

Educators and the Cape Town Open Learning Declaration: Rhetorically reducing distance

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ABSTRACT

The Cape Town Open Education Declaration and other visionary documents seek to unify and challenge educators in the creation and use of open learning resources. We rhetorically analyse the Declaration which idealizes the educational process and contrast this with the practical challenges which affect the development and use of open educational resources. We draw on classical rhetoric and hermeneutics as analytical tools of such visionary documents that contain little factual information. Without an initial vision, an enabling environment, complete with policies and funding, means very little. We argue that analysing such vision documents is important part in persuading educators to take further steps towards creating, shaping and evolving their own educational practices.

Keywords: *rhetoric; hermeneutics; Cape Town Open Education Declaration; Distanciation*

INTRODUCTION

The Cape Town Open Education Declaration (CTOED 2008) is written to challenge the *status quo* in the education sector and encourages signatories to realise its vision. This demands a response in how it was written and how it invites one to for example sign the Declaration. While the Declaration addresses a wider audience that includes learners, policymakers and others, our focus emphasises educators and their uses of open educational resources. Educators' active participation is an important first step in realising the vision of the Declaration. We argue that appreciating the Declaration's textual form helps in understanding the function of such a document, the context in which it is written and the vision projected. While the overriding message of such a declaration is that its adoption is for the better good, there are aspects that will be questioned, creating a distance between the reader and the intended outcome. The terminology is often opaque and academic debates can be intense. Ultimately what is more important is persuading people to pursue the evolving vision of open education.

The Open Society Institute and the Shuttleworth Foundation, established by the philanthropists George Soros and Mark Shuttleworth respectively, supported the creation of the Cape Town Open Educational Declaration. A meeting was convened in Cape Town on the 14th and 15th of September 2007, to which thirty leading proponents of open education were invited, who then collaboratively wrote the text over the following four months. The Declaration was finally released on 22 January 2008. David Wiley, one of the thirty co-authors, remarked on his blog that 'This document is the result of one of the best facilitated and most fun meetings I've ever had the privilege of attending, and is deserving of your immediate attention and eventual signature' (Wiley 2007).

In our textual analysis we look primarily at how the Declaration seeks to persuade. While we are aware of some of debates around the vision and terms in the Declaration, these are not apparent to the average reader of the text. One might observe that the Declaration's title makes reference to 'open education' while 'open educational resources' appears in the subtitle and correctly assume that it reflected different views. While individuals and organisations may attach precise

meaning to such concepts, in reality these meanings are not yet broadly established and we cannot anticipate all the ways they might be reinterpreted. Here we are then less concerned with the technical, legal and policy implications or even historic origins, which are of course vitally important to the success of the open education initiatives, as we argue they are not central to persuading the average reader. Thus ours is not a critical analysis and is not seeking to reinterpret the text. We are trying to support an understanding of the Declaration through rhetorical analysis in order to broaden the debate around the vision of open learning.

We aim to shed light on some of the initial reasons why educators might consider using an open educational resource. Thus we are not trying to unearth those resource types that lecturers might consider useful. The reason we suggest rhetorical analysis and a hermeneutical framework is the appropriate methodology in this case is because it is central to helping us understand the persuasive nature of the Declaration and allows for a plurality of interpretations. A content analysis, a survey or indicators of success (e.g., growing adoption rates or positive educator evaluations of open educational resources) would be of no less significance. But when it is either difficult to obtain quality data or unfeasible to conduct such studies in rapidly emerging contexts, other approaches may be better suited. Instead, we propose that the impact of documents such as the Cape Town Open Education Declaration which are rooted in global social networks depends of the effective use of a range of various persuasive techniques.

This paper is structured around a classical rhetorical analysis of the Declaration, given below. From the analysis we look at the *distanciation*, a concept from Ricoeur's hermeneutics describing divergence in points of departure between the reader and the text. In the conclusion we consider some of the opportunities and implications raised by the analysis. These include explaining the importance of imagination in addition to reducing distance in order to realise the ideals of a texts such as the Declaration.

