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# Development of the Taxonomy of Policy Levers to Promote High Quality School-Based Counseling: An Initial Test of its Utility and Comprehensiveness

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## Abstract

This article is the second of a two-part series that describes the development of the *Taxonomy of Policy Levers to Promote High Quality School-Based Counseling*. Previous article (Morshed & Carey, 2020) described the development of the taxonomy using content analysis of existing published descriptions of policy levers. This article tested the utility and comprehensiveness of the taxonomy by having experts from South Korea, Nigeria, and West Virginia review policies in their regions. They analyzed the taxonomy by using it to describe the school-based counseling policy landscape in their own contexts. Overall, the taxonomy provided a useful framework for identifying policy levers that were implemented as well as the levers which were not implemented but could be used to further improve school-based counseling. A revised taxonomy adding four new levers is presented. Further research to expand the taxonomy is suggested, and its utility to guiding policy research and evaluation is explained.

**Keywords:** school-based counseling policy, taxonomy of policy levers, Korea, Nigeria, West Virginia

Morshed and Carey (2020) described the first stage in the development of the *Taxonomy of Policy Levers to Promote High Quality School-Based Counseling*. Governments use different policy levers to promote change and improvement in specific situations (Bemelmans-Videc et al., 1998). These levers are important to determine the success of a policy. A taxonomy of policy levers may serve as a useful framework to systematically analyze government's policy initiatives. The purpose of developing the taxonomy of policy levers for school-based counseling was to organize and understand

the various policy levers that governments have used to directly influence the practice of school-based counseling. A taxonomy of this nature is essential for the comparative international research to identify effective policy. The initial draft of the Taxonomy was developed using a qualitative content analysis of the literature on existing laws and policies of more than 30 countries intended to regulate and promote quality school-based counseling. In developing the structure of the taxonomy, the policy outlook of The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], which is a useful framework to analyze educational policies, was used (OECD, 2015). The detail methodology of developing the taxonomy can be found in Morshed and Carey (2020) article. The initial as well as a revised version of the taxonomy of policy levers can be found in Table 2 of this article. In this article, we describe the second stage in the development of this taxonomy. As an initial test of the utility and comprehensiveness of the taxonomy, experts on school-based counseling policy in three different national contexts (Korea, Nigeria, and the United States) were asked to use it to describe the attempts by government policy makers to influence school-based counseling practice in their countries.

Korea, Nigeria, and the United States represent a broad range of approaches to school-based counseling. The United States has a substantial and well-established school-counseling system and a long history of government involvement. However, government policy formulation and implementation to promote school-based counseling takes place mainly at the state level with considerable variability across states (Carey et al, 2020; Gysbers, 2006; Martin et al., 2009). West Virginia was selected as a participating state because state government there has been particularly active in implementing policies to improve school-based

counseling. The Republic of Korea has made significant progresses in recent years in developing school-based counseling. School-based counseling in Nigeria is emerging but is still in the process of developing a robust school-based counseling system. Information from these three contexts with such different statuses of the school-based counseling systems was considered to provide useful information of the extent to which the initial taxonomy reflected the diversity of school-based counseling systems and policies across different national contexts. Consequently, collecting this information offered the promise of expanding the taxonomy as well as improving its comprehensiveness.

For each of the three countries, following specific questions in the policy reviews were addressed:

1. What policy levers from the initial taxonomy have been implemented?
2. What policy levers from the initial taxonomy have not been implemented?
3. Are there any laws or policy initiatives related to school-based counseling that are not included in the policy levers listed in the initial taxonomy?
4. Based on the policy review, what additions and changes can be suggested to the taxonomy?

To achieve the initial test of the policy levers created by Morshed and Carey (2020). The authors reviewed the laws and policies that have influenced the practice of school-based counseling in these three countries and compared these laws and policies to the levers included in the initial taxonomy. In each of the three countries, a coauthor with extensive knowledge of the history and current practice of school-based counseling developed a comprehensive list of government policies that had been implemented to influence the practice of school-based counseling over the past 20 years. They provided critical feedback on the utility and comprehensiveness of the taxonomy and attempted to map policy guidelines to specific policy levers in the original taxonomy. They also separately analyzed the extent to which the initial taxonomy was missing important policy levers that were relevant for South Korea, Nigeria and state of West Virginia. Where a match could not be found, they indicated that a new lever needed to be added to the taxonomy for a particular country or state. The fourth and fifth coauthors, who had developed the original taxonomy, reviewed these determinations. Three disagreements were resolved by discussion.

