

International Union for the Scientific Study of Population

INTERNATIONAL POPULATION CONFERENCE

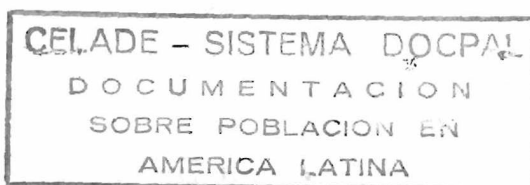
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ISSUES AND POINTS OF VIEW ON
THE TEACHING OF DEMOGRAPHY

Analysis of the answers based on the survey
undertaken by the Working Group on the
Teaching of Demography, during the first
quarter of 1980.



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ISSUES AND POINTS OF VIEW ON THE
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I. ORIGIN OF THE STUDY

During its first meeting the IUSSP's Working Group on the Teaching of Demography ^{1/} decided to concentrate its efforts on substantive aspects related to the teaching of demography and population studies leaving deliberately aside institutional aspects covered so far by several meetings and studies, including those carried out some years ago by the Union's Committee on this same subject. ^{2/} In particular, the Group considered that an in-depth study on aspects related to the contents and orientation of the teaching was needed. In fact, it was recognized that during the past years, efforts had been placed on the development and teaching structure of the institutions rather than on analyzing the core of the teaching contents. It was therefore necessary to concentrate on this side of the question.

The Group also decided not to get complicated by trying to establish precise boundaries for what should be understood by demography or population studies; special attention was paid instead to gathering information in order to better understand the present situation of the teaching of demography without adopting a priori positions.

For practical purposes it was agreed upon that if attention was focused on the objectives and on the persons to whom this teaching was addressed, it was relatively easy to establish four main categories:

- a) Training of professional demographers or specialists in the field of population;

^{1/} This Working Group was set up by the Union's Council on September 1978 and is integrated by Messrs. Roland Pressat (France), Peter Mc Donald (Australia), Guillaume Wunsch (Belgium), Louis Lohlé-Tart (Union's Secretariat) and Guillermo Macció as Chairman. Its first meeting was held on September 1979 where a work programme was adopted to be carried out until the Manila General Conference. A second meeting was held in early June 1980 to analyze the results of the second survey carried out by the Group. On this occasion the members of the Group were assigned different tasks in order to analyze the data available. The Group has since continued to carry out, by post, the work it was entrusted, centering the information gathered in the Union's Headquarters.

^{2/} Committee on the Teaching of Demography (1969-1974)

- b) Teaching of demography, as a subject, in the training of professionals in other disciplines;
- c) Population education and information, and other related activities;
- d) Teaching of demography at the high school level

Category (a) includes those programmes, whatever their level, offered at universities, academic centres, training centres or other national or international institutions, aimed at training persons qualified to conduct specialized work in the field of population studies and that are recognized as competent in the labour market. Within this category, two sub-categories can be easily identified: formal academic teaching and training of technicians.

These sub-categories, on their turn, can also be divided following other criteria, such as level, duration and emphasis placed on teaching.

Category (b) is related to demography as an independent subject which is conducted on a regular and systematic basis in training centres -mainly universities- as part of the curricula for the training of specialists in several disciplines (i.e. Economics, sociology, geography, medicine, etc.).

The third category (c) includes a wide range of situations regardless of the institutions offering the training, which have the aim to transmit, disseminate or promote knowledge, research findings or values and even to motivate action in the field of population. All these efforts have a common feature, they are not intended to provide professional training in any specific discipline.

The fourth category (d), teaching of demography at the high school level, is easily identified taking into account the nature and place in which it takes place. Although examples of this type of training are scarce, it does exist and is characterized by providing basic knowledge of a non-professional character.

In order to accomplish its two-year programme, the Working Group agreed to concentrate on the first two categories. This for very simple reasons: the different degree of interest they present, motivation and capacity of the members of the Group and the usual time and budget limitation.

The survey, which provided the raw material for the analysis that follows, was preceded by a consultation (sometimes called the first inquiry) carried out among all the members of the Union, which had the aim to ask them to provide detailed information on persons in their respective countries -whether Union members or not- actively involved in teaching activities related to category (a) defined above. The inquiry included questions such as name of the institution or institutions where respondents delivered classes, subject and level of the courses, and the language used in training.

The results of this inquiry were organized in a file according to country of residence and name of teacher. Said file permitted to avoid duplications and prepare a list by country. This universe set the bases for a second survey which was carried out among each of the professors previously identified during the first inquiry. This mechanism was aimed at ensuring the participation and opinion of all Union members and at counting upon the opinion of persons actively involved in teaching, thus enabling the Group to obtain a fresh and in-depth view on the matter.

II. THE INQUIRY

2.1. Objectives

The first and main objective of the inquiry is very simple and precise: to obtain updated and direct information on specific matters related to the teaching of demography and population studies aimed at training professionals in these fields.

