

Structures and programme supports for Creativity, Action, Service in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme: An implementation study in Turkey

Journal of Research in
International Education
2016, Vol. 15(2) 120–136
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1475240916659722
jri.sagepub.com


Robin Ann Martin

Bilkent University, Turkey

Manolya Tanyu

American Institutes for Research, USA

Stirling Perry

Hiroshima International School, Japan

Abstract

This qualitative multiple-case study examined the implementation of an experiential learning component of an academic curriculum in six high schools in Turkey. Structures and supports that influenced programme implementation were examined using an implementation framework adapted from Durlak and Dupre. The study describes how the experiential learning programme is implemented. Findings indicate four areas that need ongoing attention: (1) supports for programme coordinators, (2) teacher training, (3) integration with academics and (4) school cultures that better support experiential learning.

Keywords

Experiential learning, implementation theory, International Baccalaureate Diploma, positive youth development, school culture

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical time of cognitive, physical, social and emotional changes in human development, with long-term impacts on well-being and productivity throughout adulthood. The National Research Council in the United States has identified social and psychological assets that facilitate healthy development of adolescents (Yohalem and Pittman, 2003). Such qualities are nurtured with community-based opportunities and through relationships with others (Larson,

Corresponding author:

Robin Ann Martin, Bilkent University, Ankara 06800, Turkey.
Email: RMartin@bilkent.edu.tr

2000). Developmental researchers and proponents of the positive youth development framework suggest that learning is optimized when adults support learning experiences of young people or help them gain access to community resources that provide positive opportunities (Rhodes, 2002). Adolescents spend their time in a number of interrelated settings (e.g. school, community, home); thus, it is best if learning opportunities are also connected (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Nagaoka et al., 2015). For example, service learning – which promotes academic learning through community service – has gained wide acceptance in American (as well as other) schools. About half of all American high schools implement this approach to support students' social and emotional development, civic engagement, academic achievement and career awareness (Billig, 2002). Internationally, such service-learning programmes continue to gain recognition through dedicated journals and ongoing research (Furco, 2013; Gelmon et al., 2009; Kulundu and Hayden, 2002).

School cultures and school climates

Adolescent development is influenced greatly by the settings within which learning experiences are embedded. Thus, consideration of school cultures and school climates is necessary in the interpretation of this research. Evidence about the importance of school climate for adolescent development is well documented (Thapa et al., 2013). Studies of school cultures continue to explore such phenomena as school ethos and their influences on the learning of both students and teachers using different theoretical frameworks (Fraise and Brooks, 2015; Hargreaves, 1999; Turan and Bektaş, 2013). Fraise and Brooks (2015) recently argued that the problem underlying school culture research resides in how scholars have conceptualized it. By drawing attention to 'culturally relevant pedagogy', they discuss the importance of educational leaders in rethinking issues such as the formal and informal curricula. This study, therefore, explores both formal and informal elements of the academic curriculum and notes that previously informal, extracurricular activities are becoming formalized by the evolving structures and resources of schools.

Situating youth development in the educational context of Turkey

Adolescents in Turkey, as in most parts of the world, face expectations to succeed in the modern age of high-tech business and an evolving civic society. With over 75% of the Turkish population now living in urban settings (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012), Turkish adolescents need collaborative, technical and critical thinking skills to develop into healthy adults capable of adapting to dynamic social and economic circumstances. Over the last decade, the Turkish educational system has initiated a more constructivist approach with its national secondary school curriculum towards more student-centred learning (Aksit, 2007; Öztürk, 2011). Such a shift implies greater attention to the social and emotional needs of adolescents (Martin and Alacaci, 2015). Although Turkey has begun to integrate some social activities into schools (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2005), scant attention has yet been given to programmes that support the non-academic skills of students, particularly at the high school level. Educators still adhere tightly to beliefs that emphasize teacher-centred approaches to education (Yılmaz, 2009).

Little research has been published about positive youth development programmes in Turkey (Martin, 2012). Nonetheless, some studies have examined the effects of interventions on pro-social values such as responsibility, friendship, tolerance and honesty (Dilmaç et al., 2007), as well as democratic values and conflict resolution (Sarı et al., 2008). Overall, current educational research in Turkey has focused more on academic areas such as mathematics and science education (Göktaş et al., 2012). One reason for this may be that the competitive Turkish national university entrance examination – administered at the end of high school and required for entrance to Turkish universities – emphasizes academic achievement by assessing knowledge acquired through rote learning.