CONTEXT

A declaration is likely to be an unfamiliar form of text to educators (and learners), making it especially interesting to analyse rhetorically. Here rhetorical analysis is an appropriate tool as we are interested in identifying the reason-giving activities in a context where typically no formal or absolute proof exists to justify the choices made. The Cape Town Declaration is one of several related initiatives, ranging from ideas that can be traced back to individual academics or projects to related declarations on open access bringing likeminded advocates together (Hodgkinson & Williams & Gray 2008, Tuomi 2006). The terms used vary considerably, but all share similar aims to encourage collegiality among those involved in sharing and improving learning materials for the better good. These related initiatives are seen as complementary strategies to the Declaration. Signing up to the Declaration involves first reading and agreeing to the principles and then realising and growing the vision among individuals and within organisations. The growth involves improving on practice, contributing, collaborating and signing up others to join the initiative.

The version of the text used in this analysis is that published on the Declaration's website (CTOED 2008). This Declaration was conceptualised by a group of thirty people who attended the initial meeting in Cape Town. A draft was prepared by a small group and this version has subsequently been revised and edited repeatedly by various people. The subsequent 'soft launch' was to encourage feedback and criticism. The authors chose to focus on open educational resources even though they 'recognize that there are other areas that need to be addressed in order to fulfil the broader vision of this movement, especially open technology, assessment and sharing of teaching practices' (CTOED 2008). The FAQ further states 'that people should feel free

to use this Declaration as a starting point for drafting companion Declarations that may appeal to different audiences, different components of open education, or any number of other things.'

The authors seem to have made some hard but pragmatic choices as a first step to facilitate a growing open educational resources movement. The writers hoped for the same awareness as when the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI 2002) sparked culture change in a range of institutions, and the adoption of new policies in the area of access to knowledge.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

In an Aristotelian rhetorical analysis (Kennedy 2007), the general procedure is to follow the five canons of rhetoric: namely, *inventio* (discovery of arguments), *dispositio* (arrangement of arguments), *elocutio* (style of the text), *memoria* (memorisation of the text), and *pronuntiatio* (delivery of the text) (Perelman 1979:2). Today we often rely on shared and evolving written texts, and so memorisation and delivery of speeches are often overlooked in rhetorical analyses (Corbett 1990:27). Where delivery and memorisation has some role is in developing the authors' ethos.

Inventio encompasses the macro structure of a text. When authors prepared the Declaration they develop an *inventio* as a means of organising the subject matter. A rhetorical analysis tries to discover the arguments behind the broader structure of the Declaration. This includes recognising recurring themes and repetition of key words, phrases that link to the connotations of the title and any other arguments that would lead one to an understanding of the main idea of the text.

Extracts from the Declaration relating to inventio:

Heart of the argument

Repetition of the idea that

'Most educators remain unaware'

'barriers' appears three times

'more accessible and more effective' – the promise of this unlocking 'the collaborative, interactive culture of the Internet'

Recurring theme

'create, shape and evolve'

'customize, improve and redistribute'

Three strategies

- (1) Educators and learners
- (2) Open educational resources
- (3) Open education policy

The above analysis of the *inventio* highlights aspects of the general structure relevant to someone interested in using open educational resources. If someone had not yet been exposed to the ideas in the Declaration, they should be enticed to join the open education movement. If they already have an idea of the possibilities, then their desire will be reinforced. This structure would not affect the advocate of open education or a learner in the same way, as they represent

different audiences. The Declaration recognises 'most educators remain unaware' and may not yet have access, and that there are 'barriers' and a need to 'unlocked' opportunities.

The main metaphor in the subtitle is 'unlocking the promise of open educational resources'. The recurring theme is joining the movement and contributing to the improvement of the educational system for the benefit of all. The three strategies aim to develop a discourse for open education, for educators and learners alike, by making available open educational resources and promoting policy to support this process. We believe that for our specific reader it really is a case of discovery as they engage with such a wide ranging text.

