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**SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:
EXAMINING TOP-DOWN INITIATIVES**

Theses of the PhD Dissertation

Szeged, 2025

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Topic Description

A variety of key concepts and terminologies are frequently used in the academic literature to describe the multifaceted relationships between universities and society. These terms reflect the evolving roles of higher education institutions beyond their traditional functions of teaching and research. First, university social responsibility (USR), refers to the university's institutional commitment to contribute positively to society, often through top-down and transactional activities. These may include initiatives aimed at addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, reinforcing the university's role as an agent of societal change (Mbah, Johnson and Chipindi, 2021; Reisinger and Dános, 2022; Sitku, 2023). Some scholars also view it, emphasizing the role of universities in driving technological innovation and fostering economic development (Etzkowitz *et al.*, 2000; Smith and Bagchi-Sen, 2012). In this context, UCE is viewed as holding a similar position to corporate or business institution. Consequently, some researchers refer it as 'university social responsibility,' a concept derived from 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR), applicable to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Rudnák, Gedecho and Taera, 2024).

Second, third mission. This concept denotes the university's role beyond its core functions of education and research. It emphasizes collaboration, mutual benefit, and long-term partnerships with external stakeholders. The third mission encompasses activities such as community engagement, public service, and knowledge transfer (García-Gutiérrez and Corrales Gaitero, 2020; Jones *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, the third mission concept stems from the growing significance of university research in enhancing national and regional competitiveness and is closely linked to the notion of the "entrepreneurial university" (Laredo, 2007; Málovics, Juhász and Bajmócy, 2022). In this context, the concepts of USR and the third mission are broadly aligned, particularly in their practical orientation toward business and industry collaboration.

Thirth, university-community engagement (UCE). It broadly encompasses the range of collaborative efforts between universities and local or regional communities. These interactions aim to address pressing social issues and promote reciprocal benefits between academic institutions and society (Ogunsanya and Govender, 2020; Singh, Bhatt and Singh, 2021).

Fourth, service learning or community service. Service learning is a pedagogical approach that integrates community service with academic instruction, and is part of UCE. It enables students or/and lecturers to apply theoretical knowledge in real-life settings while simultaneously addressing societal needs. This approach represents a concrete implementation of the third mission of universities (Waghid, 2002; Tolosa and Amundarain, 2017).

Fifth, university sustainability. It refers to the comprehensive efforts by HEIs to integrate sustainable practices across various dimensions of their activities, particularly concerning the relationship between people and the environment (Lozano *et al.*, 2015). These efforts include activities such as renewable energy projects, energy and resource conservation, efficient waste and environmental management, and the promotion of social justice (Francis and Moore, 2019). By adopting this model, academics hope to continue their core activities (teaching and research) while simultaneously reducing their environmental footprint and contributing positively to the environment in a sustainable manner.

The definitions and focal points of these terms are presented in *Table 1*. This study adopts the term (UCE) due to its growing global recognition and its specific emphasis on mutual collaboration between universities and communities. Specifically, the term UCE is chosen over other related terms due to its emphasis on process and its potential to generate mutual impact and benefits for the collaborating actors. Concepts such as USR and the third mission are more practically oriented toward business-related relationships, which do not align with the focus of this study. Meanwhile, service learning/community service and university sustainability refer more specifically to types of activities or issues being addressed. Both (service learning/community service and university sustainability) can be viewed as components of UCE, as UCE serves as an umbrella concept encompassing various initiatives that connect universities with communities to generate long-term impact through collaborative efforts involving multiple stakeholders.

Table 1 Comparison and Key Concepts

Term	Description	Focus
USR	University's obligation to contribute positively to society.	Transactional activities
Third mission	Interaction between universities and local/regional communities	Enhancing development for competitiveness
UCE	Interaction between universities and local/regional communities	Collaborative efforts
Service learning/ community service	Integrating service with academic learning	Skill development, societal contribution
University sustainability	Integrate sustainable practices	Environment issue

Source: Author(s), 2025

Regarding the UCE term, it has been extensively researched across disciplines and context (Koekkoek, Ham and Kleinhans, 2021). UCE is about connecting universities with community needs (Preradović and Čalić, 2022), thereby dismantling the traditional view of universities as "ivory-towers" (Ocean, Calvano and McGorry, 2020). UCE can contribute to the enhancement of human and social capital, the improvement of professional infrastructure and capacity building, and, more broadly, offer benefits across the socio-economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions of the local community (Koekkoek, Ham and Kleinhans, 2021). Through collaboration between universities and local communities, various cross-sectoral issues can be addressed, including health, education, economics, environment, and other pressing challenges (Benneworth *et al.*, 2018; Koekkoek, Ham and Kleinhans, 2021).

In the economic sector specifically, UCE might be a key driver of local economic income. Also, UCE can support transformative social justice (Málovics, Juhász and Bajmócy, 2022). Furthermore, previous studies have underscored the significance of UCE as it can directly contribute to accelerating the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (education), SDG 10 (equality), and SDG 16 (peace, justice,

and strong institutions) (Shabalala and Ngcwangu, 2021; Carroll, Fitzgibbon and Caulfield, 2023; Borsatto *et al.*, 2024).

