

# The non-formal education and migration of the Aeta, an indigenous tribe in the Philippines

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## Abstract

This research into the non-formal education of the Aeta, an indigenous tribe in the Philippines, who became migrants after a volcanic eruption, highlights the significance of community-learning models for the purpose of integrating migrants into a society. The community education system, in which the Aeta are involved, found its inspiration in the Danish model of folk high schools and Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed". Their programmes are prepared according to principles of flexibility and inclusiveness. The findings of an analysis of the non-formal education system show that the literacy programme is integrated into community education and activities, which encourages the inclusion of indigenous people in adult learning, and thus also the development of active citizenship, empowerment, an evolving community and the preservation of the Aeta culture.

**KEYWORDS:** community education, non-formal education, Aeta, Zambales, indigenous people, para-teachers.

## Introduction

A study of the community education practices involving the Aeta, a Philippine indigenous people in the province of Zambales on Luzon Island, was carried out from 2008 to 2010 and has provided some new findings about indigenous community learning. The Aeta (also spelt "Ayta") are an indigenous people of the Philippines and one of the oldest groups of inhabitants. They are scattered in the mountainous regions; their neighbours also call them "Pugut", which means "forest spirit"; this name could be related to animism. According to Early and Headland (1994), there were approximately 31,000 Aeta living on various

Philippine islands. The community group where this field study took place consists of approximately 750 members. Their language is Zambal, which is spoken by about 2000 people, and they are part of a community of LAKAS (an abbreviation of *Lubos na Alyansa ng mga Katutubong Ayta ng Sambales* or Alliance of Indigenous Ayta in Zambales).

The Aeta are included among the so-called *negritos*. This name comes from a Spanish term *negrito*, meaning “little black person”. The Aeta are small in stature (women are approximately 140 cm tall), and they have a decidedly dark complexion and curly hair.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the Philippines were conquered by the Spanish, the Aeta moved from the lowlands into the mountains. On account of their peacefulness, they moved away from the conquerors. The Aeta of the Zambales region used to live on the slopes of Mount Pinatubo, a dormant volcano, where they developed their culture and their language, Zambal. After the 1991 volcanic eruption, they were forced to move to the lowlands, i.e. their former homeland. There, however, they feel like newcomers, as it is now a different linguistic environment. The Tagalog language is used, as it is the most widely spread language in the Philippines. There is one more difference in the lowlands: the prevailing culture demands literacy.

In our research, we were interested in the education system that was organised to facilitate their integration into the population group they were being resettled into, so they could function in the community and participate in its decision making. We referred to research findings in the field of literacy, which claim that community education contributes to the development of resilience and empowerment (Street 1986; Mezgec 2006).

The idea for this case study evolved in our meetings with education leaders of the Aeta community. The first contact was made in Denmark in 2007, when one of the authors of this article spent half a year at the International People’s College in Helsingør. This led to a meeting with twenty members of the Education for Life Foundation (ELF), a Philippine non-governmental organisation, who explained that they foster community education in local communities (*barangays*). Their wish is to spread literacy among adults, develop their abilities for inclusion in the wider community, and to provide knowledge to children and adolescents that would allow them to enter the formal school system. We agreed to carry out a field study, which started in 2008. This was the first study concerning the education and learning of the Aeta. The research focused on the non-formal community education system developed during the time when they moved to the lowlands. The concept of community education and active citizenship was selected as the theoretical starting point of our research into non-formal education.

## **Community education**

For many years, community education has been related to development, and it is well known in theoretical discussions and in practice throughout history (Field 2009; Thompson 2002; Lawson 1998). The best-known models are community schools in the USA and Danish adult education centres (*folkehøjskole*) and cultural courses, developed by Freire. All these models advocate education as the only ethically acceptable way of activating people so that they work and think for the common good of all.

Community education developed in various forms in response to various types of problems or needs: economic (poverty), cultural (preservation of language) and political (empowerment and ability to participate in society). One of the main principles of community education is encouraging people to actively participate in society and educating those groups that otherwise would not enter the formal education system (Lawson 1998). Community education is a process of transferring power and developing social justice and respect in a community; it is based on social learning and active participation.

