

# The International School Psychology Survey

*Development and Data from Albania, Cyprus, Estonia,  
Greece and Northern England*

SHANE R. JIMERSON<sup>a</sup>, KELLY GRAYDON<sup>a</sup>, PETER  
FARRELL<sup>b</sup>, EVE KIKAS<sup>c</sup>, CHRYSÉ HATZICHRISTOU<sup>d</sup>,  
ELJONA BOCE<sup>e</sup>, GLADIOLA BASHI<sup>e</sup> AND  
THE ISPA RESEARCH COMMITTEE

<sup>a</sup>*University of California – Santa Barbara, California, USA,*

<sup>b</sup>*University of Manchester, Manchester, UK,*

<sup>c</sup>*University of Tartu, Estonia,* <sup>d</sup>*University of Athens, Athens,  
Greece and* <sup>e</sup>*University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania*

**ABSTRACT** Although school psychological services around the world are currently undergoing a period of rapid development, little comparative information is available about the training, roles and responsibilities of school psychologists or the contrasting contexts in which they work. Further information in this area should help new and established school psychological services to plan future developments. Therefore, in 2001–2002, the International School Psychology Association's (ISPA) Research Committee developed and piloted the International School Psychology Survey (ISPS). Utilizing the survey format implemented by the National Association of School Psychologists in the USA to survey school psychologists across the country, the ISPA Research Committee members collaborated to design a survey appropriate for international colleagues. The ISPS was piloted in five countries: Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England. The data from the ISPS provides unique information regarding the profession of school psychology in each of these countries. These initial efforts and preliminary data provide a foundation for the future understanding of the characteristics, training, roles and responsibilities, challenges and research interests of school psychologists around the world.

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Please address correspondence to: Shane R. Jimerson, University of California, Santa Barbara, Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology, Child and Adolescent Development, 2208 Phelps Hall, Santa Barbara, CA, USA. Email: Jimerson@education.ucsb.edu

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As the field of school psychology continues to develop around the world, it is important to obtain systematic data to better understand the training, roles and responsibilities of school psychologists.<sup>1</sup> As emphasized by Oakland and Cunningham (1992), a clear picture of the current status of the profession is an essential foundation for building the future of school psychology. Information from our international colleagues provides unique insights regarding similarities, differences and diversity among school psychologists in different countries.

There have been a handful of efforts to gather systematic information regarding school psychology practices and training around the world. In 1948, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) presented a report of a questionnaire completed by 43 ministries of education in multiple countries (UNESCO, 1948). In 1956, Wall edited a UNESCO report that provided information from a group of experts addressing the Education and Mental Health of Children in Europe (Wall, 1956). These early UNESCO efforts provided valuable information regarding: (a) demographic characteristics of school psychologists; (b) their roles and functions; (c) legal, political and professional regulations impacting the provision of psychology services in the schools; (d) preparation, credentialing and supervision; (e) the perceived importance of research to the field and (f) expectations of future trends in the profession. Reviews of several of these elements between 1977 and 1979 indicated that preparation and ratios in many countries had improved (Catterall, 1977–1979). In addition, articles by Lunt (1991), Lindsay, (1992) and Burden (1994) have also reviewed developments in international school psychology services. As previously highlighted, ‘... school psychology has been fortunate in having aspects of its international development chronicled and constructively furthered’ (Oakland and Cunningham, 1992; p.102).

In 1992, Oakland and Cunningham gathered information from school psychology experts in 54 nations. These efforts gathered information similar to the early UNESCO (1948) study, including: demographic information, job functions, training, importance of research, regulation of services and predicted future trends. Information was presented both in terms of the respondents as a whole and as a comparison between developed and developing nations. Results from the 1992 study indicated that, around the globe, school psychologists tend to be young, female and share similar conceptions about the field. However, the authors noted variations when comparing the data from countries with either a high or low gross national product (GNP). For instance, it was reported that school psychologists in low GNP nations experienced less favourable conditions than their high GNP colleagues, with regard to topics such as years of experience, salary, ratio of school psychologists to students and external threats to the profession. Based

on information provided by representatives of 54 countries, Oakland and Cunningham emphasized that school psychology is an established, yet still growing profession around the world.

Utilizing the data collected by Oakland and Cunningham (1992), Ezeilo (1992) focused on the contrast between the practice of school psychology in high and low GNP countries. In particular, Ezeilo explored the status of the largely low-GNP nations of Africa and suggested collaborative efforts that may be used to help promote and advance school psychology in this region. Ezeilo suggested that international organizations may play a key role in helping low-GNP nations promote professional associations, update training programs and conduct much-needed research. This application of Oakland and Cunningham's (1992) data demonstrates the utility of obtaining data from international colleagues.

During the past decade, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has completed multiple surveys of school psychologists across the United States of America (USA). In the most recent effort, Curtis et al. (2002) collected data from 2000 NASP members, focusing on areas such as the characteristics, preparation and training and professional practices of school psychologists. This data represented the third phase of a longitudinal endeavour (Curtis et al., 1999; Graden and Curtis, 1991) and provides information concerning trends within the profession in the USA. Curtis et al. (2002) noted an increase in the percentage of older practitioners, a decrease in the ratio of students to school psychologists and an increase in the time devoted to special education related activities. This series of surveys of NASP members provides valuable information regarding the state of the field of school psychology in the USA.

