COMMUNITY EXTENSION PROGRAMS AMONG SELECTED STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, AND PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A CASE OF BUKIDNON

Section A-Research paper

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the implementation of community extension programs among selected State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It utilized the descriptive research design, specifically the Interpretative Phenomenology and Grounded Theory approaches. The province of Bukidnon was the location of the study. The researcher conducted the face-to-face interview and participated by six informants identified as the head of the office, those in charge, or the coordinator implementing extension programs. The researcher determined the sample size in a saturation manner. The processes of Grounded Theory, such as *Open coding, Axial coding, Selective coding*, and *Theory,* were used to record, transcribe and afterward analyse statements. The study revealed the following significant themes: *The Purpose of Community Extension, Challenges in the Implementation, Addressing Challenges in the Implementation, Best Practices, and The Essence of the Experiences.* In addition, the study pointed out that several implications for implementing extension programs were public service, fostering partnership, sustainable development, and enhanced experiences. The study also shows a relationship between policymakers, educators, and communities. Finally, the results generated an Extension Sustainability Theory brought about by *social, economic, and political factors.*

Keywords: *Community Extension, State Universities and Colleges, Private Higher Education Institutions, Interpretative Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Bukidnon*

INTRODUCTION

Education nowadays demands higher and best quality instruction. It should equip all learners with the abilities they need to be economically productive, create sustainable livelihoods, support peaceful, democratic societies, and improve individual wellbeing. Along with this, community extension programs were created among selected state universities and colleges, and private higher education institutions based on the experiences, challenges encountered, strategies, and best practices they faced, in the case of Bukidnon. These programs, such as livelihood, education, and basic social services, were now incorporated into their academic educational requirements to satisfy the mandate of the Commission on Higher Education.

Quitoras, M. C. L. & Abuso, J. E. (2021). Pursuant to the pertinent and existing provisions of the Commission on Higher Education all State Universities and Colleges and Private Higher Education Institutions are mandated to implement the three fundamental functions of the HEIs. These three fundamental functions are instruction, research and extension. In all HEIs, faculty members are regarded as the front liners in carrying out the implementation of these functions. These three-fold functions, through evolving convergence and interaction, helped to strengthen the structure of society using community development and involvement.

Magnayel R.P. & Ylagan A.P (2021). The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) requires colleges and universities to provide educational and public services to the community. Under CHED Memorandum Order 52, series of 2016, the Commission has begun re-directing extension activities. According to the new extension policy, HEIs are strategically positioned to cooperate with communities, enterprises, and industries to transmit information or technology in some developmental regions. In line with the Commission's thrust to mobilize knowledge and technology empowerment, SUCs and HEIs had been actively conducting research and extension programs and projects. These extension programs mainly were technology and knowledge transfer and application. Many people in our country still do not have adequate access to appropriate education and training, contributing to the ever-widening social disparities plaguing most low and middle-income nations. As a consequence of this issue, persons either need to possess the skills necessary to obtain a job or refrain from engaging in activities requiring entrepreneurial initiative.

Carinugan J.T. & Brillantes A.B Jr. (2020). All higher education institutions are governed by and subject to state laws. Republic Act 7722, also known as the Higher Education Act of 1994, established the CHED, responsible for developing and carrying out policies, plans, and programs for the growth and effective functioning of the nation's higher education system. This community extension program's activities will promote partner communities' welfare, development, and empowerment. The characterization finds its bearing in the four pillars: strengthened partnerships, programmed activities, empowered communities, and social responsibility. The practical value generated is to create self-employment opportunities and supplement the family income of the beneficiaries, develop people's empowerment for the poor sector of the society, uplift the standard of living of the people in the community, and develop social awareness and responsibility among the students and faculty.

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In the case of Bukidnon, one of the most remote provinces in the Philippines, the local situation is that they have difficulty accessing the essential social services and livelihood they need. Some may have already experienced such government service, but not all were given. It is known that the province's quality of life is simple. With this, the community wants more access to primary education knowledge, livelihood opportunities, and essential social services. They need to be helped in order to uplift their lives. In addition, they need full support from the stakeholders to improve their lives by taking advantage of jobs, training, business opportunities, and social services offered by private or government agencies. In realization, Bukidnon is considered a rural, remote community that needs extension programs to help them commit to decent living.

Community extension programs can be closely connected to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These community extension programs adhere to some of the seventeen (17) global goals established by the United Nations on various social and economic issues to achieve sustainable development worldwide. Some of these goals were as follows: No Poverty, Quality Education, Decent Work, Economic Growth, and Partnerships for the Goals. Furthermore, these Sustainable Development Goals aim to bring about global transformation. It is a call to action to alleviate poverty, giving free and quality education, livelihood, economic growth, and partnership to stakeholders. One of its objectives is to eliminate extreme poverty for everyone by the year 2030. These goals can be accomplished by providing the community with training and extension programs that improve their way of life. Programs that can assist the community in generating revenue on their own, with the support of a project, and in collaboration with the local government unit. The community, state universities, colleges, and private higher education institutions must collaborate to benefit the community. Therefore, this study adheres also to the country's global target of ending extreme poverty.

