

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Middle Years Programme (MYP) implementation in Turkey



Summary developed by the IB Research department based on a report prepared by:

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September 2016

Background

The purpose of this study was to investigate the implementation and outcomes of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) in Turkish schools. The study involved an analysis of the MYP implementation process and the alignment of programme materials from the Turkish Ministry of National Education Program (MoNEP) and the IB. Researchers employed an embedded multiple case-study approach to conduct an in-depth analysis of three schools that have been implementing the MYP for at least two years.

Research design

Data sources included interviews with school heads ($n = 4$), MYP coordinators ($n = 6$) and teachers. Teachers participated in focus groups (11 groups with an average of 5 teachers per group) and they also completed a questionnaire about school culture and classroom learning environments ($n = 155$). To further examine classroom climate, 22 lessons were observed using a rubric that helped to identify IB learner profile attributes, teacher attitudes and student behaviours. Factor analysis provided an in-depth examination of the teacher questionnaire data, which was triangulated with findings from the qualitative data analysis. Another source of data was student scores and their rankings on the Turkish national exam, which provided insight into student academic performance.

To examine programme alignment, *MYP: From principles into practice* (IBO 2014), other MYP documents and some IB subject guides were compared to the Turkish Ministry of National Education *Fundamental principles* (including the amendments) (MoNE 1973), *Regulations of primary education* (MoNE 2013a) and *Regulations of secondary education* (MoNE 2013b).

Findings

Outcomes of MYP implementation

This section presents findings related to the outcomes of MYP implementation on school culture, classroom

climate and student academic performance on an external measure.

School culture

The school culture of the MYP case-study schools was positive. Teachers and coordinators agreed that their principals support MYP implementation and teacher professional development. They also noted that it is advantageous to have leaders who have formerly experienced IB programmes as teachers or coordinators; this helps them to understand the importance of particular training in support of teachers' efforts to implement the MYP.

The questionnaire results showed that, of the teachers surveyed, 66% agreed that their schools ensure teachers have proper MYP preparation before they start implementing the programme. Nearly 59% strongly agreed or agreed that their school empowers them to make decisions under given circumstances. Well over half (57%) strongly agreed or agreed that their achievements and accomplishments are recognized by their schools.

School heads, coordinators and teachers all commented on the attributes of the student body. They reported evidence of the IB learner profile attributes, as well as global contexts and MYP key concepts among students. The learner profile attributes were especially apparent when discussing community involvement. The teacher questionnaire results indicated that 85% of the teachers either strongly agreed or agreed that their school gives students opportunities to make a difference by helping other people, the school or the community. This spirit of service contributed to a "can do" atmosphere in the schools, and fully reflects the culture and goals of the IB.

Respondents described their students as reflective and inquirers who also have very good presentation, research and organization skills. According to participants, the MYP also provides students with many opportunities to develop their communication skills, such as attending competitions and conducting international projects. As one MYP coordinator explained:

We have highly communicative students who also have considerable stage experience. During the MYP

evaluation visit we had recently, the visitors noted that the students helpfully translated meanings of lessons spoken in Turkish. More than being skilled at speaking English, students employ their skills with confidence and enthusiasm.

Classroom climate

When visiting MYP classrooms, one of the most striking teaching techniques observed by the research team was inquiry-based teaching and learning. Teachers asked questions to guide student learning and to check for understanding and, more importantly, students themselves were asking questions. As one educator explained:

[Students'] inquiry skills have improved. They not only listen to what the teacher says in the lesson, they question why. They find connections among their lessons to improve their understanding.

It was clear that learners are encouraged to inquire and to think critically. Teachers praised students and encouraged group work and student-to-student learning.

During interviews, some teachers also enthusiastically explained that the MYP is activity based, providing students with the opportunity to inquire and to apply their knowledge. Several participants emphasized that the MYP's interdisciplinary approach provides context for meaningful learning. Teachers always try to help students make connections between what they learn in the classroom and their daily life. One focus group participant described that:

Before MYP, teachers used to give direct instructions and the students passively listened to the teacher. But now the students are actively engaged, they think and inquire very often. They do not ask "Where do we use mathematics in real life?" since we let them see where and how to use it in real life.

Teachers agreed that the MYP framework helps them to recognize how to use inquiry-based learning, differentiated learning, global awareness and an interdisciplinary approach in their lessons. They felt that the MYP requirements in the unit plans encourage them to develop debatable and conceptual questions to arouse students' curiosity. Even for experienced teachers, it seems that the MYP has helped them to hone their skills and incorporate new, creative strategies into their practice.

