Preparing teachers and principals to play a significant role in community disaster preparedness and resilience
2010/2011 Canterbury earthquake sequence
- Major damage to Christchurch and surrounding areas
- $40 billion damage including most of the city’s business district and important infrastructure
- Schools played a major part in local response and recovery
- UNESCO and University of Auckland funded project followed five Canterbury school communities over four years
- Researcher also visited schools in Australia (bushfires), Vanuatu (cyclone), Japan (tsunami) and Nepal (earthquake)
Disaster risk reduction through drills, emergency preparedness and hazard mapping
Knowledge of disasters covered in subjects such as science and social studies
School psychologists and counsellors providing psycho-social support
Developing understanding of role of schools
More recently discussion of parts played by principals and teachers
Little on relationship between schools and communities in disaster contexts
Multiple roles of schools:
- Community cohesion pre-disaster
- Response role, such as relief centres
- Recovery role, supporting staff, students, families

Multiple roles of principals
- Crisis managers and community recovery leaders

Multiple roles of teachers
- First responders and psycho-social support
- Expected to continue with ‘business as usual’
- Difficult role as also often victims themselves
Better preparation of teachers

- Pre-service teacher education: what are the possibilities and what roles might you play?
- In-service teacher professional development: teachers role in DRR and emergency preparation

Better preparation of principals

- Wider understanding of disaster contexts
- Preparation for crisis management
- Developing crisis management teams and protocol
- Understanding and preparation for long-term school community support
Other recommendations

- Consideration of the siting of schools and designing them as strong, safe, multi-purpose facilities
- Schools and communities engage in joint hazard mapping and disaster preparation
- Education sector has more integral role in national and local disaster management policy and planning
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