eSupport: An Extension Project of the College of Computer Studies of Mindoro State University during the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The Mindoro State University Bongabong Campus extension unit is still operational amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper evaluates the implementation of the "eSupport: Continuation of Extension Services Amid Covid-19 Pandemic," an extension program by the College of Computer Studies faculty and students. This extension program included six topics delivered via a free webinar series and online training programs through Google Meet, Zoom, MS Teams, and Facebook Live and some conducted face-to-face. Participants or beneficiaries in the webinars, online and face-to-face training, and extensionists served as respondents of the study. The narrative research design was used, and the data were treated using the weighted mean. The instrument used in the study was a university evaluation questionnaire on extension services. The evaluation sheet was divided into strategy, speaker, and services. The study revealed that community beneficiaries gave positive assessments and feedback on the College of Computer Studies' extension project. Participants' and extensionists' or implementers' experiences and recommendations will be considered in future planning, implementation, and impact assessments.

Keywords: *extension project, evaluation of the implementation, problems encountered, narrative design, university's extension evaluation sheet, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Constitution requires higher educational institutions to promote the implementation of relevant extension and community programs or activities. The Commission on Higher Education is in charge of enabling and monitoring community extension programs that have a positive societal impact that each institution carries out. Following the mandate to provide extension services, the methods by which HEIs deliver extension programs differ and are based on the program activities or project undertakings of each department or course in a school, state college, or university. Literacy programs, seminar and skills training programs, and technical assistance to requesting communities are two common examples of extension activities related to education training programs.

Universities and colleges conducted several studies that implemented evaluations. They assessed the impact or outcomes of extension activities related to education-training programs, including Corpuz et al. (2022), Magnaye and Ylagan (2021), Rubi and Cepeda (2021), Balazar (2020), Llenares and Deocaris (2018), Abrea (2017), Daquiz et al. (2016), Codamon-Dugyon (2016), Rubio et al. Furthermore, the study of Guiab et al. (2016) identified problems encountered during the conduct of extension programs, whereas Pizana et al. (2021) studied the lived experiences of both extensionists and participants.

Mindoro State University (MinSU), formerly Mindoro State College of Agriculture and Technology (MinSCAT) extension program, is an integral component. It is committed to extending services, particularly to rural folks, by helping them improve their quality of life. Through the program, barangay folks are provided with training on skills development in various technological fields, thus enabling them to acquire other livelihood opportunities. The program also includes additional training, which is aligned with the curricular offerings of the institution, and information dissemination, which will enhance awareness and knowledge about relevant issues and concerns. The program's objectives and activities conform with the thrusts and goals of the national, regional, provincial, and institutional development plans, which aim to uplift the quality of life of the people in communities (MinSCAT, 2014).

MinSU has nine academic departments or colleges working with the Extension office to support and sustain Community Extension Programs relevant to community and societal needs. The College of Computer Studies is one of the colleges that empowers communities and changes lives through knowledge and skill development and technology transfer via literacy programs, training, workshops, seminars, and technical assistance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly disrupted instruction, extension, and community outreach services at every university, state college, and school worldwide. Face-to-face seminars, workshops, and training programs were transformed into webinars and online training. With the current situation, the students' and teachers' access to digital devices, tools, applications, and the Internet has increased. The MinSU Bongabong Campus Extension Office, in collaboration with the College of Computer Studies, would like to offer a free webinar series and online training programs on various topics such as tarpaulin design using Adobe Photoshop, invitation card making using Microsoft Publisher, video editing using Kinemaster, Capcut, and Filmora, and creating online survey forms using Google Forms and webinar on classroom netiquette for teachers and students. As a result, the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) and Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering (BSCpE) proposed and implemented eSupport: Continuation of Extension Services Amid the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The following project objectives are stated in the approved extension project proposal: to assist the target beneficiaries, elementary and high school students, as well as their advisers and teachers, in gaining knowledge and improving skills in designing tarpaulins and making invitation cards. Also, to compete in and win the Department of Education's Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan-Technology and Livelihood Education (EPP-TLE) District and Division Festival of Talents. They will also learn and improve their video editing skills to present their outputs and school projects during the competition in tarpaulin and invitation card making due to the pandemic, as well as train student and faculty/teacher researchers in the use of online survey forms rather than face-to-face surveys during the pandemic. Finally, students and teachers/faculty should be more aware of proper netiquette when conducting and participating in online learning.

