

## **The Education Dilemma**

### **Project Proposal and Design Document**

#### **1. The Learning Problem:**

Educating U.S. high school students to keep pace with evolving global advances is a complex issue faced by the nation. The future of the nation's economic prosperity depends on having educated individuals to maintain and further society. Annual funding in the billions of dollars are budgeted on education. However, educational funds are routinely diverted as national priorities take precedence to fixing, or improving issues within the existing education. The goal of education is on building skills or knowledge for students.

Real world decisions are being made often without the knowledge or insight of the very generation that is most affected. The need for the young learner to become aware of the educational and economic world they live in as they transition into adult learning and the working world is critical to providing an additional opportunity to succeed as contributing members of society. U.S. high school juniors need to understand the importance of education as it relates to employment, so that they can make an informed decision about higher education prior to entering the workforce.

#### **2. The Target Audience:**

As eleventh grade Advanced Placement U.S. History (APUSH) class students in the state of Virginia prepare for entering the “real world,” they are involved in researching either postgraduate employment or continuing education options. APUSH class students possess an understanding about the national education and have developed pre-existing views on educational policies from the news headlines. The students are technology savvy with an awareness of political and economic issues, making them an ideal target audience.

While the students are currently studying U.S. history and have prior knowledge of major U.S. events, they are typically unaware of their significant role in the bigger picture of U.S. education and specifically their role in maintaining the U.S. economy. For some students, education only provides the single viewpoint of the teacher, while following a reward-based standardized quiz or exam with an overall linear approach towards instruction, and thereby contributing to errors in conceptual understanding.

Learning only one perspective oversimplifies any idea in any field of study, especially when attempting to apply the idea at a later time. During this pivotal time in their lives, students are motivated to research options for following a career path which may or may not involve tertiary educational options. Completing this 5 week online activity may provide students with better insight into their decision.

#### **3. General Knowledge Domain and Outcomes**

The domains of this CLE are represented by topics chosen for their substantial roles in the complex issue of education. This CLE will explore the significant past, present and future topics and issues

associated with U.S. education. The knowledge domains are interdisciplinary, overlap considerably and the topics focus on the following:

- History of education in the U.S.
- Global standards of education
- U.S. standards of education
- Role of politics in education
- Inter-relatedness of education and economics
- Influences of technology on education
- Inter-relatedness of education, economics and technology
- Societal aspects related to education

U.S. students participate in education until they graduate from high school. While Virginia high school students are required to complete U.S. history during their eleventh year, and pass Standards of Learning (SOL) exams to graduate, there is no current curriculum addressing the significance of education received nor their specific role as a student in that system. News headlines which highlight education issues affecting students are largely vague or overlooked completely by the students themselves. This CLE introduces students to the role of education in the U.S. and why it is of vital importance to the nation and their future.

After high school graduation, the former students are considered young adults and expected to join the workforce. Employment options may require successful completion of higher education or at least continued learning. The decision whether or not to follow the path of higher education will directly impact their future employment and socio-economic status.

The CLE addresses varying levels of pre-existing knowledge by fostering the construction of new experiences to develop a deeper understanding of the issues. The nonlinear, exploratory research of cases via peer-reviewed articles, wiki's and videos provide the needed experiences through multiple perspectives to create those new experiences. The use of cross-referencing multiple perspectives through themes permit authentic exposure to the relevant issues of policy, politics, economics and technology directly impacting U.S. education.

#### **4. Learning Outcomes:**

Bloom's taxonomy is a model used to determine different levels of complexity in learning outcomes. This CLE model builds up to the highest levels of Evaluation and Creation in order to develop a deeper understanding of the issues and are as follows:

- Increase awareness of education in the United States.
- Evaluate issues related to technology and education.
- Compare different perspectives of education in the United States.
- Gain different perspectives from other students.
- Correlate the rapid growth of technology and the job market to education.
- Summarize the factors affecting the decision to enter employment with or without higher education.
- Construct knowledge of educational benefit or hindrance through resources provided.