### **South Korea**

The Korean government has implemented several policy levers that are included in the taxonomy. Each is reviewed below organized by policy focus.

#### **Assuring the Initial Competence of School-Based Counselors**

The Korean government implemented one policy lever related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020)

taxonomy of policy levers. The lever is *A.1 Licensing/Certifying school-based counselors*. Korea's school counselor licensing system was developed after the passage of the Revised Elementary and Secondary School Education Act of 2004. Under this system, candidates seeking to attain an entrance-level (Level 2) school-counselor certification must meet one of the following criteria: (a) hold a bachelor's degree in a psychology-related major; (b) complete school-counselor coursework at a state-designated school-counseling graduate-school program and get a master's degree in counseling; or (c) hold a Level 2 teacher certification and complete school-counselor coursework at a state-designated school-counseling graduate-school program. Candidates who satisfy one of the criteria must also pass the teacher examination, which is administered by the Ministry of Education, before they can be certified as a school counselor (Kim, 2009). Although the government licensing system was aimed at ensuring the initial competence of school-based counselors, it should be noted that the system has been criticized because the certification requirements do not align with a counselor's daily responsibilities (Eun & Kim, 2004; Park & Bang, 2007; Seong & Lee, 2017; Yu, 2007).

#### **Assuring the continuing Competence of School-Based Counselors**

The Korean government implemented one policy lever related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. The lever is *B2. Providing support for professional development education for school counselors*. Korea's school counseling system is overseen by the Wee Center, which is affiliated with and funded by the Ministry of Education. The Wee Center monitors and supports the national school counseling system and offers periodic training to school counselors seeking to advance their professional development. However, the majority of the courses offered by the Wee Center are only open to school counselors with tenure, a group that represents only 25% of all school-based counselors in Korea. The remaining 75% of school-based counselors hold certifications issued by professional associations, including the Korean Psychological Counseling Association (Lee & Yang, 2017), resulting in a discrepancy in the counseling services provided to schools. Furthermore, the training offered by the Wee Center has been criticized in several academic publications for not providing adequate support to counselors throughout the different stages of their careers, as well as for the lack of a systematic approach to curriculum development (Kim & Lee, 2012; Lee et al., 2012).

#### **Promoting the Hiring of School Counselors in Schools**

The Korean government implemented two policy levers related to this policy focus. One of them is in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. The lever is *F1.*

*Suggesting that Schools have Counselors.* The Revised Elementary and Secondary School Education Act of 2004 suggests that all schools have one counselor on staff and assigns school counselors to a specific school, city or provincial educational office. Since the law revision came into effect, 41.1% of elementary, middle, and high schools nationwide now employ at least one school counselor or professional counselor, whereas before there was none (Choi, 2017). Even so, this percentage is still far below than that of other countries such as the United States and should be increased. The other, *Mandating the number of school counselors to be hired in each year*, is not in the taxonomy and a suggested addition. It has been added to the revised taxonomy. Every year, the local provincial or municipal educational department determines the number of school counselors to be hired in that year. The policy is generally viewed as beneficial, as it has increased, albeit with limits, the number of school counselors in the country. However, the policy is not without drawbacks. Because the number of counselors that each school or district can hire is predetermined, qualified candidates must sometimes wait one or two years before they attain employment, which could make the school counselor profession less attractive to qualified applicants.

Professional counselors are equipped with different counseling theories and skills, creating a disparity in counseling services. For example, professional counselors working in Korean schools have one of the following certifications (a) youth counselor, issued by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (the only government-issued counseling certification in South Korea at present); (b) professional counselor, issued by the Korean Counseling Association; (c) counseling psychologist, issued by the Korean Counseling Psychological Association; (d) clinical psychologist, issued by the Human Resource Development Service of Korea; or (e) social welfare worker-Level 1 (Kim, 2009). This indicates a variability in professional school-based counselor development and hiring scenario.

