Assessing the Validity of Varying Points of View

General Description:

The student wakes up and starts the day, getting a call from Curtis saying that he has to get coffee early. This will give the student a reason to head to the Daily Grind to begin the Learnscape

Summary:

This is just an introductory interaction where the student receives guidance on the first events of the day, which is to go to the coffee shop to meet friends. It also briefly introduces the student to their Digital Home

Dialogue:

Curtis        Hey, are you going to be at the Grind this morning? I have an early meeting, so let’s meet at 7:00 instead of the usual time! I’ll tell Juzen – see you then!
Student       OK, sounds good. See you at 7:00.

Interaction 1, coffee with Juzen and Curtis

General Description:

Curtis, Juzen and the student meet at The Daily Grind, a local favorite coffee shop. They are all old friends and get together frequently before going in to work. They don’t work at the same company, but talk about their jobs a lot.

If possible, this should be a video interaction.

Summary:

The three of them talk about the online class the student has just finished taking, and the discussion turns to the idea of online schooling in general. Curtis, a current MBA student, is a big fan of online education, while Juzen is opposed to the idea, thinking that it can’t be as good as traditional classroom education. This discussion will primarily be to get non-factual ideas about education out. Facts and research will come later in the Learnscape.

Dialogue:

Juzen        Hey there, good morning! Ready for another exciting week?
Curtis  Hi, good to see you. Juzen wasn’t sure you would make it in this early!

Juzen  Well, I thought you’d be up late studying for that course you have been taking – but then I remembered you finished that last week, right?

Student  Good morning everyone. Yes, that’s done now. It was pretty interesting, though.

Curtis  What was it called? “Critical Reading and Listening?” Not terribly exciting if you ask me!

Juzen  Whatever, Mr. Online MBA! You really are in no position to talk about the quality of education.

Curtis  Hey! My program is great. There’s no way I could earn my MBA while working full time if I didn’t have the flexibility to take courses online.

Student  Do you really think it’s as good as a classroom-based program, though?

Curtis  Well, it’s just different, you know what I mean? I got my Bachelors’ degree at a traditional university, and the program was great. But there’s no way I could do that now.

Juzen  They make these things called “night classes,” Curtis. It’s how working adults used to obtain degrees before they could go online and just buy them!

Student  So, Juzen, I guess you are not a big fan of the idea of online education?

Juzen  You could say that! I don’t see how you can get anything close to the same level of education staring at a computer as you would from going in to class. Even the biggest lecture hall is more personal than the Internet.

Curtis  But that’s just not true. I talk to my professors all the time, through instant messenger, e-mail, and over the phone.

Student  That’s interesting. I have been thinking about going back for my degree, but I really don’t know where to start.

Juzen  Start with your HR department. You might have some sort of corporate discount or reimbursement policy for education. They’ll be able to help you get set up with a program, too – a real program, at a real college!

Curtis  A real college can be online, Juzen!

Juzen  You keep telling yourself that, buddy! OK, it’s been fun but I have to go. Same time tomorrow?

Curtis  No, we can let our friend here sleep in a little longer tomorrow. Have a good day, everyone. Juzen – we aren’t finished! Haha...bye!

Student  I need to pick up a coffee for someone in the office. See you both later.
Student’s Cubicle

General Description:

Standard office cubicle; student will have a phone, email, and internet to use

Summary:

The cubicle is where the student will go to receive instructions on the events for later in the day. Student reads two emails and a text message.

Tami’s Email      Subject: Coffee???

Did you remember my coffee? You better have remembered because I am going to make life miserable for everyone if I don’t get my coffee! LOL – just kidding...sort of. Seriously, bring it to me now.

-Tami

Allen’s Email      Subject: Performance review follow-up

I want to tell you again what a great job you did last quarter. Let’s meet later today to talk about next steps for you. There could be great things for you at this company, but we need to make sure you’re able to achieve them.