Gonzales, A.C., and Maghamil, C.W. (2009) mentioned that although the extension service in the Philippines was structured into a national system in 1952, it was initially conducted during the Spanish rule. Community extension program as a comprehensive collection of actions designed to affect a series of results in the targeted communities. They make it clear that a program consists of multiple workshops or activities. Extension programs are distinguished by, among other things, a focus on the needs of the target audience, the intention to influence participant learning and behavior outcomes, extensive activities, and a thorough evaluation.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a company's share of helping people and the environment through community outreach projects. It means putting social issues into how a business works and going above and beyond what the law requires helping communities. Through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), it is being emphasized as a marketing tool. Corporate social responsibility in marketing involves attracting stakeholders who want to make a positive difference with their experiences. Many organizations use socially responsible marketing to offer experiences that benefit the community. The concept of social responsibility holds that businesses should be good citizens, balancing their money-making operations with activities that benefit society, whether local, national, or global. CSR can help the community of a particular municipality and open the possibility of expanding the existing business.

Moreover, community extension initiatives will also teach people how to develop products or services to make a living, providing them with the possibility of becoming

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entrepreneurs as well. The livelihood projects will introduce green economy and entrepreneurial business concepts through extension initiatives of the institution. This concept brings about an improvement in the well-being of humans as well as social equality, while concurrently bringing about a substantial reduction in environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

Business administration emphasizes the significance of CSR, which involves businesses taking responsibility for their impact to the community. Implementing community extension programs is a way for businesses to fulfil their social responsibilities and positively contribute to the communities in which they operate. Community extension programs could develop Strategic Business Units (SBU's) for the company. In connection with this, corporate social responsibility and the possibility of business expansion will be considered. Significant experience and challenges in creating extension programs are the budgetary requirements needed to implement the project. It will be successful if both parties are involved, such as the education institutions and the community, with the support of the LGU in partnership for the common good.

The researchers' enthusiasm and perseverance, together with their prior research-related experiences, will be their critical tools for completing this task. The researcher is from Bukidnon who has observed success stories of extension programs in the province. Before joining the academe, the researcher worked in various private industries and government organizations. Through these experiences, the researcher realized that the best quality education involves not only formal instructions but also the development of skills and talents through extension programs and services that will benefit the community, enriching their abilities and potentials in informal ways. The researcher wants to explore the experiences, challenges encountered, strategies, and best practices of these different state universities, colleges, and private higher education institutions.

Finally, it will reveal the determinants of experiences, challenges encountered, strategies, and best practices among selected State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). As a result, it will be the basis of generating an emergent theory. In many aspects, the researcher seeks to discover best practices for the function of school extension administrators in creating extension programs. This research will add to our understanding of several fields, especially how higher education institutions and other community stakeholders use extension programs. The researcher is very optimistic about the success of this scholarly undertaking.

Atheoretical Stance. In the qualitative part of this dissertation, the researcher employed a naturalistic approach and followed an atheoretical stance vis-à-vis the phenomenon of interest. The researcher will not anchor the qualitative research to any framework and suspended a priori conceptualization that might bias the collection and analysis of data. Therefore, the identification of theories and review of related literature and studies will be made at the end of the study.

Philosophical Stance. In undertaking this research study, the researcher agrees to the underlying philosophical assumptions, while bringing to the study his own worldviews that end up shaping the direction of his study. Creswell (2012) describes the following four philosophical assumptions that he will observe in the conduct of this study: *Ontological* (The nature of reality): This relates to the nature of reality and its

characteristics. As an actor of this study the researcher embraced the idea of multiple realities and reported on these multiple realities by exploring multiple forms of evidence from different individuals' perspectives and experiences of the selected informal sectors, therefore the researcher needed to bracket out his personal belief and interpretations. *Epistemological* (How researchers know what they know): The researcher and the selected informal sector participants are dependent on each other; therefore, interactions are necessary in order to obtain rich information from the participants. Subjective evidence is assembled based on individual views from research conducted in the field. *Axiological* (The role of values in research): The researcher makes his values known in the study and actively reports his values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field. The researcher therefore should provide a thick description. *Methodology* (The methods used in the process of research): The researcher will use inductive, emerging, and shape his experiences in collecting and analyzing the data.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted, the research instrument utilized, the data collection procedures, the ethical considerations, and the data analysis. Grounded Theory and Interpretative Phenomenology were the approaches the researcher used to understand better and appreciate how community extension was implemented in SUCs and private HEIs. The researcher used Interpretative Phenomenology and Grounded Theory approaches because both played important roles in the study. As a process, the researcher used Interpretative Phenomenology as the methodological and philosophical method in initiating my point of view. Then, the researcher utilized the Grounded Theory to generate the Theory. Specifically, in Interpretative Phenomenology, the researcher did the thinking process of reflection and interview to arrive at insights into experiences. While at the same time, the researcher utilized a grounded theory-building process to analyze the data and generate a theory based on the data gathered. IP and GT are qualitative designs with subtle methodological differences (Esguerra A.G., 2023). However, when taken individually and combined, it would lead to possibilities, explaining why IP and GT were utilized. The study was conducted on selected State Universities and Colleges and private Higher Education Institutions in Bukidnon. The Province of Bukidnon is a rural area in Northern Mindanao. It is famous for having a pleasant climate relative to its higher altitude and great mountain ranges. The communities are well-known to have seven tribes of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and disadvantaged communities. Per the year 2022 records of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Region X, where the area of Bukidnon is located. The following are the data collected: 15 out of 33 State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), 2 out of 11 Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), and 15 out of 65 private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region X are all located in Bukidnon. The key informants for this study were six (6) selected schools from State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It consists of two (2) from State Universities, one (1) from State College, and three (3) from private HEIs. Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) are excluded from this study because the two LUCs still need to implement extension