The Cape Town Declaration speaks most clearly to educators while Budapest (BOAI 2002), Berlin (BDOA 2003) and Rio (RDOA 2006) declarations on open access and education speak more to librarians and other groups. We identify the heart of the argument to be an overcoming of technological, sociological, technological and economic barriers.

Dispositio concerns the arrangement of the text, and is informed by the *inventio* discussed above. In order to put their message across effectively, the Declaration authors have to arrange their material 'with the keenest discretion' in order to strategically strengthen it (Corbett 1990:278). *Dispositio* is typically concerned with questions about the introduction, the statement of facts, the proof of our case, discrediting the opposition, and the conclusion. This is a classical way to structure a speech, although all these statements need not appear. Other considerations include how to appeal to the audience showing the *ethos* of the speaker, moving from readily acceptable arguments, and what sort of evidence to use and when (Corbett 1990:281). For the Declaration, considering it is an *epideictic* text, the introduction and conclusion would be key places that would first hook the reader, capturing their attention, and finally bolstering the message, often inspiring an emotion.

Extracts from the Declaration relating to dispositio:

From the introductory paragraphs

'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.'

From paragraph 10

'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.'

From the Conclusion

'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 extracted paragraphs that concern the idealisation of society and the educational process. These statements are visionary and aim to create a seed in readers mind as to the potential uses of educational technology. The Declaration is more than a simple advertisement or invitation, as we had previously described seminar presentations attracting people to make use of educational technology services (Deacon & WynSculley 2007). The paragraphs were not formally structured and often seemed to run as a free flow of thought - probably as a result of group editing - yet this is adding to the dynamism of the text. The need for screen readability most likely informed the length of paragraphs. The conclusion of the Declaration is particularly dramatic as the reader gets a sense of being drawn in to take some action, following the lead of the authors who are projected as visionaries in this case.

Elocutio or style is an integral part of the thought processes of the speaker and forms the means by which the audience will perceive the arguments presented to them:

Style does provide a vehicle for thought, and style can be ornamental; but style is something more than that. It is another of the 'available means of persuasion,' another of the means of arousing the appropriate emotional response in the audience, and of the means of establishing the proper ethical image (Corbett 1990: 381).

Thus one can define *elocutio* as the means of persuasion through the use of style, recognised in the level at which the language used makes a convincing difference. In rhetoric we identify three types of style: plain, forcible, and florid (Corbett 1990: 26). The other important facets of style are the arrangement of sentences and the use of figures of speech (tropes and schemes), metaphor and analogy. A plain style is used in the Declaration. The language is clear and straightforward, easy to understand and engaging with some florid aspects. Readers can easily identify activist type slogans, everyday cliché phrasing and peculiarly long lists. The magnification we see through obvious exaggeration leads the reader to think not merely about the local, but on a global scale. We suspect that this 'magnification' happened as a result of the general editorial process. The future perfect grammatical form 'should be' introduces visionary language.

Extracts from the Declaration relating to elocution:

Slogans

*'Unlocking the promise'
'free for all'
'the right thing to do'*

Cliché

*'cusp of a global revolution'
'the sum of all human knowledge'
'planting the seeds'
'seize the opportunities ahead'*

Lists

*'learners, educators, trainers, authors, schools, colleges, universities, publishers, unions, professional societies, policymakers, governments, foundations and others'
'we call on educators, authors, publishers and institutions'
'Thousands of educators, learners, authors, administrators and policymakers'*

Visionary language

'Resources should be'

Magnification

'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.' ... 'the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world'

Part of analysing the *elocutio* includes identifying important metaphors. Pointers to the 'pool' and 'fertile ground' remind the reader of an abundance of open educational resources that can be grown over time; and finally 'embracing innovations' all of which attempts to reduce the distance between the reader and the ideas advocated in the declaration.

