

Opening statement response.

Digital Delerium present their comments and queries to Team *Presto!* initially through a “*tongue in cheek*” stream of consciousness monologue and then under a more structured five headings approach.

Monologue:

The pro side amply explains, explores, extrapolates and emphatically wins the argument as to whether or not a good lecturer can become a good on line teacher.

Their argument has ample evidence of how the characteristics of the ‘good’ lecturer like: a willingness to learn new things and etc. will but of course be useful and helpful in their quest to become a ‘good’ online lecturer. They state that they “*have successfully argued that technical barriers do not prohibit a teacher from a teacher from functioning to the best of their professional ability*”.

What are the barriers to which they refer?

We can go on here to show which of their arguments relate to this aspect and agree with it all!

Surely it is time for the con side to raise the white flag and acknowledge the battle is won. Indeed it is. We concede you have proven without doubt that a good F2F teacher can indeed become a good online teacher.

Wait a minute, wasn't there something more in that statement? What are we arguing about again? Let's remind ourselves:

“It's straight forward to become an online teacher – a good traditional teacher can become a good online teacher”

This is an incorrect paraphrasing of the initial statement. It should read: “it is straightforward to **teach online** – if you are a good teacher in the classroom, you **can be** a good one online too!”. Given that DD are using this as a reminder to refocus the discussion, it is somewhat confusing as to why they would use the wrong.

While it can be argued that there are only small differences between the two statements, these differences do have an impact on the meaning and the response to the statement - teaching online is a necessary but not sufficient condition to make one an online teacher, no more than driving once will classify you as a driver (this statement needs more work, but you catch my drift). Focusing on the word 'straightforward' we find that it is defined as 'uncomplicated and easy to do or understand' (OED Online). Ease is a subjective concept, and in much of their argument DD make reference to generalisations concerning an online **teacher**, which stems (presumably) from their earlier misquoting of the debate statment, rather than discussing the process of teaching online. We would maintain that it is in essence uncomplicated to teach online and can provide two very straightforward examples of this

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1) The Khan academy: the origins of the KA are via remote tutoring with the available technology, simple recoding devices and screen capture; from humble beginnings to a well-supported initiative with support from both Google and the Bill and Melinda gates Foundation;

2) Call/online support centres: for all practical purposes technical support fulfils a teaching role, and does so remotely - one-on-one tutoring takes us through the process of solving a problem; the availability of online 'teach yourself' resources has further enhanced this aspect, as we can all problem solve via the world wide web.

There is a problem with this statement as subject for debate in that it is two statements masquerading as one.

The main clause of the statement speaks to whether or not it is straightforward to teach online. The subsequent clause merely qualifies what we should understand by the phrase 'teach online' for the purpose of the debate, and also gives us a level of teaching to consider, that of 'good' teaching.

We have already conceded defeat on the latter part of the statement, who in their right mind would argue that a good lecturer cannot become a good online teacher?

However, is it straight forward? Consider what straight forward means. As we are not allowed to use references outside of what we have been given we will ask the other side to give us their definition.

Just like to state for the record that this is not correct. The exact line from the activities brief is ' you are only *expected* to access the resources in Week 2 Resources area' (our emphasis). This statement does not preclude or prevent either team from more extensive research to support their position; rather it emphasises that there are minimal boundaries for the research which can be undertaken.

Is there a how to guide? A "Step by step guide to developing pedagogically sound, inclusive, engaging elearning courses for dummies" book that we can buy?

In response to this facetious statement, we would argue that such step-by-step guides do not exist for any human endeavour and that it is unrealistic to expect a one size-fits all approach for any aspect of teaching, whether traditionally didactic or online. We have however, attempted to highlight a number of texts which approach your requirements. For example, several prominent authors have excellent texts in this area and Digital Delirium are encouraged to explore Salmon's 'E-moderating: the key to online teaching and learning', Palloff's 'The excellent online instructor : strategies for professional development' and Ko and Hussein's 'Best Instructional Practices for Teaching Online'. All of these are available in the DIT library and Digital Delirium are advised to take full advantage of these texts! In case they feel able to deal with the rigours of DIT's virtual learning environment, we can also recommend that they access page 9 of the Weblinks of the WebCourses module where they will find a link to *The CU Online Handbook, Teach differently: Create and collaborate* available for free at <http://cuonline.ucdenver.edu/handbook/>.