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programs in the area, and this study primarily focuses on SUCs and HEIs only. These informants were all located in the Province of Bukidnon. Only one (1) School President/Administrator or Vice-President for Research and Extension or Extension Program Coordinator knowledgeable in implementing their community extension programs or projects and services represented these schools. These informants were purposely chosen based on the Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. Here, the researcher selected, identified, and determined who would be the informants and allowed them to participate. Six informants were intentionally chosen for this analysis: the head, the person in charge, or the extension program coordinator implementing community extension programs. These informants were selected based on the inclusion-exclusion criteria that served as the basis for selection. The instruments involved in this study were the researcher, interview guide questions used, and the hired rapporteur. The researcher facilitated the informants' questions, answers, and discussions throughout the face-to-face interview. The interview lasted for 20–30 minutes, depending on the degree of information shared by the informants. The researcher used an interview guide with open-ended questions to elicit more information and revelations from the informants. The hired rapporteur recorded and took notes on the informants' important points. After the researcher and rapporteur finished the interviews, they prepared the transcriptions for analysis. The researcher sent a letter of application to the Graduate School of Business for approval before conducting the data gathering for this study. Upon approval, the study underwent technical, content, and ethical reviews in compliance with standards. The issuance of a Notice to Proceed NTP commenced the selection of informants. The informants were purposely selected to participate in the study. The researcher submitted a letter requesting permission to conduct the study to the respective school presidents or heads for approval of the chosen informants. Once approved, the researcher communicated with the informants through phone calls, text, Facebook Messenger, and email. Once the informants signified participation, the researcher interviewed them personally. Furthermore, before the interview started, the researcher relayed the informed consent to the informants to ensure their voluntary participation. During data collection, the researcher briefed the informants concerning the intent, purpose, and data analysis procedure. The researcher explained to the informants that the interview process followed ethical standards for them to express their experiences and stories confidently and without hesitation. With the aid of a rapporteur, the researcher achieved the documentation process by audio recorded and notes taken. Finally, the researcher transmitted the transcribed data for proper classification. The researcher analyzed the data and provided codes and themes. At the end of this study, the researcher destroyed all of the records, as required by ethical rules. In this qualitative analysis, the steps of the Grounded Theory approach: Open coding, Axial coding, Selective coding, and Theory, were utilized in this study. To code the data, the researcher performed a word-by-word analysis. In Open Coding, the researcher conducts a line-by-line analysis of the data. The researcher noted, highlighted, and put into first categories as Sub Themes. Here, the researcher started to theorize and reflect on what transpired from informants' data that constantly compared and looked for a particular pattern. In Axial Coding (Subthemes), at this point, the researcher identified connections and relationships between the codes and later on categorized them as Themes. The researcher explores how different concepts interact with others. In Selective Coding (Themes), the researcher carefully related the

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core category, which was found to all other types. The researcher correctly classified and verified the relationship between Themes to discover a Grounded Theory. Theory (Grounded Theory)– the core category (Themes) served as the basis for the created Theory. The researcher ensured that the core category considered the data connections that explain the phenomena to the informants' experiences leading to a constructed theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis and interpretation of data based on the results of the study which was collected through face-to-face interview, recorded audio, and transcriptions being analyzed using the qualitative approaches, and results are presented through themes as follows; The Purpose of Community Extension, Challenges in the Implementation, Addressing Challenges in the Implementation, Best Practices and The Essence of the Experiences.

THEME 1. THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY EXTENSION

Community extension programs have always had good intentions. It is to help the community, especially people experiencing poverty or being indigent. It was also noted that this province is home to indigenous people who needed help. As stated in the CHED memorandum circular, the threefold functions of higher education institutions are Instruction, Research, and Extension. Community extension programs were implemented for these purposes: *Extending Help to the Community Based on the Needs Assessment Results, The Functions of the Higher Education*, and *Meeting the Needs of the Community.*

Subtheme 1: Extending Help to the Community Based on the Needs Assessment Results. As human beings, we have the heart to help the community we live in. Looking at the difficulties and hardships in the everyday lives of our fellow human beings, we intend to help them. Here, the informant at her position now and the institution she worked for has the capacity and responsibility to help the people, knowing that most of them were disadvantaged and indigenous, and known to experience poverty. In helping the community, the implementers should have a needs assessment plan and based on the results it has to be addressed in accordance to their needs and wants of the adopted community. According to informant 3, she said: *"...So as a corporate social responsibility, we are giving back to the community.* Sermona, N.L., Talili, I., Enguito, et al. (2020). The most practical way a public institution can fulfil its accountability to taxpayers is through community extension programs. It is about how to give back to society what the government or the people expect from SUCs or private HEIs. The intention is to showcase corporate and social responsibility.

Subtheme 2: The Functions of the Higher Education. According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) memorandum, all higher education institutions should have implemented the three-fold function in their respective schools: Instruction, Research, and Extension. They must follow these pronouncements for them to pass the evaluation

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and monitoring. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is taking seriously the implementation of these threefold functions to be implemented in all institutions of higher education because doing so is also following the mandate of their office. Informant 1, mentioned that: "*… Implementing in such a way that it is a requirement for CHED during evaluation because the Commission higher education needs to have an extension service for each and every institution."* Sermona, N.L, Talili I, Enguito, et.al (2020). SUCs and private HEIs must perform a trilogy of functions, including instruction, research, and extension services. Instruction, considered its primary function, delivers knowledge and skills to students. On the other hand, research focuses on creating fresh theories and methods for society and the university to use. According to CMO No. 46, s. 2012, *"to provide focused support to the research required for technological innovation, economic growth, and global competitiveness, and crafting the country's strategic directions and policies,"* CMO No. 46, s. 2012, stipulates that one of the missions of the Philippine Higher Education System is to help improve Filipinos' quality of human life, respond effectively to changing societal needs and conditions, and provide solutions to problems at the local community, regional, and national levels. Extension Programs are a primary duty of universities and colleges; hence, state university and college assessments contain measurements or indicators of their breadth and efficiency.

