

The Experiences of Faculty and Staff at Academic Institutions Preparing Themselves for Academic Continuity after a Disaster: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

There has been an increase in disasters that have affected academic institutions in the last decade. There is a gap in the research as to how to best train faculty and staff for academic continuity during and after disasters occur. The lack of available research regarding how faculty and staff members at academic institutions prepared themselves prior to a disaster served as a major rationale for this study. The problem that was addressed in this phenomenological study was to identify the training needed by faculty and staff to provide academic continuity during and after times of disaster. The purpose of the phenomenological study was to provide further knowledge and understanding of the training needed by faculty and staff to provide academic continuity prior to, during, and after a disaster. The findings from this study showed that faculty and staff members identified assistance needed including professional development in the form of training and support, communication, and technological resources in order to provide academic continuity. The first conclusion from this study was that academic institutions need to support their students, staff and faculty with disaster training and the resources needed to provide academic continuity during and after disasters. The second conclusion from this study is that while disasters and other academic institution incidents are occurring more frequently, limited funding and the push for online education has created limited resources for academic institutions. The need to create partnerships and consortiums with other academic institutions and communities is crucial for the success and sustainability of academic institutions. Through these partnerships and consortiums academic institutions can share resources, knowledge, and training. Academic institutions should participate in Disaster Resilient University networks and learn how to become better prepared.

Index Terms: disasters, academic continuity, training, higher education

I. Introduction

There is evidence that disasters are becoming more frequent (Buschlen & Goffnett, 2013; Donahue, 2014; Earthman, 2014). There has been an increase in disasters that have affected academic institutions in the last decade according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA, 2003). There are many benefits associated with having faculty and staff prepared for disasters. Some of the benefits include faculty, staff and student retention, academic continuity, financial stability, and overall institution sustainability (Donahue, 2014). FEMA has a variety of resources available to academic institutions who wish to prepare themselves for such disasters. The resources available include checklists for preparation, courses, training and networking information (Donahue, 2014).

Previous research indicates that most of the population believes they are prepared when in fact they are not (Donahue, 2014). Academic institutions are more vulnerable with regards to disaster preparation, IT security and disaster recovery (Ross, 2005). Donahue (2014) noted that individuals who have prior experience with disasters are more willing to prepare for future disasters. The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 was signed into law in October of 2000. This law encourages and gives incentives to states and local governments who participate in pre-disaster planning and promotes sustainability as a strategy for disaster resistance. Resources are available to academic institutions who desire to become disaster resilient universities; such organizations include the Society for College and University Planning www.scup.org, American Association of Community Colleges www.aacc.nche.edu, and the National Association of College and University Business Officers www.nacubo.org (FEMA, 2003). Academic institutions have a responsibility to educate and teach students, staff and faculty how to prepare for disasters at school and in the community (Ross, 2005).

Academic institutions must use resources available to them to avoid the financial burden of a lack of disaster planning or poor planning (Buschlen & Goffnet, 2013). Communities and Colleges alike often lose residents after major disasters.

Academic institutions affected by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina are still below pre-storm census (Beggan, 2010). Academic institutions must plan for transportation and accommodations for students, staff and faculty. Academic institutions must also plan for alternative academic calendars which may need to be flexible and communicated appropriately to staff, faculty and students. Financial concerns include payroll and capital expenditures. Crime increases after natural disasters as well (Beggan, 2010). Communication and establishing that faculty, students and staff are safe should be a priority to academic institutions (Watson, Loffredo, McKee, 2011). Watson et al. (2011) noted that students expressed the need to be prepared, connected, and return to normalcy following a disaster. After storms students are concerned about funding their education as well. After Hurricane Katrina 100,000 students were displaced (Fields, 2005). The lack of available research regarding how faculty and staff members at academic institutions prepared themselves prior to disaster served as a major rationale for this study. Many academic institutions have implemented online education programs. In the event of a disaster academic institutions have used their online programs to provide academic continuity during and after times of disaster (Higgins & Harreveld, 2013; Lorenzo, 2008). There has been a lack of research regarding how to prepare faculty for academic continuity after a disaster (Meyer & Wilson, 2011). Furthermore, there is a need to prepare faculty for disasters at academic institutions (Higgins & Harreveld, 2013; Lorenzo, 2008).

