



Danish research centre on education and advanced media materials

Digital Generations:
Children, young people and new media
London, 26-29 July, 2004

Learning Materials: Black Box or Digital Dream?

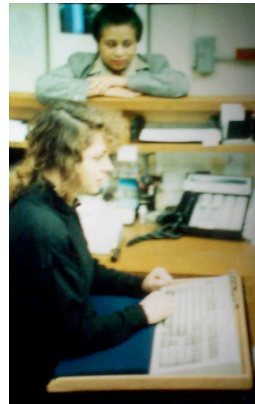
Kirsten Drotner
Dept of Literature, Culture & Media
Uni. of Southern Denmark

Kim Christian Schroeder
Dept. of Communication,
Journalism and Computer Science
Roskilde University Centre

Founding director of DREAM Co-director of DREAM



Learning materials: the field



- A huge field: Google lists 614.000 entries for “educational materials”
- A hugely compartmentalised field: producers encompass commercial suppliers, public agencies, educational practitioners, users themselves



Learning materials: situating the research

Media and ICT studies

Traditionally, rather limited interest in pedagogical issues in general and in learning materials in particular

Educational and learning studies

Traditionally, rather limited interest in constitutive role played by media and ICT in learning processes



Learning materials: traditions of research

Textbook research

- focus on content of learning
- focus on formal training
- often comparative
- decontextualised
- semiotic theories, content analysis



New media as black box

Online learning

- focus on context and org. of learning
- both formal and informal learning
- rarely comparative
- context-sensitive
- learning theories, HCI theories



New media as digital dream



What prompts research on learning materials?

- Changing learning environment:
 - ends: learning has become a central social resource
 - means: the mediatization of learning
 - focus: from “learning that” to also “learning how” and “why”



challenges conventional understandings of learning, knowledge production inc. contestation of power relations in learning processes

- Changing media environment:
 - multimedia culture
 - convergent media technologies, divergent uses



challenges conventional understandings of cultural hierarchies and media inc. contestation of “core” sites of learning



Defining learning materials within new media and learning environments

- Learning materials are material and immaterial resources of learning
- Any mediated representation may be a learning material
- Defining a mediated representation as a learning material depends on the aims and contexts of application
- Learning materials operate at the intersection between the subjects and objects of learning and in both formal and informal settings



The Dream approach to researching learning materials

- A holistic approach
 - combination of media and learning perspectives
 - both formal and informal settings
 - old as well as new media
- A focused approach
 - young people as key informants
 - same groups followed in both formal and informal settings
 - strategic areas of study: literary analysis, science studies, health communication, genre appropriation, and gender
- A practical approach
 - collaboration between researchers, public agencies and commercial suppliers



What Dream does not do

- Analysis and evaluation of efficacy of different learning materials
- Analysis and evaluation of effect of different learning materials



Key questions

- Can we identify learning modes that are specific to particular media? Are there mediatized learning modes that are transferable between media?
- Which discourses on media and communication are embodied by the learning materials under study?
- Which discourses of learning and knowledge are embodied by the learning materials under study?
- Which methodological approaches prove most feasible to meet our aims of study?
- Develop a catalogue of best practices in developing new learning materials

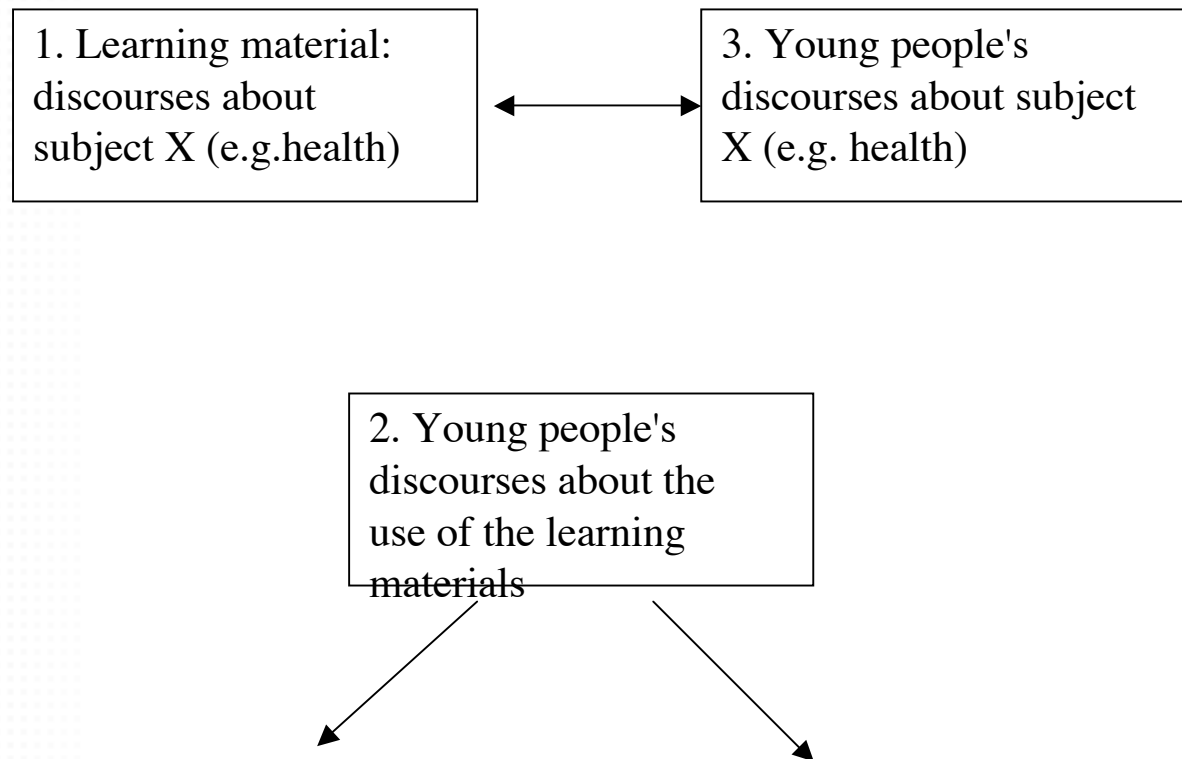


Mapping the mediated discursive landscapes of learning in the digital age

- The intelligent exhibition: Exploratory learning in the natural sciences
- Natural science and conceptual reasoning
- Interactive textual analysis: creative and receptive processes of literary literacy
- Learning health behaviour in the mediatized society
- Edutainment as genre and learning environment
- Learning, gender and ICT: Participatory design and animation development



Discursive linkages in the landscapes of learning



Methodological implications:

Methodological pluralism

- Young people will be our key 'informants'
- Fieldwork methodologies from media audience studies:
Media ethnography and Reception analysis
- Discourse analysis and semiotics.
- Qualitative and quantitative research methods
- Formal and informal learning processes:
the school and the everyday
- Navigation-oriented usability method combined with
an interpretive, cultural perspective



The mediatized society

'Convergence' of media: interactivity

The modern, mediated youth culture is becoming multi-dimensional and multiply interactive

'Couch potatoes' versus 'semiotic jugglers'