This high-stakes examination has also been correlated with stress and depression among adolescents (Yildirim, 2007; Yildirim et al., 2007). However, in this educational context, some Turkish schools have incorporated an international component that integrates experiential learning into the national curriculum, adding both benefits and challenges.

The International Baccalaureate and its holistic approach to learning

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a non-profit educational foundation offering four international education programmes (Primary Years, Middle Years, Diploma, Career Related) which aim to develop the intellectual, personal and social-emotional skills needed to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world. The IB espouses a dynamic combination of knowledge, skills, independent critical and creative thought and international-mindedness to educate the whole person for a life of active and responsible citizenship (IB, 2009: 1). Established in 1968, the IB has shown dramatic growth, especially from 1999 to 2010, when the total number of IB programmes grew by 400% – from 923 programmes in 1999 to 3439 in 2010 in over 140 countries (Lee et al., 2012). Furthermore, growth is not limited to typical international schools that serve primarily expatriate students. National schools, serving primarily local students, can also be found that offer one or more of the IB programmes in addition to their existing curricula. To offer any programme, schools must go through a comprehensive authorization process, along with periodic reauthorization. In November 2015, Turkey had 54 schools offering at least one of the IB programmes, while 39 schools offered the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP). In total, 35 of the 39 schools are national private schools, serving mostly Turkish students; one is a public school, and three are schools that serve mostly international students.

Creativity, Activity, Service as a tool for adolescent development

To complete the IB Diploma, students need to satisfy curricular requirements that include Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS), until 2014 known as ‘Creativity, *Action*, Service’, which is centred on experiential learning. Unlike other IBDP curricula, CAS is not assessed with a mark or grade, so there are no points that count towards completion of the Diploma. Instead, in order to pass CAS, ‘students are required to present evidence demonstrating achievement of all CAS learning outcomes’ (IB, 2015: 15). Prior to 2015, reflection was emphasized as means for the evidence but with little guidance on how reflections should be documented. As of 2015, the CAS Guide gives more guidance on the reflection process, along with the use of portfolios and interviews for student assessment. CAS is evaluated as a programme every 5 years as part of a self-study process.

CAS was designed to help IBDP students in grades 11 and 12 to engage in civic responsibility, leadership and non-academic service projects. CAS also aims to develop reflective thinking for personal growth, openness for new challenges, awareness as a member of a local and global society, and active participation in activities involving intellectual, physical, creative and emotional experiences (IB, 2008: 5). In 2015, the IB revised its CAS Guide. It now gives more specific guidance to schools in how its principles can be adhered to while maintaining flexibility in approaches and practices. CAS projects can be carried out in groups or individually. Examples are learning how to play an instrument (creativity), improving in dance or sports (activity) or fixing up a school with limited resources (service). Such activities help towards college and career readiness and, perhaps just as importantly, towards developing a student’s own sense of well-being by involving them within their greater community (Nagaoka et al., 2015).

Current research on CAS

Despite CAS being a core component of the IB Diploma, research on it has been limited. One study examined how service influenced social change in a community (Ward, 2012). Collecting data

from 19 IB Diploma alumni who worked in an international project in Peru, Ward used social change theory to understand the empowerment of students and local community members in working collaboratively to create change.

Two multi-site studies about CAS have been completed across countries. One was commissioned by the IB to examine programme impacts at schools in North and South America (Billig and Good, 2013). The authors found cultural differences. In the United States, for example, students were more often left 'to their own devices to find service opportunities', and they perceived volunteer work as a privilege to develop 'an ethic of service', whereas in Argentina students were provided with organized activities and saw civic-mindedness as an obligation. Billig and Good also found that CAS supported the development of civic and organizational skills, such as 'developing a plan, assembling a team, organizing and managing meetings, expressing a point of view to others' (Billig and Good, 2013: 5).

The second multi-site study (Brodie, 2014) focused on student perceptions about CAS and its implementation, with a sample of 10 schools in the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Norway. Brodie found that reflection on student experiences is a key component for learning within CAS, yet it was not implemented well. In addition, he found that CAS coordinators were overworked, along with 'a tendency to overburden the students with reflection requests' (Brodie, 2014: 18).

