Chapter 11

Tactical and Substantive Educational Templates on Formal Open Learning Content Sharing Repositories and Referatories:
Peer-to-Peer Sharing by Professional Educators and Instructional Designers

ABSTRACT

To enable more efficient work, educational templates have been created for various contexts: online learning, assessments, video creation, document creation, and others. This work involves the exploration of 191 template-related digital learning objects shared on a learning object repository/referatory, an LMS-related object-sharing site, social slideshow sharing site, and social video sharing site, as an environmental scan. This work culminates in a definition of a "tactical and substantive educational template" (TASET) as a collaborative object and various requisite features for quality and heritability.

INTRODUCTION

In terms of peer-to-peer open-shared learning resources, sometimes, the sharing is between professionals who work in a particular space. One example of such a space is in education, where peers share resources on digital learning object repositories and referatories, learning management system (LMS)-based sharing sites, slideshow sharing sites, social video sharing sites, and other types of social sharing spaces. Some of the shared resources are open-access (available to the broad public without cost, without paywalls), open-source (with editable code available for each resource), open-shared (free and editable contents,

released through various levels of copyright licensure), and others. Some require usage of dedicated technologies (like particular LMSes, immersive virtual worlds, virtual learning environments, and other virtual spaces). Some require cloud-based access to the resource, with the user providing some inputs and acquiring some usable outputs (as in converters). Others are technology-agnostic, usable across various platforms and technologies, in a stand-alone and portable and sometimes downloadable way. In this work, the templates studied are those offered in a stand-alone way, not as part of online courses, learning modules, subject guides, e-books, digital learning objects, and so on. The stand-alone aspect also has implications on other aspects: technological, ideological, reputational, and others. There should be no hurdles to the usage (such as no need to pursue rights-releases from the original sharer). The coupling has to be loose, if at all. It should be non-contextualized. It has to have sufficient "escape velocity" beyond the local context of the individual or group makers and into the larger and more general context. Rather, the focus is on atomistic templates for educational usage, which offer a re-usable solution to a common challenge (with contents at the correct level of abstraction).

One assumption of professional peer-sharing is that the various shares may be more applicable in a professional space based on the advantages of insider knowledge for both creator/sharer and receiver/user.

A learning object is generally defined as a unit of digital educational content. These are known as "information objects" (Hodgins, 2002). These are designed at an atomistic level of granularity that there may be usage of these resources across a range of disciplines. In another work, learning objects are "instructional materials found on the Internet that can be used to illustrate, support, supplement, or assess student learning. Small in size, they can provide instruction that is just enough, just in time, just for you" (Cramer, 2007, p. 126). Using learning objects enable the practice of 21st century skills, including digital literacy (Cramer, 2007, p. 128). A brief historical sense of a learning object follows:

'Learning objects' (Wiley, 2001) became of interest because the web made it possible to easily distribute learning resources that were in a digital format. Once digitized, visuals, audio clips, text, or applets can be easily transmitted for re-use in another place or instructional context. In some cases, learning activities can be turned into templates with original content stripped out and new content filled in. Thus, the team 'learning object' embraces both content and processes, stored and transmitted in digital format, and having the potential for sharing in other instructional contexts. The term 'object' is ostensibly borrowed from object-oriented programming, and provides a nice allusion to computer code that is constructed in such a way that it will be possible for other programmers to re-use the code in new programs. (Richards, 2002, pp. 1-2)

Of note above is the idea that templates of learning activities are parts of learning object repositories and have content and processes (in this conceptualization). As a "type" of open-shared learning object, templates do not appear to be a common individual form. Found templates are usually parts of other online learning contents.

Generally, templates are merely patterned forms or molds that are reusable, with core standard elements that make it more interchangeable with others…and which make it interconnectable with other elements. A template helps save on time by introducing efficiencies in processes. A template may be built with quality control elements included. In an education space, a template is often a digital or analog (or both) form that structures learning contents or learning activities. By definition, templates are designed to be partially complete; users have to emplace contents based on their particular teaching and learning context for the template to have value. Templates serve as supports (Rehak & Mason, 2003, p. 22).

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