

The International School Psychology Survey

Data from Australia, China, Germany, Italy and Russia

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ABSTRACT Using the International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) this study aims to advance our knowledge of the characteristics, training, roles and responsibilities, challenges and research interests of school psychologists around the world. Data are presented from five countries; Australia, China (Hong Kong), Germany, Italy and Russia. The ISPS contributes valuable information regarding the profession of school psychology in each of these countries. Building upon the ISPS data previously gathered in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England, this study yields additional information regarding the training, roles, responsibilities and contexts of school psychologists. Information from international colleagues provides unique insights regarding similarities, differences and diversity among school psychologists in different countries.

KEY WORDS: challenges; characteristics; international survey; research interests; responsibilities; roles; school psychologists; training

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Understanding the characteristics, training, roles, responsibilities, challenges and research interests of school psychologists around the world is increasingly important as the field of school psychology continues to develop in many countries. During the past five decades few systematic efforts have been made to gather systematic information regarding school psychology practices around the globe (Catterall, 1977–1979; Jimerson et al., 2004; Oakland and Cunningham, 1992; UNESCO, 1948; Wall, 1956). Thus, it is not surprising that few have reviewed the developments in international school psychology services (Burden, 1994; Ezeilo, 1992; Lindsay, 1992; Lunt, 1991). A review of previous research examining school psychology around the world is provided by Jimerson and colleagues (2004).

Previous International School Psychology survey results

Recognizing the diversity of school psychology around the world, the International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) (Jimerson and the ISPA Research Committee, 2002) was developed through the collaborative efforts of international colleagues involved in the ISPA Research Committee. The ISPA Research Committee explores the diversity of the profession of school psychology and promotes the exchange of information and resources around the world. In 2002, the ISPS was distributed to systematically gather information from school psychologists in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England (Jimerson et al., 2004). Similarities and differences were noted regarding the profession of school psychology in these diverse countries. Findings were described in the five domains included in the ISPS: (a) characteristics of school psychologists; (b) training and regulation of the profession; (c) roles and responsibilities; (d) challenges and (e) research. The following provides a brief summary of some of the findings reported by Jimerson and colleagues (2004).

Characteristics. Regarding characteristics of school psychologists, results revealed that the majority of school psychologists in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England were female. Furthermore, those countries with younger practitioners on average had a higher proportion of females. The age range of school psychologists in the participating countries appears to be related to the length of time that the profession has existed in each country. With respect to language, school psychologists in Northern England reported predominantly monolingual fluency in English and the most common second language in all countries was either English or French. School psychologists around the globe reported wanting to help produce change, work with people and a common distaste for administrative work. The ratios of school psychologists to school-age children varied

widely both within and across countries, ranging from 1:580 in Albania to 1:9,050 in Cyprus.

Training and regulations. Regarding training, the majority of respondents from Cyprus, Greece and Northern England held Masters level degrees, while data from Albania and Estonia suggest that the majority of school psychologists in these countries held Bachelors level degrees. Results also revealed that only one of the five countries (Northern England) required teaching experience as a prerequisite for entry into the profession of school psychology. Regardless of requirements, most school psychologists did report some teaching experience.

Roles and responsibilities. The results from Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England reveal some variability in most common activities across countries; however, psychoeducational evaluations or counselling students were consistently among the highest endorsed activities for all countries. With regard to providing primary prevention programs and conducting staff training and in-service programs, international colleagues were highly consistent in reporting these activities as comprising a minimal amount of their time. Counselling students, consultation with teachers/staff and consultation with parents/families, psychoeducational evaluations and primary prevention programs were each ranked in the top three by two or more countries, and administrative responsibilities was consistently ranked as the least optimal role.

Challenges. Lack of leadership within the profession and lack of research and evaluation were the most common internal challenges across Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England. Lack of money to properly fund services was the most salient external challenge reported by school psychologists in these five countries. Overall, more external challenges to the delivery of psychological services were endorsed at higher rates than internal challenges. External threats to the delivery of school psychology services were revealed as particularly salient in Cyprus and Estonia, where five or more of the nine potential challenges were consistently endorsed.

Research. While indicating that research is very relevant to professional practice, no respondents from Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece or Northern England noted spending a portion of their time on research-related activities. School psychologists reported learning difficulties, school failure and dropout as important research topics across countries. It was notable that responses from school psychologists in Albania mostly referred to research addressing professional issues, as opposed to topics related to service delivery.

Current study

The current study shares unique information regarding the characteristics, training and regulations, roles and responsibilities, challenges, and research interests of school psychologists in five countries; Australia, China (Hong Kong), Germany, Italy and Russia.

Methods

Measure

International School Psychology Survey (ISPS). The ISPS was developed by Dr Jimerson and the ISPA Research Committee through a careful process of modification of the draft of the survey previously used by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, USA) and then numerous iterations of revisions and redistribution to international colleagues serving on the ISPA Research Committee [the process is described in Jimerson et al. (2004)]. The International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) (Jimerson and the ISPA Research Committee, 2002) contains 46 items that address five domains: (a) characteristics of school psychologists; (b) training and regulation of the profession; (c) roles and responsibilities; (d) challenges and (e) research. Additionally, the ISPS also solicits feedback regarding the potential role of ISPA in each country. The first 20 items contain general questions asked of all participants, with the remaining items on the ISPS to be completed only by professionals employed in a school setting. ISPS items were predominantly multiple-choice questions, with several open-ended questions included as well. *Characteristics* of the sample were measured by 20 items, asking participants for information ranging from gender and age to favourite and least favourite aspects of the profession. Information was collected about *professional training and regulations* through six items addressing educational preparation, requirements for practice and sources of salary funds. The *roles and responsibilities* of school psychologists were measured by 15 items requesting the average number of hours respondents spent in various settings and engaging in specified tasks, as well as for opinions regarding the ideal roles of a school psychologist. *Challenges to the profession* were assessed by two items asking for internal and external factors that jeopardize the delivery of school psychological services in each country. The topic of *research* was addressed by three items that asked for the perceived relevance of research to professional practice, the availability of research journals and the most important research topics. During the 2002 pilot phase, the ISPS was translated, distributed and collected in five countries (Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England (Jimerson et al., 2004).