Thanks,
Allen

Reese’s Text      (appears AFTER student visits Tami’s desk)  Hey, haven’t seen you in a while. Let’s go over to Tony’s tonight and I’ll teach you how to lose gracefully at eight-ball!

[Student has a choice for replying nicely or “smartly”]

Nice response

Sure, sounds great. See you there at 8:00.

“Smart” response

Who better to teach me how to lose than an expert in the field? See you at 8:00.
2nd Interaction, Tami’s desk

General Description:

Tami is something of a mentor to the student, and in a similar situation. She is also looking into pursuing a degree but knows very little about what sort of program she wants. She is very smart and while she may not know a lot about the programs, she’s a great coach when it comes to judging arguments and weighing facts against each other.

Summary:

Student briefly talks with Tami about the events of that morning; Tami encourages the student to pursue a degree and to be very careful to not let opinions sway their decision.

Dialogue:

Tami    What took you so long – did you get it? Oh, yes, give it here!
Student Good to see you too, Tami!
Tami    No time for that, just let me have a sip...ahhh, there we go. My world is right again. So, how are you doing?
Student Great, thanks. I just finished up that Critical Thinking course you recommended.
Tami    The online one? Did you like it? I am seriously thinking of going back to school – don’t tell anyone, but my manager is retiring and wants me to take her job. You’d think I’d be qualified after 10 years, but they say I need a degree!
Student Wow, that’s great! So where are you taking classes?
Tami    I’m not, yet. I’m still trying to decide what’s best for me – traditional class or online?
Student You would have loved to see Juzen and Curtis go at it this morning, then.
Tami    I can imagine! Those two should just get married. Does Curtis have his MBA yet?
Student He’s getting close. He loves his online courses.
Tami    And with his crazy work schedule, he should. That’s what it’s made for, people like him.
Student Juzen made some good points too. She was concerned that it wouldn’t be very personal and that the quality of instruction could suffer.
Tami    Well, you know what I say to that – research it, and figure it out for yourself. Then come tell me what you think!
Interaction 3, Meeting with Allen

General Description:

Standard office, not too fancy. Pictures of kids and family on the walls. Allen is a bit traditional so maybe a bookcase with a set of encyclopedias or similar books. Not stuffy looking, but also definitely not “hip.”

This interaction should be done with video for Allen.

Summary:

In this meeting, the student meets with their boss and talks about the student’s future with the company. The student can’t advance any further without a degree, so Allen recommends talking to HR about enrolling in the local university for a night program. The student brings up the idea of online classes.

Dialogue:

Allen  Hi there, come on in. Have a seat. OK, first of all, you did great on your review – I think you know that. So, what I’m going to tell you next isn’t the easiest thing in the world. You’re already at the top of your pay grade – the only way you are going to get a raise at this point is if you get promoted.

Student  Ummm...but you aren’t going to promote me, I take it?

Allen  I can't promote you. I talked to the board and they are insistent on the fact that you need a degree. Nobody is denying your qualifications, and I am certain you’d do great with more responsibility, but without a degree, it’s just not going to happen.

Student  So what does this mean?

Allen  It means you’re going to school whether you like it or not! Ha! OK, I guess not, but I’m going to strongly encourage you to look into it. I will set up a meeting for you with Kathy from HR. She’ll tell you what you need to do to get started in some night courses at the community college. Once we have you in a degree program, the Board said they’ll consider a promotion as long as you have a clear path to the degree.

Student  That’s great, but when would the semester start?
Question 1:

*Allen*  
Probably not for a few months. But we’ll get you in as soon as possible.

*Student*

A. I would hate to lose a few months!
B. What if I took an online degree program?
C. Do I have to go to the community college?

*Allen (response)*

A. I don’t know what else you can do. I suppose you can talk to Kathy about an online program, but I don’t trust those.
B. Online schooling? I don’t know, it sounds fishy to me. Talk to Kathy, but I would think a traditional class is better.
C. It’s the only school in the city! What else are you going to do? I guess you can talk to Kathy about an online program, but I don’t know that I trust those.