The Oakland and Cunningham (1992) methodology differs from the efforts of Curtis and colleagues on behalf of NASP, in that the former gathered global data from one or more country representatives, while the latter gathered information from a sample of practicing school psychologists within a single nation (the USA). By systematically collecting information from practicing school psychologists in multiple countries, the present study represents the convergence of these two strategies. Recognizing the diversity of school psychology around the world, the International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) was developed through the collaborative efforts of international colleagues involved in the ISPA Research Committee.<sup>2</sup> The ISPA Research Committee explores the diversity of the profession of school psychology and promotes the exchange of information and resources around the world. The current study shares information regarding the development and piloting of the ISPS and provides unique information regarding the characteristics, training and regulations, roles and responsibilities,

challenges and research interests of school psychologists in five countries.

## **Methods**

### *Development of the survey*

Dr Jimerson (Chairperson of the ISPA Research Committee) developed a modified draft of the survey previously used by NASP and then distributed the draft to colleagues of the ISPA Research Committee for review and additional revision to ensure appropriateness for international use. Based on feedback and input, a revised version was generated and redistributed for review. This process included five iterations of revisions and redistribution. Included in this stage of development was the addition of key questions from the Oakland and Cunningham (1992) study. The final version of the ISPS (Jimerson and ISPA Research Committee, 2002) was unanimously approved by the members of the ISPA Research Committee. The ISPA ISPS was then made available to country representatives for translation and distribution to pilot the survey.

### *Content of the survey*

The International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) contains 46 items that address five principal areas: (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. In a format similar to that used by Curtis et al. (2002), 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.

Survey 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.

#### *The ISPS pilot procedures*

The ISPS was translated, distributed and collected in five countries (Albania – Dr Bashi and Dr Boce; Cyprus – Dr Hatzichristou; Estonia – Dr Kikas; Greece – Dr Hatzichristou and Northern England – Dr Farrell). 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.

#### *Distribution of the ISPS*

Each country coordinator distributed the ISPS to school psychologists in their country. The distribution processes for each country are described below.

*Albania.* Using the phone list of the Albanian Association of School Psychologists, Dr Bashi and Dr Boce contacted each school psychologist. It was possible to contact every school psychologist living in Albania ( $n = 11$ ). Most of the respondents (nine) were living in the capital area, Tirana (four as lecturers and external pedagogues in the University). A questionnaire was sent via mail to the city of Elbasan (circa 54 km in distance from the capital Tirana), where one of the AASP members lives and works. Another questionnaire was sent to Kosovo where another member works and the others were contacted at work. All distributed questionnaires were completed and returned ( $n = 11$ ).

*Cyprus.* Dr Hatzichristou contacted the Principal School Psychologist of the Division of Educational Psychological Services in the Cyprus Ministry of Education to invite her to participate in the distribution of the survey. Questionnaires were distributed to all 17 psychologists working full-time in the Division. Of these 17, 11 surveys were completed and returned. Psychologists working in the Division have the responsibility to provide psychological services in all primary and secondary public schools in Cyprus.

*Estonia.* The questionnaires were distributed during three school psychologists' meetings in Tartu and Tallinn. These were the meetings of the Estonian Association of School Psychologists. Dr Eve Kikas (in Tartu) and Dr Hele Kanter (in Tallinn) described the survey and

invited the participants to complete the ISPS questionnaires (addressed envelopes were provided to return the completed survey). A total of 40 surveys were distributed and 22 surveys were returned. The total number of school psychologists in Estonia is approximately 130, of whom several work part-time.

*Greece.* Dr Hatzichristou and members of the research team located school psychologists working in public special schools, private schools and school-linked services of municipalities in the broader Athens area. Participation was solicited by phone and questionnaires were delivered and collected in person by research assistants. Fifty psychologists, comprising the majority of professionals working in this area, agreed to participate and completed the survey. Of these psychologists, 11 (22 percent) were working in public special schools, 26 (52 percent) in private schools and 13 (26 percent) in mental health centres providing psychological services to schools. It should be noted that, at the time the survey was conducted, there were only positions for psychologists in public special schools and in private schools and there were no positions for psychologists in regular public schools. During 2002, Centres for Psychological Assessment, Diagnosis and Intervention were founded in various areas of Greece and new positions for psychologists were available.

*Northern England.* Dr Peter Farrell wrote a letter to Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs) in 40 local education authorities in the North of England. These included a mix of urban and rural areas. The correspondence invited the PEPs to distribute the ISPS questionnaires to their Educational Psychologist (EP) colleagues and also provided them with an addressed envelope to return the completed surveys. A total of 300 surveys were distributed, roughly equal to the number of Educational Psychologists in the northern regions. A total of 73 completed surveys 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. Reported results are not always representative of the total number of participants, as missing data were omitted from analysis. Answers on open-response items were recorded and synthesized by content for summary purposes.

