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Towards university involvement in community-based tourism monitoring & evaluation education

The aim of this paper is not to construct a comprehensive framework but rather propose a solid conceptual foundation for enhancing the impacts of CBT projects with increased engagement with universities. While universities possess various characteristic values to assist in CBT projects, monitoring and evaluation are fundamental in CBT projects. Despite it being decades that CBT is proposed as a way of tourism development, there is a dearth of information regarding the monitoring and evaluation of CBT. In South Africa, universities are challenged to engage with communities effectively, and there is also very little evidence that universities prepare both undergraduate and postgraduate students in CBT-M&E education. The low levels of community engagement and omission by universities to present monitoring and evaluation education in their curricula could lead to the CBT programme and/or project not achieving its sets goals. In view of the above deficiency, this paper advances an interactive model between University and key stakeholders in a CBT project about M&E proposing four main groups: the M&E process, stakeholder management, collaboration activities, and reflective learning work synergistically to achieve the CBT impacts. This paper is significant as it advocates for greater university-community engagement and enhancing CBT-M&E education to enable transformative learning and sustainability.

Keywords: Community-based tourism, Monitoring and evaluation, Education, University
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Introduction

Tourism has aided the economic and employment growth of various communities worldwide (Álvarez-García et al., 2018). However, tourism has its contradictions. Despite its possible economic benefits, its unplanned development has been the reason for environmental and social-cultural negative impacts (Álvarez-García et al., 2018). These adverse effects “have led to growing concerns about the conservation and preservation of natural resources, sustained human well-being, and long-term economic viability thus a need for seeking new forms of tourism planning, management, and development” (Álvarez-García et al., 2018). An alternative tourism development approach, community-based tourism (CBT), can be seen as attempting to counteract the negative effects of conventional tourism development. Community-based tourism has been presented in numerous countries to ameliorate people's local living conditions "by strengthening democratic processes at the local level and increasing the value of local leadership in developing tourism" (Rindrasih, 2018). Community-based tourism "is presented as an alternative to mainstream tourism, and it has such attractiveness that it has rarely been subjected to critical review" (Rindrasih, 2018). The literature on CBT is well established, especially in the last three decades (Álvarez-García et al., 2018). However, until recently, it has been noted that CBT is "a complex and emerging field of study, and much remains to be learned" (Naik, 2014). CBT is currently proposed as a "constantly changing and evolving niche of tourism; therefore, a greater understanding is needed to assist communities in developing CBT sustainably (Ernawati et al., 2017).

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a key process in any project or development initiative, and each intervention should have its M&E plan (Frankel et al., 2014). However, M&E is rarely a priority in development projects serving to fulfill project requirements rather than a mechanism to achieve the agreed outputs, outcomes, and impacts (Biwott et al., 2017). "Despite M&E being recognized as a critical management tool, project developers tend to

give it modest priority resulting in M&E compliance simply for the sake of fulfilling the requirements of most funding agencies without any intention of using the findings as a mechanism of ensuring the success of the projects" (Govender and Giampiccoli, 2017). Documents related to M&E in tourism are extant (Rio and Nunes, 2012). While for a CBT project, M&E is highly relevant (Steele et al., 2017). Academic literature that specifically considers M&E in CBT projects is scarce. However, various documents related to CBT, such as manuals and handbooks (Talbot and Gould, 1999), and a dedicated publication titled *a toolkit for monitoring and managing community-based tourism* exists (The Mountain Institute, 2000).

It is also important to note that university-community engagement (CE) is a fundamental component of graduates' teaching and learning (The Mountain Institute, 2000). As noted, CE "should be recognized as a critical element in higher education institutions [...]" (Calanog et al., 2012). However, university CE projects in the tourism sector are extant (Asker et al., 2010). This paper aims to contribute towards the knowledge on M&E of CBT and the possible collaborations of universities in CBT projects/ventures.