A systemic view of implementation: proposing a framework for analysing CAS

This study aimed to investigate how CAS is implemented in Turkey and how the elements of CAS are perceived by students in Turkish schools. It is the first study to specifically examine CAS implementation in Turkey. Since research on CAS is still very limited, we consulted literature on implementation science and youth development programmes to understand key elements of implementation and contextual factors. As there is no single prescribed approach demanded by the IB, a study on the implementation of CAS can be particularly helpful in understanding how different schools implement it.

Over the last decade, a number of studies have reviewed the processes of implementation and factors that influence interventions (Dariotis et al., 2008; Fixsen et al., 2005; Naylor et al., 2015). Based on a review of a large number of studies, Durlak and Dupre (2008) identified 23 key factors that influence the implementation of an intervention. This ecological framework includes nested layers of indicators or factors that influence implementation: (1) community factors, (2) provider characteristics and (3) innovation characteristics. The core of an innovation is influenced by two integrated systems: (1) the intervention delivery system or the organizational capacities and (2) the intervention support system or the training and technical assistance provided to ensure its delivery.

To examine how CAS was implemented in the six schools included in the study, we developed a conceptual framework adapted from Durlak and Dupre's model (see Figure 1). The framework situates CAS within nested systems that are interconnected and influence each other. More specifically, CAS, as an educational component within the academic system, is influenced by varied elements within a school, including its school climate or culture, norms, structures and supports. The school itself is influenced by its surrounding community, where students live and look for opportunities to carry out CAS activities. Additionally, the school is influenced by the national educational policy of the country. Thus, our goal was to understand how these factors interrelate with each other, as well as to examine the structures and supports within the school that shape the ways in which CAS is variously implemented. More specifically, we wanted to examine the supports and resources within each school that directly influenced CAS as a core component of the IB curriculum as well as those that may be available within the broader school community.

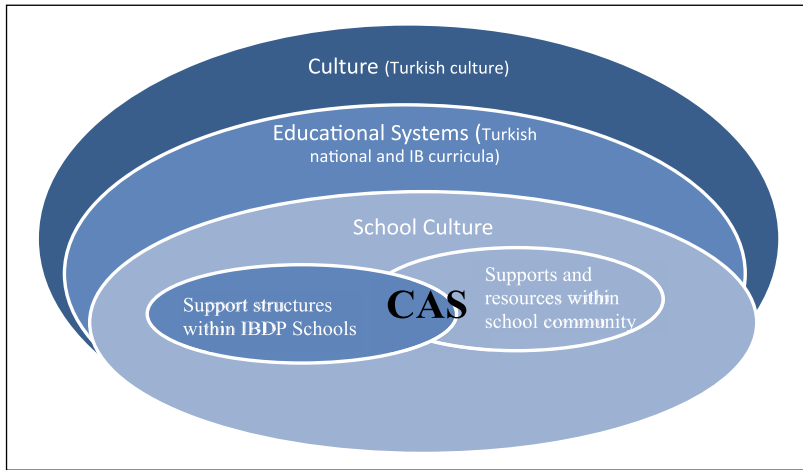


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for Creativity, Action, Service (CAS).

By using implementation theory, our study suggests a more systematic framework that could be used for programme improvements and programme evaluation across international schools. Furthermore, the recommendations may affirm common understandings of how to improve CAS; although many such improvements would cost minimally, poor implementation strategies remain embedded in experiential programmes such as CAS; thus, systematic research may serve as evidence to school administrators, especially in countries where such curricula are not common place, about needed changes in how programme implementation can be improved.

Research questions

Our specific research questions to examine CAS implementation were as follows:

1. How is CAS organized and structured in IBDP schools in Turkey?
2. How is CAS supported within the context of each school community?
3. In each school, what features of the CAS programme may influence the nature of student experiences?

Methods

Using a multiple-case study design, we examined six schools that were identified using purposive sampling with two criteria: (1) schools in Turkey with well-established IBDP and (2) schools with CAS programmes recommended by at least one other leader in the Turkish IBDP community. We ensured that CAS coordinators and at least one administrator in each school wanted to participate, along with IBDP students and teachers. Approval for conducting the research was obtained from each school as well as from the Turkish Ministry of Education.

Characteristics of participating schools

The schools participating in the study varied in several respects (see Table 1), including how long they had offered the IBDP, the number of students in grades 11 and 12, and their locations. The sample schools were located in four urban/suburban areas of western Turkey.

Table 1. Sample schools.

