The changing status and growth of social work education worldwide: Process, findings and implications of the IASSW 2010 census

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Abstract
The dramatic growth in social work education is documented in the International Association of Schools of Social Work’s 2010 census of institutions offering at least one degree program in social work. The census gathered data on program structure, personnel, student enrollment and curriculum from 473 respondents in the five IASSW regions. Half of the respondents reported requiring course content in social work history, values or ethics, and 20 percent of required courses are taught by non-social work educators. The expansion of social work programs is indicative of social work’s untapped potential for delivering social justice content on the international stage.

Keywords
Generalist perspective, International Association of Schools of Social Work, international social work curriculum, social work education, world census

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Introduction

The first decade of the 21st century saw an unprecedented expansion of tertiary degree programs in social work. The 2000 Directory of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) included 1384 institutions with a social work program. In contrast, the 2010 Directory listed 2110 institutions with at least one tertiary program—an increase of over 50 percent. This increase underestimates the expansion because many institutions reported offering more than one degree program and a single method of delivery.

Many factors converged to spur the expansion of social work education throughout the five regions of the IASSW. One important factor contributing to the growth of social work degree programs was an IASSW educational standards initiative. Social workers have long debated whether it is desirable or even possible to develop a set of guidelines for educational programs. In 2002, IASSW embarked on a multi-year project to create such a document. After a lengthy consultative process (see Sewpaul, 2005; Sewpaul and Jones, 2005), the ‘Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession’ were approved by both the IASSW and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) at the 2004 Congress in Adelaide, Australia (IASSW, 2004). The document set out the purposes of the profession, the epistemological paradigms informing the curricula, and provided specifics on the format, structure, and content of educational programs in social work. The process and publication of the Standards elevated the status and legitimacy of the profession, opened the discussion about standards throughout the social work academy, and, thus, encouraged allied programs in the social services to gather under the umbrella of professional social work.

Other factors include the Bologna Process, which was designed to bring the degree of comparability of tertiary programs across Europe by instituting a three-year degree program structure. The process brought educators together and led to both the establishment of new programs and the conversion of existing social work diploma or qualifying programs to the level of a degree. Also, European and American social work educators intensified their outreach to their international colleagues in support of the establishment or reestablishment of university-based social work education in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world. Collaboration between North and South, East and West, gained momentum by the end of the 20th century. It was aided in part by technology, funding, and a growing recognition of the contribution of social work to ameliorating social problems in a world increasingly characterized by a deepening gap between the rich and poor, mass dislocation of peoples, frequent natural disasters and warfare.

Identifying the key impetus for the dramatic growth in social work education in the Asia Pacific region remains unclear. China, like several of her neighbors, established social work programs at an unparalleled rate during the last decade—a rate that has only increased in the past three years with a reported additional 350 programs established after 2010 (Leung, 2012). The social problems brought by their fast-changing economy, the flight to the cities, rural workers leaving their families for work in urban areas, demographic changes, and growing inequalities are certainly factors.

Tertiary social work education has a comparatively recent history. The first schools of social work were established in the first decade of the 20th century. By the 1930s social work education had gained a modest, but substantial, hold in Europe and North America with a small number of programs in other regions of the world (Saloman, 1937). Programs continued to develop, albeit slowly, in North America during the mid-20th century while programs in Eastern Europe were closed under the Communist regime. The foothold social work education had gained in Latin and South America came to a halt during the period of dictatorships, which swept the continent in the
last decades of the 20th century (Parada, 2007). The most significant growth in the first decade of
the 21st century, then, has been in the Asia Pacific Region where establishment of social work
programs continues at fast pace.

As part of its professional commitment to social work education, IASSW launched the 2010
census to both update the 2000 version of the directory of social work programs worldwide and,
through a survey, gather information on the structure, personnel, student enrollment, and curricu-
lum of social work programs. This article describes this census process, reports on findings, and
discusses implications of the 2010 Census Project.

The 2010 IASSW Directory

IASSW sponsored three notable research projects tracing the development of educational pro-
grams preparing social work practitioners, academics, and researchers. The 1937 report by Alice
Salomon (Saloman, 1937) identified 179 schools in 29 countries; only five of those countries were
outside Europe or North America. The IASSW’s 2000 Directory listed over 1300 institutions in
114 countries, but included non-degree and allied social service programs. The 2010 directory
included only institutions offering degree programs in social work and those institutions in coun-
tries, such as France and Italy, who offer a diploma or license as a qualification of practice. There
were a few instances where verification of the institution as degree-granting was not possible
because of language barriers or incomplete websites. The decision was made that those institu-
tional listings be retained until verification can be completed. Over 600 social work degree-
granting institutions were added to the 2010 directory, for a total of 2110 institutions in 125 coun-
tries worldwide.