In the delivery and elements that make the text memorable we find two aspects to note. Here the *pronuntiatio* does not refer to the spoken delivery (even though an audio version of the Declaration exists in the Internet Archive (<http://archive.org/>) since this text is meant to be read on screen, or from a printed copy. Even at a local signing of the text at University of Cape Town it was not read out loud. *Pronuntiatio* in this online context then means 'the ease of reading' and also the short paragraphing, and the very word structures used become all the more important as the receiver cannot rely on the speakers' intonation or visual rhetoric. Another aspect of the *pronuntiatio* is the translation of the Declaration into other languages, for ease of understanding and inclusively. The enactment of the text which *pronuntiatio* covers is interwoven with and dependant on the range of languages, cultures and understandings of readers world wide.

With reading of the Declaration in a screen context, *memoria* is not limited to memory of the speaker, but we can broaden this to include what the reader takes away with them. The recurring themes, the engaging introduction and conclusion, the slogans and lists stay with the reader long after their first encounter with the Declaration (or the FAQ as a support document). Thus we see that the *pronuntiatio* and *memoria* aid a reader's interpretation long after the reader has moved on.

DISTANCIATION

Drawing on Betti and Ricoeur (Bleicher 1980, Geanellos 2000), our hermeneutical framework or 'formal procedure' for interpretation involves the following fundamental steps: (1) distanciation or pre-understandings, (2) the hermeneutical circle (which Betti calls the 'canon of the coherence of meaning') which leads to (3) a surface reading and (4) an in depth reading based on clues within the text, and (5) finally validation of the process. In this paper we focus on the distanciation aspect as the separation between a certain type of reader and the text interests us the most.

Ricoeur (1973) uses for his type of hermeneutical analysis the concepts of *distanciation* (admitting the 'distances' between text and author, text from its original context and from interpreters or audiences) and *appropriation* (making a textual meaning from your own experience) in order to bring about a new mode of being (a result of successful interpretation). Distanciation can be described as including historical, personal, cultural, professional details of the readers, their methodological horizons, methods of data collection and analysis, and any relationships they have towards the subject under discussion. This is related to Gadamer's fusion of horizons such that a speaker's intended meaning overlaps with a readers postulated meaning.

A hermeneutical framework requires a synthesis of the steps above bringing in a readers' mind only if they are 'close' to the text. To understand more about the distance that a reader will have from the text requires us to define the audience. We consider who a typical reader might be – these are not the visionaries who authored the declaration and nor do they include those debating its elaboration or details. Having defined the audience we outline some of the issues that create

the nuances and layers of the distancing experienced by the selected audience. Finally we will use Perelman's rhetorical theory, explaining how this particular audience 'adheres' to the Declaration.

The Declaration has a multitude of audiences. One of the basic ideas of hermeneutics is 'plurality' which means that various distanciations or sets of pre-understandings will lead to different, but equally faithful, interpretations of the same text (Geanellos 2000). For the purpose of this analysis, we focus on how the Declaration speaks to educators. Several permutations and types of distancing are possible when considering how an individual might join a community of practice. In each case the type of distancing experienced by the individual (the educator) is categorised using Figure 1. *View and search* – ranges from those who perceive the available resources to be inadequate or insufficient for their purposes to those who are fearful or feel they know too little to make much use of open education resources in their context

- *Search and use* – includes those with enough skill and understanding to search for and make use of appropriate resources in their teaching
- *Use and adapt* – people who are additionally able to adapt resources and contribute their changes back as new or improved open education resources
- *Only produce* – those who are willing to share resources they have created, but are unwilling to participate in the community to use, enhance or adapt resources
- *Search, use, adapt and produce* – those participating in every facet of using, adapting and producing open educational resources

