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THE DEVELOPING ROLE OF SCHOOL AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

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This paper discusses some of the key challenges facing the profession of school psychology internationally as we move into the 21st century. At a time when, in most countries, the profession is experiencing a period of growth and expansion, many problems still remain. Indeed school psychologists themselves devote a great deal of time and space at their conferences and in professional publications to debates about their ongoing role. These debates reflect continuing uncertainty, both within the profession and amongst employers and users of services, about the distinctive nature of the contribution that school psychologists make in supporting children, schools and families. This paper discusses the origins of these uncertainties and considers ways in which they might be overcome so that the profession can move forward with confidence, knowing that it has a secure future and a distinctive contribution to make in a rapidly developing and uncertain world.
Key Words: *Educational psychologist; School psychologist; Professional role.*

En este artículo se abordan algunos de los retos clave a los que se enfrenta la profesión de la psicología educativa a nivel internacional, a medida que nos adentramos en el siglo XXI. En un momento en el que, en la mayor parte de los países, la profesión está experimentando un periodo de crecimiento y expansión, muchos de los problemas siguen vigentes. En efecto, los propios psicólogos escolares dedican una importante cantidad de tiempo y espacio en conferencias y publicaciones profesionales a debates sobre su rol actual. Estos debates son reflejo de la constante incertidumbre, tanto dentro de la profesión como entre los contratantes y los usuarios de los servicios, sobre la naturaleza distintiva de la contribución que los psicólogos escolares ofrecen en el apoyo a niños, colegios y familias. Este artículo aborda los orígenes de estas incertidumbres y considera las formas en las que se pueden superar para que la profesión pueda avanzar con confianza, sabiendo que tiene un futuro seguro y que puede aportar una contribución distintiva en un mundo incierto de rápido desarrollo.
Palabras clave: *Psicólogo educativo; Psicólogo escolar; Rol profesional.*

Over the past 20 years there has been a marked growth in the development of school (educational) psychology as a profession[1]. Although this growth is reflected in countries from the so called developed and developing world (see Jimerson, Oakland & Farrell, 2006; Hart, 2007), there are considerable variations in the role and function of school psychologists in different countries, in the numbers who are employed, in their training and in their conditions of service. There are also ongoing debates among school psychologists and others about the evolving nature of their role, for example, how their work overlaps with other professional groups, e.g. teachers, psychiatrists; their relationship with employers; the most appropriate balance between individual work with children and more general advisory and consultative work. Many of these concerns reflect a degree of continuing uncertainty about the long-term future of the profession, an issue that is discussed by school psychologists themselves and by employers. The comments in many of the chapters in Jimerson et al. (op cit) indicate that school psychologists believe that their role is often misunderstood, that employers make unreasonable demands on them, that parents and teachers can have unrealistic expectations as to what school psychologists can achieve and that their contribution is not valued as highly as other professionals, for example psychiatrists and clinical psychologists.

These concerns indicate that the profession still faces many challenges that will need to be addressed in order for it to become fully established in all countries of the world. Perhaps one of the key challenges is to overcome some of the feelings of insecurity and self doubt that are reflected in some of the literature. To do this the profession needs to be clear about the nature of its distinctive contribution, to prepare high quality and

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[1] *Most countries adopt the term school or educational psychologist although other titles (e.g. psychological counsellor, school counsellor, and guidance officer) also are used. In this paper I will use the term "school psychologist".*

appropriately trained professionals and to ensure that employers, teachers and other professionals continue to value the work of school psychologists. This paper begins with a discussion of the impact that the origin of the profession, in particular the role of IQ testing and assessments for special education, has had on the current role and status of school psychologists. It then considers alternative approaches, in particular school based consultation, the extent to which they are adopted and how, in some instances, these alternative approaches can promote role ambiguity and uncertainty among school psychologists themselves and other professionals and parents with whom they work. This is followed by a review of the huge impact that the shortage of school psychologists can have on the range work they can undertake and on the capacity to provide a universal and distinctive service to all children. The theme of the school psychologist' distinctive contribution is taken up again in more detail in the final section where there is a discussion of the key components of school psychologists' work that can be described as being distinctive and of the vitally important role the professional associations can play in promoting the distinctiveness of their work. The paper concludes with some specific suggestions on how the profession of school psychology can respond to these challenges and move forward with optimism into the twenty first century.