Subtheme 3: Meeting the Needs of the community. Every person belongs to the community, and every community has different cultures, lifestyles, and everyday needs. One community's needs differ from those of other communities, especially when it involves Seven Tribes. Here, community extension programs must follow the people's needs. The programs should be addressing what the community needs and wants. To help these people uplift their ways of life, the extension services and programs should fit what they desire. It is essential to do needs assessments or feasibility studies before implementing any projects or programs intended to benefit the community, especially when the funding source is a grant from the government, a private organization, or even the school. It must be done to ensure that the programs put into action will be a good use of money. Informant 2, also shared: *"… With this community extension, we want to adhere to the needs of the community and how we can help them. ""… We employ needs assessment to capture their needs."* Uy Jr, R. & Arendain, J.R. (2023). Needs assessment is a systematic procedure that involves seeing what the community needs to determine the current state of its resources. It relates to the assessment's main concern, goal, or aim. Understanding a community's needs implies the effective implementation of programs and the development of more services. As the starting point for improving community life, assessing its needs is crucial.

THEME 2. CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION
It is not easy for every school to have its extension programs because of the challenges. There are hurdles that they confront for each initiative that they put into action, from getting started to the most significant challenge of all: the lack of funding— in terms of monetary and human resources. In summary these challenges include as follows: *Difficulty to Start, Limited School Budget Allocation and Limited Skills of Staffs.*

Subtheme 1: Difficulty to Start. In every program the school implemented, the beginning operations were quite challenging. It would be best to look at all aspects to ensure that the programs will continue running and have a sustainable existence, especially the community's acceptance. After knowing the challenges of adopting every culture, the implementers should see its acceptability.   Here, adaptability and cultural acceptance are essential. For the project and programs to be sustainable and successful for the people, it must be entirely accepted and embraced by all cultures. Informant 3 shared: "*…We have also the struggle in community acceptance at the start. Because of different tribes. Other tribes may accept the program … the other tribe may not, so it is very difficult to start a project.*"

Sermona, N.L., Talili, I., Enguito, et al. (2020). One challenge extensionists encounter in community extension program implementation is the need for more cooperation from the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries may not be interested in the programs implemented in their communities because of resistance, including intentions, motivations, or a fear of change.

Subtheme 2: Limited School Budget Allocation

The school budget has a purpose and needs to be aligned with every vital function. The function of the school is for academic and administrative purposes. Luckily, some schools have budgets for corporate social responsibility and extensions, but others don't, so they need more funds for extra activities such as extension projects. It is good to say that government funds for some schools are available, but it also takes a long time. It is unfortunate to report that the implementations of the community extension program always have extra funds to spend. Even if the school is required to execute the program, they may choose to implement it only if they have extra and sufficient funding. Their primary concern is the various academic offerings they provide. The least important things are the additional services and the extension projects.

According to informant 3 she said: " *…So, aside from that, we don't have a budget or financial resources, enough for having extension programs.*"

Sermona, N.L., Talili, I., Enguito, et al. (2020). Financial and budget allocations from the school are not enough to implement extension programs. However, if the university can justify and provide the budget to extension programs, it would be advantageous to the extension implementers. Given the difficulties in budgeting and the lack of support from the school or the administration, it isn't easy to handle extension services.

Subtheme 3: Limited Skills of Staffs

The acquisition of knowledge and experience is of critical significance for every single member of staff working for the organization. It is an essential component of the staff development program, and the institutions must adhere to it. When an institution invests in skills training for its workers, that investment will pay dividends by increasing their productivity and illuminating their abilities. If a person or organization can develop their skill set in these areas, it will be easier for them to achieve their full potential. Employees need to improve their personal growth and learn more skills through training in order to do their jobs effectively. If an expert shares their expertise and experience with the staff through training, their abilities can be improved, and their extension service implementation will be successful.

Furthermore, informant 3, confirmed: *"… In the office I have limited staff to focus on extension. They have also limited skills and trainings attended to assist in the project implementation."*

Sermona, N.L., Talili, I., Enguito, et al. (2020). In the case of community extensionist challenges, they include low faculty motivations, limited skills and training, multiple responsibilities, and a low budget given to extension services. Prioritizing the skills of implementers is important, as they are the front-liners in implementing the programs; without their skills and knowledge, the extensionists can't perform well.

THEME 3. ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION

The challenges encountered in implementing extension services were significant and needed to be addressed. These challenges are the difficulties the institution faces in its project implementation. They have identified the problems when creating strategies. The strategies to address these challenges were *Benchmarking with Other Schools, Partnership with LGU, and Provide Staff Skills Training & Development.*

Subtheme 1: Benchmarking with Other Schools. Benchmarking is the process of comparing a school's performance to institutional standards or best practices. It entails selecting the best practices, strategies, procedures, and results. Through benchmarking, schools can discover their strengths and weaknesses, set performance targets, and improve. There must be collaboration in implementing programs so that each school will know how to start a program or project that the community will accept. Each school has to visit its partner colleges and universities to understand what programs apply to different cultures. With this, Informant 1, revealed*: "…We are accommodating other SUC's or other schools for to do benchmarking activities for the benefit of each school.* Moralista, R.B.; Rueda, R.B.; et al. (2022). Community engagement efforts, using benchmarking as the foundation for its community service program, are successful. It assists in assessing the current system of extension programs and services. Implementing extension programs for the school's recognized community may help elevate the community's standing and develop appropriate activities by benchmarking economic and livelihood initiatives to establish a baseline for community extension programs.