The target participants/beneficiaries were from

the various partner elementary and secondary schools, particularly Moises Abante Memorial Elementary School, Proper Bansud Elementary School, and Labasan National High School since they requested technical assistance from MinSU CCS-BSIT during the pandemic, they should continue to acquire new skills and knowledge. Due to the pandemic, after one year of lockdown and restrictions were imposed, the DepEd EPP-TLE District and Division Festival of Talents was conducted online such as Invitation Card Making and Tarpaulin design contests – only the advisers per school and judges were present during the competition. The students' outputs were presented using a recorded presentation due to health measures. So, the partner schools ask for technical assistance from MinSU for them to compete and win in the contest at both the District and Division levels.

Students and teachers from MinSU, Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Bansud Campus, and John Paul College were selected as the beneficiaries of the webinar on Classroom Netiquette since they shifted to hybrid or online learning due to the pandemic. They are also the beneficiaries of the Webinar on Creating Survey Forms using Google Forms, and this will allow their students and teachers researchers to administer the survey online rather than face-to-face.

The topics for online training/face-to-face training and webinars/seminars will be delivered through lecture-discussion and lecture-demonstration methods, aided by PowerPoint presentations and flyers/handouts. Each activity in the first session was done online using Google Meet, Zoom, Facebook Live, and MS Teams, whereas three activities were done face-to-face in the second session. There were required outputs in each activity before participants could claim their certificates.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study evaluated the College of Computer Studies community extension project titled "eSupport: Continuation of Extension Services Amid Covid-19 Pandemic. Specifically, it aimed to (1) assess/evaluate the proposed and implemented extension project in terms of (a) strategy, (b) speaker, and (c) services, and (2) identify the problems encountered and share the experiences of the extensionists/implementers in the conduct of the extension activities.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, a narrative research design was used to assess or evaluate the extension program at the College of Computer Studies, as well as to identify the problems encountered by the extension program implementers and extensionists and share their experi-ences. The researcher used the university extension questionnaire, direct observation, and interviews.

Participants

The participants of the study were:
- The grade four to six pupils and teachers or advisers from Moises Abante Memorial Elementary School, Proper Bansud Elementary School.

- Junior and senior students from Aurelio Arago National High School and Labasan National High School.

- College students and faculty from MinSU Bongabong Campus of Bachelor of Secondary Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management, Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management, Bachelor of Science in Fisheries, Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, and Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering,

- College students from Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Bansud Campus and John Paul College.

Only the retrieved questionnaires were used in this study. Out of 544 skills training and webinar participants, 289 recipients or beneficiaries were retrieved, twenty-four (24) student implementers and six (6) faculty extensionists served as respondents in the survey. The first group of respondents is the beneficiaries from the various partner schools and colleges based on the conducted extension activities and services rendered. They assess or evaluate the completed extension activities regarding strategy, speaker, and services. The

second group is the faculty extensionists and student implementers. They are the best people to share their experiences and encountered problems while implementing the eSupport extension activities.

Survey Instrument

The researcher adopted the evaluation instrument used by the Office of Extension and Public Information to gather information and data. The questionnaire is composed of three parts. Part I included:

- The name of the participant
- The type of extension program/activity
- The date of the event
- The location

Part II evaluated/assessed the extension program/activity regarding Strategy, Speaker, and Services.

Part III included participants' comments and suggestions. The evaluation sheet has fourteen (14) items written in both Filipino and English and a 5-point Likert Scale with the following descriptions/ratings: 5-Excellent, 4-Good, 3-Better, 2-Poor, 1-Very Poor.