Five headings of debate:

Essential Qualities of a Good Teacher:

1. *Presto!* suggest that the role of the teacher is to develop a “*natural learning environment*”, however, as Prensky (2001) states, there is quite a divide between the teacher and the student with regards to digital fluency. Prensky (2001) classifies society into two groups; digital natives (the younger generation whom do not know life without technology) and digital immigrants (those that know life before and after the advent of omnipresent technology). Students typically fall into the digital native category and teachers the digital immigrant. As such, the natural learning environment for one group (digital natives) will be different from the other (digital immigrants) and the change from one to the other (immigrant to digital in the case of a teacher is difficult to achieve.

We would like to challenge the overly simplistic binary division of digital native and immigrant, from the perspective of able to deal with online learning or not, with a telling quote from Zur and Zur ' Not all digital immigrants and digital natives are created equal' (Zur and Zur, 2010). This short 'soundbite' elegantly captures the inherent contradiction in the native-immigrant divide, as the division is most-often centred on a (somewhat arbitrary) date. There are many flaws to this argument, no least of which notable digital pioneers such as Sir Tim Berners Lee, the creator of the world-wide web, would be considered a digital immigrant according to most definitions. In fact, as far as we are able to determine, essentially all contemporary teachers use e-mail as a key tool in their day-to-day work despite an age profile which would classify the majority as digital immigrants! The native-immigrant distinction also does not recognise that just as some so-called digital natives are not 'teach savvy' so some digital immigrants are more than competent in the adoption of new technologies.

Even in the relatively ancient times of 2001 (from a world-wide web perspective) Prensky suggest that digital immigrants who have accepted their place in the new digital world will look to their own creativity and other sources to help them communicate their still-valuable knowledge and wisdom on this world, i.e. they will *adopt* the new digital world like their own and become 'citizens' of this new world. We would argue that the transition is not as difficult as Digital Delirium would have us believe - at its core it is a change in stance and a willingness to embark on a new road. In fact, in a later work, Prensky himself (2010) also suggests a way to continue on this road - leveraging the student's capabilities via 'partnering pedagogy' where the students use the technology and the tutor coaches the students to use it for effective learning.

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Zur, O. & Zur, A. (2010): *Psychology of the Web & Internet Addiction-A GUIDE for parents and other adults who are concerned about how much young people spend on the computer (social networking sites, such as Facebook, instant messaging or online games) or those who want to learn more about Internet Addiction and Internet Gaming Addiction*. Online Publication. Available at <http://www.zurinstitute.com/internetaddiction.html>

2. *Presto!* point to the capacity of the teacher to 'connect' with their students, as a characteristic of a good teacher. What is their position on the literature that points to the criticality of this connection in the online environment, and the unique aspects to this fostering connection in the online environment; i.e., do they think the classroom teacher has those skills automatically?

Again we strongly disagree with the "unique aspects" of such a connection in the online environment as highlighted by Digital Delirium. Irrespective of whether the teaching happens in a classroom or online, the ability of a teacher to foster a connection with their students (e.g. as outlined by Palmer, 1999) may come easy for some but others will have to work hard to develop such a connection. We agree with Digital Delirium that not every teacher will have all the relevant skills, but in the qualifying subclause of our discussion point we are referred to a 'good teacher in the classroom'. This carries with it the implication that the teacher has all an optimal classroom skillset vis-à-vis fostering a connection with students. Such skills can be put to good use whether they are in the context of the written word, the face-to-face experience, the carrier pigeon, the telegram or online. A good teacher can recognise the requirements of the situation and adapt their methods to maximise their potential for teaching. We would thus suggest that it is irrelevant what teaching space which you inhabit, to teach you must gain the trust and confidence of your students. The ways in which this can happen are manifold, but the *means* by which the relationship develops is the same on or offline, e.g. relating the material to real life, preparation, being prepared, being available to students and listening to their students.

3. *Presto!* concur with Palloff and Pratt (2001; pg. 20) stating that there is a need to adopt a facilitative approach in online learning, we agree with this; however, Pronto do not provide any evidence to suggest the a good F2F "*facilitative*" teacher can switch effortlessly to online facilitation. The Palloff and Pratt reference is not provided for further investigation.

