

The Clark Team

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I have been pulled from one end of the spectrum to the other in considering this debate. A brief introduction to the topic had me supporting Kozma. Clark's polarizing dismissal of medium as a simple delivery truck seemed crudely reductive. However, upon reviewing the details of their rhetoric, I find Clark's arguments compelling.

Clark proposes that the benefit media offers is a matter of increased efficiency and reduced cost (Clark, 1994). In terms of the counterexamples Kozma presents, I must side with Clark. I concur with Kozma that White's ThinkerTools game offers a meaningful opportunity for children to simulate mechanics in an affordable, effective way. Likewise, the Jasper Woodbury Series provides a well-designed opportunity for students to interact with graphic images and activate prior knowledge for problem solving (Kozma, 1994). There is no denying the immense capacity of media to provide effective educational experiences on a large scale. It would be massively more challenging to facilitate such instruction on the individualized level without the proposed media, but this doesn't begin to address Clark's assertion that another method could achieve the same results. To be sure, creating a live teaching environment that allows students to experiment with force and motion would be vastly more time and resource-consuming in comparison to an easily accessible video game. But media simply facilitates an (enormous) increase in efficiency, nothing more. I find no point in Kozma's arguments that presents a truly unique property of the medium, despite a compelling argument for its merits.

Admittedly, Daphne Bavelier's TED presentation gave me pause. She presents captivating evidence that action video games optimize users' abilities to read fine print, track objects, and complete mental rotation tasks in the real world. Playing such games leads to demonstrable changes in areas of the brain that control attention (TED, 2012). I must, however, apply Clark's distinguishing query: "If you suspect that there may be an alternative set or mix of

media that would give similar results, ask yourself what is causing these similar results” (Clark, 1993, para. 23). The speed with which benefits are demonstrated might lead us to believe the action video game medium possesses unique attributes. Ultimately, though, I believe that such results might be replicated with the use of other media – perhaps, Air Force pilot training or playing laser tag in a well-designed environment. It is my belief that the method within the media is the “active ingredient” (Clark, 1993, para. 16).

The argument that media provides the ability to implement effective methods of instruction efficiently and effectively for large numbers of people is unassailable. The benefits, however, are largely economical, not a unique attribute of the media itself.

References

Clark, R.E. (1994). Media Will Never Influence Learning

http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~bmann/0_ARTICLES/Media_Clark.html

Kozma, R. (1994). Will Media Influence Learning: Reframing the Debate. Educational Technology Research and Development (42), 2. 7-19.

TED. (2012, Nov 19) Daphne Bavelier: Your brain on video games.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FktsFcooIG8>