Research Problem

Generally, Hazelkorn (2016a) distinguishes the concept of UCE in three aspects: (1) social justice; (2) economic development; and (3) the public good. The social justice model emphasizes reciprocity to improve the capacity of universities and local communities, economic development emphasizes the importance of universities as engines of social and economic growth, and the good public model emphasizes a process in which universities serve the public good, especially if the state funds them. This model aligns with the framework proposed by (Grant and Hains, 2024), who similarly emphasize that the primary contribution of higher education should be directed towards local communities by enhancing their "capacity" (p. 163).

Conversely, the economic development model highlights the role of universities as engines of socioeconomic progress, advancing social mobility and widening access to higher education for marginalized groups. This model underscores universities' efforts to enhance graduate employability, their short- and long-term contributions to national economic growth and regional development, and their role in fostering the creation of new enterprises while driving innovation in existing industries.

The third model, the public good, emphasizes a process wherein universities, particularly those funded by the state, are dedicated to serving the collective welfare of society. To some extent, the second and third models share a common orientation towards quantitative economic growth. In this study, we categorize the two primary dimensions of the UCE model into social justice and economic income.

Some UCE program initiators claim they have successfully implemented UCE because they have made significant impacts on economic income (Weinberg, 1999; Petersen and Kruss, 2021). Despite creating more jobs or increasing community income, many questions remain about this "economic income" UCE program model. Some researchers believe that boosting income by creating jobs or raising earnings does not lead to long-term benefits for the community (Grant and Hains, 2024). Furthermore, a prevalent critique of these programs is their inability to address the systemic origins of the

challenges encountered by local communities, who are frequently oppressed and marginalized by the prevailing socio-economic structures (Hurd and Stanton, 2023)—predominantly capitalist systems functioning across countries. Economic injustice and inequality, which prevent these communities from accessing education and basic needs, ultimately contribute to their impoverishment. Programs focused solely on quantitative income growth do not address the root causes of why marginalized communities struggle with financial problems and income. Fundamental issues such as education, mindset, health, housing, and basic needs, which impact community well-being, are often ignored (Gyamera and Debrah, 2023).

Therefore, instead of focusing only on the growth of economic income or quantitative economic welfare, some researchers believe that UCE programs should target the fundamental social justice issues that drive long-term transformation in marginalized communities (Strier and Shechter, 2016; Wood, 2016; Chupp, Fletcher and Gaulty, 2021; Hurd and Stanton, 2023). It is also important to emphasize that the issue is not always about selecting between quantitative economic growth or qualitative social transformation, but rather about aligning the university's available resources with the specific challenges faced by the community. For instances, education majors might focus more on educational programs that also give students real teaching experience in front of the community (Wade, 1995), business majors might focus on opening access to new skills for small entrepreneurs to increase their income (Petersen and Kruss, 2021), and this applies to other study programs as well.

At other side, the issue also might not be about the academic background of the students or faculty, but about the urgent needs of the community that can be addressed without requiring academic expertise but instead physical assistance and access (Shannon and Wang, 2010; Day *et al.*, 2021). Or it may be due to a more fundamental issue: the perspective of academics who view UCE as an "additional task," wherein their role is only to "assist" rather than address the systemic injustices faced by the community (Wood, 2016).

Furthermore, the issue may be more fundamental: the perspective of academics who view UCE as an "additional task," where their role is merely to "assist" rather than to address the systemic injustices facing the community (Wood, 2016). This perspective embodies a "shallow" form of collaboration between universities and communities (Himmelman,

2001). In this view, the responsibility of academics is limited to addressing only surface-level issues, without engaging in the deeper, systemic problems that communities face.

In addition, several studies suggest that the "shallow" outcomes of UCE may be due to the motivations of the actors involved—whether driven by genuine personal interest or simply viewing UCE as an academic obligation to fulfill. One prior study reported that the actors involved in UCE initiatives in South Africa failed to maintain their commitment and motivation, resulting in minimal impact on the local community where the university is situated (Thakrar, 2018). Another study noted a UCE failure in China due to the inability of university actors to adequately understand the cultural nuances of the local community (Chen and Vanclay, 2021). Other UCE cases (Duke, 2008; Clark *et al.*, 2017; Sanga, Gonzalez Benson and Josyula, 2021) have failed to achieve equal involvement of all parties, the fulfillment of goals for both sides, and long-term sustainability of the partnership.

