

Chapter 3.7

Case Studies of Creating Reusable Interprofessional E-Learning Objects

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ABSTRACT

Reusable learning objects can play an important part in enhancing interprofessional learning. They provide flexible support to students of health care and provide an opportunity during the creation process, for interprofessional educators to share knowledge and understand more about each other's roles. When creating learning objects, a development and evaluation framework including technical expertise and quality control at critical stages is important, however it is the interprofessional community brought together at workshops at the start of the development cycle and the underlying pedagogical design principles

that ensure the materials are fit for purpose and guarantee reuse across professional groups.

INTRODUCTION

Within the context of interprofessional e-learning, this chapter will describe three case studies illustrating the use of a development and evaluation model for creation of reusable learning objects (RLOs). A range of issues around RLO design, repositories for interprofessional learning (IPL) and collaborative approaches will be discussed and some recommendations made for future research and development. The four objectives of the chapter are:

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- To provide a working definition of RLOs and explain the relevance and importance of the RLO approach for interprofessional learning.
- To show a generalised model for the creation and evaluation of interprofessional RLOs in health and social care (HSC) and discuss the variants of this in the case studies described.
- To show how educational and content creation issues have been addressed in three case studies of RLO development and use involving interprofessional teams in health care education:
 - **Case study 1:** Pharmacology RLOs to support interprofessional learning.
 - **Case study 2:** Cross sector development of RLOs for interprofessional learning in health care (LOLA).
 - **Case study 3:** RLOs for service improvement in the UK National Health Service (NHS).
- To discuss issues arising from the case studies and make recommendations for further work and research.

BACKGROUND

Current e-learning practice has moved away from putting whole courses online towards the creation of smaller self contained ‘chunks’ of learning, recently termed reusable learning objects (RLOs) (Wiley, 2000; Harden & Hart, 2002). RLOs present a number of educational advantages; they are stand-alone units of learning, which can be used in many different ways and across interprofessional disciplines (Windle et al., 2007a). This makes them extremely flexible and cost-effective. Material can be kept up to date more readily; it is much easier to update a single resource than an entire course. Students and teachers alike have access to these resources at any time or place through a standard web-browser. Teachers can combine

various RLOs to form the basis for their own custom-made courses (Mason, Pegler & Weller, 2005) or they can direct students to individual RLOs to support or explain particular concepts or processes as part of a blended learning approach (Lynn, Bath-Hextall & Wharrad, 2008). Critics of RLOs would argue that reusability is a myth, and any lecturer will always deliver a subject in their own style reflecting their own slant even in the most concrete of disciplines. In his paper on ‘Learning objects: weapons of mass instruction’, Butson (2003) says “The overwhelming acceptance of learning objects is baffling given that they represent a decline of learning into a form of reductionism” (p. 667). If learning objects are used like Lego bricks to build courses comprising simply of content, then most educational practitioners would agree with Butson. This chapter will refute this, by demonstrating in three case studies, how pedagogically designed RLOs, created by interprofessional groups are making a real difference to learners.

Wiley (2000) first proposed the definition of an RLO to be ‘a digital resource that can be reused to facilitate learning’ and since then there have been a plethora of definitions in the literature and this is discussed in more detail in a chapter in this volume by Windle & Wharrad. One of the more pragmatic definitions (Leeder et al., 2002) is relevant to the RLOs described in this chapter: A reusable learning object is a web-based multimedia digital resource based on a single learning objective or goal, comprising a stand-alone collection of four components:

- **Presentation:** a presentation of the concept, fact, process, principle or procedure to be understood by the learner in order to support the learning goal;
- **Activity:** something the learner must do to engage with the content in order to better understand it;

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