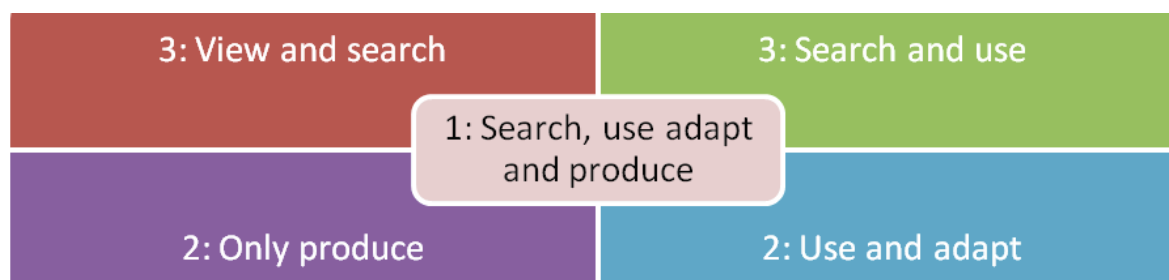


Figure 1: Potential audiences among educators

Some educators may have unreasonable expectations of how open education may help them, which may result in them claiming not to be able to find any use in what is available. The anticipation is that a growing number will make use of and contribute to what is being shared by the open education community. We will then describe the distancing that might be experienced by such an individual educator. A similar diagram could trace the lifecycle of different educational resources (e.g., Fulantelli *et al.* 2008), but by focusing on educators we emphasise how they can develop and change their understandings and grow the vision of the open education movement.

The ideal is mastery of all aspects. The intermediate category has developed some skills and we would like to move them to the ideal. The third level category will always be the majority, with incentives to try to move beyond producing and adapting. For the purposes of this paper we believe that the Declaration specifically aims to inform, encourage and persuade the level 3 group, the majority of whom might only view and search for resources. The distancing

experienced by this group interests us specifically. We surmise that the following issues create the distancing for this category of educator considering their environment:

- *Educational organisation:* The Declaration was designed, whether consciously or subconsciously, to speak to the level 3 groups who work in conventionally established educational systems. Thus educators not working in conventional educational setting might find the character of the Declaration troubling (e.g., Downes 2007).
- *Defining learning and pedagogy:* Differing definitions of learning will inform how the Declaration is interpreted. The vagueness of the text, while being open to multiple interpretations, might lead to misunderstandings of the intentions. Readers might see the Declaration as implying that educational resources can be packaged and distributed; then used and customised by educators who have their own pedagogies. This is a fundamentally different approach from those that believe that learners can teach themselves in unstructured ways without that combination of being mentored, accessing expert opinion, or gaining practical experience.
- *Inequity and local needs:* Clearly access to educational resources is not equitably distributed around the world and mechanisms are needed to redress this imbalance (e.g., Inamorato dos Santos 2008:8). This is probably why the Declaration was signed in Cape Town, to counter the stereotypical north and south roles. A concern is that readily available and attractive appearing open educational resources might be selected over more locally relevant resources and expertise, thus resulting in locally relevant material not being used and undermining the capacity of regional expertise to develop. The FAQ response to this states the intention for self-empowerment and to encourage the adaptation of materials so that they are locally appropriate (FAQ 2008). The FAQ continues that 'the ultimate goal is some type of open educational network, not a unidirectional pipeline.'
- *What qualifies as an open educational resource?* The Cape Town Declaration defines open educational resources as 'openly licensed course materials, lesson plans, textbooks, games, software and other materials that support teaching and learning.' It goes on to state that these resources should be '... licensed to facilitate use, revision, translation, improvement and sharing by anyone.' The text in the Declaration was inspired by the definition of open educational resources established by UNESCO in 2002. Issues around licensing and restrictions on the use of materials might be a hindrance to usage.' (CTOED 2008).

The growing adoption of educational technologies at universities, schools and other places of learning is characterised by greater diversity in the attitudes towards and use of these technologies (Harrington *et al.* 2005). The distancing experienced by someone in the 'view and search' group, as they read the text, is likely to relate to the specificity of the organisational location of the audience, focus on addressing efficiencies in their work environment and vagueness or disagreement about the learning and resource they would require. The problems faced by individual educators are much broader than what the Declaration can address, and helping such an educator involves communicating what can be expected, what they will still need to be done and how they may later be assisted.