- Construct a plan on how higher education may or may not improve the decision for future employment.
- Explain their plan.

## 5. Pedagogical Model

Education is a complex issue due to the nature of interdisciplinary domains of politics, economy, society and technology. For high school students, the ill-structured dilemma of choosing to enter employment directly after graduation or postpone until after completing a form of higher education is complex and ventures into several domains.

The ill-structured nature of the issues involved in education are best addressed by following the Cognitive-Flexibility Hypertext (CFH) constructivist pedagogical model. The CFH Constructivist Learning Environment (CLE) allows students to bring their existing understandings into an environment where they assemble with new knowledge from analysis of case studies.

Decisions in education affect the entire nation and primarily current school age children who grow up to be the next generation workforce. Passionate and ongoing debates range from children failing to achieve basic proficiency, how best to educate, who will fund the education, and the determination if the education meets local, state, federal or even global standards.

The issue of education contains the perspectives from parents, politicians, professionals in the fields of economics and education as well as the students. With a multitude of perspectives to weigh in on their portion of the debate, the CFH pedagogical model was determined to provide the most robust representation of perspectives on the primary issues involved. CFH theory argues that for learners to effectively process, internalize, and apply knowledge it must be acquired through real-world situations where learners synthesize multiple perspectives and think through complex potential solutions (Jonassen, 2011). Based in the cognitive flexibility theory, CFH avoids oversimplifying instruction, accentuates the role of context, and stresses the conceptual interrelatedness of ideas.

## 6. Learning Activities

The overall objective of the learning activities is for the students to construct a deeper understanding of U.S. education through the following learning activities:

***Initial Survey:*** Complete an individual survey on the topic of U.S. education and related themes using pre-existing knowledge. The survey will consist of qualitative open ended questions relating to the topic themes.

***Blog Post and Response to Peers:*** Write blog posts in response to teacher provided prompts, within specific themed case-studies. Through nonlinear exploration and cross analysis of multiple themed case perspectives, apply new with pre-existing knowledge and understanding. Articulate into multiple case study responses. Post meaningful responses on peer posts. This promotes a layer of understanding for peer perspectives.

***Follow-up Survey:*** Individually complete a Follow-up survey to the Initial Survey. This

survey will consist of the same qualitative open ended questions relating to the topic themes as the Initial Survey, with additional specific questions about the themed issues and cases. The repetition of previous questions, combined with answering additional thought provoking questions based on knowledge gained through the Blog Post activity will help the student reflect, formalize and articulate the knowledge gained.

***Final Prompt:*** In a one page report, apply the newly constructed knowledge to reflect and respond with a self evaluation of possible current and future skills required for personally desired post graduation employment. Demonstrate synthesis to create and articulate a multi-themed action plan as a solution for addressing the dilemma of employment or higher education.

### **7. Assessment/Evaluation:**

Cognitive Flexibility Hypertext encourages students to be in control of their learning process. For that reason, the students will be assessed in the following ways:

***Initial Survey:*** The individual responses to the qualitative open ended questions relating to the topic theme will establish a baseline of basic knowledge on the issue to get a better understanding of what each student currently knows about the issue.

***Blog Post and Response to Peers:*** Content posted will be reviewed for demonstrated knowledge and understanding of themed issues and consideration of multiple case perspectives. Peer posts will be reviewed for meaningful and knowledgeable responses.

***Follow-up Survey:*** This reflective activity is to measure the level of knowledge and understanding gained through case exploration and articulation, after completion of the Initial Survey and Blog Post Activity.

***Final Prompt:*** This activity will be reviewed and evaluated for demonstrated knowledge, understanding and evaluation of themed issues. As well, demonstrated synthesis and creation of a multi-themed plan will be evaluated for understanding and consideration of multiple case perspectives.

### **References**

Jonassen, D. H. (2011). *Learning to solve problems: A handbook for designing problem-solving learning environments*. New York, NY: Routledge.