Regarding how intrinsic motivation arises among UCE actors, prior studies have found that those who engage in UCE driven by personal motivation (bottom-up) tend to undertake UCE with genuine commitment (Málovics, Juhász and Bajmócy, 2022; Gyamera and Debrah, 2023). In contrast, those who implement UCE programs merely to fulfill top-down directives often result in superficial, formalistic programs cases (Duke, 2008; Clark *et al.*, 2017; Sanga, Gonzalez Benson and Josyula, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to understand whether the context itself (top-down or bottom-up) contributes to the failure of UCE to have a meaningful impact on local communities. To answer that question, this study will examine these two contexts through a systematic literature review (SLR) of prior studies on UCE implementation, focusing on both top-down and bottom-up initiatives.

Following this SLR, the study will concentrate on a top-down initiative context. While the bottom-up approach has been successful in impacting local communities (Gyamera and Debrah, 2023), this research continues to investigate why the more stable top-down approach has often had limited or no impact on local communities. The urgency of empirically examining UCE in the top-down context arises from the challenges and criticisms that, despite its recognized importance, UCE in top-down contexts often suffers from confusion, lack of coordination, and insufficient commitment (Fenwick, 2014). Furthermore, another study concluded that internal issues among UCE actors

within the university in a top-down context, such as their internal capacity, hinder their ability to reaffirm higher education's role in fostering dialogue with local communities (Purcell, 2023).

Previous literature suggested that the ability to respond to the local community needs may play a crucial role in the success of UCE (McLachlan *et al.*, 2017). As also stressed by other study that the success of UCE is significantly related to how well these practices are integrated with the needs and issues of the communities (Taylor, 2023). However, in a top-down context, the urgency to prioritize community needs may be overshadowed by the desire to quickly fulfill academic duties and responsibilities associated with implementing UCE programs (Fenwick, 2014; Wahyuni, 2023).

Therefore, addressing these issues requires further investigation within the top-down context to ensure meaningful and effective engagement (Fenwick, 2014). Consequently, the main research question in this thesis is **“How to implement the university-community engagement in successful way from top-down context?”**

Purpose and Context of the Study

To address the problem identified and the main research question above, I examined prior literature through SLR on the implementation of UCE from both bottom-up and top-down perspectives. I continued to analyze three case studies, including two cases UCE programs and one national case study on academic perspectives of UCE implementation at the national level. These three case studies are conducted in Indonesia.

The Indonesian context was chosen because: *first*, it effectively illustrates how government regulations and directives at the grassroots level significantly shape UCE activities (Yudarwati, 2019); *second*, in the Indonesian context, the top-down approach applies to all levels of government (Ha & Kumar, 2021; Pramono & Prakoso, 2021), including the education sector (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018; Setiawan, 2020); *third*, Indonesia, with its five main islands and diverse ethnic groups in each region, provides a multicultural context for this study, which will be particularly relevant in the study that examines the perspectives of faculty members across various Indonesian universities on UCE programs; and *fourth*, Indonesia offers a non-Western context for UCE, addressing

criticisms that most engagement studies are ethnocentric and Western-oriented (Yudarwati, 2019).

Based on that purpose and the strongly hierarchical top-down context in Indonesia, I will answer the main question of this thesis based on the SLR of prior literature relating UCE cases across various countries and contexts (top-down and bottom-up) and examining three empirical case studies regarding these three sub-research questions below:

1. How do lecturers/academics perceive the implementation of UCE within a top-down initiative context in Indonesia?
2. How is the UCE program implemented within a top-down initiative context in Indonesia?
3. What do stakeholders consider to be the success of UCE programmes and what are the components that determine such success?

Based on the purpose and research questions above, I formulate the research objectives of this study in three ways. *First*, in scientific/theoretical area, this study aims to analyze the factors that contribute to the success of UCE; analyze the perspective of lecturers regarding the implementation of UCE; analyze the implementation of UCE from different perspectives (university, local society, and intermediary side), and analyze how the stakeholders define the success of UCE along with the components determine such success.

Second, in practical area, this study aims to offer actionable insights and strategies for improving UCE through top-down initiative approaches. By analyzing real-world cases, it seeks to help stakeholders design and implement UCE initiatives that effectively align institutional goals with community needs, ensuring that such efforts are not only completed as a mandatory task from the top government but also socially impactful and sustainable to the society.

Third, from the author's personal side, this study reflects my personal commitment to bridging the gap between academic institutions and the communities they serve in international UCE practices (generally), and the context where I work as an academics (specifically). Through exploring top-down UCE initiatives, I aim to better understand how the program can contribute to the society in meaningful way. Also, motivated by a desire to contribute to more inclusive and socially just development practices, this

research is also part of my journey to become an academic who hopes to contribute in meaningful and sustainable change through collaboration and shared knowledge.

Structure of the Study

The study begins with the background, main research question, purpose and context of the study, and the overall structure. Following that, the methods used in the three empirical case studies. Next part is representing the result of the all the three empirical studies that analyze the perspectives of Indonesian lecturers from different universities on the implementation of UCE in the context of top-down initiative, the result of the investigation of the implementation of UCE with local cow farmer community in ASM Village, and the UCE program conducted by public university with housewives community in Rammang-Rammang, an Indonesian tourist destination.