Because the 2010 directory limited listings to institutions granting degree programs in social
work, a simple comparison of the listings obscures the dramatic increase in degree programs dur-
ing the past decade. Several institutions embarked on major restructuring efforts during the first
decade of the 21st century, leading to program consolidation (e.g. in South Africa) or converted
their non-degree educational offerings to undergraduate degree programs (e.g. in the United
Kingdom).

Many institutions offer more than one degree program (e.g. an undergraduate degree and one or
more graduate programs) and may offer their degree programs in various formats (e.g. part-time,
off-campus, online, language or gender specific). Each format requires curriculum modification
and, in several instances, staff with specialized skills or knowledge. For example, of Canada’s 38
universities with social work programs, only seven offer a BSW degree. Fourteen offer both a
BSW and an MSW, and two others offer both an MSW and a PhD. The remaining 15 institutions
offer all three degree levels. The US Council on Social Work Education lists 524 institutions with
social work programs in the United States. However, those institutions offer nearly 800 degree
programs – 480 undergraduate programs, 218 master level programs, and 65 doctoral programs
(Council on Social Work Education, 2013). The situation is similar in the 78 schools of the United
Kingdom that offer a mix of qualifying social work programs, the majority at the bachelor level.
Only a few schools in the UK offer doctoral programs in social work.

The spread of social work education is best illustrated by the series of maps presented in Figure 1.
The first map shows the five regional borders of IASSW. As sub-regional associations grow in
strength, questions continue to be raised about the relationship of the sub-regional association to
regional and international associations as well as about the affiliation of a particular sub-region or
country to the arbitrary borders of the regions as established by the IASSW.

An examination of the regional maps (see Figures 2–6), which illustrate the countries in which
degree programs in social work have been identified, demonstrates that social work education is
International Association of Schools of Social Work maps.

now established in nearly every country in the world. The legends that accompany the maps denote the number of institutions in each country. Since the maps were drawn, the growth of the social work programs has continued, particularly in the Asia Pacific Region and several master and doctoral programs are planned or have been established in Africa, Europe, and Latin and South America.

Observations about the directory listings

The decade of 2000–2009 saw striking changes in the organizational structure of universities with corresponding changes for their social work programs. In South Africa, for example, countrywide reorganization of the university system following the demise of apartheid meant the amalgamation and/or renaming of institutions and programs. In Britain, the emphasis on obtaining higher ratings in the government’s Research Assessment Exercise (now known as the Research Excellence Framework) led to massive reorganization of faculties and discontinuation of a number of social work programs. Neoliberalism of higher education continues to influence the restructuring of undergraduate and newly developing doctoral programs throughout Latin and South America.

In a number of other countries, for example, in Ethiopia and Slovenia, social work education was established or reestablished through to the doctoral level. In China, social work program establishment grew exponentially, with 205 listings in the current directory and another 145 reportedly added since 2010 (Leung, 2012). The directory added several programs not included in the 2000
IASSW Region A: Africa.

directory (for example, in Algeria, Turkey, and Nigeria). Social work education was introduced or reintroduced this past decade in several Asian countries, including Nepal, Indonesia, and Cambodia.

Value and limitations of the directory

Although the updating/compiling of the directory was a complex, time-consuming undertaking, the listing is the sole documentation of the worldwide growth of institutions offering at least one degree program in social work. Between 2000 and 2010, over 600 institutions were added to the directory either because they were newly established or reestablished. Fewer than 20 institutions with programs established prior to 2010 but not previously listed as having a social work degree program were added to the listings. That growth reflects the strides social work has made in the past decade in carving out a distinct professional identity, reaffirming its value as a major social service provider, and securing its place as an academic discipline in the university setting.

Developing the survey

The development of the 2010 Census questionnaire drew heavily on the work of Garber and his colleagues, who completed the 2000 survey (Garber, 2000), and the mid-decade membership survey of
Barretta-Herman (2008). To allow for longitudinal comparison, the 2010 Census maintained a similar internal organization. The wording of the questions underwent several reiterations to minimize regional bias, to respond to feedback regarding the relevance of individual questions, and to incorporate suggestions for additional questions solicited on factors of importance not captured in earlier surveys.