The contents of the questionnaire were deliberately conceived so that the data collected would serve the following purposes:

- To obtain a clear view of the teaching of demography in a large section of the world -to say the world might sound too pretentious- with special attention on four or five aspects which have been identified as key issues.

- To learn about the opinion on substantive matters of persons rather than institutions which are effectively engaged in teaching activities; in other words, those directly responsible for the training of professionals.
- To induce or stimulate thought and critical appreciation on aspects related to the content and orientation of teaching. In other words, to promote an in-depth discussion of matters which up to now have received little attention.
- To enhance some problems which are common to teaching activities -whatever the institutional arrangements adopted- and try to find possible solutions.
- To gather and classify the professors' suggestions on the possibility that the Union might make a more direct and better focused contribution with a greater impact on the field of teaching.

2.2 Addressees

The inquiry was addressed at all those persons previously identified, through the first questionnaire to the Union members, as "actively involved in teaching activities in demography or population studies". It should be noticed that no mention was made of professors and no pattern was given for interpreting what should be understood by "actively involved", a matter that was left to the respondent's criterion (as indicated in the form: "according to your personal appreciation").

This procedure could lead to some bias as it left the matter to the respondent's personal judgement without any specific instruction. It is likely that the idea of "professor" or being "actively involved" has been more rigorously applied in some cases than in others. To apply a generous and broad criterion would apparently bring no further consequences. A restricted criterion could instead have excluded some names and eventually reduced the representation of some countries or institutions. There is no effective procedure, however, which could establish the probable effect of this eventual distortion.

As indicated above, the reception of the answers was concentrated at the Union's Secretariat. A file was organized by professor's country of residence and

name. This classification and cleaning work ensured, among other things, that each identified professor was sent only one questionnaire, even though he would have been mentioned by several respondents as it actually occurred.

Finally, between November 1979 and January 1980 the questionnaire was sent to 850 addressees.

2.3. Geographic coverage

Mention has already been made of the fact that the identification of professors was carried out through the members of the Union. This of course implies a bias since almost by definition countries where Union members did not reside were not included. On the other hand, it could be argued that if there are no Union members it is precisely because scientific activities around population studies are too weak and hardly developed. This may perhaps be true for a good number of cases but not for all of them. Some examples can easily be provided. Another important bias is that derived from the high concentration of members -within the countries- in a reduced number of cities and in universities or academic centres. In a certain way, then, the geographic coverage of this study reflects the situation of the Union's membership.

Moreover, the fact that most respondents do not work alone but rather in groups or institutions brings about another bias, leading to a sort of general consensus on the subjects included in the inquiry. The dialogue among colleagues "collectivizes" the answers. It would be interesting to inquire about the effect of this condition paying at the same time particular attention to the cases of "isolated" investigators who work alone either by lack of an adequate professional environment or simply because of geographical reasons. By the way, "isolation" as a problem has been mentioned among those subjects to which the Union could devote greater attention.

For analysis purposes, the answers were grouped in seven geographical regions, as indicated in the following table:

Table # 1

Geographic distribution of addressees and answers

Region	Addressees				Total	Valid answers		Ratio A/S
	members		non-members			Abs.	%	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	Abs.	%	
1. Africa	51	12.2	41	9.5	92	34	10.4	0.370
2. Asia	62	14.8	110	25.5	172	55	13.3	0.320
3. Eastern Europe	18	4.3	18	4.2	36	15	4.6	0.417
4. Western Europe	116	27.7	129	30.0	245	90	27.9	0.367
5. Latin America and the Caribbean	51	12.2	57	13.2	108	40	17.3	0.370
6. Oceania	19	4.5	11	2.5	30	15	4.6	0.500
7. USA and Canada	102	24.3	65	15.1	167	69	21.9	0.413
Total	419	100	431	100	850	318	100	0.374

An exclusively geographic criterion was followed in the preceding table. An alternative could have been to establish groups of countries according to "schools" or tendencies in the matter of research and training. It is a well known fact that a division of this type is not simple because cases of clear affiliation to a tendency -assuming that this could be clearly defined- are very scarce. In demography as well as in most social sciences, heterogeneous, eclectic and hybrid situations are predominant.

One could wonder why Europe has been dealt with in two sub-groups. This has been done so because it has been assumed that the differences in economic and political organization prevailing in both groups have their repercussion, in one way or another, on certain aspects of teaching. Particular mention should be made here of the fact that to group Latin America and the Caribbean together could be regarded as inappropriate. The sole reason to treat them as a unit is the very reduced number of cases detected in the Caribbean.

The Group also examined the possibility of making additional sub-divisions but it concurred that little usefulness could be obtained from it, particularly taking into consideration the reduced number of persons involved in teaching. If this subject survives among those that will continue to receive the attention of future Unio

Councils there will certainly be an opportunity to make a more tuned and in-depth analysis. Then, a specific study by geographic regions will have more meaning.

