



## Eccomi Pronto: Implementation of a Socio-Emotional Development Curriculum in a South Korean Elementary School

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'Eccomi Pronto' (EP), an elementary school socio-emotional learning curriculum that was originally developed and evaluated in Italy was translated in Korean and implemented and evaluated in 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms of a primary school in South Korea. Qualitative data from teachers indicated that EP improved the self-reflection and self-direction of students, resulted in pedagogically useful insights into the psychological functioning of students, and enhanced the quality of teacher-student interaction. However, statistically significant changes in students' engaged, academic behavior (as measured by an 8-item survey) were not noted. Teachers reported that the core of the EP curriculum was appropriate for the South Korean educational context. Teachers also recommended modifications in the follow-up learning activities to make these activities more consistent with South Korean education practices.

**Keywords:** Socio-emotional learning, elementary students, South Korea, Italy, curriculum

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## **Introduction**

In schools, children acquire academic knowledge and learn academic skills. Admittedly, this academic learning is critically important. Yet, academic learning cannot be the only focus of schooling (Elias, 1997). The problems with focusing the goal of schooling narrowly on academic learning have extensively explored within modern educational thought (see Greenberg et al., 2003; National Research Council, 2012). Many students lack social-emotional competencies and become less connected to school as they progress from elementary to middle to high school, and this lack of connection negatively affects their academic performance, behavior, and health (Benson, 2006; Blum & Libbey, 2004; Klem & Connell, 2004). Heckman and Krueger (2003) studied the factors affecting the achievement gap between middle class and low income and minority students in the United States and concluded that both cognitive (e.g. academic skills) and non-cognitive skills (e.g. self-direction skills, social engagement skills, self-regulation skills etc.) are responsible for the gap, and that school-based programs that focus on helping students develop their non-cognitive skills are an essential component of effective achievement gap reduction approaches. In addition, Levin (2012) reported that there is a much stronger relationship between students' non-cognitive skills and their earning levels as an adult than there is between students' academic achievement test scores and their later earnings levels. Reviews of educational and developmental psychological research over the past three decades have identified critical non-academic skills that are necessary for academic success (Hattie, Biggs, & Purdie, 1996; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994).

Evaluations of the impact of school-based interventions suggest that focusing on improving students' social-emotional learning related to these non-cognitive skills results in improvements in academic achievement (Durlak & Weissberg, 2010; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Despite these broad agreements of importance in non-cognitive skills, schools in many countries have limited curricular resources to systematically address the non-cognitive skill development of students. Therefore, the development of purposeful, school-based interventions that are empirically validated and that promote students' non-cognitive skills, is crucially needed.

Eccomi Pronto (EP) is a research-based, social-emotional learning (non-cognitive skill learning) curriculum that was developed through a partnership between the University of Verona in Italy and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA (Bertolani, Mortari, & Carey, 2014). It is a story-based curriculum that has been delivered collaboratively by counselors and primary school teachers. Each story is grounded in positive psychology-related social emotional learning and teaches students ways to understand themselves, to regulate their own emotion, and to direct their own behaviors. EP also seeks to help teachers understand the inner lives of their students, develop strong nurturing relationships with their students, and develop skills in using group process to promote personal-social development in their classrooms. EP activities are also used to connect parents with the school and to help develop a common understanding of the social emotional learning construct that are essential to promote students' academic learning and wellbeing.

South Korea has been known as a successful country with a strong educational system. According to 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) findings of OECD, South Korean students held high intellectual levels, ranking the first in reading as well as in math and the third in science (OECD, 2010).

Numerous studies indicated that the pressure to achieve in school is more acute in many Asian countries, such as South Korea (Friedman, 1991; Huan, Yeo, Ang, & Chong, 2006; Isralowitz & Hong, 1990). South Korean students may be paying a social and emotional price for this high level of academic pressure. They were found to be the least happy school students in OECD countries according to a recent survey (OECD, 2012). The South Korea National Statistics Office (KNSO, n.d.) reported suicide was the second leading cause of death (4.6 out of 100,000) among youth aged 10-19 in 2008. In addition, school violence issues have been the most serious problems in school. According to the 2013 School Violence Surveillance Survey, 6.3% of respondents between the ages of 10 to 18 reported direct and indirect harm and 56.1% of victims experienced serious psychological symptoms, and 4 out of 10 victims were thought to commit suicide from school violence (Korea Youth Violence Prevention Foundation, 2014). These emotional and behavioral problems affect academic development so that there is awareness of importance of socio-emotional curriculum in South Korea. However, very few studies in this area have been conducted in South Korea (Shin, 2011). There is a need for effective socio-emotional curricula in South Korea in order to complement and balance the intense pressure on academic achievement. The authors consequently translated, adapted, implemented, and tested EP for use in South Korea.