Effective facilitative skills include establishing and recording ground rules jointly (facilitator, participants), clarifying limits and consequences (objectives). General facilitative skills include showing empathy, listening to and acknowledging comments, giving responsibility to participant, developing awareness of individuals within a group and modelling effective group behaviour. These are good facilitative skills which all tutors should have regardless of learning environment. However the outcomes differ – with traditional teaching emphasis is on presenting information, with online learning there is a sharing of your own experiences and hearing others; traditional teaching uses questioning to test students knowledge, online questioning is used to demonstrate understanding or awareness; and most importantly with traditional teaching the responsibility for learning lies heavily

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with the teacher whereas with online learning dependency on the instructor is reduced and students are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning.

We would also like to direct Digital Delirium's attention to page 7 of our opening statement where they will find the following reference to Palloff's work: Palloff, R.M. & Pratt, K (2001). *Lessons from the cyberspace classroom: The realities of online teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

4. In addition to Bain's (2001) and Dormody and co-workers (2006) comments on the qualities of a good teacher, doesn't the eTutor require many more skills (technical and otherwise) in order to be able to teach online?

Whilst we do acknowledge that an eTutor will require additional technical skills, we would point out that the technology should not be demonised, particularly as the debate statement makes no explicit reference to technology. Rather it refers to the word 'online' which is simply a term for connectivity with the world-wide web. In the modern world, this means that when you are using a telephone, even a land line, or watching digital television you are considered online. These technologies have been democratised through the expedience of the mass market to such an extent that *we no longer see* the technology and only the output. Analogous 'invisible' technologies exist in the E-learning space - consider the Echo360 system, a fully automated, hands-off, technology which switches on automatically, carries out lecture capture, video processing and posting to the VLE, all without intervention of the teacher (<http://echo360.com/>). This sort of technology approaches the third of Arthur C. Clarke's third law which states that 'any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic'. Stripping the technology aside, our original point remains valid - we focused on the core characteristics as identified by Bain (2001) as we strongly believe that these characteristics are every bit as relevant to face-to-face and online teaching.

5. Smith (2007) argues that "*tedious preparation*" is key. Isn't preparation even more important in an online context, as the literature suggests? (No way you can 'fly by the seat of your pants' there!).

Preparation is the key, no matter which approach you use. We think that we have been misquoted as the full quote is 'Although these performances look as though they were made with spontaneity, close inspection almost always reveals tedious preparation'. This misquote obscures the core message, that performances consistently rated as 'good' (by both students and faculty) are associated with a high degree of preparation in both online and the real world settings. This while we agree that the literature suggests that online teaching requires more time in terms of preparation, this is not always be the case (Stone and Perumean-Chaney, 2011). Good teaching in traditional settings also requires a substantial amount of preparation time and not all face-to-face teaching should be considered at the level of 'chalk-and-talk' as its sets a very low technological and preparative bar for comparative purposes. For example, Hans Rosling is considered by most commentators to be an exemplary example of a 'good teacher' but even a cursory inspection of his presentations reveals that a vast amount of preparation has been carried out (for an example of his approach see http://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_at_state.html). This level of preparation is perhaps on the extreme side of the spectrum of teaching practice, but it is by no means unique. Even in situations where the teacher desires to use online group work, there is not as large a preparation gap as the anecdotal evidence would suggest. For example in a clip on 'Online teamwork and

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collaboration', educators from the University of New South Wales suggest that the preparation times is exactly the same as if the activity was face-to-face (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjcxKPIwoNA>).

Stone, M., & Perumean-Chaney, S. (2011). The Benefits of Online Teaching for Traditional Classroom Pedagogy: A Case Study for Improving Face-to-Face Instruction. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 7(3).

6. *Presto!* suggest that a teacher may be able to hold down two full time positions if they choose to go online with their courses. Not only would this be immoral (a case of a double jobbing lecturer in Galway and AIT comes to mind); but also contradictory to *Presto's!* earlier statement of who a good teacher spends a large amount of preparation time getting classes ready. If a teacher can effectively hold two jobs at once why is there a need for all the educators in Ireland? It could be done with half if educators went online and double jobbed!

