Experiential High School On Line

Background

A new company has been created, called Experiential Teaching On Line (XTOL). The purpose of this company is to contract with top ranked universities to offer the best possible master's degree programs worldwide.

The founder of XTOL, Professor Roger Schank[1], has been building on line experiential master's degree programs since 2001. As the Chief Education Officer of Carnegie Mellon University's Silicon Valley Campus he led the development of a variety of programs in various areas of Computer Science. He and his team of developers from Socratic Arts, a company he founded to build these programs, built Masters programs in e-business technology,

[1] John Evan Professor Emeritus of Computer Science, Psychology, and Education at Northwestern University and Founding Director of its Institute for the Learning Sciences. Previously Professor Schank was Chairman of the Computer Science Department at Yale University.

software engineering, and software development. These offerings are unique in that they have no classes, no lectures, and no tests. They are learn-by-doing courses in what Schank calls a Story Centered Curriculum (SCC). Later, Socratic Arts built an experiential MBA program for La Salle University in Barcelona, Spain.

XTOL is now building masters degree programs in Software Development, Software Engineering. Mobile Application Development, and E-Business Technology. These masters degrees are intended to supply employers with graduates who can immediately go to work and make use of the latest software development skills. Graduates will not be steeped in theory but in practice. These masters programs have been designed by academics at top ranked computer science department who care more about practice than about theory and who genuinely want people around the world to have better technical education than is currently available in most universities.

The creation of these programs offers another important opportunity. While the U.S. struggles with test scores, test preparation and a push for more and more people to go to college, the rest of the world is in a different situation.

In most parts of the world, students aren't so much worried about whether they will get into an Ivy League school, they are concerned about where they will be gainfully employed in meaningful work. But how does a student in Peru, or India, or Ghana, or Indonesia, get a first rate education that leads to employable skills? (This question is just as important in the U.S. but big interests are against real solutions. Nevertheless what is proposed below would work in the U.S. as well where there are 2 million homeschooled students.)

Proposal

The masters curricula we are building can easily be converted into high school curricula. This can be done by making them go a little slower with more support. Also, because these things need to be taught, it would be necessary to spend time teaching writing, speaking, and teamwork. Since software development typically occurs within the context of running or starting a business, basic business knowledge would need to be taught as well. Lastly, or more accurately, firstly since the entire curriculum would start with this, a reasoning curriculum would need to be created in order to teach students to

think critically and precisely. Since what follows that first year curriculum is about computer science, the reasoning curriculum would also be technical and scientific in nature but would not necessarily be specific to computers.

Specifically the four year high school curriculum would be:

Year 1: Reasoning about science, business, and technology with an emphasis on writing and team work

Year 2: Software Development: this means learning to program in various environments and learning about user's needs and proper design

Year 3: Business/Entrepreneurship: this means learning how to launch a business as well as learning to create software that would enable that business to function

Year 4: Mobile Application Development; Web Retail Technology; Data Mining; Security: these would all be specializations within which students could pursue a project of their own

A student would concentrate for four years on things that would make him or her readily employable.

It would not be necessary for the student to go to college. Students could opt to go to college of course. If they make that choice, the summer between their junior and senior years could be spent on intensive SAT preparation.