



## Constructive Community Engagement: The Experiences of the Elementary Laboratory (ELS) Teacher-Extensionists

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### Abstract

The study explored the experiences of the elementary laboratory school teacher/extensionists of the Bukidnon State University (BukSU) College of Education (CoE) between 2016 to 2019. The research investigates various aspects of their involvement, including learning outcomes, delivery, and instructional materials, resource persons/trainers, and venues and facilities, within the context of constructive community engagement. Additionally, the study explores the alignment of these projects with the BukSU Framework, as well as national and international goals.

A qualitative method of research was employed, utilizing validated research-made interview guide questions in gathering the data from nine (9) teacher/extensionists who actively participated in the projects. The data analysis follows Creswell's 2013 research method, comprehensively examining the collected data.

The analysis reveals ten prominent themes that emerged among elementary laboratory school teacher/extensionists. These themes encompass a range of experiences specific to the extensionists such as; Unyielding Resolve: Conquering Challenges, Embracing Growth, Conquest through Adversity: Embracing Challenges, Thriving, and Succeeding, Savoring Success: Seasoned Support, Tasty Triumphs, Inspiring Success through Skillful Support, Journey of Joy: Embracing Adventure, Empowering Minds, Victorious Quest: Mastering Document Challenges for Honorarium Claim Success, Rising above Limits: Empowering Few, Leaving a Lasting Legacy, Empowerment in Action: Extended Training for Community Transformation, Cultural Heritage Revived: Nurturing the Legacy of Binukid Language in the Community, Unite, Empower, Inspire: Igniting Compassionate Engagement for Joyful Community Transformation.

The findings of this study have practical applications for benchmarking and can serve as a basis for revisiting the policies and guidelines of university projects, thereby improving project implementation. Moreover, the results hold significance in enhancing the effectiveness and impact of future projects undertaken by Bukidnon

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State University, while providing insights for similar initiatives at national and international levels. The experiences and lessons learned from the elementary laboratory school teacher/extensionists contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and successes encountered within the context of community engagement, informing the development of more impactful and sustainable projects in the future.

## Introduction

Constructive community engagement is a dynamic relational process that facilitates communication, interaction, involvement, and exchange between an organization and a community for a range of social and organizational outcomes. This is necessary and viable as it is likely to lead to more equitable, sustainable public decisions and improve the quality of life of local communities. Community engagement is defined as the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people (CDC, 1997).

In general, the goals of community engagement are to build trust, enlist new resources and allies, create better communication, and improve overall health outcomes as successful projects evolve into lasting collaborations (CDC, 1997; Shore, 2006). The rationale for community engagement is largely rooted in the recognition that lifestyles, behaviors, and the incidence of illness are all shaped by social and physical environments (Hanson, 1988). This “ecological” view is consistent with the idea that health inequalities have their roots in larger socio-economic conditions (Iton, 2009). If health is socially determined, then health issues are best addressed by engaging community partners who can bring their perspectives and understandings of community life and health and other issues to a project.

Recently, the Commission on Higher Education has initiated efforts to re-direct community engagement or extension projects under the CHED Memorandum Order No. 52, series of 2016. The policy provides some guidelines on Higher Education Institutes (HEI) community extension programs for the “provision of space to discover practical, evidence- and science-based answers that can address real-world social, economic, and environmental challenges of partner citizens and communities.” As producers of knowledge or hubs of innovations, the new extension policy posits that HEIs are strategically positioned to partner with communities,

businesses, and industry in facilitating the transfer of knowledge or technology on specific developmental areas. University extensions “or the “extensions of the universities” are ‘any educational innovations done outside the university” (Mounders, 1982).

These innovations mainly focus on literary, agricultural and social topics focused on national health objectives and emphasizing collaboration among diverse groups regarding health and literacy. This emphasis on community engagement has encouraged education and health professionals, community leaders, and policymakers to imagine new opportunities as they face new challenges (Doll et al, 2008).

Conducting community engagement constructively involves the community and collaborating with its members are cornerstones of efforts to improve public health and literacy. In recent years, for example, community engagement and mobilization have been essential to programs addressing smoking cessation, obesity, cancer, heart disease, and other health concerns (Ahmed et al, 2010; Minkler et al, 2008).

In like manner, recognizing the importance of involving the community, Bukidnon State University Elementary Laboratory School (BukSU ELS) teachers established and conducted a community extension project called “Tagpandaya hu gipulun” (Taking good care of the family). As part of BukSU’s extension program the ELS teachers conducted a community engagement project as one of the core functions of the University.

The department was able to respond effectively to social and economic needs and demands of individuals and society. They conducted community engagement guided by the philosophy that the academe has a social responsibility to contribute significantly to the improvement of the quality of life of the communities it serves in the fields of Education, Arts and Sciences, Industrial and Business Information Technology.

The community engagement project entitled “Tagpandaya hu gipulun” (Taking good care of the family) was conducted at Barangay Kapitan Anghel, Malaybalay City and consisted of a 5-year term engagement plan. Engaging with the community by teachers beyond their workload is not an easy job. It needs skills and competence based on effectiveness, efficiency and creativity. The educational system is encouraged to reach out to educationally deprived communities in order to give meaningful reality to their membership in the national society and to enrich their civic participation in program undertaking.

Although, Bhagat (2010) defines educational institutional social responsibility as the voluntary efforts but with their commitment of ethical excellence toward social development they planned and conducted various activities. Their community engagement was through activities like enhancement of educational standard of underprivileged groups, adult education activities, environmental awareness, ecological conservation, health awareness, healthcare and sanitation, adoption of village for holistic development addition to the academic commitment of the institution.

The group also provided technology and innovation transferred to specific clientele with the ultimate objective of improving the way of life of the people in the barangay. As the program aimed to improve the quality of life on service communities, they anchored all activities to address the needs, problems and resources of the community. Furthermore, the community engagement conducted by the faculty strengthened the policy formulation and literacy of the children in the primary level with convertible exchange values as a form of capital and as a catalyst for social transformation with a central role of parents in children literacy development.

