
School-Based Counseling Policy, Policy Research, and Implications: Findings from South Korea

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School-Based Counseling in South Korea

In this chapter, we describe the development of school counseling practice and review the existing research on school-based counseling in South Korea. School counseling in South Korea had its inception in the 1950s, when the US educational delegation initiated educational missions in South Korea (Lee & Yang, 2008). The US educational delegation taught Korean educators about counseling and guidance theories and methods, which were different from the traditional discipline approaches (e.g., corporal punishment) in South Korea. These activities gave rise to progressive movements that initiated the 1963 Education Act from the Ministry of Education. Although this education policy guideline created an influx of counseling and guidance teachers in school, and training programs in school districts, the role of the guidance teacher was ill defined and provided little direction for 40 years (Yu, Suh, & Lee, 2014). In 2004, through the passing of the Elementary and Secondary School Education Act (ESSEA), schools started to hire full-time school counselors. Currently, most secondary schools

that have full-time school counselors have a school-based counseling office called the WEE (We + Education + Emotion) Class. In addition, the majority of school districts have set up a community-based counseling hub called the WEE center, which provides comprehensive mental health services for children and adolescents (Lee, Suh, Yang, & Jang, 2012a).

Existing Context and Policies

School-based counseling is a relatively new profession in South Korea, with full-time school counselors appointed in secondary schools for just over a decade. School counselors may therefore struggle with their professional identities due to factors such as diverse expectations of stakeholders, a lack of professional training programs, and an absence of legislation to support the profession (Yu et al., 2014). Nonetheless, the growth in school-based counseling as a profession is promising (Seo, Kim, & Kim, 2007), given evidence suggesting that many school students are struggling with a variety of issues (e.g., Internet addiction, depression, and school violence). Two acts governing educational policies related to school counselor employment and training - the revised 2004 Elementary and Secondary School Education Act and the revised 2011 No Violence in Schools Act - have provided a sound foundation for school counseling to build

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upon and expand. Both of these acts have the potential to serve as an impetus for the further development of the school counseling profession in the future. In addition, a rigorous examination system designed to select and recruit the best-qualified school counselors enhances the public credibility of school counselors and their profession.

Until 2015, school-based counselors in most secondary schools (middle/high schools) and school districts held a total of 6,870 posts. Of those about 780 school counselors work in school districts, and 6,090 are employed as middle and high school counselors. The employment of school counselors matches the geographical distribution of the general population. Most school counselors work more than 40 h per week; this work includes the performance of school duties (i.e., paperwork) above and beyond counseling tasks. While counselors in middle and high schools work the traditional 9–10-month school year with a 2–3-month vacation during summer and winter, counselors employed by school boards to work in the districts work about 11–12 months without a long vacation. Approximately one fourth of school counselors (25%) obtain tenure because they have passed the aforementioned rigorous national exam. Tenure laws prevent these school counselors from being fired without just cause and due process. Therefore, tenure does provide job security for these school counselors in South Korea. However, the majority (75%) are employed by individual schools on 2-year contracts.

The traditional route to becoming a full-time tenured school counselor involves completing either a bachelor's degree from a counseling-related department (e.g., psychology department) or a master's degree from a counseling program of a graduate school of education. Traditional education programs for school counselors include the courses designed specifically for those preparing to apply for counselor positions. These courses include psychological assessment, personality psychology, counseling students with disabilities, group counseling, family counseling, and career counseling as well as counseling theory and practice. In addition, students need to

experience a 4-week practicum, which are organized through partnerships between universities and middle or high schools. Practicum experiences combine theory and practice and allow the students to experience a school counselor's tasks firsthand under professional guidance and supervision. However, several researchers have argued that a 4-week practicum is insufficient to facilitate enough opportunities for the development of clinical skills and to promote understanding of practical issues in school counseling (Lee & Yang, 2008). Moreover, systematic supervision is not offered during the school counseling practicum. Some supervisors in practicum sites may also be in the early stages of their professional development and therefore unable to respond sensitively to certain counseling issues. Therefore, a lack of experience among field supervisors can inhibit the effective training of school counselors, including, most importantly, the ethical practice of school counselors in training.

