

Empowering Women through Livelihood Training: An Exploratory Analysis of Outcomes for the Upper Dela Paz Women's Association

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the result of the Extension Program of the College of Business and Management in collaboration with the Upper Dela Paz Women's Association of Cortez, Bohol conducted last November 18-19, 2022. The researcher conducted this assessment last June 2023 through focus group discussion. Aligned with the mandated functions of a State University, this paper aimed to establish the status of the extension effort of the College and how the beneficiaries applied the learned skills from the extension. The research determined the outcomes of the training in relation to economic activities and the utilization of the product. Moreover, it also aimed to identify the encountered challenges of the beneficiaries and pinpoint areas that need improvement from the beneficiaries' point of view. Utilizing qualitative methods, specifically the Focused Group Discussion, the research examined the outcomes of the training provided to the active members of the association. Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke revealed additional entrepreneurial skills are ignited, actual product utilization, identified challenges as well as areas for improvement. The study recommends tangible economic benefits that aim to enhance and sustain the extension program.

Keywords: Community Extension, Economic Activities, Product Utilization, Costing, Food Processing

INTRODUCTION:

Extension program gives birth to a Social Assessment Research where it helps extensionists, researchers, planners and decision makers provide information about the possible outcomes of implementing a policy, instituting a program, or starting a project where it is designed to alter and shape the future (Montalbo, 2016). It aimed to have sustainable community development by creating opportunities to address all dimensions of business – poverty relationships and reach fundamental changes in the administration of sustainable community development. Associations will have to rethink their approaches to social partnerships, different stakeholder engagement processes and impact valuation. The Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997 essentially lays down the framework for how the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) operates in the Philippines. This commission takes on the responsibility of ensuring that the quality of tertiary education is upheld. It does this by overseeing important aspects like instruction, research, community extension service, and, in the case of state universities, production activities.

When one talks about extension services, it is not just a side note – it is a big deal, a very important one. It is given priority attention and is considered one of the key thrusts of higher education, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with instruction and research. Its emphasis is not just about the university doing its thing; they are a crucial part of how universities contribute to the larger picture of socio-economic development for through this the community feels the presence of the institution. In simpler terms, when a university engages in extension

services, it is not just focusing on educating its students or conducting research within its walls. It is actively reaching out to communities, applying knowledge and skills to real-world problems, and often playing a role in the economic development of the region. So, it is not just about education for education's sake; it's about education making a tangible impact beyond the campus, influencing and contributing to the growth of society as a whole.

Like any other State University in the Philippines, Bohol Island State University (BISU) is mandated to have an extension program where every academic curriculum should be involved with and must be given priority. It must be carefully planned, organized, monitored and evaluated; thus, it should be managed well in order to achieve its objective and full potential to elevate the community benefiting from it. The nature of the extension program is not a road most people are willing to travel for; navigating it will require expertise, skills, time, patience and perseverance. Furthermore, an extension program of a certain university must align with its college program and its course offerings. This is where the design of its activities must be anchored with the scope of the college where the extension is formulated and strategized.

Linao (2004) as cited by Montalbo (2016) identified the four (4) approaches in engaging community development. These approaches are Top down, Bottom-Up, Cooperative and Empowerment. The Top-Down approaches, leaders are the active players, though human resources are distinct from the process and

beneficiaries of development. Bottom – up approach on the other hand sees people or human resources as important players in achieving development but still orchestrated from outside the community. In the case of the cooperative approach, people are seen as a necessary ingredient, with communities considered as catalysts or partners in development. In the empowerment approach, the focus is now developing local capacity for self-development and locale are considered as the main focus and owners of the development process. In this study, it is a must for the beneficiaries to be collaborators and become empowered. The last approach is the BISU approach in conducting its extension community and development.

The partnership between the College of Business and Management (CBM) formerly College of Business, Arts and Sciences (CBAS) of Bohol Island State University Main Campus (BISU -MC) and the Upper De La Paz (UDLP) Women Association started with an understanding through Memorandum of Agreement. Considering that majority of the members of the association are plain housewives with no regular income, they were the beneficiaries of the Extension program of the College particularly the Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) and the Bachelor in Entrepreneurship. The stipulation between the parties started way before COVID 19 struck, hence the reason why activities have been limited. Fortunately, the CBM Extension Office caught up and compensated for the time wasted due to the pandemic. Training and conventions between the parties happened once the ordinances banning peoples' assembly were lifted.