Procedures

During 2003, the ISPS was translated, distributed and collected in five additional countries; Australia, China (Hong Kong), Germany, Italy and Russia. Country representatives were responsible for complete translation of the English version of the survey into the language appropriate for their country, distribution of the ISPS and collection of the completed surveys. The research team at the University of California in Santa Barbara, under the direction of Dr Jimerson, was responsible for coordinating correspondence among the country representatives, processing the surveys and completing data analyses. Each country coordinator distributed the ISPS to school psychologists in their country. The distribution and data collection processes for each country are described below.

Australia. Jim Phillips distributed the ISPS to members of the Australian Guidance and Counseling Association (AGCA). The AGCA is a national body and all States in Australia have either a branch of AGCA or their State organization is affiliated with AGCA. The AGCA mailing list includes school psychologists working in government and non-government schools at the primary and secondary level. There are approximately 2000 school psychologists across Australia, of which approximately 1200 are members of AGCA. An advance article was published in the National Newsletter to alert members to the survey. Members were provided with a reply-paid envelope in order to return the survey. Some AGCA members previously indicated that they did not want to receive any mail other than newsletters or journals, thus, across all States a total of 900 surveys were individually mailed. A total of 285 completed surveys were returned.

China (Hong Kong). Drs Mantak Yuen and Shui-fong Lam compiled a mailing list of all practicing school psychologists in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China. By 2003, Hong Kong was the only city in China that had established a profession in school psychology. The survey in China was therefore conducted in Hong Kong only. It is estimated that there are approximately 100 school psychologists in Hong Kong. Questionnaires were individually mailed to all the 74 school psychologists who worked in public schools, government centres and in private practice. Reminder questionnaires were sent one month later. A total of 34 completed surveys were returned.

Germany. Dr Jörg-Michael Thurm sent copies of the German translated version of the ISPS to Dr Joetten, President of the Division of School Psychology in the professional organization of German Psychologists 'Berufsverband Deutscher Psychologen und Psychologinnen e.V. (BDP)'. It is estimated that there are approximately 1050 school psychologists in Germany. Dr Joetten distributed approximately 200 surveys throughout Germany to members of the BDP. Nearly all of

the BDP school psychologists are practicing in public k-12 educational systems, with only a few exceptions who are employed by private schools. A total of 45 completed surveys were returned.

Italy. Julia Coyne (2003) presented the results of the first ISPS during an interactive workshop at a national school psychology conference in Lecce, Italy, '*Quale Cultura per la Scuola Del Futuro?*' ('Which Psychology for the School of the Future?') through the Department of Pedagogical, Psychological and Didactic Sciences at the University of Lecce on June 21, 2003. Fifty surveys with self-addressed stamped return envelopes were distributed to the presentation participants, which comprised of clinical psychologists, developmental psychologists, school psychologists, psychiatrists and graduate students in psychology. Using additional contact information gathered at the conference, she sent out additional electronic surveys to Italian conference attendees, their colleagues and associates. Also, Lou Loprete sent electronic surveys to members of the Psychological Orders of Veneto, Lazio, Emilia Romagna and Piemonte, and contacted independent associates in Rome. In Italy, as school psychology services are administered on an independent contractual basis in public schools, they are less integrated, if available at all, within school settings. Instead, school psychology services are delivered using structures that are already in place through the health department, private and state programs. As such, there are independent psychological practitioners who provide services in the schools as independent freelancers. As a result, it appears that fewer than half of the participants who completed all of the questions on the ISPS were in a position to provide useable data on the ISPS, given their diverse activities as psychological practitioners working in the scholastic environment. These data should represent, therefore, only a preliminary effort to systematically gather information regarding school psychology in Italy and the interpretation of these results warrants caution. At the current time, the number of school psychologists practicing in schools in Italy is unknown. However, through the extensive data collection and research efforts of the '*Societa' Italiana di Psicologia dell'Educazione e della Formazione*' (SIPEF) presided over by Carlo Trombetta, in conjunction with '*Istituto Regionale Ricerca Educativa-Lazio*' (IRRE Lazio) on a regional, then national level, it is surmised that accurate data regarding the number and professional activities of the school psychologist in Italy will soon be made available. The data collecting process initiated by Ms Coyne at the Lecce conference yielded 22 completed ISPS forms (20 via e-mail).

Russia. Dr Klueva distributed the Russian translated version of the ISPS to 100 educational psychologists during the Annual Regional Conference of the Educational Psychology held in Yaroslavl in December of 2002. It is estimated that there are approximately 2000 school

psychologists in Russia. Among those who participated in the conference were psychologists working in school settings, in state psychological centres, psychology-major university students and universities professors. A total of 42 completed questionnaires were returned.

Results

Descriptive analyses examining the frequency of responses were completed and summarized (see Tables 1-10). The data presented below provides information regarding characteristics, training and regulations, roles and responsibilities, challenges and research interests for each of the five countries. Answers on open-response items were recorded and synthesized by content for summary purposes. Considering the diverse contexts of school psychology services in various countries, caution and careful consideration is warranted in the interpretation of the results.