Several strategies were employed in that effort. The research team examined closely the findings of the 2000 and 2005 surveys for item validity and reliability. They submitted reworded questions to the IASSW Board Members, discussed the structure, content, and wording of the survey questions at the biennial board meetings in 2008 and 2009, and offered workshops for item construction feedback open to participants at regional meetings and international meetings. Since it was determined that visibility for the survey was essential to maximizing the response rate, the research team presented the project to all five regional meetings at the 2008 Biennial Congress in Durban, South Africa. Members of the team discussed the project at educator meetings in each of the regions, publicized the upcoming survey in the IASSW Newsletter, and utilized contacts with colleagues to encourage their participation in the upcoming survey. At the 2010 Biennial Congress in Hong Kong, the team staffed the IASSW booth for several hours, displaying a series of maps illustrating the number of schools by country, presented papers related to the project, displayed drafts of the directory for verification, and distributed the link to the web-based survey to encourage participation.
The survey distribution by email began in mid-January 2010 to the 1384 listings in the partially updated directory. (Updating the directory was a continuous process throughout 2010 and 2011.) The email in English, Korean, Spanish, Japanese, French, Simplified and Traditional Chinese invited respondents to complete the survey on the web-based software program, Qualtrics. The system was set up to default to the language of the respondent. Two reminders were sent at approximate four- to six-week intervals.

Because the response to the web-based survey was disappointingly low at 11 percent, the IASSW Board approved a proposal in June 2010 for a postal/mail distribution. The mailing was to include a membership application in addition to the letter of introduction, the survey and a return envelope. During the next few months, the letter of introduction was updated, the survey reformatted for print, and reworded to invite respondents to reply by accessing the web-based survey, by fax, or by return mail. The decision was made to limit the survey to four pages to reduce costs of the original mailing and the return mailing since ‘return postage paid’ could not be offered. The surveys were mailed to ‘Administrator/Head Social Work Program’ to direct the survey to the individual with the requisite knowledge to respond to the survey. Only one response was received by fax. Half of the respondents accessed the survey via the web and the remainder returned he completed survey by post.

The data from the print surveys were entered weekly to a SPSS file designed for the world census analysis. If there was a question on a response, an email requesting clarification was sent and a number of clarification responses were subsequently received. In the email distribution, many of
IASSW Region D: Latin & South America.
the addresses were personal (respondents used a Google or Yahoo account) and few respondents entered their institutional website. Despite the assumption that the survey asked only for demographic information in the public domain, 71 respondents chose not to identify their institution nor could the responses be identified by region.
Format of the survey

The survey was organized into six sections to focus the respondent on the information requested. Many questions offered multiple responses, contributing to the complexity of the questionnaire. At several points, the respondent was offered the option of entering/writing their response or comment. The survey asked for information on the structure of their program, the personnel employed, student enrollment, and curriculum. Two additional areas were explored: the international experience of a program’s academic staff and students and the perception of trends impacting the educational endeavor.

The task of cleaning the data was begun in 2011. It took several months to successfully clean the data and ready it for analysis. The preliminary statistical analysis on the 473 responses was completed in mid-2011. The research team gathered for a four-day intensive examination of the data in October of 2011. The methodology was critiqued, the results were analyzed from both a worldwide and regional perspective, and implications of the results were proposed.

Findings

The distribution of responses reflects the concerted effort made to elicit participation from across the regions. The population frame of 1384 generated 473 completed surveys, or a 34 percent response rate. A closer examination by region (Africa, 22; Asia Pacific, 82; Europe, 86; Latin and South America, 29; North America, 183; region not identified, 71) shows a predominance of responses from regions with proportionately higher numbers of schools and from schools in English-speaking countries. More than two-thirds of the responses were in English, despite the translation of the survey into French, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, and Simplified and Traditional Chinese. When reviewing the findings reported below, Western bias as reflected in the language and thus in the construction of the questions must be taken into consideration.

Structure of social work programs

The establishment dates of programs responding to the survey were spread across the decades to include programs established in the earliest decades of the 20th century in each region and then spread throughout the past century to include programs established in the 2000–2009 decade. The following tables illustrate the years the programs were started in the entire ample and then by region to support the representativeness of the sample.