Table # 1 shows some interesting aspects. Thus, for instance, the breakdown according to whether the addressees are Union members or not, makes evident the importance of the latter, especially in the case of Asia where the number of non-members almost double that of Union members. With the sole exception of the U.S.A. and Canada group, all the remaining groups have a similar distribution. In fact, more than fifty per cent of the inquired professors were non-Union members, an important fact which could perhaps deserve a more detailed analysis. The relation "valid answers/forms submitted" appears in the last column. The differences between the regions, in this respect, are self-explanatory.

2.4. Quality of the responses (Validation)

Of the 850 questionnaires originally submitted, 328 of them had been returned duly filled by early June 1980. The answers represented 59 countries. It is worth mentioning that as a matter of principle, it was decided from the beginning not to send any further reminder or warning to the respondents regarding submission of their answers. The questionnaire was sent with an introductory letter and that was all. It was taken for granted that being it a specific subject, strongly related to the professional activity of the addressees, any further action in this regard was unnecessary. Under the assumption that all the letters reached the addressees and that all those included in the list were actually engaged in teaching activities, the response rate was around 0.37.

Ten questionnaires were excluded after a thorough examination on the part of the Group since the information they contained was fragmentary and some important elements were lacking. 318 questionnaires remained after this first validation. During the Second Meeting of the Working Group (June 1980) all valid responses were examined by the whole Group.

It should be borne in mind that the inquiry was addressed at active professors working in programmes aimed at qualifying demographers or specialists in population studies. Consequently, in front of each questionnaire, the following

question arised: Is this person (the respondent) actually involved in the teaching of demography at the professional level or not?.

The information gathered to serve these purposes was foreseen under item II.4 (page 2 of the questionnaire) where every respondent is asked to indicate (yes/no) whether the course he/she is teaching at present is part of a comprehensive programme in demography or population studies. Table # 2 shows the results of this exercise.

Table # 2

The Course is part of a comprehensive programme?

Region	Yes	No	Total
1. Africa	21	14	35
2. Asia	20	26	56
3. Eastern Europe	5	10	15
4. Western Europe	37	59	96
5. Latin American and the Caribbean	25	15	40
6. Oceania	9	5	14
7. U.S.A and Canada	46	26	72
Total	173	155	328

This simple examination which served as a filter, evidenced two different modalities: for all the regions, except Europe, a clear predominance of professors is observed whose teaching is inserted in comprehensive programmes, aimed at a specific professional training. In the case of Europe, whether Eastern or Western, said professors are a minority as compared with those who teach the subjects not as part of a comprehensive programme. Why should this occur?. No answer has been found to this question. It could be that it reflects the long European tradition regarding the teaching of demography -as a subject- at the universities.

2.5. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of five parts, each containing questions related to personal teaching experience. It can be summarized as follows:

I.- Identification

- 1) Name
- 2) Address
- 3) Institution
- 4) Sex
- 5) Year of birth

II.- Personal teaching experience

- 1) Field of training
- 2) Period of formation in demography
- 3) Year in which respondent began to teach
- 4) Courses being taught
- 5) Contents and aims of the courses
- 6) Time devoted to teaching and related activities
- 7) Evaluation of teaching activities
- 8) Access to information or new developments
- 9) Suggestions for improving the access to information and new developments

III.- Orientation of the teaching

- 1) Description of the particular function
- 2) Opinion about the fulfilment of the function of teaching
- 3) Opinion about fundamental issues in the teaching of the subject

IV.- Background of students

- 1) Principal weaknesses in the academic background of the students
- 2) Opinion about best academic background

V.- Suggestions for future actions of the IUSSP

Apart from the usual questions appearing in any questionnaire aimed at obtaining information on the person who is inquired (parts I and II), a different type of questions has also been included.

These questions are aimed at stimulating thought, sometimes introspective, on subjects which are considered essential for the understanding of what is presently happening regarding the formation of professionals in the field of demography. It is not sufficient to know the duration of the courses, their contents and bibliographies, the aspiration to a certain level and the institutional setting in which they take place. Teaching is a process which has two protagonists: those who teach and those who are being taught. Until now very little attention has been placed on the analysis and theoretical thoughts on subjects that affect either one or the other. Furthermore, it appears that at least a good number of teachers have devoted little time to thoroughly thinking about their tasks, the origin of some difficulties they face in the teaching of demography and possible solutions to some of their problems or handicaps.

An attempt, however modest, has been made in this inquiry in order to cast some light upon certain subjects as those mentioned above. The questions included in Sections III, IV and V have this specific objective. For illustration purposes, a facsimile of the English version of the questionnaire has been included in the Annex. French and Spanish versions were also available for remittance to French and Spanish speaking addressees, respectively.

III. RESULTS

Several alternatives were discussed and examined at the time when the Working Group raised the convenience of carrying out a survey in order to obtain data on the problems affecting the field of teaching. There was prompt agreement upon the need -centering on precise and not speculative issues- to count upon answers to three types of questions:

- Related to those who teach
- Referring to those who are taught
- Aimed at improving and increasing the Union's eventual contribution in this field

The questionnaire which was commented upon in the previous section, was prepared on the basis of these three issues.