Subtheme 2: Partnership with LGU, Students, Non-Teaching Personnel, Linkages and Alumni. A partnership is always the best way to establish a connection. These stakeholders include LGU, students, non-teaching personnel, private and government agencies, linkages and alumni. The connection can lead to an agreement that benefits everyone. Establishing clear communication channels is crucial when considering forming a partnership with a local government unit (LGU). An excellent relationship founded on trust values is essential to achieving successful cooperation goals. Establishing a Memorandum of Agreement, or MOA, between the schools and the Local Government Unit binds them to produce a good program that can benefit everyone in the community. The LGU will provide a financial counterpart for the implementation of the project, bridging the gap of financial insufficiency. Informant 1 said; *"…As an extension partner, LGU provides financial shares to the implementation of our community*

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extension programs for the benefits also of their constituents.".. Mores LS, Lee J, Bae W. (2019). The partnership between the university and the Local Government Unit (LGU) provides opportunities for collaboration and meaningful engagement with community partners to promote sustainable community development. On the other hand, LGUs have more financial resources than universities. Local universities and private HEIs were determined to be uniquely suited to meet the technical and human resource needs of LGUs. Significantly, though, partnership experience considerably influenced both parties in making informed decisions. So, before forming a partnership, it is essential to set realistic goals and expectations for both partners and lay the foundation for a long-term partnership between the university and the LGU. To this end, policies that strengthen partnership institutionalization, funding and systematic monitoring and evaluation systems can enhance the future value of such collaborations.

Subtheme 3: Provide Staff Skills Training & Development. Staff skills training and development are how we can boost employee performance, innovation, and talent to have a quality workforce that can meet the future demands of institutions. The personnel should be provided with local, regional, and even national training. These skills training will help enhance their confidence, skills, and learning of different concepts of extension services, all of which can lead to personal development if appropriately utilized. Informant 4, mentioned: *"…Yes, trainings and development should be given to our staffs in order for them to perform well."* Sermona, N.L., Talili, I., Enguito, et al. (2020). One problem in implementing community extension is the skills of the extensionist. The management needs to capacitate the extensionists through training or mentoring to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to extension service implementers. The management should have continuous capability-building activities for extension implementers.

THEME 4. BEST PRACTICES

The term "Best practices" refers to the methods or approaches determined to be the most successful and efficient in implementing a program. They are strategies, methods, or procedures that produce consistently excellent results. Among the schools implementing community extensions they have these best practices as follows: *Creation of Social Media Accounts, Official University Publication and Radio Station, Livelihood and Income Generation, and Campus Expansions.*

Subtheme 1: Disseminate Information to the Public. Public information dissemination refers to sharing relevant information with the general public that is accessible, understandable, and readily available to ordinary people. Social media nowadays is very rampant when getting information. The information is just one click away from our social media accounts; we know everything. With these social media accounts and pages, information dissemination is very easy. Another way to disseminate information is through the school's official university publication. In addition, there is a radio station in the school. This radio station broadcasts updated school activities, especially extension projects, that will inform our listeners and stakeholders about what is happening to our school. Our stakeholders are eager to learn about the extension services our school has implemented. These kinds of information dissemination will give pride promotions to our

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schools, boosting good reputations and leading to goodwill. Informant 1 further expressed: *"... Creating social media can reach out stakeholders and communities in the Philippines and abroad with a great wide of information dissemination." "...The official newsletter of the University Extension to showcase information activities conducted by the office." "... Lastly, our radio station is one of our best practices to inform the community what are activities in reaching out the community."* Quitoras, M. C. L. & Abuso, J. E. (2021). HEIs can nurture their culture by learning from the best practices of selected HEIs. These best management practices give HEIs a great chance of fulfilling their functions. The best practices of selected higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines regarding the development of culture help academic leaders formulate policies and motivate their faculty members to be engaged. When hiring extension project leaders, it's important to find someone from a reputable institution so they can share their best practices.

Sub-theme 2: Livelihood and Income Generation
The most crucial impact community extension programs can have on people is livelihood and income creation. With these, they can be helped to stand alone without always asking for help from the government or other people. They can now create their own products and sell it to the market, then earn an income. Giving also the opportunity to uplift their way of living. In terms of extension programs, a successful experience would be one in which assistance was provided to community members, such as farmers, to improve the quality of their lives. They might be satisfied with their socioeconomic rank if they are given awareness and the opportunity to progress. Informant 2, explained: **"...** *They can also gain income from the livelihood we are giving to them such as coffee growing. Among the coffee growers, they have their middleman to buy their products and sell it to the market.* Uy Jr, R. & Arendain, J.R. (2023). Livelihood is vital to generating sufficient income to sustain the community's requirements. The community requires a higher standard of living resulting from increased domestic income, business expansion, and stable employment. The community identifies that it requires an additional source of income to uplift its status, emphasizing the need for livelihood. Valle, L. Costam, E et. Al (2022). Community extension programs that build capacity and teach entrepreneurship can reduce community poverty. The implementers will train the community to gain income by providing a livelihood by creating products. With this, community extension program participants who emphasize capacity building and entrepreneurship become entrepreneurs. The results thoroughly confirm that promoting livelihood and income generation uplifts the community's standard of living.