Table 1 shows the start date of the programs in the sample while Table 2 shows start dates by region, confirming that the programs responding to the survey do not mimic the growth reported in the directory. Newer programs, those established in the last 20 years, were underrepresented in the sample because the sampling frame used as of January 2010 did not include many newer programs subsequently added to the directory.

As was found in the earlier surveys (Barretta-Herman, 2005, 2008; Garber, 2000), the majority of the programs, 65 percent (263 of the 409 reporting) were in public institutions (state-sponsored), an indication of the value of the profession in the eyes of the state. One hundred and twenty-six respondents (27%) described their institution as private, the majority of which described themselves as private/religious. Several of the private institutions commented that they receive financial support from the state either directly or indirectly through student aid or bursary support.

Because free-standing academic units within an institution are an indication of status within the institutional structure, respondents were asked if their social work program was an independent academic unit or a part of a larger academic unit. Forty percent of the respondents described their
Barretta-Herman et al.

Table 1. Year social work program started, N = 340.

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<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>46</td>
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Table 2. Year social work program started by region, N = 340.

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<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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program as an ‘independent unit’ while 7 percent indicated that this was a change in status since 2000. Because a majority of the programs indicated their full-time academic compliment as 10 or fewer, it is reasonable that the remainder of the programs, 53 percent, would be coupled with other disciplines within a larger faculty/administrative unit. A majority of the programs reported they were in the faculty of sociology, social science, and/or social policy. A number of programs were in a faculty grouping that included theology, law, or the health professions.

Of the 397 (84%) respondents who indicated the highest social work academic credential held by the program head, only 169 (36%) indicated that that individual held a doctoral level degree in social work. Doctoral level education, especially in social work, is in a nascent stage in many countries and stagnant in others. Even in the North America Region, where doctoral social work education has been available for nearly a century, only 55 percent of respondents indicated their program head had a DSW or PhD in social work. This reflects the limited availability of doctoral-level education in social work in the 20th century. The recent expansion of doctoral-level education in Africa, Europe (mainly in Eastern Europe) and Asia, while critical to the development of the profession, has simultaneously raised concerns in academia about theoretical rigor and research expectations of the new programs (Binglaing, 2008; Leung, 2012; Yuen-Tseng and Wang, 2008).

When asked to choose which responsibility their program administrator could exercise from a long list of tasks, respondents from the North America Region were more likely to be responsible for policy formulation, budget allocation, staff hiring and evaluation, and external relations than the other four regions. Compared with the other regions, 25 percent of North American and 27 percent of Asia Pacific heads of program had building and facility management responsibilities. Less than 20 percent of respondents in other regions reported these responsibilities. However, the differences were not statistically significant (N.S.).

When comparing programs identified as independent academic units with those that were not independent units, respondents from the North American Region were more likely to be responsible for budget allocation (95%) ($\chi^2 = 38.785$, d.f. = 4, $p < .001$), evaluation (89%) ($\chi^2 = 19.304$, d.f. = 5, $p = .002$), individual appointments on non-teaching personnel (88%) ($\chi^2 = 58.560$, d.f. = 5, $p < .001$), and having relationships with regulatory bodies (82%) ($\chi^2 = 19.304$, d.f. = 5, $p = .002$) than the other four regions. However, respondents from the African Region were more likely to be responsible for academic formulation (83%) ($\chi^2 = 12.995$, d.f. = 5, $p = .023$) and building and
facility management (67%) (N.S.) and government relations (83%) (N.S.) than the other four regions. Respondents from the Asian Pacific Region were more likely to be responsible for working with social service organizations (86%) (N.S.) and the relationship with professional organizations (91%) ($\chi^2 = 30.870$, d.f. = 5, $p = .001$) than the other four regions. Respondents from the European Region were more likely to be responsible for curriculum decision-making (89%) (N.S.) than the other four regions. Respondents from the Latin American Region were more likely to be responsible for hiring (100%) ($\chi^2 = 11.884$, d.f. = 4, $p = .018$) than the other four regions. The regional differences reflect variations in academic organizational structure and models of delegated authority.

