

Identifying Best Practices and Current Strengths of Community Extension Services in Ifugao State University

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Abstract: A crucial part of higher education institutions (HEIs) are Community Extension Services (CES), which operate as a conduit for converting academic knowledge into useful, community-focused solutions. The purpose of this study, "Identifying Best Practices and Current Strengths of Community Extension Services at Ifugao State University (IFSU)," was to investigate the institutional advantages, successful strategies, and sustainability mechanisms that contribute to the social relevance and impact of IFSU's CES programs. Dewey's (1938) Service-Learning Theory and DeBord's (2007) Collaborative Partnership Framework served as the foundation for this study, which used a qualitative case study design to investigate the dynamics of CES implementation on university campuses. Interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis were used to collect data from CES coordinators, students, professors, and community stakeholders.

The results showed a number of interconnected themes that reflected IFSU's strengths and best practices in CES implementation. These include making sure that extension programs directly support institutional and national development agendas and that CES activities are strongly aligned with the university's vision, mission, and goals. Partnerships between local government entities, non-governmental organizations, and industry stakeholders improve resource mobilization and innovation, according to the study, which also recognized collaboration and partnerships as essential to program sustainability. Furthermore, departments used their academic knowledge to meet particular community needs, which strengthened the relevance and efficacy of discipline-based program implementation. While the volunteer culture promoted a sense of shared commitment among staff, students, and community members, the incorporation of service-learning methodologies further enhanced student participation and civic duty. Lastly, the continuity and long-term effects of extension initiatives were guaranteed by the existence of sustainability structures, which included community ownership and follow-up procedures.

According to the study's findings, community involvement, academic integration, cooperative relationships, and institutional alignment all work together to make IFSU's Community Extension Services successful. Together, these elements support CES's long-term viability and revolutionary potential as a platform for social empowerment and inclusive development. In light of these conclusions, the study suggests that in order to improve community-university collaborations, service-learning should be further institutionalized, stakeholder collaboration should be improved, discipline-based extension programs should be developed, and sustainability models should be adopted. The findings offer a useful foundation for other public schools and universities looking to enhance their CES procedures and make a more significant contribution to national and local development.

Keywords: *Community Extension Services, Best Practices, Higher Education Institutions, Ifugao State University, Service-Learning, Collaboration, Sustainability.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In state universities and colleges (SUCs), which support the tripartite duties of instruction, research, and extension, Community Extension Services (CES) have emerged as a key component of higher education institutions (HEIs). By converting theoretical knowledge into workable solutions

that tackle social, economic, cultural, and environmental challenges, CES acts as a link between academic institutions and the general public. CES makes it possible for institutions to make a direct contribution to sustainable development and nation-building through community-focused programs like livelihood training, environmental conservation, literacy campaigns, and technology transfer. Bringle and Hatcher

(1996) assert that integrating extension and service-learning programs strengthens academic engagement and fosters civic duty, guaranteeing that higher education stays socially sensitive and rooted in real-world situations.

Along with teaching, research, and production, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines requires that community extension be one of the four main responsibilities of SUCs. The Higher Education Act of 1994, also known as Republic Act 7722, places a strong emphasis on the need for universities to expand their knowledge and resources in order to promote national development priorities and serve communities. Therefore, in addition to meeting the urgent needs of the community, CES activities are planned to be in line with the university's vision, mission, and goals as well as national and international requirements like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN and the Philippine Development Plan. Universities are vital to the empowerment of marginalized groups, social inclusion, and collaborations that support self-sufficiency and sustainable development through CES (De Guzman, 2019; Cardenas et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, many universities struggle to maintain successful CES programs in spite of their significance. The impact and continuity of extension programs are frequently hampered by problems like unclear evaluation frameworks, poor coordination, low faculty involvement, and inadequate funding. These difficulties emphasize how important it is to find and duplicate successful strategies that have shown quantifiable results. Participatory planning, interdisciplinary collaboration, research-based techniques, and a volunteer attitude are characteristics of strong CES implementation, according to a number of local and international organizations (Magno & Pasion, 2021; Gonzales, 2022). Comprehending and recording these processes offers important insights into what makes CES impactful and sustainable.

Community involvement is ingrained in Ifugao State University's (IFSU) institutional mission. IFSU's extension activities frequently incorporate indigenous knowledge systems, environmental stewardship, and socio-economic empowerment because the university is located in a mountainous and culturally diverse area. By addressing needs in education, agriculture, business, and cultural preservation, the institution has developed a strong engagement with local communities through a variety of outreach and collaboration initiatives. As a result, analyzing the advantages and best practices of IFSU's Community Extension Services advances both the institution and the larger conversation on successful community involvement strategies in higher education.