### *Evaluation Questions*

A mixed methods approach to the initial formative evaluation of EP was used in this study. The qualitative component includes short open-ended survey, while for a quantitative component, a single group, pre- post-test design with measures adapted from English language survey instruments, was employed. The evaluation was designed to address the following questions:

- 1) What changes in students' behavior did teachers note after EP implementation?
- 2) Is the implementation of EP related to increases in student engagement and academic behavior as measured by the Student Engagement Survey (SES), which was used by Bertolani, Mortari and Carey (2014) in evaluation of EP in Italy?
- 3) Are the stories, processing, and activities of EP appropriate for the South Korean educational context?
- 4) What suggestions for improving EP design and implementation for the South Korean school context were noted by teachers?

## **Method**

### *Setting and Participants*

Teachers (N=4) and students (N=99) from an elementary school in Yongin, a region of South Korea that has a population of more than one million, participated in this study. EP was implemented in all four fourth grade classes in the school. Ninety-nine students participated in this study. All students were either 9 or 10 years of age. The sample was comprised of 45% girls and 55% boys. All teachers volunteered to have their classrooms participate in this implementation and evaluation of EP.

The Yongin Hanil elementary school is situated in an urban setting and includes 679 students. Students are ethnically homogeneous but diverse in terms of socio-economic level. The family income gap between high and low class is large. In the recent past, there had been a high level of student behavior problems and parental complaints of low academic achievement at the school. For this reason, programs for improving students' socio-emotional learning have been developed and implemented at the school over the past four years. These include an extension of field trips (12 days in a year); an art festival in which all students participate, 30 minutes break between 80 minute-learning session, a school garden, and family hill climbing events. With an increased focus on socio-emotional learning, the school data has indicated that the rate of student problem behaviors has decreased, and academic engagement has increased. Consequently, student and parent satisfaction with the school increased, and the school became well known as an emotionally and academically successful school in the community. While practices at this school demonstrate a much higher recognition of the importance of and emphasis on students' socio-emotional learning compared to the norm in South Korea, the school, however, lacked a structured curriculum that focuses social emotional learning in the classroom settings.

#### *Eccomi Pronto Curriculum*

EP is a story-based curriculum designed to simultaneously promote the development of early elementary school students' self-direction, active engagement in school, and literacy skill development (Bertolani, Mortari, & Carey, 2014). The curriculum is designed to be delivered by teachers in collaboration with counselors, and is intended to be delivered as a universal curriculum for the student general population in the early primary years.

EP is based on the fundamental assumption that students' academic development and personal development are inextricably bound. Every EP unit focuses on both students' social-emotional development and literacy development. EP is intended as a compliment rather than a supplement for reading skills instruction. It is designed to teach the structure of good stories, how to remember and relate the sequence of events in a story, how to make good inferences about the characters' inner lives of thought and emotions and their influence on behavior. It is well-established that students need to learn a range of discrete skills, such as decoding, to process written language and that a lack of such skills can severely impair academic development (Adams & Bruck, 1993; MacDonald & Cornwall, 1995). Skills-based instruction in reading mechanics, however, is not sufficient to promote literacy development (Cooper, 1993). To be engaged literacy learners, students also need to develop such skills as confidence in their basic abilities; a range of self-management skills and routines; knowledge of their own strengths, limitations and tendencies; comfort and skill in working with others; and joy in learning (Squire, Nailor & Carey, 2014). Rather than being focused on helping student develop specific reading-based academic, EP is designed to help elementary students become engaged, self-directed, lifelong learners—a goal that cannot be accomplished by skill-based instruction alone.

