

Jane Austen and the Belly of the Beast Part 2: Language and Power

**Commodification, Technology and the Open Agenda
in Higher Education**

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Introduction

- Ideology, technology, power, & economics: Universities and the crisis in neoliberalism
- Tensions between the concepts and cultural forms of the university and economics
- Culture and money in Jane Austen – Higher Education as a *comedy of manners*?
- ‘Belly of the Beast’ – to be trapped in a bad place
- 2nd in a series of ‘working sketches’

Contentions

- Knowledge as economic product
- Mass production/education – the factory model
- Technological Solutionism and the illusion of mass-produced personalisation
- (Economic) viability against search for wisdom
- Transferring cost to the people, corporate business models, reduced labour costs

Pressure points

Political pressures on universities to abandon their culture:

- Austerity cuts
- Competition (funding, ranking, privatisation, internet)
- Commodification of individual (teachers/learners)
- Widening access, participation goals
- More bureaucracy as control mechanism
- = More for less!

Language: A Monoculture?

- Technology, education, open education
 - Narrow, controlled, self-censoring
 - Social media: an amplifier and multiplier
- Education and Technology
 - An endless TED talk?
 - Language of Fear – of being left behind
 - Technological Solutionism
 - Youthful deliriums...

The Open Agenda

- Open education: rapid, diverse and massive
 - Technology, venture capital, markets, competition
 - Opportunities and contradictions
 - Outsourcing learning to cut even more costs
 - Shift from service provider to certification body
- ‘Open’ as a contested space...
- Brand equity projection*
- New markets... - data as new currency

The Open Agenda

The Open Agenda and the Developing World:

- Colonisation via knowledge economy: transporting Western values, language and branding – using ‘openwash’
- Cf. television expansion in the 1990s: cheapest tv productions as fillers between ad spaces
- Cf. genetically modified seeds sold to developing world to capture markets and ‘greenwash’

Language

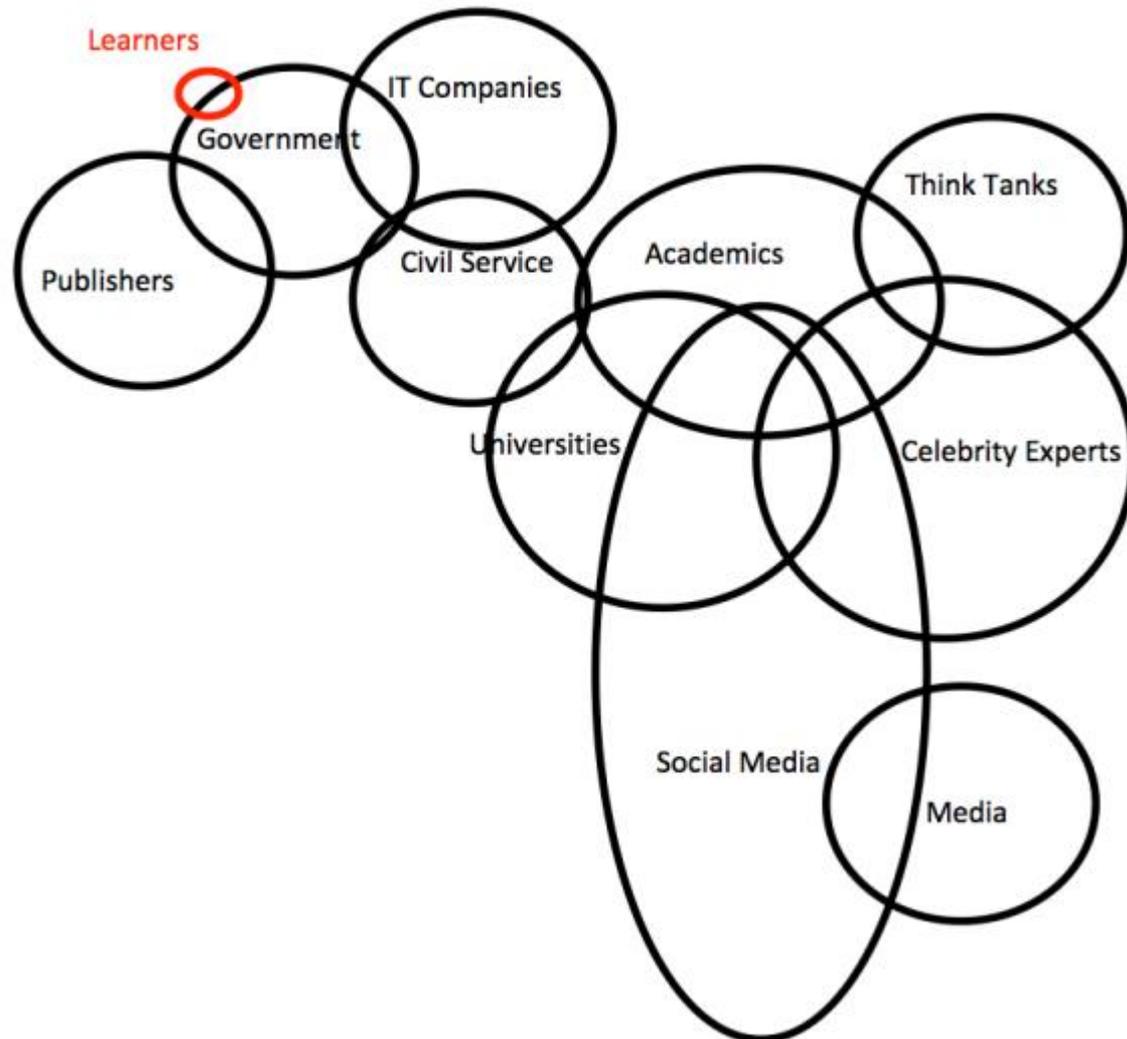
Neo-liberal language now used by public sector:

- Business model, efficiency, market, customers, brand, ranking, sustainability, economies of scale, etc.
- Shift from teaching, student support services, and delivery to focus on **outcomes** and accreditation (code name “personalisation”)

Language: fear & greed

- “Digital Natives & Immigrants”
- “Higher education in 50 years will be provided by no more than 10 institutions worldwide”
- “Education is broken”... a meme for selling tech
- “The next big killer application for the Internet is going to be education.”
- “The [UK] government aims to ‘drive competition and innovation’, through a more market-based approach to higher education, allowing students to choose between a range of providers.”

Power



“An avalanche is coming”



Summing Up: The Future

- To develop alternatives we should know from where we are starting.
- There is a role for public institutions and government...rolling back privatisation
- Democratising HE – lessons from the 19th century?
- The radicals of the early 19th century held that education should be ‘accessible to the public and transparent to the public gaze’