THE ORIGIN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PRACTICE

In the early part of the 20th century growing interest among psychologists in the concept of intelligence and its measurement, and of the use of IQ tests to identify children who might require special educational provision had a profound impact on the development of the profession. Perhaps, as Guillemard (2006) reminds us, the earliest example of this comes from the pioneering work in France of Alfred Binet. In 1899, along with Pierre Vaney, Alfred Binet opened a pedagogical and psychological laboratory in a Parisian primary school and, in 1905, he was asked by the Ministry of Public Instruction in France to study problems exhibited by children who could not follow the regular school curriculum. He developed the Binet-Simon test which was assumed to be an entirely valid measure of intelligence and hence a legitimate tool to detect "mentally retarded" children and to direct them toward special classes. This test formed the basis of the well known Stanford Binet test. Binet's work was developed in the UK during the 1920's when the London County Council employed Cyril Burt as a psychologist to help solve the problem of classifying children's suitability for schooling. He was the UK's first educational (school) psychologist and he saw the role as primarily being one of testing children to see if they needed to be educated in a special school. Hence the prominence given to a child's IQ for determining the type of school, mainstream or special, that they should attend has a long history.

And of course, if IQ tests serve this purpose, then there is a need to employ professionals to use them and this helps to explain the origins of the development of school psychology as a profession. As Oakland (2000) stresses, the rise in the numbers of school psychologists in different countries around the world closely mirrors the extent to which these countries have embraced the concept of intelligence and IQ testing as being indispensable tools for the identification of children with special needs. As an emerging profession it was crucial to identify a task that could *only* be performed by someone from that profession and IQ testing provided the perfect example. Here was a task that that emerged from academic psychology and was seen to be of value to schools, parents and doctors, and which, therefore, should rightly be something that must be administered by trained psychologists. In the UK, this position was greatly strengthened by an agreement that individually administered IQ tests should be 'closed' – i.e. only for use in clinical settings by appropriately trained applied psychologists. Hence, IQ testing was something that no other professional could do – a truly distinctive task and one which therefore contributed significantly to the development and identity of the profession of school and other applied psychologists.

There are a number of publications which support this general view. Reschly (2000), for example, suggests that the rapid development of the profession of school psychology can, to a great extent, be explained by school psychologists being assigned this unique role in IQ testing and by the requirement in many countries for them to be involved in special education assessments. This point is reinforced in the recently published Handbook on International School Psychology (Jimerson, et al. 2006) and in surveys carried out on behalf of the International School Psychology Association - ISPA (Jimerson, Graydon, Farrell, Kikas, Hatzichristou, Boce, Bashi,

2004; Jimerson, Graydon, Yuen, Lam, Thurm, Klueva, Coyne, Loprete, Phillips, 2006; Jimerson, Graydon, Skokut, Alghorani, Kanjaradze, Forster, 2008) where core work in each of the countries represented includes reference to the use of psychometric testing (in particular IQ tests) in the psychological assessment (evaluation) of individual children. Furthermore, in a survey of over 200 educational psychologists from England and Wales (Woods and Farrell, 2006) a large percentage commonly used a full or partial cognitive assessment measure (i.e. all or part of an IQ test) when carrying out assessments of children referred to them as having learning difficulties. Other evidence also suggests that IQ tests still form a central part of the school psychologist's assessment strategy in the UK (Farrell, Harraghy & Petrie, 1996; Rees, Rees & Farrell, 2003;

These findings are mirrored from the results from surveys of teachers' perceptions of school psychologists that have been carried out over the past 20 years. These indicate that, in the main, teachers expect them to carry out special education assessments (DfEE, 2000; Dowling & Leibowitz, 1994; Evans & Wright, 1987; Ford & Migles, 1979; Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires, & O'Connor, 2006). Moreover, this finding is replicated in a survey of teachers' views of EPs in Estonia (Kikas, 1999), in a major survey of the views of 1,100 teachers in eight different countries (Farrell, Jimerson, Kalambouka, & Benoit, 2005). In addition Gilman and Gabriel (2004) found that local authority (LA) administrators in the USA were even more committed than teachers to the view that the school psychologists' main role was to carry out assessments of children with special needs and to make recommendations for them to be placed in some form of segregated provision.