Characteristics

Characteristics of the school psychologists who completed the survey are listed in Table 1. The *gender ratio* among respondents revealed that the majority of participants were female, with the largest percentage of female school psychologists being 100 percent (Russia), and the smallest being 50 percent (Germany). In Australia and Germany, the *average age* of the samples (47, 53, respectively) matched trends of older practitioners reported in the United States (Curtis, 2001) and Cyprus and Northern England (Jimerson et al., 2004). However, the mean age of school psychologists in China, Italy and Russia was much younger (31, 36 and 32, respectively). *Years of school psychology experience* was found to be reflective of age, with school psychologists in China, Italy and Russia having fewer years of experience than their colleagues in Australia and Germany. *Years of teaching experience* varied across the sampled countries (average ranged from 2 to 10 years). Of these five countries, Australia was the only country that requires a teaching qualification prior to entry into school psychology, however, respondents from Italy reported the greatest number of years of teaching experience, on average (average of 10 years). Data for the *highest degree held* (Table 1) was reflective of varied national standards regarding professional preparation. The majority of respondents from Australia, China and Germany held Masters level degrees, while data from Italy and Russia suggest that the majority of school psychologists in these countries held Bachelors level degrees. In China, Germany and Italy the majority of respondents were *fluent in two or more languages*. In all cases, fluency in the national language

Table 1 *Demographic characteristics of school psychologists**

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Russia</i>
Participants	<i>n</i> = 212	<i>n</i> = 24	<i>n</i> = 40	<i>n</i> = 22	<i>n</i> = 42
Gender (%)	<i>F</i> = 80 <i>M</i> = 20	<i>F</i> = 78 <i>M</i> = 22	<i>F</i> = 50 <i>M</i> = 50	<i>F</i> = 64 <i>M</i> = 36	<i>F</i> = 100 <i>M</i> = 0
Age range	23–71	28–53	33–64	28–57	19–57
Mean age	47	31	53	36	32
<i>Average years of experience</i>					
School psychology	10	7	24	7	5
Range	0.5–35	1–20	2–32	2–29	0–32
Teaching	6	3	2	10	4
Range	0–32	0–10	0–33	0–37	0–29
<i>Highest degree held (%)</i>					
PhD	2	3	13	5	0
MA	75	97	87	40	98
BA	23	0	0	55	2
<i>Fluent languages</i>					
Languages spoken fluently	English French	Cantonese Mandarin English	German English French	Italian English German French	Russian English French German
% Speaking two or more languages	8	100	77	68	17
Languages of professional literature	English	English Chinese	German English	Italian English French	Russian English French German
% Reading in two or more languages	0	100	54	73	12

* Includes results from Q. 11 (Years of experience working as a school psychologist); Q. 10 (Years of classroom teaching experience); Q. 15 (Highest degree earned); Q. 17 (Membership in Professional Organizations); Q. 4 (What languages do you speak fluently / communicate in?) and Q. 5 (What languages do you read professional literature in?)

was implicit due to the fact that the surveys were distributed and completed in that language. School psychologists in Australia and Russia were primarily monolingual, with only eight percent reporting fluency in a language other than English in Australia and no school psychologists reporting a language other than Russian in Russia. An identical pattern was found for *languages in which school psychologists*

read professional literature. English was the most common second language for reading professional literature across all countries with the exception of Russia, where a second language for professional literature was not reported.

Professional characteristics

Professional characteristics of participating school psychologists are reported in Table 2. The reported *ratio of school psychologists to school aged children* varied greatly across respondents from all countries. The averages by country suggest that Italy and Russia may have relatively small ratios (47 and 549, respectively), while Australia, China and Germany reported substantially higher ratios (1,560, 16,549 and 19,065, respectively). It is important to note that those countries reporting small ratios, have fewer school psychologists, thus, these numbers reflect only the number of students that school psychologists work with. Thus, many students in these countries do not have access to school psychology services. The percent of respondents who *receive supervision as school psychologists* also varies greatly between countries. Professionals in Italy and Germany reported the lowest amount of supervision (10 and 28 percent, respectively), compared to 70 percent of professionals in Russia. School psychologists in Australia and China also had relatively high percentages of supervision (61 percent and 63 percent, respectively). The *hours per week worked in a full time position* was relatively consistent across countries and ranged between 36 and 40 hours for the majority of participants. With regard to *professional membership*, three percent of respondents in Australia reported membership in ISPA and none of the respondents from China, Germany, Italy or Russia reported being members of ISPA. In Australia and Germany, membership in national School Psychology Associations was greater than membership in national Psychology Associations, however the opposite trend was found in China and Italy.

Open responses to questions about *what participants like most and least about the field of school psychology* demonstrated similarities between school psychologists worldwide and are listed in Table 3. Respondents from all countries reported working with students, teachers and families as one of their favourite aspects of the profession. Other common responses across countries were related to producing positive changes and professional autonomy or flexibility. When asked about the least liked aspects of school psychology, administrative responsibilities, overwhelming workload or demands, lack of organization or standards of the role of a school psychologist were common responses across countries.

