

From Certificate to PhD:

Creating a collaborative educational pathway for emergency management in New Zealand

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Abstract

The international profession of emergency management is growing and evolving rapidly. Despite this growth, significant labour shortages of qualified emergency managers and new expectations under the Tertiary Education Strategy, New Zealand has never had an integrated pathway for education and training for this discipline. This paper outlines a collective vision to develop a collaborative educational pathway from Certificate to Doctorate level in emergency management and provide this continuum from one central geographical location – the Manawatu, a potential world first. The collaborative educational pathway in emergency management is conceptually endorsed by Massey University, Tai Poutini Polytechnic, International Pacific College and the Emergency Management Academy of New Zealand.

Introduction

Emergency management is the managerial function charged with creating the framework within which communities reduce vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters (IAEM, 2008). In this internationally evolving profession, New Zealand is experiencing a shortage of qualified emergency managers (NZ Careers Service, 2007). Recent legislative changes creating sector expansion and many practitioners approaching retirement age have compounded this human resource shortage. Although the sector seeks qualified practitioners to enter the labour market, the current study options are limited and fragmented (Glassey, 2008). Although education is just one aspect of improving the pool of human resource talent in New Zealand, it is an important part of capacity building. Research was undertaken to develop a conceptual approach to establish a pathway of education at all levels with multiple entry and exit points. The educational framework in New Zealand is influenced by the Tertiary Education Strategy 2007-2012 (Ministry of Education, 2006), whilst the sectoral framework for emergency management is set by the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002—however at the time of research minimal guidance was provided for training and educational requirements for the sector.

Methods

This research project was developed using a literature review, statistical analysis of educational

activity, comparative analysis of international approaches to emergency management education, discussions with stakeholders and significant consultation of proposed recommendations. There was no direct funding provided to this project by any party; other than time in kind contribution provided by the employer (EMANZ).

Results

A statistical analysis was carried out and confirmed the growing update of emergency management education within existing qualification options (figure 1). The major surge was provided for by new local certificates provided by Tai Poutini Polytechnic and National Certificates through the Local Government Industry Training Organisation. Both of these sources of increases could be attributed to the release of new RAPID® national training packages by the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management (Glassey, 2008).

Massey University launched the first focused university qualification in emergency management for New Zealand in 1992 with a Diploma in Civil Defence. It since was evolved to become a Graduate Diploma in Emergency Management and has over 55 graduates (as at end of 2007) making it the most widely achieved domestic university level emergency management qualification achieved in New Zealand. Despite its outreach, all these qualifications are not integrated well within the tertiary education framework as expected by government strategy.

In review of emergency management core competencies by Etkin (2006), it appeared that New Zealand had the pieces of a *jig saw* puzzle required to create an *end to end* educational pathway for emergency management. What was lacking was a Bachelor level degree in emergency management and a framework to integrate these effectively.

Discussion

The Tertiary Education Strategy expects providers to work collaboratively and to establish seamless progression or scaffolding of education from one provider to another. This expectation supported by Etkin's core competencies approach drew linkages between the previously fragmented qualifications in a concept known as the collaborative educational pathway (figure 2). This pathway created a structure for students to enter at various levels, depending on their experience and qualifications and provided for a range of exit points whilst ensuring each provider was autonomous in determining their own curriculum. In most cases, existing entry criteria were already in place however an articulation was later made between

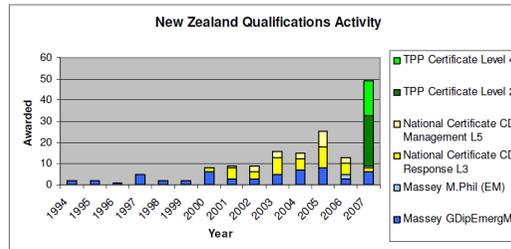


Figure 1: New Zealand Qualifications Activity. Source: NZQA, 2008; Massey University, 1994-2007; Tai Poutini Polytechnic, 2007

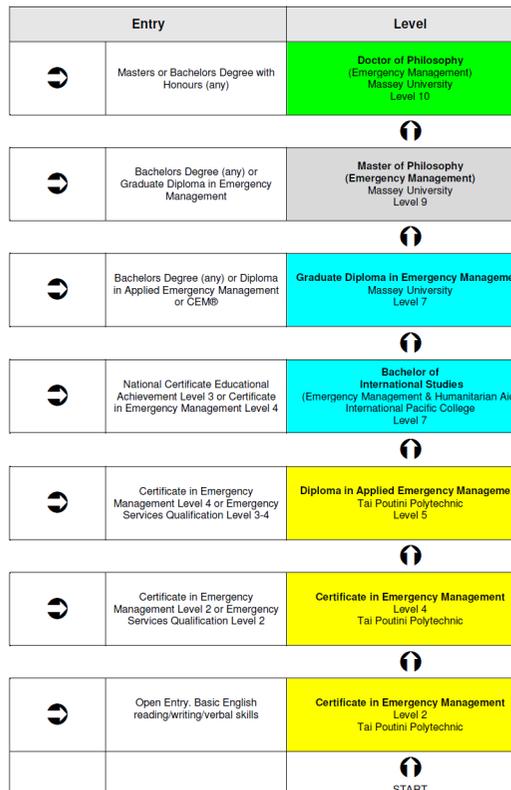


Figure 2: Collaborative Educational Pathway (Glassey, 2008).

Massey University and Tai Poutini Polytechnic to ensure those completing the Diploma in Applied Emergency Management could enter the Graduate Diploma in Emergency Management without the need for an undergraduate degree. This approach provided distinct areas of focus across the providers, with the lower levels focusing on operational applied skills such as incident management; and higher levels focusing on academic and strategic attributes. This approach creates a pathway from Certificate to Doctorate level education specifically in emergency management; which is believed to be globally unique and provides for an exclusive marketing advantage. This marketing edge has been used to create a central brand known as *Emerg.Ed* (Figure 3) and the internet site www.emerGEDucation.com that provides a neutrally branded website that provides a *one stop* shop for information on emergency management education study options.



Figure 3: Emerged brand.

Conclusion

The creation of the collaborative educational pathway ensures that students have an integrated framework in which to enter the emergency management profession and continue their professional development. Not only is this likely to contribute to professionalisation of the emergency manager role, it likely will improve the competence of emergency managers which ultimately leads to enhancing service delivery to the community before, during and after a disaster.

This unique approach minimises competition between providers, encourages collaboration and creates opportunities for providers to attract students, domestically and internationally. By adopting this simplistic model, providers can also clearly demonstrate the alignment of their programmes against the expectations set out by the Tertiary Education Strategy.

In 2009, the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management released technical standard TS 02/09: Civil Defence Emergency Management Competency Framework. Further research is needed on whether this new technical standard will affect the collaborative educational pathway, however initial assessment would suggest the pathway supports the philosophy of the technical standard (TS 02/09) and that providers will need to re-align curriculum to reflect new requirements.

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All opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of Massey University, Tai Poutini Polytechnic or International Pacific College.

Further information

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For further information on the collaborative educational pathway, visit the joint website: www.emerGEDucation.com