This approach to school psychology practice is rooted in the medical model, emphasizing a sumative rather than formative role, where problems are seen to be centred within the child, where they can be explored through the psychologist working in a separate room, testing the child and using the results to predict educational performance. The approach tends to ignore the contribution that the school or family, with the ongoing involvement of the school psychologist, can make towards prevention and intervention for individuals, groups, families and communities, and, of course, the findings and implications of the psychometric tests results tend to be accepted without question.

There is now a wealth of literature, going back over many years, which is critical of school psychology practice that relies more or less solely on the medical model (see for example Brown & Ferrara, 1985; Gillham, 1978; Howe, 1998; Leadbetter; 2005; Lokke, Gersch, M'Gadzah; & Frederickson, 1997; Mercer, 1974; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). So why do school psychologists persist in working in ways which are so heavily criticised in the literature? Are we as a profession partly to blame for this? In order to establish our credentials as a new profession, we stressed the fact that we were the *only* people who had the expertise and training to administer IQ tests and to use the findings to make recommendations for segregated education. Are school psychologists, whose history is rooted in this tradition, reluctant to move forward and to abandon some of their traditional practices for fear that they will be losing their professional identity and distinctive role? And, furthermore, by losing their distinctive role, schools and local authorities might no longer feel the need to employ them?

CONSULTATION AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Consultation is one approach that has been put forward as an alternative to traditional school psychology work based on IQ assessments and special educational evaluations. Indeed in the international survey of teachers' perceptions of school psychologists referred to above (Farrell et al., 2005) a number of teachers expressed the view that school psychologists should adopt model of work based on consultation rather than relying on traditional approaches where the focus is on working with a child. This view was endorsed by the 2002 Futures Conference that took place in Indiana (Dawson, et al. 2004). This encouraged schools psychologists to adopt school based consultation as a preferred model of practice and it also stressed the need for pre-service training programmes to place greater emphasis on training in consultation. In an impassioned plea, Curtis, Chesno Grier & Hunley (2004) strongly supported this view. They refer to points made in an earlier paper (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000) and urged school psychologists to move away from 'medical' models of service delivery and to adopt systems-based approaches that emphasise collaborative problem solving and consultation. These views are reinforced by Ehrhardt -

Padgett, Hatzichristou, Kitson & Meyers (2004) who also stress the need for pre-service training programmes to assist school psychologists to conceptualize student concerns from an ecological and cultural perspective. Finally the recently published Blueprint for Training and Practice in School Psychology – III (Yesseldyke, Burns, Dawson, Kelley, Morrison, Ortiz, Rosenfield, & Telzrow, 2006) stresses the key role for school psychologists in using consultation-based approaches, particularly when working at the systemic level.

Efforts to encourage school psychologists to adopt consultative approaches in their work are also evident in the UK where a number of school psychology services claim to have applied a consultation model of service delivery to schools and other agencies. In part this has been stimulated by an earlier British Government's report on the work of educational psychology services - as they are known in the UK - (Department for Education and Employment, 2000), which stresses the importance of consultation as a model of good practice. A number of British psychologists (e.g. Gillies, 2000; Turner, Robins & Doran, 1996; Wagner 2000; Watkins, 2000) offer examples of consultation in action in UK psychological services. One of the key themes emerging from a review of the work of school, psychologists in England and Wales (Farrell, et al. 2006) was the concern felt by teachers and educational psychologists about the limiting and unproductive nature of traditional special educational evaluations and of the need for them to adopt alternative approaches with an emphasis on consultation and multi-agency work. Similar pleas have been made from school psychologists working in other countries. For example Kikas (1999) and Hatzichristou (2002), referring to the developing role of school psychology in Estonia and Greece respectively, stress the need for school psychologists to adopt consultative approaches to their work.