Data Analysis

Data was tallied, tabulated, and analyzed using Google Forms (online session) and Microsoft Excel (face-to-face session) after completing the survey questionnaires. Weighted mean was the statistical tool used. The following scale was used to interpret the study's findings: 4.51-5:00 - Excellent; 3.51-4.50 - Good; 2.51-3.50 - Better; 1.51-2:50 - Poor; 1.00-1.50 - Very Poor.

Results and Discussions

The results of the study are presented in the following tables and discussions.

Table 1 lists the activities of the College of Computer Studies' eSupport community extension program. In December 2021, the BSIT and BSCPE faculty proposed to the Extension office an extension program called eSupport: Continuation of Extension Services Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. This 12-month extension program of the College of Computer Studies begins in January 2022 with six different community activities. The community activities were classified as computer literacy, skill training, and information dissemination.

Extension Activities	Community Needs Addressed	Participants/Beneficiaries	Duration
Online Training on Tarpaulin Designing	Computer Literacy/Skills Training	High School Students Advisers	32 hours (Session 1 and Session 2)
Online Training on Invitation Card Making	Computer Literacy/Skills Training	Elementary Pupils Advisers	16 hours (Session 1 and Session 2)
Online Training on Video Editing and Techniques for Beginners	Computer Literacy/Skills Training	High School Students Advisers	16 hours (Session 1 and Session 2
Webinar on Classroom Netiquette	Information Dissemination /Seminar	College Students Faculty	4 hours (Session 1 and Session 2)
Create Online Survey Forms in Google Forms	Computer Literacy	Students and Faculty Researchers	8 hours (Session 1 and Session 2)
Webinar on Cyber Security	Information Dissemination /Seminar	College Students	4 hours (Session 1 and Session 2)

Table 1: Components of Community Extension Activities under eSupport Community Extension Program

Extension Activities	Session 1		Session 2	
	WM	VI	WM	VI
Online/Face to Face Training on Tarpaulin Designing	4.45 Good		4.63 Excellent	
Online/ Face to Face Training on Invitation Card Making	4.5 Excellent		4.65 Excellent	
Online/Face to Face Training on Video Editing and Techniques for Beginners	4.62 Excellent		4.70 Excellent	
Webinar on Classroom Netiquette	4.57 Excellent		4.60 Excellent	
Create Online Survey Forms in Google Forms	4.75 Excellent		4.70 Excellent	
Webinar on Cyber Security	4.40 Good		4.42 Good	
Composite Mean	4.54 Excellent		4.61 Excellent	

Table 2. Evaluation of the Community Extension Activities under eSupport Community Extension Program of College of Computer Studies (January 2022-December 2022-Session 1 & 2)

Table 2 summarizes the findings of the eSupport community extension program evaluation. According to the data presented, the students and teachers who were recipients or beneficiaries actively participated in various community extension activities. The results show that the project leader and extensionists/implementers are highly engaged, and most activities are well-implemented or conducted. In addition, the participants or beneficiaries provided positive comments and evaluations on the overall implementation of each exercise in terms of strategy, speaker, and services. Furthermore, the results show that, except for the Online Training on Tarpaulin Designing (which received 4.45) and the Webinar on Cyber Security (which received 4.40), each extension activity received the most positive feedback during the first session. Create Online Survey Forms in Google Forms received the highest mean score of 4.75 during the first session, followed by Online Training on Video Editing, which received a mean score of 4.62. During the second session, the highest mean score was 4.70 for Create Online Survey Forms in Google Forms and Face-to-Face Training on Video Editing and Techniques for Beginners. Still, the lowest mean score was 4.42 for the Webinar on Cyber Security. Because

COVID-19 was normalized, three activities were delivered face-to-face during the second session. Still, all activities were conducted online during the first session due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Problems encountered by the Extensionists during the Implementation

The program's overall implementation immensely helped the beneficiaries; however, problems were encountered by the faculty and student extensionists during the extension activities, along with an explanation of the most frequent and least frequent issues and possible solutions for future similar endeavors, as presented in Table 3.