### South Korea Summary

Overall, the taxonomy (Morshed & Carey, 2020) provided a useful description of the focus and nature of laws and government policy initiatives in South Korea that have been implemented to promote high quality school-based counseling. Table 1 highlights the policy levers implemented and not implemented in South Korea. To date only three levers identified in the taxonomy have been implemented. One lever that has been implemented in South Korea could be added to the taxonomy. In the South Korean context, the taxonomy can provide useful suggestions for policy levers that can be implemented in the future to improve the practice of school-based counseling. The following two levers are promising next steps in policy development: (a) A2. Accrediting school counselor training programs and (b) E2. Developing or adopting a role statement for school-based counselors. Training program

accreditation is needed to help guarantee that all universities offering counselor training meet the same standards. Developing a role statement for school-based counselors could remove some of the current ambiguity around their role in the schools. Given that the school counseling system is in the early stages of development in South Korea, the taxonomy can be best used as a roadmap for advancing the profession and can guide both policy development and policy advocacy.

### Nigeria

The Ministry of Education in Nigeria has implemented several initiatives related to the policy levers described by the taxonomy. These initiatives are described below organized by policy focus.

#### Assuring the Initial Competence of School-Based Counselors

The Nigerian government implemented one policy lever related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. The lever is *A1. Licensing/certification of school-based counselors*. The Federal Ministry of Education has policy guideline that prescribes minimum qualifications for employment of school-based counselors (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016). According to this policy guideline, successful candidates for school counselors must meet one of the following conditions: (a) they must hold a Bachelor's degree in Education with a focus in Guidance and Counseling; or (b) they must hold a Bachelor's degree in Education in any teaching subject and have, in addition, a Masters of Education in Guidance and Counseling.

In addition, the Nigeria government have initiatives related to *A2. Accrediting school counselor training programs*. The National Universities Commission (NUC) is responsible for accrediting school counseling training programs. The NUC has developed the Benchmark for Minimum Accreditation Standards (BMAS), which prescribes the minimum requirements for acquisition of bachelor's degree in Guidance and Counseling from any Nigerian University (NUC, 2018). It prescribes a minimum of 30 (semester credits) and a maximum of 48 weighted credits per academic session (two semesters) for the duration of the program (NUC, 2018). The prescribed courses includes: (a) Foundations of Education courses such as History of Education, Philosophy of Education, Educational Psychology and Comparative Education; (b) Leadership in Education courses such as Educational Management and Curriculum Studies; (c) Introduction to Guidance and Counseling; (d) Principles and Techniques of Guidance and Counseling; (e) Counseling for Special Needs; (f) Occupational Information, Job Analysis and Job Evaluation; (g) Sex, Marital, Family and Child Counseling; (h) Behavior Modification; (i) Counseling in Special Settings (j) Group Counseling; and (k) Practicum in

Guidance and Counseling. In addition, students are required to have some apprenticeship or internship experience where they are expected to gain some practical clinical experience (NUC, 2018). Using these levers related to licensing of school-based counselors and accreditation of counseling training programs are promising steps towards institutionalizing school-based counseling in Nigeria.

### **Assuring the Continuing Competence of School Counselors**

The Nigerian government initiated one policy lever related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. The lever is *B1. Requiring professional development as a condition for continuing employment for all school counselors*. The Bill for an Act to Establish the Counseling Practitioners Council of Nigeria has passed its second reading at the Nigeria's National Assembly (Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018). When it is passed into law, the legislation will make counseling an officially recognized profession. Amongst other things, the bill would have provisions that reflects this Policy Lever. Detail of this provision is yet to formalize.

