Life in Forest

Kinabuhi ta kalasangan

The right to culture in education...

...and the sharing of lessons, lives and linkages at APC's Conference

Welcome!

Welcome to this June issue of Kinabuhi ta Kalasangan, The Bendum News. In this issue we reflect on the events and outcomes of APC's Conference, 'Developing Management Capacities in Culture Based Education', the first of its kind held in the cultural context at the school in Sitio Bendum.

We start our conference pages with the welcome remarks from APC's Director, Pedro Walpole. We divert from the usual news shorts in the 'Inu ha Kaagi? What's the Story?' section to include a selection of excerpts from participants reflections on their experiences during the conference. On page 3 you can find a report on the keynote speech from the Coordinator of the Indigenous People's Education Office, Rozzano ("Butch") Rufino, with a break down of the K to 12 policy on page 4. Our conference pages finish with a discussion of the key responses to the issues raised during the conference that are needed moving forward.

In this issue we also report on the culmination of research conducted by the Culture and Rights in Thailand project. We close this issue with coverage on the upcoming meeting of the UN Permanent Forum on indigenous issues, which held its annual meeting in May this year.

As always we welcome your comments and feedback on this and previous issues of Kinabuhi ta Kalasangan.

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Reflection

What is discernment? It is achieving inner strength, greater conviction, courage and commitment to protect and foster those things each of us holds most valuable.

It was with an expression of gratitude that Pedro Walpole, APC's Director, opened the APC's Conference, held in Sitio Bendum from the 14th to 17th May, 2013.

Grateful that people working at the forefront of indigenous education were able to join APC in Bendum, Pedro's speech was a reflection on the journey from gratitude and celebration, through companionship and exchange, to clarity, motivation and commitment.

"On one level we have gathered here to bring about a further understanding, in this case in terms of school management, but on another level we are also here to share life itself and much broader hopes of sustaining our communities and our people" Pedro said.

"In the process we also confirm what we value in common and are affirmed in our thoughts and efforts. It helps us to better understand what it is that motivates each of us to do the work we do – to create movement towards indigenous education that comes *from* and is guided by the experience of indigenous peoples, as many of us are here today" he said.

Pedro also expressed his hope that the proceedings of the conference would allow the participants—from teachers, school managers, community organisers to those coming from national and international support agencies, both governmental and non-governmental—to be empowered, to be better informed, and to be better able to explain why their experiences in indigenous education are so important.

"Empowerment is achieved through the realisation of this discernment, realising that we are informed, and we are able to make decisions about the ways we want to respond to our experiences *because* we can articulate *why* they are so important. From this basis we can stand up for something, take action and commit" Pedro said.

As a school rooted in the community experience, Pedro shared APC's commitment "to care for the land and life around us, the daily needs and growth of our children and the culture in which lies their hope for the future, of belonging in society and having dignified and productive lives, and of having peaceful relationships with Migtanghaga, tanhaga ug kapwa. "

Inu ha kaagi?

What's the story?

Conference feedback

Q. What has been your experience of the conference?

"I've learned the importance of culture-based education. It's my first time to encounter such a system and its also recognised by DepED. Culture presentation is really important. I admired how the 'magnanau' (teachers) serve the community and how committed they are to their profession."

"I`ve learned a lot. Its my first time to witness contextualised approach especially to the Pulangiyen tribe in Mindanao. I really appreciate the labour to make the conference possible and I look forward to more conferences like this."

"This experience has been new for me. It deepened my knowledge on the life the Indigenous Peoples have and their role in our society. "

"Even when we were still on the road going to Bendum, we could really tell that the experience would compensate for the journey, and would help to awaken us.

My experience here at APC really proved that we should give attention to Indigenous Peoples. This realisation has awakened us and helped us develop our understanding.

I appreciate the many things we heard and saw in the conference, especially the hopes and strategies of the different organisations, there is really a lot of learning we can use when we go back to our organisation."