Since 2011, the Korean government has trained senior teachers to become school career counselors. This is because most universities in South Korea have introduced a new more holistic admissions system, which assesses students' applications more holistically, not just in terms of their test scores. The Korean government posits this new system enables colleges to more easily recruit creative and talented students (Yu et al., 2014). Alongside introducing the new college admission system, the Korean government has also trained 5,000 teachers and placed them in schools as career counselors. Kim (2013) reported that there are some areas of overlap between school counselors and school career counselors. The former often work with students who have career development problems as well as mental health issues, whereas school career counselors primarily work with students regarding their career development. The issue is that school career counselors may possibly be engaged in modes of intervention that have traditionally been considered the domain of school counselors (i.e., career development and counseling), which could be a threat to school counselors, especially those in high schools.

Research Findings

Research on Outcomes of School Counseling Programs

Table 19.1 provides an overview of the findings from outcome studies of counseling conducted with elementary, middle, and high school students in South Korea. These have shown that individual counseling (e.g., Park & Cheon, 2009), group counseling (e.g., Park, Yu, & Cho, 2013), classroom guidance (e.g., Kwon & Lee, 2011), and parental education programs (e.g., Go, Yu, & Cho, 2009) provided by school counselors were effective. To date, most outcome research into school counseling published in respected journals and other scholarly sites have examined the effectiveness of a single program (e.g., individual and group counseling). In 2010, the Ministry of Education conducted a cost-benefit analysis by collecting data from 2,229 parents to investigate the benefits of hiring one school counselor per school. The results indicated that hiring one school counselor per school produced economic benefit of somewhere between ten trillion eighty-three billion won (10,500,000,000,000) and twenty five trillion five hundred eighty billion won (25,580,000,000,000) (Ministry of Education, 2010). The Ministry of Education continuously encourages administrators to be more receptive to large-scale studies on school counseling programs, providing schools with tangible compensation to offset their costs.

Because school counseling is a relatively young profession in South Korea, there is no comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP) model developed on a national level for school counselors. Most of the schools run their counseling program autonomously and internally, depending on each school principal's point of view about school counseling (Yu et al., 2014). Therefore, there is a need to develop a comprehensive school counseling program model, potentially with collaboration between schools and the existing national school counseling research institutes (e.g., the WEE research institute). The components of a newly developed comprehensive school counseling program model drafted by national school counseling

research institutes should be accepted by practicing school counselors. Future researchers need to examine their effectiveness after developing a comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP). The establishment of a comprehensive school counseling program model would provide a foundation for advocating for the services that a school counselor provides and for clarifying the nature of collaboration with other stakeholders (Yu et al., 2014).

Research on the Role of School Counselors

Finding consensus on the roles of counselors in schools is a major challenge addressed in several studies (Keum, 2007; Kim, 2009; Kim & Jo, 2010; Lee, Kim, et al., 2012). These studies indicated that, as reported elsewhere, role ambiguity is the issue for school counselors and that in Korea school counselors' identity is ambiguous at the present time. When school counselors' identity is not well established and embraced by the school counselors themselves, it is difficult to expect stakeholders to recognize school counseling as a distinguished profession deserving their respect (Yu et al., 2014). This lack of identity can naturally lead to role confusion among school counselors and a lack of capacity to advocate for what school counselors should do to help students in need of their help, as well as how to collaborate with teachers and administrators in schools (Lee, Oh, & Suh, 2007; Lee & Yang, 2008).

As shown in Table 19.2, the Ministry of Education (2010) performed a job analysis and outlined the tasks of school counselors in detail. However, most schools did not adopt its recommendation. Most of the schools run counseling programs autonomously that is heavily contingent on each school principal's views about the role of counseling in this school. Some school principals want the school counselors to focus on the administrative tasks (e.g., paperwork). The tasks of school counselors vary from school to school. These role ambiguities often result from the diverse perspectives of school administrators, teachers, students, and school counselors themselves. Thus, the perspectives of all