The final part summarizes the findings from the three empirical studies and details how they contribute to answering the main research question. This final chapter also addresses future research directions, limitations, and recommendations.

Research Methodology

Case study 1: Interviewing different perspectives from various locations within one country

The study was conducted from January 2023 to May 2024, utilizing semi-structure interviews of 23 Indonesian lecturers (see *Table 2*).

Table 2 Information of Data Collection

Nu		Method	Data Source	Quantity	Time
1	Interview	In Person	Recording and Notes	6 times	August 2023 – March 2024
2		Online; Zoom Meeting	Recording	15 times	January 2023 – March 2024
3		Text: WhatsApp Messenger & Microsoft Word	Text	3 times	March 2024

Nu		Method	Data Source	Quantity	Time
4	Informant archive	Sending photos with credits and anonymous photos	Image	5 photos	May 2024

Source: Authors, 2024

Figure 1 Geographical Distribution of Informants



Source: Authors, 2024 from <https://www.canva.com/>

Indonesia has five main islands, and at least two lecturers from each island were interviewed (see *Figure 1*). Prior research suggested that a minimum of 16 to 24 interviews is needed to reach saturation in a context such as Indonesia, allowing for a “richly textured understanding of issues” (Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi, 2017), p. 591). The diversity of lecturers also extends to host universities, with 9 lecturers originating from Java (the most populous island in Indonesia and the location of the capital city), while 14 lecturers are dispersed across four other islands. The distribution also encompassed variation in the levels and statuses of universities, varied positions (junior and senior), diverse tasks related to UCE (head of UCE unit, grant reviewer, chief and member of UCE), and a wide spectrum of disciplinary backgrounds.

Case study 2: Interviewing and direct observation of different actors

This study mainly used data obtained from direct observation and semi-structured interviews in ASM village, Indonesia (see *Table 3*). Interview results were stored using a media recorder, written notes, and social media text messages according to the informants' needs and conditions, then transposed into a transcript in the original language (Indonesian-Makassar language).

Table 3 Data Collection Activities

No.	Method	Time	Media
1	Direct observation	July 2021 – January 2022 a. Community service presentation (8 hours) b. Local government service office (2 hours) c. Twice in the local farmhouses (4 hours)	Recorder, photo, and reflective diary
2	Interview Local Community	August 2021 – April 2022	
	a. First Interview	August 2021	Notes and Recorder (face-to-face)
	b. Second interview (probing and prompting)	January 2022	Notes and Recorder (face-to-face)
	c. Reconfirm doubtful data	April 2022	WhatsApp
3	Interview Lecturers from the University	August 2021 – April 2022	Notes (face-to-face) and WhatsApp

Source: Authors, 2024

Upon compiling the transcript, the data were analyzed with a thematic approach (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The results from the thematic analysis were reported by finding the patterns in three themes: the context of UCE, the process of implementing UCE, and the motives of UCE actors.

Case study 3: Utilizing multimodality

This study focused on a UCE program carried out by a group of lecturers at the University X, Indonesia, from May to August 2023 until September 2024, utilizing multimodality of data sources (Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016), where data generated are not primarily linguistic or numeric. Details of the data sources are provided in *Table 4*.

Table 4 Information of data collection

Nu	Method				Data Source
1	Interview and natural conversation	7 local people (4 local people living inside Rammang-rammang and 3 local people living outside Rammang-rammang but have socio-economic connections with Rammang-rammang)	Informant1	Local people inside Rammang-Rammang	Research notes
			Informant2	Local people inside Rammang-Rammang	
			Infromant3	Local people inside Rammang-Rammang	
			Informant4	Local people inside	

Nu	Method				Data Source
				Rammang-Rammang	
			Informant5	Local people outside Rammang-Rammang	
			Informant6	Local people outside Rammang-Rammang	
			Informant7	Local people outside Rammang-Rammang	
		4 Lecturers from university X	Informant8	Lecturer1	
			Informant9	Lecturer2	
			Informant10	Lecturer3	
			Informant11	Lecturer4	
		5 local visitors (3 from South Sulawesi Province and 2 from Jakarta, the Indonesian capital city)	Informant12	Local visitor	
			Informant13	Local visitor	
			Informant14	Local visitor	
			Informant15	National visitor	

Nu	Method				Data Source
		6 tourist visitors (3 from Hungary and 3 from Switzerland)	Informant16	National visitor	
			Informant17	Hungarian	
			Informant18	Hungarian	
			Informant19	Hungarian	
			Informant20	Swiss	
			Informant21	Swiss	
			Informant22	Swiss	
2	Direct Observation	Twice direct observations (August 2023 & September 2024) in three different locations souvenir shop, residential area, and tourist destination.			Notes, body language/gestures, cultural items, photos, videos, and recording
3	Document Archive	Scientific articles published by the group lecturer who did the community service			List of article data in Appendix 1
		Local news			

Source: Author(s), 2024

The results of the observations were stored in the form of video recordings, voice recordings, photos, article archives, and reflection diaries of the researcher. All these data were analyzed with a thematic approach (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018), by finding the patterns in themes: the local dynamics of community, perspective of lecturers of the local and UCE, along with perspective of locals regarding the UCE program.