Q. How has your experience here affected the way you understand your work?

"It has very much affected how I see my work in developing curriculum, handling our young children, and giving information to our students who are not Lumad—that there are Filipino children like them that live in the far land, mountains and the rivers who strive to achieve and pursue their studies. "

"My experience led me into the idea that I can do more with my work than the things we are currently working on. It made me think of what ways our office can do to respond to the needs of indigenous communities."

"I`m humbled by the people and the spirit of service within me is revived."

Q. Suggestions for improvement?

"Further trainings and seminars for people from the Lumad community so that the culture is preserved".

Closing time at the museum:

An end to indigenous culture as a stand-alone subject?

"Indigenous peoples in education have been oppressed, discriminated against, their knowledge and systems of practice seen as inferior to a one-size fits all system of education which has sought to compartmentalise and separate learning from life. "

Addressing an audience of indigenous educators and supporting staff from across Mindanao and the Philippines Mr. Rozanno E. Rufino, Coordinator of the Indigenous Peoples Education Office (IPsEO), spoke about the progress made in understandings of culture-based education in the Philippines, and how both the National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework (Dep ED Order No. 62, s.2011) and the K-12 Reform (Republic Act No. 10533) aim to bring this to the center of education policy.

Mr Rufino was key-note speaker at the recent conference held by Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center in Sitio Bendum, Bukidnon entitled 'Developing management capacities in culture-based education'.

"Education which is culturally rooted is about nurturing identity, maintaining intergenerational ties; it is aligned with maintaining the wellbeing of ancestral domain and community, and achieving harmony with the community life cycle. This is culture-based education" Mr Rufino said.

Even in the present day, the school system contributes to the erosion of indigenous knowledge skills and practices (IKSP):

"Schooling is in conflict with the life of the community and community activities that are actually intertwined with indigenous learning systems" he said.

Mr Rufino also quoted Br Armin Luistro's statements from January of this year:

"We have been mis-educated by a system that perpetuates cultural oppression… which we need to change to undertake reforms."

Mr Rufino went on to emphasise how K to 12 is responsive to the learner's context. This has implications on curriculum and assessment, teaching and learning processes, learning resources, structures and environment, and management. It moves from the separation of learning and life, to learning from life.

Mr Rufino said that the reforms are about allowing communities to chose and design the component of education which will allow them to provide their learners with a strong basis in community history, experience and life, while also developing their key learning competencies.

This moves the approach from IKSP being taught as a stand alone subject—'museumising' the knowledge, to a system of education which is both relevant and responsive.

"K-12 is flexible, it encourages a range of educational approaches…. it is both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary" he said.

In a question and answer session after his speech, participants at the conference raised questions about the implementation of the K-12 on the ground. Some DepED offices, school principles and teachers have

Mr Rufino during his Keynote speech at APC's recent Conference

understood the reforms as a means to impose curriculum to the people at the margins, which is not in keeping with the idea of Indigenous education. The speaker said it should be indigenous people who teach and make decisions about what is taught.

"Communities must assert themselves if they want to change the implementation of DepED" replied Mr Rufino.

Acknowledging that some DepED offices have not implemented the program properly, he said that communities must be more assertive about how they wish students to be educated, and expose these offices or Principles who are not allowing recognition of IKSP.

As part of the D.O. No. 62, s.2011, Mr Rufino said, there are already situations where community elders' knowledge has been incorporated and where they have become part of the teaching force.

"The framework is not black and white, the policy is designed to be open…. If there are competencies required by a community, it must be the elders that evaluate the performance of students, and they must take part in decision making about what knowledge the children get."

K to 12: Facts, Figures and Commentary

Q. What is K to 12?

The K to 12 reform was signed into law by President Aquino on May 15, 2013.

The new law increases basic education from 10 to 12 years in the Philippines, and includes one year of kindergarten. While this additional kindergarten level, which was signed into law under the Kindergarten Education Act (Republic Act No. 10157), began being implemented in SY 2011—12, the first set of students to enter into the additional 2 years of Senior High School will not do so until SY 2016—17. These two additional years will be structured so that students can specialise in either the core curriculum or one of three tracks—the academic, the technical-vocational training, or the sports and arts track.