Table 19.1 Summary of research associated with school counseling in South Korea

Category	Reference	Major questions	Method	Source of data	Level/location	Major findings
Role of school counselors	(2007)	Do the levels of expectations and the anticipation of the roles of school counselors have a significant difference?	Multivariate analysis and T-test	Self-questionnaire	Professional school counselors/ South Korea	The level of expected school counselor roles was higher than the level of anticipated school counselor roles
Role of school counselors	Kim (2009)	What are the current state and problems of the professional school counselor system in South Korea?	Descriptive statistics	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and Ministry of Education and Science Technology	Professional school counselors/ South Korea	Problems of the professional school counselor system in South Korea were as follows: non-systematic education system, invalidity of curriculum and selection process, deficit of job description and continuing education, and short of treatment for and understanding of professional counselor teacher Arrangement of education system, settlement of curriculum and selection process, duty of systematic continuing education, and efforts for enhancement of treatment and understanding were proposed as development plans for the professional school counselor system in South Korea
Role of school counselors	Kim and Jo (2010)	What is a duty of a professional school counselor, and what kind of ability is demanded to accomplish the duties for school counselors?	DACUM method	17 articles, interviews, and a professional committee	A professional council/South Korea	The following tasks were defined as a job of school counselors: counseling, education, connection, administration, and competency development. Competencies for each job and task are presented as knowledge, skill, and attitude
Role of school counselors	Lee, Kim, and Lee (2012b)	What are the duties of professional school counselors, and what kind of educational needs are demanded to promote the expertise of professional school counselors?	Factor analysis	Self-questionnaire	Professional school counselors/ South Korea	Professional school counselors reported that they demand to be reeducated for small group counseling, large group guidance, education of parents and teachers, career and academic area
Ethics of school counselors	Kang, Lee, and Son (2007)	What are common ethical dilemmas that school counselors encounter in counseling sessions? What are the ways to cope with such ethical dilemmas?	Descriptive statistics	Self-questionnaire	Professional school counselors/ South Korea	Major ethical dilemmas that school counselors encountered were as follows: ensuring the right to self-direction, respecting client's values and beliefs, professional relationships with faculty, uncertain ethical behavior of colleagues, and legal responsibility. School counselors followed the ethical code when dealing with the major ethical dilemmas, and they relied on their professional judgments when dealing with other ethical dilemmas

Ethics of school counselors	Kang, Lee, Yu, and Son (2007)	Do school counselors have a knowledge of ethical issues in school counseling? What kind of ethical issues are these school counselors aware of?	Chi-square test	Self-questionnaire	Professional school counselors/South Korea	School counselors were informed in the following ethical issues: testing, exceptions of confidentiality, professionalism, contribution to the profession, dual relationships, and child abuse. However, they reported confidentiality, confidentiality with parents, and sharing information with other professionals were difficult ethical issues to deal with
Ethics of school counselors	Choi, Koh, Park, Shin, and Kang (2012)	What are the common ethical dilemmas that school counselors deal with? What are the limitations and should be amended for the current ethical code of the Korean School Counseling Association?	Focus group interview	Focus group interview, self-questionnaire	School counselors school counseling researchers/South Korea	Researchers asserted that these issues should be considered when revising the ethical codes for the Korean School Counseling Association: (1) the current ethical code does not fully cover issues regarding the unique features of the Korean education system and a counseling setting, (2) a revised ethical code needs to offer well-defined guidelines regarding the confidentiality of clients and their parents' "right to know," and (3) if informed consent from parents is not received, problems including legal issues may occur
Outcome research	Kwon and Lee (2011)	Do elementary school students who participated in a classroom-based academic counseling program improve their academic motivation and academic skills?	Repeated measures ANOVA	Self-questionnaire	Fifth grade/Gyeonggi Province	The academic counseling program made significant positive effects on the academic development, both the academic motivation and skills of the students who participated in the program
Outcome research	Park and Cheon (2009)	What is the impact of the short-term school individual counseling model on achieving counseling goals and increasing the ability to solve problems?	Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) and Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM)	Self-questionnaire	High school students/South Korea	The model had a positive impact on achieving counseling goals, increasing the ability of solving problems, decreasing students' mental symptoms, and changing the students' self-image
Outcome research	Yu (2012)	Does the career searching group counseling program improve career maturity, motivation, and career development of maladjusted middle school students?	ANOVA and ANCOVA	Self-questionnaire	Middle school students/South Korea	The career maturity of maladjusted students was enhanced after participating in the program. Among five sub-factors, decisiveness, involvement, and independence significantly improved, while compromise and attitude of choice did not improve. Thus, the participants of the program can understand themselves and investigate information on their future career, which will ultimately enhance their career maturity, give them motivation, and facilitate their career development