The concept of community education incorporates the work of Freire (2009) and is currently connected to the practice theory and the community of practice as developed by Wenger and Lave (Wenger 2010). The ideas of community education are continuing to develop and create phenomena and connections. Especially distinctive are its connections to the contemporary trends of multiculturalism and the concept of social minorities. The purposes behind community education vary, but all models emphasise community development, taking care of social and cultural capital, overcoming isolation and exclusion, or the delivery of relational goods. Relational goods, as defined by M. Nussbaum (2010), are goods that cannot be produced or enjoyed solely by a single individual.

Community education can be defined as non-formal education as well as social development work, for which it is typical to work with individuals and groups in their local environment. Educational content is connected to the development of functional literacy skills, to the development of information skills as well as with vocational lifelong learning opportunities. Community education programmes are also carried out in the fields of health, environment protection (ecology) and critical citizenship. All of the above mentioned indicate a connection between community education and active citizenship.

## **Active citizenship**

Citizenship is usually understood as a political and legal status and an aggregate of the characteristics developed by an individual to be able to successfully function in society. The notion of active citizenship, according to Podmenik (2003), evolved in the early Renaissance in Italian city-states, where people were divided into common folk and aristocrats; however, there were issues of common interest to both groups. When conceptualising the idea of active citizenship, one encounters different views and, due to their diversity, it is not possible to settle on one single definition of active citizenship. Let us merely point out that it is often narrowed down to refer to political action, which is only one dimension of actively participating in society. When choosing a model that would capture the multidimensional character of active citizenship, we decided in favour of a model by the Dutch author, Veldhuis (2005), who based his thinking and his model on the theory of Arendt. According to Veldhuis, the dimensions of active citizenship and related education are interdependent with the four basic social subsystems that he defined as: the political-legal, social, cultural and economic dimensions.

Corresponding to individual dimensions, there are also different goals of education. The political-legal dimension implies that education should be aimed at concepts of democracy, understanding political structures and political participation, decision-making processes at a national and international level, and the electoral system. The cultural di-

mention implies that education should promote an understanding of the function of the media, developing cultural heritage, encouraging intercultural experiences, and the strengthening of literacy and other skills. The social dimension of citizenship implies education regarding the protection of human rights, bringing together different social groups and the development of social cohesion. The economic dimension is shaped by different aspects of the (market) economy and refers to education to improve professional qualifications, to increase employability, to raise awareness of the ecological aspects of the global economy, and of consumer rights.

Both of the concepts mentioned above, community education and active citizenship, emphasise educational goals in the following areas: co-decision making and participation, self-determination, social inclusion and social justice. Furthermore, they emphasise the importance of cooperative interaction between education providers. Various agencies, societies, and authorities can contribute to community education and local development.

## **Research methodology**

This research is based on a case study method. There were several reasons for this: first, there was no previous research on education in the LAKAS community. The second reason was the fact that we explored actual practices in a real life context; therefore, it was not possible to draw clear lines between a phenomenon and its environment. The line between the context and the phenomenon researched was not clear enough to allow us to single out the phenomenon. The third reason was the need for flexible planning, since the subjects and events examined could not be prepared in advance; therefore, we had to adapt to them. Also, the focus of interest of our research was the Aeta in the LAKAS community, which is why this study could be classified as a single holistic case study (Yin 2003; Flyvbjerg 2007).

## **Data collection**

The main method of gathering data was fieldwork, which included observation and interviews with education providers and participants of educational programmes. In the interviews, we took into account the advantages and disadvantages of narrative methods, which highlight the subjectivity of reality, we also took into consideration the recommendations by methodologists who specialise in the research of everyday life (Muršič 2011; Merriam 2002). In order to follow the principle of triangulation, we gathered data in several ways.

During a three-month stay in the Philippines, we observed life in the community and kept a diary (a field diary and a diary of reflections). The process was also meticulously photographed. In addition, we also conducted interviews. We conducted fifteen non-standardised interviews with different people concerned: organisers, providers, and participants in the community's activities. During some interviews, an interpreter was present. In most cases, those were Avelino Cielo-Bobby (educator in the Education for Life Foundation's programme (ELF)) and Helen Abarra (coordinator of the teaching personnel in the LAKAS community). The method of documentation analysis was also applied. We

analysed reports on the work carried out in previous years and various articles, published by the ELF education providers between 1999 and 2008. When all the data was gathered, a preliminary analysis was conducted, and themes were defined; a thematic analysis then followed. During the analysis and interpretation of data in 2009 and 2010, we also wrote several e-mails to obtain additional explanations from the educators. That was used as validation procedure for some respondents.