A summary of the results is hereinafter presented following the questionnaire's sequence. Mention should be made, however, of the fact that the material gathered is far from having been totally exploited.

There is still room for further analysis on the basis of crossed tabulations and new groupings using criteria other than the ones applied in this report.

3.1 Who and how are those who teach?

Their sex and age

Due perhaps to their professional bias none of the members of the Group questioned the convenience of inquiring about these two attributes. Someone might rightly inquire about the specific use of both questions within the study. In spite of not having it declared a priori, it was assumed that the professors'

sex and age might identify some characteristics directly related to the organization of teaching itself. The truth is that much less was expected of them when the idea of including the corresponding questions arised. Very little thought was actually given to the matter.

Composition by sex shows a remarkable preponderance of men. Eighty three per cent of the responses correspond to men.

This distribution is not uniform among the regions. The lowest and highest values correspond to Eastern Europe where no female responses were obtained and to Latin America and the Caribbean where they reach 42 per cent, respectively. This high proportion can be interpreted as a clear indication of the position gained so far by women in the field of teaching within universities and academic centres in this region. It would be worthwhile to find out whether this is an exclusive characteristic of demography or if similar characteristics can be observed in other social sciences. It can be stated though that a considerable number of women in Latin America choose the teaching of demography in spite of the fact that this task is comparatively less remunerated in academic centres and universities. It frequently constitutes the second earning in the household thus being less decisive and what is more important, providing prestige whitout it being a heavy burden.

The age of the persons inquired, at the moment when the survey was closed (1980), was calculated on the basis of the question year of birth. Table N° 3 shows the main results.

Twenty one per cent from the total is found in ages between 25-34, whereas the group 35-44 represents little more than 45 per cent. One fifth of the responses correspond to the group 45-54 and the remaining 13 per cent is concentrated on ages 55 and over.

Table # 3
Distribution of respondents by sex and age
 (percentage)

Region	Sex		Total	A g e			
	M	F		25-34	35-44	45-54	55 and over
Total	83	17	100	21.1	45.3	20.4	13.2
I. Africa	91	9	100	26.5	52.9	20.6	-
II. Asia	80	20	100	27.3	38.2	21.8	12.7
III. Eastern Europe	100	0	100	13.3	26.7	40.0	20.0
IV. Western Europe	89	11	100	20.0	46.6	15.6	17.8
V. Latin America and the Caribbean	58	42	100	22.5	52.5	20.0	5.0
VI. Oceania	80	20	100	26.7	60.0	13.3	-
VII. USA and Canada	86	14	100	14.5	42.0	23.2	20.3

N= 328

Differences between the seven regions are again remarkable. Strictly speaking we cannot refer to common patterns since each region presents its own. It is clear however that the way in which the teaching of demography is presently organized and institutionalized, and the tradition, duration and stability of the academic structure, including jobs, affect in one way or another the professor's sex and age composition. The same can be said in respect of the mechanisms to recruit and renew the university faculties. It is a well known fact that in some cases university faculties become lasting for life jobs while in others their instability is as high as in any other job or even worse.

However, some characteristics are worthwhile mentioning. With the sole exception of Eastern Europe, the age group 35-44 concentrates the highest proportion of professors although marked differences are found within the regions. This is not new of course and it might have been easily anticipated if one accepts that professional development reaches its peak during that interval.

More interesting is to note the weight that professors over 45 have in both Europes, USA and Canada. Noteworthy within these groups is Eastern Europe with 60 percent of professors over 45. This could be interpreted as an indicator of more stable and lasting situations in which the renewing process of the faculties is slowly developed.

Also noteworthy, although less surprising, is the absence or scarcity of what we could call "old" professors in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Oceania. This may well be interpreted as a clear indication that the teaching of demography as conceived in this report is quite new in those regions.

Asia constitutes a special case since the distribution within the four age groups is much more uniform than in the other regions. This is not easy to explain and the survey does not provide additional judgement elements. However, this is a subject which should be studied more in-depth in further analyses.

Training fields

The road leading to demography and to population studies does not follow a straight trajectory. With some exceptions, of course, motivation towards demography is a matter which appears provided that a previous academic background in a broader scientific context is already available. These previous training fields serve as a springboard from which they are projected towards our area of concern. It was deemed appropriate to learn more about the various fields of training of the respondents taking into consideration that the orientation, emphasis and even concern for what is being taught is strongly influenced by the professors' previous academic background.

The questionnaire includes seven non-exclusive alternatives as well as an open category: Demography; Sociology, Anthropology, Political Sciences; Mathematics, Statistics and Actuarial Sciences; Economics, Medicine, History, Geography.

The fields more frequently mentioned within the open category were the following: Economic Development, Public Health, Planning for Development, Methodology for Research, Regional Planning.