For example, in South Africa, the role of local universities is to develop and share knowledge that enables the state's developmental mandates to be realized through the achievement of the National Development Plan 2030 goals. As universities are considered full of "experts," it must provide the platforms and enabling environment to ensure the state, communities, businesses, staff, and students collaborate and innovate to solve local developmental challenges. The first step in this direction would be ensuring their programme offerings have updated knowledge in community development, community engagement, community-based tourism, monitoring and evaluation, and other related themes. Universities could also play a significant role as agents in bringing together the CBT operators, academics, students, public sector enterprises, businesses, and non-profit organizations to

share knowledge, solve challenges, and develop innovations. In the absence of such collaborations and partnerships, efficiency, and effectiveness to realize the sustainable development goals would not be fully realized. Therefore, this article addresses this gap in the universities' roles to become more relevant to the communities' needs by fully engaging in empowering communities in CBT monitoring and evaluation.

This paper attempts to highlight the pathway for greater interactions amongst universities and CBT projects to transform university education and local communities through improved programme offerings and reflective learning. Due to a dearth of information on CBT-M&E and its application, the study used a desktop appraisal method. Literature from books, peer-reviewed journals, government publications, and policy reports was reviewed. The next section briefly discusses CBT, CBT-M&E, and universities' role in further developing the outcomes and impacts of CBT.

Literature Review

Community-Based Tourism

Community-based tourism origins can be traced back to the alternative development approach (Asker et al., 2010) to counteract the negative impacts of conventional/mass tourism (Hamzah and Khalifah, 2009). Community-based tourism differs from mass tourism (Twining-Ward et al., 2007), and it has been proposed as an agent "for social justice, equity, redistribution of wealth and resources, and empowerment" (Fitzgerald et al., 2012). Thus, CBT should promote self-reliance, self-planning, and self-management, be transformative, redistributive, and be empowering (Herts, 2013). Three main principles can be recognized in CBT: community ownership, full community involvement in management, and the community as the primary beneficiary of the initiative (Manowaluilou, 2017). Community-based tourism "is understood to be managed and owned by the community, for the community" (Govender and Giampiccoli, 2018) state that to ascertain the success of CBT

initiatives, the above issues should be monitored and evaluated. Due to the many definitions of the term CBT (Giampiccoli, 2015) and the various CBT models present in literature (López-Guzmán et al., 2011), M&E has become a challenge. This paper supports - in line with other literature (Purbasari and Manaf, 2018) that CBT should be owned and managed by the local community. Additionally, CBT should also be understood as associated explicitly with disadvantaged members in society (Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2016); thus, CBT works for a more equitable society and for social justice (Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2016), which should be the purpose of the universities.

Monitoring and Evaluation in CBT

Monitoring and evaluation are essential actions to be undertaken in any project or intervention (Ngo et al., 2018). According to the World Bank, while M&E are related, they are not the same. The UNDP defines monitoring as the ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on their progress towards achieving their goals and objectives. In development work, monitoring concentrate on the progression of the project/intervention by tracking inputs such as cost and activities, whereas evaluation considers the project impacts and objective – if the objective has been achieved (Mtapuri and Giampiccoli, 2018). The following steps for M&E (Giampiccoli and Nauright, 2013) have been proposed, namely, a review of the project objectives and identifying the users of both the monitoring and evaluation information. A critical step in designing an M&E system is selecting appropriate indicators (Tasci et al., 2013). Indicators are very important as they "are clues, signs, or markers that measure one aspect of a program and show how close a program is to its desired path and outcomes [...]" (George et al., 2017).

In CBT, monitoring is critical to ensure the short-term goals are achieved through regular measurements and comparison against the agreed standards or targets and allowing