## **The Aeta, migration and non-formal education**

The Aeta live in a close-knit community, their way of life is characterised by their care and concern for the entire community, and is reflected in their mutual support and solidarity. They help each other in all areas of life: they build houses together, cultivate the land, they learn together, and frequently, they also cook together. The Aeta are known for their particular method of farming; they grow sweet potatoes, bananas and vegetables. They are also known for their forms of alternative medicine.

This case study focuses on a group of Aeta in the province of Zambales, who together, make up the LAKAS community. The LAKAS community was founded in 1984 by the Aeta people in the province of Zambales, who wished to change the situation of the Aeta. After the eruption of the volcano, the number of Aeta in the lowland area increased, and the tasks of the community became more complex (spreading literacy, the inclusion of migrants). The Aeta live in local communities, called barangays.

In the province of Zambales, there are 31 barangays; the Aeta live in 11 of them. These barangays are mainly in the area around the Pinatubo volcano. The LAKAS community consists of approximately 150 families or 750 people and, according to seismologists' forecasts, they cannot return to the volcano mountain. People we spoke to, however, told us that many Aeta keep returning to their mountain and that in particular some older ones, who had lived on Mount Pinatubo their whole lives, have never adapted to life "in civilization", and so want to go "home". Some have already done so, and some are going back soon, some might go in the future.

The centre of the LAKAS community is located about 50 km from the Pinatubo volcano. It is built as a village, with all the facilities relevant to community life. In the centre of the village, there is a playground, surrounded by a kindergarten, school, library, administration building and a community area with benches, for community meetings.

During the second evening, in this area, the researchers were surprised as they performed a welcome dance:

Carol takes me to the centre of the community where they are all dressed in their traditional clothes. In his address, the headman explains that they have prepared a programme and they will dance for me. I am slightly shocked because I didn't expect it. The evening turns out excellently. We laugh a lot. In the end, I dance, too. Dances relate to the imitating of animals, so each dance is named after a certain animal, such as the Butterfly dance, the Eagle dance, the Fish dance, etc. (Authors' diary notes, 9 March 2008).

The animal dances are connected to animism. They are performed prior to hunting

or collecting shellfish; on the one hand, the dance is an apology to the animal they are going to catch, yet on the other, it is an appeal for the hunt to be successful.

Missionaries started coming in the 1960s, so that now the majority of Aeta are Christians; however, this does not preclude them from keeping their dances and other cultural traditions. In this case, the animal dances were performed as a form of welcome. They live modestly in their homes:

Animals, such as chickens, dogs, and cats, in some places I even saw piglets, live together with the Aeta in their homes. Their little houses are simple and are built from bamboo. I, however, actually only slept in houses made of brick. All houses are poorly insulated and consist of only one level. The village was peaceful. After ten o'clock at night, things completely settled down. We woke up between six and seven in the morning. The majority of them departed to their fields to take care of their crops (Authors' diary notes, 10 March 2008).

The Aeta did not use written language, their first contact with literacy occurred in the 1980s when, in 1982, the Sisters of St Francis came to Mount Pinatubo and started the first literacy programmes and health education sessions to help improve the survival rates of children. At the time, only one third of children survived to reach 15 years of age. Since the Aeta were illiterate and were unfamiliar with the monetary system, locals who came to buy their land and their produce often cheated them. Since they have moved to the lowlands, the Education for Life Foundation takes care of improving their literacy.

Helen T. Farnularca, a para-teacher for adults who has been teaching them since 1969, says that it was easier for them on Mount Pinatubo because they had their own land and they lived in an environment they knew. Since they did not adapt to their new environment, life became harder for them after they moved to the Zambales lowlands. She noticed that they did not know how to trade their produce and set their prices; they could not sign their names, or read information on electoral candidates and their political statements to decide on whom to vote. They could not read instructions for the use of medications, and therefore could not use them, nor could they help their children with their learning.

Helen T. Farnularca says that she wants to help people who never attended schools to be at least able to read and write. She said:

It's in my heart that I have to help my people if I have knowledge and I am able to spread it. Since we live in a community, each of us shares our knowledge and skills with others' (Interview with Helen T. Farnularca, 14 March 2008).