### **Ensuring that School Counseling Activities are Planned, Organized, and Evaluated well in School**

The Nigerian government initiated one policy lever related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. The lever is *D1. Developing or adopting a model for school counseling practice*. The Federal Ministry of Education (2016) has prescribed a model on how guidance and counseling services are to be organized in schools. The model specifies the resources to be dedicated for the effective delivery of counseling services and conditions necessary for making counseling a valuable enterprise for counselors at all levels of education. It also identifies the National Counseling Board (NCB), as the state agency responsible for monitoring counseling programs in Nigeria. These are new progresses and how they are implemented in the field level is a matter of further inquiry.

### **Promoting a Distinct School Counselor Role in Schools**

The Nigerian government initiated one policy lever related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. The lever is *E2. Developing or adopting a role statement for school-based Counselors*. Over the years, school counselors in several schools in Nigeria have been made to perform ancillary responsibilities, especially serving as subject teachers at the detriment of directing and coordinating counseling activities in their schools. This development was informed by lack of documentation of the specified roles of school counselors in Nigeria, which also in many instances resulted in uncertainty and related ambiguities about the actual

duties and involvements of school counselors in Nigerian schools (Aluede, 2000; Aluede et al., 2005). The Federal Ministry of Education, in recognition of this problem, has recently developed a clear specification of the roles of school counselors in Nigerian schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016) reflecting the use of this policy lever. Like several of the initiatives in Nigeria discussed previously, this is also a new progress and detail implementation may materialize in the coming years.

### **Nigeria Summary**

Overall, the taxonomy (Morshed & Carey, 2020) provided a useful description of the focus and nature of laws and government policy initiatives in Nigeria that have been implemented to promote high quality school-based counseling. Table 1 highlights the policy levels employed and not employed in Nigeria. Nigeria has not implemented any lever that is not contained in the taxonomy. As with South Korea, in the Nigerian context, the taxonomy can provide useful suggestions for policies levers that can be implemented in the future to improve the practice of school-based counseling. Policy levers are in place to support the quality assurance related to the initial competence of school-based counselors and the assurance of the continuing competence of school counselors. These levers need to be evaluated to determine their effectiveness. While a model for practice is in place, policy work still needs to be done to promote the following: (a) the use of effective school counseling practices within the context of this model; (b) the hiring school counselors who can implement this model effectively; (c) the use of evaluation to ensure the continuously improvement of Nigeria's school counseling system.

### **West Virginia (United States Sample)**

Policy formulation and implementation to promote school-based counseling in the United States takes place mainly at the state level with considerable variability across states (Carey et al, 2020; Gysbers, 2006; Martin et al., 2009). West Virginia (WV) was selected as a United States sample because the state government has been particularly active in implementing policies to improve school-based counseling. WV has put policies in place that include most of the foci of the taxonomy (Morshed & Carey, 2020). In addition, the WV policy context indicates the need for adding levers related to the development of leadership in school-based counseling. While WV has had a school counseling policy advocacy initiative in place since 1971 when the WV School Counseling Association formed a state charter of the American School Counselor's Association (ASCA), many of the policy levers were not put into place until ASCA released the ASCA National Model 2019 (ASCA, 2019). The development of the National Model encouraged the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) to strengthen its Comprehensive School Counseling Policy

and then employ a full-time School Counseling Coordinator to lead and coordinate policy development efforts (Schimmel, 2008). Specific state policies are reviewed below organized by policy focus.

### **Assuring the Initial Competence of School-Based Counselors**

WV implemented two of the three levers related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) policy lever taxonomy. First one is related to *A1. Licensing/Certifying school-based counselors*. Since the early 1970s the WVDE has required school counselors to be certified through earning master's degree in a state accredited School Counseling Program and demonstrating a passing score on the Praxis examination (WVDE, 2018). The second initiative is related to *A2. Accrediting school counselor training programs*. School counselors are categorized as Professional Support Personnel, along with Nurses, School Psychologists, Speech-Language Pathologists, Attendance Directors and Coaches. In 2010, a state taskforce developed the *WV School Counselor Performance Standards* (WVDE, 2014a), providing a common language, describing what school counselors in WV need to know and be able to do. State program accreditation policy was revised to require universities to align training programs with these standards that outlined the counselors' work in relation to the developing WV State Model (WVDE, 2017b).

