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How can a literacy course contribute to strengthening the spirit of citizenship?

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Workshop on 'Literacy: a lever of citizenship'

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Citizenship: a changing concept

‘Citizenship throughout history has been a legal and political status accorded by the state to the individual and a bond of loyalty owed by the individual to the state.’

Heater, D. (2004: p. 194) *A History of Education for Citizenship*, RoutledgeFalmer

‘...most of our current understandings of citizenship are based on the historic convergence of boundaries of citizenship (territorial, cultural/national/linguistic, institutional and moral) that are now pulling apart...’

Williams, M. (2003: p. 209) ‘Citizenship as identity, citizenship as shared fate, and the functions of multicultural education’, OUP



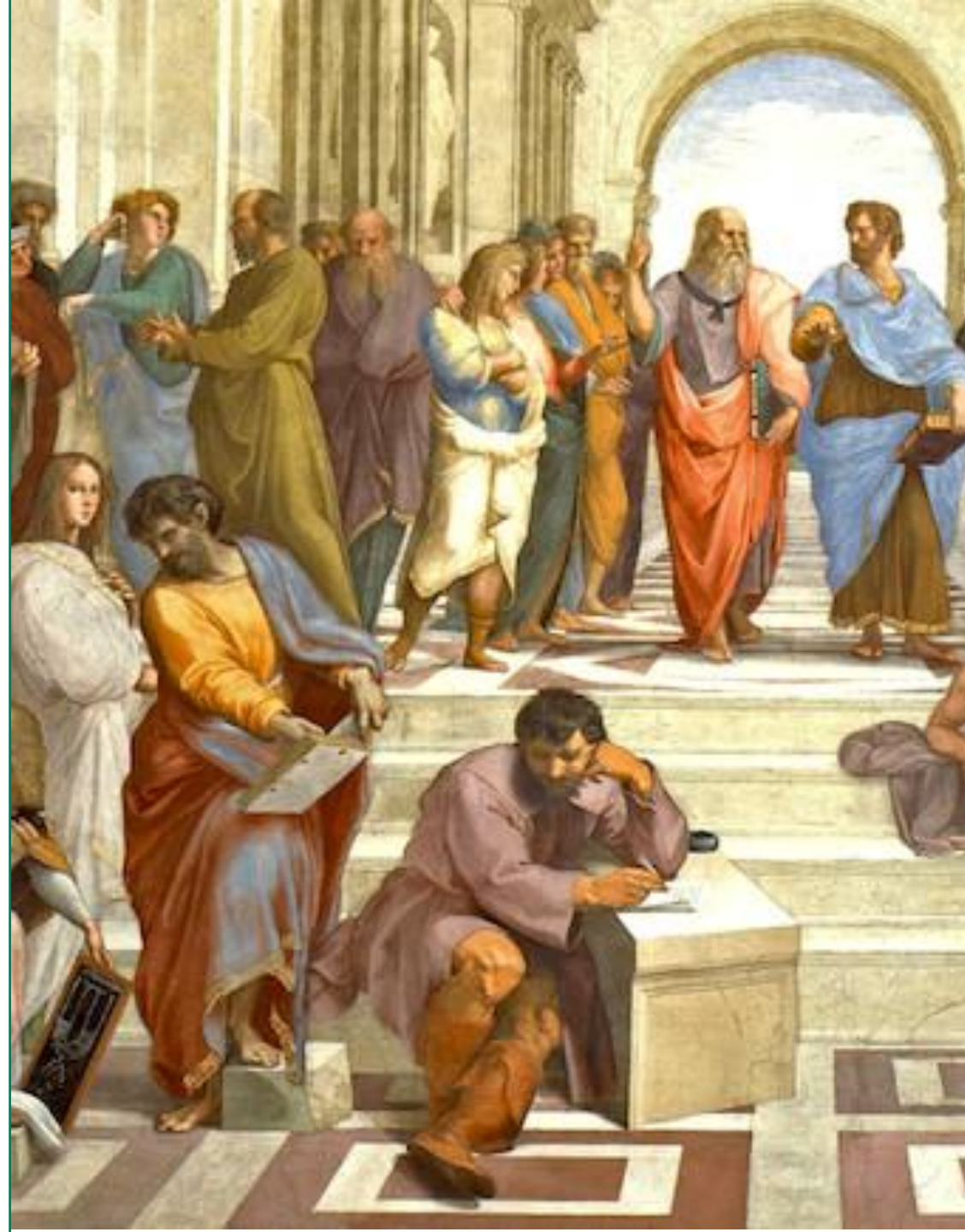
Education for citizenship: what kind of education and what kind of citizenship?