There are a number of definitions of consultation all of which have a great deal in common differ only in emphasis (See for example Gutkin and Curtis,1999; Farouk, 2004; Rosenfield, 2002; Denton, Hasbrouck & Sekaquaptewa, 2003; Strein, Cramer and Lawser, 2003; Wagner, 2000) . Essentially they stress the fact that, in order for school psychologists to maximise their impact on helping children and young people to develop, it is important for them to have a detailed knowledge of the systems where children live and work (school, family and community); to develop mutually supportive trusting relationships with people who work in or with the system, including the children; and to work jointly with all relevant parties adopting a problem solving framework. The task for school psychologists is to negotiate their respective roles and responsibilities within a 'system' in a way that makes their contribution effective. Hence the hallmark of a successful psychological consultant is the evidence of a variety of modes of working (e.g. discussions about individual children; curriculum development and systems work) across different situations.

The origins of the approach lie in the fact that pupils do not live in a vacuum, that psycho/social/educational problems are multi-facetted, that they exist in a social context in which a number of people have an interest in bringing about change. Therefore the causes of a child's reported problems are unlikely to be rooted in one place – e.g. within the child. Hence consultants working within and across agencies need to work together both in prevention and intervention. Professional boundaries need to be broken down; multi-agency work must be effective with full collaboration and trust in each other's judgments, with a willingness to share professional expertise, to place equal value on the opinion of all involved, and a preparedness to accept that school psychologists, may not have the answers.

There are a number of recent articles that give accounts of school psychologists adopting consultative approaches (e.g. Burns, 2004; Dennis, 2004; Farouk 2004; Larney, 2003; Perez-Gonzalez, Garcia-Ros & Gomez-Artiga, 2004). Evaluations of the impact of the approach have been positive, particularly from teachers (Perez-Gonzalez et al., op. cit; MacLeod, Jones, Somers & Harvey, 2001). However, as Larney (op. cit) indicates, methodological problems with these evaluations suggest that further research is needed before a clearer picture of the impact of the consultative approach can be obtained. In particular she mentions the need to focus on obtaining client outcome variables, developing more longitudinal data, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and including research on the consultation process itself.

Despite favourable accounts of the benefits of consultation, research on the work of school psychologists suggests that they still spend relatively little time on this activity. Hosp and Reschly (2002), for example, found that school psychologists spent from 50% to 66% of their time on formal psycho-educational evaluations and

around 25% of their time on consultation related activities. These findings are similar to those of an earlier review (Reschly, 2000) and are supported by Curtis (2002). From an international perspective, the ISPA surveys on the role of school psychologists (Jimerson, et al. 2004, 2006, 2008) found that school psychologists only spent between 5% to 20% of their time in consultation related activities.

The overriding conclusion from the publications referred to above is that, despite a clear professional view of, and some empirical support for, the positive value of consultative approaches to school psychology practice, survey evidence suggests that school psychologists only spend approximately a quarter of their time on consultation-related activities. It appears that school psychologists around the world seem to be more comfortable working within the medical model where problems are seen to be centred in the child and where the bulk of their work can be carried out on a one to one basis with children and parents.

THE SHORTAGE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

One further explanation for the reluctance of school psychologists to embrace consultation as a preferred model of working may lie in the universal shortage of school psychologists in almost every country. For when a services is in high demand but short supply, there is a tendency for the provider of that service to take on roles that the users expect them to perform, i.e. IQ assessments and special educational evaluations (see Department for Education and Employment, 2000; Dowling & Leibowitz, 1994; Evans & Wright, 1987; Ford & Migles, 1979; Farrell, et al. 2006).

The shortage in the numbers of school psychologists in different countries is closely associated with a country's economic wealth and its commitment to use this wealth to promote the education of all children. Hence, typically, school psychology services are more successfully established and embedded in countries characterized by highly developed and legally mandated education systems that provide universal education for all children, including special education services for students with chronic, severe, and complex learning and behavioural disorders. These conditions are present in North America, Western Europe and Australasia (Jimerson, Oakland & Farrell, 2006). In contrast, many governments in Asia and Africa lack sufficient economic resources to adequately fund general education and consequently governmental resources needed to support special education and school psychology are meagre. Hence school psychology generally is strong in countries with well-established special education programmes for children and with laws that require school psychologists to conduct psychological assessments and to engage in designing intervention programmes. School psychology generally is weak in countries where there is no legally mandated requirement for school psychologists to carry out assessments of children with SEN and where special education programmes are inadequate. This analysis reflects the key and expected role of school psychologists, discussed earlier in this paper, in carrying out psychological assessments and special educational evaluations.