For more than 5 years, the Elementary Laboratory School with its faculty members extended services to the community. The teachers' experience was challenging due to being overloaded with work both academic and non-academic activities yet they pursued what they had started.

Hence, it is the intent of this study is to explore in-depth the experiences faced by the teachers in terms of opportunities, difficulties, anxieties, and other challenges they encountered as they tried grasping the needed skills in conducting extension services to the community. Results of this study are viewed to help other teachers-extensionists address issues and concerns relative to the implementation of other University extension projects in future community engagements.

Community processes can be complex and labor-intensive, and they require dedicated resources such as time, funding, and people with the necessary skills. Leaders everywhere are struggling with how to make the right choices as they try to improve extension services and promote individual and population quality of life. Future researchers may find the result of this study a fuller understanding of community engagement and this will facilitate and promote its result to advance the better implementation and engagement of communities.

## Objectives

This study explores the experiences of the Elementary Laboratory School teachers who served as the extensionists in conducting extension works or activities. This paper will account the different experiences specifically on the opportunities and challenges of the elementary school teachers in doing extension works.

## Conceptual Framework

The concept that undergirds this study is phenomenology (Husserl, 1982) to uncover the lived experiences of the teachers who served as the extensionists during the conduct of the community engagement plan of activities. As Ahmed & Palermo (2010) postulated that the principles of engagement can be materialized through the execution of range of roles and experiences from the institution funder who needs to know how to support community engagement to the extensionists, community leader and other stakeholders who needs hands-on, practical information on how to mobilize the members of a community to partner in the engagement initiatives.

This is reinforced by the theory of experience postulated by Dewey (2008) and Vygotsky (2001) who hypothesized that phenomenology as a term that appears in two contexts: philosophy and methodology. Phenomenology emerges as a philosophical movement concerning how to look at the world. It is basically the study of 'pure phenomena', which refers to the appearances of things as they appear in persons' experiences (Smith, 2008) as they extend services to the community. Edmund Husserl (1982) the father of phenomenology established a basic "descriptive phenomenology" or descriptive approach to experiences of people to different activities (Braithwaite, 1994).

Again, this is supported by the idea of Minkler & Wallerstein (2008) who stated that recognizing the experiences encountered by the groups involved in community engagement will enhance their capabilities, attitudes and values. As they have their own particular norms and that all partners in a collaboration will have lessons to learn about each other and the collaborative process. Moreover, everyone will fully appreciate that all who are involved in engaging a community must be responsive to the needs of that community as defined by the community itself.

Doing community engagement services, the community and the extensionists constructively expressed deep sense of commitment of the people involved in the academe. Academic people are more aware and more socially skilled than the other sectors in the community. The community extension services is a component which conveys its commitment to service and is driven by humanitarian and Christian ideals. It is providing service to peoples, groups, and communities inside and outside the University.

According to Brian Martin (1984), the academic people are in the position to recognise social problems and take effective steps to solve the problems. As a group they are supposed to be trained and experienced in social criticism and thus be able to cut through rhetoric and apologetics to the roots of problems. They are granted 'academic freedom' which should enable unfettered creative thinking and bold experimentation towards the solution of social problems. Finally, the academics are supposed to be self-reflective, to critically examine their own ideas and actions.

Blumenthal, (2006) argued that a person's beliefs, a representation of the information a person has about an object or a situation, can determine attitude, which can then have an effect on one's behavior towards an object or situation. Similarly, Tesser, Martin and Mendolia (1995) argued that it is a person's conscious thought that can determine one's attitude on one's behavior. Additional studies (Blumenthal DS, DiClemente RJ, (2004) have indicated that there is a relationship between attitude and behavior.

## Research Methodology

This study utilized the qualitative method of research specifically the descriptive phenomenological approach. Nine participants were purposively chosen based on their actual lived experiences, since they were part of the group who conducted the extension activities from SY 2016-2017; 2017-2018; 2018-2019. Since two of the researchers were also part of the subject extension project under study, participation to the present study were discouraged to avoid undue influence issue.

The data were collected through individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussion (FGD). The information obtained focused on the personal experiences of the nine ELS teachers in the extension activities conducted for the past 3 years. The interpretation of the experiences of the participants are based on Edmund Husserl research method on descriptive

phenomenology. As Edmund Husserl method valued the experience of the phenomenon as perceived by human consciousness which should be an object of a scientific study (Airihenbuwa, CO (2007).

The data collected was organized, transcribed and coded using Collaizzi's method of data analysis. It consists of six steps: 1. The reading and re-reading of the transcribed interviews; 2. The extraction of significant statements; 3. The formulation meaning on every significant statement; 4. The formulated meaning was analyzed to determine and group into theme clusters and emergent themes; 5. The identified emergent themes was exhaustively defined and described; and 6. The findings of the study were validated by the participants to compare the descriptive results constructed by the researcher with their experiences and as a result, finalized the descriptions of the phenomenon.

### Ethical Considerations

Upon the approval of the Dean of the College of Education, a letter of consent was sent addressed to the faculty members of the ELS department that informed them they were chosen as the participants of the study. The participants affixed their signatures on the Certification of Consent Form.

## Result and Discussion

### *The Experiences of the Elementary Laboratory (ELS) Teachers-Extensionists*

The experiences of ELS teacher-extensionists have provided valuable insights into their constructive community engagement efforts. Through a comprehensive exploration of their experiences, ten compelling themes have emerged, showcasing their dedication and impact. These themes shed light on their work's profound and transformative nature, inspiring others to embrace challenges, empower minds, and foster joy within communities.

