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## GOALS OF TEACHING LITERATURE: LITERACY, LIBERALISM AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP



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### ABSTRACT

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This paper is based on the premise that teaching of literature acts as a remedy for widespread cross-cultural misunderstandings, prejudice and global ignorance. It can also be exploited for multicultural understanding and progressive global responsibility. Moreover, the paper also studies how far the teaching of literature contributes to socialize students into Literacy, Liberalism, and Global Citizenship transmitting particular worldviews and instilling in them knowledge, and obedience to cultural beliefs and practices through educational practices. The study measures how far the teaching of literature could be utilized for instilling the elements of Literacy, Liberalism, and Global Citizenship among the graduates. By making use of a multiple linear regression model with SPSS 25 on a sample size of 100 respondents comprising ethnically diverse teachers of literature from the regions in Asmara, Eritrea, the study analyzed coefficients and accuracy levels in order to determine the influence of teaching of literature (predictor) on Literacy, Liberalism, and Global Citizenship (dependent variables). Results revealed a partial but significant influence of predictor on dependent variables without much diversion. It is recommended that the volatility in the relationship between the predictor and dependent variables should be addressed in future research.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study contributes to literature studies by exploring how teaching of English literature can act as a remedy for widespread cross-cultural misunderstandings, prejudice and global ignorance. The factors analyzed are Literacy, Liberalism, and Global Citizenship which learners can imbibe through the teaching of literature.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global peace and harmony much depends upon liberal and multicultural education (Farnham, 1999; Banks, 2004; Banks, 2017; Dirksen, 2017; Haberberger, 2018). The world has undergone massive transformation while it faced issues of regional and global dimensions. Some of these issues have been recurring since ages including the ethnic and religious fanaticism. All such issues have been attended to by diverse disciplines, while looking for a solution. The role of education in bringing down the adverse sentiments has been phenomenal. There are Black Studies and Ethnic studies, for instance, to curb the evil of ethnicity and racism to a great extent. There are also attempts made to examine complex literary texts and attempt to accomplish goals of cross cultural harmony and

global citizenship through liberal education. Students today learn not only about literary structure and meaning of the established form, they also learn about the context through which a literary text is produced.

It has become very significant in the current era to understand the goals of teaching literature (Langer, 1997). Both the global economy and the ethnically diverse society need citizens who understand the languages, traditions and histories of other cultures as well as their own. There is a need to delve into other languages and learning and to read complex literary texts that rank among the most powerful means available for accomplishing these goals of achieving a liberal literary education. By teaching literature, for instance, teachers can offer insights into such principles like Literacy, Liberalism, and Global Citizenship. By a close examination of literary texts, they can also develop analytical and interpretative skills to understand the complexities of today's world.

The aim of literature is not only to acquire knowledge about diverse cultures of distant lands and geographical locations. The literature component in the curriculum of any university program helps to develop interpersonal, informational and aesthetic values of learning. While students respond to text, they understand and appreciate other cultures. The literature curriculum comprises culturally diverse texts related to issues such as diaspora, multiculturalism, concerns of the expatriates and above all ethnicity. This has strengthened the feelings of cultural pluralism and global understanding among graduates.

Teaching of literature in universities also gives rise to the ideology of cultural assimilation blending the cultural beliefs of students of literature with those of the author of the text. Such an understanding of a literary text also develops the ideology of cultural pluralism and helps develop an understanding of Literacy, Liberalism, and Global Citizenship from culturally diverse regions and helps to build a global perspective. In today's challenging environment engrossed with global issues, education is the only resource to develop this global perspective.

The authors have taught literature for last few decades in multi-ethnic and multicultural teaching environments. Hence, a need for this study was felt to analyze how teaching of literature can be used for the sustainability of a cultural pluralism and developing a global perspective through variables such as Literacy, Liberalism, and Global Citizenship. This study through teaching literature also attempted to seek evidence of building up a global environment wherein students develop virtues of Literacy, Liberalism, and Global Citizenship along with academic excellence.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Carter and Long (1991) in one of early studies on teaching of literature, recommended the use of a cultural model wherein teachers emphasized upon the socio-cultural, linguistic, intellectual, political, literacy and historical context of texts under study. Through a traditional approach of teaching literature, and also a teacher-centered method where the teacher passes knowledge to the students, this method proved the universality of understanding different cultures, literacy levels and ideologies in relation to one's own. Around that time, studies like Collie and Slater (1987) and Lazar (1993) had also supported the teaching of Literature for personal involvement, cultural enrichment, developing students' interpretative abilities and making them holistic individuals.