Not surprisingly there is a huge difference between countries in the number of school psychologists who are employed and, more significantly, in the ratio of school psychologists to students both within and between countries. In Estonia, for example (Kikas, 2006) the average ratio is 1 school psychologists to 750 students in those schools that employ school psychologists, almost all of which are in urban areas. However, there are no school psychologists in many rural areas. In other countries estimates about ratios of school psychologists to all children vary considerably. For example, the ratios are 1:3,000 in England and Wales (Squires & Farrell, 2006; 1:5,000 in Cyprus (Papcosta, 2006); and 1:13,100 in Hong Kong for school psychologists working in government schools (Lam, 2006). However, in some countries the figures are rough estimates, as they do not keep statistics on the number of school psychologists they employ.

There is a universally held view among school psychologists themselves, teachers, parents (see Squires, Farrell, Woods, Lewis, O'Connor, 2007) and professionals who work for other support services that there is a chronic shortage of school psychologists and that, at present, they are unable to respond quickly, and in some cases, effectively to the range of demands that are placed on them. In many countries this can result in a narrowing of the school psychologist's role in that their services may only be used to deal with so called "urgent" cases and there is no time left for them to undertake preventative work or to adopt consultative approaches.

The shortage of school psychologists inevitably impacts upon the perception that teachers have of their value and contribution. There have been a number of surveys over the past five decades which have addressed this issue and, although many of these are now a little dated and do not take account of changing circumstances, their findings are still relevant. Typically, surveys have indicated that teachers value the quality of the work of school psychologists but that they would like to see more of them (e.g. McKeever 1996;) and that, as Gilman and Gabriel (2004) argue, the ongoing shortage of school psychologists inevitably clouds teachers' perceptions of their work. This finding was strongly endorsed in a recent international survey of over 1,100 teachers from 8 different countries (Farrell, Jimerson, Kalambouka, & Benoit, 2005). In this study teachers also indicated that school psychologists spent most time carrying out assessments of individual children and on counselling and therapeutic work. However they also stated that they would prefer them to work more with teachers and parents in carrying out preventative work. Hence they seemed to asking for school psychologists to undertake a wider range of activities than they currently appear to undertake.

The findings from a recent review of the work of school (educational) psychologist in England and Wales (Farrell, et al. 2006) provide a mixed picture of the views that teachers have of school psychologists. Whilst many expressed extremely positive views about their school psychologist and valued their work in supporting them and their school, others were extremely negative. As in other studies, they expressed negative views about the lack of contact with and EP, sometimes as little as once every three months, and they also were frustrated that all the school psychologists seemed to do was to carry out assessments of children who might need special education. In general terms over half of all teachers surveyed rated the quality of their school psychologist's work as being "good" or "very good", but they all wanted to see more of them.

Hence the shortage of school psychologists, which is partly a related to the economic wealth of a country, can have a major impact on the work that school psychologist are able to undertake and on the perceptions that others, in particular teachers, have of their work.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE WORK OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST DISTINCTIVE?

As discussed at the start of this paper, the origin of the profession of school psychology emerged from an interest in measuring children's IQ and in making recommendations for special educational provision. However some studies suggest that teachers and psychologists appear to be frustrated with this limiting role and consider that other approaches, for example consultation, provide a better alternative. Perhaps one of the reasons why school psychologists are reluctant to embrace consultation is because they find it harder to claim that this activity is distinctive to the profession, i.e. one that could not be carried out by another professional. Individual assessments using IQ tests represent, in contrast, a highly distinctive function, rooted in academic psychology, and one which it is easier to justify as being a key role for the school psychologist.