School	Year IBDP started	Number of IBDP students in grades 11–12	Total number of students in grades 11–12	Percent of IBDP students in grades 11–12
School 1	1994	220	489	45
School 2	1996	90	90	100
School 3	1997	80	80	100
School 4	1999	263	1044	25
School 5	2005	72	291	25
School 6	2006	64	130	49

IBDP: International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.

At Schools 2 and 3, both small schools with populations of fewer than 100 students in grades 11 and 12, all students were required to follow the IBDP. Schools 5 and 6 were both medium-sized schools with student populations of 291 and 130 respectively, with less than half of their students participating in the IBDP. The two largest schools had grade 11 and 12 student populations of 489 and 1044, with between one-quarter and less than one-half of their students enrolled in the optional IBDP, although these programmes were established in the 1990s. We included these two large schools to explore whether larger schools may need to deal differently with the implementation of CAS than smaller schools.

Data collection

Data collection was done between December 2013 and March 2014. The 1-day visit to each school included individual interviews with at least one school administrator, the CAS coordinator, a teacher focus group and a student focus group. Each interview or focus group lasted about an hour. For the student focus groups, we asked the CAS coordinators to select a range of students which included two students who were highly engaged in CAS, two somewhat engaged and two students not very engaged. Student focus groups in two schools were conducted separately for the 11th and 12th graders due to scheduling issues. Also, in one school, we interviewed three CAS supervisors in the same group, as there was no CAS coordinator. Consent forms were collected from all adult respondents, parents of the students who participated, and the students.

Data analysis

The study used a qualitative approach that integrated interviews and focus groups with some document analysis. All interviews and focus groups were transcribed and coded using NVivo 8, a qualitative analysis software programme. A codebook was developed that identified the categories and sub-categories guided by our research questions and emergent themes. We used descriptive content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorff, 2013) to develop 9- to 12-page profiles of each school, characterizing CAS implementation using the ecological framework described in Figure 1, with a focus on programme assets and challenges. CAS coordinators from each school reviewed a draft profile to check our interpretations within each school report. Finally, we aggregated the six school profiles to identify the themes (Miles and Huberman, 2013) which emerged across schools as well as the unique characteristics of individual schools.

Findings

Several interrelating themes emerged with respect to the implementation of CAS across our sample of six schools. One was the importance of school culture as a dynamic entity that influences, and is influenced by, programme implementation features. Other themes were the pivotal role of CAS coordinators and the perceived (though not insurmountable) challenges of integrating the CAS programme with a national curriculum which contains little experiential learning for supporting adolescent development. It is important to note that these themes are not unique to the IBDP. Rather, it is hoped that the extensive description in this section may provide insights for other schools in countries where programmes for experiential learning and social-emotional development are still in the early stages.

In this section, we begin with an overview of CAS programme features by describing the activities and projects in which students were engaged to answer our first research question: 'How is CAS organized and structured in IBDP schools in Turkey?' Next we describe the supports and resources within the school and the school community that influenced the implementation of CAS in order to answer our second research question: 'How is CAS supported within the context of each school community?' Finally, we summarize CAS features that seemed to influence student experiences in order to answer our third research question: 'In each school, what features of the CAS programme may influence the nature of student experiences?'

Organization and structures of CAS

Students in all six schools conducted their CAS projects primarily in their local community, city or region. There were some examples in which rural schools or victims of natural disasters in eastern Turkey were helped, as well as occasional trips to other countries. While one school emphasized that students initiate their own projects, at other schools suggestions for projects were made by both students and teachers. Some long-term projects had been initiated and maintained by teachers (e.g. working with a rural village school, or trips to other countries), while other projects had been successfully started by students (e.g. creating a sign language theatre or playing music with disabled children). Examples of typical service projects at the six schools included AKUT (Turkish Search and Rescue), *Village School Project* (repair and remodelling in a rural village) and working with disabled children in hospital. Common creative projects were clubs for robotics and ceramics, choral performance and visual arts. Athletic – or, according to the most recent CAS Guide (2015), 'activity' – pursuits included volleyball, hiking, marathon running, karate and an American Football club.

The CAS coordinators and students at all six schools explained that their CAS programmes strived for a balance of creativity, activity and service. However, in all schools, descriptions of CAS service-oriented projects dominated the discourse of students, teachers and administrators. In fact, across all schools, we coded 107 comments describing service projects, in contrast to only 36 comments about creativity and activity (or physical fitness). Creativity and activity work also tended to be initiated individually rather than collaboratively. CAS projects must include at least two of the three elements of CAS, but the centrepiece of most collaborative projects in four of the six schools was the service element.