### **Assuring the Continuing Competence of School Counselors**

WV implemented all three of levers related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. WVDE policy sets forth professional development (PD) requirements for recertification of counselors which is related to *B1. Requiring professional development for relicensing*. Districts, organized by counties, have oversight but are required to submit data into the WVDE data system for monitoring purposes (WVDE, 2018). There are initiatives related to *B2. Providing support for professional development education for school counselors*. Both the state and the counties provide options for PD that align with the *WV School Counselor Performance Standards*. While ongoing PD is required to meet the annual continuing education mandates, counselors decide the courses and trainings they will take (WVDE, 2018).

Finally, WV has initiatives related to *B3. Requiring periodic personnel evaluation of school counselors*. Until 2012, there was no personnel evaluation specific to school counselor. School counselors participated in a generic *Student Support Professional* evaluation that had very little to do with their role and did not contribute to increased competence. In 2011, in response to federal mandates, the WVDE began a massive educator evaluation overhaul. Initially, the focus was on teachers. However, because the state school counseling coordinator strategically included

State Board members, teacher union leaders, and principals in the State Model stakeholder group, these members advocated for inclusion of school counselor and principals. A comprehensive, standards-based, online school counselor evaluation system was developed in 2011, utilizing a data-driven, goal-setting model to ensure the continuing development of competence of school counselors (WVDE, 2014a). At present, the WV does not have a system in place to analyze and monitor performance evaluation data.

### **Promoting the Use of Effective School Counseling Practices**

WV implemented both of the levers related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. First lever related to this policy focus is *C1. Advocating for best practices*. In 2007, the state School Counseling Coordinator worked with other state and national leaders to develop a five-year strategic plan that articulated clear goals for aligning WV CSCPs with national best practices. This plan guided policy efforts in WV and encouraged practitioners to employ best practices. First lever related to this policy focus is *C2. Developing and disseminating resources to support effective practice*. The state School Counseling Coordinator worked with stakeholder groups to develop a variety of resources (curriculum, best-practice protocols, program tools, training initiatives, etc.). School counselors' use of these tools were recommended but not required. A state website was developed to disseminate resources and information to school counselors.

### **Ensuring that School Counseling Activities are Planned, Organized, and Evaluated Well in Schools**

WV implemented one lever related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. The lever is *D1. Developing or adopting a model for school counseling practice*. The WV School Counseling Model was finalized in 2012. While it was closely aligned with the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012), it had its own nuisances about the delivery system and structure. For example, schools are required to deliver a three-tier school counseling program consisting of prevention, intervention, and treatment and to align this program with other school-based student support systems (WVDE, 2017a). The WVDE initially offered training to help counselors align with the model. However, these training were voluntary. After full implementation of the policy, another round of trainings was offered in 2014 to principals and counselors. While implementation of the WV School Counseling Model is required in all schools (WVDE, 2014b), there is no accountability mechanism at the state level to ensure compliance.

### **Promoting a Distinct School Counselor Role in Schools**

WV implemented all three levers related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. First one is *E1. Developing a distinct job classification and description for school-based counselors*. WV has had a distinct job description for school counselors for many years. The performance standards developed in 2010 further defined and clarified the role of school counselors (WVDE, 2012). Second one is *E2. Developing or adopting a role statement for school-based counselors*. Several policy and practice documents exist that articulate the role of WV school counselors, including State Code (State of West Virginia, 2017), WVDE Policy 2315: Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (WVDE, 2017a), and the Comprehensive School Counseling Model Reference Guide (WVDE, 2014b). It is important to note that the role statement found in WV State Code provides vague and even outdated language and content. The final lever is *E3. Mandating that some school counseling-related activities are delivered in schools*. Since the early 1980s, state legislative code required that counselors spend 75% of their time in direct student counseling and 25% in vaguely described indirect services. However, in 2019, that code was updated to require school counselors to spend 80% in direct services to students and 20% of their time in indirect (State of West Virginia, 2019). WVDE Policy 2315: *Comprehensive School Counseling Programs* mandates that school counselors "spend their time planning, designing, managing, facilitating, delivering, and evaluating a comprehensive school counseling program that benefits all students in accordance with the West Virginia School Counseling Model, Policy 5100, and W. Va. Code §18-5-18b" (WVDE, 2017a, p. 4). This policy identifies four distinct delivery systems that make up all WV CSCPs: Personalized Student Planning, Integrated Delivery of the WV Standards for Student Success Standards, Responsive Services and Student Supports. Specific activities for each delivery system component are defined in the Policy. Counties have local control related to the activities that are delivered in schools and there is currently no capacity at the state level to monitor local compliance with state policy.