Table 2 Professional characteristics of school psychologists*

Characteristics	Australia	China	Germany	Italy	Russia
Ratio of school psychologists to school children	1: 1,560	1: 19,065	1: 16,549	1: 47	1: 594
Range of ratios	10–11,000	300–40,000	1,000–100,000	6–105	100–1,350
National requirement of prior teaching experience	Yes	No	No	No	No
% Receiving supervision as a school psychologist	61%	63%	28%	10%	70%
Number of hours in a full time position	36	40	40	36	36
Range	40–40	35–40	38–42	18–40	18–38
<i>Organization membership</i>					
ISPA (%)	3	0	0	0	–
National School Psychology Association (%)	84	34	48	23	– (40% in State/ Provincial School Psychology Organization)
National Psychology Association (%)	43	47	38	50	–

* Includes results from Q. 23 (Ratio of School Psychologists to school age children in your district / local authority), Q. 9 (Are you required to be a qualified teacher with teaching experience before becoming a school psychologist in your country); Q. 32 (Do you receive supervision as a school psychologist); Q. 19 Please indicate how many hours a week constitutes a full time position in your country) and Q. 17 (Membership in professional organizations)

Table 3 Most and least liked aspects of school psychology*

<i>Australia</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Russia</i>
<i>Most liked aspects of school psychology</i>				
Working with children, families and teachers	Ability to apply knowledge to help others/make changes	Variety of work	Working with students and families	Working with children
Effecting positive changes/making a difference	Working within a system	Professional independence/autonomy	Effecting positive changes/making a difference	Creative freedom
Variety of tasks/flexibility of role	Autonomy/flexibility of role	Working with people	Contributing to growth of teachers	Counselling
<i>Least liked aspects of school psychology</i>				
Administrative burden/paperwork	Administrative burden/paperwork	Administrative responsibilities	Hard work/fatigue	Low salary
Overwhelming workload or caseload	Acting as a gatekeeper of special education	High workload	Lack of acceptance/understanding of the role of the school psychologist by staff	Working with diagnostic materials without computers
Low salary and status	Unrealistically high expectations of administration or teachers	Unrealistically high expectations of administration or teachers	Having role/job determined by availability of money within a school	No set requirements or professional standards
Limited time for prevention and interventions	Low salary and status	Lack of support/acceptance by other professionals		

* Includes results from Q. 45 (Please describe what you most like about being a school psychologist) and Q. 44 (Please describe what you least like about being a school psychologist)

Roles and responsibilities

Results regarding the *percentage of time spent in different school psychology tasks* are reported in Table 4. It should be noted that the numbers included in this Table represent the average endorsement for each item across participants and, therefore, do not necessarily add up to 100 percent. The exact percentage of respondents endorsing each activity (at any percentage) is represented in the bottom bracket for each activity. Responses from Italy should be viewed with particular caution, given the relatively lower percentage of respondents participating in this section of the survey. Similar to responses regarding

Table 4 *Average percent of work time spent in common school psychology activities**

<i>Work activity</i>	<i>Australia Mean (Median) {**}</i>	<i>China Mean (Median) {**}</i>	<i>Germany Mean (Median) {**}</i>	<i>Italy Mean (Median) {**}</i>	<i>Russia Mean (Median) {**}</i>
Psychoeducational evaluations	22 (20) {85}	23 (20) {89}	28 (25) {87}	70 (50) {40}	32 (30) {74}
Counselling students	29 (25) {89}	17 (15) {78}	14 (10) {82}	80 (80) {20}	17 (15) {79}
Providing direct interventions	11 (10) {64}	*** (***) {***}	7 (5) {40}	55 (30) {20}	22 (15) {67}
Providing primary prevention programs	7 (5) {53}	11 (5) {59}	8 (5) {59}	50 (20) {20}	13 (10) {35}
Consultation with teachers/staff	14 (11) {94}	21 (20) {94}	13 (10) {75}	35 (20) {50}	11 (10) {79}
Consultation with parents/families	11 (10) {93}	11 (10) {91}	15 (15) {72}	15 (10) {30}	11 (10) {79}
Conducting staff training and in-service programs	6 (5) {64}	7 (5) {94}	15 (7.5) {70}	60 (20) {20}	9 (10) {73}
Administrative responsibilities	15 (10) {90}	13 (10) {87}	11 (10) {75}	0 (0) {0}	10 (5) {84}

* Includes Q. 31 (% of your total work time) {**numbers in the brackets indicate the % of respondents indicating that they spend a portion of their time engaged in the particular activity}

*** Country coordinators did not include this item.

Table 5 *Monthly tasks of school psychologists**

<i>Number of times tasks were completed per month</i>	<i>Australia Mean (Median) [Range]</i>	<i>China Mean (Median) [Range]</i>	<i>Germany Mean (Median) [Range]</i>	<i>Italy Mean (Median) [Range]</i>	<i>Russia Mean (Median) [Range]</i>
Psychoeducational assessments completed (# of students)	7 (5) [0–45]	6 (5) [0–23]	39 (5) [0–1,235]	10 (4) [0–50]	33 (20) [0–200]
Students counselled individually	29 (20) [0–130]	10 (5) [0–60]	13 (10) [0–45]	5 (0) [0–15]	14 (10) [0–120]
Counselling groups	2 (1) [0–25]	0.6 (0) [0–5]	3 (0) [0–36]	2 (1) [0–6]	5 (3) [0–50]
Consultation cases	18 (12) [0–120]	11 (8) [0–50]	4 (4) [0–10]	5 (0) [0–18]	7 (5) [0–30]
Inservice programs/presentations	1 (1) [0–4]	1 (1) [0–4]	2 (1) [0–120]	5 (0) [0–32]	3 (2.5) [0–15]
Primary prevention programs	1 (0.5) [0–20]	1 (0.1) [0–15]	2 (0) [0–40]	0.3 (0) [0–2]	3 (1.5) [0–50]

* Includes results from Q. 24 (Average number of students per month counselled individually); Q. 25 (Average number of student counselling groups conducted per month); Q. 27 (Average number of students per month you have completed psychoeducational assessments with); Q. 28 (Average number of consultation cases per month in which you provided consultation to other educational professionals, e.g. consultations for interventions); Q. 29 (Average number of inservice programs/presentations you conducted for teachers, parents, and/or other personnel per month, e.g. special topic presentations, professional development presentations);, and Q. 30 (Average number of primary prevention programs, e.g. working with the whole class to prevent future problems, per month)

likes and dislikes, the reported average percent of time spent per activity was relatively consistent across many countries. Where large discrepancies exist, the country with the percentage most divergent from the others was consistently Italy. In all countries, either *psychoeducational evaluations* or *counselling students* were reported as comprising the greatest percentage of practitioners’ time. With regard to the remaining activities, respondents from these five countries reported a relatively even balance across activities, such that time spent on other activities appears to be relatively evenly balanced.