Core school structures for supporting CAS

We observed that all schools in our study implemented core school structures in line with the guidance provided by IB (2008):

- An initial CAS orientation for students;
- A formal reflection and monitoring process for student progress;
- A coordinator (or supervisors) who oversaw the programme;
- Teachers who assisted (or advised) students on projects.

As we describe below, features of student orientation, monitoring and coordinators' efforts and experiences varied from one school to another, while teacher involvement needed improvement across all the schools in our sample.

Student orientation. Overall, there was no single way of introducing students and parents to CAS, and most schools had developed their own methods. Three schools gave 1-hour workshops with PowerPoint slides and handouts. Two schools gave a more student-directed orientation and integrated it into school activities. In schools where the orientation was customized, creative and student-driven (e.g. video created by students in CAS), students reported being more engaged with CAS activities and projects.

Student support and monitoring. Students in the CAS programme are expected to reflect on their experiences and how they progress towards their goals. It is intended that these reflections will support the learning process, as well as enabling CAS coordinators to monitor student progress and identify potential individual supports. While CAS coordinators expected students to reflect on their learning experiences through writing, students were confused about its purpose and typically perceived this requirement merely as 'a box to be ticked'. Students in all schools were adamant that the documentation required of CAS was a burden and dreaded the paperwork involved in the reflection process (e.g. Brodie, 2014; Perry, 2015). Two schools used an online programme (ManageBac) for monitoring student learning, which minimized the paperwork needed.

The CAS coordinators. They were all full-time teachers who were asked to run the CAS programme in each school. In our sample, they were appointed by administrators who saw that they would be strong in that position because they understood the value of CAS for student learning. Often, they were teachers who were already helping with CAS activities due to their interests and skills. They were responsible for introducing CAS to students and parents, interacting with external community agencies (especially service organizations) with which students could do their projects, communicating with teachers about supervising or advising needs, and coordinating trips for service projects. In three schools, the coordinators also had to schedule buses for trips, gather permission slips and do most of the logistical work without much administrative support. In one school, the monitoring and feedback tasks were divided among a team that included CAS advisors, counsellors and/or the IB coordinator. Despite the heavy workload, only at two schools were CAS coordinators given even a slight reduction in their teaching hours.

Although external training is mandated by the IBDP for coordinators who are new to CAS, little formal training was available for CAS coordinators in our sample schools, with only two having recently attended external CAS training sessions in other countries. These two coordinators were relatively new to CAS, so they had been through training for CAS at IB workshops. Two others already had over a decade of experience coordinating CAS and had reached the level of supporting other CAS coordinators. These four coordinators, with either recent CAS training or extensive experience, seemed more at ease with the demands of their work than the other two less-experienced coordinators with little recent training. It is also worth noting that at the time of our research, little was happening with respect to on-site CAS training at the schools, although since that time CAS coordinators have begun to do more in this respect.

We found that the CAS coordinators were key to the successful implementation of CAS in each school. Each coordinator brought an individualized understanding about the purpose and goals of CAS as shaped by their level of experience and training. That understanding directly informed the communication infrastructure put into place for making CAS work. For example, in three schools with strong cultures of service, the coordinators understood teacher engagement as central to building the capacity for CAS, and they worked closely with teachers and counsellors to encourage students to develop their own projects. Supports received from other teachers reduced coordinators' stress levels, in contrast to the coordinators at the other schools who received little help from others.

Long-serving CAS coordinators also affected the quality of the CAS programme through the relationships that were built with parents and community partners over many years. Unfortunately, during the 2 years that we were interacting with the schools, CAS coordinators changed in four of the six schools, and the new coordinators often seemed to start afresh rather than building on the positive aspects of the already developed programme.

Teacher involvement. According to the CAS Guides (IB, 2008, 2015), each student should be advised by a teacher (described as a CAS supervisor) who helps to identify 'personal and social goals' for the project and supports students in their reflection process. Despite this requirement, in all six schools most teachers had little awareness of the students' CAS goals. Only one school informed its teachers about ongoing CAS projects at the beginning of the year and presented a student-made video showcasing their projects and experiences. In addition, in five of the six schools, the CAS coordinator was the only person reviewing written student reflections, although sometimes they were given help if requested.