Skills Training and Livelihood Assistance for the Women's Association of Upper Dela Paz, Cortes, Bohol was the name of the extension program focusing on seminars, one of which is about Financial Literacy and Women Empowerment. The two (2) day seminar aims to provide an additional venue for the association to diversify its product offering to maximize its income. A highlight of which is an actual food processing since the output intends to empower the beneficiaries. The objectives of the extension programs are to extend a hand towards economic development, respond to the needs of the local community in their request for support in the delivery of technical expertise in food processing and entrepreneurial knowhow, to give opportunity to diversify the association's product offering and to realize profitable income-generating activity for self – sustainability.

Extension and community involvement are key features which allow the community to feel the presence of the university (Salazar,2020). An increasing appreciation is evident to the impact of the higher extension in the academic learning process as learners and students use their disciplinary knowledge and skills to help address and contribute something to the real – world problem. It is in this regard that the research and extension office of the College of Business and Management conducted this impact assessment study. The researchers spurred their interest in conducting this investigation to determine the result of the training in relation to economic activities and utilization of the product. Furthermore, the researchers aimed to identify the challenges encountered by the beneficiaries and examine areas that need improvement from the vantage point of the participants.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach has been adopted, employing Focus Group Discussions (FGD) as a primary method of data collecting, for this research paper. FGD is utilized for its ability to facilitate different group interactions, allowing participants to express dynamic perspectives on the topic investigated. As an essential part of the study, FGD serves as a tool to explore the distinct experiences and perceptions of the participants, generating rich and contextually embedded information. The participants of the study were eleven members of UDLP Women's Association who are actively involved in the Food Processing Seminar and Workshop dated November 18-19, 2022. This group was carefully selected for its direct involvement in the food processing activities, providing valuable insight into the intricacies of the subject under investigation. The survey was conducted on whether the services to be provided by the experts of BISU are align with the interest of most of the members of the association and found out that food processing was identified as most aligned to the members' interest. The locale, located in Upper Dela Paz , Cortez, Bohol serves as the primary setting for the research, offering a contextually rich environment for understanding the experiences and practices related to food processing within the mentioned community.

In the case at bar, the researchers utilized the Thematic Analysis by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (Braun and Clarke Thematic Analysis) where the processes involved several steps. The steps include familiarization of the data, creating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing for themes, defining, and naming the themes, crafting the analysis, examining consistency, and finalizing the report or findings (Clarke and Braun,2017).

RESULTS

This section presents the findings and discussion of the themes, sub-themes and related codes that sprang from the data analyzed. The first table presents the totality of the themes, categories and codes.

Table 1. Result of the Training in Relation to Economic Activities

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODE
Investing	Bought needed materials	Bought weighing scale
		Bought cellophane sealer nip

	Bought ingredients	Bought flour
		Bought ground pork
		Bought spices (Ingredients)
Marketing	Selling	Selling house to house
		Selling for credit
		Selling to the relatives
	Food supply	Has big help to the community as basic needs
		Provision of Basic needs
		Able to buy Basic Needs (Ketchen Ingredients)
Production	Learning new skills	Acquired skills in making chiffon cake and tocino
		Experience of making longganisa
		Learn in costing
	Learned values	Consistency using guides and procedures
		Showing excitement/ enthusiasm to the trainings provided
	Baking experimentation	Baking Chiffon cake using steamers
		Baking chocolate cake using steamers
		Baking moist chocolate cake using oven

The table shows the different economic activities resulting from the food processing training and workshop as an extension program of the College of Business and Management for the Women's Association of Upper Dela Paz, Cortes Bohol. The results are explained using pertinent statements extracted from the interviews. These were substantiated from existing literature relevant to the themes generated. The food processing conducted by the College resulted into three economic activities, these are Investing, Marketing and Production. Economic activities could lead to economic development to a country for it brings changes to production of new products and processes along with discovery of new techniques, raw materials and technologies (Altinay & 2010).

The outcome of the skills training motivated the participant to invest as they purchased needed equipment and ingredients to start – up with the production of the goods that were taught to them. A weighing scale and sealer nip cellophane were bought which were needed in the production as identified by Respondent 1 saying:

“For longganisa and tocino with my little amount of capital, I bought a weighing scale and cellophane sealer nip out from my little savings amounting to 1,700”.

These materials were not initially available in their houses and were bought after the training. The purpose of the weighing scale is to precisely measure the required amount of ingredients for the production and a sealer is used to seal cellophane for packaging, particularly for longganisa and tocino. When starting a livelihood or micro-business, having essential equipment is crucial to maintain consistency in sales volume or measurement of items. Ensuring a consistent sales volume is a strategic move in building a positive reputation when starting an entrepreneurial endeavor (Mutya, 2016).