*Student*

A. I have been thinking about an online program, actually.
B. I know people who take those, but I have my doubts, too.
C. Everyone is talking about online education today!

*Allen (response)*

A-C: Like I say, I don’t know much about it – but I don’t really think it’s my first choice. Do some research, though – if you decide that’s the way to go, justify your reasoning and we will make it happen.

*Student*

OK, thanks. Is there anything else?

*Allen*

Not right now. Check in with me in a couple days and let me know what you think. I’d like to get you started as soon as possible.
Interaction 4, Pool with Reese

General Description:

Tony’s Billiards is a fun, laid back pool hall where the student and their friends like to hang out. Reese is one of the student’s oldest friends and a great person to bounce ideas off of. He isn’t an expert, but he’s very savvy when it comes to technology and he understands how to tell the difference between rhetoric and facts.

Summary:

Student and Reese talk about student’s plans for a degree while playing pool; Reese promises to send student an article and a video about the ways education is changing thanks to the internet.

Dialogue:

Char Name: Hi Reese, good to see you!

Student: Hey, it’s good to see you too. How have you been? Work keeping you busy?

Student: Work’s been crazy. I just had the best review of my life --

Reese: Great! Big raise, big bonus? Company jet? What are they giving you?

Student: Nothing, until I get a degree.

Reese: Oh no! What are you going to do?

Student: Well, I’m going to get my degree.

Reese: Good for you. Are you going to take online courses?

Student: I don’t know. I just started thinking about it. Actually, I wonder if you can help?

Reese: Ask me anything you want – I may not be an expert, but another opinion is always helpful.

Question 2:

Student must ask at least four of the six questions shown here before the “That’s all I have questions about” option displays and the interaction ends

Student

A. Juzen says that there’s no personal interaction in online programs.
B. Curtis seems to like his online MBA program more than he liked his undergrad, classroom-based courses.

C. Is it true you really just sign up and pay to get a degree online?

D. Does an online degree count the same as a traditional degree?

E. Will companies view an online degree the same as a traditional degree?

F. How long will it take me to earn a degree if I try to get it online?

G. That’s all the questions I have right now. Thanks, Reese.

Reese’s answers to the above:

A. Well, you can tell that is an exaggeration just by hearing it – there’s NO interaction? If there is no interaction at all, it can’t be a good program. But I highly doubt she is correct. You would need to research the program before signing up, of course, but a good program is going to have a good amount of interaction.

B. That’s great – but it’s only Curtis’s opinion, and doesn’t mean it would be the same for you. It’s good to hear what he thinks, but you still need to make your own decision – and base it on facts, not hearsay.

C. Ha – sure, if you want to waste your money on a worthless piece of paper. You need to look at accredited universities, no diploma mills. I get email saying you can earn a degree in two weeks. It’s obviously not a serious offer.

D. That depends on who you ask. But if you go through a serious online program, it should count just like any other degree. The only problem is that there is some bias out there against online degrees. You are trying to see past that bias right now!

E. That’s a question for your HR department, not me!

F. Depends – you can move at your own pace more with an online program than with a traditional one. Curtis is right about that – there is more flexibility in scheduling.

G. OK, great. I hope I helped. Now, let’s play some pool!

Day 2

General Description:

Student is back in the office for Day 2.

Summary:
Email from Kathy arrives setting up their meeting time.

Text message from Juzen arrives making fun of the student for losing badly at pool to Reese.

**Juzen’s text**  
I hear Reese beat you pretty badly at pool last night! Maybe you can take a course to learn how to play! ;)

**Kathy’s email**  
Subject: Corporate Education Policy

Allen tells me you want to earn your degree. Please stop by my office this morning to talk about our education options.

Thanks,

Kathy

**Interaction 5, Meeting with Kathy (HR)**

**General Description:**

Kathy’s office is fairly modern, not as stuffy as Allen’s. She has one of those motivational posters up on the wall about “Teamwork.”

As this is a very important interaction, I recommend we use video here as well.