Sub-theme 3: Campus Expansions. All students want schools that are near their neighborhood. They don't want to be away from their parents and relatives while studying. As much as possible, they finished their studies with their loved ones. Improvement is the very essence of campus expansion and conversions. The school should have many campuses in order to cater to all the school community's needs. Satellite campuses are ways of reaching them so they can become professionals by attending formal classes. The establishment of a campus, its conversion, or its expansion is the most impressive example of a best practice by an educational institution. The school has the potential to assist many students in avoiding a life of illiteracy. It is

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possible that providing high-quality education and trying to reach students even in outlying areas will have a more significant positive influence.   In addition, informant 1 shared: "...*Convert into state college? Yes. For example, one is DDOSC. If you're familiar with the Davao de Oro State College DDOSC. That was a former extension campus of our campus.".* Rubio, J.A. M.A., Pentinio, C.V.P., et al. (2016). The school or organization uses the funds for a specific purpose, such as expansion activities and strengthening the quality of the projects or programs implemented. Satisfaction measures the number of services and needs; it connotes success. These expansions could be improvements, enhancements, or institutional developments.

THEME 5. THE ESSENCE OF THE EXPERIENCES

The essence of experience means going beyond satisfying one's life. It encompasses direct interaction, observation, and personal improvement. These include the following subthemes: *A Sense of Fulfilment, Compassion for The Community and Experience New Culture.*

Sub-Theme 1: A Sense of Fulfilment

When one achieves something worthwhile or aligned with their values and objectives, they feel a strong sense of fulfillment. The feeling that one's labor, deeds, or pursuits have produced meaning, satisfaction, and personal fulfillment. Based on the experiences shared by the informants, they feel fulfilled when they can help the people in the community. They will be proud to serve and help the community. They are more encouraged to work with and serve others because they are fulfilled.

Informant 2 revealed: *"... It just gives a sense of fulfilment, but that you have the same focus. You have the same objective; you have the same purpose and that is to help the people in the community."*

Pizaña, A.D. Pizaña, R.E. & et al. (2021). The implementation of community extension programs is greatly challenging yet contributes to a lot of meaningful realizations. It is very fulfilling, even without recognition. When the community or the clients appreciate the relevant service the extensionist has accomplished, it gives them much honor and pride.

Sub-Theme 2: Compassion for the community

Love should be our primary motivation for whatever we do throughout our lives. Those who pour their hearts into their efforts for the community will find the most success. They will never complain and will comply with whatever demands are placed on them, regardless of the difficulty. For this expression of the informant, what they are aiming for is to serve. They will be much more fulfilled if they love their work. Uplifting the life status of indigent and indigenous people gives them the compassion to serve and love the community they serve. For the love of the community, they will offer a lot.

According to informant 5, **"** *...The love for the work for the community. "*

Pizaña, A.D. Pizaña, R.E. & et al. (2021). Commitment and dedication are the foremost characteristics of an extensionist. They love the clients and the community, and service is also vital. The challenges they faced as implementers were a light burden when they talked about caring for the people and the community with passion and compassion. Before starting the extension program, the service must be dedicated, humble, and hardworking.

Sub-Theme 3: Experience New Culture

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The Province of Bukidnon has an abundance of varied cultures. It is the home of famous tribes namely: Talaandig, Higa-onion, Bukidnon, Umayamnon, Matigsalug, Manobo, and Tigwahanon. They have different kinds of cultures and rituals. Other practices may or may not be the same as one, so it is nice to embrace the culture. In addition, the programs and education system must fit their culture. Finally, when it comes to knowing the very famous IPs, you will find them in the province. The community extension projects usually involve seven tribes of Indigenous Peoples, or IPs, prioritizing them as privileged people.

Informant 5, expressed; *"...To understand their culture. Our educational system fit for the community."*

Rojas-Garcia, E., & Ruiz-Ballesteros, E. (2018). Discovering culture in many ways connotes different societal challenges. Challenges in culturally varied nations imply various strategies to implement and engage community tactics to adhere to possible outcomes that could improve the community. Knowing and determining its various aspects would ultimately uncover realizations.

THEORY GENERATED

The emergent theory generated is an ***Extension Sustainability Theory***. This theory was based on careful analysis of this study and the propositions made. ***Extension Sustainability Theory*** is a theory for sustaining community extension programs that foster community engagement. It involves purpose, challenges encountered, strategies implemented, best practices, and the essence of experience. This theory postulates that it is an outcome of social, economic and political factors*.*

The factors influence and affect the implementation of community extension program:

1. Social Factors - These relate to the community's residents' cultural norms, values, and beliefs—this influences how people think and interact with one another. Social factors are events or situations that impact people's way of life and well-being.

2. Economic Factors- *These* factors refer to the conditions and variables related to the financial aspects of an individual, organization, or society. Moreover, these factors affect the economy, including income, livelihood, and governmental activities.

3. Political Factors- These factors encompass the influences and dynamics of governmental institutions, policies, and processes on individuals, organizations, and societies. Government policies and actions are what drive political factors.