Government Perspective

This study originally intended to incorporate the perspectives of government actors, particularly given the top-down nature of the context. The aim of including the government's viewpoint was to better understand the “top” perspective on the implementation and management of UCE programs in Indonesia from the standpoint of decision-makers. Despite my best efforts to incorporate this dimension, I was ultimately

unable to obtain responses from government representatives, which prevented me from conducting the planned interviews.

On April 9th, I sent an email to the Director of Research and Community Service at the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology, Republic of Indonesia. Unfortunately, I received no reply. Two weeks later, I sent a follow-up email, this time attaching a letter of support from my supervisors as well as a recommendation letter from the head of my department in Indonesia. However, there was still no response. In addition to direct email correspondence, the request was formally submitted through *Sistem Naskah Dinas Elektronik (SINDE)*, a digital correspondence platform developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to manage official communications. I also attempted to contact the Director personally via WhatsApp, but regrettably, this effort was also unsuccessful.

This lengthy and multilayered administrative process reflects the considerable distance (both literal and bureaucratic) (Wijaya and Ali, 2021; Turner, Prasojó and Sumarwono, 2022), between grassroots lecturers and high-level government authorities. Despite going through all appropriate channels, the author received no adequate response to support the completion of this aspect of the study. This issue is also relevant to the context of this study as a "non-Western" investigation (see page 20), where, at the grassroots level, academics often lack the autonomy and privileged typically enjoyed by their counterparts in Western countries.

Scientific Results

Prior studies and author experiences showed that who engage in UCE driven by personal motivation (bottom-up) tend to undertake UCE with genuine commitment (Málovics, Juhász and Bajmócy, 2022; Gyamera and Debrah, 2023). In contrast, the implementation UCE programs merely to fulfill top-down directives seems result in superficial, formalistic programs cases (Duke, 2008; Clark et al., 2017; Sanga, Gonzalez Benson and Josyula, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to understand whether the context itself (top-down or bottom-up) contributes to the failure of UCE to have a meaningful impact on local communities. To answer that question, this study have examined these two contexts through a systematic literature review (SLR) of prior studies on UCE implementation, focusing on both top-down and bottom-up initiatives. The SLR highlights that regardless

of the approach (top-down or bottom-up), if implemented effectively, UCE can significantly contribute to the societal goals of participants and offer mutual benefits for both universities and communities involved. The success of UCE does not depend solely on the top-down or bottom-up nature of its initiation but rather on the presence (or absence) of additional supporting factors. Awareness in fulfilling obligations appears essential for the success of a top-down approach, while commitment is a core element for achieving effective UCE outcomes in a bottom-up approach. Furthermore, there are 4 key factors that clearly seem to be vital for UCE success in any cases: support system, flexibility, power balance, and relevance. These findings provide a new understanding of how UCE works in the top-down and bottom-up initiatives and what strategies should be executed based on the chosen approach.

Following the SLR, the study concentrated on a top-down initiative context to examine three sub-research questions.

1. How do lecturers/academics perceive the implementation of UCE within a top-down initiative context in Indonesia? (sub-research question 1)

Based on this first sub-research question and the analysis of case study 1, it is found that from an academic perspective (as represented by the lecturers), various regulations and reward-and-punishment mechanisms operating within the broader national system significantly influence how they perceive UCE programs. It is undeniable that all lecturers felt the impact of this top-down system. Most acknowledged that the demands to fulfill UCE obligations, tied to grant allocations that must be implemented within a certain timeframe, the penalties for failing to meet deadlines, and the reward points or coins awarded upon successful completion, effectively shape their mindset toward viewing UCE as merely a duty that must be completed. This first case study proved the result of SLR study that UCE program on the top-down initiative context highly needs “awareness” to clearly understand the goal of UCE. Then, I formulate the first thesis to answer the first sub-research question:

In the top-down initiative context, it is undeniable that lecturers view UCE-related work as a mere obligation, while a small minority sees it, in addition to

fulfil obligation, also as an opportunity to contribute academically to the local community. (Thesis 1)

2. How is the UCE program implemented within a top-down initiative context in Indonesia? (sub-research question 2)

Based on this second sub-research question and the analysis of case study 2, it is found that all three kind actors involved in UCE (university actors, the local community, and the local government facilitating the engagement between academics and the community) are motivated either by regulation or punishment and reward mechanism. As a result of conducting programs driven purely by systemic motivation as such way, the program failed to meet the needs of the local community. This case study also proved the result of SLR that without clear understanding (awareness) of the aim of conducting UCE, it is difficult to give meaningful impact to the local society. Then, I formulate the second thesis to answer the second sub-research question:

In a top-down initiative context, the implementation of the UCE program is strongly influenced by directives from above, including rules and a reward-punishment system, yet it remains distant from achieving the sustainable and impactful outcomes that define successful UCE. (Thesis 2)