for any corrective changes to be timeously implemented (Leksakundilok and Hirsch, 2008). Similarly, evaluating the impact of tourism on tourism destinations is indispensable to guarantee the destinations' long-term sustainability (Amat Ramsa and Mohd, 2004). To guarantee sustainable CBT, M&E should be integrated into the whole planning and application process. All too often, M&E is rarely carried out, making it difficult for the organization to take further actions to improve the quality of the service and product (Sánchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2014). Again, the sustainability of a CBT project "can be evaluated effectively through the use of an evaluation framework incorporating specific sustainable tourism performance indicators" (Tasci et al., 2013). Various indicators (Jealous, 1998) have been proposed for M&E community-based ecotourism ventures in Southern Africa. Indicators can include (Frankel and Gage, 2016) community decision-making structures, community benefits from tourism partnerships, and collaborations. Each CBT project has specific requirements; however, some recurrent themes can be individuated, such as gender equity, business sustainability, local capacity development, and poverty reduction (Casley and Lury, 1982), which could also be used to develop indicators. An ecotourism project M&E study advance that M&E should also involve the tourists indicate that M&E should be very much participatory (UNDP, 2009). For example, capacity building in the participatory context depends on some form of external assistance. Thus, the fundamental matter "is not capacity-building *per se* but rather the design of these initiatives," thus, capacity building should be seen as a long-term approach (Peters, 2016). Community-based tourism remains on the same level as CBT should be considered a long-term strategy, not a 'quick-fix' solution (Casley and Lury, 1982). However, it is important that the external "facilitation process should be structured in such a way to promote community self-reliance in both the intervention and the M&E process" (Frankel and Gage, 2016). Universities should take cognizance of this fact when developing CBT partnerships.

Monitoring and Evaluation in CBT are present, and various CBT manuals /handbooks dedicate a section or mention M&E (Frankel and Gage, 2016). There are two critical reasons for monitoring a CBT project: "Firstly, to assess a project's business performance relative to specific business objectives. Secondly, to assess the project's contribution to the community's development and sustainability objectives" (Lozano-Oyola and Javier Blancas, 2012). A CBT M&E toolkit (Rio and Nunes, 2012) also indicate the specific reason for M&E in CBT, namely, to improve policymaking; to evaluate overall project performance over time; to increase donor confidence; to ensure that all social categories (including ethnic minorities, youth, and women) can benefit from CBT; and to increase understanding of sustainable tourism amongst stakeholders.

Therefore, Monitor & Evaluation in CBT should be comprehensive – not excluding but going beyond mere economic matters – and consider various social, human, political issues. As indicated, it is important that in CBT, "monitoring does not only measure the success and gaps in terms of monetary value but also include non-monetary gains such as pride in the local community, sense of ownership, increase self-esteem. In most case studies, it is the non-monetary gains that are valued more by the local community than the financial benefits" (Hamzah and Khalifah, 2009). There are various reasons for the need for M&E in community-based ecotourism enterprises (CBEE). One of the consequences of inadequate M&E is the limited knowledge of project implementers, particularly the uninformed local people, with limited knowledge about the project's progress, opportunities, and problems. In effect, operations and strategies that are needed to be re-aligned and adjusted within an M&E system. In the absence of an effective M&E system, the CBEE activities cannot be fully aligned to the impacts and changes in the local community and its natural resource base" (Mearns, 2012).

Various steps for CBT M&E have been proposed: evaluate, learn, decide, plan, implement, monitor, reflect, learn, decide, adjust, implement, monitor, reflect, learn, decide, adjust, implement (Mearns, 2012). A CBT Handbook suggests the following steps in M&E in CBT: 1. Develop Monitoring Objectives; 2. Determine Boundaries of the Area to be Monitored; 3. Identify Community Attributes; 4. Identify Potential Impacts; 5. Prioritize Impacts; 6. Identify Potential Indicators; 7. Collect Data; 8. Evaluate the Monitoring Data (See Fig. 1). The *toolkit for monitoring and managing community-based tourism* (Twining-Ward et al., 1999) proposed the eight steps in the M&E process in CBT similar to the above, except the last two steps: Communicating Results Reviewing and Adapting.

Role of universities in South Africa and beyond

South African universities continue to carry the racial divides coming from the apartheid regime. The previously white universities are still better resourced with infrastructure and human capital than the universities that predominantly catered to previously disadvantaged communities, namely, blacks, Indians, and coloured's. This has resulted in most communities perceiving universities as elitist entities that cater to the rich's needs and with little or no relevance to the poor communities. Internally, universities are also faced with challenges of financial stability, poorly prepared university entrants, violence and sexual crimes on campus, and the decolonization of the curriculum. While the three pillars of universities are teaching and learning, research, and community engagement, very little attention was paid to the latter. This could be attributed to the complexity of undertaking community engagement activities, the workload of academics, and the use of financial and human resources with no financial returns to the university's coffers. The university involvement in communities in general and in CBT has been minimal, and this paper seeks to reverse the trend of low university-community engagement.

