Building the AoC Clearinghouse: Media Literacy Education

Moderated by Dr. Pär Lundgren, Professor of Media and Communication at the University of Karlstad in Sweden, Working Session 2 brought together Media Literacy Education[1] experts from 21 countries representing a wide range of universities, media education, and media policy organizations from across the globe.

As the Alliance of Civilizations chose MLE as the subject for the first theme to be elaborated in its on-line Clearinghouse, the main purpose of Working Session 2 was to invite the assembled MLE experts and advocates to advise on how the Alliance could best develop this on-line resource to support a growing international MLE community of knowledge.

DISCUSSION

The Working Session began with the introduction and demonstration of a live interactive navigation of the newly developed Clearinghouse website on MLE which was scheduled to open to all Internet users on the 15 February, 2008.

The MLE Clearinghouse is the first of a series of clearinghouse themes being launched by the Alliance of Civilizations, which aim to develop an international *community of knowledge*, providing exemplary best practice resources and serving as a research tool for users and practitioners in a range of key fields of work relevant to AoC's implementation plan.

The purpose of the MLE Clearinghouse is to become an open and inclusive resource providing information to interested individuals, insti-

WORKING SESSION 2 SPEAKERS

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1 Media Literacy Education (MLE) describes a broad variety of recently-developed pedagogical approaches that teach media consumers how to critically interpret the information they receive, taking into consideration the new cultures emerging from the Information Society. Some prefer the terms Media Education, Digital Literacy, News Literacy, or 21st Century Literacies.

tutions, policy-makers, and organizations. All registered users will be able to contribute to its development by uploading content, articles and information. The AoC is developing a network of partner organizations which will – jointly with the AoC Secretariat – become the administrators of the MLE-themed website.

Following the interactive live website demonstration, the session continued with presentations by five speakers who provided both overviews of the latest MLE initiatives and policies across diverse regions (Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, North America, and Europe) as well as highlights of uniquely innovative programs and/or far-reaching policies.

The presentations were followed by small group discussions in which participants and speakers debated the definition of MLE, exchanged information on best practices and discussed the relevance and optimal utility of the AoC's MLE clearinghouse. A number of participants in the session expressed an interest in partnering with one another through the AoC. These partnerships could be developed through the MLE on-line clearinghouse in order to further the process of sharing information and supporting cooperative action following the AoC Forum.

Outcomes

Based on the discussions of the working groups, as they were reported back to the main session, the following themes and conclusions were identified:

There is an increasing number of organizations working in the MLE area and more resources and activities are being developed.

Contextual differences between regions have given rise to a wide variety of approaches to MLE with emphases on different types of media varying from country to country. Technological divides are still preventing some parts of the world from engaging in online MLE debates and using web-based resources.

Policy and curricula pertaining to MLE have been and are being developed in a variety of regions, but the level of development between regions is uneven. Civil society could play an important role in informing decision-makers and policy advisors on the latest developments in MLE policies in diverse regions.

MLE should be part of citizenship education as it is part of a broader context of encouraging critical thinking in today's information society.

There is a need to critically evaluate MLE in light of the work that has been achieved in this area over the last 20 years. This task is facilitated by an enhanced understanding of the media context developed through research and studies during this time.

MLE audiences need to be defined and suitable resources and materials need to be made available to them.