## **Education for Life Foundation (ELF)**

The ELF organisation was established in 1992, and it has been particularly active in community education. It is the founding member of E-Net Philippines, which is included in the Education for All (EFA) network. Edicio dela Torre, the head of ELF, and also the president of this extremely beneficial Philippine civil society network, is endeavouring to

bring education within everybody's reach. Also involved are both the Asia Pacific Bureau of Adult Education and the Global Campaign for Education, which are international networks consisting of various civil communities active in the Education for All movement.

A representative of the Education for Life Foundation (ELF) met with Aeta leaders after the eruption of the volcano, when they had to deal with local authorities and cope with different social circumstances than what they were used to on Mount Pinatubo. Together, they started preparing educational programmes, mainly aimed at spreading literacy, community development, and learning about the protection of land ownership rights. They lead programmes like the Grassroots Leadership Courses (GLC) and also theatre workshops. The theatre workshops that we observed were led by Avelino Cielo-Bobby, though students also participated. In 2006 and 2007, students from the Conservatory of Music and from the College of Fine Arts and Design of the University of Santo Tomas assisted, as recorded in the annual reports (Annual reports of the Lakas community 1999-2008).

In the LAKAS community, the Education in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) programme (Teves 2009) is conducted by para-teachers who do not have regular academic teaching credentials, but have completed a training course; this takes place once a year. We learnt that they only had to master reading and writing; they are not required to have pedagogic skills. Para-teachers in the LAKAS community are themselves members of the Aeta people. This particularly facilitates the learning of participants who have insufficient knowledge of Tagalog, which is the official language of education in the Philippines, as the para-teachers are able to use their language, Zambal, to assist them. Educational programmes are conducted in two languages: Tagalog and Zambal. The English language, taught in all secondary schools (attended by students from 12 to 16 years of age), is also present.

Educational programmes are developed according to people's needs; however, education is also influenced by social conditions. What is essential for community education is the so-called 'Grundtvigian moment', a name coined by Edicio dela Torre, the president of ELF. He explains it as a specific political and social situation that occurs in a country's development process. That situation provides the moment that enables the introduction of Grundtvig's ideas. The situation that provides such an opportunity is when part of the social elite becomes open to reforms in the society, to allow them, perhaps even encourage them or at least not obstruct them. A moment becomes a Grundtvigian moment when individuals from various social strata no longer remain observers, but use the reforms to assume responsibilities themselves and become active participants and push the reforms over the boundaries set by the elites. Dela Torre explains that such a moment in the Philippines seemed to happen after the fall of Ferdinand Marcos, who was the president of the Philippines between 1966 and 1986. Afterwards, the new political elite were ready to accept reforms. Prior to that, all calls for reform that came from barangays were suppressed.

With the establishment of a democratic system, conditions to empower barangays were set, which in 1992 led to the establishment of the non-governmental organisation, Education for Life Foundation (ELF). The educational environment is defined not only by the migration of the Aeta from the Mount Pinatubo slopes to the lowlands and their illiteracy, but also by social changes.

## **Types of programmes and the organisation of the education system**

The Aeta are involved in two important programmes; the Grassroots Leadership Course (GLC) and the Alternative Learning System (ALS). Besides these two programmes, there are other forms of adult education. From 1999 to 2007, several seminars, workshops and courses were carried out in the LAKAS community, as evidenced by the annual reports on community work. We can list the following: a public-speaking course for leaders, a fire safety seminar; workshops on the production of organic soap, detergents, syrups, baskets according to traditional methods; workshops on the production of honey, paper, candles, flutes, beds; herbal medicine workshops; meetings with health care workers, intended for the women of the community; and there were also several artistic and theatre workshops. In the LAKAS community, some educational activities were aimed at promoting organic agriculture: for example, the production of organic mangoes.

## **Education of leaders in communities**

The Grassroots Leadership Course is a six-week programme. This is a 'course for active members' of barangays and is intended for leadership training. Participants in the course develop skills of negotiating with the authorities. They acquire communication skills that should also enable them to solve conflicts within barangays. This programme is actually widespread in the Philippines and has been completed by more than 2000 people. It is notable that men and women are included in equal numbers. The inclusion of women is intentionally encouraged.