In addition to promoting literacy development, EP is intended to start students down the path towards self-directed learning. Each story in the curriculum is based on key concepts (e.g. using self-talk to regulate academic behavior) from a research tradition in modern educational or developmental psychology related to

the capacity to be an effective self-directed learner. The characters and events in the stories help students see how these concepts can be used to improve their lives. Each story has a lesson or a ‘moral’ but, unlike traditional children’s stories; these lessons are based on psychological theory and research rather than on folk psychology. For example, the story related to Goal Setting (Locke, 1996) includes two main characters, Becky and her sister Bertha; both want to become the most famous cow in the world. They engage in a contest to see who can jump over the moon first. The story describes how Bertha and Becky try to solve this problem in different ways. Bertha tries hard while Becky develops a plan with different goals for each day of the week. The story ends with a lesson. Becky is successful because of the way she uses a systematic goal-setting process to solve the problem.

Each of the twelve lesson cycles has four parts, namely a brief introduction to the lesson; a story; group processing of the story; and follow-up activities. The introduction orients students to the work and helps them focus on key concepts and skills related to the lesson. The story consists of a description of the antecedent state (i.e., the problem), a series of events, descriptions of characters who interact with each other in the story and who experience the events of the story, and a resolution of the story (with an explicitly stated or implied lesson or moral). The group processing component includes a detailed protocol to help teachers lead group inquiry focused on the story. Finally, follow-up activities are concrete suggestions for projects that can be used to reinforce learning. For example, after a story focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the EP handbook suggests that teachers ask the students to use such strategies as, choose one thing that they enjoy doing and one thing that they know they need to do even though they do not enjoy doing it; write these two things on a piece of paper, develop a plan to help themselves remember to do the thing that they like doing and to do the thing that do not like to do; and, sign this ‘contract’.

In the present study, the first six EP curriculum units were translated from Italian to English by two of the original developers of the curriculum. Two bilingual members of the research team then translated the units into Korean. Discrepancies or problems in translation were identified and discussed across the two sets of translators so that equivalent translations could be produced.

### *Evaluation Design*

This evaluation employed a mixed methods approach, employing both qualitative and quantitative elements. The qualitative component used an open-ended survey of teachers and the records from weekly teacher meetings to gauge the appropriateness of EP in the South Korean educational context, to identify needed improvements in the curriculum, and to identify changes in students attributed EP.

The quantitative component was also used to attempt to validate (or triangulate) the qualitative component. Here we were constrained by the practical realities of the school environment to use a single group pretest-posttest design. It was not feasible to implement *EP* in a ‘staggered’ fashion in that school so that comparison group would result. Nor was it possible to locate a similar school that was willing to participate as a comparison school. While a one group, pre-post design is relatively weak from the perspective of reducing threats to internal validity, however, it is useful especially in the early stages of an investigation of a phenomenon in settings when it is not feasible to employ a control group (see Campbell & Stanley, 1966;

Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002). In such instances, this design can point to findings that need to be investigated later using stronger evaluation designs. While the design of the present study cannot definitively determine whether changes in students are caused by their participation in the EP curriculum, the present study can shed light on the appropriateness of implementing EP in the South Korean educational context and yield preliminary data on the probable effects of EP. These generative results can help shape and direct subsequent cross-cultural studies of EP.

### *Instruments*

The instruments used in the present study were translations (using the same process described above) of the instrument used by Bertolani, Mortari and Carey (2014). After translation, the four participating teachers reviewed the Student Engagement Survey (SES) to gauge its face validity as a measure of engagement in South Korean classrooms and to determine its readability for their students. Teacher agreed that the SES was an appropriate measure.

*Qualitative surveys.* An open-ended survey was used to collect qualitative data from all four teachers. These data were collected after the EP intervention. Teacher survey consisted of nine open-ended questions. It gathered feedback on the value of the project and suggestions for its improvement. Two questions focused on teachers' reflections of the whole experience and asked teachers to comment on what they either liked or find helpful about the intervention. Two other questions asked about changes within either the classroom or students related to intervention; specifically whether teachers saw any changes and if so, what types of changes were noted. Another question explored what teachers thought about being in the role of conductor of EP lessons. Two further questions asked whether teachers shared their experience of the project with colleagues and families. The final question asked what teachers would change to improve the curriculum.