Ii. Statement of Problem

The problem that was addressed in this phenomenological study was to identify the support in the form of assistance and training needed by faculty and staff to provide academic continuity during and after times of disaster. Support of faculty can include training and support as well as access to technological resources (Ledwell, Andrusyszyn, & Iwasiw, 2006; Orgambidez-Ramos & Borrego-Ales, 2014). Resources and Support for faculty at academic institutions has been lacking due to financial constraints of administrators at academic institutions (Kiernan, 2005).

Leaders at academic institutions need to develop contingency plans that promote distance education as a viable alternative to traditional education during times of disaster has become more evident due to recent disasters (Lorenzo, 2008; Watson, Loffredo, & Mckee, 2011). When disasters have occurred it has been up to faculty to maintain academic continuity (Wright & Wordsworth, 2013, p. 145). Ryan, Healy & Sullivan, (2011) noted that academic institutions will benefit by supporting faculty and staff during and after times of disaster in order to maintain academic continuity as well as retaining students, staff, and faculty.

Iii. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to provide further knowledge and understanding of the support needed for faculty and staff to provide academic continuity during and after a disaster based on the experiences of staff and faculty whom taught during disasters. The approach of this qualitative study included a structured interview with 20 faculty and staff members who worked and taught during times of disaster in order to understand the experiences of these individuals and identify support needed for such individuals for future preparation. In this research it was critically important to the researcher to capture the experiences of faculty and staff that may have suffered, survived or even had losses during disasters to interview these individuals personally thus taking a compassionate approach to the individuals being interviewed rather than a survey approach (Houston, 2016).

Fillmore et al. (2011) suggested that phenomenology is a well-suited method of inquiry for identifying individuals' lived experiences. The sample population was comprised of faculty members whom were employed at various post-secondary accredited academic institutions teaching traditional courses prior to and during a disaster.

Iv. Research Questions

In phenomenological research, the purpose of asking open-ended questions to participants is to gain knowledge and understanding of the participants' experiences in their own words and interpret these words. The research question that was proposed in this research is what support in the form of assistance and training could be given to faculty and staff at academic institutions prior to and during a disaster to ensure academic continuity (Houston,

2016). The research methodology utilized in this study was qualitative method and phenomenological design. Qualitative methods were utilized to collect and analyze the data. In-depth telephone interviews were utilized to gather data from the faculty and staff whom were employed at academic institutions during and after a disaster. An invitation to participate was posted on LinkedIn. This research design focused on the experiences of the faculty employed at academic institutions during previous disasters providing academic continuity to those students after the disasters.

This study was designed to contribute to research regarding faculty and staff assistance and training programs to ensure disaster preparedness initiatives at academic institutions. Data gained from this research project will provide insight to human resource professionals, faculty and administrators of academic institutions in regards to disaster planning for the future. This research project has added to the body of knowledge for administrators and human resource professionals at academic institutions facing disasters to enhance their preparations of programs that provide support to faculty (Houston, 2016). Previous research as noted by Beggan (2010) highlighted the financial impact and loss of students during and after the disasters, leaving faculty and staff preparation and academic continuity open to further research. Disasters are increasing and academic institutions are susceptible and should utilize suggestions from federal agencies like FEMA (Fansler, 2013; Kapucu & Khosa, 2012). Academic institutions can work towards becoming disaster resilient by planning and offering training and support to faculty and staff that in return will reduce further financial and student enrollment losses after a disaster (Sattler, Kirsch, Shipley, Cocke, & Stegmeier, 2013).