3. What do stakeholders consider to be the success of UCE programs, and what are the components that determine such success? (sub-research question 3)

Based on this third sub-research question and the analysis of case study 3, it is found that the success of a UCE program cannot be defined solely by economic income, especially if fundamental issues within the local community remain unresponded. Limited communication and understanding between academics and the community hindered the collaboration, resulting in a lack of depth and coherence. This communication gap was largely due to differences in ontologically worldview and lifestyle (Stengers, 2016; Frith, 2020), with the academics being influenced by modernist perspectives, while the local community adhered to traditional, nature-aligned ways of living. While the program was deemed successful in terms of quantitative economic growth (Weinberg, 1999; Petersen and Kruss, 2021), as it increased community income, unfortunately, the target community was not the one residing within the program's implementation area. Additionally, the

program failed to address the core issues of the local community, which were hindered by several barriers—both from the academics (misalignment with their expertise and lot of academic tasks) and from the local community (cultural barriers).

This empirical case study 3 also reinforces the findings of the SLR in two significant ways. First, it confirms that the factor of relevance plays a critical role in determining the success of UCE initiatives. Second, the SLR identified impact and sustainability as key dimensions of successful UCE. While the program examined in this case study demonstrated sustainability, it failed to generate meaningful impact within the local community, as it did not address fundamental needs. The lack of relevance to the community's core issues ultimately hindered the program's effectiveness, highlighting the importance of aligning UCE initiatives with the actual needs of the target community.. Then, I formulate the third thesis to answer the second sub-research question:

According to the definition of successful UCE (sustainable and impactful), increasing the local community's income alone does not suffice to determine program success if substantial issues faced by the local community remain inadequately responded. (Thesis 3)

4. How to implement the university-community engagement in successful way from top-down context? (main research question)

Finally, based on the SLR result, together with the results of 3 case studies, it is highlights finding in two areas. *First, in theoretical area*, it is proved that the success of UCE can not be solely attributed the initiative approach. Instead, the factors support the UCE success yang lebih menentukan kesuksesan UCE. These factors are awareness (specific in top-down context), commitment (specific in bottom-up context), and 4 general factors that are working in both contexts: support system, flexibility, power balance, and relevance.

Second, in practical area, specifically in top-down context where the study is situated. This study conclude that it is not only the lecturers, but also the local community and government, as the third party in the program, that are affected by the top-down system structure. Their perspectives, driven by regulations, systems, and the mechanisms of rewards and punishments, ultimately shape the type of collaboration and UCE programs

that are executed—unfortunately, this UCE program fail to either increase the community's income or achieve social justice through sustainable transformation. To solve this gap, this study conclude to use “community-issue driven” approach in responding the community needs.

Then, I formulate the fourth thesis to answer the main research question:

The initiative approach matters and has an influence in the UCE program, but it is not the sole determinant of UCE success in impacting the UCE program. In the context of a top-down initiative, the UCE actors should pay attention to the factors that determine the success of the UCE to achieve the success. The 'awareness' of the actors in responding and executing UCE according to its ideal purpose—impactful and sustainable—emerges as a crucial factor, alongside other supporting factors such as commitment, adequate support systems, program flexibility, power balance, and relevance. (Thesis 4)

Limitation and Future Research

The method was conducted within a single context (a single country and single case studies), meaning the results cannot be generalized. The findings from a single-country case are limited in their applicability to other countries, even if they follow the same top-down initiative approach. This is because, as qualitative researchers, we acknowledge that each case has its own context, influenced by various factors such as culture, economic systems, environment, history, and other dynamic elements that evolve with societal changes. Therefore, while the results of this study may serve as a reference for cases using the same approach, this reference should remain flexible and not be applied rigidly.

Meanwhile, the single case study, it comes from a public university which the implementation of UCE at this university was only 24 years old when the UCE was carried out. Although 24 years is not a short time, this period is not as long as the implementation of UCE in Indonesia, which has reached 60 years. Therefore, the most important limitation is that the failure of UCE, in this case, cannot be generalized to the case of a large campus in Indonesia that already has an international reputation and has long had a more stable university structure. In addition, this case was taken in the city of

Makassar, a city on the island of Sulawesi, far from the Indonesian capital on the island of Java. The majority of large and well-known universities are also located in Java. Therefore, this research case comes from a campus outside the dominant area of Indonesia from the aspect of government and education. Future research can raise broader issues by looking at cases in big campuses in Indonesia to acquire better comprehensive knowledge.

Recommendation and Future Studies

Based on the results of the SLR and three empirical case studies, this study offers several recommendations that may be valuable for academics, local society involved, and policy-makers. *First*, based on the SLR findings, the primary recommendation concerns both theoretical and practical domains. In terms of theory, the concept of “awareness” warrants further development. For instance, future studies should explore how to effectively measure the presence of awareness among various UCE actors. On the practical level, it is recommended that central governments develop mechanisms to ensure that such awareness exists among faculty members prior to their involvement in UCE programs—this could take the form of targeted mentoring initiatives or regular training sessions specifically focused on UCE principles and practices.