Table 5 presents the average number of *specific school psychology*

tasks performed monthly by respondents. School psychologists in Germany and Russia reported conducting the highest number of *psychoeducational assessments* monthly. Accordingly, German and Russian school psychologists also reported the largest percentage of their time engaged in this activity. This pattern is also seen in Australia, whose respondents reported the highest number of *students counselled individually* per month, and also reported spending the greatest percentage of their time engaged in this activity. With regard to consultation cases, the average number in Australia is much higher than that found in the other countries. However, the percentage of time spent on this activity suggests that school psychologists in Australia spend a similar amount of time in this activity as their international colleagues. Responses for the number of *counselling groups, in-service programs/presentations* and *primary prevention programs* conducted were relatively consistent across countries (ranging from 0.3 to 5 per month).

Perceptions of the *ideal school psychology role* and *extent of participation in this ideal role* are listed in Table 6. Results for school psychologists in Italy are not presented due to the very small number

Table 6 *Ideal roles /responsibilities /activities and extent of participation in the ideal school psychology role**

	<i>Australia</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Russia</i>
<i>Ideal roles for rank order</i>					
Psychoeducational evaluations	2	2	1	***	5
Counselling students	1	6	4	***	3
Providing direct interventions	5	**	6	***	**
Providing primary prevention programs	7	4	**	***	1
Consultation with teachers/staff	4	1	2	***	4
Consultation with parents/families	3	5	3	***	2
Conducting staff training and in-service/education programs	6	3	5	***	6
Administrative responsibilities	8	7	7	***	7
<i>% Participation in ideal role</i>					
All the time	4	3	3	10	3
Great extent	39	22	27	40	44
Average amount	34	50	52	30	48
Limited extent	22	25	18	20	5
Not at all	1	0	0	0	0

* Includes Q. 42 (What would you include as the ideal roles/responsibilities/activities of school psychologists? RANK ORDER, 1=most ideal, etc.) and Q. 43 (To what extent are you able to work in that ideal roles/responsibilities/activities?)

** Country coordinators did not include this item.

*** Sample size (n = 8 for this item) too small to present results

of respondents to this item. For China, Germany and Russia, null responses are shown for items not included in that country's survey. Though responses varied across nations on most items, respondents unanimously rated *administrative responsibilities* as the least optimal role. The most ideal role for school psychologists was unique for nearly every country included in this study (i.e. Australia, *counselling students*; China, *consultation with teachers*; Germany, *psychoeducational evaluations*; Russia, *providing primary prevention programs*). This was also true for the second most ideal role as well, with the exception of *psychoeducational evaluations*, which was selected as second most ideal by respondents in Australia and Hong Kong. An analysis of the top three ranked choices by countries shows a slightly more consistent pattern across countries. *Psychoeducational evaluations* and *consultation with parents/families* were ranked among the top three most ideal activities by three or more countries each, and *counselling students* and *consultation with teachers/staff* were each ranked in the top three by two countries. Overall, the lack of consistency in ranking the ideal roles and responsibilities of school psychologists reflects differences in the overall definition of the school psychology role between these countries. However, the consistency in selecting the least ideal role suggests that professionals in these countries are agreeing on what is *not* the optimal role of a school psychologist.

Regarding the reported *participation in the ideal role*, the results were quite consistent across the countries. Between three and ten percent participated in their ideal role all of the time. The majority reported participating in their ideal role a great extent (22 to 44 percent) or average amount (30 to 50 percent). Approximately a quarter of respondents in each country reported participating in their ideal role to a limited extent, with the exception of Russia where only five percent reported a limited extent. Those reporting that they did not participate in their ideal role at all ranged from zero to one percent.

Challenges

External challenges to the delivery of school psychological services are presented in Table 7. Endorsement of potential challenges demonstrated considerable variability across countries on external challenges, however, the data for a few items showed some international consistency. *Lack of money to properly fund services* was regarded as the jeopardizing service delivery by the highest percentage of respondents in Australia, China and Germany, with endorsements ranging from 59 to 88 percent. However, respondents in Italy and Russia perceived this threat to be much less relevant in their countries (27 percent and 12 percent, respectively). *Other professional groups taking school psychology jobs* was recognized relatively consistently as a threat to the

Table 7 *External challenges jeopardizing service delivery**

<i>External challenges</i>	<i>Australia (%)</i>	<i>China (%)</i>	<i>Germany (%)</i>	<i>Italy (%)</i>	<i>Russia (%)</i>
Low status of school psychology	48	41	65	46	9
Low status of education in my country	18	3	43	18	2
Conflicts with competing professional groups	17	28	23	14	0
Other professional groups taking school psychology jobs	30	47	45	32	57
Lack of money to properly fund services	73	59	88	27	12
Lack of political stability	1	0	18	9	26
Lack of economic stability	1	22	33	9	21
Lack of public support for education	16	6	43	14	88
Low salaries for school psychologists	53	31	5	0	5

* Includes Q. 40 (Please indicate which of the following external challenges may jeopardize the delivery of psychological services within schools in your country)

profession, with percentages ranging from 30 percent (Australia) to 57 percent (Russia). *Low status of school psychology* was considered a challenge by a large percentage of school psychologists in Australia, China, Germany and Italy (ranging from 41 percent to 65 percent), however very few colleagues in Russia (nine percent) agreed that this was a problem. *Low salary for school psychologists* was perceived as a potential threat to service delivery in Australia and China, but not in Germany or Russia. A very high percentage of school psychologists in Russia (88 percent) reported *lack of public support for education* as a threat to the delivery of school psychology services in their country. Respondents from Germany (43 percent) agreed that this factor was a threat in their country, however respondents in Australia, China and Italy did not identify this threat as relevant in their respective countries. External threats to the delivery of school psychology services may be particularly salient in Germany (where five of the nine potential challenges were endorsed at 40 percent or higher), Australia and China (where three of the nine potential challenges were endorsed at 40 percent or higher).