The goal of this study is to determine and evaluate Ifugao State University's Community Extension Services' best practices and existing advantages. It specifically aims to identify the essential characteristics that contribute to the significance and sustainability of IFSU's CES programs. These qualities include: discipline-based implementation; integration of research and service-learning; cooperation among stakeholders; promotion of sustainability and

voluntarism; and alignment with national, international, and local development goals. The report also examines excellent CES programs from various departments and campuses that have improved livelihoods, boosted engagement, and developed capacity in the community. The research intends to create a framework or set of recommendations that other universities can use or modify to improve their own extension programs by compiling these success stories.

In conclusion, this study aims to give a thorough grasp of how CES operates efficiently in a state university setting. The research aims to support policy development, program replication, and ongoing improvement in community-university relationships by showcasing the institutional strengths and best practices of IFSU's community extension programs. The results should ultimately be a useful tool for educators, administrators, legislators, and other interested parties who want to improve community extension's applicability, sustainability, and transformational potential in Philippine higher education.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

By providing a crucial link between society and higher education, Community Extension Services (CES) enable universities to share their knowledge and innovations with the communities they serve. Simpson (2015) asserts that successful CES programs combine theoretical understanding with real-world applications to foster learning and social change. Universities address urgent social, environmental, and economic issues while promoting reciprocal development between communities and academic institutions through community-based interventions. Universities' social responsibility is also demonstrated by CES programs, which make sure that education promotes sustainable and inclusive growth, particularly in rural areas where possibilities are still few.

Partnerships and collaboration are frequently mentioned as important markers of a successful CES deployment. Strong partnerships between local government units (LGUs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private institutions, and community stakeholders are essential for successful community engagement, according to Byrd et al. (2012). Shared resources, technical know-how, and long-term program sustainability are made possible by these collaborations. Numerous colleges in the Philippines have provided practical examples of this idea. For example, by partnering with LGUs and farmer cooperatives, Benguet State University (BSU) has formalized its extension programs, facilitating the transfer of agricultural technologies and enhancing livelihoods in Cordillera communities (Tadeo et al., 2020). In keeping with its mission to produce graduates who are both culturally aware and globally competitive, Ifugao State University (IFSU) has collaborated with regional heritage organizations and governmental organizations to support indigenous knowledge systems and cultural preservation in Ifugao (IFSU Annual Report, 2023). These cooperative examples show how effective CES is improved by robust stakeholder interaction, which keeps programs current and sensitive to local circumstances.

The Research-Backed Program Design is another well-known best practice that bases CES activities on an evaluation of community needs and empirical data. According to Gonzales (2016), community extension needs to be grounded in scientific research to guarantee that interventions are long-lasting and successful. Universities may identify urgent community challenges, create data-driven initiatives, and assess results with this research-based method. Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU), for instance, uses science-based solutions for renewable energy and sustainable agriculture initiatives that benefit rural farmers as part of its extension programs that incorporate applied research (MMSU Research and Extension Bulletin, 2021). Participatory action research is also used by the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) in its CES framework, enabling local communities to jointly develop solutions that tackle their particular problems. Thus, research serves as the cornerstone for impact and innovation, guaranteeing that CES programs are well-founded, quantifiable, and flexible enough to adjust to shifting circumstances.

Another essential component of a successful CES deployment is the service-learning approach. Service-learning, which has its roots in Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory, combines classroom instruction with practical experience. According to Bowen (2005), this method fosters civic duty and empathy by tying theoretical instruction to community service, which improves student learning. Service-learning has becoming a more popular extension approach at Philippine colleges. For example, to increase student involvement in nation-building, the University of Santo Tomas (UST) and Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) integrate service-learning initiatives into their education, health, and environmental courses. Students at IFSU engage in literacy outreach, environmental awareness campaigns, and livelihood workshops in neighboring barangays as part of service-learning that is included into courses offered by the College of Education and College of Arts and Sciences. These initiatives are prime examples of how educational establishments may foster civic engagement and promote the well-being of their communities.