However, even if minimally, some examples of university engagement with tourist practitioners are reported. The Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management of the University of Venda reported that it has engaged in tourism activities with various municipal structures, all aimed at promoting community upliftment (Talbot and Gould, 2007). Also, the Central University of Technology (CUT), through its CE division, is involved in community tourism projects, such as the *Strongbow Project* that “is aimed at building capacity within the higher education sector in Ethiopia, particularly in the fields of tourism, eco-tourism, and natural resources management” (Manyara and Jones, 2007). Other CE projects including or focusing on tourism from CUT are *The Karoo Riviera: cross-border tourism development plan for the middle Orange River* and the *Sustainable agricultural development programme* (Asker et al., 2010). As stated in the above section, capacity building interventions by universities is critical. A key feature in CBT is the low local community capacity due to being historically disadvantaged and currently excluded from the mainstream tourism activities (Govender and Giampiccoli, 2018). Capacity-building should be considered an essential pre-condition and serve as a platform to train people beyond mere tourism matters serving to empower community members in various livelihood requirements (Asker et al., 2010). Capacity building in CBT is not easy, and various issues such as politics, equitable division of labour, and benefits need to be considered (Hamzah and Khalifah, 2009). Universities could develop programme offerings to address capacity development. For example, three institutions, namely, Hanoi Open University (HOU), Capilano College, and North Island College in Vietnam, were all involved in capacity building in the Ta-Phin Village CBT project (Häusler and Strasdas, 2003). This project specifically focussed on staff and the students from the Canadian and Vietnamese academic institutions working together to develop modules and deliver training to the local community in Ta Phin Village. The international institutions with a team of 5- 9 persons visited the local community annually for

three weeks, while HOU's staff and students trained the local community on an average of 4-6 times a year" (The Mountain Institute, 2000). In terms of the proposed model, the above examples indicate that effective engagements between universities and CBT practitioners to develop opportunities to capacitate key stakeholders. Key to the proposed model is the project's reflective learning and sustainability, as indicated by the above examples.

For the cross-pollination of expertise and knowledge, academics and/or students from nearby universities or colleges can be used to collect and analyse data for M&E in CBT(Suansri,2003). However, in CBT, M&E must be participatory since community members should be the protagonist. Reasons forwarded about the importance of participatory M&E in CBT (Suansri and Yeejaw-haw, 2013) focus on effective management of data and information, building consensus, using indigenous knowledge and capacity building of community members.

University involvement in CBT is present National Department of Tourism (2016), and "various CBT organizations such as Community-based Tourism Institute in Thailand and the Latin America Community-Based Tourism Network all have universities as collaborators" (Twining-Ward, et al., 2007). Internationally, universities have been involved in tourism and also in CBT projects. For example, the University of Malaysia Sarawak has been the coordinator Community-Based Tourism in Bario, Malaysia, and The School of Travel Industry Management (TIM) of the University of Hawaii's Manoa was specifically involved in the writing of *A Toolkit for Monitoring and Managing Community-Based Tourism* (Hamzah and Khalifah, 2009). The above indicates the university roles and link to CBT and CBT-M&E education.