*Teacher Modifications of EP.* While implementing EP, teachers met once a week. A member of the research team led this meeting. In the meeting, the teachers reviewed the six weekly EP session and discussed whether the curriculum unit's story and follow-up activities fit into South Korean cultural and educational context. In consultation with the research team, teachers suggested modifications to the EP curriculum units (see results section for a summary of these suggested modifications). Meeting notes were recorded and all modifications were noted.

*Quantitative instrument.* The Student Engagement Survey (SES) (Bertolani, Mortari and Carey, 2014) was used to collect evaluation data on student engagement. These data were collected both before and after the EP intervention. Bertolani, Mortari and Carey (2014) developed this instrument based on the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). Psychometric investigations suggest that the MSLQ has good reliability and validity characteristics and that the items are appropriate for elementary students (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). Coefficient alpha reliability of range between .74 and .83 and MSLQ scores have been demonstrated to be related to student's school performance on measures including grades on quizzes and examination; grades on essays and reports; student performance on classroom seat-work assignments; and, overall class grades (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). Bertolani, Mortari and Carey's (2014) adaptation of the MSLQ is an 8-item scale (i.e the SES). On the SES, respondents rate

items (e.g. I always do my homework when it is boring.) on a three-point scale (1 = true; 2 = somewhat true; 3 = not true). Higher scores indicate greater school engagement. In a previous study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the SES was found to be .87 and students' SES scores increased after participation in EP (Bertolani, Mortari & Carey, 2014).

### *Procedures*

EP implementation procedures are described below. First, researchers selected an elementary school for this project. The participating school is the place in which one of researchers has been working and which, as noted above, is positively disposed towards socio-emotional learning. Second, researchers requested the principal of the school to permit the implementation of this program. In South Korea, all the courses performed in classroom are thoroughly scheduled before the beginning of the semester, so the permission of principal is a necessary step in order to change some courses into others. Third, the teachers were contacted by the school's intranet and were asked whether they wished to be involved in the project. For actual implementation, the researchers selected all four fourth grade classrooms. These classrooms were selected because all four teachers were veteran teachers and were very interested in learning how to implement a socio-emotional classroom curriculum. One teacher had already earned a doctoral degree in Education. Another was enrolled in a Masters program in counseling and psychology. The two teachers held a bachelor's degree. Fourth, two researchers visited the school (May 2014) and met both a principal and teachers in order to introduce main concepts and goals. During the meeting with teachers, researchers explained the salient features and components of each session of EP and provided the rules and procedures for conducting a typical curriculum unit. Fifth, a letter describing the project, its associated data collection procedures, and informed consent forms were sent home to parents (May, 2014). Sixth, teachers were trained to deliver EP by one of the researchers (June, 2014). Training lasted one day and included observation of a demonstration, opportunity to practice a session and feedback from the trainer. Seventh, teachers implemented six EP curriculum units in their class over a 6 week period (June-July, 2015). A typical EP session lasted an hour. It included a brief review of the previous session; the introduction of new material; the reading of the story; group processing of the story; an activity, such as drawing, for debriefing; and instructions for additional teacher- or parent-led activities to be completed before the next session (Bertolani, Mortari, & Carey, 2014).

*Intervention Fidelity.* Implementation fidelity was assured through direct observation of each teacher's first lesson by a researcher and through a researcher leading weekly review meetings with teachers. Proposed adaptations (e.g. the use of a worksheet) suggested by the teachers were discussed and reviewed in these meetings to ensure that they were consistent with the learning objectives of the corresponding EP unit and the overall learning goals of the EP curriculum. All adaptations that were adopted by the group were implemented in all four classrooms.

### *Data Analysis*

The qualitative analysis process followed a phenomenologically-grounded approach (Mortari, 2007). The qualitative analysis consisted of the following four steps, namely, close reading of each survey to obtain

an overall understanding; identifying the significant text units of the responses and observations; labelling any text unit previously identified (this phase involved the search for a descriptive label which captured the meaning of the text unit); and grouping labels and finding a category for each collection of labels. When a category was represented in all four teachers' data, it was considered to represent a theme. Only five such themes were identified in these data.

In the quantitative analyses, a dependent-test was used to examine pre-to post-test changes on the total SES scale score. Almost all students' data were complete. Only five students did not answer one item each. Less than 0.6% of the data was missing. Here, item means were substituted for the missing values in the computation of students' total SES scores.