Only one school involved teachers systematically in a verbal reflection process with students, in a panel interview initiated by the new CAS coordinator. The panel involved every teacher and some staff (administrators, counsellors, secretaries or other school members who do not teach) who together interviewed students individually about their CAS experiences and discussed their progress. The coordinator used two professional development hours to train all teachers to serve on the interview panels. This seemed highly effective in helping teachers become more aware of student work outside of classrooms and increased teacher interest in supervising CAS experiences. Questions posed by teachers helped students realize the value of outcomes from their own experiential learning.

Two schools had structures that were not directly designed for CAS but nevertheless supported teacher involvement in student projects and reduced the workload on CAS coordinators. In one school, all teachers were required to supervise a social club at the school. The other school paid a small stipend for teachers involved in sports, music or drama, although not for those who supervised service projects.

Supports and resources within the school community

Our research found that certain supports within the school community were especially helpful in creating opportunities for students to engage in CAS experiences.

Partnership with external service agencies. All six schools had established or begun to establish relationships with a number of outside organizations (especially those serving people with special health needs, such as leukaemia or organ transplantation), rural schools, foundations, Rotary Club and Turkey's social and family services. There was an expectation that such projects would be available for each new cohort of students. Through such ongoing partnerships, funding for special projects was routinely secured.

Coordination with parents. Schools varied in the extent to which parents were informed and involved. Four schools kept parents well-informed about CAS and its successes from one year to another. They developed what one coordinator called ‘the parent advantage’ by capitalizing on parental connections within the greater community, especially tapping into links facilitated through parents active in the non-profit sector and social-civic organizations in the local community. One school also used the IB’s recommended parent/student contract for CAS as a way to boost parent commitment to CAS. According to one teacher, this helped to inform academically focused Turkish parents that CAS was essential to the IBDP’s underlying philosophy. Students in this school were among the strongest advocates of the value of CAS for their own personal development and for learning to help others. In contrast, in two schools with heavy emphasis on academic work, parent support for CAS seemed tepid. Students described how their parents did not understand the purpose of CAS and perceived it as an interference with academic performance.

Supports and resources within the school

Our findings support the conceptual framework of Figure 1 in that common supports and resources within each school seemed to directly influence how well CAS was implemented and sustained. In this section, we highlight the five supports and resources in the schools, beyond the basic structures, that seemed most essential to how well CAS was implemented:

1. Teacher training;
2. Administrative support;
3. Integration of CAS within the academic schedule;
4. Integration with school culture;
5. Influence of national and IB curricula.

Teacher training. While CAS coordinators received various forms of formal training, none of the other teachers in our study received any training on the key components of CAS, such as goal setting or reflection. Nor did they have training on practices that supported positive youth development. Nonetheless, we observed that some experienced CAS advisors provided informal training and scaffolding to less-experienced teachers. For example, teachers in two schools talked about how they took over club-advising duties from their predecessors who helped them ‘learn the ropes’.

Administrative support. A key to successful CAS implementation was the presence of school directors who championed the programme and supported a CAS-oriented culture. They gave coordinators more confidence and support to take risks and try new ideas, important for making CAS work in their local circumstances. They also gave more direct and ongoing recognition to coordinators in their accomplishments. On the other hand, unlike academic programmes that are continuously monitored each year for their successes and failures, there seemed to be relatively little involvement of administrators in monitoring or improving CAS. The most detailed involvement was where one CAS coordinator was required to submit a one-page annual report. Otherwise, directors or IBDP coordinators seemed mostly content with informal discussions with CAS coordinators, allowing students to pass (often easily) with some documented evidence, combined with the 5-year review by the IBDP. Little attention was given to yearly programme improvements. One exception was the panel interviews in one school, as discussed above, which served to provide oral feedback and encouragement for students. It also served as a final evaluation for the students, involving the entire school staff, thus adding a level of rigour to the requirements of passing CAS.

Integration of CAS within the academic schedule. While CAS is a required component for the IB Diploma, it was perceived by most students and administrators, and by many teachers, as extracurricular in nature and not integral to academic life. In every school, CAS was perceived as unrelated to academic goals, with a lower priority than the academic aspects of the IBDP and the Turkish national curriculum. Consequently, none of the six schools in our sample had designated time for CAS specifically. Students were expected to engage in collaborative meetings and to write reflections in their own time. However, two schools had scheduled time to support clubs or give flexible time: One provided at least 1 hour per week for social, literary and science clubs, which created a setting where students could implement their CAS projects; another had designated weekly ‘self-directed learning time’, which provided an opportunity for planning CAS activities. This school had also adopted the IB Middle Years Programme, which includes a Community and Service element that familiarizes students with the expectations of CAS in the Diploma.