The ten themes are as follows:

1. Unyielding Resolve: Conquering Challenges, Embracing Growth.
2. Conquest through Adversity: Embracing Challenges, Thriving, and Succeeding.
3. Savoring Success: Seasoned Support, Tasty Triumphs.
4. Chip Mastery: Inspiring Success through Skilful Support.
5. Journey of Joy: Embracing Adventure, Empowering Minds.
6. Victorious Quest: Mastering Document

### Challenges for Honorarium Claim Success.

7. Rising above Limits: Empowering Few, Leaving a Lasting Legacy.
8. Empowerment in Action: Extended Training for Community Transformation.
9. Cultural Heritage Revived: Nurturing the Legacy of Binukid Language in the Community.
10. Unite, Empower, Inspire: Igniting Compassionate Engagement for Joyful Community Transformation.

These ten themes reflect the diverse experiences and remarkable contributions of ELS teacher-extensionists, showcasing their dedication, resilience, and impact within their communities. Each theme highlights a specific aspect of their engagement, such as their determination to overcome challenges, their ability to thrive in the face of adversity, and their celebration of successes. The teachers-extensionists demonstrate their expertise in providing support and guidance, their commitment to empowering individuals and fostering joy, and their dedication to preserving cultural heritage. Ultimately, their united efforts aim to inspire compassionate engagement and transform communities into joyful and thriving spaces.

### **Theme 1: Unyielding Resolve: Conquering Challenges, Embracing Growth.**

Theme 1 highlights the unwavering determination of ELS teacher-extensionists as they navigate obstacles, embracing opportunities for personal and professional growth. Their resilience serves as a driving force in their pursuit of community betterment. It deals with one sub-theme unveiled "Triumph Unleashed: Embracing Challenges, Overcoming Disappointment, and Resilient Resolve" "Triumph Unleashed" captures the essence of perseverance and triumph amidst adversity.

This sub-theme showcases individuals who fearlessly face challenges, rebound from disappointment, and exhibit unwavering determination. They embrace difficulties as opportunities for growth, refuse to let setbacks define them, and possess the resilience to push forward. It is an inspiring journey of unwavering resolve and a testament to the power of resilience in achieving triumph. This was supported by the significant statements of the participants as shared by Participant 1, as she mentioned that;

*P1, I have a lot of challenges to share before I was assigned as the leader.*

*The preparation for the proposal is so challenging. We need to finalize it. We need to get it done.*

The role of an extensionist as a project leader involves challenges in preparing a research proposal. Key challenges include identifying a research topic aligned with project goals, defining clear research objectives, conducting a comprehensive literature review, formulating research questions or hypotheses, selecting an appropriate research methodology, addressing ethical considerations, developing a realistic work plan and budget, and anticipating limitations and challenges. Overcoming these challenges requires careful planning, research expertise, stakeholder engagement, and a commitment to producing high-quality research that meets the needs of the community.

*P1, It's so much effort, going back and forth from city to DA (Department of Agriculture), choosing which barangay will be the DDU (Demonstration Farm Site), riding transportation repeatedly, consulting and waiting all day to be catered to by the project's office.*

*During the proposal preparation, we needed to set a plan. It was really discouraging and disappointing when it was completely changed. My plan wasn't used anymore, it became incomprehensible, and I even lost my ideas. We kept switching instead of targeting the IP*

*P1 (Paragraph 1), preparing the MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) is very challenging.*

Preparing a project proposal involves significant time and effort, with specific challenges encountered during the selection of a barangay beneficiary, proposal preparation, and creation of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Choosing a Barangay Beneficiary: Selecting a suitable beneficiary requires considering community needs, project objectives, and available resources. Extensive research, community engagement, and consultation with local authorities are necessary. This stage is time-consuming but crucial for project effectiveness and sustainability.

**Discouragement and Disappointment in Proposal Preparation:** The process can be daunting, leading to discouragement and disappointment due to unclear guidelines, limited resources, or lack of experience in proposal writing. Overcoming these challenges requires perseverance, seeking assistance or mentorship, and finding the motivation to refine the proposal. **Challenges in the preparation of the MOA:** Crafting a comprehensive and legally binding MOA involves understanding legal frameworks, negotiation skills, and effective communication. Multiple revisions, negotiations, and coordination with stakeholders make this stage complex and time-consuming.

These challenges reflect the intricacies of project implementation, emphasizing the need for careful planning, perseverance, and effective communication. Overcoming obstacles in beneficiary selection, proposal preparation, and MOA creation is vital for successful community projects. Establishing a supportive and collaborative environment is crucial. Seeking guidance from experts and engaging with community members and authorities ensures project alignment with community needs.

Further, clear guidelines, training, and resources for proposal preparation can alleviate discouragement. Seeking legal advice and involving stakeholders streamline MOA preparation. Open communication among project leaders and beneficiaries manages expectations and builds strong partnerships. Recognizing these challenges allows project leaders to develop resilience, enhance skills, and adapt. Overcoming obstacles increases the chances of implementing impactful initiatives benefiting the chosen barangay beneficiary and fostering community development.

### **Theme 2: *Conquest through Adversity: Embracing Challenges, Thriving, and Succeeding***

Theme 2 delves into the ability of ELS teacher-extensionists to not only embrace challenges but to thrive and succeed despite adversity. Their experiences serve as testaments to their unwavering perseverance and resourcefulness in driving meaningful and positive change. Under the sub-theme of "*Resilience Unleashed: Navigating Emotional Distress, Overcoming Challenges, and Triumphing through Hardship,*" extensionists expressed their sentiments, which further support this notion.

*P1, instead, the original project was for elementary school extensionist as planned to focus on the IM development for the IP community (sorry I have heartaches in this project). Since it's for elementary department, the entire college supposedly shouldn't be involved in the delivery. It should be done through Instructional Materials (IMs) for Indigenous Peoples (IPs).*

The extensionist experience described here highlights emotional distress, significant difficulties, and challenges that lead to deep emotional pain and hardship. A breakdown of the elements and discussion of their implications follows. These difficulties indicate that the extensionist is facing substantial obstacles or hurdles in their work or personal life. These challenges could be related to the nature of their extension work, such as

encountering resistance or skepticism from the community they serve. Additionally, personal factors like a lack of resources, time constraints, or limited support may contribute to these difficulties.