Perceived *internal challenges to the delivery of school psychological services* are listed in Table 8. *Conflicts of leadership within the profession* was consistently rated low across countries (under 20 percent

Table 8 *Internal challenges jeopardizing service delivery**

<i>Internal challenges</i>	<i>Australia (%)</i>	<i>China (%)</i>	<i>Germany (%)</i>	<i>Italy (%)</i>	<i>Russia (%)</i>
Lack of leadership within the profession	34	75	40	23	10
Conflicts of leadership within the profession	1	19	15	9	2
Professional burnout	81	50	18	9	57
Lack of research and evaluation	29	84	48	23	12
Lowering standards for selecting or preparing professionals	38	31	3	18	26
Lack of professional standards governing professional services	18	47	38	23	19
More able professionals leaving the profession	34	41	3	14	55
Lack of peer support from other school psychologists	27	38	8	14	12
Lack of adequate supervision	49	53	38	18	19

* Includes Q. 41 (Please indicate which of the following internal challenges may jeopardize the delivery of psychological services within schools in your country)

for all countries), suggesting that this potential threat is not considered problematic by the majority of participating school psychologists. In contrast, *lack of leadership within the profession*, *lack of research and evaluation* and *lack of adequate supervision* were each endorsed among the top three internal threats by respondents from three countries, suggesting that these are more commonly regarded as potential internal challenges to service delivery. *Professional burnout* also demonstrated international consistency, and was endorsed by at least 50 percent of respondents in Australia, China and Russia. The highest endorsed internal threats by country were: *professional burnout* in Australia and Russia and *lack of research and evaluation* in China and Germany. In Italy, *lack of leadership within the profession*, *lack of research and evaluation* and *lack of professional standards governing professional services* were evenly endorsed as the highest internal challenges (23 percent), suggesting either a lack of internal challenges or a lack of agreement regarding internal challenges among professionals in this country. Internal challenges appear to be the most salient to practitioners in China, who endorsed six out of the nine possible internal challenges at 40 percent or greater.

Table 9 *Importance of psychological research**

<i>Relevance rating</i>	<i>Australia (%)</i>	<i>China (%)</i>	<i>Germany (%)</i>	<i>Italy (%)</i>	<i>Russia (%)</i>
Very relevant	58	50	13	33	62
Somewhat relevant	40	50	66	45	33
Not relevant	2	0	21	22	5
Commonly cited research topics needed	Resilience	Motivation	Reading and writing problems	Evaluations	Motivation
	Mental health (e.g. depression, suicide)	Inclusion/mainstreaming	Teacher health (burnout prevention)	Prevention	Social and psychological adaptations of teachers
	Best practices in diagnosing and working with learning disabilities	Effective teaching/learning strategies	Attention problems	Teaching and learning	Influence of health, environment and social aspects on education
	Behaviour management		Maths difficulties		

* Includes Q. 37 (To what degree is psychological research important to professional practice in your country?) and Q. 38 (In your judgment, what are the major research topics needed for school psychology in your country?)

Research importance and interests

The ISPS asked participants to rate the *importance of research to the profession of school psychology* in their country, as well as to list a few important topics in which research may be needed. Results for these items are shown in Table 9. The majority of respondents across all five countries found that research is somewhat to very important to professional practice. However, in Germany and Italy, the percentage of practitioners perceiving *research as not important to practice* was greater than 20 percent. Open response answers of important research topics by country reflect the diversity of the countries. Learning styles or difficulties or teaching strategies for particular populations was a common response across nations. Motivation was a commonly listed response in China and Russia and responses specific to teachers were common in Germany and Russia. Responses in Australia and Germany often listed particular disabilities or disorders (e.g. depression, ADHD).

Discussion

The International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) project represents an international effort to better understand school psychology around the world. Information reported by school psychologists in Australia, China, Germany, Italy and Russia advances our knowledge of the characteristics, training and regulations, roles and responsibilities, challenges and research interests of school psychologists in these five countries. In addition, the participants provided information regarding potential contributions of the *International School Psychology Association* (ISPA) to the development of the profession of school psychology. Comparisons and interpretations of the results warrant caution, as it is important to consider the various contexts and systems of school psychological services in each country. Implications and reflections on the data from the five participating countries are presented below.

Characteristics

Global similarities in the demographic characteristics of this sample suggest a relatively consistent profile for school psychologists around the world. The results of this study indicate that the majority of practicing school psychologists in Australia, China, Italy and Russia are female, which is similar to previous research exploring the characteristics of school psychologists in the United States, Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England (Curtis et al., 1999; Jimerson et al., 2004; Oakland and Cunningham, 1992). Germany presented a unique scenario, with the percentage of male and female school psychologists evenly divided. In previous international research, the range of percentage of female practitioners varied among countries and

appeared to be linked to age, with those countries with younger practitioners on average having a tendency to have a higher proportion of females (Jimerson et al., 2004). Results from this survey support this trend, with practitioners in Germany reporting the highest average age and the lowest percentage of females. Considering the estimated gender ratios in training programs in these countries, it is anticipated that the proportion of females in the field will remain high.

