



International Network for School Social Work

<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>

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The Status of School Social Work in 2016

School social work continues to expand around the world. Information about school social work in different countries has increased over the last 25 years, aided by the International Network for School Social Work. International surveys have been done at intervals since the mid 90's. The information that the surveys generate helps to promote international contact between school social workers, to develop new school social work programs and gives international context in social work education.

The 2016 International Survey

The 2016 International Survey of School Social Work contains the results of a survey sent to school social work leaders in 56 countries where school social work is practiced. Responses obtained from 36 countries include contact information for national school social work associations or representatives, data about the status of school social work and basic information about school social work practice.

Thanks are due to the school social work leaders in these countries who gathered information and completed the questionnaire: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Laos, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Macau, Macedonia, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States, and Vietnam.

The Survey includes a Supplement with information from earlier surveys gathered in 2012, 2006 and 2003 from 9 countries for which no current data are available: Curacao, the Czech Republic, Estonia, India, Mongolia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Arab Emirates.

Results

There is much similarity in the school problems that school social workers address around the world. Almost all work on attendance and behavioral problems and many of them work on emotional problems, motivation, material needs and issues facing children with disabilities. Typically school social workers evaluate problems, do group-work, casework, preventive activities, home visits, counseling and consult with teachers.

Schools, school systems, private schools, government agencies and non-profit agencies employ social workers to work in schools. In some countries there seems to be a uniform system

across the country, but in most countries that have federal governments there is much variation in hiring and operations between provinces or states. Several countries report pilot programs or the beginnings of school social work.

The practitioners are commonly called school social workers or the equivalent in their language, such as *Schulsozialarbeiter/in*, but there is variation in the title used. Examples of other titles are *student welfare officer*, *education social worker* and *social worker in schools*. Some social workers are working with titles such as *counselor* or *social pedagog*. Norway has social professionals working with school children and their families with about 8 titles for various roles.

The Survey revealed an estimate of 45,000 social workers currently employed. There are a few well-established, strong programs. However, it is a common experience that school social work is struggling to become established, to survive or to become fully operational. There are only about 10 countries with a professional association dedicated solely to school social work. These associations are key in helping the profession achieve recognition in the educational establishment, and in providing support, advocacy and professional development specific to school social work.

New information from the 2016 Survey

Around 220 social workers are employed in **Macau**. Non-Governmental Organizations such as the YMCA, Caritas and the Methodist Church Social Service deliver the service under the subsidy of the Education and Youth Bureau. The NGO or the school may elect to hire either a social worker or a psychologist. They all use the title of school counselor (學生輔導員), but the responsibilities are typical of school social work.

In **South Africa** the National Committee for School Social Work Education and Practice (a sub-committee of the NASW SA) is working to develop and promote school social work. Although school social work has existed in South Africa since 1983, it is receiving much more attention since 2015 through the work of this committee. The social workers are very much involved in all social issues and the emotional problems that students bring to school.

There is little information about how social workers in schools in the Mediterranean region serve school children. Financial crises and high unemployment in Greece and Spain mean that school children need more help than ever. In **Greece** social workers are only available at School Units of Special Treatment and Education, leaving most schools without service. In **Spain** the *Profesor Tecnico de Servicios a la Comunidad* (Teacher of Community Services) fills the typical school social work role and may have a social work, sociology, pedagogy or primary school teaching degree.

In **Taiwan**, almost 300 school social workers (學校社會工作人員) or certificated school social workers (學校社會工作師) work in regular schools, special education schools and in alternative schools sponsored by NGOs for students who dropped out.

In **Laos**, pilot programs have demonstrated unique approaches for social workers to serve school children through Child Development Centers located in schools. Social work is a new profession, and there is much potential for continuing the pioneering work with schools as new social workers graduate each year.

Missing Information

We have little information from much of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Central and South America, some Northern European countries including the Netherlands and Denmark, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and some areas of Oceania. If you have contacts who can share information about how social workers work with schools in countries in those regions, please get in touch so that more information can be added to our knowledge of school social work.