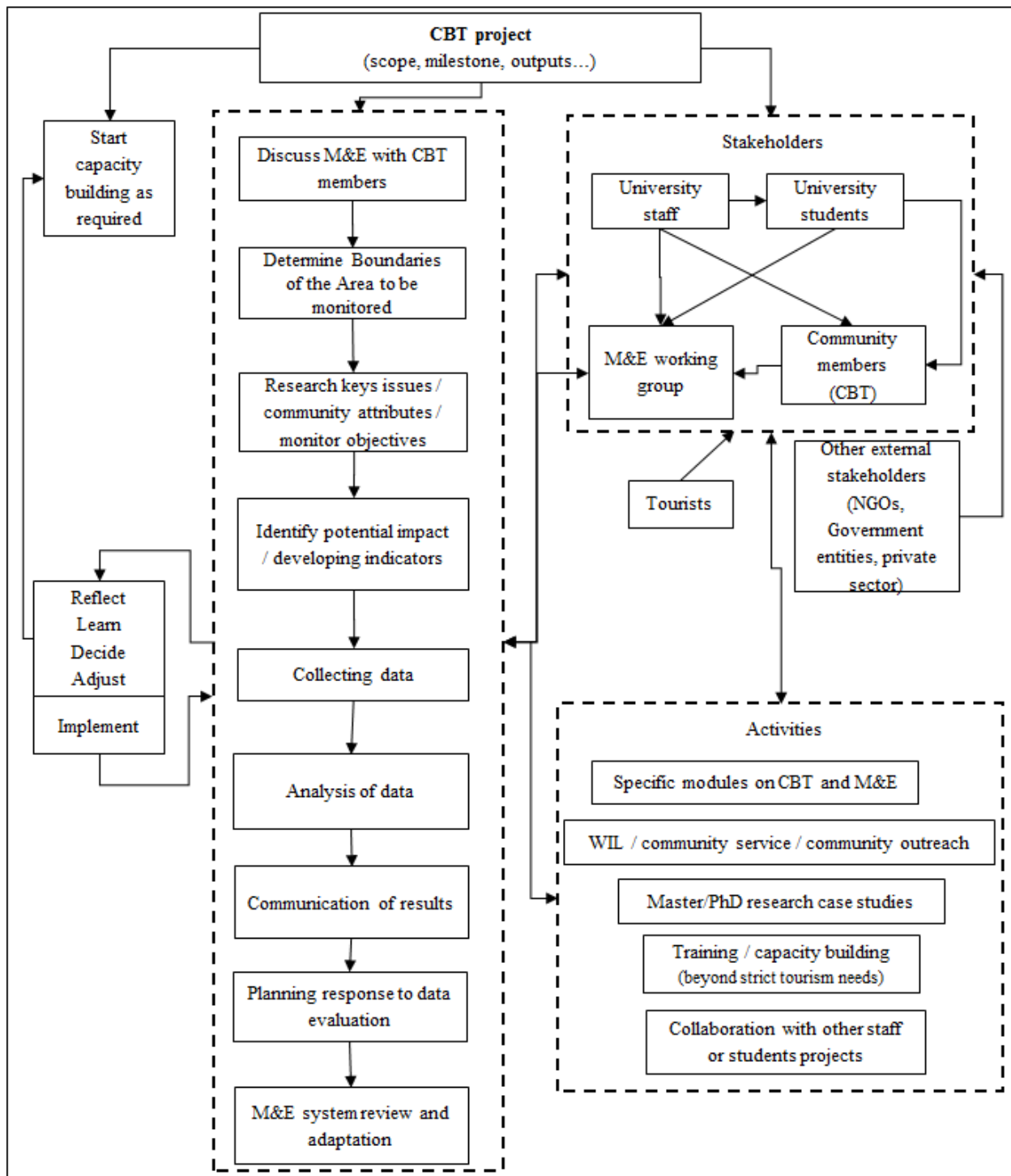
Universities have various advantages related to their involvement in the CBT project: they possess a wide range of expertise, are – long-term – locally based, and are generally not-profit-oriented (Calanog et al., 2012). Models on the possible collaboration between

universities and CBT context has been proposed (National Department of Tourism, 2016). Specific involvement of Universities in CBT M&E has also been proposed in the literature, such as the Canadian Universities Consortium Urban Environmental Management Project involved in CBT M&E in a CBT project in Thailand (Hamzah and Z. Khalifah, 2009). It has also been proposed that the university's collaboration in CBT "will educate the local community on the appropriate framework to develop community-based projects and equip the organization with the tools and approaches to improve the quality of the tourist experience. Universities will also bring with them research expertise to analyse changing tourist demand and trainers to conduct capacity building programmes ..." (Twining-Ward, et al., 2007). However, as CBT the local community must have ownership of the M&E; external facilitators should just *facilitate* the M&E process, not take ownership of it.