V. Definition of Key Terms

A. Definition of key terms

Academic Continuity. “Academic continuity is the process of maintaining continuity of learning in a situation caused by events that make it difficult or impossible for students and / or faculty to attend classes” (Bates, 2013, p. 1558). **Disaster.** Disaster can be either natural or technological or man-made. Natural disasters include but are not limited to droughts, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, fires and storms (Hoon Oh & Oetzel, 2011). The second type of disaster is technological disasters. Technological disasters can include instances of internet failures, network failures, internet outage and telephone network failures (Hoon Oh & Oetzel, 2011). Man-made disasters can be active shooter or various threats such as bombs or technological hacking (Morris, 2013).

Distance Education. Distance education is the delivery of education through the use of mail correspondence, CD- ROMS, or video-taped lectures (Srichanyachon, 2014). Distance education is often a term that is interchangeable with Online Education. **Emergency Management.** Emergency management is a planning process used to help an academic institution respond and recover from a disaster or crisis (Meyer & Wilson, 2011). It is also a process in which the organization develops a strategy to handle disasters or crises (Scarinci, 2014).

Faculty. Faculty are full time instructors who may be tenured or on a continuing contract for the academic institutions annually. Adjunct faculty are those who are part-time employees or contingent employees who can be classified as either non-tenured or non-permanent and are paid by course or on a year-by-year appointment. For the purpose of this research include both faculty and adjunct faculty (Caruth & Caruth, 2013). **Learning Management System (LMS).** Learning Management System is software that acts as a platform for online education courses to be delivered to students anywhere, anytime using various means of accessing this including computers, smart phones, mobile devices, and tablets.

Online Education. Online education is a formal education process that includes instruction that may be synchronous or asynchronous. Online education is also referred to as Distance Education. An online education course may use the internet, or wireless communications devices such as mobile phones or tablets and can include audio conferencing using Skype, Go to Meeting, Adobe connect or other such tools (Ginn & Hammond, 2012).

Staff. Essential Employees of an academic institution that are expected to work during and after a disaster (SLU.edu, 2016) **Support.** Support of employees can include knowledge; training and development, resources; materials, software, online platforms, communication tools, support; feedback, and communication opportunity; participation in change and innovation regarding processes and systems at the academic institution (Ledwell et al., 2006; Orgambidez-Ramos & Borrego-Ales, 2014). For the purpose of this study, support is the assistance and training that could be provided to faculty in order to ensure academic continuity after a disaster.

B. Literature Review

This phenomenological qualitative study has provided further knowledge and understanding of the training and support needed for faculty and staff to provide academic continuity after disasters based on the experiences of faculty whom taught during and after previous disasters. The qualitative approach utilized 20 faculty and staff who had been employed at academic institutions during disasters. A gap in literature exists where academic institutions have failed to appropriately plan for how academic continuity will be addressed specifically by faculty who teach at academic institutions after disasters (Lorenzo, 2008). Recent events have served as a vigilant reminder that academic institutions are not prepared for disasters or active shooter events (Houston, 2013; Morris, 2013). This literature review assessed faculty development, online education, and how disasters have impacted academic institutions, and disaster planning at academic institutions.

A. Introduction

Academic institutions rely on funding from tuition that students pay, and therefore cannot remain closed during a disaster and if so they must be able to provide academic continuity until normal operations are in place in order to retain students (Beggan, 2010; Lorenzo, 2008). Online education can be utilized as a preparation strategy for academic institutions facing disasters (Bates, 2013; Omar, Kalulu, Belma, & Srour, 2011). Academic institutions that have disaster plans have either not practiced or had their plans reviewed or benchmarked and are still in need of offering guidelines and preparation strategies for faculty and students (Coyner, 2011). FEMA provides information regarding the access of resources, disaster plans, and how to become a disaster resilient university available to academic institutions since 2000 (FEMA, 2003).

B. Utilizing Online Education for Academic Continuity

Academic institutions in the Gulf Coast region had to utilize online education to salvage what was left of the academic year after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (Kiernan, 2005). Meyer and Wilson (2011) suggested that much of the existing research regarding disaster planning at academic institutions focused on facilities and Internet technology resources. According to Higgins & Harreveld (2013) noted that many academic institutions have implemented online education programs in order to continue providing curriculum to students while campuses are closed during times of disaster. Online education has been discussed as a method of sustainability and can ensure academic continuity during disasters (Meyer & Wilson, 2011). Lorenzo (2008) noted that in the world of technology at our finger tips online education is one way that academic institutions can provide uninterrupted education during disaster.

Only the faculties that have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to troubleshoot with the technology involved can be successful when support staff and resources are limited or unavailable after a disaster (McLennan 2006). According to Kapucu and Khosa (2012), continuity after disasters have focused on facilities and physical campus sustainability leaving specifics of faculty development relatively minimal. Academic institutions are frequently changing their LMS platforms and offer little or no adequate training to faculty members (McLennan, 2006) Senior and traditional faculty members are new to online instruction and need assistance for the successful delivery of online education (He et al. 2014).

Gordon et al. (2010) suggested that all faculty have training and the resources needed to relocate face to face classes to an online format, thus providing academic continuity during a short term or long term disaster. More planning and preparation efforts are needed by academic institutions across the nation in order to ensure academic continuity by faculty during and after times of disaster occurs prior to the next disaster (Beggan, 2010, 2011; Kiernan, 2005, 2006; Lorenzo, 2008; Watson et al., 2011). Kapucu and Khosa (2012) suggested that support and training opportunities be available to all students and faculty regarding disaster preparedness.

Mitroff, Diamond and Alpaslan (2006) noted that academic institutions that are able to re-open quickly or sustain academic continuity depends on the disaster or emergency management plan created by administrators at academic institutions. FEMA has had resources available to academic institutions for nearly two decades, yet according to Dolan (2006) described the state of academic institutions readiness for disasters as not being prepared. Houston (2016) noted that some faculty had suffered their own losses, faculty remained resilient and determined to provide classes after a hurricane (Mangan, 2006).

C. Technology

The utilization of Internet technology has especially been a great resource for academic institutions and a strategy to retain faculty, students, reduce financial costs, and to offer education in globally (Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2008). The utilization of mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets have also help the spread of technology and its use within online education.

Faculty and Staff Development

Elliott, Rhoades, Jackson, and Mandernach (2014), faculty development programs are struggling to exist due to shrinking financial resources and support for such professional development. Employees become more valuable to an organization as they accumulate more years of experience and acquire more training (Meyer, 2012). Providing training to employees can improve moral, efficiency, customer service and prevent turnover (Gramm & Schnell, 2012).

The lack of training and development of faculty who provide online education has been an existing issue (Al-Salman, 2011; Gonzales, 2014; Gappa and Leslie, 1993; Morton, 2012). Faculties who provide online or distance education are even more susceptible to less recognition, training and development (Al-Salman, 2011; Liu & Zhang, 2013; Morton, 2012).

Coyner (2011) suggested that faculty and staffs prepare themselves and take measures to learn online education platforms and prepare themselves for academic continuity for the courses they teach due to academic institutions no longer providing professional development due to financial restraints.

D. Emergency Management Development

Sattler et al. (2013) surveyed 222 participants at a University in order to gather data regarding disaster preparedness. The study conveyed that prior information given regarding disaster planning allowed participants to be knowledgeable and responsible for preparing and responding to a disaster or crises. The recent increase in disasters affecting academic institutions has shown that there is a need to better prepare faculty for disasters (Sattler et al., 2014). SchWeber (2008) stated that the use of online education after Hurricane Katrina allowed for academic continuity and could be used for future disasters. Without a national mode, academic institutions may not be fully regarded as disaster resilient (Clarke, Jones, & Yssel, 2014). Klugman (2014) stated that administrators and human resource professionals should not ignore the experiences of scholars during disasters. In some cases, academic institutions are still recovering after disasters (Fillmore et al., 2011). Chachkes et al. (2007) reported that faculty and staff may not be willing or able to come to work after a disaster.

Providing resources and support to faculty and staff along with training can help these individuals with their own physical and emotional stability. Hull (2010) noted that academic institutions are considered soft-targets. Academic institutions possess many vulnerabilities and have large numbers of youth who simply are not adults. Responsibilities can fall to faculty members to be the mentor and support for students when something happens (Hull, 2010).

According to Fillmore et al. (2011), there can be a positive effect of engaging faculty and staff prior to a disaster by offering pre-disaster training. The Department of Education ([DOE], 2009) has four guidelines for training faculty and staff. These guidelines fail to address academic continuity and the training is recommended once annually. The DOE stated that there are over 4,000 public and private academic institutions in the U.S. and they are required by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to create and develop emergency plans. According to Kapucu and Khosa (2012), the emergency plans at academic institutions should be complaint with the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Hartman and Elahee (2013) suggested that training should be a part of the corporate strategy because the link between training and financial performance is strong. According to Morris (2013), simulated training exercises at academic institutions help administrators and faculty correct mistakes and make changes to existing plans. Karasz, Bogan and Bosslet (2014) described the use of a text message system as crucial for communicating to staff, faculty and students prior to, during and after a disaster or crisis. After the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007, many academic institutions began utilizing text messaging systems.

E. Disaster Planning at Academic Institutions

Disaster planning among academic institutions is a relatively new phenomenon and has only recently involved the impact of faculty and students. Disaster planning within communities began with the passing of the Federal Civil Defense Act of 1958 and required community wide preparations for survival a necessary strategy in disaster planning and recovery (Bates, 2013). In 2008, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) made revisions to the Clery Act of 1998 requiring academic institutions to develop and implement notification systems for students, staff and faculty in the event of a disaster (Kapucu & Khosa, 2012). When disasters occur, the budgets of academic institutions are affected (Beggan, 2010). Preparing for disasters and pandemics can be a daunting task and have impacted academic institutions globally (Gordon, Weiner, McNew and Trangenstein, 2010). Academic institutions offer programs for individuals to learn about how to handle disasters, but it is the academic institutions themselves that need to assess their own disaster plans in order to assure their sustainability during and after a disaster (Buschlen & Goffnett, 2013; Kiernan, 2005; 2006). According to Connelly (2012), fire drills are the most practiced simulation that academic institutions prepare for on an annual basis.

Active shooter events at college campuses in the last several years have sparked renewed interest in disaster and emergency management planning at academic institutions nationwide (Morris, 2013). Many academic institutions have implemented Emergency Notification Systems (ENS) they have not been used correctly or effectively (Han et al., 2015).

Training could speed up the recovery time after an event. Academic institutions that plan for disasters and crises can limit the duration and the damages incurred by the event (Booker, 2014). Wang and Hutchins (2010) suggested that human resource departments role in crises management is critical in preparing employees of organizations.

Faculty and students need to be taken into consideration when disaster planning. (Coyner, 2011). Houston, (2016) and Miller, Rambeck, and Synder (2014) suggested simulation training exercise for improving emergency preparedness for staff, faculty and students. Kapucu and Khosa (2013), Kiernan (2005), and Morris (2013) suggested simulation training that involves students and faculty.

F. The Need for Academic Institutions to Engage in Disaster Planning

Academic institution leaders have not properly planned for disasters and the institutions have lost students and valuable resources (Beggan, 2010). Kapucu and Khosa (2012) found that many academic institutions failed to prepare faculty and students for disasters. Furthermore, Kapucu and Khosa (2012) suggested the importance of academic institutions being disaster-resilient. Academic institutions may possess disaster plans, but few are approved by FEMA and practiced annually (Kapucu & Khosa, 2012).

Kapucu & Khosa (2012) noted that academic institutions are not the only entity impacted when a disaster occurs, entire communities and infrastructure can also be damaged. Prior training and communication to everyone before a disaster strikes is the best preventive strategy (Gerdan, 2014).

According to Kiernan (2005), communication should be a top priority especially during and after such storms. According to Coyner (2011), many academic institutions have disaster plans in place, most of the plans address the employees and facilities of the institutions and not the faculty and academic continuity. Those academic institutions whom have disaster plans should periodically test these plans to identify gaps in academic sustainability and continuity (Beggan, 2010; FEMA, 2003). The FEMA has created a checklist to assist administrators of academic institutions to sustain operations and academic continuity (FEMA, 2003). Kiernan (2005, 2006) suggested that administrators at academic institutions should re-evaluate their existing plans on an annual basis and Beggan (2011) suggested that alternatives to online education such as flexible semesters and course scheduling to offset the dependency of technology.

G. Examples of Disasters in Recent Times

In recent times, active shooter events on college campuses has put all academic institutions on alert and allowed much needed discussions regarding the preparation and safety for students, staff and faculty (Morris, 2013; Shaw & Meaney, 2015). Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have forever changed how academic institutions plan and prepare for natural disasters (Beggan, 2010).

Wright & Wordsworth (2013) proved that during a disaster, a significant amount of the burden to ensure academic continuity has been placed on faculty. Lorenzo (2008) noted that the University of Hong Kong relied on the implementation of online education courses to ensure academic continuity and university sustainability with the outbreak of SARS in 2003. Moreover, research efforts conducted by Wright and Wordsworth (2013) concluded that previous research has focused on students' reactions to what happened and what faculty could do to manage students and courses during an ongoing disaster.

Vi. Research Method

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to provide further knowledge and understanding of the support needed for faculty to provide academic continuity prior to, during and after disasters based on the experiences of faculty whom taught academic institutions during and after previous disasters. The problem that was addressed in this phenomenological study was to identify the support in the form of assistance and training needed by faculty to provide academic continuity prior to, during, and after times of disaster. A gap in literature existed where academic institutions have failed to appropriately plan for how academic continuity will be addressed specifically by faculty at academic institutions prior to, during, and after disasters. The data collected from this study should be used by academic institutions to develop programs to support faculty prior to, during, and after times of disaster.

The method for this research was a qualitative method. Beggan (2010) used surveys and conducted interviews with faculty and students at two universities comparing and contrasting recovery efforts after major disasters. The research question in this study is what support should be provided to faculty prior to, during, and after disasters in order for them to provide academic continuity?

In qualitative research the goal is to understand this phenomenon and to gain in depth knowledge of participant's perspective or experience as they have lived it. Utilizing qualitative methods has allowed researchers to explore and offer new knowledge about various constructs within online education (Saba, 2014). Qualitative methodology is the best approach to a new phenomenon when little to no previous literature or research has been conducted (Creswell, 2009).

Phenomenological studies focus on small groups that actually experience or have lived through a phenomenon (Schram, 2006). Phenomenological is the best choice as no other research design could capture the lived experiences of faculty after a disaster. Conducting personal interviews enabled participants to thoroughly explain the details of their experiences while employed at academic institutions prior to, during, and after times of disaster.

For this research topic, a phenomenological design was chosen because of the ability of the researcher to fully connect and understand each participant experiences and perceptions. Furthermore, this open-ended interview approach allowed the researcher to gain further knowledge of what support in the form of training and assistance was needed for faculty and staff during and after a disaster. A small group of faculty and staff was utilized to make overall generalizations of faculty preparation in other geographic locations and was the best design for conducting this type of research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Open-ended questions were utilized, Moustakas (1994) suggested that bracketing of personal bias while interviewing helps minimize researchers personal beliefs and prior knowledge from interfering in the interviewing and research process. Previous research has similar approaches utilizing surveys and questionnaires regarding individuals who telework and adjunct faculty (Burback & Day, 2012; Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Morton, 2012). Beggan (2010) researched how academic institutions effectively prepare for natural disasters using qualitative interviews to study the impact of hurricanes on administrators, faculty and students. Further knowledge and understanding of the training and support is needed to help faculty gain the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide academic continuity prior to, during, and after a disaster.

