



Educational Innovation:

The Journal of Learning Transformation, Pedagogy, and Student Success

eISSN: Pending (Online)

doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026

Volume 1 Issue 1 - October 2026

Beyond the Screen: Why Immersive Learning Transforms Educational Outcomes

Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University, Future State University, Work & AI,
Catalyst Center for Work Innovation

Received March 8, 2026

Accepted for publication July 28, 2026

Published Early Access September 14, 2026

Abstract: *This research synthesizes current empirical evidence on immersive learning approaches through both a meta-analysis of 42 experimental studies (2010-2024) and original data from three case implementations across different educational contexts. Drawing on cognitive science principles including situated cognition, cognitive apprenticeship, and productive failure, the study examines how immersive learning environments create "thick authenticity" by connecting real-world contexts, personal interests, disciplinary practices, and authentic assessment. The analysis addresses the "authenticity dilemma"—balancing complex, authentic challenges with appropriate instructional scaffolding—while critically examining implementation challenges, individual differences that moderate effectiveness, and potential drawbacks. Quantitative results indicate moderate positive effects on knowledge acquisition ($g = 0.38$, 95% CI [0.31, 0.45]) and stronger effects on transfer ($g = 0.61$, 95% CI [0.52, 0.70]) and motivation ($g = 0.67$, 95% CI [0.58, 0.76]), though with significant heterogeneity across designs and implementations. Qualitative data from the case studies reveal that implementation quality, particularly the balance between authenticity and scaffolding, significantly mediates effectiveness. This mixed-methods investigation demonstrates that well-designed immersive learning can develop transferable knowledge, professional identity, and intrinsic motivation, while clarifying boundary conditions and implementation requirements for maximum impact.*

Keywords: Immersive learning, thick authenticity, authenticity dilemma, situated cognition, cognitive apprenticeship, productive failure, instructional scaffolding, learning transfer, student motivation, professional identity, meta-analysis, mixed-methods research

Educational Innovation: The Journal of Learning Transformation, Pedagogy, and Student Success

HCI Academic Press

Orem, Utah, USA

Suggested Citation:

Westover, Jonathan H. (2026). Beyond the Screen: Why Immersive Learning Transforms Educational Outcomes. *Educational Innovation: The Journal of Learning Transformation, Pedagogy, and Student Success*, 1(1). doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026.1.1.1

Digital Transformation, AI, and Inclusive Education: Creating Equitable Learning Ecosystems

Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University, Future State University, Work & AI,
Catalyst Center for Work Innovation

Received May 24, 2026

Accepted for publication August 10, 2026

Published Early Access September 18, 2026

Abstract: *This article examines the complex interrelationship between digital transformation, artificial intelligence adoption, and inclusive education in creating more equitable learning environments. Through mixed-methods research combining systematic literature review, survey data from 412 educational practitioners, and 37 semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders, the study explores how these three forces collectively reshape educational access, engagement, and outcomes for diverse learners. Statistical analyses reveal significant correlations between implementation patterns and equity outcomes ($r=0.57$, $p<.001$), with institutional commitment to inclusion ($\beta=0.42$, $p<.001$) emerging as the strongest predictor in regression models. Findings identify five key implementation patterns that significantly influence equity outcomes, including intentional design approaches, comprehensive integration strategies, continuous evaluation practices, stakeholder participation models, and balanced innovation-support frameworks. The study identifies critical barriers to equitable implementation, including persistent digital divides, algorithmic biases, professional development gaps, and governance challenges. The research contributes an empirically grounded Education Equity Technology (EET) model conceptualizing the interaction zones where these domains converge, while providing evidence-based recommendations for educational leaders and policymakers. These findings have important theoretical implications for understanding sociotechnical systems in education and practical applications for creating more inclusive digital learning environments.*

Keywords: Digital transformation, artificial intelligence in education, inclusive education, educational equity, Education Equity Technology (EET) model, digital divide, algorithmic bias,

professional development, educational governance, sociotechnical systems, equitable learning ecosystems

doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026.1.1.2

Suggested Citation:

Westover, Jonathan H. (2026). Digital Transformation, AI, and Inclusive Education: Creating Equitable Learning Ecosystems. *Educational Innovation: The Journal of Learning Transformation, Pedagogy, and Student Success*, 1(1). doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026.1.1.2

Educational Attainment and Employment Outcomes: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of the Synergy Between Higher Education and Labor Market Success

Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University, Future State University, Work & AI,
Catalyst Center for Work Innovation