Most Frequent Problem: internet and technical problems

The most frequent problem encountered during the implementation of extension activities is internet and technical issues. These problems disrupt sessions and affect the overall quality of the program. To address this issue, it is crucial to provide robust technical support, invest in better internet connectivity, and have contingency plans, such as recording sessions for later viewing.

Problem Encountered	Frequency	Possible Solutions
Some registered participants didn't attend online	Moderate	• Send reminders and confirmations closer to the session. • Offer incentives or rewards for attendance. • Analyze the reasons for non-attendance and tailor content or timing accordingly.
Some participants didn't fill out evaluation forms	Moderate	• Provide clear instructions and deadlines for evaluation submission. • Send follow-up emails or messages to remind participants. • Stress the importance of feedback for program improvement.
Expected attendees didn't arrive on scheduled date	Moderate	• Confirm attendance in advance and adjust session planning accordingly. • Maintain a waitlist or overbook to account for potential no-shows.
Rescheduling due to conflicting schedules	Moderate	• Coordinate with participants to find suitable alternative dates. • Use scheduling tools to identify expected availability in advance. • Set realistic expectations and communicate changes promptly.
Stakeholders' or clients' attitudes	Moderate	• Foster better communication and build rapport with stakeholders. • Address concerns or misunderstandings proactively. • Seek feedback from stakeholders to improve the working relationship.
Internet and technical problems (poor connection, FB Live)	High	• Provide technical support and troubleshooting guides. • Test internet connectivity in advance and have backup plans. • Explore alternative platforms with better stability. • Record sessions for later viewing in case of interruptions.
Lack of financial assistance for extensionist students	Moderate	• Seek funding or sponsorships for students' data load expenses. • Offer financial incentives or compensation for extensionists. • Explore partnerships with organizations
Limitations of the platform and interrupted meetings	Moderate	• Select a more robust platform or upgrade to a premium plan. • Plan for shorter sessions with breaks to minimize interruptions. • Have backup communication channels (e.g., email or chat) for continuity.
Participants unintentionally removing others	Low	• Provide clear guidelines and instructions for platform usage. • Offer technical training or tutorials before the sessions. • Monitor sessions and intervene promptly if issues arise.
Difficulty in organizing live meetings/discussions	Moderate	• Plan and reserve suitable venues with minimal interruptions. • Use noise-cancelling technology or headphones to reduce background noise. • Create a code of conduct for participants to maintain order and respect during discussions.
Difficulty in scheduling extension classes	Moderate	• Offer flexible scheduling options to accommodate participants. • Establish a fixed schedule well in advance for consistency.

Table 3. Problems Encountered by the Extensionists During the Implementation

Least Frequent Problem: Participants unintentionally removing others

While this problem is less frequent, it can still be disruptive. To mitigate it, participants should be provided clear guidelines and training to ensure they are comfortable with the platform. Monitoring sessions and intervening promptly when issues arise can prevent unintentional removals.

By implementing these solutions and learning from past challenges, future extension activities can be executed more smoothly, maximizing the benefits for all stakeholders involved.

Impact of Skills Training and Webinars

It is essential to elaborate on the potential monetary, societal, and economic benefits the beneficiaries might derive from the online training and webinars. Highlighting these benefits can provide a comprehensive view of the program's impact. Here's an expanded discussion on each aspect:

Monetary Benefits

Improved Employability. The online training and webinars equipped teacher participants with valuable skills and knowledge relevant to their fields or roles/needs.

Entrepreneurship/Freelance Opportunities. Some participants may have used the knowledge gained from the program to start their own businesses or freelance careers. This entrepreneurial spirit can generate income and contribute to local economic development. Beneficiaries who acquire skills in tarpaulin designing may explore freelance opportunities. They can offer their design services for events, businesses, or individuals, thereby generating additional income. Beneficiaries can pursue freelance opportunities in video editing for businesses, content creators, or individuals, earning income through their editing skills.