Due to the complexity of the responses they were first grouped in three categories according to the way they had received their training.

- Exclusively in demography
- In combination with other discipline(s)
- Without specific training in demography although they were conducting a course on the subject

Once this filter had been applied, the responses for each region were examined separately with the purpose of identifying a pattern which would permit characterizing each of them from that point of view. Such exercise provided the basis to prepare the following scheme:

Training fields of the scholars

Predominant patterns (*)

I. Africa	Demography (60)	In connection with	Mathematics, Statistics and Actuarial Science Geography-Sociology
II. Asia	Demography (30)	In connection with	Mathematics, Statistics Sociology
	Demography (15)		
III. Eastern Europe	Demography (42)	In connection with	Statistics Sociology
IV. Western Europe	Demography (23)	In connection with	Economics Sociology
	History (14)		

(*) Figures in brackets represent percentages for the pattern within each region (100)

V. Latin America and the Caribbean	Demography (46)	In connection with	Mathematics, Statis- tics and Actuarial Science Economics-Sociology
	Demography (15)		
	Sociology (7)		
VI. Oceania	Due to the reduced number of cases there is no clear pattern.		
VII. USA and Canada	Demography (38)	In connection with	{ Sociology
	Sociology (9)		
	Economics (6)		

The preceding scheme and direct handling of the questionnaires enabled us to comment more in detail the characteristics of some geographic areas. USA and Canada are certainly interesting cases. A very reduced percentage of professors with exclusive training in demography is to be found here. The great majority declared having been trained in two or three fields. The most frequent combination is Sociology and Demography which proves once again that within this context the latter is considered to be part of the former. Noteworthy also is the number of persons actively involved in teaching without having specific training in demography.

The proportion of persons inquired in Western Europe who have received exclusively demographic training is almost non-existent. Although it is not the one with the highest relative weight, the distinctive characteristic is provided by the category of those with non-demographic training or not including demography. This category groups a number of professionals where post-graduate studies in History are predominant. The most frequent multiple training is Demography-Economics and

Demography-Sociology, in the same order. In Eastern Europe professors with exclusive demographic training are also very scarce and double training is mainly concentrated in the first place on Demography-Statistics and secondly in Demography-Sociology.

In order to complete the characterization by field of training, in Table # 4 responses are presented according to this criteria. Only 173 responses from professors who declared having developed classes within a comprehensive programme were retained for this purpose (see para. 2.4).

Given the reduced number of cases, conclusions derived from the above mentioned table should certainly not be regarded as conclusive. Thus for example, absolute cases of professors with four or more training fields never exceed three within a region (Eastern Europe and Asia). Likewise, it can be observed that those who declared only one field are indeed the minority. Independent of the regions, the common denominator is to have a training in two disciplines. The fact is confirmed once again that the orientation of the training and the contents of the programmes are strongly associated with the "type" of teaching staff prevailing in a given region.

Period of training

The chapter related to the informers characteristics ends with a question on the quinquennial period in which the main training in demography was obtained. For the interval between 1950-1979 data were gathered by quinquennia. An open group prior to 1950 was also considered.

At the moment of examining the responses, it was decided to regroup them in three periods, as shown in the second part of Table # 4.

In general, nearly half of the informers declared having received their main training between 1960 and 1969 whereas 40 per cent had done so during the 70's. This is coherent with what was observed in connection with age. The relation between the respondent's age and their training period is most clear, although the deferring period is not always the same.

Table # 4

Training fields

(in percentage)

Region	Total	Number of fields			
		1	2	3	4 and more
Total	100	22	53	19	6
I. Africa	100	5	80	15	-
II. Asia	100	32	42	16	10
III. Eastern Europe	100	-	43	14	43
IV. Western Europe	100	28	49	18	5
V. Latin America and the Caribbean	100	23	58	12	7
VI. Oceania	100	10	50	40	-
VII. USA and Canada	100	21	51	20	2

N = 173

Training period

(in percentage)

Region	Total	Period		
		before 1960	1960-1969	1970-1979
Total	100	18	44	38
I. Africa	100	6	35	59
II. Asia	100	21	42	37
III. Eastern Europe	100	44	28	28
IV. Western Europe	100	20	48	32
V. Latin America and the Caribbean	100	6	46	48
VI. Oceania	100	14	45	41
VII. USA and Canada	100	24	49	27

Differences appear once again among the regions which confirm what was stated when commenting age. The majority of the teaching staff from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania were trained during the last decade, which is a clear sign that we are facing new programmes and a growing concern for the subject. In regions with a long standing tradition, distribution by periods is more monotonous. Eastern Europe shows us once again its characteristic pattern showing a high concentration of professors trained before 1960.

Other quantitative characteristics

The survey also included questions on the year in which the respondent started teaching on a regular basis, about the number of hours devoted to teaching and on to the supervision of thesis as well as the annual average number of theses supervised.