With respect to language, school psychologists in Australia and Russia reported predominantly monolingual fluency (in English and Russian, respectively). The relative diversity of languages used in the other countries represents opportunities for sharing knowledge and resources across countries. Due to the fact that the most common second languages in all countries were either English or French (a pattern consistent with results from previous research in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England), international communication and publications in these languages may be valuable to international colleagues in many countries. However, it is important to note that only in Australia did all of the respondents report fluency in English or French, suggesting that while these languages may be helpful for the sharing of information and resources, country-specific languages are also important.

The age range of school psychologists in the participating countries appears to be related to the length of time that the profession has existed in each country, with the oldest average ages found in Australia and Germany. This trend is consistent with results from the previous ISPS distribution in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England (Jimerson et al., 2004). The older average ages of practitioners in Australia and Germany (47 and 53, respectively) may be a particularly important consideration, depending on the number of professionals being prepared in school psychology and the relative demand as trends in the United States have projected a shortage of school psychologists in the next decade (Curtis et al., 2002). Repeated administration of the ISPS in these countries during the upcoming years will help to facilitate and understand longitudinal trends in the profession of school psychology.

Regarding the most and least rewarding aspects of the profession of school psychology, professionals across countries reported similar responses. School psychologists in this sample reported enjoying working with and helping children, families and teachers, and a common distaste for administrative work. These responses were also common in the prior five countries responding to the ISPS (Jimerson et al., 2004), which is notable considering the diverse composition of the multiple countries responding to the survey. School psychologists in three of the five countries (Australia, China and Germany) responding to

the ISPS reported enjoying the variety and autonomy provided by the profession.

The ratios of school psychologists to school-age children varied widely both within and across countries. In the United States, it has been suggested that a ratio of approximately one school psychologist to every 1,000 children is ideal. Of these five countries, only Australia had a ratio close to that ideal (1:1,560). The other reported ratios were either very high (e.g. 1:19, 065 in China) or very low (e.g. 1: 47 in Italy). Several explanations for these ratios exist. For example, the very small ratios reported by the sample from Italy could represent the fact that school psychology is not yet a recognized profession in that country, such that psychological practitioners were reporting the exact number of students they worked with, which did not specify whether this contact was through private practice or on a contractual basis in the schools (thus, most children in the schools do not have direct and regular access to psychological services). Another possible explanation for the range of ratios reported is differences in gross national product (GNP) between participating countries. Similar to the results from the previous ISPS in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England (Jimerson et al., 2004), the ratios reported in this sample do not appear to be related to the GNP of the participating countries. Further investigation is necessary to clarify the range of ratios revealed in this study.

Training and regulations

The variation found in this study with respect to the highest degree earned is consistent with the range of training options available in each country and the existing opportunities to study abroad. In most countries, the majority of respondents held a masters or specialist level degree. In Italy, where the profession is not yet recognized, training levels were the most diverse of any country sampled, with a nearly even split between bachelors and masters/specialist level training.

Similar patterns were found in the percentage of school psychologists receiving supervision across countries, again suggesting diversity among professional training and regulations. Of the countries where school psychology is a recognized profession, the percentage of school psychologists receiving supervision was very similar in three countries (between 61 percent and 70 percent in Australia, China and Russia) and much lower in Germany. This difference may be related to the age and experience of school psychologists in this sample; since these respondents were the oldest on average and had the most years of experience of the five countries sampled, they may be more likely to not need professional supervision. These results are similar to the previous trend found in Albania, where the sample was the youngest and had

the highest percentage of practitioners receiving supervision (Jimerson et al., 2004). Additional research is necessary to better understand the significance of the variability in professional supervision in various countries.

Membership in professional organizations, similar to the highest degree earned, is related to the differences in options available in each country. Similar to the results found previously from Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England, very few colleagues in these countries were members of ISPA. Membership in national school psychology associations and membership in national school psychology associations was approximately even among the five countries, with two countries reporting the highest membership in national psychology associations, and the remaining two reporting the highest membership in national school psychology associations. This even split may be in contrast to trends found by other authors, which suggested that school psychologists were increasingly influenced by the field of psychology over the field of education (Oakland and Cunningham, 1992). This may also reflect the professionals in school psychology having an independent identity, outside of general psychology or education associations. Additional information regarding the size and scope of these organizations and the benefits of membership would also assist in understanding these differential membership rates.

Whereas the 1956 UNESCO report (Wall, 1956) recommended teaching experience as a requirement for school psychology practice, Oakland and Cunningham (1992) reported a trend of decreasing importance of prior teaching experience. Results from the current study were consistent with this trend, with four of the five countries not requiring teaching experience for entry into the field. This is similar to the prior study, in which only one country of five required teaching experience as a prerequisite for entry into the profession of school psychology (Jimerson et al., 2004).

Roles and responsibilities

Whereas previous research suggests that the primary tasks of school psychologists are assessment and intervention (Curtis et al., 1999; Farrell and Kalambouka, 2000; Oakland and Cunningham, 1992), results from the current study reveal that the largest percentage of time reported spent in each of these tasks was 30 percent. Previous international research indicates that the primary tasks of school psychologists are assessment and intervention (Oakland and Cunningham, 1992). Consistent with previous results from the ISPS in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England, though relatively small proportions of time were reported, the percentages of time reported for *psychoeducational evaluations* and *counselling* were

among the highest reported in most of the countries in the current study. A third important activity was *consultation*, which was reported by practitioners in China as the second most frequent activity, and by practitioners in China, Germany and Russia as among the top two most ideal roles.