Beyond this extension of learning years from Kindergarten to Senior High however, the K—12 Reform provides for changes in the approach to learning in the Philippines.

DepED states that the K to 12 reforms provide for integrated and seamless learning. This change to a 'spiral progression' in learning means a greater diversity of subjects are introduced at an earlier age, so that subjects can be connected and integrated—for example, rather than being taught Biology, Chemistry and Physics in consecutive years, these are now integrated into teaching throughout Grades 7—10.

Q. Why has this change been made?

Twelve years of pre-university education has become widely implemented in Asia and the rest of the world. It is the standard requirement for students and professionals abroad—such as under the Bologna Process in the European Union and the Washington Accord in the United States. The Philippines is also the last country in Asia with only 10 years of pre-university training. Speaking during the ceremony, President Aquino said:

"By signing this bill into law, we are not just adding two years of additional learning for our students; we are making certain that the coming generations are empowered to strengthen the very fabric of our society, as well as our economy."[1]

Q. Have there been any problems in implementation?

While DepED has stated its target to provide some 31 million additional learning materials[2] by the end of 2013, revised learning materials for the K to 12 class are expected to arrive late again, and some teachers have struggled with the basic training they have been given during the recent summer break[3].

[1]Inquirer, 2013. Found at: http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/409755/aquino-signs-education-reform-law

[2]DepED (2013) 'The k to 12 Basic Education Program'. Found at: www.deped.gov.ph

[3]Multilingual Philippines, 2013. Found at: http://mlephil.wordpress.com/2013/06/04/k-12-still-struggling/

Q. How does this apply to indigenous education?

What is key for indigenous education are the provisions which build proficiency through mother-tongue based multi-lingual education (MTB-MLE) and the contextualisation and enhancement of the curriculum so that it is relevant to learners.

Speaking at a conference earlier this year, Br. Armin Luistro said :

"The heart of the K-12 reform is about one's culture, one's sense of self…. K-12 takes culture as the bedrock of education".

The K to 12 reform also implies changes to Alternative Learning System (ALS) curriculum, which requires students to have 2 years more education before they can enter for the ALS high school equivalency test[2].

At present the K to 12 reform provides for 12 local languages to be used as the means for instruction from Kindergarten through to Grade 6. These are Bahasa Sug, Bikol, Cebuano, Chabacano, Hiligaynon, Iloko, Kapampangan, Maguindanaoan, Meranao, Pangasinense, Tagalog, and Waray[2].

While Filipino and English will continue to be the languages of instruction in High School and in the additional Senior High School, the reforms imply the need for services to be provided in three key areas. These are technical –vocational training which is more culturally orientated and contextualised, teacher education institutions which provide training in indigenous cultures and culture-based education and teachers who have a strong grounding in local cultural context and local language

However, while DepED will allow for 'private education institutions to hire graduates duly recognised for their expertise in the education sector, when there is a shortage of qualified Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET)'[4], this is only on the provision that they are either part-time staff or that they pass the LET within 5 years.

For many schools in more remote areas, finding staff with both the necessary cultural knowledge and also the specific training required by DepED is often impractical and financially impossible. For the move toward 'learner centered' education to succeed in the indigenous context, it remains to be seen whether a middle ground can be found whereby DepED can support the training of these teachers and the development of these training institutions, while realising the importance of the cultural and linguistic skill these teachers already possess.

[4] Republic Act No. 10533. Section 8., paragraph a).

Conference Report

The challenge now is for us in the education community to share and develop the standards, skills and approaches that develop Philippine indigenous education institutions and educators into leaders in the field at an international level. This requires movement from not only those directly involved, but from the public and private agencies. These were the sentiments expressed during APC's recent conference 'Developing management capacities in culture-based education'.