We believe that we are again being misinterpreted by Digital Delirium - at no stage did we claim that a teacher may be able to '*hold down two full time positions*'. What we said was that 'they may work full-time as a faculty member for another institution, or even work outside of the field of education in a full time capacity'. We admit that we have perhaps not made the intent as clear as we should have - our intent was to highlight the affordances of the online delivery method to permit educational institutes to draw from the real-world knowledge base that exists outside of the primary academic institute. This is used widely in many professional fields, from telemedicine to business meetings, and in no case is it considered to reach the 'immoral' status which Digital Delirium suggests. Rather it would involve an institute engaging one or more specific field experts who may reside in a distant geographic area (e.g. Sligo!) to deliver content to the local institute. I doubt that Digital Delirium believe that Brian's webinar was in some way immoral! If additional students could benefit from a teaching event that would happen in any case, what is the issue with tapping into such expertise? This is all the more relevant in the context of students who may be in remote rural locations - on line courses may be the only chance they will get to pursue educational opportunities

7. *Presto!* base their debate on the characteristics of a good F2F teacher being similar to that of an online teacher. These characteristics may be similar but the content delivery and delivery space are totally different; hence the crux of their argument is not in agreement with their stance on the topic.

As we have mentioned in several places, we contend that the essential qualities of an online teacher and online teacher are essentially congruent. The 'crux' of our argument is this contention; our 'stance' is that it is uncomplicated and easy to do. We are not advocating a universal jump into the deep waters of online education, but the debate statement does not require us to do so.

Timeframe and Skill Set:

8. *Presto's!* long list of suggested solutions (e.g. make technical barriers a positive, availability of technical assistance, need for adaptation to the classroom setting to an online setting, assumed familiarity with the technology) all points to a crying need for a transition period for good teachers to adapt to the online environment! All the advocated solutions/recommendations take time, resources and skills.

We have no doubt that time, resources and skills are required to move to online. Again we would emphasise that this does not equate with difficulty and that it can still be uncomplicated and easy to do. Many activities take time but are not complicated and are easy to do (e.g. painting a large room, counting grains of rice). Time consuming does not equal difficult (cf the concept of 'tedious preparation').

Technology:

9. *Presto!* claim, through non-peer reviewed sources, that Broadband in Ireland is improving; however, the standard of broadband varies from location to location in Ireland. We, for example, have experienced the inability of “*dongle*” based broadband to support a basic webinar due to bandwidth issues.

The National Broadband Scheme (NBS) implementation is well underway and while we accept that broadband quality is not consistent across all areas. This does not mean that the student has to lose out. The amount of students suffering from poor broadband is constantly reducing, and the ones that remain do have the opportunity in the early days of the online module to find a different location, be it an internet cafe close to their house to participate in the online class. A small handful of students having to make small alterations like this to participate online does not dissipate the overall positive teaching experience that the online class affords. Team Presto! has first hand experience of using such alternate approaches - one members lives in an area west of Sally's Gap in Co. Wicklow that is not covered by the NBS but was able to access the webinar using a mobile dongle device and has also participated in the virtual chat room. With new technologies such as satellite, service is available in all areas if participants choose to sign up to it.

<http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/Communications/Communications+Development/National+Broadband+Scheme>.

10. *Presto!* mention the importance of technical support for online learning to be effective and seamless; although not the point of the debate (as it's the teachers' ability to become an effective online teacher not the technical support provided); it is clear that suitable support is required. Not

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all institutions will have this support, and it often comes down to the teacher to provide on the spot assistance. If the teacher is not familiar with technology, this will hamper the teachers' transition to online teaching. *Presto!* quote US statistics with regard to 24/7 technical support; however, with decreasing staff numbers in the Irish education sector, the IT support will become more and more limited; placing additional strain on the teacher to become a hybrid teacher/tech support. With these new roles comes the requirement for additional training and *Presto's!* point is lost.