These are not limited to group 2 as the specificity of the organisational location of someone in the 'only produce' group is similarly significant in how they perceive the learning and resource needs of others and their expectation that others will find value in the educational resources that they share. The limited involvement of such groups most likely relates to not really knowing either what has been valued or by whom. Even though one might never know for certain how useful and in what ways others found shared resources, knowing how much use others have made of similar contributions is very likely to be motivating. The Declaration aims to make this more likely and closes the gap by being inclusive and providing a singular vision.

The Declaration and the supporting FAQ anticipates many of these issues. Examples that might rhetorically reduce the group 3 readers' distanciation include:

- *Public resources from public money.* The open learning initiatives will require contributions of educational resources. The Declaration argues that 'ideally, all taxpayer funded resources should be open educational resources.' The FAQ reiterates that this would ensure that 'the taxpayers who financed these resources can benefit from them fully.' Acknowledging that this may not always be possible, 'professors and institutions [are encouraged] to make all of their resources open' (CTOED 2008).
- *The FAQ itself.* The FAQ is the first resource that aims to explain some of the details of the declaration – reducing the distance between the opportunities to use an open resource by answering the readers' many questions. The FAQ is divided into several sections on Background, Open Education, Benefits, Licensing and Intellectual Property, Technology and Impact (CTOED 2008). One of the most important questions is: What am I committing to when I sign? 'For an individual, signing indicates a commitment to pursue the Declaration's three strategies as a part of one's own teaching, learning, or work life. For an institution, signing means a commitment to open education through undertaking initiatives or making policies aligned with the strategies in the Declaration.' The reader will have further questions which the FAQ is designed to answer in an informative and positive light which enables and empowers. Conceivably the FAQ can relatively easily be updated to as new questions arise.
- *Easy accessible style* of the Declaration. The language appeals to a wide audience as described earlier. Often distanciation to the notion of open educational resources is physical and literal. The fact the Declaration is easily accessible and available in many languages helps alleviate the reader's initial barrier to participation
- *Recognising, admiring and emulating signatories.* The signatories are listed on the website and many are leaders in the field, as for example can be seen from their blogs. One can sign online and add ones own name to the list of signatories. A reader's recognition of leaders in the field or their peers, through realising that those whom they trust are showing them the way, makes it so much easier for them to become a participant in this new initiative.

Presence and distanciation

In providing definitions for terms such as 'presence' and 'adherence' rhetoric shows how a vivid text persuades through gaining or reinforcing the adherence of that audience (Perelman 1986: 808). Thus rhetoric becomes a method for increasing the audience's desire by making opportunities real so that they will readily accept and adhere to the message of the speaker. For the purposes of this paper we are specifically interested in how presence reduced distance. Presence is 'a second-order effect that relies on synergy of first-order effects – those achieved, one by one, at the level of invention, arrangement, and style' (Gross & Dearin 2003:135).

By incorporating the notion of distanciation from the hermeneutical framework with 'presence' from rhetorical theory we can then postulate that the mechanism by which a reader will be tempted to seriously consider the open education movement is as follows:

1. The reader experiences a distanciation from the text
2. The rhetorical canons create a sense of presence in the reader's mind
3. Once this reduction in distanciation has occurred, the reader's being or reality is changed.

The success of the Declaration is dependent on, especially in the case of educators, realising the vision of open education through continued use and contributions. Thus we see that *presence* is not only an effect appreciable in the mind, but it is concretely linked to action in the real world:

The classical rhetorical concept of energeia (sic), which Chaim Perelman resuscitated in the notion of 'presence,' is thus instrumental in establishing an attitude of understanding: potentially new worlds, potentially new roles – potentially new selves – are given imaginative presence in the mind of the audience, revealing for examination and choice a new realm of experience. Again, the logic of discourse may convince; yet the extent to which discourse invites such imaginative participation and mixing of worlds will determine its success or failure as persuasion (Baumlin 1987:41).