CES programs' strengths are frequently found in their conformity to institutional mandates and the mission-vision of the university. According to Israel and Ilvento (2005), outreach efforts at universities with established CES frameworks—backed by finance, administrative frameworks, and faculty training—are more successful. CHED Memorandum Order No. 52, s., in the Philippines, 2016 highlights the need for SUCs to make sure that their extension initiatives take into account national development objectives, academic knowledge, and institutional agendas. For instance, the development of complete CES systems with an emphasis on agri-technology dissemination, climate resilience, and rural enterprise development has been carried out by Central Luzon State University (CLSU) and Visayas State University (VSU). These programs guarantee discipline-based execution by utilizing student involvement and instructor competence. By institutionalizing volunteerism, research-extension integration, and cultural responsiveness, Ifugao State

University is strengthening its CES programs in the meantime. This is especially true of initiatives that support heritage conservation, sustainable tourism, and indigenous crafts. These programs not only highlight IFSU's prowess in community involvement but also its dedication to preserving cultural identity and empowering local communities.

➤ *Theoretical Framework*

Two interconnected frameworks serve as the foundation for this investigation: the Collaborative Partnership Framework (DeBord, 2007) and the Service-Learning Theory (Dewey, 1938). Dewey's Service-Learning Theory places a strong emphasis on combining community involvement with experience learning. It implies that when students use their academic knowledge in practical contexts, meaningful learning takes place, encouraging introspection, civic engagement, and personal development. This paradigm ensures that learning results transcend academic borders by offering the pedagogical underpinnings for CES to connect classroom instruction with field-based service. Additionally, service-learning strengthens the mutually beneficial interaction between communities and universities, in which both sides gain from empowerment and shared learning.

This is supported by DeBord's (2007) Collaborative Partnership Framework, which emphasizes the importance of collaboration between government agencies, business enterprises, community organizations, and academic institutions in attaining fruitful and long-lasting CES results. This approach places a strong emphasis on stakeholders' shared accountability, shared governance, and respect for one another. Universities are better able to integrate interdisciplinary expertise, mobilize resources, and sustain long-term program sustainability through cooperative partnerships. This framework supports Ifugao State University's collaborative extension approach, which combines academic innovation, local knowledge, and governmental policies to provide culturally grounded and responsive community initiatives. By emphasizing the importance of experiential learning and collaborative involvement as key components of successful, inclusive, and transformative extension work, these frameworks collectively provide a solid theoretical foundation for comprehending the dynamics of CES.

➤ *Synthesis of the Review of Related Literature*

The literature study emphasizes how important Community Extension Services (CES) are to higher education institutions' social duty. CES acts as a medium for converting scholarly knowledge into concrete community benefits in both local and global contexts. Effective CES programs must incorporate participatory participation, research integration, and educational transformation, according to scholars like Bringle and Hatcher (1996) and Simpson (2015). These viewpoints make it clear that the reciprocity principle—the idea that the institution learns from the community as much as it serves it—is the foundation upon which CES is built.

A review of numerous studies shows that successful CES programs share a number of characteristics. The most

important of them are service-learning integration, research-based program design, and cooperation and partnerships. Research-based frameworks (Gonzales, 2016; Israel & Ilvento, 2005) guarantee that interventions are responsive to real community needs rather than presumptions, while studies by Byrd et al. (2012) and DeBord (2007) confirm that multi-sectoral collaboration improves program sustainability and reach. By involving professors and students in meaningful, reflective service that enhances academic and civic learning, the incorporation of service-learning theory (Dewey, 1938; Bowen, 2005) has been demonstrated to enhance CES's educational function.

By placing CES within the framework of the national development strategy and the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) responsibilities, Philippine studies contribute to this conversation. The localized implementation of these global concepts is exemplified by the extension activities of organizations like Mariano Marcos State University, Ifugao State University, Central Luzon State University, and Benguet State University. These SUCs have demonstrated best practices in livelihood improvement, environmental sustainability, indigenous knowledge preservation, and agricultural technology transfer—all of which are based on solid collaborations and community involvement. Even so, a lot of institutions still deal with persistent issues with program continuity, stakeholder involvement, monitoring systems, and financial allocation.

The necessity for a more methodical identification and recording of CES's institutional strengths and best practices is highlighted by this gap. Few studies have explicitly examined the internal mechanisms, alignment with the university's vision and mission, and sustainability strategies within the setting of state universities, especially those in the Cordillera region, despite the fact that prior research has provided a general description of successful extension programs. By analyzing the current strengths and best practices of Ifugao State University's Community Extension Services, the current study aims to close this gap. By doing this, the study hopes to theoretically and practically add to the expanding corpus of research on university-community engagement and offer other SUCs that want to improve the efficacy, relevance, and long-term effects of their extension programs a replicable model.