**Table 1** *Demographic characteristics of school psychologists*

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Country</i>				
	<i>Albania</i>	<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Northern England</i>
<i>Participants</i>	<i>n</i> = 11	<i>n</i> = 11	<i>n</i> = 24	<i>n</i> = 50	<i>n</i> = 73
<i>Gender (%)</i>	<i>F</i> = 100 <i>M</i> = 0	<i>F</i> = 73 <i>M</i> = 27	<i>F</i> = 92 <i>M</i> = 8	<i>F</i> = 84 <i>M</i> = 16	<i>F</i> = 63 <i>M</i> = 37
<i>Age range</i>	23–25	25–59	22–61	20–59	28–65
<i>Mean age</i>	24	42	39	35	47
<i>Average years of experience</i>					
<i>School psychology</i>	2	8	4	8	12
<i>Range</i>	1–2	1–32	0.5–28	0.5–30	0.5–41
<i>Teaching</i>	2	<1	13	3	7
<i>Range</i>	2–2	0–5	0.5–42	0–20	1–23
<i>Highest degree held (%)</i>					
<i>PhD</i>	—	18	—	8	4
<i>MA</i>	—	82	12	70	93
<i>BA</i>	100	—	88	22	1
<i>Fluent languages</i>					
<i>Languages spoken fluently</i>	Albanian English Italian French	Greek English French German	Estonian English Russian	Greek English French	English French
<i>% Speaking two or more languages</i>	100	100	96	100	2
<i>Languages of Professional literature</i>	Albanian English Italian French	Greek English French German	English Estonian Russian	Greek English French	English French
<i>% Reading in two or more languages</i>	100	100	96	100	1

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?)

*Characteristics*

Characteristics of the school psychologists who completed the survey are listed in Table 1. The sample from each country was largely female, with percentages ranging from 63 (Northern England) to 100 (Albania). In Cyprus and Northern England, the average age of the

sample was similar to that found by Curtis (2001) in the United States (42, 47 and 45, respectively). However, the mean age of school psychologists in Albania was much younger than in the other countries (this country's first training program was only recently established). *Years of school psychology experience* was found to be reflective of age, with school psychologists in Albania having the fewest years of experience due to their recent entry into the profession. In contrast, *years of teaching experience* was reflective of national requirements (Northern England) or historical habits (Estonia) (Table 2). In Estonia, several school psychologists teach psychology lessons at the secondary school level and many teachers have studied psychology as extramural students and now work as psychologists as well. Data for the *highest degree held* (Table 1) was reflective of varied national standards regarding professional preparation. 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. In Albania, Cyprus, Estonia and Greece, all or nearly all of the respondents were *fluent in two or more languages*. In all cases, fluency in the national language was implicit due to the fact that the surveys were distributed and completed in that language. School psychologists in Northern England were primarily monolingual, with only two percent reporting fluency in a language other than English. An identical pattern was found for *languages in which school psychologists read professional literature*. English and French were common second languages for both communication and reading professional literature across all countries with the exception of Estonia, where French 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 Albania and Estonia may have relatively small ratios (580 and 690, respectively), while Cyprus and Northern England have ratios that are substantially higher (9050 and 5000, respectively). The percent of respondents who *receive supervision as school psychologists* also varies greatly between countries. School Psychologists in Estonia reported receiving the lowest amount of supervision at 14 percent, compared to 80 percent of professionals in Albania. The *hours per week worked in a full time position* was consistent across countries and fluctuated between 30 and 40 hours for the majority of participants. With regard to *professional membership*, none of the countries reported a significant percentage of membership in

**Table 2** *Professional characteristics of school psychologists*

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Country</i>				
	<i>Albania</i>	<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Northern England</i>
Ratio of school psychologists to school children	1: 580	1: 9,050	1: 690	1: 2,578	1: 5,000
Range of ratios	200–1,500	1,000–12,000	200–1400	30–4,000	60–13,000
National requirement of prior teaching experience	no	no	no	no	yes
% Receiving supervision as a school psychologist	80%	55%	14%	37%	66%
Number of hours in a full time position	40	38	35	30	37
Range	16–40	35–39	35–40	2–30	35–50
<i>Organization membership</i>					
ISPA (%)	0	0	4	4	1
National school psychology association (%)	100	0	66	14	44
National psychology association (%)	0	91	4	64	99

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. 18 (Please indicate how many hours a week constitutes a full time position in your country) and Q. 17 (Membership in Professional Organizations)

ISPA. In all nations surveyed, membership in national Psychology Associations was greater than membership in national School Psychology Organizations.

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/people as one of their favourite aspects of the profession. Another common response across countries was related to producing positive changes. When asked about the least liked aspects of school psychology, lack of organization of the role, administrative responsibilities and pressure/demands were common responses across countries.