Adding to this historical approach of the significance of teaching of literature, there are also studies like Sarland (1991); Wyse (2009); Sell (2005); Chang (2003); Utami (2012); Van (2009) who posited that teaching of literature is a vehicle to cultural assimilation or acculturation; development of a positive and global approach; a good liberal education and development of moral and other attributes. Ur (1991) has also asserted that teaching of literature develops empathy, critical and creative thinking, knowledge of the target culture, and awareness of humanity and conflicts. Ayo (2003) describes the benefits of teaching of literature as "educational, cultural, moral, recreational and socio-political." Responding to the growing need of globalization and liberalism, even technology and social media are used to teach literature (Li, 2011).

Historically speaking teaching of literature is believed to be fostering mutual personal understanding, tolerance, moral standards, love of mankind and understanding of self and society. Many teachers of English

Literature have held the belief that by exposing students to good literature will mold them into moral and good citizens. All these studies are relevant in the current times too as they view the teaching literature as a source of disseminating global trends and values leading to global citizenship.

Mustakim *et al.* (2018) in a recent study has assessed the choice of instructional practices for teaching of literature and insisted that the instructional method to teach literature must develop creative thinking, widen the minds of students for global problems. The study explores various models, approaches and activities in teaching of literature, particularly the cultural model which made use of cultural information and moral-philosophical values contained in the literary texts and recorded personal responses of the participants which comprised teachers and students of literature.

Doyle *et al.* (2017) in another stud, produced a volume of texts and critical studies on literacy and its role in developing socio-cultural values essential for a civic society. Several opinions and reviews were examined to understand specific literacy requirements and literacy practices in specific contexts and purposes. Besides, Hattie (2008); Forrest *et al.* (2017); Ayo (2003); Basnett and Grundy (1993); Collie and Slater (1987); Llach (2007) and Ganakumaran (2003) have unanimously agreed to the significance of effective teaching strategies and instructional methods to develop linguistic competency and literacy levels of students across diverse cultures and traditions. However, none of these studies explored the role of teaching of literature to promote literacy; hence giving a rationale and a research gap for the current study.

A few early phenomenal studies (Langer, 1991;1995;1997) however, have laid down methods by which students acquire literacy by studying their own culturally and linguistically relevant literature. Taken up the first of the series, Langer (1991) held the opinion that literacy acquisition was initiated by making students engage in literate activities, preferably close to their heart, or 'tales from home.' By teaching such stories, students acquire a good control of the content, language and structure which helps them to lay the foundations of literacy. In the second follow-up study, Langer (1995) collaborated with bilingual and ESL teachers to test whether the teaching of literature fostered literacy in classrooms where the students' mother tongue was different from English. The results confirmed the earlier findings that 'tales from home' developed "ownership" for those stories among students which further strengthened their control on language, content and structure to consolidate literacy. In the third study of this series, Langer (1997) extended findings to classrooms of diversity, where a number of cultures and mother tongues were represented. The objective was to understand whether literature instruction in classrooms of linguistic and cultural diversity helped in developing literacy. The findings helped the author to reaffirm the socio-cognitive views on literacy propounded in theories and models (Langer, 1997) where literacy is based more on socio-cultural factors.

Teaching of literature has long been associated also with liberalism, art and culture (Chesterman, 1983; Carter and Long, 1991; Axer, 1997; Axer, 1998; Carpenter, 2007; Cruz, 2010; Kateregga, 2014; Cohen and Drop, 2017; Forrest *et al.*, 2017; Lee, 2017) . Lionel Trilling in his book *The Liberal Imagination* reiterated that literature has a role in preserving the culture and its values (Pollen, 2017) though it seemed a nineteenth century idea, belonging to the era of Coleridge, Wordsworth or Arnold, who spoke generously about literary culture, natural liberalism and paganism. These nineteenth century writers proposed that teaching of literature was essential to develop a liberal society because it showed the real essence of life. Liberalism at first was a privilege of the elite class, those who preferred "canonical" literature, refusing anything that was middle class, Orwellian or Freudian or a Marxist literary piece of literature, as according to them, was not liberalism but dark and dismal literature.