As our learned DD team have pointed out 24/7 IT support may not be available in all institutions, however, communities of practice and collaboration have become a major theme within online learning. These communities and collaborations can be powerful catalysts for enabling online learners to improve their practices. DD suggest that the option of 24/7 support is not one that is viable with reducing numbers in the education sector. Maybe it's time for Institutions to look at ways to reduce costs in non-differentiating tasks such as IT support. Oblinger suggests that the more traditional model of a university providing most of its services physically on or near a campus is changing. More and more services originate off site and are shared distributed or aggregated by other colleges and universities or outsourced agencies. Whilst again DD can suggest that these are comments that don't refer to the Irish context maybe it is time for faculty in Ireland to take note of what is happening elsewhere and identify services such as 24/7 IT support which could be efficiently supplied through contractual relationships with corporations or other institutions. If faculty are in the business of providing education maybe it's time to start thinking like a business and then 24/7 IT support may not be so far away

Digital Delerium states that our argument about the provision of technical support does not have a place, as it is not the 'point of the debate'. We feel, that the existence of some technical support allows the teacher to better do their job. You state that not all institutions will have this support and that it comes down to on the spot assistance with a teacher who may not be familiar with technology. Most good institutions will have a support system, but according to Heiner, Matthias, Schneckenberg, Dirk and Wildt, Johannes (2001) 'the eCompetence of an individual staff member centres on their use of eLearning in a lecture or course, whereas the eCompetence of an institution focuses on strategies to implement eLearning in a complete study programme or set of courses.' Just as a good f2f teacher prepares for classrooms, so does a good online teacher.

Oblinger, D. (2010) From the Campus to the Future *EDUCAUSE Review*, vol. 45, no. 1 (January/February 2010): 42-52

Digital Literacy:

11. *Presto!* suggest that the digital literacy of students is improving; again the point of the debate is lost here. The debate centres on the ability of a good F2F teacher to evolve into a good online teacher. The technical ability of the students has little influence on the ability of the teacher to adapt to online learning. Surely the point here should be the current digital literacy of teachers; however, no information is supplied. What about mature students that they may be teaching?

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We would refer Digital Delirium to our previous discussion of digital natives and immigrants. In addition, we would point out that just as a good face-to-face teacher must dedicate time to problem students in the classroom, a good online teacher must dedicate themselves especially to these problem students. Therefore, if they are a good face-to-face teacher, they will be a good online one too and, as Smith, K (2005) states, the mature student will '*gain mastery over the system and develop confidence are more likely to stay the distance.*' We would also point out that the solutions for these issues are not difficult, and are by are straightforward.

Smith, K.,T., (2006) Early Attrition among First Time eLearners: A Review of Factors that Contribute to Drop-out, Withdrawal and Non-completion Rates of Adult Learners undertaking eLearning Programmes, Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, available at <http://jolt.merlot.org/vol2no2/tyler-smith.htm>.

Pedagogical Aspects:

12. *Presto's!* emphasis seems to be on defending the ease of transition to the online environment based on technical factors. What about the pedagogical aspects - for example, the specific models that have been developed for online teaching - would they argue that any teacher can become competent in these models? And the personal skills, which we would argue have substantially different requirements in an online environment.

13. Some of the points made are based on assumptions e.g preparation of pre-class questionnaires assume exposure to online teaching methods, assertion on students' familiarity with technology is not the reality

Assumptions are made even in face-to-face contexts. Their use does not create any additional, particular onerous barrier.

14. Some points made from the wrong standpoint e.g. accessibility doesn't make a good teacher neither does technical support which is not always available, collaborative learning isn't a proof of good teaching. Of course online teaching maybe the next step in teaching but it takes time and technical skills to reach this step.

While it is acceptable that it does take time and technical skills, that does not equate to difficult.

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15. *Presto!* suggest the studies of Vygostky (1962, 1978; references not provided) underpin the concept of networked collaborative e-learning. Vygostkys work occurred in the pre-online era, so it is hard to imagine that he expected his studies to be extrapolated to it! Furthermore, the point of the debate appears lost in this section; there is no evidence to back up the claim that a good F2F teacher will automatically become a good online teacher, instead the paragraph focuses on the student. Towards the end of this section, *Presto!* suggest that this new model is the pedagogical way forward, however, they do not provide evidence that the current teachers will be able to adapt to this model.

