

## *UGOT Challenges, Expression of Interests*

### **Literacy and Democracy**

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The global literacy situation is a challenge (Cope & Kalantzis 2000; Barton 2007; Street 2014). Even if some countries get high ranks in PISA reports and UNDP's Human Development Reports, there are still great inter-country discrepancies both in literacy achievements and in research vitality. This is a problem, since literacy and democracy are mutually reinforcing. In fact, literacy is a prerequisite for full participation in modern societies and acts as a catalyst of their transformation.

Literacy is a crucial life competence which empowers the individual citizen to develop capacities of reflection, oral expression, critical thinking and empathy, boosting personal development, self-confidence, a sense of identity and full participation in a digital and knowledge economy and society. Thus, the main objective of this UGOT Challenges application is to secure and develop international collaboration in literacy where University of Gothenburg is involved. The collaboration will allow researchers from different disciplines to connect and integrate existing knowledge on literacy, and develop a comprehensive approach to literacy and cutting-edge research methods. At the same time this collaboration will strive to translate gained knowledge into a clear form that eases communication with other societal forces to have a more direct and efficient impact on education and public opinion.

The collaboration planned for includes discursive, cognitive, media and sociocultural research from different disciplines: reading and writing literacy (Monica Rosén, Liss Kerstin Sylvén, Anna Lyngfelt, UFN/HFN), media literacy, civic engagement and democracy in a community perspective (Mats Ekström, Annika Bergström, SFN), digital literacy (Jonas Linderöth, Staffan Björk, UFN/IT), scientific literacy (Clas Olander, Sofie Johansson Kokkinakis, UFN/HFN) and medicine and disability research (Ingrid Behrns, Åsa Wengelin, SA/HFN). This research could be developed by the use of ongoing research projects at the University of Gothenburg, since its focus is on the possibilities for citizens in a multicultural society to communicate not only their basic needs but also their opinions.

Evaluators proposed:

Günther Kress, Professor of Semiotics and Education, University of London  
Sheila Riddell, Professor of Inclusion and Diversity, University of Edinburgh