Integration with school culture. In support of our conceptual framework of CAS, we also examined how each school conceived the integration of CAS into its school culture. We found that the local school cultures appeared to greatly influence focal points for CAS in each school. Three schools focused on service as a key element of student education, which helped CAS become an important part of those schools, while informally supporting the school culture. One of these had focused on service long before adopting the IBDP. As a result, it had in place a well-established extracurricular programme with over 90 clubs, many oriented around service as well as creativity, thus helping students develop their CAS experiences and projects. At another school, the school culture emphasized sports and creative activities as being especially valuable to student development, while the school was still seeking ways to improve its service element. At the other two schools, CAS was perceived to be of less value than the academic curricula – although their CAS coordinators were trying to shift the school culture towards greater support for CAS.

Influence of national and IB curricula. Like most IB schools in Turkey, the schools in our sample had adopted the IBDP to strengthen the quality of their academic programmes and provide students with the option of an internationally recognized diploma. In five schools, the Turkish national curriculum was required for all students, while one served international (non-Turkish) students only and so did not require the national curriculum. Our research suggested that the national educational demands directly influenced the extent to which CAS was implemented, although we expected to observe an indirect influence according to our conceptual framework (depicted in Figure 1). In four of the five national schools, teachers and students complained about the addition of CAS on top of the many academic requirements demanded by both the national and IB curriculum. Only one school administrator noted elements of the national curriculum that resembled the ideals of CAS, such as participation in civic activities.

Lack of accountability for social activities in the national curriculum and heavy emphasis on academic performance hindered one school’s commitment to integrate CAS into its academic curriculum. An administrator explained that although the national curriculum included 1 hour per week for social activities, in her view it was ‘not required’. She added, ‘The Ministry of Education does not officially say that each student has to complete activities throughout the year. It’s just written there’. This lack of accountability seemed to influence the attitudes and commitments of many teachers and administrators towards CAS in the five schools that were delivering both national and international curricula.

At four of our six schools, IBDP coordinators and other administrators also stated that they wished they could integrate CAS better with other elements of IB curricula. However, the overall

continuity of principles underlying CAS with the elementary and middle school curricula was still developing in all six schools, along with its horizontal curriculum alignment to academic subject areas. In all interviews with administrators, it was clear that they were still working to better establish such curricular coherence and continuity.

Features of the CAS programme that influence student experiences

Overall, how schools integrated CAS into their school culture seemed to have a direct influence on student motivation and engagement in CAS activities. In the four schools that encouraged clubs or non-academic activities such as arts and drama, students in our focus groups identified personal reasons as to why they engaged in projects (e.g. to do good for others in need or to explore career interests), and they took pride in their accomplishments. In the other two schools where the school culture was less supportive of CAS, students identified personal interests but emphasized how CAS interfered with their academic work. Here, teachers and administrators gave more attention to the extrinsic rewards of CAS, particularly how it would improve students' college applications and admission to international universities. Some students noted that such attention was 'against the spirit of CAS'.

Also notable was that the two schools with the most seamless CAS support had adopted the IBDP in the early years of their school histories. Thus, they were able to use CAS to support the development of the overall school culture. For example, some students at one school were helping to supervise the service projects of younger students from the elementary to middle school levels.

As schools introduce new CAS programmes, school size could also be a problem. While small schools seemed well suited to personalized approaches for implementing and monitoring CAS, one large school showed how counsellors and teachers can be trained to work together in orienting, supporting and monitoring students as well as providing individual feedback. Thus, collaboration among school staff to support student experiences seemed to matter more than school size. However, the CAS team at the other large school struggled with only a small number of teachers designated to support such large numbers of students.

Discussion

Implementation research is a growing science across fields in the health and human services, including education (Fixsen et al., 2005). Studies in schools are often focused on prevention of negative behaviours (Fagan and Mihalic, 2003) as well as outcomes for social and emotional learning (Payton et al., 2008) or health-related outcomes (Naylor et al., 2015). In this multi-case study, we adapted Durlak and Dupre's (2008) model for intervention studies to examine factors affecting implementation of an international programme guided by the positive youth development framework (i.e. using young people as community resources and providing them with the supports they need to strengthen the competencies they need for successful adulthood) and experiential learning in high schools. Our research used qualitative techniques to describe the multi-faceted features of implementation.