Yes, Vygotsky's work occurred in the pre-online era but his theory on social constructivist learning which developed out of Piaget's theories of cognitive development is based on the notion that the learner is active in the learning process; and that learning is the result of interaction with others and where the learners construct their own knowledge. He stressed the importance of support for learning through a "Knowledge Other", a teacher or peer. We find it difficult to accept the argument that just because Vygotsky's ideas were prior to the existence of current technology that they cannot be extrapolated to it. If we accept this line of thinking then should we not consider Newton's or Boyle's laws valid (limitations aside) and not apply them to modern technologies as neither of them exist today? We think that this is an inherently shortsighted approach, particularly given the low likelihood of significant neurological and anatomical changes in the brain since Vygotsky.

We believe that his ideas on collaborative learning are in fact enhanced by technology - Web 2.0 allows students to collaborate in a way that is all but impossible in a face-to-face environment. The great affordance of the technology is the ability of teachers to track the collaboration bringing a transparency to group work that is not present in traditional environment. Thus online pedagogy involves collaboration and consultation not only with students but also with a whole host of support personnel and the instructor is not a lone island in the institution and instead is part of a local network of other support staff, librarians, web/graphic designers, course tutors and programme managers.

16. *Presto!* use our class as a case study stating that a pre-induction questionnaire can be used to establish the participants' level of expertise with the relevant technology and to identify early if the student or teacher is feeling out of their comfort zone. Surely it is too late for a teacher to feel out of his/her comfort zone in the days before delivering a fully online class! What is the plan B at this stage? Revert to "traditional teaching"? Again, this supports Digital Deleriums point that the change over is not a simple process, requiring additional training, and may not be suitable for all teachers, even good ones.

17. *Presto!* claim that online learning can benefit the student as it enhances their technical skills; but at what cost? What about the F2F social skills?

We think that it is a bit of a stretch to argue that an involvement in an online environment precludes the development of social skills and is at odds with Digital Delerium's position with

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regards to the so-called 'digital native'. This is direct contrast to experience of the millions of participants in massively multiplayer online roleplaying games (e.g. World of Warcraft) and in social networking sites (Achterbosch et al., 2008). Being online and part of a community sharing a similar experience generates a social pressure and there are strategies for the online teacher to encourage social skills. The provision of a water cooler area allows participants to “hang out” with their peers either asynchronously or synchronously. Collison et al (2000) suggest that whilst conversations in the water cooler area allowed students to discuss everything from family to holidays they also naturally eased into discussions on course content. They also point out that beyond communications in spaces provided by social interaction, social dialogue continued to be evident in many responses to task orientated areas, indeed they observe that when classmates who had never “met” met in person for the first time after they had completed an online course they were “hugging, laughing and sharing stories like old friends”. As one student put it “this was no awkward meeting of forty strangers coming together for the first time. This was a class reunion.” It would appear that this group of students did not lack face-to-face social skills just because they took an online course.

Achterbosch, L., Pierce, R., and Simmons, G. Massively multiplayer online role-playing games: The past, present, and future. *ACM Comput. Entertain.*, 5, 4, Article 9 (March 2008), Available at: <http://www.cs.vu.nl/~eliens/stud/research/projects/local/cie/a9-achterbosch.pdf>

Collison, G. Elbaum, B. Haavind, S. Tinker, R. (2000) *Facilitating Online Learning Effective Strategies for Moderators* USA: Atwood.

18. *Presto!* state that “current pedagogical approaches will evolve and be applied to the new format to maximize the affordances of this format”. This statement is confusing and needs to be backed up by examples. Are you suggesting this evolution will be straightforward; will it be a step by step / painting by numbers process?

The ease or difficulty of the evolution can only be ascertained in a review of the development process after the fact. The perception of a 'difficult' step is dependent on all other steps in the process being easy, and in an incomplete process this is impossible to identify.

19. *Presto!* state: “online teaching is only the next step in the on-going evolution of teaching. Let’s break that down. It is ‘only’ the next step. As it is ‘only’ the next step it is therefore a straightforward one? What about evolution and iteration?”

With regards to the emphasis on 'only' the next step we would remind Digital Delirium of the words of Lao-Tzu: A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step'. The educational distance one must travel from traditional face-to-face to *completely* online may appear vast, but this gulf is only bridged with single, distinct acts. The length of these steps is as straightforward as the teacher dictates - from the technologically adept to the reluctant traveller.