### Degree programs offered

Over half of the respondents (55%) offer the undergraduate degree (Bachelor of Social Work), although heavily weighted by respondents from the North American Region, where 78 percent of those reporting offered the undergraduate degree as part of their educational offerings ($\chi^2 = 93.577$, d.f. = 5, $p = .001$). Nearly 20 percent of the respondents in four of the five regions offered a doctoral program in social work, with 10 percent of the respondents indicating their doctoral program started since 2000. The advances in doctoral social work education occurring around the world are not occurring in North America, where only 15 percent of respondents reported offering doctoral education; of those, only five of the 183 respondents (2%) indicated they had started a doctoral program in the last ten years ($\chi^2 = 19.744$, d.f. = 5, $p = .001$). All regions reported establishing or deleting non-degree programs in relatively equal numbers. It appeared that programs deleted non-degree programs in favor of developing first professional degree-earning educational programs.

The Global Standards adopted in 2004 devotes considerable time to discussions of theoretical perspective in social work programs. Over two-thirds (69%) of the 247 responding to this question indicated their undergraduate program’s theoretical perspective was ‘generalist’. There was wide variation in the remaining theoretical perspectives listed, from community practice (5–13%), anti-oppressive practice (4–9%), and social structural and critical perspectives, each listed by 7 and 3 percent of the respondents, respectively.

Greater diversity was evident at the master’s level with the larger programs reporting more than one theoretical perspective or several ‘concentrations or tracks’. The most frequently listed theoretical perspectives for masters programs were Advanced Generalist (including direct practice), Critical Perspectives (including anti-oppressive practice), and Community Development (including empowerment strategies).

Examining the master’s program theoretical perspectives by region illustrated a slightly different picture with 50 percent or fewer respondents in the regions identifying their programs’ theoretical perspective as generalist. In the African Region, while 37.5 percent of the respondents indicated that their theoretical perspective was ‘generalist’ for the master’s program, 25 percent indicated that community development was their theoretical perspective and another 25 percent indicated that their master’s program theoretical perspective was ‘clinical’. In the Asian Pacific Region, 33.3 percent of the respondents identified that ‘generalist’ was their theoretical perspective for their master’s program, while 12.5 percent identified ‘community development’. In Europe, about 42 percent of the respondents indicated that their theoretical perspective was ‘generalist’, while in the Latin and South America Region, 50 percent identified that their theoretical perspective was ‘generalist’. In the North America Region, 23 percent identified their theoretical perspective as ‘advance generalist’. Only three programs listed an administration track as an option for their graduate students.
**Mission statements**

A mission statement is an important tool to communicate to prospective students and to other disciplines and administrators in the institutional setting the uniqueness of the educational program offered. Mission statements provide an organizing principle for the development of the curriculum, for formulation of field requirements, and for recruitment of staff for the program. Yet only 65 percent of respondents in Latin America and slightly more than 50 percent of the respondents in Africa, Asia Pacific, and Europe Regions indicated they had a mission statement for their programs, compared with 92 percent of the respondents from North America ($\chi^2 = 40.540$, d.f. = 5, $p < .001$).

This stands in sharp contrast with the 2005 Membership Survey, in which 89 percent of the members indicated they had a school mission statement, but significantly higher than the 2000 worldwide census, in which fewer than 35 percent of the respondents indicated they had a mission statement (Barretta-Herman, 2005, 2008; Garber, 2000). The increase in positive response to the mission statement request may be the result of both the Global Standards, which advises ‘All schools should aspire toward the development of a core purpose or mission statement’ (IASSW, 2004), and the increase in degree programs reported in the 2010 census.

**Characteristics of the staff complement**

Across four of the five regions, the staff complements averaged 10 or fewer full-time academic staff, all with at least two years’ practice experience. In Europe, where the size of the staff averaged 25, the same number of staff, an average of 10, had the requisite two years or more practice experience ($F(5,300) = 16.565$, $p < .001$). The remaining staff had academic degrees in related fields, such as psychology, sociology, and social policy. All respondents reported the percentage of classroom instruction taught by part-time staff as nearly 20 percent. In other words, part-time staff either from other disciplines or practitioners with specialized knowledge teach one of five courses in social work programs.

In the five regions, academic staff carried all three responsibilities of an academic staff member: classroom teaching, fieldwork supervision, and research responsibility. Despite the demand voiced for more social work research and regardless of the number of full-time academic staff in social work, few programs reported more than one or two staff devoted entirely to research. However, when asked how many full-time academic staff members are regularly engaged in direct practice, research, consulting or community development activities, research activities were reported twice as often as other activities. An average of six staff was reported as currently engaged in research, compared to three involved in practice or consulting activities. This reflects institutional expectations and financial support given to staff with an active research agenda.