Second, drawing from the first empirical case study—which revealed that not all faculty members are passionate about UCE and that not all academic disciplines align directly with it—this study recommends that UCE be implemented at the university level, rather than as an obligation imposed on individual academics. This institutional approach implies that:

1. UCE should be treated as a “collective responsibility” of the university rather than an individual duty of each academic staff member.
2. Only faculty members who demonstrate a genuine interest in UCE should be involved and provided with institutional support.
3. Faculty across various disciplines should be encouraged to collaborate in addressing complex community challenges. Such interdisciplinary cooperation fosters more holistic and sustainable solutions, moving beyond the current practice of discipline-specific UCE initiatives.

Third, findings from the second and third empirical case studies revealed the presence of “communication barriers” between universities and local communities, making it difficult to align program content with community needs. To overcome this, the involvement of a “third-party actor”, such as a local NGO or civil society organization (CSO), is recommended. These actors often possess a deep understanding of local contexts and can act as mediators to bridge the communication gap. This strategy has also been supported by successful practices in the literature (e.g., Boodram & Thomas, 2022; Jackson & Marques, 2019; Málovics et al., 2022).

Fourth, all three empirical case studies identified a “mismatch between the programs being implemented and the actual needs of the communities”. To address this, a “community-issue driven selection approach” (Minkler and Hancock, 2003; Minkler, 2004), is proposed. This would entail prioritizing engagement initiatives that are directly informed by the issues raised by the community itself, thus ensuring greater relevance, ownership, and sustainability of UCE activities. This proposal may also serve as a recommendation for future research, particularly to explore how the “community-issue driven” approach has been applied within top-down contexts in other settings.

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The Candidate's own publications

A. Article from the Journal

1. **Wahyuni, A. S.**, Málovics, G., & Gébert, J. (2025). Critical Factors Influencing Sustainable and Impactful University-Community Engagement: A Systematic Review of Top-Down and Bottom-Up Initiatives. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*. In press (Scopus Q1).
2. **Wahyuni, A. S.**, Málovics, G., & Gébert, J. (2025). Discussions of challenges in implementing UCE for community development: Case from a top-down context. *Community Development*, 1-23. (Scopus, Q2).
3. **Wahyuni, A. S.**, Málovics, G., Müllner, A., Fehér, B., Csernák, J., Juhász, J., ... & Bajmócy, Z. (2024). The Role of Boundary Spanners in Institutionalizing University-Community Engagement: Insights from a Hostile Setting. *International Journal for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 12(1), 1-22. (Scopus, Q3).
4. **Wahyuni, A. S.**, & Málovics, G. (2023). Top-Down Motivation in University-Community Engagement. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 27(4). (Scopus, Q3).
5. **Wahyuni, A. S.** (2023). Review of Student Service-Learning Program in the Early Period of the Higher Education System in Indonesia. *ASEAN Journal of Community Engagement*, 7(2), 196-210. (International peer-reviewed journal)
6. **Wahyuni, A. S.** (2023). Delivering online community service from community perspective: A critical review. *Journal of Community Service and Empowerment*, 4(3), 486-491. (International peer-reviewed journal)
7. **Wahyuni, A. S.**, Hudaefi, F. A., Saeni, A. A., & Habbe, A. H. (2025). Ukhuwah and succession questions of an Indonesian Muslim's family business. *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*. (Scopus Q2).
8. Málovics, G., & **Wahyuni, A. S.** (2024). Az egyetemi közösségi szerepvállalás támogató tényezői egy hazai empirikus kutatás tapasztalatai alapján: Az EKSZ terjedését támogató tényezők= Factors that support the spread of university community engagement (UCE)—experiences of an empirical investigation from Hungary. *EDUCATIO*. (Hungarian peer-reviewed journal)