III. METHODOLOGY

The best practices and present advantages of Community Extension Services (CES) programs at Ifugao State University are investigated in this study using a qualitative case study design. Because it enables a thorough understanding of the social interactions, institutional procedures, and human experiences that influence CES implementation, a qualitative approach is suitable for this study. By capturing the viewpoints of various stakeholders engaged in planning, execution, and assessment, the case study method, in particular, allowed the researcher to examine CES initiatives within their actual environment. This technique offered a thorough understanding of how extension programs function, achieve success, and maintain their

influence by recording the lived experiences and narratives of persons involved in CES activity. To assure validity and triangulate findings, the primary methods of data collection are document analysis, focus group discussions (FGDs), and interviews.

The study's research setting included several campuses in the university system renowned for its varied and active CES involvement. Because these campuses encompass both urban and rural locations, the researcher can document a variety of extension work techniques, difficulties, and innovations. A more comprehensive view of how CES initiatives are tailored to the needs of local communities were possible due to the diversity of geographical and socioeconomic situations. Because each campus carries out initiatives that represent distinct thematic priorities—like livelihood training, education, cultural preservation, and agricultural sustainability—they are perfect places to find best practices that can be replicated.

A wide range of stakeholders who are actively participating in CES activities were among the study's participants. These included students who volunteer or intern in community outreach programs; faculty members who act as extension facilitators or subject-matter experts; CES program directors and coordinators who manage project planning and execution; and community stakeholders, including CES beneficiaries, local government representatives, and non-governmental organizations. Their combined knowledge was crucial for comprehending institutional and community viewpoints regarding the benefits and effects of CES programs.

Participants were chosen using a purposive sampling strategy. This approach is appropriate for qualitative research since it focuses on people who are well-versed in the topic being studied. To guarantee thoughtful and well-informed answers, respondents were selected based on their active participation in CES events for a minimum of three years. Interviews were conducted with about 50 participants, who represented different university campuses and departments. The sample size were adequate to achieve data saturation and fully represent the range of CES experiences in various circumstances.

Three primary methods were employed for gathering data: document analysis, focus group discussions (FGDs), and semi-structured interviews. CES coordinators, instructors, and community partners participated in semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information about management techniques, best practices, and the programs' perceived strengths. Open-ended questions were used in the interview guide to let participants talk freely about their experiences. Focus groups with students and community stakeholders were arranged in the meantime to investigate their shared viewpoints on the advantages, difficulties, and efficacy of CES. Participants were encouraged to interact during the FGDs, which yielded more varied and rich perspectives. Finally, pertinent materials including CES program reports, annual evaluations, policy documents, and case studies were analyzed. These textual sources provided institutional and

historical background for the study and act as secondary data to support and enhance interview findings.

Obtaining approval from the university administration and the CES offices on a few chosen campuses was the first step in the data collection process. Following clearance, the researchers got in touch with the selected participants to arrange FGDs and interviews at times that work for both parties. In order to allow for extensive interaction and observation, data collection took place across a number of weeks. With the participants' permission, all interviews and conversations were audio recorded, and they were thereafter transcribed for analysis. In order to gather data pertinent to the study's goals, the researchers also examined CES-related reports, policy manuals, and paperwork. Triangulation between various sources improved the conclusions' dependability and believability.

The study used both content analysis and thematic analysis for data analysis. Qualitative information from interviews and focus group discussions were examined using thematic analysis. The researcher coded replies, looked for trends, and grouped them into emergent themes pertaining to institutional strengths and best practices in CES implementation, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model. This approach made it possible to interpret the meanings and experiences of participants. In the meantime, CES reports and associated papers were subjected to content analysis in order to pinpoint recurring tactics, ideas, and results that define effective programs. The study combined insights from many data sources to create a thorough narrative on what makes CES practices durable and effective by integrating several analytical methodologies.

All things considered, this methodological approach guaranteed a methodical, reliable, and contextually aware examination of community extension services at the chosen university. The study's objective of identifying the concrete and intangible elements that contribute to the success and sustainability of CES initiatives was supported by the integration of several qualitative methodologies, including document analysis, FGDs, and interviews.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings, which were obtained through thematic and content analysis of focus groups, interviews, and document reviews, show a number of related themes that emphasize the current strengths and best practices of Community Extension Services (CES) at Ifugao State University and similar state universities. The remarkable connection of CES programs with the university's vision, purpose, and goals is among the most notable themes that surfaced. Successful CES initiatives, according to respondents, are those that unmistakably embody the organization's mission to support inclusive development and societal transformation. These initiatives aim to further the university's primary missions of teaching, research, and service while also empowering underserved areas. The intentional alignment guarantees that extension initiatives are strategic endeavors that represent the university's long-term

dedication to regional and national development objectives rather than just outreach initiatives.

