



Public Safety and Emergency
Preparedness Canada

Sécurité publique et
Protection civile Canada

Report on the 2005 Emergency Management Education in Canada: One-Day Workshop

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Emergency Management Education in Canada: One-Day Workshop

Introduction

In Canada emergency management education is in an early phase of development. There are a small but growing number of colleges and universities which offer courses in emergency management, with several other colleges and universities with programs in development. Over the past several years Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC) has played an active role in promoting the growth of Emergency Management (EM) education in Canada initiating discussions and publishing reports on the status of EM education. In response to the growing interest in EM education, the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College (CEPC) organized an emergency management education workshop in the fall of 2005. This workshop brought together academics, practitioners and the private sector to discuss some of the major issues in EM Education in Canada. The following is a summary of discussion from the 2005 workshop.

On November 16, 2005 the first annual Emergency Management Education Workshop was held in Toronto Ontario. The workshop brought together 60 people from various backgrounds who were interested in discussing emergency management education. The attendee composition for the workshop was a 50/50 split between academia and emergency management practitioners. This mix of academics and practitioners allowed a variety of perspectives to be presented on all discussion issues. The workshop consisted of a series of panel sessions and breakout sessions to stimulate discussion on several important topics. Panellists and facilitators were from across Canada including Ernest MacGillivray from the New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) and Jack McGee from the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC). In addition to the Canadian attendees, Wayne Blanchard who is head of the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Higher Education (HiEd) program attended to offer information on that project and lessons they have learned over the past few years.

Panel Session Overviews

Session 1: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: The Changing Risk Environment

The first panel session of the day was moderated by Jack McGee from the Justice Institute of British Columbia and had Ernest MacGillivray from EMO New Brunswick and Doug Bell from Dillon Consulting as panellists. Mr. MacGillivray presented his impression of the changing risk environment and how the diversity of threats, risks and hazards has changed in Canada. EM today includes not just natural hazards but also industrial accidents and human induced deliberate acts. Further to this the current trend of EM being more closely tied into security was discussed. In addition Mr. MacGillivray also commented on how important the EM education initiative is for Canada. Doug Bell presented a private sector perspective on EM and the changing risk environment and how it has influenced their business. His presentation noted that there is a noticeable shift in the type, scope and scale of the EM related work that is being done in Canada. Mr. Bell

discussed how the nature of their business has changed over time and that now they need people with higher education, particularly related to EM. Following the presentations, other comments related to the issue of standards and common curriculum were discussed by panellists and attendees.

Session 2: Where are we now? Training, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees

The second panel session was moderated by Robert Race from the International Oceans Institute of Canada and included Wayne Blanchard from the Federal Emergency Management Agency Higher Education Program, John Lindsay from Brandon University, Jack McGee from the JIBC, and David Etkin from York University as panellists. The purpose of the second panel session was to discuss the current status of the EM education field in Canada. Wayne Blanchard spoke to the attendees about the successes and lessons learned in running the FEMA HiEd program in the United States. This presentation was the source of much discussion which was focused on the role that the federal government could play in Canada with regard to EM education. Jack McGee from the JIBC provided an overview of the current activities of the JIBC, including information on the emergency management certificate that they offer. David Etkin from York University gave a presentation on the current program being run at the Atkinson College of York University. Dr. Etkin commented on some of the challenges that they have encountered with their program including the difficulty in finding professors. John Lindsay from Brandon University gave a presentation on their Applied Disaster and Emergency Studies program. Mr. Lindsay provided information on the format of their program and on some of their plans for the future. Additional points of discussion included the current status of EM as a profession and the need for the community to work together to move the discipline forward.

Breakout Sessions

The breakout sessions were designed to get small groups of attendees to discuss several important topics. The following are summaries of the breakout session outputs presented at the workshop.

Session A: Building Research Capacity and Networks

Breakout session A looked at the issue of research funding for EM in Canada. The group felt that currently in Canada there is little to no funding available to academia for conducting research related to Emergency Management. Previous programs that existed in the Federal Government have been discontinued and no alternative has been created (e.g. funding through former research group in OCIPEP). The notable exception to this is the Stuart Nesbitt White Fellowship which is administered by PSEPC and provides 8 students with \$19,250 each annually.

The group noted that there is research funding in other areas that is related to EM. For example, research conducted in sociology and psychology that is focused on the stressful impact that disasters have on people. Further work is needed to build the bridges and identify where these research dollars exist and how to gain access to them.

There needs to be a good cooperative effort on behalf of the EM education community to engage the government with regard to EM research funding. This could take the shape of an overview body which would have numerous functions. Potential responsibilities of this group would include:

- Being an advocate for EM research
- Provide a mechanism to share research questions amongst the community
- Sharing existing knowledge
- Coordinating research needs
- Identify gaps in professional practice
- Promote disciplinary advances / knowledge gains

The group considered the potential research capacity in Canada to be quite large and at various levels including academia and the first responder community. It was commented that the first responder community would be a great source of front line research and contribute greatly to the research in Canada on EM.