In addition, ingredients were considered as among others being bought to make the products as added by Participant 1: “I bought first sir flour, 1 kilo of ground pork, 1 kilo pork for tocino, that's all, I bought ingredients then I made it.”

Flour and ground pork are known ingredients in tocino and longganisa productions. Participant 1 demonstrated her way of grabbing the opportunity from the new acquired knowledge and skills by purchasing ingredients for the food processing business. From these ingredients, she was able to start her own tiny longganisa business serving and helping her community through supplying longganisa and tocino for breakfast. The micro business serves the community in its own and various way, may it be in a form of supplying the community with simple viand with in the neighborhood

Likewise, Marketing activities emerged because of the training provided by the College. These Marketing activities include selling (Kotler&Armstrong, 2016) the product within the vicinity using the house-to-house approach of vending the products produced. Participant 2 narrated: “.... I did a house to house selling.”

This implied that the result of the training leads to other economic activities by using her skills in marketing. Though there was no formal training on how to market homemade longganisa and tocino, the participants used their entrepreneurial skills in disposing of the products they learned to make during the training. On the other hand, Participant 1 sold her product on the basis of credit with her friends, relatives and neighbors if the latter had no cash on hand. She explained: “and if they don't have cash, I accept credit. However, I will not sell them some longganisa again until they pay their debt.”

Selling a product may be done in different ways – cash basis and credit (Evangelista &Evangelist, 2015). This selling method ensures that the products are sold and disposed of since the very nature of the goods is perishability. Once the

products are sold based on credit, the seller and the buyers stipulate on the time or date of payments. Participant 3 tried to sell the product directly to the nephew saying:

“And then I sold it to my nephew because he liked the taste. Yes, he truly liked it. That is it!

Instead of going to farther places, utilizing relatives, family and friends as captive markets of the product was a strategy of the trainee. Captive market is a condition where a specific group of consumers has no choice or limited choices or alternatives for a particular product or services ((Kotler&Armstrong,2016). In some cases, a sense of gratitude between buyer and seller could be an example of a captive market. In the case at bars, people from the barrio or rural areas have the feeling of embarrassment if they deny the seller hence sales are made and the longganisa and tocino product are not exempted. Since the taste of the longganisa is tasty and delicious, selling it will be easy. Such strategy is considered good since travelling to sell the product could incur additional expenses which is not good for business. Supplying to the community is both a civic and strategic move, after all the people in the rural area need not travel for food consumption – a basic need (Newstrom & Davis, 2007), in the city.

Participant 1 reiterated how the lessons learned from the food processing conducted by the college became beneficial to her: “For me, it helps even if it does not give huge profit, but it certainly helps the household with little things to pass by. The little profit that I have from selling longganisa enables me to buy salt, and other condiments or ingredients for our viand”.

The last economic activities resulting from the training are production of longganisa, tocino and baked products like the chiffon cake. Learning and acquiring new skills were the highlight and garnered enthusiasm among the members, as Participant 5 said: “It’s very nice because I was there and I learned to make chiffon cake, and longganisa and tocino, I was happy because I now know the ingredients. I hope I can continue making it because it can benefit and help my family. A backup statement by Participant 4 was added exclaiming “About the chiffon cake, we were excited to finish and being provided with ingredients needed because we planned that by December we could sell. It was really affordable”. The training has then contributed to the enhancement of their cooking and baking skills and made them happy. Participant 3 said that “My nephew liked my longganisa after I sold it to him” from learning the skill in producing longganisa.

Costing is an accessory and a new skill learned by the trainees when it comes to production of products. As explained and emphasized by Participant 4: “there is a need to know the proper method of costing to identify the profit of producing the items. It’s a waste of time to keep on making without knowing how much income is made and still continue making the product. Furthermore, she said: “The first thing I learned is costing. From there, I know that there is a need for a weighing scale to get the right measurement and consistency of recipe”. The idea was agreed and supported by respondents 6 who said: “In my experience, it is good if you know the costing”.

The values learned during the production process is one of the important goals in production. Skills alone will not justify the beauty of producing products, the virtue of consistency is a must in making things. The essence of being able to produce consistent quality products are inculcated to the mind and hearts of the members of the association. When asked by the researchers about being consistent, Participant 4 insisted: “The guide and procedures in making the products should not be altered or changed since it will have different taste. The customers will wonder why there are different set of tastes of the same product from the same maker”. Consistency in the production process is a competitive advantage which enables entrepreneurs to survive and thrive in the speculative and unpredictable environment of business (Okumus, F., Altinay L., & Chathoth P. K., 2010). Being enthusiastic is another added value that sprung from the training. “I am so excited about the training provided and they were very nice.” as being uttered by Participant 7.