Questions about the distinctiveness of school psychologists' work have featured in the literature on school psychology services for many years (see Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Imich, 1999; Leyden, 1999; MacKay, 2002; Thomson, 1996). Given the school and community context in which they work, and the fact that other professionals also work in these contexts, it is understandable that people might question the distinctive contribution that the school psychologist brings. Similar questions are also asked of other professional groups, for example social workers, child psychiatrists, counsellors and speech and language therapists. Representatives from each of these professional groups, and others, would presumably claim that they bring something distinctive that identifies them as having a unique set of skills, knowledge and abilities which separates them from other related professionals. But, given the range of professionals who can be involved in working in the same area, it is not surprising that parents, teachers and others can, at times, be confused about the distinctive role and function of any one group.

This is particularly pertinent when considering the cost of employing particular groups of professionals. In this context school psychology time might be viewed as relatively expensive which raises questions about whether another professional might be able to undertake some of their activities more economically and with the same impact. The issue of cost may partly explain recent trends across public services for some aspects of work that might,

in the past, have been the sole province of one professional group, to be provided more efficiently through the utilization of a paraprofessional workforce. The rise in the role and status of teaching assistants (para-professionals) is one example (Balshaw & Farrell, 2002; Blatchford, Russell, Bassett, Brown, & Martin, 2004). This relatively new group is now being given increasing roles and responsibilities in schools which hitherto might have been carried out by teachers. Similarly, nurses are carrying out work that was previously undertaken by doctors. Hence, when considering the distinctive nature of the work of a fully qualified school psychologist, there is an underlying issue of whether their time is being used efficiently and whether it is necessary for someone with their particular combination of specialised skills, knowledge and experience, who is relatively expensive to employ, to undertake all of the range of tasks that they might be asked to do. If the answer to this last question is 'No', then it is important for school psychologists and commissioners of their services to decide whether, and in what circumstances, a school psychologist should become involved.

In the recent review of school psychology services in England and Wales (Farrell et al., 2006) a large number of examples of school psychology practice were given which stressed psychological knowledge and skills that school psychologists utilise in their work. School psychologists themselves articulated this view cogently. Typically, they stressed that their background and training in psychology provides them with detailed knowledge of child development, social and organisational psychology, cognitive development, personality, individual differences, the psychological impact of different 'conditions' upon the child, family and the community, psychological therapies and interventions, and research and evaluation. Similar views were expressed strongly by teachers, local authority officers, other professionals and parents. There was a general view that school psychologists have an important contribution to make and that the key factor that makes their work distinctive is their background in academic and applied psychology.

However it is important to point out that some of the questionnaire data provide a slightly more ambiguous picture about stakeholders' views of the distinctive contribution that School psychologists can make (see Farrell et al., op cit). When asked whether an alternative provider could have undertaken a piece of work that was carried out by a school psychologist, many respondents identified one or more alternative professionals who, in their judgement, could have carried out the work with the same impact. This view was also expressed by school psychologists where, for example, approximately half of them stated that, with reference to the work they had carried out, the involvement by another specified professional might have had the same impact.

The key implication is that school psychologists should be explicit about the nature of the distinctive contribution they can make and that commissioners should be very clear about what it is they want from their services. Evidence suggests (Farrell et al. op cit,) that when school psychologists of achieved clarity about the aims, processes, requirements and outcomes of the their work, this resulted in a greater commonality of purpose, and in other professionals feeling motivated and committed to work with the school psychologist as part of a team. The general view that the school psychologists' distinctive contribution lies in their psychological skills and knowledge would suggest that agreed clarity of the school psychologist's role should be focussed around the particularly psychological function that they will utilise.

The role of national associations in promoting the distinctiveness of school psychology practice

The strength and distinctiveness of school psychology within a country is often directly linked to the presence of a strong national association representing its members. Such associations can, in particular, stress the distinctive nature of the school psychologists' work. Countries with a more highly developed discipline of psychology, a longer tradition of providing school psychology services, and larger numbers of school psychologists often have stronger professional associations than those that lack these three qualities.

There are number of important tasks that a well managed and high status professional association can perform all of which are crucial in helping to define and publicise the distinctive nature of school psychology practice. These include the following: -

- Defining criteria for undergraduate honours degrees in psychology
- Setting criteria for professional training and accreditation including monitoring standards of training,
- Promoting links with local and national government,

- Producing high quality professional and academic journals,
- Raising the profile of school psychology work in local authorities, and at central government level,
- Developing and sustaining the credentialing and licensing of school psychologists.