9. **Wahyuni, A. S.** (2022). The Relevance of Capability Approach to Evaluate Living Standard: A Systematic Review. *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences* 60 (Autumn/Winter), 671-677. (Scopus, Q4)
10. Igamo, A. M., Al Rachmat, R., Siregar, M. I., Gariba, M. I., Cheron, V., **Wahyuni, A. S.**, & Setiawan, B. (2024). Factors influencing Fintech adoption for women in the post-Covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 10(1), 100236. (Scopus, Q1)
11. Istiariani, I., **Wahyuni, A. S.**, & Amalia, F. (2024). Creative accounting from an Islamic perspective: viewed from sadd al dzari'ah concept. *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Finance Research*, 6(1), 81-106. (International peer-reviewed journal)
12. Diana, C. N., Radisa, I., Widyasari, D. M., **Wahyuni, A. S.**, & Muna, A. (2024). Level of Trust in Digital Banking Acceptance: Technology Acceptance Model Study and Enjoyment Perspective. *International Journal of Management, Accounting & Economics*, 11(8). (International peer-reviewed journal)
13. Munthaha, M. M., Aqil, I., Maulana, S. R., **Wahyuni, A. S.**, & Muna, A. (2024). Implementation of QRIS: A Case Study of SMEs in Indonesia. *Dinasti International Journal of Economics, Finance & Accounting (DIJEFA)*, 5(3), 1102-1117. (International peer-reviewed journal)
14. Taera, E. G., Setiawan, B., Saleem, A., **Wahyuni, A. S.**, Chang, D. K., Nathan, R. J., & Lakner, Z. (2023). The impact of Covid-19 and Russia–Ukraine war on the financial asset volatility: Evidence from equity, cryptocurrency and alternative assets. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 9(3), 100-116. (Scopus, Q1)
15. **Wahyuni, A. S.** (2023). Survival Strategy of Traditional Small Retail in Competition with Modern Large Retail. *Sriwijaya International Journal of Dynamic Economics and Business*, 51-60.. (International peer-reviewed journal)
16. Triana, D., **Wahyuni, A. S.**, & Utami, R. (2022). Phenomenology of A Paggadde-Gadde's Resilience in Managing Their Business Post-Quarantine of Covid-19 Period. *International Journal of Religious and Cultural Studies*, 4(2), 157-164. . (International peer-reviewed journal)
17. Muna, A., **Wahyuni, A. S.**, & Musyaffi, A. M. (2022). Financial Literacy of Students: University Case Studies in Indonesia. *AKUNSIKA: Jurnal Akuntansi dan Keuangan*, 3(1), 16-21. (International peer-reviewed journal)
18. **Wahyuni, A. S.**, Astuti, A., Utami, R., Safitri, N. A., Nurhalizah, A., & Hairuddin, N. H. (2021). How did Paggadde-gadde Maintain its Business? An Ethnography Study Before and During Pandemic of Covid-19. *AKUNSIKA: Jurnal Akuntansi dan Keuangan*, 2(1), 42-48. (International peer-reviewed journal)
19. **Wahyuni, A. S.**, & Sitanggang, R. S. (2021). Ketakberdayaan Mempertahankan Persediaan dan Modal Akibat Covid-19: Studi Kasus gadde-gadde Mama Robi. *Journal Of Educational Technology, Curriculum, Learning and Communication*, 1(3), 116-124. (Indonesian peer-reviewed journal)

B. Conference Presentation

1. Does public-private cooperation funding align with the goals of university-community engagement? A scoping review of European cases. *The 6th Conference in cooperation with the European Association for Comparative Economic Studies*. 2024.03.22. Szeged, Hungary.

2. Estimating the Causal Relationship between Farmer Exchange Rate, Food Consumer Price Index and Inflation: ARDL Bounds and Toda-Yamamoto Approaches. *The 4th International Conference on Islamic and Muhammadiyah Studies (ICIMS)*. 2024.01.30. Surakarta, Indonesia.
3. Integrating Local Culture and Islamic Values for The Sustainability of Small-Family Businesses: A Case Study from Indonesia. *International Conference on Humanities Studies (INCHES)*. 2024. 2024.01.16. Makassar, Indonesia.
4. Community effects associated with sunflower oil production: systematic review. *International Conference on Sustainable Vegetable Oils : Socio-economic and Ecological Approaches (The 1st VOICE 2023)*. 2023.11.30. IPB International Convention Center, IICC, IPB University, Indonesia.
5. Strategic Pricing for Sustainability: A Case Study of Small-Family Business in Indonesia. *The 7th International Conference on Family Business and Entrepreneurship (ICFBE)*. 2023.11.30. Kuching, Malaysia.
6. Analysis of the Implementation Impact of Financial Accounting Standards on Entities without Public Accountability in Sharia Real Estate Companies. *The 1st International Multidisciplinary Conference of Applied Sciences (IMCAS)*. 2023.11.18. Unhas Hotel, Makassar, Indonesia.
7. Public-Private Cooperation Funding Juxtaposed of University-Community Engagement in Europe: Systematic Review. *The First 30 Years of the European Union*. 2023.11.16. BGE, Budapest, Hungary.
8. Digital Marketing Strategy in Indonesia: A Short Bibliometric Review. *The International Conference on Enterprise and Industrial Systems (ICOEINS 2023)*. 2024.10.04. Bali, Indonesia.
9. Public-Private Cooperation Funding Juxtaposed of University- Community Engagement in Europe: Systematic Review. *Jakarta International Conference on Multidisciplinary Studies Towards Creative Industries*. 2023.10.04. Jakarta, Indonesia.
10. From A Competitiveness to A Resilience and Sustainability-Orientated Higher Education Policy. *The 5th Conference in cooperation with the European Association for Comparative Economic Studies*. 2023.04.14. GTK, University of Szeged, Hungary.
11. The Relevance of Capability Approach to Evaluate Living Standards: A Systematic Review. *The Conference (Re)discovering the drivers of economic development*. 2022.06.16. University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy.