

For Discussion on Case Study Station & Field Campus: Introduction to an Electronic Colloquium

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Introduction, Background, and Purpose of this Note

As the fifth international conference on Integrated Disaster Risk Management draws near, one can look back and see the development of a shared concern with “implementation” into the vision of a network of case study stations (CSS). At this point in time (July 2005), the first four CSSs have been funded (in China, Nepal, Turkey, and Japan). Other potential CSS have also been identified in South Africa, Colombia, and India. This development from professional and ethical concern with the lack of implementation to operational network has been very rapid. In 18 months many of us discussed the implementation gap (in Kyoto, January 2004, at the time of the DPRI Ten Year Review) and debated “implementation science” (in the Ravello IDRM meeting). We went on to present reflections on CSS and new model of professional training (the Field Campus – FC) in a panel during the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) in Kobe (January 2005). Since the WCDR, the FC model was shared with a working group on training led by the International Labour Office at the launch of the International Recovery Platform in May, 2005, and preliminary discussions have been held with colleagues in Colombia, South Africa, and India (June, 2005).

In view of the rapid development of from idea to reality, this is an auspicious time to pause and consider together the lines of a shared vision of the future. As with the broader NEXUS IDRiM, flexibility and appropriateness to the local context is of paramount importance. Nevertheless, as the CSSFC (pronounced CaSS-FiCam) begins to produce deliverables and advanced students begin to circulate among CSSs, it would be wise to pool our experience and ideas in order to define a shared core of meaning for both the key terms: “case study station” and “field campus.”

Thus everyone who has been (or will be) associated with any of the five IDRM meetings is cordially invited to send email responses to this initial note, and to react to one another’s thoughts and suggestions. In this way, we will have achieved some clarity by the time we meet in Beijing in September.

Key Questions

To begin with, we need to address some key questions. Participants in this electronic colloquium may want to suggest other questions.

1. How should we define CCS? What are its minimal characteristics? What are its more advanced characteristics?
2. How should a potential CSS or CSS at an early stage of development be supported in order to move to a more advanced stage?

3. Given that each individual in the NEXUS IDRiM is in some way associated with an institution of higher education or research, why not automatically consider all these institutional nodes in the nexus to be CSSs?
4. How should we define FC? What professional level should participants have? How will they be supported and supervised academically? How will they be supported logistically and practically?
5. Do the answers to questions 1-4 add up to a total vision of “implementation?” What are the potentially links between our approach to implementation-focused research and training and other efforts in the world today?
6. If we are satisfied with the answers to questions 1-5, where do we go next? How fast should the CSSFC expand? Where should we look for financial support? Should FSSFC develop along regional lines (e.g. Asian, African, Latin American, North American/ European – not including small island developing states (SIDS) in some of these regions)? If so, can one kick start African CSSFC? (As we should bear in mind how neglected Africa usually is – aware as we all must be of the message of the formal and informal activities surrounding the G8 meeting in Scotland).

Pump Priming Ideas

In order to get the colloquium rolling, the ideas flowing, the following reflections are offered.

1. THE BASIC NATURE OF THE CSS. Looking over the notes, essays, power point presentations that we have shared over the past 18 months, it is possible to sketch out the minimal characteristics of a CSS.
 - The institution is one involving research and training in some aspect of disaster risk management.
 - The research and training involves the long term monitoring of the implementation or application of some hard or soft technology useful for disaster risk reduction.
 - Such long term monitoring is based on equally long term relationship with a branch of government (often municipal or local government) and/ or civil society institutions (NGOs), and/ or the private sector.
 - Time dimension is long term – continuous or intermittent – hence longitudinal, in contrast to the conventional “case study” where return or repeat is rare, hence its results cross-sectional.

DISCUSSION: The institution may be specialized in some aspect of disaster risk management such as seismology or public health or the economics of insurance. The important point is that at least some aspects of their specialized work should involve the attempts to implement or apply some technology or some process

(problem solving, decision making, etc.) in the real world. The success or failure of this attempt at implementation should be monitored over a long period of time. Such work should be done in collaboration with a branch of government, the private sector, or civil society (or some combination of these three).

2. **SOME ADVANCED CHARACTERISTICS OF A CSS.** In addition to these basic characteristics, the CSS may desirably develop in the following directions:
 - Inclusion of inter-disciplinary components in the long term monitoring process.
 - Involvement in wider dissemination of results of monitoring.
 - Networking with and nurturance of other potential CSS in the country where the original CSS finds itself.

DISCUSSION: As specialized as the research and training institution may be, it is possible over time to bring in through institutional partnerships complementary skills and perspectives so that eventually a fully interdisciplinary monitoring of implementation is possible. Ideally, this would include perspectives coming from engineering, natural science, health sciences, economics, social sciences, politics and public administration. Such well-rounded, long term results concerning how best to implement hard and soft technologies may be worthy of quite wide dissemination, perhaps beyond the normal range of academic audiences, even involving journalism, video documentary production, etc. Having reached this advanced stage of work, the original CSS may attempt to work with other institutions of research and training within its national territory to develop them also as CSSs.

3. **SUPPORTING A POTENTIAL CSS.** This is easiest in the conduct of joint research and training. One should be careful to note the by writing in terms of “potential” CSSs, no value judgment is being made about the overall scientific or academic quality of one vs. another node in the nexus. This language of “potentiality” only refers to the historic fact of development of the four basic characteristics discussed earlier. Some excellent research and training institutions have simply not developed long term relationships with government, civil society, and/ or private sector in this way. Nevertheless they may still be excellent institutions. This is all the more reason why, if they desire so, they work with partner institutions that DO HAVE such experience, and hence move from the status of potential CSS to CSS, and even further to the status of Advance CSS (AdCSS).
4. **WHY AREN'T ALL NEXUS INSTITUTIONS AUTOMATICALLY CSSs?** From the foregoing, the answer is obvious. We should remember that the NEXUS IDRiM is a network of people in the first instance – people who share a common “dream” or vision of integrated disaster risk management (IDRiM). This nexus only secondarily involves institutions to the extent that the individual people committed to the shared vision happen to be affiliated with one or more

institutions. In theory, however, given the strong leadership and effort of any person involved in NEXUS IDRiM as well as support from others, an institution with which they are associated could become a CSS.

5. **DEFINITION OF FIELD CAMPUS.** Again, reviewing the various discussions and debates we have had over the past 18 months, a series of overlapping ideas emerge. So far there seems to be less consensus about the field campus (FC) as concerning the CSS. The following are two of the alternative views.
 - The FC is composed of advanced graduate students and/or post docs from one CSS who work with their counterparts under the supervision of professors/ senior professionals in another CSS on implementation-oriented research. One could call this the bi-lateral view.
 - The FC is constituted by advanced graduate students and/or post docs from any CSS who circulate for shorter periods (3-6 months) among a series of other CSSs. In each “placement” (not unlike the “rotations” of advanced medical students through various departments of a hospital), the participants are learning less about implementation-focused research as such, and more about the process of academic-non academic cooperation, diffusion of research results, team leadership, etc. One could call this the multi-lateral view.

DISCUSSION: The bi-lateral view has more in common with the conventional “exchange student” model. Its advantage is simplicity and also that in administrative terms it is a well-known model. The multi-lateral view might also be thought of as a “finishing school.” That is, whatever the PhD level specialty of a participant (eventually, anything from engineering or volcanology to social psychology or public health), they would be exposed to the process of implementation in a “learning by doing” situation.

6. **SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT FOR FC PARTICIPANTS.** Here, too, many ideas have been floated over the past 18 months, among them the following:
 - Each participant would have a professorial level sponsor and primary supervisor.
 - Supervision could be shared with any member of the NEXUS IDRiM with relevant knowledge, skills, and experience if they are willing, at the request of the primary professor.
 - There could be Summer Institutes at which all the FC participants and members of the NEXUS IDRiM would evaluate and explore dimensions of their accumulating experience in work at CSSs. These could be timed to come before or after the annual IDRiM meetings or could be separately programmed. There could be mini-institutes within countries with more than one CSS or combination of CSS and potential CSSs, and also possible would be regional (e.g. Asian or Latin American, etc.) institutes for support and enrichment of FC participants.

- The FC could also have a dedicated web site and list serv supplementing real time and face to face support with electronic resources.

7. DOES THIS ADD UP TO THE PRACTICE OF IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE?

The answer is both “yes” and “no.” In an academic world it is hard to keep full attention on implementation and to maintain this focus. Both the Confucian and European monastic origins of modern universities turned away from the world as imperfect. There are thousands of years of academic tradition one needs to push against. However, some of the core disciplines out of which NEXUS IDRiM members come are relative new comers to the academic world. They do not carry as much of a burden of such history. Engineering and public health are among these. In fact, during the latter part of the 20th Century, every one of the disciplines out of which NEXUS IDRiM members come has taken a turn toward application. There may still be a bias toward “pure” research in some circles, but that does not seem to have blocked the career development of most of us. So, in brief, it is possible to assert the following:

- As described above, the CaSSFiCam “package,” would constitute a step in the direction of institutionalized implementation as well as co-learning in the process.
- It would draw in new stakeholders, valorizing and harmonizing their own knowledge and experience (government branches, civil society, and private sector).
- It would provide a platform for training of a new kind of professional: someone rooted in a traditional discipline, but fully capable of cross-disciplinary team work, especially in cross-cultural situations.
- It would help to make concrete the Hyogo Framework of Action, especially its 3rd Priority for Action: “Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.”
- Among parallel, complementary approaches are a number of efforts by UNESCO and UNU, as well as training made possible by access to the internet (e.g. existing training courses based at University of Wisconsin, Madison and University of Oklahoma).

8. EXPANSION AND FURTHER STEPS? The authors of this first note prefer to leave these last questions open to participants in the electronic colloquium. What is clear, though, is that we need “proof of concept” fairly soon if we are likely to find financial support for expansion. Proof of concept, in turn, depends on clarity of concept. That is where your active and vigorous participation in discussion of all these questions is vital.

Thanks in advance for your time and efforts!