**Student enrollment**

Over 50 percent reported using academic qualifications as a selection criterion for admission with significantly less emphasis on in-person interviews, reference letters, and personal written statements. Considering the central role the ability to form a relationship plays in practice, it is noteworthy that in-person interviews played a minor role in selection to degree programs. Prior social agency experience received the lowest criteria rating for entry to undergraduate programs, at less than 10 percent, but this criterion gained a slightly higher rating of 15 percent for graduate programs.

Average enrollment and graduation figures for the 2008–09 academic year are displayed in Table 3. Two hundred and eighty-two respondents reported unexpectedly large average enrollments.
in undergraduate programs compared to the reported BSW graduates because a student is registered as a social work major upon entry to the institution in many countries, whereas in other countries, a student does not become a social work major until after their first or second year of tertiary study. Some universities, for example, in Africa, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, enroll students directly into the social work qualifying program.

Kenya presents a further example. There, most universities do not admit students for BSW training until after their first year of study and this is meant to ensure that the student is first exposed to different social science disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, political science, etc. This reflects the view that social work cannot operate in isolation of social sciences and strengthens the perception that a social work trainee can understand social work better with a basic background in the other social sciences. Other countries in Africa, particularly those in Southern Africa, have social work programs that admit the student right from first entry into the university. Those countries, however, have established social work as a fully recognized profession and social work is reflected as such in their legislative acts for social welfare. Considering these enrollment figures alongside the number of full-time academic staff raises questions about the student–academic staff ratio in social work programs.

The number of doctoral graduates reported annually was a high of five per program in North America and three in the Asia Pacific Region (N.S.). The other three regions reported an average less than one for the 2008–09 academic year. Clearly, this raises many staffing questions for the profession as social work programs continue to be developed and student numbers grow. The net numbers of teachers with social work doctoral education is not keeping pace with the need for classroom teachers and the demands for strengthening research capability and capacity.

### The curriculum

There was a strong consistency across four of the five regions in response to questions about length of the undergraduate program (average of 35–38 months) and master’s programs (20–24 months). In contrast, the Latin and South America response was 57 months for the BSW, which, in many countries, is a five-year degree program that allows a graduate to apply to proceed directly to a doctoral program ($F(4,179) = 2.486, p = .045$). Three regions (Africa, Latin and South America, and North America) reported an average of 420 hours in a credit-bearing learning experience outside the classroom for undergraduate students, while the Asia Pacific and European Regions require over 600 hours ($F(4,160) = 5.468, p < .001$). In North America, the master’s level requirement was reported at 664 hours, significantly more than the undergraduate requirement. Few responses were recorded on internship requirements for the MSW in the other four regions.
Since the undergraduate degree in many countries is the practice degree, the master programs in these four regions are assumed to be more advanced theoretical or research-focused.

Despite the challenges to the development and adoption of the Global Standards in the first half of the last decade, those standards did set out content areas for social work programs (IASSW, 2004). Figure 1 indicates those required content areas indicated in the standards and those required content areas for both the BSW and MSW are reported by the respondents.

The figure demonstrates a high degree of consistency across topic areas in both the BSW and MSW. Seventy-five percent of the BSW programs offering similar courses in direct practice areas, human behavior, etc. However, in both the BSW and the MSW less than 50 percent of those report offered course or content in the history of social work and in the ethics and values of the profession.

The literature is filled with commentary on the disadvantages of a standardized worldwide curriculum for the profession in meeting the distinct needs of the region, its countries, and their cultures. The elective offerings provide an insight into how programs are structuring their curriculum to respond to local need. As is clear in Figure 2, eight topic areas are offered by 80 percent of the programs. In contrast, only one elective, Women’s Issues/Domestic Violence, was offered in over 80 percent of the MSW programs reporting. It appears the MSW curriculums offered fewer electives, indicating either a more structured program or a more focused program. Only an elective in Policy Practice/Administration received a higher response in the MSW than the BSW elective offerings.