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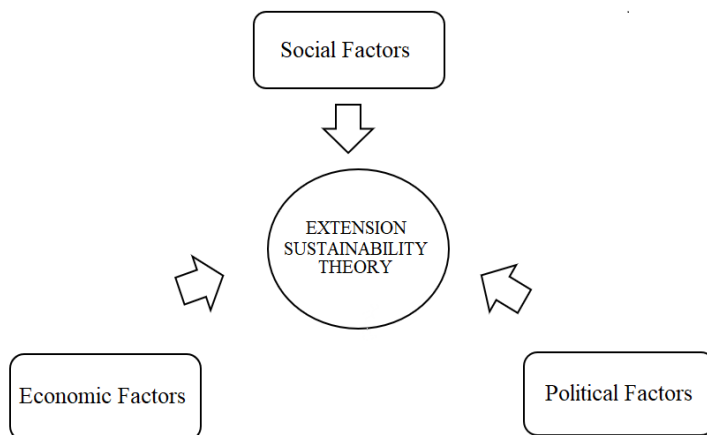
This emergent theory emphasizes the interaction of several components to sustain a comprehensive framework and improve personal well-being, community extension project and program success, and the beneficial effects on communities. It highlights the significance of a thorough strategy that integrates social factors, economic factors, and political factors toward sustaining community extension programs.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

These are the implications of the study, the researcher's reflection, and recommendations drawn from the iterative analysis and interpretations of data obtained from the in-person interviews. The following are the implications of the study. *SUCs and HEIs mandate.* For SUCs, these programs reinforce their public service mandate, allowing them to engage with local communities and address their specific needs actively. It strengthens community ties, fosters the development of future leaders, and creates research opportunities that contribute to societal progress. On the other hand, for private HEIs, community extension programs enhance their reputation as socially responsible institutions, attracting students, faculty, and donors who value community engagement. These programs also align academic offerings with community needs, fostering industry and community partnerships and differentiating the institution in a competitive market. Overall, community extension programs empower SUCs and private HEIs to positively impact society while nurturing a sense of social responsibility among their stakeholders. *Economic Development.* Community extension programs can have significant implications for the economy. By fostering community development, these programs empower individuals with new skills, knowledge, and resources, leading to increased employability and entrepreneurship. As community members become more economically active, there is a potential rise in local businesses and job opportunities, which can reduce unemployment rates and improve overall household incomes. Moreover, these programs often focus on sustainable practices, encouraging environmental responsibility and resource management, which can result in cost savings for individuals and businesses. The community's improved infrastructure and human capital can also attract outside investments, promoting regional economic growth. Community extension programs are vital in fostering inclusive economic development and creating a positive ripple effect on the broader economy. *Strengthens Linkages to Society/Community.* Community extension programs in Bukidnon have significant societal implications and foster strong linkages between the community and private/local business establishments. These programs, implemented by various organizations, educational institutions, and government bodies, promote social development and improve the community's well-being. They address critical issues such as poverty, healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability, enhancing the overall quality of life in the region. Furthermore, these programs facilitate collaboration between the community and private/local businesses, leading to mutually beneficial partnerships. Enterprises gain a better understanding of the community's needs and can tailor their products and services accordingly, while the community benefits from increased job

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opportunities, skills training, and economic growth. These linkages create a harmonious relationship, promoting sustainable development and shared prosperity, thereby transforming Bukidnon into a thriving and inclusive region. ***In Aid to Political Geography (Law and Policy Makers).*** Community extension programs can significantly affect political geography, law, and policymakers. By engaging with communities at the grassroots level, these programs provide valuable insights into local populations' specific needs, challenges, and aspirations. This knowledge enables policymakers to design more targeted and effective laws and policies that address these communities' unique socio-economic and environmental issues. As community members become more empowered through education and skill development, they may actively participate in the political process, increasing civic engagement and representation. It can foster a more inclusive and responsive political landscape where the voices of marginalized communities are heard and considered. Moreover, community extension programs that focus on sustainable development can influence policy decisions, promoting environmentally friendly practices and shaping the trajectory of regional development. Ultimately, these programs can catalyse positive political and legal change, promoting equitable governance and enhancing society's well-being. ***Promote Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)***. Community extension programs have significant implications for corporate social responsibility (CSR). By engaging in such programs, companies demonstrate a commitment to social and environmental causes beyond profit-making, enhancing their reputation and fostering stronger relationships with stakeholders. These initiatives enable businesses to address local community needs, promote sustainable development, and contribute to poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, and environmental conservation. By investing resources and expertise in community development, companies can positively impact the lives of individuals, foster a sense of loyalty among employees and customers, and contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive society. Ultimately, community extension programs align businesses with broader societal goals, bolstering their CSR efforts and solidifying their position as responsible corporate citizens. ***Sustainable Development in Accordance with SDGs.*** Community extension programs are crucial in advancing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting inclusive and sustainable development at the grassroots level. Through these programs, communities are empowered to shape their futures and contribute to global objectives actively. By fostering education and skills training, they contribute to SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), and 4 (Quality Education), helping lift people out of poverty, ensuring food security, and improving access to knowledge, by focusing on sustainable livelihoods and economic growth (SDG 8), and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) as well. Moreover, promoting cooperation and collaboration and promote the importance of partnerships in achieving shared global goals (SDG 17). In summary, community extension programs foster comprehensive, integrated, and locally-led approaches to achieve the SDGs and create a more equitable, sustainable and prosperous world for all. ***Impact on the Lives of Adopted Community***. These programs empower individuals by providing access to education and skills training, improving their employability and earning potential, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life. Health and hygiene initiatives fostered through community engagement improve well-being and reduce disease prevalence, leading to healthier and more productive individuals. The focus on sustainable livelihoods and economic growth

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increases incomes and financial stability, lifting families out of poverty and reducing vulnerability. Additionally, the emphasis on environmental conservation creates a cleaner and safer living environment, benefiting both present and future generations. Overall, community extension programs play a transformative role in the adopted community, positively influencing beneficiaries' socio-economic conditions, health, and environmental sustainability, ultimately creating lasting improvements in their lives.