## Results

### *Teacher Survey Results*

All four teachers completed the surveys. Five themes were identified from the four teachers' data. First, teachers indicated that the *EP curriculum was fun and engaging*. Teacher #4, for example, said; "Generally students enjoy this program due to the interesting stories and participate in every activity with a lot of enthusiasm and expectation". Second, teachers indicated that they believed that *EP encouraged students' self-reflection and self-directed behavior*. Teacher #2, for example, stated; "This method enables the students to handle their problems by themselves without others' "help". In addition, teacher #3 said, "each student is able to set the goals, try to reach them and finally feel satisfied with the results they made". Third, teachers indicated that participating in *EP gave them new, useful insights into their students*. Teacher #3 stated, "It was good to know what the students think and feel in their classes and it gives [teachers] the chance to make creative activities to enhance personality development and self-directedness in class". Fourth, teachers reported that *participation enhanced the nature of the teacher-student relationship and the quality of teacher-student interaction*. Teacher #1, for example, stated; "Teachers need to make an endeavor to understand children's thoughts and minds and guide them while communicating and sympathizing". Finally, teachers indicated that the *EP curriculum could be improved*. Mainly teachers suggest that the curriculum needs to be reorganized for higher graders and integrate with diverse examples and activities.

### *Quantitative Data: Changes in Student Engagement.*

Based on pre-test and post-test scores obtained in the present study, internal consistency of the SES was estimated as 0.538 and .588 by Cronbach alpha procedures. Student scores (pre- and post-test) on the SES were compared using a t-dependent test. The pre-test of SES (N=99) had a mean of 14.99 and a standard deviation of 1.98, while the post-test of SES (N=99) had a mean of 15.16 and a standard deviation of 2.03. Neither pre nor posttest SES scores showed significant skewness (Pretest = -0.300; Posttest = -0.506) or kurtosis (Pretest = -0.734; Posttest = 0.157). The t-dependent test did not find any significant difference ( $t = -.667$ ;  $df = 97$ ,  $p >.506$ ), suggesting that self-reported student ratings of their own engagement in school did not improve significantly after EP.

### *Changes developed to adapt EP to South Korean context*

The teachers unanimously agreed that the six EP curriculum units were largely appropriate for the South Korean cultural and educational context. No modifications were suggested for the introductions to the lessons, the stories, or the group processing of the stories. All four teachers, however, did make several modifications in the follow-up activities to make them more consistent with the South Korean educational environment. First, worksheets for follow-up activities after the reading of the story and group processing of the story were developed in order to help students engage in follow-up activities. South Korean elementary students are very familiar with using worksheets to support learning in areas such as mathematic calculation and English grammar. Considering that a regular class of South Korean elementary school lasts only 40 minutes, teachers also used structured worksheets to enable students to finish up all the activities more efficiently in the allotted time. Second, writing as well as drawing was commonly used in worksheet-based follow-up activities. In the original Italian version of EP, most follow-up activities were based on student drawing. For these fourth grade students in a South Korean school, writing was considered by the teachers to be an easier way for students to express what they learned from the stories and group processing. Third, concrete examples of correct responses that were consistent with the South Korean context were presented to students along with their blank worksheets. For example, one of the developed worksheet activities, ‘Trying Something Different’ (second session), asked students to find a new way to solve their current problems. Along with the structured worksheet, students were given a completed worksheet example (see Table I) based on a familiar situation in the South Korean education context to help them formulate their own response. The teachers believed that the students would more readily respond if they had positive examples to emulate.

**Table I. Example developed by Korean teachers and provided to students to illustrate a ‘correct’ response.**

Trying Something Different	
Description	I can't turn in my homework in due date.
Attempted Solution and Reaction	<b>Solution:</b> Writing down the homework on the note reminds me of doing it.  <b>Reaction:</b> I forgot to do my homework while doing other project.
Try Something Different 1	I do my homework as soon as possible as soon as I arrive home, and ask parents to check immediately.
Try Something Different 2	I put post-it on the desk as a reminder and check up my must-do before going to bed.