It is true that Foucault, Derrida, and others have given a humanist experience to teaching of literature by dramatizing it as a "micro-universe," where ideologies change literary point of view (e.g *Hamlet* to be seen as a feminist play or *Animal Farm* and *Lord of the Flies* as children's tales but not a description of a dystopian world. It is the responsibility of the teacher of literature to prevent corruption of literature and its meaning, to preserve its liberalism, much like the literary traditions in the era of deconstructionism or post-structuralism.

Teaching literature in a college education develops students' critical and analytical skills and the ability to express emotions by use of appropriate vocabulary. Their deep engagement with literary works also provides them a good exposure to language, literary structures, understanding of the text and ability to decipher narrative techniques and verbal articulations. Though there are independent courses in liberal arts that follow rigorous curriculum, and cultivate an understanding of liberal arts in students pursuing humanities graduation stream. For instance, these courses provide students opportunities to grow as global citizens despite complex and challenging issues. To meet these challenges, these courses at university levels re-conceptualize students' experiences, providing them a twenty-first century global learning experience; to practice diversity, internationalization and global learning.

Studies have revealed that teaching of courses like African American Literature, African Diaspora Literature and Black Studies in an American rural, liberal arts college offers protection against racist and sexist discrimination resulting in students empowerment, empathizing with others irrespective of ethnicity, race and region, preparing them as world citizens (Hoon, 2013; Setiyowati *et al.*, 2018; Gusnetti and Romi, 2019). The domain of literature is quite big, ranging from the fiction of V. S. Naipaul to the revolutionary poetry of P B Shelley or Paganism in Wordsworth, or to absurdist theatre of Samuel Beckett. These are disciplines of humanities that offer a mirror of humanitarian and cultural experiences to students' of literature, placing them in the realm of liberalism and global citizenship.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework was designed for this study to show the goals of teaching of literature Figure 1. In this framework, Literacy, Liberalism and Global Citizenship were envisaged as goals of teaching of literature. These three goals are also chosen as variables of this study to determine the extent to which they can serve the objectives of teaching of literature.

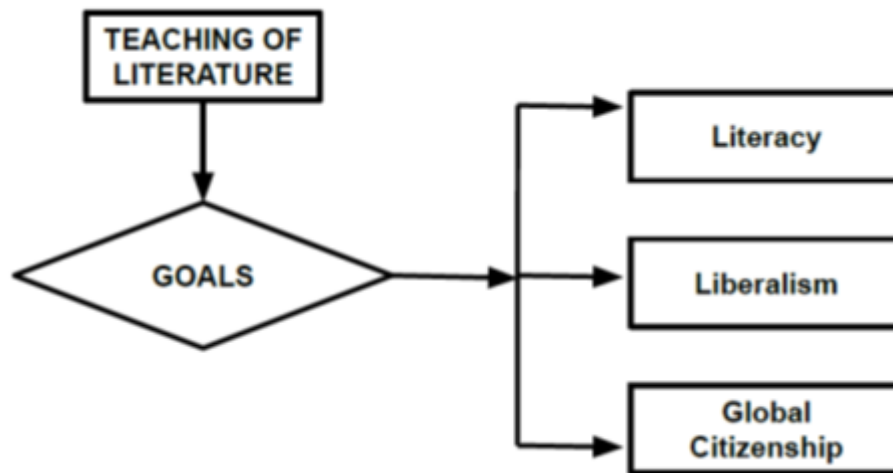


Figure-1. Conceptual Framework of goals of teaching of literature.

Source: Based on data analysis and previous literature review.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### i. Statement of the Problem

There are apprehensions in previous studies about the lack of adequate literary texts that can potentially instill these values. These apprehensions formed the basis of the current study to investigate whether the values represented in the variables of the study, literacy, liberalism and global citizenship could be achieved through teaching of literature. Based on these concerns and the literature review, this research study hypothesizes a simultaneous as well as partial association between teaching of literature and literacy, liberalism and global

citizenship. The universities in Asmara, Eritrea were an ideal sample for this study as the English literature faculty and students belong to multiple ethnic backgrounds and demonstrate these variables in their behavior and attitude.