Academic performance

To provide insight into the academic performance of MYP students on an external measure, the researchers collected from the case-study schools Transition from Primary to Secondary Education (TPSE) exam¹ scores from two academic years, 2013–14 and 2014–15. These

¹ This is an examination that all grade 8 students in Turkey take. The results of this exam affect student eligibility for high school enrollment: higher scores qualify students to enroll in higher-ranking high schools.

scores showed how students were placed in the nationwide rankings.

The information presented by the case-study schools showed that, in the 2013–14 TPSE exam results, on average 42% of their grade 8 MYP students were among the top 4% ranked students. Similarly, in 2014–15 the average was 46%. None of the student scores in the study population was ranked below 50% (see table 1).

Per cent rank from the top	Total number of MYP case-study students who scored within this ranking 2013–14	Total number of MYP case-study students who scored within this ranking 2014–15
1–4%	70 (42%)	59 (46%)
5–9%	39 (24%)	27 (21%)
10–14%	17 (10%)	13 (10%)
15–19%	17 (10%)	13 (10%)
20–24%	8 (5%)	8 (6%)
25–29%	5 (3%)	1 (0.5%)
30–34%	4 (2%)	3 (2%)
35–39%	3 (2%)	2 (2%)
40–44%	2 (1%)	2 (2%)
45–49%	1 (1%)	1 (0.5%)
Total	166 (100%)	129 (100%)

Table 1. Performance of MYP students on the TPSE exam in 2013–14 and 2014–15 academic years.

MYP student performance on the TPSE exam provides evidence that the MYP supports academic achievement among students, as they perform very well in comparison with their non-IB peers. Furthermore, more than two-thirds (71%) of the MYP students finishing grade 8 enrolled in private high schools, which are the most prestigious type of high school in Turkey.

The MYP implementation process

This section considers the process and resources that support MYP implementation. It also highlights the reasons why schools decide to implement the MYP, along with any barriers they face and how they overcome these challenges.

Reasons for implementing the MYP

When school heads and coordinators were asked about why their school chose to implement the MYP, they frequently mentioned student academic and personal development. The most notable MYP features of interest were the IB learner profile attributes, approaches to learning, global contexts and the interdisciplinary nature of the programme.

The MYP was chosen because of its benefits to both students and the school community. Heads and coordinators reported that the MYP helps to develop responsible, self-regulated learners who will benefit their own country as well as the world. As one coordinator explained:

We decided to implement the MYP since we wanted to educate children who were not only successful at examinations, but are successful as humans. We would like to raise well-educated and well-behaved humans who can be successful anywhere around the world ... We were seeking ways to make our students responsible global citizens. We would like to involve them in community service projects. We would like them to know themselves and the world, and take responsible actions to make it a better place.

Challenges to implementation

Turkish schools are faced with some challenges and difficulties in implementing the MYP in a national context. Heads, coordinators and teachers emphasized that the objectives of the MYP and MoNEP are different. The former focuses on developing creative, independent thinkers, while the latter is more content based. Participants noted that MoNEP is very intense with many expectations, and it is difficult to cover all of the topics in a school year.

Certain school heads and coordinators acknowledged that there was originally some teacher resistance to adopting the MYP. Teachers new to the programme were hesitant because the MYP has a different philosophical approach and they were accustomed to a more teacher-centred classroom. Rather than focusing on content alone, MYP teachers need to develop an inquiry focus for their units and identify activities to engage students. At the same time, however, they must also cover MoNEP content in their classes. Teachers explained that MYP implementation is almost like an extra job as it adds to the demands of MoNEP, which are exacerbated around national exam time (TPSE). According to one of the MYP coordinators:

Teachers complain about the lack of time when the TPSE exam approaches. They say that they need to give multiple-choice tests to the students for more practice and they do not have time for learning activities that are required in MYP. Teachers feel pressured to have the students succeed in the exam and put the projects and learning activities aside until the TPSE exam is finished.

Over time, however, MYP coordinators have come to view the MYP as a framework that guides them in making the Turkish national programme more innovative and interdisciplinary in its implementation. They are encouraged, through the MYP, to use new strategies and technologies to enhance the student learning process.

In addition to the challenge of meeting the demands of two programmes, MYP coordinators and teachers mentioned that language is a critical barrier to MYP

implementation. Most professional development workshops and programme materials are not available in Turkish, which creates an impediment to educator learning in many in Turkish IB World Schools. A further barrier is that MoNE does not allow MYP components to be implemented in some high schools (grades 9 and 10), especially if schools are already implementing other nationally recognized programmes.