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Category	Reference	Major questions	Method	Source of data	Level/location	Major findings
Multicultural school counseling issues	Gao, Hwang, and Kang (2010)	Does the social skill group counseling program improve self-understanding, self-acceptance, self-confidence, cultural identity, and the relations with others of ethnic minority children?	Programs and Interview	Interview on multicultural counselors, multicultural students and their advisors; self-questionnaire	Multicultural elementary school students/ Gyeonggi province	The children had positive changes in self-understanding, self-acceptance, the self-confidence, cultural identity, and the relationship with their parents, teachers, and friends after participating in the program
Multicultural school counseling issues	Lee and Lee (2009)	Does the adaptability program for elementary students of lower grades from multicultural family improve their school adjustment higher than those who have not participated in the program?	T-test and ANCOVA	Self-questionnaire	Multicultural elementary school students/ South Korea	The experimental group that participated in the school adaptability program showed more significant improvement in school adjustment and peer relationship than the control group
Multicultural school counseling issues	Kim, Yu, and Nam (2014)	Does a group counseling program improve the ability of interpersonal relation of multicultural students of upper grades in elementary school?	ANCOVA	Self-questionnaire and the observation report	Multicultural elementary school students/ Chungcheong Province	Students who participated in the group counseling program had higher ability of interpersonal relation than those who did not participate in the program. Moreover, openness and trust factors of the participants in the group counseling program were significantly higher than those who did not participate in the program

Table 19.2 Job analysis of school counseling in South Korea

First tier	Second tier	Third tier	Task	Rate	
Direct service (60–80%)	Individual activities (45–55%)	Individual counseling	School adjustment	40–45% (16–18 h per week)	
			Individual counseling		
			Academic individual counseling		
		Individual appraisal	Career individual counseling		
			Mental health assessment		5–10% (2–4 h per week)
			Academic assessment		
	Career assessment				
	Group activities (15–25%)	Group counseling	School adjustment group counseling	10–15% (4–6 h per week)	
			Academic group counseling		
			Career group counseling		
Classroom guidance		Character guidance	5–10% (2–4 h per week)		
		Academic guidance			
		Career guidance			
Indirect service (20–40%)	Consultation (10–20%)	Individual consultation	Teacher consultation	5–10% (2–4 h per week)	
			Parent consultation		
			Agency consultation		
		Group consultation	Teacher education	5–10% (2–4 h per week)	
			Parent education		
		Coordination (10–20%)		Case note	10–20% (6 h per week)
	Office management and advertisement				
	Counseling planning and administration				

individuals involved in school systems need to be considered in defining the specific roles of school counselors.

Yu et al. (2014) reported three major reasons that cause role ambiguity in school counselors. First, there is currently no nationally developed comprehensive school counseling program model in South Korea. Second, Yu and colleagues (2014) pointed out the need for more courses to be added to training programs and count toward certification (e.g., introduction to school counseling, consultation, and school counseling program management), as most training programs for school counselors do not fully represent the work of the counseling professional. Finally, the current practicum or internship course (1-month period) does not provide enough opportunities to experience the variety of roles performed as a school counselor or to receive appropriate supervision.

Research on Ethical Issues

As shown in Table 19.1, several researchers (Choi et al., 2012; Kang, Lee, & Son, 2007; Kang, Lee, Yu, & Son, 2007) reported the ethical issues relevant to school counselors. Because school counseling is a relatively new profession, Korean school counselors frequently face ethical and legal challenges (Yu et al., 2014). Although some counselors have been practicing counseling for years, legal and ethical challenges can still unsettle and disturb them. Currently, no unified ethical standards for school counselors have been developed. Due to this absence, school counselors are advised to refer to the code of ethics for general counselors prescribed by the professional counseling associations, such as the Korean Counseling Association or that prescribed by the American School Counselors Association (Lee & Yang, 2008). However, the practical values of

these ethical standards are limited because they are not developed with the consideration of unique situations in Korean school settings. Moreover, having knowledge in these ethical standards cannot sufficiently prepare school counselors to deal with the ethical issues raised in school settings.

From confidentiality issues to records' maintenance, from the duty of care to sexual harassment issues, a school counselor's legal and ethical questions can spring up from every corner. Maintaining confidentiality with minors can be more challenging for school counselors in South Korea. Traditionally, before the introduction of formal school counseling, teachers in South Korea performed this role, though in a limited capacity, and teachers are still closely involved with students' personal and social issues. This often helps school counselors to get support from teachers, yet also makes them challenging to keep confidentiality. Another example concerns record keeping. The lack of consensus on the ethical practice of record keeping creates confusion about how to keep records, for how long, and who has access to the counseling records (Lee & Yang, 2008). The development of ethical standards and training in dealing with ethical dilemmas is a critical issue for school counselors in South Korea.