### **Conclusions and Discussion**

#### *What changes in students' behavior did teachers note after EP implementation?*

Teachers indicated that they believed that EP participation resulted in positive changes in their students. Specifically, they indicated that students were more self-reflective and self-directed as a

consequence of their participation in the curriculum. Judging from their responses, EP was successful in achieving its major socio-emotional learning objectives. The teachers also identified three features of the EP curriculum that support its efficacy, namely that EP is fun and engaging; that EP gave them new, useful insights into the psychological lives of their students, and that EP participation enhanced the nature of the teacher-student relationship and the quality of teacher-student interaction. These results are consistent with the previous findings of Bertolani, Mortari, and Carey (2014).

*Is the implementation of EP related to increases in student engagement and academic behavior as measured by the SES?*

The results of the present study failed to find a significant increase in students' engaged, academic behavior related to EP participation. This result fails to replicate the findings of Bertolani, Mortari and Carey (2014) in Italian primary schools. There are several possible explanations for this discrepancy. First, instrumentation issues may have influenced the results. The SES proved to be much less reliable in the South Korean sample ( $r = .53$ ) than in the Italian sample ( $r = .87$ ). The Italian version of the instrument may be a 'cleaner' measure of engaged, academic behavior, while the South Korean version is most likely measuring engagement and additional variables.

Second, the two samples also showed large differences in mean scores on the SES. For example, the South Korean sample showed a post-test SES mean of 15.16 compared to the corresponding Italian mean of 11.72. Considering that all of the eight items have a 3-point response format, this difference is quite substantial. These higher scores could be related to a number of factors including the possibility that the South Korean students were indeed more highly engaged as a consequence of studying in a school that was highly invested in socio-emotional learning, or the possibility that the South Korean students tended to respond more positively to multiple choice items given the emphasis on the importance of doing well on examinations that is prevalent in South Korean culture and education. In any event, it is likely that the higher scores in the South Korean sample created a ceiling effect that made finding a significant pre- and post-test difference more difficult.

Third, it is also possible that SES differences in results are related to translation issues. While we used a back translation process to help ensure translation accuracy (see Bertolani, Mortari & Carey, 2014), as well as teacher reviews to help ensure face validity and readability, it is possible that the Korean and Italian versions of SES are not equivalent measures. Despite the advantages of using the same measure across contexts, future studies of EP may also include instruments that have known psychometric characteristics within the country in which the study is being conducted.

*Are the stories, processing, and activities of EP appropriate for the South Korean educational context?*

Teachers unanimously agreed that the six EP curriculum units were appropriate for the South Korean cultural and educational context. No modifications were suggested for the introductions to the lessons, the stories or the group processing of the stories.

### *What suggestions for improving EP design and implementation were noted by teachers?*

The South Korean teachers made several modifications in the EP follow-up activities to make them more consistent with the South Korean educational environment. These modifications included increased use of student writing (rather than drawing) in follow-up activities, and the use of structured worksheets with examples of correct responses. Teachers regarded these modifications as necessary in order to adjust the implementation of EP in South Korean educational contexts to make it more consistent with schedules and practices. We did not ask students if they thought whether these examples were necessary, but it would be important to do so in subsequent research.

### *Implications for Practice*

The results of this investigation are promising and suggest that additional field tests and evaluations of the effects of the EP curriculum (with modified activities) are warranted in South Korean schools. EP may indeed prove to be a valuable method for infusing a much needed emphasis on socio-emotional learning in South Korean schools. Given the apparent instrumentation problems however, care should be taken to use instruments that are more appropriate for measuring student change in these field tests, and to collect qualitative data from students regarding how they evaluate the program.

### *Implications for Research*

EP has the potential to be a valuable tool to enhance students' socio-emotional development, to promote greater understanding by teachers of the psychological lives of their students, and to enhance the quality of the teacher-student relationship. The stories and group processing aspects of EP seem appropriate for two very different cultural and educational contexts. However, actual student follow-up learning activities needed to be modified in order to make them consistent with cultural differences in educational practices and approaches. Additional studies of the effectiveness of EP in South Korean schools and addition field tests of EP in other countries are warranted. Given the limitations of single group evaluation designs like the one used in the present study, evaluations of EP that employ a control group design (ideally with random assignment of participants to conditions) is necessary to establish its effectiveness and to draw a definitive causal link between the curriculum and positive student outcomes. Finally, it should be noted that the present study was limited to a study of the effects of EP on academic outcomes. Future research should expand this analysis to include other potential outcomes, such as optimism, self-efficacy, and self-acceptance, that are related to psychological health and wellbeing of students.

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