Collaboration and collaborations emerged as a key component of CES success, which is another important discovery. Respondents explained how CES initiatives' sustainability and reach are improved through collaborations with industry stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local government units (LGUs). These partnerships frequently offer technical, logistical, and financial assistance that improves program execution and permits more thorough service delivery. In addition to fostering opportunities for shared learning and innovation, collaborative efforts between the institution and outside partners guarantee that CES programs continue to be responsive to changing community needs.

The significance of discipline-based CES programs is emphasized in a third theme. According to the study, extension programs rooted in academic departments' specific knowledge—such as those in agriculture, engineering, education, and health sciences—tend to be more targeted, pertinent, and effective. For example, education departments drive literacy and skill development programs, while agriculture departments frequently lead programs pertaining to food security and sustainable farming. In addition to optimizing professor and student competence, this alignment of extension work with academic subjects raises the caliber and legitimacy of community initiatives.

The results also highlight how service-learning strategies are increasingly being included into CES implementation. According to respondents, programs that integrate service-learning concepts typically result in higher levels of student involvement and enable students to apply their theoretical knowledge in authentic community contexts. Both communities and students gain from this pedagogical approach; communities obtain valuable services that tackle urgent problems, and students acquire real-world, life-changing learning experiences. Students' civic awareness and sense of social duty are strengthened by the service-learning framework, which closes the gap between classroom instruction and real-world situations.

The study also found that community involvement and voluntarism are important advantages of CES initiatives. Faculty, students, and community partners who actively participate in volunteer-based activities cultivate a feeling of collective responsibility, compassion, and ownership. According to the respondents, this volunteerism is a hallmark of successful CES programs because it fosters camaraderie, improves teamwork, and guarantees continuity even when the project is over. Volunteers' feelings of satisfaction and pride serve to strengthen the university's service-oriented culture.

Finally, a key element in guaranteeing the long-term viability of CES projects is sustainability models. Projects with regular monitoring, organized follow-up procedures, and strong community ownership typically have a bigger and longer-lasting impact, according to respondents. When communities are given the autonomy to carry out the projects

on their own with sporadic university involvement, sustainability is attained. The most successful programs have sustainability elements incorporated in, like livelihood development, skills training, and ongoing capacity-building, which guarantee that communities can maintain gains even after official project conclusion, according to documentation analysis.

Overall, the findings support the notion that strategic alignment with institutional goals, cooperative collaborations, discipline-based focus, service-learning integration, active involvement, and sustainability frameworks are key components of successful CES programs at state universities. Effective community extension work is built on these interrelated components, which show how educational institutions may significantly support social change and community empowerment.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings support the notion that Community Extension Services (CES) programs at state universities are successful and sustainable because they strategically align with institutional goals, have strong collaborative partnerships, and incorporate service-learning principles into academic and community activities. The study emphasizes how CES projects can become effective tools for social change when they are directed by the university's aim to support equitable and sustainable development. Furthermore, by combining resources, knowledge, and logistical support, the active cooperation with external stakeholders—such as local government entities, non-governmental organizations, and corporate institutions—improves the efficacy and reach of these programs. Conversely, the incorporation of service-learning enhances community well-being and student learning by connecting theoretical knowledge with real-world applications. Together, these components provide a comprehensive and long-term strategy for community development, guaranteeing that CES initiatives continue to be effective, responsive, and in line with regional and national development goals.

Several suggestions are made to improve CES implementation and results, building on these findings. First and foremost, colleges must keep fortifying their alliances with outside parties, such as governmental bodies, corporate organizations, and civil society associations. These partnerships encourage shared accountability and creativity in community involvement in addition to increasing the availability of resources. Second, service-learning ought to be explicitly incorporated into the academic curriculum and established as a crucial part of CES programs. This method addresses real-world community problems while giving students chances for practical learning that improve their leadership, professional competence, and civic involvement. Third, all academic departments ought to support the creation of discipline-based CES projects. Community projects that are in line with the specialized knowledge of each subject guarantee that interventions are pertinent, supported by evidence, and able to yield quantifiable results. For example, education departments can oversee literacy and skill

development initiatives, while agriculture programs might concentrate on sustainable farming technology.

Finally, to guarantee the long-term impact of CES programs, colleges should set up a thorough sustainability structure. This entails regular monitoring and assessment, follow-ups after the project, and capacity-building exercises that enable community members to continue projects on their own. Additionally, by including sustainability concepts into CES planning and execution, programs are kept flexible enough to adjust to shifting community circumstances. State colleges like Ifugao State University can further solidify their position as social progress agents by implementing these suggestions, combining research, service, and knowledge for the good of their local communities and the advancement of national development.

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