

Conception of Comprehensive Emergency Management, FEMA, and its reflection in the trend of Disaster Studies in U.S.

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1. Introductions

FEMA¹ has been playing the key role in initiating and developing Disaster and Emergency education programs in the U.S. This study reviews the course and development of Comprehensive Emergency Management as a key stone of FEMA's Emergency Management approach in relation to its reflection in Disaster studies. In the paper, the conceptual development of Comprehensive Emergency Management is introduced with the history of disaster policy in the U.S. is introduced and FEMA's role and contribution to the current trend of Disaster Studies in higher education is discussed.

2 . Disaster Management Policy

2.1 Pre-FEMA era

Since the first piece of congressional act to disaster in 1803, federal approach to problems became popular in the United States. By the 1930's, a number of federal agencies were given authority to provide disaster aids such as financial assistance, Loans, or implementation of disaster control projects.(see Table1) These federal efforts were, however, 'often fragmented, subject to almost continuous revision, and ambivalent with respect to goals'². As a result of this undirected policy, by 1970, more than 100 federal agencies were involved in some aspect of risk and disasters, causing great complication in responsibilities at a time of disaster.

Table 1 Major Mitigation Policy Initiatives in U.S.(Pre-FEMA)

| Year/Era | Disaster Act/Disaster Related Federal Agency | Cause/Brief |
|-----------|---|---|
| 1803 | First Congressional Act | New Hampshire Fire/Financial Assistance |
| 1930's | Flood Control Act (1934) | Disaster Loans |
| | Reconstruction Finance Corporation | Disaster Loans |
| | Bureau of Public Roads | Flood Control Projects |
| 1950's | Tennessee Valley Authority | Flood control |
| | DOD(Department of Defense) | War Related Emergency Preparedness |
| 1950-1960 | Office of Emergency Preparedness (in white house) | Natural Disasters |
| 1970s | National Flood Insurance Act/ Program (NFIP) (1968) | Major Natural Disaster Hits |
| | Flood Insurance Act(1972) | Mandatory Flood Insurance to Home Mortgage Owners |
| | Disaster Relief Act(1974) | Natural Disasters/ HUD Authority Enhanced |

2.2 FEMA and Comprehensive Emergency Management (CEM)

In 1979, as an effort to concentrate these scattered authorities, National Governor's Association (NGA) submitted a landmark report to the congress. Its study concerned about the lack of a comprehensive management in national policy to manage emergencies and, pointed out the lack of an integrated approach to managing hazards. Comprehensive aspect of Emergency Management encompasses four phase of disaster or emergency activities: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery (see Table2), which later became a cornerstone of FEMA's mission. In response to NPA recommendation, in 1979, President Jimmy Carter merged major federal agencies into FEMA and centralized the disaster related responsibilities.

Table 2 Four phases of disaster

: defined by National Governor's Association (1979)

| | |
|----------------|---|
| ✦ Mitigation | : includes any activities that actually eliminate or reduce the probability of occurrence of a disaster |
| ✦ Preparedness | : to the extent that mitigation measures have not, or cannot prevent disasters. |
| ✦ Response | : followed an emergency or disaster. Generally, they are designed to provide emergency assistance for casualties. They also seek to reduce the probability of secondary damage. |
| ✦ Recovery | : continues until all systems return to normal or better, or improved levels |

¹ Federal Emergency Management Agency

3. CEM and Disaster studies

The Comprehensive Emergency Management provides clear key concept in defining and providing direction to academic programs in conducting research and effective practice.⁴

Disaster study in North America has its root in the physical and natural science studies such as Climatology, geography, engineering, geology, meteorology, and seismology. However, Table 3 and 4 shows that current disaster study is also a subject that is integrated with numerous social science studies in addition to the phrases of disaster.

It is also observed from Table4 that highly ranked topics such as planning, preparedness, and mitigation reflect FEMA's current emphasis on Preparation/Mitigation.

Table 3 Chapter Topics appear in Five Commonly used EM Texts

| Chapter Topic | Out of 5 texts |
|---------------------|----------------|
| History | 3 |
| Preparedness | 3 |
| Mitigation | 3 |
| Planning | 1 |
| Response | 3 |
| Recovery | 3 |
| Legal | 1 |
| Organizational | 2 |
| Risks,hazards | 2 |
| Communication | 1 |
| Terrorism | 1 |
| Global sector | 1 |
| Management | 3 |
| Policy | 1 |
| Future/challenges | 3 |

Table4 Curriculum Topics in College Programs

| key word | number of program |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| hazard | 23 |
| planning | 20 |
| political scienc | 15 |
| emergency ma | 11・12 |
| preparedness | 12 |
| social aspect/p | 11 |
| mitigation | 9 |
| disaster manag | 8 |
| response | 8 |
| terrorism | 6 |
| computer/tech | 4 |
| crisis managen | 4 |
| geography | 4 |
| risk | 3 |
| recovery | 3 |
| sociology | 3 |
| communication | 2 |
| special populat | 2 |
| public health | 2 |
| engineering | 2 |
| total | 141 |

4. Concluding Remarks

Some studies suggest that approaches to disaster preparedness and response are influenced by political ideologies⁵. In refer to this suggestion, the conception of CEM can be observed as an outcome of its course reflecting the changing disaster policies of U.S., starting from its first act of 1803. FEMA's focus in disaster policies also has been influenced by political and social factors, shifting its emphasis from civil defense to current trend in hazard mitigation and preparedness.³

Taking its leading role as an initiative in Emergency Management Collegiate Program (since 1995) into account, it is apt to state that FEMA and its comprehensive approach to Emergency Management provided a foundation to Emergency Management higher education in U.S. and, its concept and goal have influenced in current trend of disaster in both profession and discipline.

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