Held from May 14 – 17 2013, APC was host to 50 participants from across the Philippines. This included key note speaker Rozanno (Butch) Rufino, Coordinator of the Indigenous People's Education Office and local DepED representative Edwin Gurrea, Indigenous Coordinator for Malaybalay City.

From national non-governmental organisations were speakers Xinia Scoropinski and Roce Anog, as well as Junn Esteban from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and Noemi Dumalaug from Translators Association of the Philippines.

From the Jesuit community were Glenda Factura and Tara Marie Agolito , both working with Fr Eric G. Velandria SJ, from Xavier University, Cagayan, Bros Flores from Loyola House of Studies, and Ricky H. Ogade and Leah Jane Ampoeda from Fr Leoni Lumad Mission.

The other participants included APC and Nabawang Elementary School staff and teachers, ESSC staff and representatives from 11 other indigenous education institutions from across Mindanao.

Conference findings

While the first day's proceedings served to reinforce our

understanding of how mother-tongue based multilingual education is so much more successful both for the students personal well-being and their academic performance, the conference was also a chance for participants to discuss the more holistic aspects of life among indigenous communities – those other factors which affect their abilities to provide indigenous education.

Most of the institutions which provide front line services direct to Indigenous communities expressed the difficulties they found in handling government and business sector policies. Some groups had come directly into contact with plantation companies over the right to ancestral lands. This loss of indigenous people's ancestral domain had in effect changed the role of indigenous peoples from land owners to labourers on their own lands. This frustration was also shared by groups who had had contact with mining companies.

A major concern for some participants was how they could achieve financial sustainability, as they struggled to make connections with Local Government Units (LGU) and other government agencies such as the DSDW, NCIP or DepED, to make use of relevant support funds such as the LGU allowance for IP Educators. Building strong communications and receiving engaged responses was expressed as a major challenge.

To these voices some were able to share their positive experiences and suggest strategies. APC has devoted much time to building community linkages, although at times we have also struggled to resolve concerns that threaten school operations and community stability. From this discussion we learned how different approaches have succeeded in different places, and while we took relief that our experiences and struggles were shared, we also learned that we come from different places and have differing goals, so for each of our challenges we must consider the geography, economy, the cultural and political landscape.

For APC this has been a breakthrough in understanding how we might move forward and assist other institutions, individuals and communities. This has been the first indigenous education conference held in the community context in Bendum, and proved a powerful factor in both deepening the resolve of both our teachers and visitors to broaden their own skills and the skills of their community, co-workers and students. Bendum is becoming a place where people can achieve peace, reflect, and are strengthened.

We still need to act

From this conference it has also become clear that there is a need for institutions and individuals to move beyond the simple advocating for and celebrating indigenous peoples ability to teach their own arts, crafts and skills. We must also realise as teachers, managers, NGO workers and government support staff that there needn't be any trade-off between ensuring children and youth have a strong grounding in their language and culture and that they develop the competencies required by mainstream education, and to progress on the formal education ladder.

At APC we are now developing the methods and activities by which we can offer information and training for indigenous educators in the Philippines from both the public and private sectors. It is our hope that we can be host to an annual conference of indigenous educators in Mindanao. From participants feedback we know there is a demand for a forum in which participants can share experiences and ideas, be informed about current issues relating to indigenous education, speak directly with government agencies and find out about the other training activities offered by APC, and this has to be held in an environment that reflects the reality of the indigenous experience in education, and an environment where participants from across society can talk on a level with each other.

Participants gather for a final photo at the school.

Negotiating cultural rights and the rights to culture: Case studies and lessons from Thailand

The 1990s saw a growing demand in Thailand for communities to be included in decisions about the management of cultural and natural resources, culminating in the 1997 Constitution in which some of these rights were formalised. Recognising that the implementation and engagement with these rights at the local level had not been evaluated, Sirindhorn Anthropology Center (SAC) based in Bangkok, Thailand identified the need to research these issues, formulating the Culture and Rights IN Thailand project (CRT) in 2009.

