



VISION SUMMARY

Steve Joordens & Dwayne E. Paré

Joordens and Paré are squarely focused on shifting education away from an emphasis on information learning and towards the development of core cognitive skills such as critical thought, creative thought, and clear effective communication. They are not alone in arguing that such a shift is critical. Many luminaries of education such as Fullan, Hattie and Robinson have argued that these are the skills that give students success in all facets of life. These are also the skills that prospective employers value most.

With the need for this kind of change now generally accepted in the global education community, Joordens and Paré's award-winning work focuses on meeting it. Their strategy includes two distinct components. First, they created and validated a process and technology that allows any educator to easily develop these core skills in their students without requiring additional time or resources. Second, they provide explicit ways to measure these skills, which is critical for leveraging change on the highest levels.

Called *peerScholar*, their technology is woven from the cloth of research in educational psychology. It embodies a large set of evidence-based learning practices to give students the structured practice with these skills that is required for their learning to be effective. Throughout a single *peerScholar* activity, students repeatedly exercise critical thought, creative thought, expressive communication and receptive communication, all within a

supportive context that clearly illustrates how their work compares to that of their peers. *peerScholar* itself has been the focus of research, and both its efficacy and usability have been empirically established. As *peerScholar* continues to evolve, it does so in a research-influenced manner thanks largely to the work of the **Advanced Learning Technologies Lab** that Joordens and Paré direct.

The world often judges educational institutions based on easy measures such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores. If we want the development of cognitive skills to be valued in this same manner, then they too need to be measurable. Joordens and Paré are aware of this and are leading the field to directly address this challenge. For example, they argue that the core process of critical thought is the ability to discriminate exemplars of some category (e.g. arguments) on the basis of their quality. In a recent paper, they showed exactly how this ability can be quantified and then demonstrated that repeated practice in contexts requiring critical thought results in improvements in this score.

The motivation behind their work is to provide the technologies that help educational institutions move towards the form of education that best prepares students for success, leadership, and innovation. Their global reach is evident in their Gates-sponsored Introduction to Psychology Massive Open Online Course (i.e., MOOC) on Coursera.org, their work with the Global Teenager Project, and their work with refugees and struggling students via their relationship with COGx. They are truly committed to reshaping how and what students learn, and their work is already making an impact. With your support, that impact will increase significantly.