**Summary:**

Kathy will talk to the student about how to pick a degree program. However, while they will be talking about education and online/traditional classes, the real point of the conversation is to talk about critical reading techniques. After this interaction, every interaction the student has will be geared at using those techniques to evaluate what he/she is seeing.

**Dialogue:**

**Kathy**  
Hey there! Good to see you. Have a seat. So, you appear to be in a bit of a bind these days.

**Student**  
It looks like it. I need to get a degree, but I don’t know what to do while I’m working full time.

**Kathy**  
Well, I’ll help you figure that out. I’m sure you’ve done a lot of thinking about your options already?
Student

Everyone I know seems to have an opinion to share – traditional school, online school – I don’t know what to pick. They both seem to have a lot of advantages and disadvantages.

**Question 1:**

*Kathy*

Everyone you’ve talked to – so are you basing your ideas right now on fact or opinion?

*Student*

A. Fact – my friends have experience and know what they are talking about.
B. Opinion – there’s a lot of rhetoric out there and it’s hard to get through it all.
C. Opinion – there’s a lot of rhetoric out there and it’s hard to get through it all.

*Kathy*

A. Well, that’s not exactly the kind of facts you need. Personal experience is valuable to hear, but I’m talking about hard facts – research, studies, and so on. You are just looking at anecdotal evidence, which is usually biased
B. It is difficult! It’s OK to consider opinions, but you want to make sure you treat them as opinion and not fact. Just because a good friend says it’s true doesn’t mean it’s true! You need to be sure to apply critical thinking skills as you make your decision. I know you just finished a course in that, but let’s talk about it some more.
C. That’s ok. It’s good that you understand that – you just need to find some hard facts to back up the anecdotal ones before making a decision! Let’s talk about how you think you can do that.

*Student*

Well, I am hoping you can help with that. I have some questions for you.

*Kathy*

That’s what I’m here for. Please, go right ahead.

**Question 2:**

*Kathy*

That’s what I’m here for. Please, go right ahead.

*Student*

A. First of all, does our company distinguish between an online degree and a traditional one?
B. Where can I find some hard facts about the differences between the program types?
C. What would you do in my shoes?
D. When I find information about these programs, how can I tell if it is trustworthy or not?
E. I think that’s all for now.

Kathy (student must ask at least two questions – if B is skipped, the link will be included in Reese’s remediation email later)

A. Not at all. Well, assuming you go to a legitimate, accredited online university. Did you know a lot of traditional universities are starting to offer online programs? So the distinction isn’t as great as someone like Allen might think. There is still some bias out there, but not when I’m the one approving your education reimbursement receipts. Just make sure that it is a legitimate program!

B. I’m glad you asked! I just found a good website that you can use. It’s got information about the advantages and disadvantages of both types. It’s not all the best information, but you’re smart enough to weed out the valuable info from the rest. If this is skipped, link to this site will come from Reese in later email

C. Ha – right. I’ll be honest, I know exactly what I would do if I were in your shoes. But this is your decision, and I’m not going to sway you either way. There’s not a wrong answer, it’s just that you need to decide for yourself which program will work best.

D. Didn’t you just finish that Critical Reading course? OK, a brief refresher. When you read or hear someone make a case, you need to think about why they are making that case. Is their argument based solely on emotion? Is it backed up by facts, and do the facts seem reasonable? What is their motivation to say the things they are saying? Could they have an ulterior motive for taking that side of the argument? Ask all of these questions, and then decide what you think about their argument.

E. OK, great. I will send you some information about the corporate education reimbursement, so that when you do get started, you will be able to fill out the mountains of paperwork I’m going to send you later with as little pain as possible!

Student Thank you, Kathy.

Kathy You’re welcome. Have a good day!

Student’s Desktop

General Description:

Student gets email from Kathy with the website she talked about.

Summary:

Student can view the website from Kathy, unless B not picked
Tami’s email

Hey! I’ve been looking into this online education thing and I have some questions for you, since I know you’re doing the same. Come by when you have a chance!