### ii. *Sampling and Population*

The population of this research comprised university teachers of colleges in Asmara regions, Eritrea. The purposive sampling method was used to identify about 100 college lecturers (n=100), 60 males and 40 females, all of them having PhDs and engaged in literature teaching. Regarding the tenure of the job, 55 had more than 15 years' experience, 25 had 10-15 years' experience, 15 had 5 to 10 years' experience and only 5 had less than 5 years' experience. These faculties worked in the English departments of various private and public universities. These respondents also belonged to different ethnic groups, cultures, geographical regions. This shows the presence of a cultural pluralism in the sample of the study.

### iii. *Instruments of the Study*

The data was collected through a questionnaire of four sections with 25 items each on the predictor (teaching of literature) and dependent variables (literacy, liberalism and global citizenship). An emphasis was made to understand the differences in the teaching of literature in comparison with the teaching of other subjects like science and mathematics. Respondents were requested to respond without any prejudice or bias. The validity tests employed bivariate test methods and results showed that all items were valid while the reliability test proved that questionnaire items were reliable and free from any bias. Table 1 presents the results of the reliability test.

**Table-1.** Results of the reliability test of questionnaire items.

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Reliability
Teaching of literature	0.850	Reliable
Literacy	0.760	Reliable
Liberalism	0.950	Reliable
Global citizenship	0.870	Reliable

Source: Primary Data.

Subsequently the questionnaire was administered to collect data on each variable of the study, viz, teaching of literature and its linkages with literacy, liberalism and global citizenship. The multiple linear regression test, coefficient determination test, model accuracy test, and t-test were adopted to analyze the data. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 was used. The significance level was accepted to be 0.05.

The results of the t-tests were also triangulated through the findings of the questionnaire and audio transcripts of focus groups conducted with a few of the respondents. 10% (10 respondents) were quizzed in focus group discussions for their observations about the teaching of literature, its significance in developing literacy, liberalism and global citizenship and its comparison with other subjects such as teaching of science and mathematics.

### iv. *Significance of the Study*

A majority of the respondents had been teaching literature for a long tenure in university level institutions in diverse linguistic and cultural environments. This study attempted to understand whether these respondents were able to assimilate the design and content of literary texts in their teaching. Based on these empirical features of the sample, it thus became a representative sample to predict the significance of literature teaching to measure values such as literacy, liberalism and global citizenship.

## 5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 2 exhibits the value of the coefficient of determination that was 0.215 which hints that the predictor teaching of literature can be investigated with the variables such as literacy, liberalism and global citizenship with 61.5 % and the rest 38.5 % can be through another model.

**Table-2. Summary of Coefficient Determination Test.**

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	100	.454*	.615	.200	12.800

\*Constants: literacy, liberalism and global citizenship

Source: Primary Data.

Table 3 presents the results of the model accuracy test with ANOVA and predictor being teaching of literature and dependent variables (constants) were literacy, liberalism and global citizenship. It reveals that the predictor simultaneously influenced the dependent variables. The F values 25.120 with the probability values of 0.045 being smaller than 0.05 allow the variables of literacy, liberalism and global citizenship to get simultaneously influenced by teaching of literature.

**Table-3. Results of the model accuracy test with ANOVA.**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8253.000	4	2975.206	25.120	0.045
Residual	35413.000	276	112.741		
Total	43666.000	280			

Source: Primary Data.

Table 4 presents results of multiple linear regression and t-test with coefficients being the predictor, i.e., teaching of literature. The data reveals that the interrelationship between the predictor and the variables of the study was confirmed by sig. values that are smaller than 0.05. These results though convey a partial influence of teaching of literature on literacy, liberalism and global citizenship but it is enough to suggest a positive and significant relationship between them.

**Table-4. Results of the Multiple Linear Regression Test. Coefficients.**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Std. Error	Beta			
Teaching of Literature	25.480	9.500		2.588	.021
Literacy	.110	.050	.110	2.000	.045
Liberalism	.440	.065	.367	6.011	.004
Global citizenship	.270	.080	.178	3.200	.011

Source: Primary Data.