May Rendon-Cinco, a grassroots educator, said:

Since there is no educational material, it is the ELF educators who develop it. They work for one year on one textbook. First, they prepare the theoretical part, while the second part consists of practical advice and tasks. During its creation, a textbook is discussed with individuals; the textbook is then adapted to the needs of a community in response to problems appearing in specific communities. The second part of the textbook is thoroughly adapted to the community to which it is sent; therefore, each community gets a different one. Authority to use the textbook is granted to those who have passed our GLC course. Those who have passed the GLC course with us are allowed to take the textbook into their community and use it to teach their fellow villagers. Now, our students are already teaching their own people (Interview with May Rendon-Cinco, Manila: 6 March 2008).

Textbooks are written in Tagalog. The course is designed to encourage skill development; therefore, they use role-play and other methods that, as closely as possible, reflect situations in which the programme participants can find themselves.

There are groups who reached an agreement with local authorities about various options to improve the quality of their lives (for example, the building of a bridge). They learn to negotiate, which makes them active participants in the community (Interview with May Rendon-Cinco, Manila, 6 March 2008).



## Spreading literacy

Another noteworthy programme is the Alternative Learning System. It is intended for young people and adults who have not finished primary or secondary school. The programme is carried out throughout the Philippines, but the programme to be presented here has been adapted for the Aeta. This also includes the language; one of the teaching languages is Zambal, the native Aeta language (not only Tagalog).

The programme covers the teaching of the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. The programme is implemented by the Department of Education of the Philippines. In 2003, the Bureau of Alternative Learning System of the Department of Education accepted the adapted programme which has been (and still is) carried out in LAKAS, as a pilot study. In 2005, the adapted programme was also officially recognised. Since that year, individuals are allowed to sit for official examinations at the end of the programme. This is the *Accreditation and Equivalency Test* (Department of Education 2005). The decision to take the examination is voluntary. It is the young who want to continue their schooling, and who mainly decide to sit the examination. Older people who only want to learn basic writing, reading and arithmetic usually do not sit the exam. The examination is recognised by the Department of Education, which means that non-formally acquired education is linked to, and recognised, as well as formal education.

## Para-teachers

The programme takes place in the community, so Helen Abarra, the coordinator of the para-teachers for adult students, first looks for the active individuals in barangays and presents the work to them. Those who are interested in teaching can become para-teachers. They have to pass a training course; generally, this is the six-week programme: the Grassroots Leadership Course. The teaching facilities are provided by the barangay, and all relevant details related to the implementation of the programme are agreed to by the group. Para-teachers receive a small amount of financial support.

Helen Abarra, who is not an Aeta, coordinates ten para-teachers who carry out the ALS programme in several villages of the LAKAS community. She herself finished the six-week Grassroots Leadership Course. In the 1980s, she moved to Mount Pinatubo and after the volcano erupted, migrated together with the Aetas to the lowlands. Her family lives at the centre of the LAKAS community and is integrated into the community's life; for example, they celebrate Aeta festivals and wear traditional clothes on such occasions.

Epang Domulot is also a para-teacher for adults. She is an Aeta and wishes to help adults of her community because she feels that, as an Aeta, she has always been discriminated against. When they lived at Mount Pinatubo, they did not have to deal with discrimination, but at secondary school, she felt discrimination. Children teased her by saying that she was a 'monkey from Mount Pinatubo' and that she should return there. If she worked on a computer, they asked her why she bothered as there were no computers in the mountains and so she would not need it. Epang particularly emphasised how happy she was to be able to help the adults of her community with their education. She noticed that they are now able to go to polling stations themselves. Now they can read each candidate's

election information and decide whether to vote for that candidate. She finds it essential that they are aware of and do exercise their right to vote, and that they are able to decide independently which candidate to vote for.

Both teachers mention that an important achievement of Aeta emancipation is that they have learnt the systems of measurement they need to use when selling their produce. Epang said that before, without that knowledge, Filipinos often used to deceive them.

Beside programmes for adults, they also organise programmes for children who are not enrolled in state schools. In interviews, teachers said that they wish to encourage children to enter formal education through non-formal programmes. They also organise a kindergarten for children. Carol, the head of the kindergarten, says that she never knows how many children will come, since some children go to the fields with their parents.

In non-formal education, attendance is not obligatory for everybody. Even in the ALS programme, a person may stop attending if they wish to do so. Some children in the community have attended neither an ALS school nor a regular state school.