### **Promoting the Hiring School Counselors in Schools**

WV implemented three of the seven levers related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. First one is *F2. Mandating that schools have counselors*. The Student Support Funding Plan requires that all counties fund certified school counselors who will deliver a comprehensive school counseling program in every WV school (State of West Virginia, 2017b; WVDE, 2017a). Second one is *F3. Requiring that only qualified counselors be employed in schools*. State policy mandates that only certified school counselors deliver the comprehensive school counseling program (WVDE, 2017b).

And the final one is *F6. Funding school counseling positions in schools*. Funding for school counselors is mandated in WV (State of West Virginia, 2017). Because of policy advocacy efforts, the school aid funding formula was revised in 2008 leading to setting aside annual funding solely for the employment of school counselors. The Student Support Funding Plan guaranteed funding for the number of counselors employed during the 2007-08 and increased the allowance by 0.5% per year through the year 2012-13 (State of West Virginia, 2017). The state monitors compliance through required staffing reports. Overall this mandate and other school counseling advocacy efforts led to a 12% increase in number of counselors employed in WV (e.g., the student to counselor ratio decreasing over a ten-year span from 416:1 in 2004-05 to 373:1 in 2014-15; National Association of College Admission Counseling & American School Counselor Association, 2018).

### **Ensuring that the Country's School Counseling System Continuously Improves**

WV implemented both of the levers related to this policy focus in Morshed and Carey's (2020) taxonomy of policy levers. First one is *G1. Leading periodic statewide evaluation of the school counseling system*. Until July 2017, the Office of Educational Performance Audits (OEPA), a non-WVDE entity, was employed by the WV legislature to audit WV schools. This agency was charged with auditing compliance with state code but not actual WVDE policies. Consequently, while OEPA monitored compliance with the 75/25 rule (that counselors spend 75% of their time in direct student counseling and 25% in indirect services), it did not monitor schools' use of the WV school counselor performance evaluation system or alignment with the state school counseling model. In 2017, the state legislature eliminated the OEPA and required the WVDE to develop its own auditing system. As of the publication date of this article, this new auditing system was still under development, but it is intended to monitor compliance of both state code and state policy. The system also is intended to generate information to help school improve their school counseling programs. Second and final one is *G2. Promoting local evaluation of school counseling programs and activities*. Since 2014, as per Policy 5310: Performance Evaluation of School Counselors, schools have been required to conduct an annual program audit and develop a program improvement goal. Attainment of this goal is to be evaluated as part of the counselor's performance evaluation at the local level. (WVDE, 2014a). However, state monitoring of the compliance with this requirement is minimal due to staffing deficiencies at the state level.

### **Suggested Additions to the Taxonomy**

The WV policy context indicates the need to adding policy levers to the taxonomy related to the development of leadership in school-based counseling. During the

**Table 1**  
**Policy Levers Used in Nigeria, South Korea, and West Virginia**

<b>Policy Lever</b>	<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>South Korea</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>
A1. Licensing/certifying school-based counselors	X	X	X
A2. Accrediting school counselor training programs	X		X
A3. Providing funding to improve the quality of school counselor training program			
B1. Requiring professional development for relicensing	X		X
B2. Providing support for professional development education for school counselors		X	X
B3. Requiring periodic personnel evaluation of school counselors			X
C1. Advocating for best practices			X
C2. Developing and disseminating resources to support effective practice			X
D1. Developing or adopting a model for school counseling practice	X		X
E1. Developing a distinct job classification and description for school-based counselors			X
E2. Developing or adopting a role statement for school-based counselors	X		X
E3. Mandating that some school counseling-related activities are delivered in schools			X
F1. Suggesting that schools have counselors		X	
F2. Mandating that schools have counselors			X
F3. Requiring that only qualified counselors be employed in schools			X
F4. Suggesting appropriate student to counselor staffing ratio			
F5. Mandating appropriate student to counselor staffing ratio			
F6. Funding school counseling positions in schools			X
F7. Hiring school counselors and placing them in schools.			
G1. Leading periodic statewide evaluation of the school counseling system			X
G2. Promoting local evaluation of school counseling programs and activities			X