A slightly clearer picture emerges from the data on intervention/method courses required in the curriculum, as illustrated in Figure 3, where it appears that direct practice intervention methods are much more likely to be required in the undergraduate program than in the graduate program curriculum. The results lend support to the assumption that graduate programs are likely to assume candidates hold a first professional degree with its emphasis on direct practice knowledge and skills prior to applying for admission to a graduate program.
However, the lower response rate to the required courses or content in research methods, statistics, development of a research proposal, or the completion of a research project is perplexing and mitigates the assumption that the master degree is more research-focused. Since the profession is...
Table 4. Number of academic exchanges/visitors and student exchanges, N = 289.

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Asia-Pacific</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>South America</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>Region not identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>N = 22</td>
<td>N = 82</td>
<td>N = 86</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 183</td>
<td>N = 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 10</td>
<td>n = 38</td>
<td>n = 32</td>
<td>n = 15</td>
<td>n = 163</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange agreements</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic visitors</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing students(^a)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming students</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Outgoing includes both studying and completing field placement when the distinction was made.

stressing the demand for a more extensive research agenda in social work, this needs to be further investigated.

**Indicators of international experience and perspectives**

In the African and Asian Pacific Regions, where social work education has had limited availability, the respondents reported a higher number of full-time academic staff who studied outside their home country for an advanced degree \((F(5,304) = 3.198, p = .008)\). Wide variations exist by country. This is also the case in response to the question of how many academic staff traveled outside their home country for teaching, research, or conferences. The African, European, and Latin and South American respondents indicated more frequent travel to other countries than academics in North America and Asia Pacific Regions, perhaps a function of professional development program availability and, in some cases, geographical proximity. The most frequent reason for academic staff to travel was to attend or participate in conferences \((F(5,305) = 2.443, p = .034)\).

In addition, many universities in Africa have been able to establish academic partnerships with universities in Europe and America. A key component of such partnerships is exchange and capacity-building for the staff. As such, upcoming African social work academics have been able to travel to other countries for graduate study in social work. In addition, several European countries have bilateral ties with African countries focused on human resource development in areas where certain skills are evidently lacking. Those programs have provided opportunities for African academics to undertake advanced social work training abroad. Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Lesotho, and Botswana have had their social work staff trained abroad through such programs.

The data displayed in Table 4 begins to provide a picture of the international exchange activity. All five regions report university exchange agreements and three regions report moderately vigorous academic visitor and student exchange programs. The number of outgoing students is higher in the Asian and Pacific and European Regions compared to the North American and African (N.S.), despite the multiple barriers in implementing international agreements for student exchange due to institutional commitment, financial barriers, term date differences (especially between the North and the South), and determining coursework equivalencies between programs. However, caution must be exercised in analyzing the data since the table illustrates the low numbers of participants who responded to this question from each region, and respondents were asked for data from the previous three years. The data suggest that those programs that have succeeded in facilitating student exchanges do so in relatively large numbers, particularly in North America and Asia.
One of the indicators of an international perspective is subscription to international social work journals such as *International Social Work* (ISW). Fifty percent of the schools in North America receive the journal, while only slightly more than 25 percent in Africa, Asia Pacific, and European Regions subscribe. In sharp contrast, only one school in Latin and South America reported receiving this journal. The *ISW* journal is published in English with translated abstracts. However, there are numerous publications in Spanish from Spain and across the Latin and South American continent, which present competition to primarily English publications like the *ISW*. This may encourage *ISW* to consider expanding its outreach to parts of the world where professional journals in native languages are less available, especially in Asia and Africa.

Other indicators of a program’s international perspective include the introduction of students to the International Definition of Social Work, the International Code of Ethics, and the Global Standards. Latin and South American schools were three times less likely to introduce these documents to their students. IASSW and IFSW published the three documents as a Supplement to *International Social Work* as a print document in English, French, and Spanish shortly after the Standards were approved in 2004. The availability of this print document is unclear. Distrust, misunderstanding, or simply political and ideological positions in Latin and South American schools may contribute to this lack of engagement with these documents. What is clear is that an accelerated effort to breach the language barrier is essential in order to achieve a truly international social work profession.

**World trends**

The respondents were asked a series of questions about the challenges facing social work education in their country in the last decade. Ten possible trends were listed, including availability of qualified field supervisors, availability of academic staff, and status of the profession. Participants were asked to indicate their response on a three-point scale: increasing, remains the same, or decreasing. A complex picture emerged. For example, over 50 percent of those responding reported applications for entry level social work educational programs were increasing and 37 percent reported that job opportunities were more available. At the same time, respondents reported levels of government support for social work services and social work education as decreasing (55% and 41%, respectively), despite the dramatic increase in programs in several parts of the world. That mixed picture was consistent throughout the trend section, most likely because of the significant differences within the regions. A more specific country-by-country analysis would be required to more fully understand regional trends.