**Table 3** *Most and least liked aspects of school psychology*

<i>Most liked aspects of school psychology</i>				
<i>Albania</i>	<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Northern England</i>
Working with children	Communication	Ability to help	Counselling students	Effecting change/making a difference
Seeing successes	Counselling students	Seeing positive results	Cooperation between child, family, school staff and SP	Working with people
	Prevention programs	Direct contact with students	Consultations with family	Variety/flexibility of work
<i>Least liked aspects of school psychology</i>				
<i>Albania</i>	<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Northern England</i>
Feeling that advice is not taken seriously by parents and teachers	Ratio of school psychologists to children	Lack of legislative organization/regulation	Lack of acceptance of the role of the school psychologist by staff	Too much work for time available
Pressure/demands	Administrative responsibilities	Difficulties working with teachers	Administrative responsibilities	Pressure/demands
Not having the power to intervene in all needed areas	Lack of organization in school psychological services	Misconceptions of the school psychology role	Lack of organization in school psychological services	Administrative burden/paperwork
Limited time for prevention and interventions		Low salary and status		

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)

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

<i>Work activity</i>	<i>Country</i>				
	<i>Albania</i>	<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Northern England</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
	<i>(Median)</i>	<i>(Median)</i>	<i>(Median)</i>	<i>(Median)</i>	<i>(Median)</i>
	<i>{**}</i>	<i>{**}</i>	<i>{**}</i>	<i>{**}</i>	<i>{**}</i>
Psychoeducational evaluations	8 (8) {40}	23 (20) {82}	16 (12) {91}	23 (20) {94}	30 (23) {80}
Counselling students	51 (60) {80}	14 (10) {82}	34 (30) {91}	30 (25) {84}	14 (5) {49}
Providing direct interventions	9 (10) {60}	8 (8) {91}	8 (5) {74}	16 (10) {63}	18 (10) {61}
Providing primary prevention programs	6 (5) {40}	6 (5) {64}	6 (5) {78}	13 (10) {55}	16 (5) {46}
Consultation with teachers/staff	20 (20) {60}	14 (15) {82}	11 (10) {91}	14 (11) {73}	20 (10) {84}
Consultation with parents/families	12 (10) {60}	15 (15) {82}	9 (10) {91}	19 (20) {94}	15 (10) {79}
Conducting Staff Training and In-Service Programs	15 (8) {80}	8 (5) {91}	4 (3) {68}	7 (5) {45}	20 (5) {73}
Administrative Responsibilities	10 (10) {20}	34 (28) {54}	4 (2) {65}	9 (10) {40}	27 (20) {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)

*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. Similar to responses regarding likes and dislikes, the

**Table 5** *Monthly tasks of school psychologists*

<i>Number of times tasks were completed per month</i>	<i>Country</i>				
	<i>Albania Mean (median) [range]</i>	<i>Cyprus Mean (median) [range]</i>	<i>Estonia Mean (median) [range]</i>	<i>Greece Mean (median) [range]</i>	<i>Northern England Mean (median) [range]</i>
Psychoeducational assessments completed (# of students)	4 (0) [0-15]	19 (20) [0-50]	19 (18) [0-60]	8 (6) [0-50]	13 (10) [0-60]
Students counselled individually	18 (10) [5-40]	35 (30) [0-100]	22 (15) [0-57]	21 (15) [0-150]	20 (20) [0-60]
Counselling groups	2 (1) [0-5]	1 (0) [0-10]	3 (2) [0-20]	2 (0) [0-24]	3 (0) [0-20]
Consultation cases	4 (5) [0-7.5]	20 (20) [0-60]	11 (10) [0-30]	7 (5) [0-25]	15 (12) [0-86]
Inservice programs/presentations	3 (2) [0-8]	4 (4) [0-10]	7 (1) [0-105]	1 (1) [0-6]	4 (1) [0-30]
Primary prevention programs	6 (5) [0-12]	5 (1) [0-21]	2 (1) [0-6.5]	2 (1) [0-20]	3 (0) [0-10]

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)

reported average percent of time spent per activity was relatively consistent across countries. With regard to *providing direct interventions, providing primary prevention programs, conducting staff training and in-service programs*, international colleagues reported spending a relatively lower amount of their time engaged in these activities. However, responses to the remainder of the activities show varying endorsements and most common activities by country. For example,

in Albania, respondents reported spending a noticeably greater percentage of time *counselling students*, and less time *conducting psychoeducational evaluations* than their international colleagues. Professionals from Northern England were also split on their reported most common activity, in this case between *psychoeducational evaluations* and *administrative responsibilities*, which was the highest percentage reported of time spent in *psychoeducational evaluations* compared to other nations. Estonian colleagues reported that the greatest percentage of their time was spent in *counselling*, though this average is still noticeably below that reported by Albania. Responses from Greece suggest that the greatest amount of time spent in that country includes *counselling students* and *psychoeducational evaluations*. The *consultation with parents/families* percentages in Greece represent the highest endorsements for that activity among participating countries. Professionals in Cyprus reported that the greatest amount of time is split between *administrative responsibilities* and *psychoeducational evaluations* with the percent endorsement of *administrative responsibilities* being the highest reported relative to the other four countries. Whereas this analysis shows some variability in most common activities across countries, it is important to note that either *psychoeducational evaluations* or *counselling students* was consistently among the highest endorsed activities for all countries. These results suggest some similarities and differences in various activities among the school psychologists in these countries.