implementation of the *WV School Counseling Model*, it became obvious that both counselors and school administrators needed to develop leadership skills in order to bring about the desired reforms and improvements. Similarly, the state leaders also needed to develop their own skills in leadership and systemic change. Competent school-based counseling leadership is essential for the advancement of the counseling profession (Chang et al., 2012). Louis and colleagues (2010) described leadership as the ability to provide direction and exercise influence to create effective infrastructures and build capacity to move the profession in agreed-upon and worthwhile directions. School principals and superintendents face the problem of too many initiatives, resulting in responsibility overload, and lack of training, skills or expertise to lead student support initiatives (Green, 2009). Yet historically, the principal most often determines the role and function of the counselor in each school (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005). While policy levers specific to leadership development were not intentionally implemented, the WV experience suggests that a policy focus related to “Enhancing the capacity of educational leaders to support the implementation of high quality school-based counseling services” should be added

to the taxonomy along with policy levers related to: developing school-based counselor leaders at the state/national level; developing school-based counselor leaders at the district and school levels; and educating school leaders on the effective management of school-based counseling programs and supervision of school-based counselors.

### **West Virginia Summary**

Overall, the taxonomy of policy levers (Morshed & Carey, 2020) provided a useful description of the focus and nature of laws and government policy initiatives in West Virginia that have been implemented to promote high quality school-based counseling. Table 1 highlights the policy levers implemented and not implemented in West Virginia. To date 16 levers identified in the taxonomy have been implemented. In addition, the implementation of policies intended to promote improvements school-based counseling services suggested the need for three additional policy levers associated with leadership development. WV demonstrates a reasonably comprehensive approach to school-based counseling policy. However, these levers need



**Table 2**  
**Taxonomy of Policy Levers Used to Promote High Quality School-Based Counseling—Revised**

Focus	Policy Lever
A. Assuring the initial competence of school-based counselors	A1. Licensing/certifying school-based counselors. A2. Accrediting school counselor training programs A3. Providing funding to improve the quality of school counselor training programs.
B. Assuring the continuing competence of school counselors	B1. Requiring professional development for relicensing B2. Providing support for professional development education for school counselors B3. Requiring periodic personnel evaluation of school counselors
C. Promoting the use of effective school counseling practices	C1. Advocating for best practices C2. Developing and disseminating resources to support effective practice
D. Ensuring that school counseling activities are planned organized and evaluated well in schools.	D1. Developing or adopting a model for school counseling practice
E. Promoting a distinct school counselor role in schools.	E1. Developing a distinct job classification and description for school-based counselors E2. Developing or adopting a role statement for school-based counselors E3. Mandating that some school counseling-related activities are delivered in schools
F. Promoting the hiring school counselors in schools	F1. Suggesting that schools have counselors F2. Mandating that schools have counselors F3. Requiring that only qualified counselors be employed in schools F4. Suggesting appropriate student to counselor staffing ratio F5. Mandating appropriate student to counselor staffing ratio F6. Funding school counseling positions in schools F7. Hiring school counselors and placing them in schools <b>F8. Mandating the number of school counselors to be hired in each year.</b>
G. Ensuring that the country's school counseling system continuously improves	G1. Leading periodic statewide evaluation of the school counseling system G2. Promoting local evaluation of School counseling programs and activities
<b>H. Enhancing the capacity of educational leaders to support the implementation of high quality school-based counseling services</b>	<b>H1. Developing school-based counselor leaders at the state/national level.</b> <b>H2. Developing school-based counselor leaders at the district and school levels.</b> <b>H3. Educating school leaders on the effective management of school-based counseling programs and supervision of school-based counselors.</b>

*Note.* Additional levers and policy focus in the revised version are noted in bold.

to be evaluated to determine their effectiveness. Presently, anecdotal evidence suggests that an absence of monitoring of school compliance with policies is likely hampering the effectiveness of some of the levers.