**Limitations**

Because the distribution of the survey took place mid-way in the updating process of the 2000 Directory, previously underrepresented countries and many of the most recently established social work programs were not part of the sampling frame. Selecting terminology to elicit comparable data, as noted above, proved problematic and was further complicated by the difficulty in selecting comparable terminology in each of the seven languages. For example, staff, school, term, and program include quite different entities around the world. Despite efforts to select terminology that translated across languages, several questions had to be deleted from analysis.

The length of the survey appeared to be a problem for respondents. Only slightly over half of the respondents completed all questions in the survey. There were no differences in completion rate between the online version and the four-page printed version. The last two sections, which focused on curriculum and trends, were more likely to be left blank. Possible factors included...
the titles of courses or course content might have been unfamiliar, survey length made it dense, respondent fatigue, and regional differences in what was considered a critical indicator or characteristic for the program worthy of noting. Questions about the educational background of academic faculty and estimates of their academic staff complement presented difficulties. For example, programs expand the designated personnel for their social work programs by bringing in teachers from other disciplines within the institution and hiring practitioners on a part-time basis for specialized content. The term ‘faculty’ has distinct meanings in one country not shared in others. Faculty can be an administrative unit or it can refer to individuals. Although the term ‘academic staff’ was used throughout the survey in an effort to be clear, the responses did not elicit a high degree of clarity.

Discussion and conclusion

All research is intrusive and, because the 2010 Census Project reached out to schools around the world, the project had an impact on raising the visibility of IASSW, highlighting the organization’s activities and raising awareness of the worldwide social work educational community. Updating the directory required contacts with colleagues around the world, requests to national associations for their lists of schools, and emails to institutions, asking for clarification of the information about their social work program available on their website. The process alerted institutions and individuals to the worldwide network of social work educational programs and the untapped potential of those connections for intellectual exchange, curriculum support, professional development opportunities, and, perhaps most importantly, the untapped potential for advocacy efforts.

Every question asked in the survey implied the answer had a high degree of value to the profession. Simply by asking those questions, program heads were alerted to consider aspects of program structure, personnel, student enrollment, and curriculum as important program indicators. The indicators mirror the Global Standards in significant ways and are, thus, subject to all the criticisms that were leveled about the Global Standards, Western bias, and whether an international social work profession exists or is desirable.

The 2010 Census Project provides a picture of social work educational programs worldwide that are not duplicated elsewhere and, hence, is a singular contribution to the literature. The findings raise many questions that need to be addressed by the profession locally and globally. Is the wide diversity in theoretical perspectives at the graduate level a strength of the profession? Why do so few graduate programs report an administrative track? Considering the apparently broad consensus on structure and content areas at the undergraduate level, is there sufficient attention given to national, cultural, and local differences to adequately prepare students for the realities they will face in practice? Are regional differences and local needs adequately reflected in the curriculum? Are students adequately socialized into the profession so as to strongly identify with social work values and ethics when a fifth of their coursework is taught by other disciplines or part-time lecturers, and when just over one-third of programs are headed by doctoral-level social workers?

Content on the history and foundations of the profession are critical to reinforcing identity with the profession and instilling social work values and ethics. It might be argued that the absence of this content reflects a lag in transition from technical-based training programs to social work degree programs in which such content would be considered fundamental to the development of professional practitioners and researchers. Whatever the explanation, the absence of this content in the curriculum is concerning and requires a concerted effort from the profession to insure that this content is required in the curriculum. These are but a few questions that emerge from the data.
which require further discussion and research to continue the efforts to strengthen the profession and enhance the capacity of the profession to meet its goals.

The growth of social work education reported here confirms the notable coalescence and an emerging strength gathering around the profession of social work in every part of the world. The growth in sheer numbers and, most importantly, in the deepening professional social work identity shared worldwide, presents a unique opportunity for social work to advocate effectively toward the goals of social justice and human rights for all.

**Funding**

Financial and in-kind support for this research was provided by the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the University of Saint Thomas, the University of Houston, Ryerson University, the University of Hertfordshire, and the University of Nairobi.

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