The challenges faced by the extensionist are not merely minor inconveniences but instead, have a profound impact on their emotional well-being. The deep emotional pain and hardship imply that the extensionist's work or personal circumstances have taken a toll on their mental and emotional state, potentially leading to feelings of despair, hopelessness, or burnout. The extensionist's experience described indicates a highly demanding and emotionally draining situation. It suggests that the extensionist's role involves navigating complex and challenging circumstances that can significantly impact their emotional well-being. Here are a few possible interpretations and discussions:

The emotional distress and deep emotional pain experienced by the extensionist underscore the need for emotional support systems. Extension programs and organizations should prioritize providing adequate resources and support mechanisms to help extensionists cope with the challenges they face. This may include counseling services, peer support networks, or training on emotional resilience. The extension work can often be emotionally demanding, and it is crucial to destigmatize discussions around mental health. By promoting a culture that values mental well-being, extension organizations can foster an environment where extensionists feel comfortable seeking help and support when needed.

The extensionist's experience suggests the need for resilience-building strategies to help them navigate emotional distress and hardships. Training programs and workshops can equip extensionists with tools and techniques to manage stress, develop coping mechanisms, and build emotional resilience. These strategies can contribute to their overall well-being and enhance their ability to effectively carry out their extension work.

Further, despite the difficulties and emotional distress described, it is important to recognize that challenges can also be opportunities for growth and learning. By reflecting on their experiences and seeking support, extensionists can gain valuable insights and develop strategies to overcome similar challenges in the future. This resilience and learning mindset can contribute to their personal and professional development. Specifically, it highlights the emotional toll that extension work can have on individuals and

underscores the need for supportive measures and strategies to address the emotional distress and hardships faced by extensionists.

**Theme 3: *Savoring Success: Seasoned Support, Tasty Triumphs***

Theme 3 focuses on shifts to celebrating the successes of ELS teacher-extensionists. Their achievements are made possible through the invaluable support they receive from their networks, colleagues, and community members. The flavor of triumph permeates their endeavors. This was reinforced by the sub-theme "Igniting Hearts, Empowering Minds: Experiencing Joyful Teaching, Enthusiastic Learning, and Fulfilling Achievements," which was further substantiated by the participants 4, 3, and 5 as stated below.

*P4, Good afternoon I was so happy given a chance to teach during the day*

*P4, I am happy to see the children excited and happy that we will arrive there and bring them food, we can also eat their vegetables such as sweet potatoes, cassava and I enjoy bananas*

*P3, it was my first time to meet the people there.*

*P5, I was the documentation in charge at that time. It was also my first time teaching the learners.*

The statements describes a range of experiences related to a teaching literacy program in a daycare setting. The individual experiences a sense of bliss, indicating a deep feeling of happiness, contentment, and fulfillment derived from their involvement in the literacy program. The children in the daycare display excitement when given the opportunity to eat snacks provided for them. This suggests that the program creates a positive and engaging environment that fosters enthusiasm and joy among the children. The beneficiaries of the program share root crops, which indicates a sense of community and collaboration. This sharing of resources could signify a supportive and inclusive atmosphere within the program.

The extensionist encounters the beneficiaries in the barangay (local community) for the first time. This suggests a new connection established between the extensionist and the community, potentially marking the beginning of a collaborative relationship. The extensionist also experiences the first-time teaching learners in the barangay. This indicates a new and significant opportunity for the extensionist to contribute their expertise and engage with the learners in the community. The feeling of bliss experienced by the

extensionist suggests that their involvement in the literacy program brings them a deep sense of purpose and satisfaction. The positive impact they have on the children's learning and well-being likely contributes to this fulfillment. The excitement displayed by the children when provided with snacks reflects their engagement and enthusiasm within the literacy program. This highlights the significance of creating a stimulating and enjoyable learning environment that fosters the children's active participation and love for learning.

The spirit of collaboration and mutual support within the community. This fosters a sense of belonging and encourages a collective effort to promote education and literacy. The extensionist's first-time meeting with the beneficiaries in the barangay signifies the beginning of a relationship between the extensionist and the community. This presents an opportunity for establishing rapport, understanding community needs, and developing a tailored approach to teaching and supporting the learners effectively.

In particular, the extensionist's first-time teaching experience in the barangay signifies an extension of their educational impact beyond their usual sphere. This expansion of reach allows for reaching new learners and communities, providing them with valuable literacy skills and educational support. The sense of fulfillment derived from the teaching literacy program, the importance of engagement and community collaboration, the significance of building relationships with beneficiaries, and the expansion of educational reach are all elements that contribute to the overall positive experience of the extensionist and the potential impact of the literacy program in the daycare and barangay setting.

**Theme 4: *Inspiring Success through Skillful Support***

Theme 4 showcases the expertise of ELS teacher-extensionists in providing skillful support to those they serve. Their knowledge and guidance empower individuals to realize their potential, fostering a culture of success and accomplishment. This was supported by the sub-theme of "*Rewarding and Notable Involvement in Chips Preparation, Providing Valuable Assistance*," as evidenced by the shared experiences of the participants, which include:

*P3, As an extensionist I help and assist in doing the chips is one of a very good experience*

The experience of the extensionist in helping and assisting in preparing the chips was truly rewarding and fulfilling. It provided them with a sense of satisfaction

and joy. By actively participating in the chip's preparation process, the extensionist had the opportunity to contribute their skills, knowledge, and support to the task at hand. Their involvement in the preparation allowed them to witness the transformation of raw ingredients into a delicious and enjoyable snack. This hands-on experience not only allowed them to showcase their culinary abilities but also provided them with a deeper appreciation for the effort and craftsmanship involved in creating the chips.