2011 saw the publication of 9 sub-projects which were aimed at finding out how culture and rights were being expressed at the local level. While there was significant topical, geographical and disciplinary variation across the sub-projects, the CRT also identified commonalities. June 2013 sees the final meeting of the Culture and Rights Forum, a monthly meeting of researchers to discuss their understandings of culture and rights in Thailand.

Many of the experiences revealed in the research have resonance with the debates on-going in the Philippines, as the government is taking steps to legislate cultural rights into public policy. As stakeholders in human development, there is a need for us to continually re-examine our assumptions and understandings of the nature of culture and rights in the Philippines.

More information about the other research conducted can be found at the CRT website at www.sac.or.th/databases/cultureandrights/

Negotiating living history and historical conservation

Alexandra Denes conducted research into the effect of the opening of the Prasat Hin Phnom Rung Sanctuary in Buriram Province as a historical park. In efforts to inscribe a scientific and archaeological narrative, depicting the site as part of the nation's official heritage, a Buddhist Temple and Buddha's footprint were removed from the sanctuary. Along with the redevelopment of the site for the purposes of national heritage, it also became a major tourist attraction. The effect was the marginalisation of the local people and the mixture of animist and Buddhist beliefs and practices which had developed around the site since the collapse of the original Ankor builder's rule in the 15th Century C.E.

Through a series of community consultations the locations of spirit houses and other mythic and sacred sites that were of significance to the ethnic Khmer, Lao and Thai Korat peoples who live in the area were mapped out, and recommendations were made for the safeguarding of these sites and values. These included integrating the maps into the local school curriculum.

The research revealed the challenges which arise around sites which have historical, scientific and archaeological value as part of a national and 'authorised heritage discourse'[1], but in the course of time have also become sacred sites to local communities. When politicians and the tourist industry influence the management of these heritage sites, how can these local, intangible customs and values be protected or co-exist with national ideas of heritage?

Cultural heritage – a right or a resource?

Sirijit Sumanta conducted research into the expression of culture and identity among the Phu Tai ethnic group in the village of Ban Phu, Nong Sung District of Makadaha Province. As an area subject to many development projects throughout the 1960s and 70s, the community identity revolved around a discourse of economic development, rather than any expression of Phu Tai 'wisdom and identity'[1].

Increases in visitors from outside of the community through tourism had inspired a revival of some of the tangible and consumable aspects of the culture such as cooking, weaving and dancing, and while this has undoubtedly been

[1]SAC Anthropology Newsletter, March 2013. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Center, Bankok.

profitable to the community – the Ban Phu Homestay Project earning over 1,800,000 Baht in 2007 (approximately 57,840 USD at current rates). The traditional Yao healing practices have already disappeared and there are few remaining who can read the communities' ancient Lao Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts. This skill is likely to be lost completely if action is not taken, as the school does not include the language in its curriculum.

This research raises questions about how 'development' is organised and what it achieves. While tourism has given the community self-sufficiency and promoted local industry and business, this has not affected community consciousness of their cultural rights, and the question remains as to whether the Phu Tai culture – its people's knowledge of their history, beliefs and spiritual practices – will survive.

Separating rights from nobility – unpacking the rights-based discourses of the community forest movement in Sakon Nakorn

The Thai Community Forest Act of 2007 has been praised as defending 'community rights'. However, the language used highlights the dependence of communities' rights to land on their ability to manage the forest sustainably.

Bencharat Sae Chua's research highlights the efforts of the community forest movement to redefine their traditions in the light of this environmentalist discourse. The discussions conducted during the research revealed that the residents of protected forest areas were not overtly engaged in forest management, but did depend on the forest for a number of products which supported their livelihood activities, subsistence agriculture and trade.

However, in the knowledge that the national policy framework gives preference to the preservation of protected areas for the 'educational and leisure purposes of the people'[1] over community rights 'to access natural resources as a means of livelihood'[1], the community forest movement felt compelled to reconstruct their cultural identity as protectors of the forest, in compliance with this national discourse.