The average number of *specific school psychology tasks* performed monthly by respondents is presented in Table 5. School psychologists in Cyprus and Estonia reported conducting the highest number of *psychoeducational assessments* monthly. Interestingly, Estonian school psychologists did not report a large percentage of their time engaged in this activity. This pattern is commonly found across these responses, possibly suggesting a differential amount of time consumed by each activity across countries. The average number of *students counselled individually* was the highest in Cyprus, and the average number of student counselling groups was similar across each of the countries (on average ranging between 1 and 3 each month). The highest number of consultation cases conducted per month was also reported by Cyprus. The highest number of *in-service programs or presentations* was in Estonia, where school psychologists reported conducting an average of seven per month. Responses for the number of *primary prevention programs* conducted was relatively consistent across countries (on average ranging between 2 and 6 each month), with school psychologists in Albania and Cyprus reporting the highest average number.

Perceptions of the *ideal school psychology role and extent of participation in this ideal role* are listed in Table 6. Though responses varied

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

<i>Ideal role for rank order</i>	<i>Country</i>				
	<i>Albania</i>	<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Northern England</i>
Psychoeducational evaluations	1	6	5	4	3
Counselling students	2	5	1	1	6
Providing direct interventions	3	7	4	6	7
Providing primary prevention programs	4	1	6	3	5
Consultation with teachers/staff	5	2	2	5	1
Consultation with parents/families	6	4	3	2	2
Conducting staff training and in-service/education programs	7	3	7	7	4
Administrative responsibilities	8	8	8	8	8
<i>% Participation in ideal role</i>					
All the time	—	45	8	38	2
Great extent	60	45	46	54	19
Average amount	40	10	42	2	29
Limited extent	—	—	—	2	34
Not at all	—	—	4	4	1

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?)

across nations on most items, respondents unanimously rated *administrative responsibilities* as the least optimal role. Similarly, *conducting staff training or in-services programs* was ranked next to last by Albania, Estonia and Greece. Estonia and Greece were in agreement with regard to the most ideal activity, counselling students. An analysis of the top three ranked choices by countries shows a more consistent pattern across countries. *Counselling students, consultation with*

**Table 7** *External challenges jeopardizing service delivery*

<i>External challenges (%)</i>	<i>Country</i>				
	<i>Albania</i>	<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Northern England</i>
Low status of school psychology	46	46	67	34	33
Low status of education in my country	27	18	25	24	12
Conflicts with competing professional groups	—	55	17	36	47
Other professional groups taking school psychology jobs	36	46	13	38	16
Lack of money to properly fund services	46	64	67	62	64
Lack of political stability	36	0	46	—	1
Lack of economic stability	36	9	46	14	1
Lack of public support for education	46	18	67	24	5
Low salaries for school psychologists	27	9	83	44	45

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

*teachers/staff* and *consultation with parents/families* were ranked among the top three most ideal activities by three or more countries each and *psychoeducational evaluations* and *primary prevention programs* were each ranked in the top three by two countries. There was less agreement regarding the perceived importance of providing *primary prevention programs*, with professionals from Cyprus and Greece rating this task in the top three activities and Estonia and Northern England ranking the activity among the least ideal.

### *Challenges*

*External challenges to the delivery of school psychological services* are presented in Table 7. Endorsement of potential challenges demonstrated variability across countries on external challenges, however, the data for a few items showed international consistency. *Lack of money to properly fund services* was consistently regarded as jeopardizing service delivery in all countries, with endorsements ranging from

**Table 8** *Internal challenges jeopardizing service delivery*

<i>Internal challenges (%)</i>	<i>Country</i>				
	<i>Albania</i>	<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Northern England</i>
Lack of leadership within the profession	36	27	50	32	39
Conflicts of leadership within the profession	—	64	8	30	18
Professional burnout	18	82	54	26	59
Lack of research and evaluation	36	73	42	46	46
Lowering standards for selecting or preparing professionals	18	27	25	26	21
Lack of professional standards governing professional services	36	27	50	42	10
More able professionals leaving the profession	46	0	33	12	22
Lack of peer support from other school psychologists	9	18	29	16	10
Lack of adequate supervision	36	64	63	40	18

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

46 percent in Albania to 67 percent in Estonia. *Low status of school psychology* was considered a challenge by 46 percent of school psychologists in Albania and Cyprus and 67 percent in Estonia, representing an important external challenge in those countries. *Low salary for school psychologists* was perceived as a potential threat to service delivery in Estonia, Greece and Northern England. *Conflicts with competing professional groups* may be considered problematic in Cyprus and Northern England and *lack of public support* for education was frequently endorsed in Albania and Cyprus. Responses to items addressing *lack of political and economic stability* were reflective of the differences between participating countries. For each of these items, school psychologists in Estonia had the highest endorsement, in contrast with school psychologists in Northern England and Cyprus who did not perceive *lack of stability* as a threat to their profession. Simi-

**Table 9** Importance of psychological research

Relevance rating (%)	Country				
	Albania	Cyprus	Estonia	Greece	Northern England
Very relevant	—	100	76	88	67
Somewhat relevant	75	—	24	10	33
Not relevant	25	—	—	—	—
Commonly cited research topics needed	Institutionalization of school psychologists	Learning difficulties	School drop-out	Learning difficulties, School failure	Learning styles
	Professional development	School failure	Family factors	Primary prevention programs	Effectiveness of interventions
		Bullying-prevention programs	Intervention strategies for special needs population	Differences in learning	Inclusion

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

larly, a much higher percentage of respondents from Estonia (83 percent) reported *low salaries* as a challenge relative to their international colleagues. External threats to the delivery of school psychology services may be particularly salient in Cyprus and Estonia, where five or more of the nine potential challenges were endorsed at forty percent or higher. Overall, the *lack of money to properly fund services* was consistently endorsed among the greatest external challenges jeopardizing service delivery in each of the five countries.

