Cape Town Open Education Declaration: Unlocking the promise of open educational resources

We are on the cusp of a global revolution in teaching and learning. Educators worldwide are developing a vast pool of educational resources on the Internet, open and free for all to use. These educators are creating a world where each and every person on earth can access and contribute to the sum of all human knowledge. They are also planting the seeds of a new pedagogy where educators and learners create, shape and evolve knowledge together, deepening their skills and understanding as they go.

This emerging open education movement combines the established tradition of sharing good ideas with fellow educators and the collaborative, interactive culture of the Internet. It is built on the belief that everyone should have the freedom to use, customize, improve and redistribute educational resources without constraint. Educators, learners and others who share this belief are gathering together as part of a worldwide effort to make education both more accessible and more effective.

The expanding global collection of open educational resources has created fertile ground for this effort. These resources include openly licensed course materials, lesson plans, textbooks, games, software and other materials that support teaching and learning. They contribute to making education more accessible, especially where money for learning materials is scarce. They also nourish the kind of participatory culture of learning, creating, sharing and cooperation that rapidly changing knowledge societies need. However, open education is not limited to just open educational resources. It also draws upon open technologies that facilitate collaborative, flexible learning and the open sharing of teaching practices that empower educators to benefit from the best ideas of their colleagues. It may also grow to include new approaches to assessment, accreditation and collaborative learning. Understanding and embracing innovations like these is critical to the long term vision of this movement.

There are many barriers to realizing this vision. Most educators remain unaware of the growing pool of open educational resources. Many governments and educational institutions are either unaware or unconvinced of the benefits of open education. Differences among licensing schemes for open resources create confusion and incompatibility. And, of course, the majority of the world does not yet have access to the computers and networks that are integral to most current open education efforts.

These barriers can be overcome, but only by working together. We invite learners, educators, trainers, authors, schools, colleges, universities, publishers, unions, professional societies, policymakers, governments, foundations and others who share our vision to commit to the pursuit and promotion of open education and, in particular, to these three strategies to increase the reach and impact of open educational resources:

> **1. Educators and learners:** First, we encourage educators and learners to actively participate in the emerging open education movement. Participating includes: creating, using, adapting and improving open educational resources; embracing educational practices built around collaboration, discovery and the creation of knowledge; and inviting peers and colleagues to get involved. Creating and using open resources should be considered integral to education and should be supported and rewarded accordingly.

> **2. Open educational resources:** Second, we call on educators, authors, publishers and institutions to release their resources openly. These open educational resources should be freely shared through open
> licences which facilitate use, revision, translation, improvement and sharing by anyone. Resources should be published in formats that facilitate both use and editing, and that accommodate a diversity of technical platforms. Whenever possible, they should also be available in formats that are accessible to people with disabilities and people who do not yet have access to the Internet.

> **3. Open education policy:** Third, governments, school boards, colleges and universities should make open education a high priority. Ideally, taxpayer-funded educational resources should be open educational resources. Accreditation and adoption processes should give preference to open educational resources. Educational resource repositories should actively include and highlight open educational resources within their collections.

These strategies represent more than just the right thing to do. They constitute a wise investment in teaching and learning for the 21st century. They will make it possible to redirect funds from expensive textbooks towards better learning. They will help teachers excel in their work and provide new opportunities for visibility and global impact. They will accelerate innovation in teaching. They will give more control over learning to the learners themselves. These are strategies that make sense for everyone.

Thousands of educators, learners, authors, administrators and policymakers are already involved in open education initiatives. We now have the opportunity to grow this movement to include millions of educators and institutions from all corners of the earth, richer and poorer. We have the chance to reach out to policymakers, working together to seize the opportunities ahead. We have the opportunity to engage entrepreneurs and publishers who are developing innovative open business models. We have a chance to nurture a new generation of learners who engage with open educational materials, are empowered by their learning and share their new knowledge and insights with others. Most importantly, we have an opportunity to dramatically improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world through freely available, high-quality, locally relevant educational and learning opportunities.

We, the undersigned, invite all individuals and institutions to join us in signing the Cape Town Open Education Declaration, and, in doing so, to commit to pursuing the three strategies listed above. We also encourage those who sign to pursue additional strategies in open educational technology, open sharing of teaching practices and other approaches that promote the broader cause of open education. With each person or institution who makes this commitment -- and with each effort to further articulate our vision -- we move closer to a world of open, flexible and effective education for all.

There are currently 2461 signatories to the Declaration, including:

Grace Baguma, Department of Education Uganda (Uganda)
Paul N. Courant, University of Michigan (United States)
Andrew Ezzell, Give Something Back International Foundation (United States)
Katherine Fletcher, Rice University (United States)
Chris Froissard, DET NSW (Australia)
Jason Gallicchio, Harvard University (United States)
Bjarne Hansen, Rommen school (Norway)
Rod Johnson, University of Michigan (United States)
Giorgos Kainourgiakis, (Greece)
Monika Koller, (Austria)
Arvind Lodaya, Srishti School of Art, Design & Technology (India)
Miltonq Louw, Institute of Information Technology (Namibia)
Wayne Mackintosh, Commonwealth of Learning (Canada)
Wolf Neddermeyer, GepecGlobal Engineering, Promotion, & Education Collaborative for pd Health Care (GEPEC) (Germany)
Alister Payne, Western Province Prep School (South Africa)
Sybilla Poortman, Fontys University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands)
Luigi M. Reale, Scuola secondaria di I grado "G. Piermarini" (Italy)
Carlos Rodriguez, (Argentina)
Nemesio Amaro San Román, Conicet (Argentina)
Catherine Schmidt-Jones, (United States)
Mark Shuttleworth, Canonical (United Kingdom)
Elisabetta Verticelli, (Italy)
Jimmy Wales, Wikimedia Foundation/Wikia (United States)
David Wiley, Brigham Young University (USA)
susanti yahya, (Indonesia)

The full list of individual signatories is here. You can also view lists of organizational signatores and the participants in the Cape Town meeting, who were the first signatories to the Declaration.