International associations representing applied psychologists also have an important role in promoting the profession. The International School Psychology Association (ISPA) for example (see Oakland, 2006) has individual members from over 40 countries. It supports a leading academic and professional journal, School Psychology International, and publishes a newsletter five times a year. It also runs an annual conference in a different country which is typically attended by over 400 school psychologists from around the world. ISPA's mission is to promote the development of school psychology around the world and, in pursuit of this mission, it has developed close links with UNESCO, it has an international crisis response network and has developed standards for the accreditation of school psychology training programmes.

Other international organisations have also made an important contribution particularly in setting benchmarking, standards and competencies for professional training in applied psychology. For example the European Federation of Professional Psychologists' Association (EFPPA), has supported the development of a common standard for the training of school psychologists across Europe. "EuroPsy" is a European standard of education and training which enables individual psychologists to be recognized as having a European-level qualification in psychology. It is based on a 6 year education and training in psychology which includes a year of supervised practice. EuroPsy is based on EuroPsyT "A framework for education and training of psychologists in Europe" which was accepted by EFPA (the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations) in 2001. Psychologists holding the EuroPsy are recorded in the Register of European Psychologists, which distinguishes 3 broad professional contexts (and a fourth category for those with recognized qualifications that do not fit into the three main categories): education (school), clinical & health, organization & work.

In 2009 EFPA will launch the EuroPsy certification process and present the model to all EU Member States and other governments' competent authorities for acceptance as an automatic instrument for the recognition of professional qualifications in psychology between different countries. (See Lunt, 2002 and http://www.efpa.be/) for more details about EuroPsy.

There is no doubt that the EuroPsy initiative has made a huge contribution to establishing common and high quality standards of training for applied psychologists across Europe. This is particularly important at a time when there is considerable variation within and between countries in the entry criteria for training school psychologists, the length of training, the nature and duration of practical placements and/or internships, and the final degree required (e.g. bachelors, masters, specialist and doctoral degrees).

CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

This paper has discussed a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order for the profession of school psychology to move forward with confidence. At the present time many psychologists and employers are unsure about the distinctive nature of school psychology practice. Furthermore the universal shortage of school psychologists inevitably affects the work they can undertake and the role and influence of professional associations in different countries is extremely variable. However, despite these concerns, the profession is at a time of growth and development. Studies of consumer views toward school psychologists (Farrell, et al. 2005; Gavrilidou, de Mesquita, & Mason, 1994; Gilman, & Gabriel, 2004; Kikas, 1999; McKeever, 1996) report the value and esteem in which the profession is held. Hence, despite the challenges referred to in this paper school psychologists are making an important contribution to the lives of children and young people, their parents, teachers and other professionals who work with them.

The challenge is for school psychologists, their employers and other stakeholders to work together so as to ensure that the school psychology services continue to enhance the status of the profession for the benefit of all children, schools and their communities.

The implications emerging from this paper are that for school psychology services to address the challenges referred to in this paper, attention needs to be given to the following key areas.

1. The relationship between school psychology services and education.

It is vitally important for school psychologists to develop good working relationships with educational administrators and policy makers at three levels: at the school level where daily practice occurs; at the local authority level where employment and service policy decisions may occur; and at the national level where legislation and policy formation is initiated. School psychologists need to be more active at all three levels in providing leadership through highlighting and promoting their services.

2. Achieving greater clarity about roles and functions.
   School psychology services need to be more active in promoting their work and in marketing their services. Consumers have a right to know about the distinctive range of services that school psychologists can provide and about the expertise and special interests among the school psychologists in a particular locality. This will go some way to ensuring that users of school psychology services actually commission the services that they need and which the service, itself, can deliver.
3. The need for strong national associations representing school psychologists.
   National association representing school psychologists to be active in promoting the profession, in safeguarding standards, in ensuring that it is properly regulated and in advancing professional training and research.
4. Increasing the number of school psychologists
   There is an urgent need for education services to employ more school psychologists. This has been strongly expressed by school psychologists themselves, by employers, parents, and, perhaps most vociferously, by teachers. Clearly service users value the expertise and advice they receive from school psychologists and many are extremely frustrated because of the difficulty in gaining sufficient access to their services.

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