides a case study demonstrating how macro level institutional changes influence organizational climate and social actors’ perceptions of their own work. Further, advanced or graduate seminars in education may choose to highlight the various debates about the role of (higher) education in an increasingly knowledge-based economy.

Focus questions

1. Discuss examples of how market logics may have influenced your coursework, choice of classes, or commitment to a class.

2. What do you think about the informal economy and buying and selling course notes and study materials?
3. Discuss examples in which you put more or less effort into a class based on your perception of the course's bottom-line benefit to your post-graduation career and/or income.
4. How might the pressures faced by professors to bring in research funds from industry or venture capital influence their work and commitment to the classroom? In your experience, does this seem to be more common within those subject areas where knowledge capitalization is fairly common, such as biotech or computer science? Or, can we see the influence of knowledge capitalization in humanities or social sciences too?
5. To the extent that students have adopted an understanding of higher education as a commercial exchange, in which they are customers who pay for grades, etc., what might be some ways in which we could change that perception? What changes would faculty need to make in order to change student attitudes? Administrators? Students themselves?

Seminar/Project ideas

Exploring Institutional Boundaries

Interview a few other undergraduate students plus at least one faculty. Ask students questions such as why they decided to come to college, how they decided which college to attend, what they like and do not like about their college education, and what they hope to get out of their college experience. Ask faculty to provide their perspective on why they became a professor, what they like about their job and what they dislike, and what they see as the purpose of college and what students should get out of the college experience. In what ways do faculty and student perspectives converge, and how do they differ? Do any of the differences suggest blurring boundaries between missions of the university (knowledge production, student learning, and satisfying the social charter)?

Marketization in Your College/University

Do a content analysis of official university admissions brochures, websites, and videos. What messages does the college want you to get from these materials? In what ways might the marketization of higher education be evident in such materials? If the university makes historical materials available, ask students to compare such materials over time to discern an increase in marketization, and how such processes are manifested. Do admissions materials for undergraduates and graduate students emphasize the same things? What differences do you note? Why do you think such differences do or do not exist?

Note

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