

**HEADING TO HANDS: DECODING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES IN  
COMMUNITY EXTENSION PROGRAM AMONG UNIT LEADERS IN SELECT  
PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (PHEIS)**

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**ABSTRACT**

Community Extension is one of the trifocal functions of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) together with instructions and research. It is the arm of the university that helps communities in learning new knowledge and skills that they can use to improve the quality of life. Extension unit heads/leaders are regular faculty members that has been appointed or designated to lead the community extension program for the university or college. Their task is to plan, implement and assess extension programs for quality and sustainability. Community Extension, as the term suggest, have many elements that intersects one another that disturbs its processes, thus affecting the objectives of the program. Therefore, understanding the experiences of community extension unit heads/leaders will show us a full picture of the intricacy in managing change. This study aimed at describing the lived experiences community extension program among unit leaders in select Philippine higher education institutions (HEI's) using the transcendental phenomenology. Results revealed that there are specific leadership competencies needed to successfully manage community extension. Such competencies are: Intrinsic qualities (dedication, passion, commitment and heart), educational competencies, intercultural competencies and dependability. Extension managers also encountered challenges in budget management, teaching load assignment, quality of extension program, policies, procedures and processes, evaluation, and positive and negative attitudes of faculty towards extension program. Community extension heads/leaders managed the demands through time management, use of right tools to understand the community, using positive feedbacks form participants as motivation, influencing others, and constant communication.

**Keywords:** Community Extension, Leadership, Qualities, Education, Management.