Research on Multicultural School Counseling Issues

According to the Ministry of Public Administration and Security (2015), 1,741,910 ethnic minorities lived in South Korea in 2015, accounting for 3.4 % of the entire population. Most of them were migrant workers, North Korean refugees, migrant spouses, and the children of biracial families. By the year 2020, 20% of the students in South Korean schools will be racially or ethnically different (Kim, 2009). This emergence of students from multicultural ethnic groups (e.g., children of foreign workers, North Korean student-refugees, and children of mixed marriage families) calls upon school counselors to be equipped with well-developed multicultural school counseling competencies. Song and Kang (2011) stated that school counselors in South

Korea need to place much energy and time into developing multicultural counseling techniques and intervention strategies that are readily applicable to these target populations because classic counseling approaches, such as psychoanalytic, behavioristic, humanistic, and cognitive approaches, were formed through Western concepts and principles more in keeping with their values, philosophical assumptions, and language usage.

As shown in Table 19.1, several Korean researchers (Gao et al., 2010; Lee & Lee, 2009; Kim, Yu, & Nam, 2014) developed and evaluated individual and group counseling programs on cultural adaptation for children and adolescents of multicultural ethnic groups. Sometimes, school counselors need to serve as advocates for securing funding for necessary social services for these underserved populations (Lee, Suh, Yang, & Jang, 2012a). To date, only a few counseling programs offered the multicultural school counseling courses in South Korea. Counseling programs in graduate schools need to include multicultural school counseling courses in their curriculum and must be designed to enhance multicultural competences, including multicultural awareness, attitudes, and skills (Lee, Suh, Yang, & Jang, 2012a).

Discussion of Key Issues and Implications

The two law acts, the revised 2004 Elementary and Secondary School Education Act and the revised 2011 No Violence in Schools Act, governing educational policies related to school counselor employment, drove the rapid increase of school counselors and school counseling services for students (Yu et al., 2014). Despite quantitative growth in school counseling programs, there is no comprehensive school counseling program model developed on a national level that outlines the specific roles and activities that each school counselor should perform. Several researchers (Lee et al., 2007; Lee & Yang, 2008; Yu et al., 2014) stated that a national comprehensive school counseling model would help school

counselors to perform their roles effectively and deal with practical issues in school settings. In addition, orienting the school personnel such as teachers and students to the roles and functions of school counselors is critical (Lee et al., 2012b). Research on the development of comprehensive school counseling program models can offer a theoretical basis for intervention areas and activities of school counselors (Lee & Yang, 2008).

As the school counseling profession grows into a recognized field, ethical issues would be critical matters to consider (Choi et al., 2012). To date, no united ethical standards for school counselors have been developed. In order to properly develop the ethical standards, well-organized collective efforts between the researchers and practitioners in the school counseling field are needed. First, the national research institute of school counseling needs to take a leadership role in establishing a task force that would develop ethical standards and codes for school counselors potentially within the existing school counselor association (e.g., Korean School Counseling Association). The ethical codes for professional school counselors drafted by the task force should be accepted by school counselors in schools.

It is predicted that school counseling in South Korea will continue to grow and develop over the next 10–20 years. For this to happen, rigorous and practical research is needed. For example, the research on evidence-based interventions and practices clarifies the way in which school counselors should make decisions by identifying evidence-based practices and rating them according to how scientifically sound they may be. These studies could be the guidelines used to eliminate unsound or excessively risky practices in favor of those that have better outcomes. In addition, research on multiculturally relevant programs can help extending a foundation for intervention areas and activities that school counselors need to perform when working with ethnic minorities. Future studies need to identify the specific multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills exhibited by the most effective school counselors. In addition, policy research into school counseling (e.g., legislation for school counselors) should be conducted in order to systematically expand the school counseling profession.

School counseling professionals need to become more involved in public affairs and continue to promote policy change that supports the profession. A meaningful partnership between policy makers, school administrators, and academic societies is vital to produce substantial effects and improve the school counseling profession. With this partnership, the concerns and challenges that Korean school counseling currently encounter can serve to inform the evolving field of school counseling in South Korea (Yu et al., 2014).

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