Facilitators to implementation

Coordinators and teachers identified a number of factors that facilitate the implementation of the MYP. They reported that the greatest support for MYP implementation comes from school administrators and founders who value their professional development. They shared that IB professional development workshops, along with in-service training, help prepare them to implement the MYP. In addition, they highlighted "IB days" that are held every other year in Turkey and are open to all teachers from IB World Schools. These IB days provide examples of best practice, a platform to exchange ideas and opportunities to learn from one another.

Participants also shared that strong communication among IB World Schools and MYP teachers helps to address many challenges. For coordinators, one of the best resources available is the coordinators' meeting, held four times a year in Turkey. The coordinators attend these meetings with enthusiasm since they experience similar challenges and can share strategies to overcome them.

MYP coordinators emphasized that another key facilitator of MYP implementation is to employ teachers who exemplify the attributes of the IB learner profile, use approaches to learning skills and are inquiring, communicative, lifelong learners who are always open to improvement. An MYP coordinator highlighted the traits their school looks for when hiring new MYP teachers.

For an MYP teacher, the very first condition is to be a researcher. An MYP teacher must inquire before giving lessons to the students. The teacher must have comprehensive knowledge and use of technology. It is important to have a second language to communicate with international teachers. The MYP teacher must show all of the IB learner profile attributes and must be open to collaboration.

School strategies for overcoming barriers to implementation

Teachers and coordinators find ways to relate the two programmes. For example, the MYP's assessment criteria can be applied to MoNEP's performance assignments. Formative assessments are important in the MYP, and teachers can use certain MoNEP requirements to assess student progress. MoNEP requires teachers to assign student projects, which in turn can support students' MYP personal projects.

Overall, school heads and coordinators valued the addition of the MYP to their school programming. They explained that once they became familiar and experienced with the programme, the MYP actually improved their ability to address MoNEP criteria. Furthermore, so far, MYP student results on the TPSE are among the top scores in Turkey, showing that IB World Schools are indeed meeting and exceeding MoNE requirements. **This study shows that the barriers of operating two different education programmes simultaneously can be overcome by supportive administrators, dedicated coordinators and creative teachers.**

Programme alignment

In this section, the authors discuss an analysis of how the national programme aligns with the MYP to examine how the programmes can be integrated. Although MoNEP is more content based than the MYP, the document analysis found many areas of alignment between the two programmes that facilitate integration. The MYP helps the national programme to achieve its goal of developing creative students who are responsible for their own learning.

Unlike MoNEP, the MYP does not list content or topics teachers are required to teach. The MYP provides a general and flexible framework that allows teachers to integrate their own items into the global contexts and key concepts, and to choose or mix objectives that are provided within subject guides.

Assessment

When the MYP coordinators compared how they assess students for the MYP and MoNEP, they reported that assessment is important for both programmes but planning and reporting is different. Both programmes have assessment principles although their emphasis is influenced by the respective programme's mission and vision. In the MYP, assessment is based on the unit's statement of inquiry in every unit, which is developed by the teacher. A summative task, also teacher-designed, measures student understanding. In MoNEP, the programme identifies what is to be assessed based on content knowledge.

Learner profile attributes

The document analysis revealed strong alignment between the following IB learner profile attributes and MoNEP: balanced, communicators, knowledgeable, principled and caring. None of the attributes had weak alignment, and there was some alignment for the following attributes: reflective, risk-taker, thinker, inquirer and open-minded. This review supported the perceptions of coordinators and teachers that the MYP seeks to foster open-mindedness more than MoNEP.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the researchers made the following recommendations for MYP schools in Turkey. For the

complete list of recommendations, please see the full report. Researchers suggest that schools should:

- highlight the benefits of using an international programme to expand and enrich the national programme
- hire teachers who exhibit IB learner profile attributes
- recognize and improve alignment between MoNEP and the MYP; for example, find ways to synchronize the MYP's personal project and MoNEP's performance assignments
- employ other teachers to provide after-school intensive courses for national exams
- provide new teachers with an orientation to the MYP
- support teachers in collaboratively planning interdisciplinary units.

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This summary was developed by the IB Research department. A copy of the full report is available at <http://www.ibo.org/en/research/>. For more information on this study or other IB research, please email research@ibo.org.

To cite the full report, please use the following: Ateşkan, A, Dulun, Ö and Lane, JF. 2016. *Middle Years Programme (MYP) implementation in Turkey*. Bethesda, MD, USA. International Baccalaureate Organization.

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