Concerning the first question, the pattern already observed for age and period of training is confirmed again. Eighty four per cent started teaching less than 15 years ago (1965). Again drastic differences between the regions are found. By way of example, in Eastern Europe those who started teaching more than 15 years ago represent 45 per cent of the cases. The remaining regions, though with important differences between them, follow the general behaviour.

Conclusions derived from the information on the time devoted to teaching and to thesis supervision are less clear. It is evident that the number of situations exceed by far what we could reasonably imagine. The analysis encounters two key difficulties:

- To be professor in demography or to teach this discipline does not mean the same everywhere
- Responsibility in training activities including thesis supervision are not exclusive. On the contrary, in most cases it is considered a complementary activity among others.

The tables elaborated with these data are insufficient to advance in the analysis of this specific topic. New crosses and a more careful examination will probably enable to identify and define some typic situations. However, this should be done at a later stage.

3.2 What is being taught and to whom is it addressed?

The studies and reports on the teaching of demography besides being scarce, concentrate, in general, on numerical descriptions of some characteristics of the courses and of the students. Very little is known, however about the more complex aspects related to the teaching staff's perception of their own task, the role it plays in the training of professionals, the most frequent difficulties they face, how to overcome them, etc. In short, there is a great gap in connection with pedagogic subjects and it appears that very few professors question themselves on what they are doing and the way in which they are accomplishing it.

With these concerns in mind, the Working Group included in the questionnaire a few questions with the purpose of learning more about this almost unknown aspect of the question. The results, although modest, of this attempt are summarized below:

Particular function of the teaching

The question "What is the particular function of your teaching in the training of the demography students for whom you are responsible?", was intended to learn more about the perception which the teachers themselves have of their responsibility. It was addressed in any case at stimulating comprehensive understanding placing the teacher within a training process which is complicated in itself and which obviously surpasses the limits of its specific responsibility. When examining the responses it was clear that the Working Group had underestimated the complexity of the subject when thinking that only one question could clarify the picture. The first point is that this is a much more complex matter than it was thought at first sight and that it might well be the subject of a specific study.

Nevertheless, some issues have become cleared. In first place, that the perception of the addressees is most heterogeneous and sometimes not very accurate, although only 173 valid responses were taken into consideration (see para. 2.4).

In some instances the importance of the subject is mistaken for that of the study considered as a whole. Despite this heterogeneity of situations, it was relatively easy to identify five categories of particular functions:

- (i) Introduce students to demography and population studies
- (ii) Provide the tools and quantitative analysis techniques, allowing the differentiation of two sub-groups:
 - Statistical and mathematical methods
 - Demographic analysis techniques proper
- (iii) Arouse interest for population subjects
- (iv) Contribute to create awareness of the importance of the interrelation between population and economic and social development
- (v) Initiate students in thinking and in rigorous and scientific work

As regards the four regions out of seven which have been considered (Asia, Western Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, USA and Canada) the particular main function is related to the teaching of demographic analysis techniques. Unexpectedly the second place corresponds to category (i) of the introductory type.

A particular situation is detected in the responses corresponding to category (iv) where it is widely referred to "contribute to create awareness of the interrelations". Those cases where professors clearly state whether they teach, handle, study or explain interrelations are scarce. This is interpreted as a troublesome indication of the yet undeveloped state of the teaching of the subject. Likewise, when speaking of population and development it appears invariably linked to "developing countries", as if it were a matter which affected them exclusively. Teaching has also been plagued by stereotypes and cliches which would certainly not resist a careful examination.

Noteworthy also is the fact that after filtering the responses category (iii) continues to show a certain weight. We must bear in mind that since we are dealing with the teaching of demography aimed at qualifying professionals, motivation at this stage appears to be unnecessary.

Finally, a minority stated that their subject was important since it was addressed at teaching students both how to think in a systematic way and to work with a certain degree of scientific rigour. This finding should not surprise us: demography continues to be a discipline whose main function is instrumental rather than reflexive.

Negative factors

Through this inquiry we wanted to learn more about the role of the teaching in charge of the addressees. For that reason -taking for granted that the training of demographers encounters several difficulties- the following question was included which is complementary to the previous one: "If you feel that the function of your teaching as defined above is not being adequately fulfilled, what are the difficulties which have led to this situation?".

The responses gathered, unlike the other questions, were very enlightening and precise. It seems that professors have a clear perception of the difficulties encountered in their training task.

It was relatively easy to establish three types of problems which can be summarized as follows:

- I. Difficulties derived from the training of students which lead to the following three predominant situations:
 - I.1. Deficient previous training, regardless of the profession.
 - I.2. Heterogeneity in training. This makes it difficult to find a common way to meet all aspirations. Eclecticism and sometimes ambiguity arise as a consequence of having in the same room students who have diverse backgrounds and different interests.

I.3. Lack of command of English. This type of difficulty is mentioned rather frequently in the responses from Asia and from Arab countries in Africa.

This seems a widely spread difficulty, thus being identified at times as a main issue.