## **Women and their participation in education**

Women are included in leadership programmes (GLC), and they are also present in the majority of literacy programmes (ALS). In their 2002 annual report we can read:

Women are constantly busy with bringing up children and other things, in the background there is always the thinking that women do not develop individually and that men and their needs are always in the foreground. In the foreground is also the thought that men are more capable of learning and education. But now both of us are aware of how important it is for women to develop as this is important for the development of the entire community (Annual reports of the Lakas community 1999-2008).

From a conversation with Helen Abarra, we learn that the young and women are included in the ALS programmes. She particularly pointed out that she supports the “liberalisation” of women and added that men too want women to attend these programmes. This testimony to the fact that these programmes, as well as being providers of non-formal education in the LAKAS community, are oriented towards the empowerment of all members of the population.

In the annual reports we also find that, at various meetings, women were encouraged to speak about themselves and their own lives. Various meetings with health care workers are organised for women, as well as workshops for the production of syrups and other products according to traditional recipes. Women can sell these products and thus provide themselves with a little bit of economic independence.

## **Elements of the Aeta culture in theatre workshops**

From the point of view of both community education and the concept of active citizenship, it is indispensable to include the culture of the local population in educational programmes. We have already shown that the literacy programmes are adapted for particular environments, that the Zambal language, together with Tagalog and English, is used. The element of culture was the most clearly expressed in theatre workshops.

Theatre workshops are a distinct form of non-formal education and are known under various names. The theatre that is the most developed in the Western world is Boal's 'theatre of the oppressed', which encourages people to actively participate.

In the LAKAS community, theatre workshops were carried out on the ELF's initiative and with the support of the barangays, in which the Aeta live. Local volunteers play a vital role. The purpose of these workshops is to raise awareness of the significance of Aeta culture; thus the idea and realisation of the workshop and the performance afterwards are based on Aeta customs.

A five-day workshop, which was part of observational field research, included various elements. Its purpose was to prepare a theatre performance. Participants (all were Aetas) had never previously seen a theatre performance. At the preparatory meetings, they discussed the feelings they experienced listening to selected rhymes, poems, and then they started to prepare a screenplay.

Each day, the workshop started with a prayer and ended with an evaluation. Bobby, the workshop leader, says that they wish to have a different cast each time. In this way, they can raise awareness of the importance of Aeta culture, which is the essence of the workshop:

Today they perform the play and rehearse its details. Bobby surprises me a lot with his presence. If he was reserved during some conversations in Manila, here he comes alive and radiates positivity. His performance is very dynamic. I feel that participants respect him a lot, since they earnestly listen to him and then carry out what they agreed on. Scenes include dancing, singing, playing (Authors' diary notes, 19 March 2008).

Scenes selected for performance, are connected to various customs of Aeta culture (marriage) and everyday life events from life on Mount Pinatubo (the Pinatubo eruption, evacuation):

If I found some of them to be shy in the beginning, I now notice that shyness has disappeared. They shout loudly whenever necessary, they dance and sing joyfully. They put on their traditional clothes. Girls have big coloured scarves wrapped around their bodies and boys have simple pieces of cloth covering only their loins (Authors' diary notes, 20 March 2008).

During workshops, food for all participants is prepared by women of the community. Facilities are provided by the LAKAS, while the catering is financially covered by one of the barangays. The purpose of the workshop is, among other things, the preparation for a performance that will take place in a month at a local festival.

In an interview, Avelino Cielo-Bobby said that he tries to awake in people their desire for expression and to return to the roots of their tribe through the methodology of theatre. Through workshops, he tries to promote awareness in individuals that their culture is meaningful and that it is important that it comes from within. This involves a complex process that helps indigenous people to understand themselves and their roots; they learn to appreciate themselves and their origins and thus find it easier to overcome

various obstacles in life. The theatre workshop methods selected, which are known from Freire's community education model and which developed into the theatre of rebellion, are deliberately used, so that people can feel and express their thoughts, feelings, experiences and preserve their customs.

## **The development of activities in the community in reference to four dimensions of active citizenship**

We were interested in how non-formal education contributes to the development of various dimensions of active citizenship. Educational practices contribute to the development of competence in all four dimensions. At the level of the political dimension, links between education and activities in a political party to represent the interests of the Aeta are evident. Moreover, the competencies of negotiating and advocating for the rights of the Aeta are crucial, as Noel Domulot, a law student, pointed out in an interview.