Session B: Fulfilling Student Needs: Distance Learning, Co-op and Skill Development

The discussion in group B focused on the issue of distance learning, co-op opportunities and skills development for EM education programs. Through the course of the discussion it was noted by the group that there are very different needs for those who would enrol in EM education programs and those who would take individual EM related courses. With regard to distance learning it is thought that though individual courses may be delivered successfully via distance learning, the same cannot be said for entire programs. There were several reasons noted for this including: the need for students to use specialized equipment; the need for students to collaborate and conduct group work; and the need for additional guidance for younger students which is typically not available in a distance learning environment. Additional road blocks to distance learning were that the timing and scheduling can be quite difficult; there tends to be a lack of support from institutions for distance students; and the difficulties in working with students who lack technical skills. The final and perhaps most major concern with distance learning is that it requires a large amount of prep time versus teaching time. Standard courses are easier to develop and test in an in-class setting as compared to distance learning.

The discussion group noted that the need for co-op programs and skills development depended on the type of student that was being taught. For those people who are already engaged in the profession of emergency management and are enhancing their practical experience with education, then a co-op placement is less required. For those younger students and students whom are being introduced into EM for the first time, co-op is seen as a great learning mechanism. However it was also noted that it could be quite difficult to find spaces for co-op students as there are few full time EM related jobs that a co-op student would be qualified to do.

Session C: Building an EM Program: Program Design, Curricula and Resource Materials

Breakout session C was tasked to discuss issues related to the design of EM programs, curricula and resource materials. The group talked about whether EM programs are vocation focused or are broad based. They said that they were in fact neither and that different levels of focus are required for different levels of training and education. There was discussion about different paths to an emergency management career. This highlighted the role of university programs in career *initiation* and college or similar certificate programs in a role of career *transition* and/or career *enhancement*. College programs can focus on helping current emergency services or other practitioners move across to an emergency management career while other courses, especially in the future, can assist emergency manager to refresh, increase or specialize their skill sets. University programs can look more to the future of the profession and provide students with a starting point for an emergency management career. This led to further discussion that undergraduate programs should require a practicum component to ensure that the students gain practical experience during their education.

Another area which was discussed in breakout session C was the balance of theory, practice and research. These themes led to a discussion on the need of universities and colleges to have clearly defined roles in EM education. As well colleges should become better at acknowledging prior learning and experience whereas universities should get better at acknowledging college certificates and diplomas. Further to this is the idea of a national curriculum and whether or not it is necessary. If not, then at the very least there needs to be more integrated approaches taken and increased visibility and interoperability between academic institutions. However some variation will always exist across the country simply due to geography and focusing on local knowledge. As the emergency management profession matures there will be more demand for specialized programs and opportunities for colleges and universities to find their respective niche in the ongoing development of the field.

Session D: Getting Started: Building a Business Case for EM Programs

The discussion in group D examined the demand for programs, the types of programs that are needed, and the best way to develop a business case for an EM program. The Master of Arts in Disaster and Emergency Management that Royal Roads University plans to launch in 2007 was reviewed as an example of how an EM program can be developed.

Demand for EM education programs in Canada is considered to be pent up. This demand has been piqued by the recent spate of disasters and emergencies around the world. The need to equip managers to manage complex emergencies and disasters is rising. Canada lags behind other nations and offers comparatively few post-secondary EM programs.

Demand for EM education exists at the college, university undergraduate, masters, and doctoral level. An increase in the number of Canadian EM programs will support the evolution and expansion of the emerging field of disaster and emergency management. It will also encourage more Canadian research. This demand for EM programs is coming

from two different types of people. Some learners are currently working in the EM field and want to enhance their knowledge and skills with further education. Other learners have little or no EM knowledge or experience, but are interested in a career in the field. New programs can serve both.

Overall the conversation throughout the session reinforced the notion that Canada could support a handful of EM programs. Ideally, learners will be able to pursue various levels of education from certificates all the way up to PhDs - within Canada. Workshop participants discussed the value of working collaboratively to promote the development of Canada's disaster and emergency management field.

Closing Discussion

Several issues were present in discussions throughout the day and were noted as being both significant and in need of further investigation. The academic and practitioner attendees all agreed that EM education in Canada needs to accommodate two types of students. There is a requirement for programs and courses for those who are starting into the field and want to make EM a career. There also is a requirement for courses and programs to support those who are already employed in the field and are looking for further education to enhance their practical work experience. Further to this issue, is the need for a defined and recognized set of core competencies required by emergency managers. The establishment of a recognized set of competencies will assist universities and colleges in designing programs.

Another common discussion theme revolved around the issue of certification of emergency managers in Canada. The general consensus of the group is that a certification process for emergency managers is an important idea and further thought is needed on how this should be done and at what level. Suggested solutions included looking at how engineers and accountants are certified in their professional fields. A final reoccurring comment was that coordination and assistance at a national level with regard to EM education is required. It felt that this was an area where federal contributions could yield significant benefits.

At the end of the workshop PSEPC representatives received many valuable and positive comments about the workshop. Several attendees noted that this was a first and great opportunity for them to meet one another and gain insight into who is doing what in Canada. Positive responses were also present in the workshop evaluations which were completed by the attendees. Attendee comments included; "Bravo"; "Excellent first step to bring together academics and practitioners to exchange ideas. Next step to continue dialogue."; and "Great 1st workshop – keep it going".

With the close of the 2005 workshop, PSEPC is planning on building upon this success by making the EM education workshop an annual event.