II. Contingency difficulties, which include:

II.1. Insufficient financial support. Several universities and some academic centres in developing countries offer training programmes under rather precarious conditions from the financial point of view. Three are the most clear manifestations of this situation which appears to become increasingly worse and might even endanger the survival of some of them:

- Progressive decrease of teaching staff
- Uncertain future of some programme's continuity
- Some programmes' lost of prestige and withdrawal of a number of students who would rather find their way through other scientific areas.

II.2. Difficulties regarding access to computers.

The great progress made in this field and the benefits obtained by population studies need not be emphasized. Nevertheless, it happens that many centres and universities do not have an easy access to said facilities which brings forth some problems and frustrations.

III. Difficulties derived from the organization of teaching. Under this heading the following should be mentioned:

III.1. Time devoted to certain subjects is insufficient. This seems to be a shortage which affects several regions, particularly Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania.

III.2. Scarcity of texts in general and in local language. Mention of this matter is made in the responses from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa (particularly Arab countries).

- III.3. Scarcity of teaching staff. People who teach seem to be few; however, those who do it devote much time to it, which causes an overloading of tasks.
- III.4 It might seem somewhat surprising but some professors complain against pressure resulting from the acceptance or promotion of students that they would not like to have in their courses. Some cases are also mentioned which state as a difficulty the pressure or conditioning about the orientation that they should give to their programmes.

Weaknesses and the ideal background

Two questions were included with the purpose of learning more about the addressees' experience in connection with their students. One of them is related to the more serious deficiencies to be found in basic formation. The other is related to which would be the best background in order to undergo specialization in demography or in population studies.

In connection with the first question, there is consensus, whatever the geographical regions, that the weakest point is the lack of an adequate background in mathematics or statistics. This deficiency also applies to those programmes with a strong sociologic orientation and in which the quantitative component and use of numerical tools is less intensive than in others.

It can also be verified that clear weaknesses in formation in social sciences, especially economics, sociology and history, appear when dealing with specialties which lay emphasis on the interdisciplinary approach.

In the light of some responses, a false dichotomy seems still to persist in some regions: on one side are those who must know quantitative techniques. They are in charge of obtaining as refined rates as possible, constructing life, fertility and nuptiality tables, demographic models, preparing population projections and so on. In other words, they are responsible for the so called demographic inputs. On the other hand, there are those responsible for "interpreting"

demographic dynamics and its role in the developing process. Among these, there still seems to persist a slight contempt towards quantitateness. A false dichotomy, for certain, which in some cases is only a shield to hide their weaknesses.

This question poses again the insufficient command of English in one or two regions. No doubt this is a problem which is not inherent to our profession but to high school or pre-graduate school. However, one cannot escape the temptation of thinking that in these cases there is a serious handicap since the main difficulty lies in a communication problem which is previous to difficulties inherent to demography as such.

Opinions are divided as to which would be the best academic background and it could not be otherwise. Preferences as regards the aptest fields are four: Sociology, Statistics, Economics and Mathematics in the same order.

Secondly, it was observed that this preference was focused mainly on the convenience of counting upon several combinations. Thus, for example, the binomials Statistics-Economics or Statistics Sociology appear often recommended.

Preferences for a specific training proved to be very different according to regions. In Africa, Asia and Latin America the experience provided by economics, statistics, mathematics and sociology in rather similar proportions was deemed convenient. In USA and Canada, on the other hand, preferences for a previous training lie mainly on Sociology or social sciences in general. Mention is also made of an ideal training provided by the combination of a social science (sociology, economics or history) and a science which provides an appropriate quantitative tool. Similar positions are to be found in Europe and Oceania.

Another stream of opinion states on the contrary that there is no ideal previous training. To dream of this is no use since it would take many years to "add" different aptitudes or qualifications. This tendency states that it is necessary to recruit students with a solid training in at least one discipline, with habits of study and with a specific vocation.

IV. FUTURE ACTIONS OF THE UNION

An effort as the one previously analyzed would have a limited repercussion if it only stayed in the diagnosis of the present situation. For this reason, the idea of the Union to initiate or reassume a more permanent role in the field of teaching was always present within the Working Group.

Consequently, the last question of the questionnaire circulated to teachers of demography sought their views on possible future actions for the Union in the area of the professional training of demographers. The answers to this question can be summarized under seven headings:

1. Facilitate exchange of information among teachers, including:
 - (i) circulation of a newsletter for teachers
 - (ii) meetings of teachers, perhaps on a regional basis
 - (iii) sessions on teaching at IUSSP Congresses
 - (iv) establishment of a co-ordinating centre or mechanism for exchange of information on teaching, for example, a committee of the Union for teaching.
2. Commission the writing of texts or books of readings, including:
 - (i) a text for incomplete data methodology
 - (ii) a text for economic demography
 - (iii) a text on data collection
 - (iv) a text on social demography
 - (v) a text on mathematics, statistics and computer analysis for demographers.

Many respondents mentioned the need for texts to be adapted to local conditions and culture and to be available in local languages.