The result of the training ignited the interest of the participants, they tested their skills by experimenting the making of products using the ingredients and materials available at home. Example of such experimentation is baking chiffon cake using steamers since an oven is not available. Participant 8 shared: “And so I tried making chiffon cake, even without the oven I made it so I tried the steaming method. It grew, I thought I baked it right but when I was about to open the steamer to slice it, it went flat after 15 minutes”. The result indicates that during Participant’s 8 experiment, baking chiffon using a steamer could be promising but will not bring the best outcome.

Respondent 4 also shared : “I tried steaming in my experiment, I baked moist chocolate cake without using the oven , I covered it with foil and I took it away from where it was baked.” Due to curiosity, Respondent 4 added: I have an oven, I compared making moist chocolate cake with steam bath. In a steam bath it remains moist because in the oven, it becomes dry where the moist is somewhat absorbed by the heat unlike in the steam bath, it looks like goldilocks moist and wet. I like steaming more than the oven. In the making, I used matching paper and I covered it with foil then covered it with clothes. These experiments made them decide which methods worked and will not work for the production of products.

The table below showcases how the members utilized the product output of their food processing training and workshop.

Table 2 Utilization of Products after Training

THEME	CODE
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Utilized at Home	Longganisa and Tocino as easy to cook
	Longganisa can be viand
	Longganisa as packed lunch in school
	Tocino as packed lunch in school
	Tocino as viand during breakfast
Utilized in Business	Tocino is sellable
	Longganisa as chosen out of three products
	Longganisa as affordable
	Chiffon Cake is occasional
	Chiffon cake is for birthday

After the training, there were two themes identified on the utilization of the products by the members of the Upper Dela Paz Women's Association who were the beneficiaries of College of Business and Management. These include the products were utilized at home and in business.

The beneficiaries learned the skills of knowing how to make longganisa, tocino and chiffon cake. Aside from technical know-how they were also guided with theories in making or producing the product leading them to identify how to use the items after the training.

When asked on the products to have the most potential, Participant 9 said "Of the three, it was longganisa was most popular, so much so that it is easy to cook" This was seconded by Participant 4 by narrating: "Longganisa is in demand during breakfast, lunch and dinner. People choose longganisa also for dinner". She said "Yes, Tocino and longganisa are easy to cook. She also added "Longganisa is easy to cooked and affordable". Participant 5 shared: "Tocino and Longganisa are prepared every morning for my grandson's lunch. We packed it in the morning and bring it to school". Participant 11 explained that Tociso is an alternative to longganisa for breakfast.

On the other hand, the training helped the participants in making the products for business. Participant 9 said: "Tocino like longganisa can be easily sold".. Participant 9 said "Of the three, it was longganisa was most popular...." Also Participant 3 joined, adding "Longganisa is readily available and affordable in price.. If I cook tocino now, tomorrow will be longganisa. They are easy to prepare". The third product which is the chiffon cake is different compared to the other two mentioned earlier which belonged to the same genus. Chiffon cake belongs to the pastry category and its purpose is not really for viand but primary categories as dessert. Unlike the previous two products, this is seldom prepared because it is only prepared for special occasions in a rural or barangay area. Participant 9 mentioned: "The cake is okay yet it will depend on occasions." Respondent 4 also added that: "cake is useful in the community but because the barangay is small and near the city." This was also followed up by Participant 10 saying: "Chiffon cake is only available and needed only in special occasions like birthdays"

The table below covers the challenges the participants identified after the training conducted by the College of Business and Management.

Table 3 Challenges Encountered by the Participant in Doing Business

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODE
Challenges Encountered	Not Paying debts	Not paying debts on time
		Not paying debts at all
	Lacking capital and Materials	No materials
		No materials and capital
		No storing of perishable items
	Discouragement	Discouragement from Partner

During the interview, the participants freely expressed the challenges they encountered during the conduct of entrepreneurial endeavors after they applied the skills they learned from the training and workshop of food processing. Among the identified challenges were collection of debts, lacking capital and materials and discouragements.

