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Emergency Management & Homeland Security in Higher Education:

The critical need for standardized curriculum

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, higher education has become an important factor in advancing organizations, as well as individuals advancing within their organization. There are many staple programs in higher education such as business administration, management and organizational behavior. These standardized programs have often been used by public servants to advance their careers. Public servants such as law enforcement officers and firefighters receive a more beneficial education attaining degrees designed specifically for their disciplines. Law enforcement personnel commonly use the criminal justice degree to advance their careers and Firefighters often use the Fire and Emergency Services degree to advance their careers. However, as a new career field and discipline, those working in Emergency Management and Homeland Security have not been afforded a standardized curriculum model to ensure those entering these career fields are entering the career field with the same knowledge. This research discusses the need for standardization of education Emergency Management and Homeland Security professionals.

Methods

The focus of this case study is to discuss the origins, patterns and details of corruption that plagued the Cuyahoga County government for decades. To do so, evidence presented in news articles and court documents will be reviewed and analyzed. To gain an understanding of why key political figures would violate the trust of their constituents and jeopardize the economy of the county they served, several articles will be reviewed. In particular the articles under review will focus on the following: Ethical theories; corruption; and leadership theories. Lastly, the research will address the following questions:

1. What ethical theories were violated by the key figures?
2. What moral theories were violated by the key figures?
3. What is the definition of corruption?
4. How do the moral and ethical theories relate to corruption?
5. What was the end result of the decade's long corruption?
6. How can future corruption be prevented?

Current Curriculum Models

In the aftermath of 9/11 and subsequent anthrax attacks, along with Hurricane Katrina there was a great deal of focus on emergency management and homeland security. The government consolidated 22 agencies into the Department of Homeland Security. Following these events was the creation of multiple academic programs that each focused on a different aspect of the various agencies in the new emerging mission of DHS. According to Donahue et al (2010), this amalgamation of disciplines and expertise linked constituencies often in conflict with each other, and ones not well suited to the domestic mission at hand. Most programs maintain a narrow focus on terrorism as the focus of homeland security; however, there also needs to be a focus on natural disasters and emerging communicable diseases and how to plan for, respond to and recover from these incidents.

FEMA Independent Study

The Federal Emergency Management developed a series of training certificates to assist in developing emergency management and homeland security professionals. The FEMA certificates are offered through the Emergency Management Institute. The core curriculum areas consists of (FEMA, n.d.):

- Mitigation
- Preparedness and Technology
- Professional Development
- Disaster Operations and Recovery
- Integrated Emergency Management

The Professional Development Series includes seven Emergency Management Institute independent study courses that provide a well-rounded set of fundamentals for those in the emergency management profession. Many accredited universities offer college credit for various FEMA independent study courses.

A few programs, such as Franklin University's Emergency Management & Homeland Security bachelor's program, have incorporated FEMA independent study courses in the curriculum (Franklin University, 2013).

The Need for Standardized Curriculum

In recent years a debate has been in progress to raise the level of education of the practitioners in the Emergency Management & Homeland Security disciplines. The initial employees in the Department of Homeland Security were professionals from various disciplines placed together, with little direction, to conduct the planning, response and recovery of natural and man made disasters for the United States. Some of the employees were from career fields that did not require a degree and experience and longevity were the rule.

Public Safety career fields seldom require a degree to attain leadership. However, the pendulum is now swinging towards college education, in conjunction with experience. Additionally, many public safety disciplines such as Fire, Emergency Services and Law Enforcement has adopted a standardized curriculum for degree programs at various levels. However, the haphazard and rushed development of pioneer degree programs in Emergency Management & Homeland Security led to new questions about the value of a major in these disciplines, the quality of academic programs, as well as the process used by regional higher education accrediting for ensuring the quality of Emergency Management and Homeland Security degree programs.

As previously stated in Current Curriculum Models, the current curriculum available to students seeking a degree in Emergency Management or Homeland Security was borne out of the aftermath of 9/11, the anthrax attacks following 9/11, the restructuring of the Department of Homeland Security, and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Many Universities have branded their degree programs.

How does higher education and the professionals corps develop a standardized core curriculum for a seemingly new discipline and assess the success of the core curriculum? According to Hollander (1999), the answer lies in reasserting the traditional role and function of higher education: the discovery and dissemination of knowledge for the betterment of and service to society.

Proposed Core Curriculum

The following is a list of proposed standardized core curriculum for Emergency Management and Homeland Security professionals:

- Introduction to Emergency Management and Homeland Security
- Emergency Planning, Response & Recovery
- Studies in Terrorism
- Intelligence gathering and Analysis
- Introduction to CyberSecurity
- Research Applications in Emergency Management & Homeland Security
- Emergency Management & Homeland Security Capstone

Conclusions

The disciplines of Emergency Management and Homeland Security are still considered fairly new. The initial degree programs offered to professionals in, or students desiring to go in to the fields of Emergency Management and Homeland Security were borne out of the aftermath of 9/11, the subsequent anthrax attacks, the restructuring of the DHS, and Hurricane Katrina. Despite diligent efforts to design and deliver quality degree programs for Emergency Management and Homeland Security professionals, the curriculum of degrees in these programs vary widely.

To supplement these degree programs, FEMA has developed an Independent Study program that University's, such as Franklin University in Columbus, Ohio, have implemented into their degree programs. Franklin University has also taken a leading step in combing the two disciplines to ensure professionals have a well balanced foundation.

As the profession of Emergency Management and Homeland Security grows and becomes more professionalized, there is a need to standardize curriculum in degree programs to ensure the professionals are attaining knowledge that is consistent and is for the betterment of and service to society.

Challenges for Developing a Standardized Core Curriculum

- Varying ideas of requirements for education in Emergency Management & Homeland Security
- Loss of program branding / identity
- The continuously evolving nature of Emergency Management & Homeland Security
- The lack of an accrediting body for the profession(s)
- Lack of standardized job descriptions at the local, state and federal levels

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