Furthermore, the extensionist's assistance in the chip's preparation showcased their commitment to the community and their willingness to lend a helping hand. By actively engaging in this activity, they demonstrated their dedication to making a positive impact and supporting the local community. Through their involvement, the extensionist also had the chance to interact and collaborate with other participants, fostering a sense of camaraderie and teamwork. This collaborative environment not only enhanced the chip's preparation process but also created an opportunity for building relationships and strengthening community bonds.

Overall, this experience of helping and assisting in preparing the chips allowed the extensionist to actively contribute, engage with others, and derive personal satisfaction from their involvement. It served as a valuable learning opportunity, a way to connect with the community, and a source of fulfillment in making a positive difference through their assistance.

#### **Theme 5: Journey of Joy: Embracing Adventure, Empowering Minds**

The transformative nature of the ELS teacher-extensionists' journey is encapsulated. They inspire and empower young minds through engaging and adventurous approaches, leaving a lasting imprint on their personal growth and development. This was supported by the sub-theme of "*Joy Unleashed: Embrace ELS, Explore Thrilling Travels, Delight in Heart-warming Teachings*," as demonstrated by the shared experiences of the participants, which include participants 1,3,4 stating the following:

*P1, it's fun being part of the extension program of ELS*

*P3 But it's fun traveling with colleagues we were enjoying what we did before..i think its fun...*

*P4, enjoy riding a dump truck because there is no one to ride.*

*P4, I had so much fun aside from being a classroom teacher I experience, yet it was fun. We shared*

*the sweet potato so everyone could have a taste. Despite our anxiety about the bumpy road, we enjoyed the ride on the dump truck, grateful to be out of the classroom.*

*P1, it's fun being part of the extension program of ELS though instead, we need to spend Saturday with our family yet we are going to conduct extension activities. But it's fun traveling with colleagues we were enjoying what we did before..i think its fun...*

*P4, I had so much fun aside from being a classroom teacher I experience fun even though we are paying our own fair in going there, yet it was fun, We shared the sweet potato so everyone could have a taste. Despite our anxiety about the bumpy road, we enjoyed the ride on the dump truck, grateful to be out of the classroom*

*P3, I experience teaching the children sharing our knowledge who needs our service I have the confidence of how to handle the learners and the parents*

*P3, for me, It would be fulfilling to know you don't just see me as the class clown, but I have sentiments half of my heart looking at the faces of the learners specially like during snack time.*

The statements provided highlight the positive emotions and experiences of the extensionist in teaching children and participating in the ELS (English Language Skills) extension program.. This indicates that the extensionist derives joy and satisfaction from their role as an educator. The positive emotions experienced while teaching suggest a sense of fulfillment in imparting knowledge and making a positive impact on the children's lives. The extensionist finds pleasure in the company of their colleagues during travel. This camaraderie contributes to a positive work environment and can enhance team dynamics and collaboration.

This statement reflects the adaptability and willingness of the extensionist to embrace alternative transportation methods. Despite the lack of conventional rides, they still find enjoyment in riding dump trucks, highlighting their resilience and ability to make the most out of challenging situations. This demonstrates the dedication and commitment of the extensionist to their work. They willingly prioritize the extension activities over personal time and expenses, emphasizing their passion for community service and their willingness to go the extra mile to make a difference.

The extensionist's experiences described above showcase several important aspects of their work and personal involvement. The extensionist's enthusiasm,

enjoyment, and willingness to invest personal resources demonstrate their passion for teaching and serving the community. Their commitment to delivering extension activities on weekends and using personal funds exemplifies a strong dedication to their role.

The positive experiences shared with colleagues during travel indicate the importance of teamwork in the extension program. Collaborating with colleagues can foster a supportive and harmonious work environment, enhancing productivity and effectiveness in delivering extension services. The extensionist's ability to find enjoyment in riding dump trucks despite the lack of convenient transportation options highlights their adaptability and resilience in the field. This adaptability is essential for overcoming challenges and making the most of available resources.

The extensionist's sentiments regarding snack time and witnessing the learners' happy faces reveal the emotional fulfillment they experience in their work. The positive impact made on the children's lives can create a sense of purpose and personal satisfaction for the extensionist. These experiences reflect the extensionist's passion, dedication, adaptability, and emotional fulfillment in their teaching role. These positive emotions and experiences contribute to their effectiveness as educators and their ability to create a meaningful impact on the children and the community they serve.

These emphasize the significance of enjoyment, collaboration, adaptability, dedication, and the impact of teaching on both the learners and educators. They highlight the rewarding nature of being an educator and the transformative power of education in the lives of children and communities.

#### **Theme 6: Victorious Quest: Mastering Document Challenges for Honorarium Claim Success**

The focus shifts to the administrative aspects of their work. ELS teacher-extensionists navigate and conquer document challenges to ensure the success of honorarium claims. Their meticulous approach guarantees the fulfillment of their responsibilities. Supported by the "*Navigating Triumph: Overcoming Challenges for Rewarding Honorarium Claims*" was evident, indicating the experience:

*P1, My only problem is when it comes to claiming the honorarium. Feeling incredibly tired and drained from long hours, with all the deadlines and demands, it's practically impossible to even log my hours properly. Though the honorarium helps, the workload's unsustainable, so I'll need to address this somehow*

The experience of preparing and securing support documents for honorarium claims can indeed be demanding, time-consuming, and frustrating. It is necessary to discuss in detail the challenges as follows. The process of document preparation and securing support documents for honorarium claims requires careful attention to detail and adherence to specific guidelines. Extensionists often have to navigate through complex bureaucratic procedures, follow specific protocols, and gather the necessary evidence to substantiate their claims. This demanding nature can put additional pressure on extensionists, especially if they have limited time and resources. The process of gathering and organizing the required documents can be time-consuming. Extensionists may need to collect various forms, receipts, attendance records, and other supporting evidence to validate their claims.