Interaction 6, 2nd meeting with Tami

General Description:

See previous

Summary:

Tami has heard some info about online education that she wants to run this by the student, to see what they think. This is a test of how the student is evaluating her claims.

Dialogue:

Tami

Oh, you’re here! Great! Where’s my coffee? Ha, just kidding. I made my own.

Student

Maybe you should lay off the coffee for a while?

Tami

You have no idea what you are suggesting. But enough about coffee. I have questions for you.

Student

OK, I’ll try to help. What is it?

Tami

This online university I have been looking at basically guarantees that I can earn a four year degree in just two years. Does that make sense to you?

Question 1:

Tami

This online university I have been looking at basically guarantees that I can earn a four year degree in just two years. Does that make sense to you?

Student

A. As a guarantee? That sounds great! You should go for it.
   B. A four-year degree is a four-year degree. It’s obviously a lie.
   C. It seems possible, but I wouldn’t trust that guarantee. It really will depend on your schedule if you can do it that fast.

Tami (Feedback)

A. Really? I don’t know, it sounds shady. How can they guarantee that?
   B. No, I think they mean I can get the same credits in less time working online. But you might have a point.
C. Yeah, that’s what I thought too. I guess if I have the time, I could probably do it that fast – but I don’t know if I have the time! But at least it would be flexible.

*Tami (Question)* OK, so next question. I hear that people with degrees from traditional universities make more money than those from online universities. Does that make sense to you?

*Student*

A. Is there any proof to that?
B. It’s possible, since some people are biased against online education.
C. Really? Wow, that changes my opinion of online education quite a bit!

*Tami (Feedback)*

A. Well…no, there isn’t! Good point. It sounded suspicious to me to begin with.
B. Maybe, but as I think about it, where’s the proof? That’s the kind of thing they should back up if they say it – and there was no evidence to support it.
C. Settle down there – I don’t even think it’s true. Wouldn’t they offer up some evidence for a claim like that?

*Tami* Oh, shoot – I need to take this. I’m on vacation the rest of the week – when I get back, you’ll have to let me know what you decided. Goodbye!

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**Interaction 7, Student’s cube - Call with Reese (Remediation/Information)**

**General Description:**

Student returns to their cube after talking to Tami. Reese calls to tell the student about a video he just saw about online education. He doesn’t have the link handy but he is going to send it in the morning.

**Summary:**

In addition to informing the student about the link that will be coming in the morning, Reese will offer remediation based on the previous two interactions. See notes below.

**Dialogue:**

*Student* Hi, Reese. What’s up?
Reese  Hey! I’m glad to see you recovered from your horrible loss last night! Haha…that’s not why I called. I just saw this video that you NEED to watch.

Student  What is it? Funny dogs? Kids doing crazy things?

Reese  WAY more exciting than that. It’s about how working adults can obtain a great educational experience while keeping their job!

Student  That IS exciting…well…close enough. What’s the link?

Reese  I don’t have it on me. But I just saw the video an hour ago and I will send it to you when I get back to the office in the morning. You need to watch it – it’s got some great info.

Student  Thanks, Reese. I look forward to it. Is there anything else?

Reese  (if remediation NOT needed) No, that’s it. Have a great day!

Reese  (if remediation needed) Well, since you mentioned it…

Reese  (if student missed B in meeting with Kathy) I’m also going to send you a website I found that lists a lot of advantages to online vs. traditional education. It looks at both sides – good stuff. I have that link right here, so I’m emailing it now. (student gets the link from Kathy that was missed before)

Reese  (if student missed ANY questions with Tami) You know, I’m a bit worried you might fall for some of the crazier arguments out there. The rhetoric is pretty thick around online education – there are a lot of good programs, but you just need to be careful when you are evaluating claims. Watch out for absolute statements and unconditional guarantees. These kinds of things are big warning signs!

OK, that’s it. Take it easy – I have to go.

Student  Good talking to you, Reese.