‘The polis...is an aggregate of many members: and education therefore is the means of making it a community and giving it unity.’ Aristotle’s *Politics*, 4th Century BC

Aristotle defined the **objectives of civic education**:

- *To contribute to the cohesiveness and therefore the stability of the state*
- *Practical learning of the citizen’s duties*
- *To teach young citizens their rights, social, legal and political*

From Heater (2004: p 2)



Citizenship education: towards multiple, global and transformative approaches

World citizenship education involves development of three capacities: ‘a critical examination of oneself and one’s traditions’, ‘to see themselves not simply as citizens of some local region but bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern’, ‘the narrative imagination’

Nussbaum, M. (1997) *Cultivating Humanity*, Harvard University Press

‘The overall goal of global citizenship education is to empower learners to engage and assume active roles both locally and globally to face and resolve challenges’

Hanemann, U. (2019: 4) *Global citizenship and adult literacy*, UIL/APCEIU

So where does literacy come in?

The MOVA literacy program aimed ‘to enable the large number of disenfranchised and passive poor to see themselves as individuals with rights (and duties) upon the state, to position themselves as citizens with legitimate demands for social change...regardless of social class, race and gender differences.’

Stromquist, N. (1997) *Literacy for Citizenship: Gender and Grassroots Dynamics in Brazil*, p. 1

On some days, the mailman would arrive with letters: Oum Fatima would deliver each to the addressee, knowing simply by the type of handwriting or script used – Arabic or French – who should receive which letter... At the *souk* (market), Oum Fatima’s skill in mental arithmetic and bargaining was legendary. Not only could she switch effortlessly between the several parallel currency units in use... but her ability to negotiate the lowest possible price made her a well-known figure in the *derb* (quarter). To those of her social class, as well as to those ‘higher up’, Oum Fatima was a woman of great respect.

Wagner, D. (1993) *Literacy, Culture and Development: Becoming literate in Morocco*, CUP, p.1

Taking a social practice lens on literacy and citizenship

Ms Awala told me she is not interested in acquiring a certificate from her literacy class. Instead: 'I just go there to make sure that I master my name so that when we are called for some other activities, I should be able to sign using a pen. I have already started doing this: even when we went to receive money to buy fertilizer, I got hold of the pen, and they said, 'Grandma, are you going to sign?' I said 'yes'. They said 'we respect you' ...

Mjaya, A. (2022: p. 68) *Literacies, Power and Identities in Figured worlds in Malawi*, Bloomsbury Academic



Mila describes how she does the financial statement: 'I just thought of it. I asked myself how I can liquidate the money, one by one, so it would also be easy for people to understand. Susan taught me at the start what to do... but I wasn't comfortable, it was difficult to do... so I just did it like this so that if the auditor reads, it's easy.'

Millora, C. (forthcoming) *Volunteerism, Adult Learning, Literacies and Social Change: A Comparative Ethnographic Study in the Philippines*, Bloomsbury Academic



How can a literacy course contribute to strengthening the spirit of citizenship? Identifying some key features

- ‘Citizenship is caught not taught’. Active citizenship is not only about introducing active methods into the classroom but also about informal learning in life and a ‘literacy second’ approach.
- Functional literacy skills for citizenship can be taught effectively through a ‘real literacies’ approach.
- Critical literacy is key to successful literacy for citizenship programmes, particularly to enhance digital literacies and digital citizenship.
- Global citizenship education involves valuing indigenous languages, knowledges, learning and literacies.

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