3. Publication of curricula presently being used including reading lists, commission the design of basic or model curricula for a range of courses.

4. Facilitate staff exchanges or the secondment of staff to new programmes in developing countries.
5. Propaganda, including:
 - (i) arguments for the need to teach courses in demography at the university level,
 - (ii) arguments for the need to teach demography at the high school level,
 - (iii) arguments directed towards governments on the importance and usefulness of demography.
6. Assistance to new programmes in developing areas.

Many respondents mentioned especially the development of population library facilities besides broader financial assistance.
7. Advice on model programmes in demography, including courses to be taught, the number of professional teachers required, number of students.

Numerous answers reflected a general lack of available information on teaching. Many persons felt that they were "working alone" and that there was a strong need for communication among teachers of similar courses. Many also apparently felt pressure from their administrations to justify the teaching of demography and considered that the Union could assist in this area. Some mentioned that international associations in other disciplines, such as sociology and geography, had taken very positive steps in practical assistance to teachers of the discipline.

V. SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

The material used to prepare this document is far from being exhausted. Some tables and tabulations remain still to be prepared. But, most of all, there is reflection to be done about the different aspects related to teaching which up to now have deserved little attention.

However, it seems opportune to draw some conclusions on the most outstanding points and findings of this study.

1. To teach demography or population studies has not the same meaning everywhere. Therefore a more or less profound study or discussion on the subject requires as a pre-requisite to be in agreement upon the matter. In some way also what is included within the different meanings is a clear reflection of historical, cultural and ideological specific situations.
2. Regardless of the geographic regions, the theoretical and critical reflection about the teaching task does not seem to be a usual practice among professors. On the other hand, clear evidence is found as regards concern for immediate conjunction or circumstantial problems among which those related to programmes stability or to financial aspects are included.
3. A feeling of nostalgia is detected among those responsible for teaching; it appears as if the activities they are accomplishing did not receive enough support. At times, a sensation of isolation, which is not geographic exclusively, may add to this nostalgia.

4. The Union is facing a very important task and perhaps a key role as regards support to teaching activities. Probably Union members expect from it more than can possibly be provided. However, the subject is most complex and rather than attempting at an encyclopedic effort it would be better to start little by little and sustain this initiative. Tradition needs to be created. Sporadic concerns do not allow capitalization of efforts which due to lack of continuity may vanish and hence cause less impact.
5. The diversity of situations detected makes it advisable to engage in specific actions according to geographic areas or teaching modalities rather than to adopt general strategies. In other words, and aiming at specific results, the next steps to be followed should be addressed at focusing on clearly defined goals.
6. The co-operation of the Union members proved to be a decisive factor in relation to the success of this study. It might be convenient to pay further attention to this form of communication. This is an efficient way in order to obtain first-hand information about what is actually happening and also an appropriate mechanism to gather more members around the scientific activities of the Union.

A N N E X

WORKING GROUP ON THE TEACHING OF DEMOGRAPHY

INQUIRY INTO THE PRESENT STATE OF TEACHING IN DEMOGRAPHY

I. IDENTIFICATION

1. Name: _____

2. Address: _____

3. Institution: _____

4. Sex: Male Female

5. Year of Birth: 19

II. PERSONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1. Please indicate your field(s)
of training

- Demography
- Sociology, Anthropology,
Political Science
- Mathematics, Statistics,
Actuarial Science
- Economics
- Medicine
- History
- Geography
- Other (specify)

2. During what period did you obtain
your training or formation in
demography?

- Before 1950
- 1950-1959
- 1960-1964
- 1965-1969
- 1970-1974
- 1975-1979

3. In which year did you begin to teach demography or population studies on a regular basis?

19

4. What are the names of the courses that you are presently teaching in the field of population studies? Please indicate for each course, the name of the faculty, department or school in which the course is conducted and whether the course is part of a comprehensive programme in population studies?

Name of Course	Faculty, Department, etc.	Part of Comprehensive Programme in Demography			
A.		<input type="checkbox"/>	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
B.		<input type="checkbox"/>	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
C.		<input type="checkbox"/>	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	no
D.		<input type="checkbox"/>	yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	no

5. Can you give a brief description of the content and aims of each course that you teach? For each course, would you also indicate the name of one text which you feel most closely relates to the content of the course?

A. Content and Aims of Course

Text:

B. Content and Aims of Course

Text:

C. Content and Aims of Course

Text:

D. Content and Aims of Course

Text:

NOTE: For the remainder of this questionnaire, please restrict your answers only to training given as part of a comprehensive training programme in demography or population studies.

6. Please indicate the total number of hours per year which you spend in classwork and thesis supervision.

Class hours

Thesis supervision hours

Average annual number of post-graduate theses supervised

7. Are your teaching activities periodically evaluated or coordinated with other courses through any mechanism, formal or informal, in your institution?

No

Yes → Is this evaluation process effective or not? Please comment.