Digital Home

General Description:

User is home after Day 2

Summary:

This is a chance to review Kathy’s website (or Reese’s, depending on path followed). The student will be informed of the possible actions while at home in the form of a thought bubble: “Hmm, it’s still early – what should I do? Watch TV? Check email? Etc.”
There is some informational video on the TV about online education, and the student can get an email from Curtis reminding everyone to show up at the Daily Grind at 8:00.

**Curtis’s Email**

Unless I hear from either of you, we’re still on for tomorrow, right? 8:00 sharp, so everyone can get their beauty sleep. By that, I mean me.

-Curtis

**Assessment 1 – Coffee with Curtis and Juzen**

**General Description:**

The Daily Grind – see previous

**Summary:**

Student will be “quizzed” by Curtis and Juzen, who will make many different statements regarding online education vs traditional. Student will have to pick “reasonable” or “unreasonable” for each. For those the student deems unreasonable, they will be asked to write a short answer explaining why it is an unreasonable statement. Answers will be saved in the student’s final assessment for the course.

Since Juzen and Curtis were in a video interaction previously, it makes sense to do that again here.

**Dialogue:**

*Curtis*

I can’t believe you actually think that, Juzen! You are not looking at the entire picture, just your own point of view.

*Juzen*

So are you the pot, or the kettle, my friend? Because you cannot tell me you have honestly considered my side of this seriously, either.

*Student*

Ummm...hi?

*Juzen*

Hey! We were just talking about you.

*Student*

Uh oh...

*Curtis*

Look – we’ve been talking a LOT about what you should do with your life. And, while it’s your choice, as your friends, we feel obligated to meddle.

*Juzen*

Yes, only we can’t agree on how to meddle. So, against our better judgment, we’re going to leave this up to. But we want to make sure you know what you’re doing.

*Student*

I think I need to leave...
Curtis  
Sit down! This will be quick. We’re both going to make our case for how you should get your degree. All we want you to do is tell us if our arguments are reasonable or unreasonable. If they are unreasonable, then explain why you think that. Sound good?

Student  
Sure…I guess.

Juzen  
I’ll go first!

The following items should display one at a time, alternating between Curtis and Juzen. For each statement, the student will get to choose “Reasonable” or “Unreasonable” – for Unreasonable answers, the student will explain why he/she thinks that. There is no feedback from the characters, since we can’t evaluate the unreasonable reasons. If possible, we should randomize these statements.

Juzen – 1  
Some people think that online education is not as effective as a traditional classroom.

Curtis - 1  
Getting a degree online gives you much more flexibility in terms of when you take classes.

Juzen – 2  
You can’t learn as much online as in a normal classroom.

Curtis – 2  
You get better personalization and interaction online than with a traditional class.

Juzen – 3  
An online degree will never earn you the same salary as a traditional degree.

Curtis – 3  
If you have the drive to succeed, you can get just as much out of the online education as you can from a normal classroom.

(after all answers are complete)

Juzen  
Well, that was fun. But I need to get to the office.

Curtis  
Me too. You guys have a good day.

Student’s desk

General Description

See previous

Summary

Reese’s email with the promised video comes in. This is mostly to break up the two assessments – it will not provide information that NEEDS to be used in the final assessment, though it may well be helpful to the student. This will be an optional video

General Description

Allen, currently out of the office, asks the student, via email, to let him know what kind of program is being considered. This should not be about the program as much as about the reasoning used to choose it. It is expected
that the student will opt for an online course, however the door is open to a student who has good critical reasons for choosing the traditional path – but they should be good reasons, considering the Learnscape details.

Summary

**Allen's Email**  
Hi there – sorry I can't be in the office to talk about this in person. But, now that you have had a few days to think about it, I want to know how you plan to pursue your degree. More importantly, I want to know how you reached that decision – I don't really care if you want an online or traditional classroom. If I'm going to sign off on it, then I want to know that you are making your decision because of good, solid, critical thinking. Let me know how you reached your decision, and we can get you that promotion.

Thanks,

Allen

**Student**  
(essay field)