Custom Invitation Services: Beneficiaries can monetize their skills by offering custom invitation card

design services.

Cost Savings. Online training eliminates the need for beneficiaries to travel to physical locations, reducing transportation and accommodation costs. Additionally, access to resources online can be cost-effective compared to traditional learning materials.

Certifications and Credentials. Participants might have earned certificates or credentials that enhance their professional profiles depending on the program. These certifications can translate into consulting opportunities.

Societal Benefits

Knowledge Dissemination. The online training and webinars benefit individual participants and contribute to knowledge dissemination within communities. Beneficiaries may share the knowledge they've gained with others

Event Enhancement. Skilled tarpaulin designers can contribute to the overall aesthetics of events within their communities, enhancing the visual appeal and making events more memorable.

Skills Transfer. Participants may have acquired skills that are personally beneficial and shareable within their communities. Participants might pass on their skills to others.

Promoting classroom netiquette contributes to a respectful and conducive learning environment, enhancing the educational experience.

Improved cybersecurity knowledge can lead to safer online practices, reducing the risk of cyber-crimes for individuals and organizations.

Networking and Collaboration. Online programs often foster networking opportunities. Participants may have connected with peers, mentors, or experts in their field, leading to collaborative projects, knowledge exchange, and community-building.

Social Upliftment: As individuals gain new skills and knowledge, they may become role models within their communities, inspiring others to pursue education and personal development.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: The MinSU College of Computer Studies' extension program (eSupport) is excellent regarding strategy, speaker, and services, as perceived by participants or beneficiaries. The extension programs are relevant to the clientele's needs and have made significant contributions to the personal aspects of the community's life. Also, the results indicate that the extension project's objectives were achieved. Also, the community extension activities conducted for students and teachers who were recipients or beneficiaries of the project were generally successful and well-received. Additionally, the adaptability of the activities to changing circumstances, such as the transition from online to face-to-face delivery due to COVID-19, showcases the flexibility and resilience of the program. Overall, the study highlights the effectiveness of the extension initiatives in positively impacting the community. Several key findings emerge from the data:

Active Participation in Community Extension Activities:

The study demonstrates that students and teachers who were recipients or beneficiaries of the community extension activities actively participated. This highlights a positive engagement and commitment from the target audience.

High Engagement of Project Leaders and Extensionists/Implementers:

The project leaders and extensionists/implementers were highly engaged in the execution of the activities. This suggests strong leadership and effective implementation of the extension initiatives.

Practical Implementation of Activities:

Most extension activities were well-implemented and conducted successfully. This indicates that the planning and execution of these activities were carried out efficiently.

Positive Feedback and Evaluation:

Participants or beneficiaries of the activities provided positive comments and evaluations regarding the overall implementation of each exercise, including strategy, speakers, and services. This signifies a high level of satisfaction among the participants.

Variation in Feedback over Sessions:

Notably, the first session received the most positive feedback for most activities, with 'Create Online Survey Forms in Google Forms' receiving the highest mean score. However, during the second session, some activities, especially those conducted face-to-face due to the normalization of COVID-19, received slightly lower mean scores.

Impact of COVID-19

The study's findings indicate that COVID-19 restrictions influenced the delivery format of these extension activities. While all activities were conduct-ed online during the first session, some could transition to face-to-face delivery during the second session as COVID-19 was normalized.

Furthermore, the issues/problems extensionists/implementers face when conducting programs and activities were revealed. The issues or challenges can be considered in future planning, implementation, and impact analysis. The project leader, together with the implementers, should consider the possible solutions to address the problems/issues encountered, submit them to the extension office for consideration in future planning via the extension office/unit, and conduct meetings with the project implementers to discuss the problems and the possible solutions. More extension programs with economic and social implications for MinSU's service communities should be provided and implemented.

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