Credit collection has been a perennial problem especially for very small-scale businesses and collecting credit on time is a dilemma for the producers of longganisa and tocino. Participant 1 uttered: "It took more than a month before one customer paid and it was a big amount. And in one client I never bothered to collect her debt since it is obvious that she keeps on giving excuses not to pay, I did not bother collecting her, I just told her to please pay me in my house once you have money available to pay". This prevented the participant from continuing her entrepreneurial endeavor since her revolving capital was hindered by unavailable cash due to unpaid debt.

A more serious experience happened to Participant 7 in which the client even did not pay the debt at all. “I have the same predicament; they purchased my product through credit but not once did they pay. I was not able to consume the product that I make because they said they’ll buy it. I can not make another batch since I don’t have money and materials”.

Not all participants experienced the dilemma of collecting unpaid debt or unpaid balance. Some are lucky enough to collect the debt with the powers of persuasion. Their problems come with a different stroke through lack of finances or capital which hinders them to buy materials. Participant 11 mentioned: “we plan already to sell but there is no money to start up the business, we plan to display it during the fiesta of the barangay”. Participant 9 added: “There is a need to acquire equipment and materials soon”. Also, Participant 5 explained: “I do not sell for now since I have no capital and I do not have the materials needed to make it but I have intention to make the product soon”. This is also supported by Respondent 7 saying: “Same with the others, I do not have materials and capital. Specifically, the participants experienced problems on storing perishable items. Respondent 6 expressed: “We made it on our own. It was just for consumption since sometimes if we make longgnisa there is a need for a refrigerator. Chiffon cake was also made only for consumption due to storing problems' ”.

Aside from problems on credit collection and financial constraints, another challenge that emerged was the discouragement of the members of the family to continue the business. Participant 1 shared: “My husband discouraged me by saying – Stop it, you are just wasting your time and your energy.” The lack of support from a partner devastated the participants prompting her to stop the little business to start.

Identifying the obstacle to advance for the women in Dela Paz is a step to formulate a strategy to step forward. Doing something with a purpose does not mean they need to stop. The researcher will now have a basis on what issue to address and formulate a mechanism to mitigate or even stop it.

It is believed that there is a room for improvement in everything and the table below addresses areas that need it.

Table 4 Needs Improvements

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODE
Security and Assurance	Needing a market	Its nice to have a market
	Plan for a cooperative	Hoping to have a cooperative
		Prefer to have a coop
		Wanting to know the roles in cooperative

As an organization that chooses to learn even from the most painful experiences, the participants identified three things to focus on. The participants acknowledge that having a market to distribute their product needs to be addressed. They cannot rely on their neighborhood as some experienced problems in credit collection. As Participant 9 pointed: “It is good to have a stable and consistent market to dispose and sell the product”. The suggestions made by the participant is valid, since perishable items need to be disposed of right away. If not disposed it could lead to spoilage if not refrigerated, and if refrigerated, electrical expenses will be an additional burden to the producers. This is where the intention to form a cooperative among each member has been ignited.

Participant 8 laughingly clarified: “to have cooperation there is one management and there will be cooperation, there will be posting in Facebook for marketing the product of sort”. Hearing this, Participant 10 exclaimed with passion: “For me sir, I will go for a cooperative to minimize our problem in collecting credit (everyone laughs). Participant 9 added in a serious note that: “For me, I will prefer cooperative to focus as one. The operation should focus one at a time with members who have skills like the training so that in the long run it will be okay and stable, then we can accept more member”.

Security and assurance are the indicators for the Extension Office of the College of Business and Management. This should be addressed as the respondents cried for this as an area that needs improvement.

CONCLUSIONS

The collaboration between UDLP and CBM has a long way to go. The skills taught by the college to its beneficiaries, though very specific, leads to a domino effect. It only did not teach the beneficiaries food processing skills but it allowed the trainee to activate their entrepreneurial skills through the different economic activities they performed at the end of the training. The beneficiaries were able to identify the challenges in conducting small business and were able to identify areas for improvement on the part of the

College – their collaborators. This led to the beneficiaries’ desire to form a cooperative to have stronger resources, empowerment and bond that ties the women association to a common purpose which is development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result of the study and conclusions, the following are recommended:

1. The women's association needs funding which may be secured through tapping government

- agencies or private agencies for the materials and capital to start- up a business.
2. There is a need for the supplemental training focusing on marketing, financial management, records management, establishing a business and related activities to make the participants ready to engage into a sustainable business.
 3. The participants may be guided with proper market distribution in their products employing cost savings strategies.
 4. The Women association may be prepared to establish a cooperative by providing awareness and assisting into registration to have a legal registered cooperation.

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