Perceived internal challenges to the delivery of school psychological services are listed in Table 8. Lowering standards for selecting or preparing professionals and lack of peer support from other school psychologists were consistently rated low across countries, suggesting that these potential threats are not considered problematic by the majority of participating school psychologists. In contrast, professional burnout and lack of research and evaluation were each endorsed at

forty percent or greater by respondents from three countries, suggesting that these are more commonly regarded as potential internal challenges to service delivery. Lack of standards governing professional services and lack of adequate supervision were endorsed by a high percentage of school psychologists in two of the five countries. The highest endorsed internal threats by country were: more able professionals leaving the country for Albania, professional burnout in Cyprus and Northern England, lack of adequate supervision in Estonia and lack of research and evaluation in Greece. In contrast to perceived external challenges, the results suggest that internal challenges are not perceived to be as likely to jeopardize the delivery of school psychological services.

#### *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 presented in Table 9. Only practitioners in Albania perceived *research as not important to practice* (25 percent), whereas in Cyprus, 100 percent of respondents found *research to be very relevant*. In the remaining three countries, opinions were generally favourable towards the value of research, between somewhat and very relevant, with the majority of respondents indicating that *research is very relevant to professional practice*. Open response answers of important research topics by country were reflective of the diversity of the countries. Several themes were evident in the responses, such as school failure or dropout, which was listed in three countries. Learning styles or difficulties was also a common response across nations. Responses in Albania showed a unique pattern in that both of the most commonly listed responses referred to professional issues, as opposed to topics relating to service delivery or students.

### **Discussion**

The development and piloting of the International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) represents an international effort to better understand school psychology around the world. Information reported by school psychologists in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England 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 inter-

pretations 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 are female in each of these five countries, which is similar to previous research exploring the characteristics of school psychologists (Curtis et al., 1999; Oakland and Cunningham, 1992). The range of percentage of female practitioners varied among countries and appears to be linked to age, with those countries with younger practitioners on average having a tendency to have a higher proportion of females. This would appear to reflect a change in gender ratios at the training level. With respect to language, school psychologists in Northern England were the only group reporting predominantly monolingual fluency in English only. 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, international communication and publications in these languages may be valuable to international colleagues in many countries. However, given that Cyprus was the only country in which the entire sample reported fluency in each of these languages, caution is also warranted in that translation into national languages may be optimal if materials are to reach the largest amount of practitioners in a given country.

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. While professionals in Albania are relatively young and have fewer years of experience, the average ages reported by school psychologists in Northern England and Cyprus were 42 and 49, respectively. Curtis et al. (2002) reported a similar trend for older practitioners in the United States and based on the longitudinal trends, concluded that there will likely be a shortage of school psychologists within the next decade in the USA, as this cohort reaches retirement. Such demographic trends made apparent through repeated national survey data may prove valuable in facilitating the future of the profession. Thus, repeated administration of the ISPS in a given country would provide an opportunity to examine changes over time.

Regarding the most and least rewarding aspects of the profession of school psychology, professionals across countries reported similar

responses. School psychologists around the globe reported wanting to help produce change, work with people and a common distaste for administrative work. This is especially striking considering the diverse composition of the multiple countries responding to the survey. The common endorsement of disliking the 'lack of organization in the role' in several countries may reflect insufficient standards or professional regulations or may reflect the multiple responsibilities of the average school psychologist's position.

The ratios of school psychologists to school-age children varied widely both within and across countries. Suggestions for the ideal ratio have changed greatly over time. For instance, Wall (1956) recommended a ratio of 1:7000 (school psychologist to students) as a goal for school psychology worldwide. In 1979, Catterall reported that ratios were meeting and in some cases exceeding this standard. More recently, in the USA, NASP's recommendation was 1:1000. Recent data indicates that one-third of school psychologists in the USA report having ratios of fewer than 1:1000 and that one-quarter exceed 1:2000 (Curtis et al., 2002). Oakland and Cunningham (1992) reported ratios as a function of low and high GNP countries, suggesting that school psychologists in low GNP countries experience less desirable student ratios. The current study indicates different ratios per country, ranging from 1:580 to 1:9050. In examining the ratios reported by each country, it is important to consider the differences in work settings and educational systems. These ratios do not appear to be related to the GNP of the participating countries; however, further investigation is necessary to clarify the range of ratios revealed in this study. For instance, the field of school psychology is relatively new in Albania and the school psychologist to student ratio reflects the contexts that currently provide school psychological services (generally select schools). Also, in Estonia (a low GNP country), the official rate is 1:600. However, as it is seen from the range of the ratios reported, it is not followed in all the schools.