Additionally, they may have to liaise with multiple stakeholders, such as supervisors, administrators, and finance departments, which further adds to the time required for the process. Frustration and Challenges: Extensionists often encounter challenges during the document preparation and submission process. These challenges can include missing or incomplete documents, unclear guidelines, delays in obtaining necessary approvals or signatures, and bureaucratic hurdles. Such obstacles can be frustrating and may require extensionists to invest additional effort and time to resolve them.

Further, the demanding, time-consuming, and frustrating nature of the honorarium claim process highlights the administrative burden faced by extensionists. It underscores the importance of streamlining administrative procedures and providing adequate support to extensionists to ensure a smooth and efficient process. This interpretation calls for the need for clear guidelines, simplified documentation requirements, and accessible support systems to minimize the challenges faced by extensionists.

The challenges faced in honorarium claim processes should be recognized and addressed by extension programs and organizations. Discussions can revolve around identifying ways to simplify the process, improve administrative efficiency, and provide necessary resources and support to extensionists. This could involve training sessions on document preparation, creating user-friendly systems for claims submission, and establishing dedicated personnel to assist extensionists in navigating the process. Further, the demanding, time-consuming, and frustrating nature of the

honorarium claim process emphasizes the need for improvements in administrative procedures and support mechanisms. By addressing these challenges, extension programs can alleviate the burden on extensionists, enabling them to focus more on their core responsibilities and ultimately enhancing their overall effectiveness in serving their target communities.

### **Theme 7: Rising above Limits: Empowering Few, Leaving a Lasting Legacy**

This highlights the exceptional impact ELS teacher-extensionists have on individuals, going above and beyond to empower and uplift a select few. Their efforts result in a lasting legacy, leaving an indelible mark on the lives they touch. With the sub-themes "*Distance Conquered, Impact Magnified: Overcoming Limited Attendance with Determination,*" "*Empowerment Reimagined: Navigating Priorities, Inspiring Growth,*" and "*Supply Struggles: Conquering Challenges for Effective Training,*" and attested by the participants' shared sentiments, it is evident that:

*P2, The distance presents a logistical hurdle, the long travel time adding to the challenge. While concerns about low participation linger, I'm actively engaging communities by encouraging them, bringing them all the needed materials to support their livelihood and their snacks attractive instructional materials for the kids and teachers guide for the day-care teacher in the community to ensure a good turnout. After all, many who may find it difficult to attend are still eager to be involved, balancing their livelihoods with a desire to learn and contribute.*

Challenges due to the distance necessary to travel and the fact that only a few attended the activities. The experience highlights the challenges faced when dealing with distance-related issues and low attendance rates during the activities. Distance can pose logistical challenges, making it difficult for participants to attend the activities. Low attendance can impact the effectiveness and reach of the program, limiting its impact on the target audience. To address these challenges, it is important to consider factors such as accessibility, transportation, and scheduling when planning activities. Strategies like providing incentives, offering alternative attendance options (e.g., online participation), and actively engaging the community can help overcome distance-related challenges and improve attendance rates.

*P3, The main challenge has been inconsistent attendance, particularly with some young women involved in the beauty skills development workshops.*

*Saturdays are often their only day to earn a living, making it difficult for them to participate regularly. We're exploring flexible scheduling options to ensure they can benefit from the training. On a positive note, the participants who attended truly enjoyed the manicure and pedicure sessions, and I hope they have the opportunity to use these new skills in their future careers.*

Challenging experience when only a few beneficiaries attended the activities: This experience highlights the difficulties encountered when a limited number of beneficiaries participate in the activities. Low attendance can impact the effectiveness of the program, as the intended beneficiaries may not fully benefit from the services and resources provided. It can also be demotivating for the extensionist who may have put effort into planning and organizing the activities. To address low attendance, it is important to understand the reasons behind it. Factors such as lack of awareness, conflicting schedules, or disinterest among the beneficiaries should be identified and addressed. Strategies like targeted outreach, effective communication, involving community leaders, and adapting the activities to meet the beneficiaries' needs and interests can help improve attendance rates and ensure maximum impact.

*P6, Conducting the training is challenging due to a lack of essential supplies. Participants desperately need materials like skirts to effectively practice their newly acquired skills during their upcoming skit activity. Unfortunately, they don't have any equipment, and the training has only been held once. Having access to appropriate materials would allow the training to continue and provide participants with necessary skills and resources. They are eager to learn and put their knowledge into practice, but lack of resources hinders their progress.*

Challenges due to the lack of supplies for the training. This experience highlights the difficulties faced when there is a shortage of necessary supplies for conducting effective training. Insufficient supplies can hinder the quality of the training program and limit the learning opportunities for the participants. It can create frustration and challenges for the extensionist in delivering the intended content and achieving the desired outcomes. To overcome supply challenges, it is important to plan and coordinate the procurement and management of necessary materials in advance. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders, securing adequate funding, and exploring alternative resources can help address the supply gaps. Additionally, promoting resourcefulness,

creativity, and adaptability can enable the extensionist to deliver effective training even in resource-constrained situations.

These experiences highlight the importance of addressing challenges related to distance, low attendance, and supply shortages in extension activities. By understanding the underlying issues, developing proactive strategies, and fostering collaboration, extensionists can enhance the impact of their programs and overcome these challenges to create meaningful change in the communities they serve.