The Declaration does indeed through signing invite participation and collaboration. Moreover, it is not just that the reader is persuaded and might adhere to the tenets of the Declaration, the addition of a hermeneutical framework allows us to see how a reader's world view has changed (e.g., Waltzer et al. 1999). The text encourages this change through *energeia*, which according to Aristotle (Kennedy 2008:219), is a visualisation or actualisation related to elegant speech that impacts on the readers' imagination:

Those things are necessarily urbane [elegant], both in composition and in enthymemes, which create quick learning in our minds. ... urbanity is achieved by means of bringing-before-the eyes [visualisation]; for things should be seen as being done rather than going to be done. To achieve urbanity in style one should thus aim at three things: metaphor, antithesis, actualisation [energeia].

Through the analysis above, we have shown that the Declaration is sufficiently '*urbane*' since it is compactly written and easily understood by those involved in the business of education at all levels. For potential viewers and users the '*urbanity*' of the text consists of (1) the unlocking and pooling of resources metaphor, (2) the utopian ideals that are in opposition to many readers' everyday realities and (3) the slogans, lists and mobilising language used to bring the new reality before the readers' eyes.

As the Declaration concludes, 'with each effort to further articulate our vision – we move closer to a world of open, flexible and effective education for all.' We suggest that the following are some of the more powerful methods in which a first-time reader may reduce their distancing by: Participating in a community of practice – attending informal meetings, such as Show-and-Tells (cf. Carr et al. 2005), being mentored amongst other staff development activities where open educational resources are mediating or boundary artefacts. This includes joining global communities, if no local community exists.

- Recognising relevant choices – while masses of online resources might be available, it is up to the educator to be selective and overcome difficulties especially in a university where curricula are structured by the lecturer, not a standards body. With intelligent searching technology, there is a promise of locating appropriate resources.
- Familiarising themselves with a range of teaching techniques – videos, podcasts or blogs help educators understand the teaching techniques associated with open educational resources. The Declaration acknowledges a rift between the naïve conception of learning from resources versus the changing relationship found in a classroom where an educator mediates a resource to facilitate learning.

CONCLUSION

Declarations are most common in times of flux when it is imperative that people make some critical choices which will have long-term consequences. Like the eighteenth century political pamphlets and the American Declaration of Independence, the open education and open access declarations have a polemical flavour (Smith 1965). Essentially the Declaration is utopian in its general outlook - it asks activists to find their own practical implementation in their local context. While Hodgkinson, Williams & Gray (2008) are concerned about whether 'structural enablements' would be sufficient, we were essentially concerned with the level and type of commitment that an educator would have after or during reading the Declaration. We are specifically interested in the impact of the Declaration on their initial vision.

It is clear that before the advent of the Internet, educators were dependant on publishers for many aspects of their work. Nearly a century ago, a South African educational publisher (Bollen 1911) advocated that teachers should buy their arithmetic teaching guide because they were written by a local teacher for local learners. They would help teachers easily create their curriculum over forty weeks, that a 'colonial [local] industry' would be strengthened and crucially 'how best to get ready for the inspection.' This time round, it might seem that the global education sector feel more like a 'colony' of the publishing industry, since there is insufficient openness and opportunities to develop solutions. As Tucker and Makgoba (2008) observed in the context of scientific research impacting on Africa's development, this is not to reject support and collaboration but to take into account the need to grow local knowledge and solutions. In visions of an emerging knowledge economy, this relationship is being questioned by position documents such as the Declaration.

Without an initial vision, an enabling environment, complete with policies and funding, means very little. The average educator first needs to understand the role of the Declaration as an inspirational guide. Knowing this will help readers not to misconstrue the intentions behind the Declaration, understanding it is not functioning as a policy or directive. It is only after educators participate, recognise and familiarise themselves with the realm of open education that a policy might become effective. By signing up to the Declaration, both understanding the text and being persuaded by it, educators will be assisted in taking further steps towards creating, shaping and evolving their own educational practices.

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