Results and discussion: towards university involvement in CBT M&E

Based on the proposed model (see Fig. 1), an M&E process in CBT and its link to university context and activities are advanced. The model (Fig. 1) presents three main groups: the M&E process, the stakeholders, and the activities (the model indicates just some possible examples of activities as each context should have its activities based on each context need and resources). The process indicates the various stages of the M&E in CBT. Specifically, each stage should have its own mini-cycle (reflect, learn, decide, and adjust) before implementing each stage. The stakeholders should work collaboratively as the CBT M&E team is the main entity that follows the CBT M&E project. The establishment of a CBT M&E team is important for practical management reasons; however, each staff member, student, and local community member can also individually participate. Other external stakeholders, such as NGOs can be involved in *ad hoc* projects.

Fig. 1. Participatory CBT-M&E model. Authors' elaboration.



The types and duration of activities will depend on the project's specific need and resources, keeping in mind that the final aim should be to empower the community members to manage the CBT ventures independently, thus the M&E within it. A possible activity could be to develop a series of modules (together with the community) about CBT and M&E – this

should be done at the beginning. For example, this context could be possible in each semester or year student can assist as a project – as much as the aim is that the community should become independent in the M&E work.

The model's implementation needs the relevant parties to come together as equal partners to make the CBT project a success. Firstly, the CBT team from the community could approach the university to join the project as a consultant either directly to the relevant department or the university's community engagement division. Next, a memorandum of understanding should be signed amongst all interested parties wishing to be part of the CBT programme. After that, each stakeholder's roles and responsibilities should be discussed, agreed upon, and recorded. All documents regarding the CBT project should be reviewed, and a SWOT analysis developed. Of importance here is the role and responsibilities of the university should be translated into specific activities. In particular, the existing expertise and knowledge of the institute, the sharing of CBT and M&E material, and the role of students and academics in the project.

Having successfully considered the above activities, the project partners need to discuss the scope, approach, responsibilities, and reporting mechanisms to be used for M&E of the CBT project. Objectives, indicators, and targets need to be discussed, agreed to, and recorded. Included in this process would be the parties and processes used to collect, analyze, and report on the outputs, outcomes, and impacts. For example, the students may be used to collect and capture the data, while the academic could analyze the data, and the CBT project leader could compile the report and distribute it to the team members. It is also important that community members also learn and participate in data capturing and analysis to act as community researchers in future CBT activities. As can be seen from the above, several processes produce various outputs and outcomes that need to be monitored and evaluated. Based on the model, the CBT team would reflect on the outputs, outcomes, and impacts,

consider if anything could be learnt from the reflection, decide if any new action needs to be taken and make the necessary decision if required. In summary, the implementation of the model requires openness, trust, and commitment from all CBT team members to undertake the necessary actions to achieve the agreed impacts in developing the team, clarifying the various stakeholder roles and responsibilities, developing and implementing the M&E processes and undertaking a reflective view of their engagements.

Conclusions

Community-based tourism and universities' common goals are to assist disadvantaged community members' holistic development, including issues of empowerment, social justice, equity, local ownership, and community members' financial sustainability. Despite the historically low levels of university-community engagement, universities can be a valuable partner to assist community members in their effort in CBT development, and CBT-M&E capacity development as monitoring and evaluation is a fundamental component in every CBT project. This paper proposed an interactive model between university and CBT project management, focusing on M&E capacity building. The interaction model suggests four main components: the M&E process, the stakeholders, the activities, and the reflective learning cycle in which the CBT project is managed. It is hoped that with effective implementation, the university could increase its inputs and activities to promote the collective CBT project outputs, outcomes, and impacts. The university inputs may include academic and student engagement and the sharing and development of CBT and CBT-M&E knowledge with communities. In conclusion, the building of sustainable partnerships amongst universities, communities, and CBT practitioners, would aid in the countries' socio-economic developmental goals.

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