**Cross Context Observations**

Table 1 contains a summary of policy levers from Morshed and Carey's (2020) original taxonomy of policy levers that were implemented in South Korea, Nigeria, and West

Virginia. As anticipated, more levers were utilized in the West Virginia context where there is a long history of government support for school-based counseling than either of the other two contexts. In both the South Korean and Nigerian contexts, the taxonomy provided a useful framework for identifying policy levers that were not implemented but which could be put in place to improve school-based counseling.

In this second initial phase of development, the taxonomy proved to be reasonably comprehensive. Seventeen of the 21 policy levers in the original taxonomy were implemented in at least one context. Four policy levers in the original taxonomy were not found to have been implemented in South Korea, Nigeria, or West Virginia: (a) *A3. Providing funding to improve the quality of school counselor training programs*; (b) *F4. Suggesting appropriate student to counselor staffing ratio*; (c) *F5. Mandating appropriate student to counselor staffing ratio*; (d) *F7. Hiring school counselors and placing them in schools*. However, all four of these have been implemented in other national contexts (Morshed & Carey, 2020).

### **The Revised Taxonomy of Policy Levers Used to Promote High Quality School-Based Counseling**

The South Korean observations suggest that one additional lever is needed to be added under an existing policy focus: mandating the number of school counselors to be hired in each year. The West Virginia study suggested the need to include an additional policy focus related to educational leadership enhancement with three associated policy levers: (a) developing school-based counselor leaders at the state/national level; (b) developing school-based counselor leaders at the district and school levels; (c) educating school leaders on the effective management of school-based counseling programs and supervision of school-based counselors. Table 2 presents the revised taxonomy with these changes included.

### **Implications**

Research on international policy levers is needed to assure that the taxonomy provides a comprehensive picture on both policy foci and associated levers. It is necessary to continue to expand the comprehensiveness of the taxonomy by including laws and policies from additional contexts. However, we believe that the taxonomy is now sufficiently developed to guide the study of policy effectiveness both within national contexts and to do cross context comparison in order to identify the strengths and limitations of the various policy approaches to improving school-based counseling. The revised taxonomy would also help identify the conditions under which the various levers are effective and the potential unintended negative consequences associated with the implementation of each lever across contexts. As noted above, such policy research and evaluation are needed to ensure the effectiveness of policies

intended to promote high quality school-based counseling practice.

At this point, while the taxonomy can be used to describe the utility and the comprehensiveness of a country's policy approach to improving school-based counseling, it cannot ensure that the policies are actually having their intended effects. In the West Virginia context, for example, it was noted that the effectiveness of some policy levers was undermined by a lack of ability to monitor compliance. Evaluation of policy implementation is necessary to define the necessary conditions for effectiveness.

In addition, the taxonomy itself cannot provide information about which policy levers would be most effective (or cost-effective) to achieve a desired end. Both Nigeria and the West Virginia use state licensure/certification and training program accreditation to assure the initial competence of school-based counselors. Policy evaluation is necessary to determine whether both levers are indeed necessary to achieve the desired policy objective. Finally, the taxonomy itself cannot provide information about which levers are likely to be most effective in which contexts or how effective policy level implementation may be different across contexts. The taxonomy, however, does enable comparative research on policy levers and their requirements for effective implementation.

Finally, the primary advantages of the *Taxonomy of Policy Levers Used to Promote High Quality School-Based Counseling—Revised* are threefold: (a) it identifies specific policy levers related to identified policy objectives (i.e., foci); (b) it establishes a common language to describe school-based counseling policy approaches; and (c) it enables both national and international comparative policy research and evaluation that will provide the information needed for formulating effective school-based counseling policy.

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