#### **Theme 8: Empowerment in Action: Extended Training for Community Transformation**

Emphasizes the ELS teacher-extensionists' commitment to continuous training and professional development. By equipping themselves with new skills and knowledge, they actively contribute to community transformation and growth. With the sub-theme "Gratitude Unleashed: ELS Teachers' Impactful Service in the Kapitan Anghel Extension Project," as attested by the shared sentiments of the participants, it is evident that:

*P2, My heartfelt gratitude goes out to the ELS teachers for extending your services to the community in Kapitan Anghel. This outreach is not merely a casual affair, but a passionate mission to uplift and empower others. Engaging in extension activities has broadened our perspectives and sparked creative ideas for projects. It's a calling that transcends the confines of the classroom and family, allowing us to connect with and serve our community in meaningful ways.*

*P3, Watching their joyful smiles and hearing their eager questions, I knew our efforts weren't in vain. The spark of understanding that lit up their eyes was the sweetest reward, and their excited plans to put their newfound skills to use confirmed that these lessons wouldn't be forgotten. Witnessing their dedication, their willingness to tackle every challenge, and the inspiring learning environment they built together filled me with immense pride. This experience wasn't just about sharing knowledge; it was about empowering them to make a difference, and seeing them embrace that possibility fills me with immense joy.*

This sentiment reflects gratitude towards the ELS teachers who have provided their services to the community in Kapitan Anghel through the extension project. It highlights the appreciation for their dedication and willingness to go beyond their regular duties to support the community. This experience signifies the joy

and satisfaction felt by the group of individuals involved in providing extended training to the community. It suggests that they take pleasure in their collective efforts to make a positive impact on the community by imparting knowledge and skills through training programs. The sentiment of gratitude towards the ELS teachers indicates that their services have had a positive impact on the community.

Further, by extending their expertise and support, they have contributed to the growth and development of the individuals in Kapitan Anghel. This highlights the importance of community engagement and the potential for education and training to bring about positive change. The happiness expressed by the group in helping the community through extended training emphasizes the significance of collaboration and teamwork. It suggests that working together as a cohesive unit can amplify the impact of their efforts and bring greater satisfaction. This highlights the value of collective action and the power of a united group in creating meaningful change.

The extension project in Kapitan Anghel demonstrates the importance of community engagement and empowerment. By providing extended training, the ELS teachers and the group involved are equipping community members with valuable skills and knowledge, empowering them to improve their lives and the overall well-being of the community. This promotes a sense of self-reliance and fosters a culture of continuous learning and growth. The expression of gratitude and happiness towards the ELS teachers and the group involved in the extension project underscores the significance of recognition and support. Acknowledging the efforts of individuals and groups who go above and beyond to serve the community can encourage and inspire others to get involved. It also highlights the importance of providing resources and assistance to sustain such community-driven initiatives. These experiences demonstrate the positive impact of the ELS teachers and the group's efforts in the community, emphasizing the value of community engagement, collaboration, and empowerment. They serve as a reminder of the importance of extending services and support beyond traditional boundaries to create lasting change and foster a sense of gratitude and happiness within the community.

#### **Theme 9: Cultural Heritage Revived: Nurturing the Legacy of Binukid Language in the Community**

The ELS teacher-extensionists play a pivotal role in revitalizing and preserving the cultural heritage of the community. Their efforts in nurturing the legacy of the

Binukid language contribute to cultural diversity and inclusivity. With the sub-theme "Reviving Cultural Roots: Empowering Community Heritage through Binukid Resurgence", Empowering Cultural Preservation: Educating and Inspiring Community Heritage. Attested by the shared sentiments of the participants that stated:

*P2, My heart feels heavy watching the Binukid language disappear. Kids who used to say "Hello!" in Binukid, like "Maayong adlaw!", might not even know it anymore. It's not just words disappearing; it's like erasing their unique customs, stories, and songs. I remember hiding and speaking Binukid in whispers, but now folks are proud of their roots, holding festivals and teaching the young ones. This comeback gives me hope, like a little flame that can bring the language back alive. We can help by supporting places where they teach Binukid, like those centers and classes, or even having evenings where they tell stories in their language. This way, future generations won't lose this beautiful part of who they are.*

*P2, We can create fun activities that teach them their ancestors' customs and stories, like games, songs, and celebrations. As people who appreciate this culture, we can work with the community to come up with new ways to connect the past and present. Keeping a culture strong in a changing world is hard, but together, with creativity and respect, we can make sure the mountain's stories still fill the hearts of its people.*

The experience of feeling sad knowing that the culture was not practiced and preserved in the community, specifically due to the lack of teaching the children to speak Binukid by the Indigenous Peoples (IP) parents, highlights the importance of cultural preservation and education. A discussion based on these experiences follows. The observation that the culture is not being practiced and preserved in the community signifies a loss of cultural heritage. Cultural traditions and languages play a vital role in preserving the identity, history, and values of a community. When cultural practices and languages are not passed down to the younger generation, there is a risk of losing important aspects of the community's heritage.

Moreover, the feeling of sadness expressed by the individuals involved reflects their emotional connection to the culture and their concern about its potential decline. Recognizing the importance of cultural heritage and witnessing its potential erosion can evoke a sense of loss, nostalgia, and a desire to take action to focus on culture heritage. The desire to educate the community about the

importance of preserving their culture demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing the issue. By raising awareness and providing education about the value of cultural heritage, individuals can encourage community members, including parents, to recognize and embrace their cultural roots. This can involve initiatives such as language revitalization programs, cultural workshops, or community events that celebrate and promote cultural practices.

Community Empowerment: Empowering the community to preserve their culture is a significant aspect of the experience. By equipping community members with knowledge and resources to sustain their cultural heritage, individuals can help build a sense of pride, identity, and ownership within the community. This empowerment can lead to a collective effort in reviving and preserving cultural practices, ensuring their continuation for future generations.

Addressing the issue of cultural preservation requires collaboration and engagement with the community. It involves fostering open dialogues, understanding the reasons behind the decline in cultural practices, and working together to find solutions. By actively involving the community in the preservation efforts, individuals can create a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, leading to a more sustainable and impactful outcome.

Thus, these experiences of feeling sadness and the desire to educate the community about the importance of preserving their culture highlight along with the need for cultural preservation, education, community empowerment, and collaboration. By addressing these aspects, individuals can contribute to reviving and preserving the cultural roots of the community, ensuring the continued celebration, and understanding of their heritage.

#### **Theme 10: Unite, Empower, and Inspire: Igniting Compassionate Engagement for Joyful Community Transformation**

This encapsulates the overarching mission of ELS teacher-extensionists.