In doing so however, they supported the assertion that their rights to land are only dependant on their legitimacy as noble and traditional managers of the forest. Bencharat points out that even if the communities' right to manage the forests were recognised, they may still be evicted from their farmlands, because the Act prohibits land occupation, settlement and farming. The crucial question missing from the movement's discourse is 'how can a communities right to livelihood and natural resources be effectively balanced with the state's goals for forest conservation?'

Students at APC gather to discuss their culture

International talks give special focus to indigenous women and youth

'It is our challenge that our students can also talk.. [like we do about indigenous issues]...that youth can share where they are and get informed… this is a part of development" said Mercy Pakiwag on the final day of APC's conference on indigenous education last May 17th.

Speaking about the role of youth in safeguarding the future of indigenous rights and culture, APC School Administrator Mercy Pakiwag shared her views with the youth who had joined the conference from Davao Oriental:

"We are proud of you, your coming here, this is a way you can help your tribe… I appreciate that there are youth who will pursue and struggle for the importance of culture… so whatever we have, there will be an inspiration to our life and work".

The importance of the inclusion of the youth in discussions relating to IP rights and culture was one of the topics of APC's recent conference. This theme was

also explored during the 12th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).


Source: UNPFII

Approximately 2,300 indigenous participants gathered on the 20th May this year for the two weeks. This session's discussions were also concerned with culture, education and health, with a special focus on youth, indigenous groups in Africa and the importance s of strengthening ties with international finance institutions.

The discussions on youth issues were centred around the findings of the UN Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Youth, held earlier this year in January.

Of the 370 million indigenous people in the world, approximately 67 million of these are youth[1].

The youth expert group meeting included recommendations on a range of issues, including improved and appropriate education for indigenous youth, and ensuring the participation of indigenous youth in decision making that affects their wellbeing[2].

Youth issues and inclusion is also a priority of Ban Ki-Moon's, as he has launched the System Wide Action Plan (SWAP), which aims to deepen the youth focus in existing UN programs.

In line with these efforts, UNPFII Secretariat in cooperation with UNICEF and the Indigenous Youth Caucus, an adolescent friendly version of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has been released, and can be found following the link on our website.

Speaking at the closing session of the UNPFII on the 31st May, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said we must work harder to ensure Indigenous Peoples are not marginalised.

"One of the most important challenges is to provide quality education which is culturally appropriate and includes the input of elders and indigenous educators" he said. Speaking about the development of indigenous higher education institutions he went on to say:

"..these education institutions are crucial in providing higher education which incorporates the concepts of indigenous history, language and culture… Denying culture is a denial of rights, a denial of roots and history" he said.

Speaking about Indigenous girls, adolescents and women, Mr Eliasson said:

"Indigenous women are one of the most marginalised groups in the world".

Citing their critical role in indigenous communities and society as educators, peacemakers and mediators, as custodians of bio-cultural diversity and sustainable practices, Mr. Eliasson said:

"...often they face multifaceted discrimination from and outside their society, including gender-based violence". He called for the better inclusion of IP women in discussions, and related this need to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[3].

The 12th Session of the UNPFII also included an in-depth review of financial development policies and mechanisms aimed at engaging indigenous peoples. Present at the discussion were over 30 representatives from the World Bank alone, as well as from the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Finance Corporation[1].

Looking forward, the UNPFII discussed plans for the first World Conference of Indigenous Peoples to be held in September 2014, in relation to the post 2015 development agenda.

Mr Ellaisson summarised these discussions in the closing ceremony, stating that the forum has made it clear that the sustainable development agenda should also address the cultural aspects of development.

[1]UN News Center, 2013. Found at:http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44952&Cr=indigenous&Cr1=&utm_source=AIPP+Daily+Information+Listserv&utm_campaign=cebf679bc2-May_215_21_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c8f8228a83-cebf679bc2-67988681#.UbGTQECnBDL

[2]The Message Stick, May 2013. Found at:

[3]UN Department of Public Information, 2013. Found at: http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/dsgsm671.doc.htm