It is interesting to note that the UNESCO report in 1948 indicated that the Ministry of Education in the United Kingdom reported that, in the few areas where educational psychologists were employed, the ratio was approximately one psychologist for every 15,000 to 30,000 students. The current data from Northern England yielded a 1:5000 ratio (ranging between 1:60 and 1:13,000). Also of interest, in 1948 it was estimated that there were between 70 and 100 educational psychologists employed in England and Wales (UNESCO, 1948). Current estimates indicate over 300 educational psychologists in Northern England alone. Clearly there has been significant growth in the profession of school psychology in many countries during the past five decades.

*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. For example, the entire sample of school psychologists from Albania had been trained at the Bachelor's level, in contrast to Cyprus where all school psychologists have a graduate level degree (i.e. among Cyprus school psychologists, nearly four-fifths have a Masters degree and the remaining one-fifth have a PhD). In Estonia, graduate courses in school psychology were started only five years ago and currently, several practicing school psychologists participate in these courses. Thus, it is anticipated that, in the future, a greater proportion of school psychologists in Estonia will hold graduate degrees.

Similar patterns were found in the percentage of school psychologists receiving supervision across countries, again suggesting diversity among professional training and regulations. These results are also related to the age and training level of school psychologists in each country. For example, the young age and high percentage receiving supervision in Albania is likely associated with the recent entry of these school psychologists into the profession, rather than resulting from the professional practice standards or regulations in Albania. Additional research is necessary to better understand the significance of the variability in professional supervision in various countries.

Membership of professional organizations, similar to the highest degree earned, is related to the differences in options available in each country. Relatively few colleagues in these countries were members of ISPA. In several countries, membership in national psychology associations outnumbered membership in national school psychology associations. Albania and Estonia were the only exceptions, where many school psychologists were members of the national school psychology association. All school psychologists in Albania reported being members of the Albanian Association of School Psychologists. In Estonia, only psychologists with a graduate level degree can be members of the national psychology association whereas this is not required for the school psychology association. The relative membership rates in the other countries may be indicative of the increasing influence of psychology over education in the profession noted by Oakland and Cunningham (1992) and may also be a result of the relative size and establishment of these organizations in each country. The prevalence of membership in national psychology associations may also reflect that in many countries, school psychology continues to be an emerging discipline. 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 of the current study indicate that only one of the five countries requires 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*

Previous international research indicates that the primary tasks of school psychologists are assessment and intervention (Oakland and Cunningham, 1992). Curtis et al. (1999) reported that school psychologists in the USA spend the majority of their time conducting psychoeducational evaluations. Furthermore, in a study conducted by the ISPA Research Committee on teachers' views of school psychologists in different countries (Farrell and Kalambouka, 2000) it was clear that the vast majority of teachers also perceived this to be a key task for school psychologists. In contrast, the largest percentage of time spent on psychoeducational assessments in this study was 30 percent (Northern England), suggesting relatively less time engaged in assessments in these five countries. Notably, three of the countries reported that the greatest proportion of their time was spent on counselling. Divergent results of the current study and those reported in the Oakland and Cunningham study may be associated with the selection of counselling as one of the top two ideal roles in the majority of countries in the current study. Potential explanations for this finding may be the individual training emphases in the countries sampled or increased importance of psychology over education in the school psychology role. In addition, the general category of intervention used by Oakland and Cunningham did not explicitly include counselling. Further research is necessary to determine the importance of this trend in understanding of the roles and responsibilities of school psychologists.

School Psychologists in Northern England reported a large percentage of role dissatisfaction, as evidenced by relatively lower percent participation in their reported ideal role. One possible explanation for this finding is that the average age of professionals in Northern England was higher than the others, suggesting a potential link with age and years of experience. It is possible that concepts of the ideal school psychology role alter as school psychologists become more aware of the benefits of and limitations to, the services they provide. More research is needed to explore the international differences between ideal and actual roles of school psychologists.

### *Challenges*

Lack of leadership within the profession and lack of research and evaluation were the most common internal challenges across countries reported in the current study. Similarly, Oakland and Cunningham (1992) found that these factors were important internal challenges and in contrast, these authors also noted that the lack of professional standards was a significant internal challenge in many countries in 1992. In Cyprus, many internal challenges were endorsed with great frequency, such as burnout, lack of research and lack of professional supervision. In addition, the Cyprus data indicated a pattern of older practitioners and high student to psychologist ratios. One possible explanation for the high rate of endorsement of internal challenges may be the impact of age, ratio and other country-specific factors on professionals practicing in Cyprus.

Overall, more external challenges to the delivery of psychological services were endorsed at higher rates than internal challenges. Lack of money to properly fund services was the most salient external challenge reported by school psychologists in these five countries. The consistency with which this challenge was endorsed suggests that this challenge exists 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). School psychologists in Cyprus perceived four of the nine possible external challenges as problematic. This result may be further evidence of a trend in this country involving older practitioners and higher student to practitioner ratios. In Estonia, six of the possible nine external threats were endorsed by more than 40 percent of respondents. A high percentage of school psychologists in Estonia identified lack of political stability and lack of economic stability as threats jeopardizing service delivery, given the pervasive nature of these challenges many of the other challenges reported in this country may have common roots in these factors.