They unite community members, empower individuals, and inspire compassionate engagement, paving the way for a joyful and transformative community experience. With the sub-theme "Compassionate Engagement: Empowering the Community, Seeking Collaborators, and Inspiring Joy" as elaborated by the shared experiences of the participants, who stated that:

*P2, Wearing the hat of an extensionist in the community isn't about arriving as outsiders and setting ourselves apart. It's about stepping in with open hearts, becoming partners and friends, and actively seeking ways to support and empower. True extension work thrives on genuine connection, not appearances. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the community, not above it, lending a hand and making a real difference, one open heart at a time.*

*P3, I dearly hope more people will consider donating food to help these children return safely to their barangay. So many families struggle to put meals on the table, and a simple act of kindness could make all the difference for these kids. They're such joyful spirits, and seeing them light up when we spend time together reminds me of the power of a little human connection.*

The experiences mentioned reflect a strong sense of compassion and a genuine desire to help and educate the community. The individuals involved express a heartfelt commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of the children and parents in the community. Let's further explore the interpretations and discussions: The statement highlights the importance of approaching community work with empathy and a genuine concern for the well-being of others. Having a heart to help and educate indicates a deep understanding of the community's needs and a willingness to actively contribute to their growth and development. The mention of longing for more people to assist the children and parents in the community suggests that the extensionist recognizes the significance of collaboration. Engaging others who share the same passion and vision can amplify the impact of their efforts and create a more sustainable and holistic approach to community empowerment.

The experiences shared indicate the importance of fostering a strong sense of community support and involvement. By actively engaging with community members and promoting collaboration, the extensionist can create a network of individuals who are invested in the well-being of the children and parents. This can lead to shared responsibilities, resources, and expertise, resulting in a more comprehensive and effective support system. The mention of being happy to be with the extensionist suggests that their presence and efforts have brought about positive emotions within the community. This highlights the transformative power of compassionate engagement and education. By creating a joyful and supportive environment, the extensionist

can foster a sense of belonging and motivation among the community members, inspiring them to actively participate in their own growth and development.

**Capacity Building and Sustainability:** The experiences shared indicate a desire to have more people involved in the community work. This presents an opportunity for capacity building and sustainability. By identifying and nurturing potential collaborators within the community, the extensionist can empower individuals to take on leadership roles and contribute to the long-term success of community initiatives. This helps create a self-sustaining ecosystem where community members can support and uplift one another.

In summary, the experiences described reflect a compassionate engagement with the community and a strong desire to educate and empower them. The analysis suggests the importance of building community support, inspiring joy and happiness, and focusing on capacity building for sustainable outcomes. These insights can guide the extensionist in their efforts to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the community.

These ten themes, accompanied by the fourteen sub-themes discovered within, provide a comprehensive glimpse into the multifaceted experiences of ELS teacher-extensionists in their constructive community engagement. Through their remarkable endeavors, they continue to shape and uplift communities, leaving a profound and lasting impact on the individuals they serve.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of elementary laboratory school extensionists from Bukidnon State University's College of Education, shedding light on the implementation of university-wide extension projects and offering guidance for other institutions and organizations engaged in community engagement. The findings emphasize the extensionists' resilience, personal growth, and ability to overcome challenges, underscoring the importance of skillful guidance and compassionate engagement.

Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of extended training in driving community transformation and preserving the cultural legacy of the Binukid Language. These findings have practical implications for benchmarking and improving project implementation, benefiting not only future initiatives by Bukidnon State University but also informing similar projects both at the national and international levels.

Overall, this research serves as a valuable resource for the development of impactful and sustainable projects. It offers important lessons and insights into the challenges and successes encountered by elementary laboratory school teacher extensionists within the context of community engagement, providing a foundation for the formulation of policies and guidelines in this area.

## Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the implementation of future university projects and improve community engagement initiatives at the local, national, and international levels:

Develop comprehensive training programs: Design and implement extended training programs that equip teacher extensionists with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively engage with the community. These programs should address local context-specific challenges, while also incorporating globally relevant principles of community engagement. Foster collaboration and mentorship by establishing mentorship programs where experienced extensionists can guide and support new participants. Encourage collaboration among extensionists not only within the university but also with extensionists from other institutions nationally and internationally. Foster partnerships and knowledge sharing through collaborative projects, joint workshops, and virtual platforms.

Strengthen partnerships with local communities through building strong partnerships with local community stakeholders, including parents, community leaders, and organizations. Additionally, establish connections with community engagement initiatives at the national and global levels, facilitating exchange programs and collaborative projects that promote cross-cultural understanding and shared learning. Promote cultural preservation and heritage by recognizing and valuing cultural legacy such as the Binukid Language and actively incorporate it into community engagement projects. Encourage the preservation and promotion of local cultural practices, traditions, and languages, not only within the local community but also by showcasing them nationally and globally through cultural events, exhibitions, and digital platforms.

Establish clear guidelines and policies. Review and refine the policies and guidelines for university projects to provide clearer directions and expectations

for teacher extensionists. Ensure that these guidelines reflect locally relevant considerations, align with national community engagement frameworks, and incorporate global best practices in community development and sustainability. Share knowledge and best practices through facilitating knowledge sharing and dissemination of best practices within Bukidnon State University and beyond. Encourage the university to actively contribute to national and global conferences, publish research papers and case studies, and participate in international networks focused on community engagement. Embrace digital platforms and social media to amplify the reach and impact of knowledge-sharing efforts.

Further, monitoring and evaluation of project outcomes is a framework to assess the effectiveness and impact of university projects. Collect and analyze data on learning outcomes, community satisfaction, and long-term project sustainability. Share evaluation findings nationally and globally to contribute to evidence-based practices in community engagement.

Furthermore, by implementing these recommendations, Bukidnon State University and other institutions can enhance the effectiveness and impact of their community engagement projects. These initiatives will foster meaningful relationships with local communities, promote cross-cultural understanding at the national and global levels, and contribute to sustainable development goals on multiple fronts.

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