When individuals achieve literacy, they can read candidate information statements themselves. Almost all para-teachers who educated adults within the framework of the ALS programme emphasised that they find it extremely important that those community members who learnt to read and write can independently vote for their political representatives in barangays. During educational programmes, they also discuss why it is necessary to advocate for their own interests and, with the help of their political representatives, to stand up for them in barangays.

Carol D. Jugatan pointed out how beneficial it is that 'some can go to vote' now. When she used the word 'some', it was in reference to the fact that those who cannot read could not vote (which in 2008 still meant the majority of people in the LAKAS community).

The LAKAS community strives to respect human rights and the rights of specific social groups: for example, Desiree D. Carbonel specifically mentioned that he fights for the rights of the gay community in his barangay.

From conversations, it can be concluded that those people who adapted to life in lowlands and are active in their barangay are politically active. Those who are set on returning to Mount Pinatubo are not interested in political decision-making. Most LAKAS inhabitants often return to Mount Pinatubo to work on their land, and also because they feel the most at home there.

The development of competencies within the cultural dimension can be observed in theatre workshops. These methods develop an awareness of their way of life. They try present the knowledge they have and their culture to others (in the Philippines and abroad).

Narrating tales about their experiences of discrimination is important for their cultural identity. We can hear many stories about discrimination, as told by Carol D. Jugatan, Epang Domulot, Roselyn J. Cabalic. They experienced a significant deal of mocking from young people, but they never felt discriminated against by schoolteachers. Carol D. Jugatan said that classmates at school said she was 'like a monkey.' This remark refers to the fact that the Aeta have a close connection to nature and have dark curly hair. Classmates also laughed at them when they had difficulties with the Tagalog language, but they also

spoke and pronounced Zambal in a different way. She said that at university the situation was better, since the professors presented the Aeta as a special group.

The social dimension is intertwined with the cultural and political one. The main purpose of community education in LAKAS is to integrate the indigenous migrants from Mount Pinatubo into the local population and to combat social exclusion. They also try to present their activities to other inhabitants of Zambales and Pampanga: for example, they sell their products in Botolan; the theatre performance that was created as a result of a theatre workshop was intended to be presented at a local festival and at the festival of theatre groups of the province of Zambales.

The LAKAS community is connected with certain non-governmental organisations that help them, and with some non-Aeta inhabitants who work with them, such as, for example, Helen A. Abarra, who lives in the community with her family, although none of them are Aeta. They have established connections with Australian aborigines. In their library, they have quite a significant amount of material that bears witness to the collaboration of the Aeta with Australian aborigines. Such connections are beneficial for them, as they face similar problems (such as problems regarding land ownership). They would like to protect their land, so they negotiate with the authorities. They would like authorities to prepare an official document for them, testifying to their ownership of the territory on which they once lived on Mount Pinatubo, so that they may return if they wish. The LAKAS community, therefore, strives to negotiate with state bodies and the knowledge that they acquire through education in both of the mentioned programmes is useful in this process.

In discussions with Noel Domulot, we learned that the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act is not completely clear. All Aeta communities meet and exchange experiences, since they have similar problems related to land. They have a subordinate position in relation to the state, as their property ownership rights on Mount Pinatubo are not protected.

## **Connectedness and solidarity**

Members of the community are very much connected and they work for the common benefit of all, which is evident in various actions. One of the reports contained a note that Epang Domulot received a monetary award at a literary competition for the best essay on experiences related to the Pinatubo volcano eruption. She dedicated the whole sum to the schooling of children from the community. In the annual report for the period October 2000 – September 2001 she proposed that an important factor in the functioning of the community was their working as a team as ‘they only survived by standing side-by-side and helping each other’ (Annual reports of the Lakas community 1999-2008).

Jerlyn, a teacher of children, says how she noticed that children were idle at home, yet they did not want to attend a state school, so she started teaching. She teaches to bring education closer to local children, as she knows that at a school organised within the community, they will feel better, and after such an experience of school, they will be able to join the formal school system.

Noel Domulot tells a story about an Aeta lawyer from the LAKAS community

who sold their land, and now there are mines open in that area; this was greatly resented by the community. 'He was ensnared by money,' says Noel. 'It is unfair of him not to work for the benefit of the community' (From discussions with Noel Domulot, March 2008). This is an example of a lack of solidarity, which members of the community dislike and find inappropriate.