REFLECTION OF THE EXPERIENCES

The researcher had the opportunity to observe the implementation of community extension programs in different contexts based on his personal experiences in our school, with our community extension programs, and by the time the researcher made this research study. The researcher learned lots of insights for the people personally handling extension programs. From the researcher's point of view, it is a corporate responsibility to society in return, but the researcher discovers more than that. Through his experiences, the researcher appreciates the importance of these programs in promoting community development and improving the lives of individuals and families. The researcher also feels the essence of experiences that the implementers have had when they said, "the feelings of fulfilment to help the community." As they said, the researcher also discovered that touching people's lives, especially the disadvantaged and indigenous people, gives love and to be loved. Most of all, the experience of adopting new different cultures, especially when it involves the famous Seven Tribes of Bukidnon, namely: Talaandig, Higa-onon, Bukidnon, Umayamnon, Matigsalug, Manobo, and Tigwahanon. These tribes have different cultures and traditions that they can share with the implementers. The researcher also learned from that interview with the informants their struggles concerning implementing such community extension. They stressed that the school and the community extension may not be the priority because of financial incapacity or scarcity of resources. The budget will generally focus on academics leading to extension programs or project implemented if the school have excess funds. It is also difficult for some schools' small private schools to comply with the requirements of CHED, comprising the three-fold functions, namely, Instructions, Research, and Extensions, because of financial constraints. Monetary requirements, as well as human resources, should be addressed to bridge the gap and be successful in the implementations. This human resource involves limited skills for the personnel to do the extension functions and responsibilities. According to the informants, personnel handling extension services must be appropriately trained to perform well. One of the critical insights that the researcher has gained in this research study is the need for effective partnerships between communities, local governments, and other stakeholders. Here, there should have been full cooperation and coordination with various stakeholders that the school should initiate. As the researcher said, a school where the extension programs start must be open to all possibilities of partnership with the Local Government Unit (LGU), the private sector, the community, and the stakeholders. The most challenging with this partnership was when we talked about the indigent and the Indigenous People or IPs. The people have different cultures and traditions to deal with. They must be sensitive and should be carefully addressed their concerns with complete respect and a good sense

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of manners. The researcher also appreciates the value of capacity building within communities. Community extension programs can empower individuals and groups by providing training and resources to build skills and knowledge. This program can include training to generate livelihood and income to improve their quality of life. Giving the community ways to improve their livelihood will be an excellent opportunity for the program to be successful. Furthermore, public services must be for everyone, and all must avail themselves with no discrimination, provided the public is fully informed. According to the informants, information dissemination is essential; the community should be informed of what the government or the institution's program has for them to avail. According to one informant, they have the most effective way to disseminate information; it is through the radio station. As the researcher observed in that place, every household has at least a radio to keep updated. Access to the internet may be limited because of remote locations, but it has been appropriately adhered to now. In summary, the researcher's reflections in this study regarding implementing community extension programs were of great experience. The programs have exceptional intentions of giving back the society as part of our corporate social responsibility. However, it is not only for promotion and service to the people; it gives beyond what is known. There may be challenges and struggles, such as financial resources because community extension activities are expenses. However, the researcher realizes the significant effect of having such programs. For the researcher, yes, provided that it gives cash outlays from our financial sources as expenses, it will give back more benefits in many ways—the services the extension programs give a more significant impact on society, not in monetary measures but beyond. The effects could have programs and campus expansions, as one informant said. Because through community extension, it discovers the primary needs of the society in particular, and having identified and adhered to them will have a lasting and sustainable effect on the institutions and the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementing community extension programs can significantly benefit the community. With the active involvement and participation of the stakeholders in the implementation process, it will be successful. Therefore, higher education institutions should continue to develop community extension programs in the community. The flowchart is made to show the processes involved. The Community Extension Flow Chart begins with the Higher Education Institution, symbolizing its role as the initiator of community extension initiatives. The first step is to actively support and encourage the development of community extension programs, recognizing the significant benefits they bring to the community and embracing the institution's societal responsibility. Addressing challenges faced by implementers is vital for successful implementation. The institution can overcome barriers and effectively serve the community by providing adequate resources, budget allocations, and skilled staff members. Fostering partnerships and collaborations with other schools and local government units (LGUs), students, non-teaching personnel, linkages, and alumni enables the exchange of best practices. It enhances community impact through collaboration and resource-sharing. Sharing knowledge and best practices is essential for fostering a broader impact. By disseminating information about successful community extension programs, other

schools, and institutions can be inspired and guided to create impactful initiatives. Moreover, emphasizing the personal fulfilment and strong bond with the community experienced by implementers can motivate more individuals to engage in community extension programs actively. The flow chart represents a cyclical process, highlighting the continuous improvement and support for community extension programs by higher education institutions. By fostering a culture of active involvement and participation among stakeholders, these initiatives become more sustainable, benefiting the community and fulfilling the institution's broader societal role.

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