The percentages of reported participation in the ideal activities revealed that very few respondents engaged in their ideal activities all of the time. Most reported participating in ideal activities a great extent and average amount. Approximately a quarter in each country indicated participating in ideal activities to a limited extent. Only school psychologists in Russia reported a greater proportion in the more favourable direction, with the other countries clearly undecided on how close their daily task match what they feel to be the ideal school psychology tasks. One possible explanation for this finding is that the average age of professionals in Russia was lower than the others, suggesting a potential link with age and years of experience. This would be consistent with a trend found in the previous ISPS study, with older practitioners reporting lower levels of participation in the ideal role (Jimerson et al., 2004). More research is needed to explore the international differences between ideal and actual roles of school psychologists.

Challenges

Lack of research and evaluation, lack of leadership within the profession and lack of adequate supervision were the most common internal challenges across countries reported in the current study. In China, many internal challenges were endorsed with great frequency, lack of leadership within the profession, burnout, lack of research, lack of professional standards and lack of supervision. In addition, the China data indicated a pattern of high student to psychologist ratios (e.g. 1:19,065). One possible explanation for the high rate of endorsement of internal challenges may be the impact of ratio and other country-specific factors on professionals practicing in China, similar to a pattern found for Cyprus in the previous ISPS study (Jimerson et al., 2004).

Overall, more external challenges to the delivery of psychological services were endorsed at higher rates than internal challenges, similar to the trend reported in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England (Jimerson et al., 2004). Lack of money to properly fund services and low status of school psychology were the most salient external challenges reported by school psychologists in four of these five countries. The consistency with which these challenges were endorsed suggests that these challenges exist in countries regardless of GNP. Previous research reported a higher percentage of low GNP

countries indicating that the lack of money was an external threat to service delivery (Oakland and Cunningham, 1992), however, the previous ISPS results were consistent with the current study (Jimerson et al., 2004). School psychologists in Germany perceived five of the nine possible external challenges as problematic. This may be evidence of a trend regarding country-specific factors involved with the profession in Germany, potentially including the impact of having a high percentage of older practitioners.

Research

In comparison to the previous ISPS information from Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England, respondents from the current study were more mixed in their regard for the importance of research. In China, there was an even split between 'very relevant' and 'somewhat relevant', but then in half of the remaining countries more respondents endorsed 'somewhat relevant' and 'not relevant' over 'very relevant', with the remaining half endorsing a higher percentage of 'very relevant' or 'somewhat relevant', compared to 'not relevant'. However, consistent with the prior study (Jimerson et al., 2004) and the results from the Oakland and Cunningham (1992) study, no respondents to this survey noted spending a portion of their time on research-related activities, suggesting that school psychologists working in schools in general may want to be consumers, but not producers of research. Topics of research interest reported on the ISPS were somewhat consistent with those reported in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England previously. For example, school psychologists in the present study also reported learning difficulties or teaching styles that match different learning abilities or styles as important topics across countries, while important topics listed by previous studies included cross-cultural issues and child development (Oakland and Cunningham, 1992). The consistency of responses from the ten countries, and the differences between the topics listed in other studies may be a result of changing priorities of practitioners and researchers, or of the different respondents utilized across studies. Other important research topics from the current countries included specific conditions and disabilities (e.g. depression, ADHD, dyscalculia), inclusion/mainstreaming and motivation.

Potential ISPA contributions

Suggestions for potential ISPA contributions are listed in Table 10. Common responses across countries included that ISPA could be helpful in distributing the results of research, could promote collaboration among international colleagues and could provide affordable training and workshops for practitioners. Related to this suggestion, since 1998

Table 10 *Potential ISPA contributions**

<i>Australia</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Russia</i>
Provide affordable trainings/workshops	Provide trainings / workshops	Strengthening of the role of school psychologists worldwide	Provide trainings/workshops	Provide training/workshops/professional growth opportunities
Provide professional literature/resources	Share research information	Promoting international exchange of information/resources	Help Italy define the role of a school psychologist/legitimize the profession	Promoting international exchange of information/resources
Promoting collaboration among professionals	Promoting collaboration among professionals	Public relations work	Help to create/supervise a national association in Italy	Development of professional standards

* Includes Q. 46 (Please provide information about how you believe ISPA may contribute to the profession of school psychology around the world and in your country, and also indicate what you would most like ISPA to address)

(under the auspices of the ISPA Research Committee), Dr Jimerson has offered a Research Column in the *ISPA World Go Round* (e.g. Jimerson, 1998; 1999a; 1999b; 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2001a; 2001b; 2002; Jimerson and Anderson, 2002; Jimerson and Benoit, 2003; Kaufman and Jimerson, 2001). The research column summarizes recent research in the fields of child development, education and psychology that may be valuable to school psychologists around the world. The annual ISPA colloquium also includes many presentations that highlight important research. In Italy, many responses were related to the theme of helping professionals in that country to establish a professional identity.

Conclusions

This article shares the results of the International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) in Australia, China, Germany, Italy and Russia. These results evidence both similarities and differences in the characteristics, training, roles and responsibilities, challenges and research interests of school psychologists in these five countries. As delineated in the results of this article and discussed above, these efforts and ISPS

data from Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England provide a foundation for subsequent research efforts to build upon. Through repeated administration of the ISPS in these countries (e.g. in three to five years) it will be possible to examine changes related to the preparation and practice of school psychologists. As additional countries complete the ISPS, this will provide further information regarding the diversity and similarities of school psychologists and the evolution of school psychology across countries. Additional information such as that collected from the ISPS should help new and established school psychological services to plan future developments. Recognizing the common ground and variations in the field of school psychology in countries around the world provides perspective on peculiarities and possibilities in the preparation and practices of school psychologists.

Notes

The International School Psychology Survey project emerged from the efforts of the *International School Psychology Association* (ISPA) Research Committee with Dr Jimerson as the Chair and Principal Investigator.

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