An independent sample t-test also was carried out to find out the significant differences in the teaching of literature in comparison with teaching other subjects like mathematics and sciences to develop these variables. The results, displayed in Table 5 suggest a higher significance of teaching of literature. ( $M = 74.37$ ,  $SD = 9.150$ ) than that of Teaching of other subjects ( $M = 45.50$ ,  $SD = 6.016$ ) with  $t(56) = 15.600$ ,  $p = 0.01$  in favor of Teaching of Literature.

**Table-5. Independent-samples t-test comparing Teaching of Literature with Teaching of other subjects.**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Teaching of other subjects	100	45.50	6.016	15.600	56	0.01*
Teaching of Literature	100	74.37	9.150			

Note: \*  $p < .01$ .

## 6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a simultaneous and a partially significant relationship between the predictor, teaching of literature, and the dependent variables, literacy, liberalism and global citizenship. The results of this research also show a multicultural sensitivity that supported the direction of teaching of literature in Asmara, Eriteria. Hence, this study can safely confirm that there is no diversion in the proliferation of teaching of literature in its relationship with variables of the study, literacy, liberalism and global citizenship.

The results of the t-tests were triangulated through the findings of the questionnaire and audio transcripts of faculty focus group discussions. A large number of respondents agreed that teaching of literary texts potentially developed the humanistic and cultural values leading to literacy, liberalism and global citizenship. Table 6 records observations and themes reflected in the questionnaire and also revealed from those audio transcripts. These facts are the evidence of the relationship between teaching of literature and variables such as literacy, liberalism and global citizenship.

**Table-6.** Results of questionnaire and interviews.

Finding	Literacy	Liberalism	Global citizenship
Themes	Knowledge of literary traditions, cultures and histories of other nations	Understanding literary texts and accepting values	Global approach; Widening thought processes
Observations	Improvement in linguistic expressions; Ability to use L2 more confidently	Greater tolerance for other cultures	Recognizes traditions, beliefs and habits of other nations

Source: Based on Questionnaire and interviews.

This data is also an evidence of a strong belief of teachers of English literature that their teaching of literature played a greater role in instilling values and beliefs associated with literacy, liberalism, and global citizenship.

The influence of the predictor, teaching of literature, on multicultural aspects like literacy, liberalism and global citizenship, is also confirmed by research findings of Banks (2004); Banks (2017); Carpenter (2007); Chang (2003) and Gusnetti and Romi (2019). This suggests that teaching of literature is affected by a multi ethnic and multicultural environment. This also supports the argument that teaching of literature simultaneous influences factors in multicultural setting. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Forrest *et al.* (2017) which show that education plays a major role in multicultural setting impacting globalization. Other studies like Cohen and Drop (2017) and Dirksen (2017) strongly recommended the enhancement of liberal sciences amidst multicultural sensitivity in order to resolve the issues of ethnicity.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In the context of the teaching a subject like literature, this study concludes that literary texts are artifacts that prepare students for global challenges by cultivating in them values of liberalism and a sense of respect for diverse cultures and beliefs. Teaching a poem, for instance, evokes an experience inside the students' consciousness, stirs their feelings and intellects, and arouses their imagination. In short, students experience vividness while learning about literature. These are primary goals of teaching literature that must be ingrained deeply inside the students' consciousness. Literature is also a record of accomplishments that man has made. In poetry, drama, and fiction there is a feeling of high accomplishments. Hence, teaching a piece of literature and helping students to experience it leads to a high degree of intellectual contentment.

To sum up, this study suggests that teaching of literature has the potential to investigate and find solutions for global complex issues linked with literacy, liberalism and global citizenship. It is recommended that global issues such as religious and ethnic intolerance, cross-border tensions and diasporic differences should be analyzed in future research. The current diasporic literature has ample pieces that can be considered as ethno-religious artifacts about the urban population in multicultural contexts and within the reach of teachers of literature. Looking ahead on this

issue, this debate should also evolve into a kind of global educational campaign that would promote teaching of literature in colleges and universities. The world needs well-engaged and globally-molded citizens who are able to take up challenges to build a more just, peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive, secure and sustainable world.

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