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And Finally ... Let's Go Deeply Digital?

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Let's Go Deeply Digital?

Michael Simonson

The origination of the term “deeply digital” is widely credited to a Report to the President made in 2010 by the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. The core of this report was that technology, deeply digital technology,

should not replace teachers but support them. Properly used, technology can extend the reach of teachers by giving them access to the best instructional and professional development tools that can create customized learning environ-

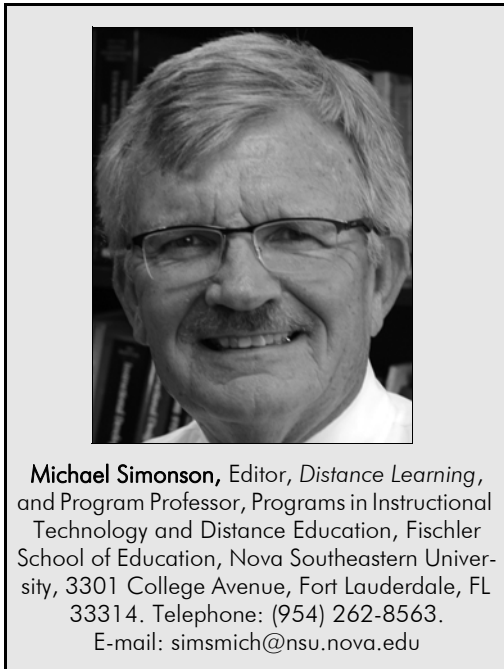
ments and assessments for students, and to capture rich information about individual performance. (p. 80)

The report emphasized the power of communities, open courseware, electronic textbooks, tutoring systems, and online courses. Goals for education, it said, should promote:

- development of common technology platforms;
- development of deeply digital whole course materials;
- development of modular instructional materials;
- development of innovative assessments
- rapid prototyping;
- data mining;
- broad dissemination;
- innovative procurement; and
- consortia.

Many now consider that to go deeply digital is to be immersive, innovative, and nontraditional in the use of digital instructional technologies in teaching and learning. A new companion phrase—digital curriculum—has also emerged in the literature. The two terms—deeply digital and digital curriculum—are related because, when an educational organization goes deeply digital, it is within the framework of the digital curriculum.

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Niss (2016) attempted to clarify what is meant by the digital curriculum by stating that the six factors that make up the curriculum are: goals, content, materials, forms of teaching, student activities, and assessment. These six must become digital in order to offer a truly digital curriculum.

The process by which education moves from the traditional artifacts of curriculum to a digital curriculum is a hierarchical process. At the base of the hierarchy is the written curriculum of the traditional educational system. At the apex is the student and teacher surrounded by a virtual, digital curriculum world where all materials are available, any form of teaching is possible, alternative and unimagined student activities are expected, and assessment is determined by artifacts. Artifacts are student created outcomes of digital learning.

And finally, as T.S. Eliot wrote, the best in listening to music, is when music is “heard so *deeply* that it is not heard at all, but *you* are the music, while the music lasts.” The advocates of the deeply digital curriculum say that; it is not noticed at all, the students are the curriculum, while the curriculum lasts?

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- President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. (2010). *Prepare and inspire: K–12 education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) for America’s future: Executive report*. Executive Office of the President, President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. Washington, DC: Author.

IN A DEEPLY DIGITAL COURSE, THE TEACHER AND STUDENT ARE SURROUNDED BY A VIRTUAL, DIGITAL CURRICULUM WORLD WHERE ALL MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE, ANY FORM OF TEACHING IS POSSIBLE, ALTERNATIVE AND UNIMAGINED STUDENT ACTIVITIES ARE EXPECTED, AND ASSESSMENT IS DETERMINED BY STUDENT PRODUCED ARTIFACTS.