### *Research*

With the exception of practitioners in Albania, school psychologists agree that research is very relevant to professional practice. However, no respondents to this survey noted spending a portion of their time on research-related activities. Similarly, Oakland and Cunningham (1992) found a discrepancy between the perceived importance of research and percentage of time accorded to it by most practitioners, suggesting that school psychologists working in schools in general may want to be consumers, but not producers of research. In contrast, school psychologists in Albania appear to be less enthusiastic about the benefits of research. Further studies may be useful in determining the

**Table 10** *Potential ISPA contributions*

<i>Country</i>				
<i>Albania</i>	<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>UK</i>
Provide trainings/workshops	Training workshops	Facilitate international contacts	Training workshops	Distribute accurate research information
Provide (translate) professional literature	Conduct and distribute research	Provide trainings/workshops	Clarify role of school psychologists	Clarify role of school psychologists
Facilitate exchange of experience and expertise		Share research information	Conduct and distribute research	Raise profile of school psychology
		Spread information about school psychology		

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)

availability of research, the focus of training programs or other potential causes of this perspective. Topics of research interest reported on the ISPS are different than those reported by in the previous decade (Oakland and Cunningham, 1992). For example, school psychologists in the present study reported learning difficulties or styles and school failure or dropout as important topics across countries, while important topics listed by previous respondents included cross-cultural issues and child development. The lack of similarity between the two sets of responses may be a result of changing priorities of practitioners and researchers or of the different respondents utilized for each sample.

*Potential ISPA contributions*

Suggestions for potential ISPA contributions are listed in Table 10. A common response across countries was that ISPA could be helpful in distributing the results of research. Related to this suggestion, since 1998 (under the auspices of the ISPA Research Committee), Jimerson has offered a Research Column in the *ISPA World Go Round* (e.g.

Jimerson, 1998, 1999a, b; 2000a, b, c; 2001a, b; 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. Additional emphasis on disseminating the results of research warrants further consideration. Providing trainings, workshops and colloquium sessions was another contribution mentioned by school psychologists regardless of nationality. A common theme among the majority of responses was that of sharing. Respondents view ISPA's primary role as that of a common base through which professionals can share research, training materials and professional expertise. Though not listed in Table 10, a common theme in many countries indicated that in general, respondents were unfamiliar with the organization. This is useful information because the impact of ISPA will be much greater if more professionals are aware of the organization and use it as a resource.

## **Conclusions**

In sum, this report of the development, piloting and data from the International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) is an exemplar of international collaborative efforts to advance our understanding of school psychology around the globe. The data from Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England 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 manuscript and discussed above, these efforts and data from 2002 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. For instance, in order to examine and compare the evolution of school psychology in different countries, a conceptual framework has been proposed, incorporating the basic interrelated components that define the specialty and influence its evolution (Hatzichristou, 2002). The key dimensions of this framework are: (a) roles, specialty definition and professional practice; (b) legislative issues; (c) education, training and accreditation; (d) scientific and professional associations; (e) scientific foundation for practice and (f) professional identity (Hatzichristou, 2002). When the evolution of school psychology in these domains is examined in different countries, *common phases* and *considerable similarities* are

identified, showing that a similar dynamic process of change with a different pace is followed in different countries. 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. This information should also inform activities to advance the field of school psychology that will follow from the School Psychology Futures Conference that took place in the USA in November 2002. ISPA was represented at the conference and there have been discussions regarding plans to hold similar events in different countries in the near future. 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.

### **Footnotes**

1. Throughout this article, the term school psychologist is used to refer to educational psychologists and other titles used by psychologists working in schools in different countries around the world.

2. This research emerged from the efforts of the International School Psychology Association (ISPA) Research Committee. Members of the 2001–2002 ISPA Research Committee who contributed to the development of the International School Psychology Survey (ISPS); Shane R. Jimerson (University of California, Santa Barbara, USA); Peter Farrell (University of Manchester, UK); Robert Burden (Exeter University, UK); Chryse Hatzichristou (University of Athens, Greece); Eve Kikas (University of Tartu, Estonia); William Masten (Texas, USA); Beeman Phillips (University of Texas, USA), Robert Clark (National University, USA), Hongwu Zhou (Zhejaing Research Institute, China), William Strein (University of Maryland, USA); Michael Curtis (University of Southern Florida, USA), Brett Nelson (Colorado, USA) and Bernie Stein (Ministry of Education, Israel).

### **Notes**

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2. Special thanks to Dr Thoma, whose help was very valuable for facilitating data collection in Cyprus. Additional thanks to Athanassia Hasapi for helping with the data collection in Greece and to Katerina Lampropoulou who was actively involved in the project.

3. Preliminary results of this research were presented at the 2002 colloquium of the International School Psychology Association, Nyborg, Denmark (Jimerson et al. and the ISPA Research Committee, 2002).

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