Received April 15, 2026

Accepted for publication August 24, 2026

Published Early Access September 23, 2026

Abstract: *This research examines the evolving relationship between educational attainment and labor market outcomes, employing a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis of employment data with qualitative interviews of key stakeholders. Drawing on a longitudinal dataset of 4,732 graduates across diverse institutions and fields (2015-2023), supplemented by 87 in-depth interviews with employers, educators, and recent graduates, the study identifies significant shifts in how educational credentials translate to employment success. Findings reveal that while higher education continues to yield wage premiums averaging 65-80% over high school diplomas, these returns vary substantially by field, institution type, and student demographics, with significant disparities along racial, gender, and socioeconomic lines. Regression analysis demonstrates that experiential learning opportunities explain 28% of the variance in early-career outcomes, controlling for institutional prestige and academic performance, though selection effects partially influence these relationships. Qualitative findings highlight tensions between traditional academic models and emerging skills-based approaches, with stakeholders expressing divergent perspectives on the purpose of higher education beyond employment preparation. The study concludes with an evidence-based framework for strengthening education-employment pathways that honors both workforce preparation and broader educational missions, while addressing structural inequities in how educational value is distributed. This research contributes to human capital, signaling, and institutional theories by documenting how the value and*

Educational Innovation: The Journal of Learning Transformation, Pedagogy, and Student Success

HCI Academic Press

Orem, Utah, USA

meaning of education are being reconfigured in response to technological and economic transformation.

Keywords: Educational attainment, employment outcomes, wage premium, experiential learning, human capital theory, signaling theory, institutional theory, labor market inequities, skills-based hiring, education-employment pathways, mixed-methods research

doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026.1.1.3

Suggested Citation:

Westover, Jonathan H. (2026). Educational Attainment and Employment Outcomes: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of the Synergy Between Higher Education and Labor Market Success. *Educational Innovation: The Journal of Learning Transformation, Pedagogy, and Student Success*, 1(1).
doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026.1.1.3

Bridging Worlds: Developing Interdisciplinary STEM Competencies in HR Professionals for Sustainable Education

Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University, Future State University, Work & AI,
Catalyst Center for Work Innovation

Received May 8, 2026

Accepted for publication September 8, 2026

Published Early Access September 29, 2026

Abstract: *This study examines the development of interdisciplinary science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) competencies among human resources (HR) professionals within sustainable education frameworks. Using a mixed-methods research design including survey data (n=245), semi-structured interviews (n=37), and organizational case studies (n=6), the researchers investigated the effectiveness of various experiential learning and mentorship approaches in developing what is termed "STEM fluency." Results indicate that bidirectional mentorship ($\beta=0.42$, $p<0.001$) and structured action learning projects ($\beta=0.38$, $p<0.001$) were the strongest predictors of STEM competency development, with significant variations across organizational size and industry contexts. Qualitative findings revealed four key barriers to interdisciplinary development: resource constraints, disciplinary identity concerns, measurement challenges, and access inequities. The study contributes an empirically-validated framework for developing HR-STEM competencies across diverse organizational contexts and identifies specific implementation strategies that promote sustainable professional development. Implications for*

HR practice and future research directions are discussed, including ethical considerations in applying technical competencies to human capital management.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary competencies, STEM fluency, human resources professionals, HR-STEM integration, bidirectional mentorship, action learning, experiential learning, sustainable education, professional development, access inequities, mixed-methods research

doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026.1.1.4

Suggested Citation:

Westover, Jonathan H. (2026). Bridging Worlds: Developing Interdisciplinary STEM Competencies in HR Professionals for Sustainable Education. *Educational Innovation: The Journal of Learning Transformation, Pedagogy, and Student Success*, 1(1). doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026.1.1.4

The Half-Life of Skills Is Shrinking: What That Means for Your Workforce

Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University, Future State University, Work & AI,
Catalyst Center for Work Innovation

Received May 20, 2026

Accepted for publication September 14, 2026

Published Early Access October 2, 2026

Abstract: *The half-life of workforce skills—the time until half of what employees know becomes obsolete—has collapsed from decades to years, with some technical capabilities depreciating in under 30 months. This acceleration creates a fundamental crisis: traditional training cycles cannot keep pace with skill obsolescence rates, rendering conventional workforce development approaches structurally inadequate. Drawing on expertise development research, organizational learning literature, and emerging data on skill depreciation, this article examines why skills are becoming obsolete faster than ever, how this acceleration creates cascading organizational consequences, and why continuous applied learning represents the only sustainable response. The analysis reveals that episodic training, credential-based validation, and knowledge-transfer models fail catastrophically when skill requirements evolve faster than development cycles. Evidence-based responses require integrating learning into workflow, shifting from content coverage to deliberate practice, measuring capability through demonstration rather than credentials, and building organizational cultures where continuous adaptation becomes embedded infrastructure rather than periodic intervention. The article concludes with implications for organizational strategy and individual career development, emphasizing that in*

Educational Innovation: The Journal of Learning Transformation, Pedagogy, and Student Success
HCI Academic Press
Orem, Utah, USA

an era of radical skill impermanence, learning velocity matters more than accumulated knowledge.

Keywords: Skill half-life, skill obsolescence, human capital depreciation, continuous learning, reskilling, reskilling fatigue, learning velocity, deliberate practice, workflow-embedded learning, psychological safety, verifiable credentials, workforce development

doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026.1.1.5

Suggested Citation:

Westover, Jonathan H. (2026). The Half-Life of Skills Is Shrinking: What That Means for Your Workforce. *Educational Innovation: The Journal of Learning Transformation, Pedagogy, and Student Success*, 1(1).
doi.org/10.70175/educationalinnovation.2026.1.1.5