## **Economic dimension**

Members of the LAKAS community mostly work in the fields. They grow various crops that they later sell. Women sell organic soaps, detergents and other products and thus earn some money. Economic emancipation is evident in the actions of individual women who, by making baskets, flutes and beds, try to earn some additional money. They supplemented the knowledge they already had with techniques that enable them, for example, to make longer-lasting soap.

Every morning, Tubag Jugatan goes to work to Botolan. Non-Aeta inhabitants, such as Helen Abarra, are employed as ALS programme coordinators. Her daughter works in the local hospital as a nurse. We did not identify any other LAKAS inhabitants who went to work outside of their community. Every day, they work in the fields and grow crops for the community and the market.

## **Conclusion**

The forms of non-formal education in the LAKAS community have the characteristics of community education, and are led by non-governmental organisations and active individuals. All non-formal educational activities are organised so that they are adapted to the Aeta, particularly in regards to the methods of their execution. Most educational activities are conducted by people from the Aeta community. The LAKAS community has a well-structured programme of non-formal education that covers various age groups (a kindergarten, a school for children and two adult programmes). In the programmes, they use their native language, Zambal. We can confirm that their characteristics make them similar to the ideas discussed by Freire, which is evident at three levels: emphasis is placed on local education and the use of methods that bring education closer to all groups, particularly those who would otherwise not experience it; education is organised for community leaders and groups of people primarily with the purpose of solving common problems; they follow a "community action-based approach", developed in Freire's culture circles with the intention of connecting educational activities with efforts to build a democratic and inclusive community.

On account of their acquired literacy, people can become actively involved in political life. Education helps them fight for their own local community, connects people within a community and assists them to realise their interests.

Filipinos are distrustful of politicians because of negative previous experiences (Ferdinand Marcos, Estrada, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo). They find the political system extremely distant; they are the most familiar with the local organisation of the barangays. There is where their people and their lives are; they see an opportunity to realise their interests there, so it is vital that community education takes place in barangays.

The children's programme is intended to encourage children to enter the formal school system, which children mainly avoid on account of experiences of discrimination. Within the Alternative Learning System, children's literacy and their motivation to return or to enter formal primary schools are supported. Because of their specific lifestyle, the Aeta have problems in wider Philippine society, so inclusion in the formal education system presents quite an effort for them, particularly because they feel discriminated against. The existence of discrimination may be one of the reasons for the development of community education within the LAKAS community.

Community education can also foster isolation due to its alternative nature. Community education was developed because of the people's need to adapt to changes more easily, but it can also mean closing themselves within their own group, since the education takes place within a closed community. Social integration is particularly mentioned by the children's teacher who wanted the children to go to a formal school and thus become part of the wider social community and life in Zambales.

The non-formal education system is the community's responsibility; it seems that the state transferred this responsibility mostly because it is cheaper owing to the large amount of voluntary work required. It is clear that community education is extremely valuable; therefore, professionally qualified teachers should also be involved in order to continue its development.

The non-formal education system assists in the development of a sense of *empowerment* and helps them take care of their common interests. The activities of the individual are primarily focused on the community and its welfare. Education gives them the ability to protect their land. Information in the article entitled *Aetas finally granted ownership* (Mennen A. Valdez 2010) testifies to the fact that the Aeta have succeeded in protecting their land at Pinatubo.

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## Povzetek

Raziskava o praksi neformalnega izobraževanja pri filipinskih staroselcih Aeta, ki so zaradi izbruha vulkana postali migranti, kaže na pomen modelov skupnostnega izobraževanja pri vključevanju migrantov v družbo in predvsem na pomen opismenjevanja. Skupnostno izobraževanje, ki se razvija pri Aeta, se je inspiriralo z modelom danskih ljudskih visokih šol in Freirejevo pedagogiko zatiranih. Pri pripravi programov sledijo principu fleksibilnosti in inkluzivnosti. Ugotovitve analize neformalnega izobraževanja, ki je potekala v sklopu terenske raziskave na Filipinih, kažejo, da je program opismenjevanja integriran v skupnostno izobraževanje in delovanje, ki spodbuja inkluzivnost okolja za staroselce s pomočjo izobraževanja. Prek tega pa spodbuja razvoj aktivnega državljanstva, razvoj skupnosti in ohranjanje Aeta kulture.

**Ključne besede:** skupnostno izobraževanje, neformalno izobraževanje, Aeta, Zambales, para-učitelji

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