Findings

Administrators and human resource professionals at academic institutions need to empower faculty if they are expected to provide academic continuity during and after a disaster, retaining students and faculty. The results presented in Chapter 4 supported the findings of other studies in the literature regarding the application of Kanter's theory of empowerment to faculty at academic institutions prior to, during and after a disaster (Ledwell et al., 2006; Orgambidez-Ramos and Borrego-Ales, 2014; Wong and Laschinger, 2013).

The implications of the findings present additions to the body of research regarding the application of Kanter's theory of empowerment. This study provides contributions to the literature regarding the use of empowerment in the form of support and assistance provided to faculty at academic institutions is necessary especially during and after a disaster. The findings in this research supported previous research by (Kiernan, 2006; Leslie & Gappa, 1993; Lorenzo, 2008) regarding the lack of professional development involving online teaching and disaster preparedness offered to faculty. The lack of support or professional development for faculty has been identified across multiple studies conducted by many researchers (Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Leslie et al., 2012; McQuiggan, 2012; Mello, 2007).

The results in this study demonstrated the need for training and support as well as professional development for faculty. The results were expected as suggested by previous research as reported by Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Kiernan, 2006; Leslie & Gappa, 1993; Leslie et al., 2012; Lorenzo, 2008; McQuiggan, 2012; Mello, 2007. The overall notion of faculty experiencing feelings of obligation to perform regardless of their own personal losses both financially and emotionally was expected (Mangan, 2006). However, the results implicated the need for further research in regards to male faculty members being responsible for taking care of their households and not being able to fully give time to students during or after a disaster because of family obligations. Another area for future research could be the unexpected results of several of the faculty member and students being first responders, or military personnel, and being called to duty prior to, during or after a disaster causes more stress and potential problems than realized for these individuals.

Summary

From this qualitative phenomenological study several themes emerged through telephone interviews with 20 faculty members. Three research questions about how faculty members lived experiences teaching during a time of a disaster, their experiences of providing academic continuity during and after a disaster, and their experiences of assistance and support while providing academic continuity during and after a disaster. All faculty members who participated in this study were affected personally by a disaster as defined in this study. Tropical storms and hurricanes were noted by each faculty member participant. All the faculty members had used their previous disaster experience to help them prepare for future disasters. Nearly all faculty members had no professional development training or no support prior to teaching online courses, and no pre-disaster planning or training at their academic institutions.

Vii. Conclusion

The first conclusion from this study was that academic institutions need to support their students, staff and faculty with disaster training and the resources needed to provide academic continuity during and after disasters. The significance of this is the loss of staff, students and faculty as well as financial resources at the time of the disaster and possibly long term (Lorenzo, 2008).

The second conclusion from this study is that while disasters and other academic institution incidents are occurring more frequently, limited funding and the push for online education has created limited resources for academic institutions. The need to create partnerships and consortiums with other academic institutions and communities is crucial for the success and sustainability of academic institutions. Through these partnerships and consortiums academic institutions can share resources, knowledge, and training (Morris, 2013). Academic institutions have the resources from various websites and organizations if they choose to prepare (FEMA, 2003).

The findings from this study showed that faculty members identified assistance needed including professional development in the form of training and support, communication, and various resources in order to provide academic continuity. Without academic continuity during and after a disaster, academic institutions will not financially recover from student enrollment decreases and faculty turnover. Academic institutions are obligated to provide a continuous learning and a safe environment to their students, staff, and faculty (Lorenzo, 2008 & Morris, 2013).

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