Our findings strongly suggest that CAS programme characteristics, the school structures, the greater community and the educational system are interrelated – influencing how CAS is experienced by students and how it may shape their learning process and thus their social, emotional and civic development in non-academic contexts.

Overall, with respect to the model of nested loops introduced earlier, this study indicates the importance of balancing the advancement of internal programme structures with appropriate supports. For example, most schools understood that they needed to improve their reflection process.

But they did not have adequate structures to support students' learning processes in non-academic and experiential settings. CAS coordinators in our study were full-time teachers and often did not have time to support students' CAS reflections. Generally, support for academic learning took precedence over a non-academic programme.

The influence of school culture

We especially noticed how the overall school culture was influenced by the nested factors of school structures and resources, along with programme supports. For example, in the school where a panel was created to evaluate student outcomes, teachers and non-teaching staff became more involved. In other schools, parent support was leveraged to create community connections or new resources to plan and implement student projects.

The theoretical lenses of informal learning and school cultures (Hargreaves, 1999; Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex, 2010) may be useful for understanding formal CAS structures as required by the IBDP. Implementation theorists refer to organizational cultures (Fixsen et al., 2005) or 'provider characteristics' and 'community level factors' (Durlak and DuPre, 2008). However, these may not fully explore 'interrelated dimensions of school culture' or facets of school ecology (Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex, 2010) that explain why study participants found CAS to be especially valuable. In particular, students and teachers noted how the informal learning environment led to student learning, especially related to motivation, goal setting and project initiation. But they also described the organizational and structural challenges that interfered with positive experiences. A take-away message for experiential learning programmes that promote holistic student development is to give more attention to implementation features that support informal learning within school cultures.

Key role of CAS coordinators

In line with prior research about the importance of key people for programme implementation (Dariotis et al., 2008), our study indicated the importance of coordinators for effective programme implementation. The competencies, connections and creativity that coordinators bring should not be underestimated. Unfortunately, in Turkey, CAS coordinators are usually full-time teachers, with little formal CAS training and limited support. Thus, more attention needs to be given to supporting CAS coordinators in the key role they play within IBDP schools.

Lack of integration with curricular systems

Across our six case study schools, there was a lack of integration between CAS and academic subjects at large. In the IBDP system, there was a lack of curriculum coherence and continuity with CAS, combined with a large perceived incongruence between CAS and the Turkish national curriculum. It was especially prominent when looking for school-wide teacher buy-in and involvement in CAS. Until teachers began to see for themselves the impact of CAS on students, they often saw it as an additional nuisance in the school.

Teacher training

While teacher involvement is seen by the IBDP as important to CAS, most teachers were not trained in working with students on student-directed or collaborative extracurricular projects. Most teachers in the Turkish national education system (and thus teachers in most IBDP schools in

Turkey) have been trained in traditional didactic teaching approaches and are not yet well acquainted with student-centred instruction, goal setting or reflection for experiential learning. Thus, Turkish teachers are often unaware of how to support students in such work, especially regarding goal setting, self-regulation or the reflection process for experiential learning. However, we observed that experienced CAS advisors provided informal training and scaffolding to less-experienced teachers. For example, teachers in two schools talked about how they 'learned the ropes' from their predecessors.

Conclusion

As the first systematic study of the CAS programme at IBDP schools in Turkey, this research highlights implications for research, practice and policy. Our study points out how implementation theory might be used as a framework for examining experiential learning programmes, as introduced through the adaptation of an international curriculum embedded into traditional academic settings, as was the case in the six Turkish schools we studied. An ecological framework where different factors are nested within each other allowed us to examine how these factors were interrelated.

The schools in our study also provided examples of balancing the demands of a national curriculum with school cultures supportive of experiential learning. For an experiential learning programme such as CAS to work in Turkey, the school culture should value student initiative, leadership and learning activities that contribute to the larger community. Schools exhibiting such a culture are more open to creating and supporting structures that enhance students' social-emotional learning and practical skills development. The school cultures seemed to emerge in tandem with a balance of strong implementation features. These supports made CAS into legitimate learning and allowed students to become more aware of their own development. When such supports were missing, both coordinators and students seemed overwhelmed with the demands of CAS on top of the academic requirements.

Near the end of our data analysis, the IB announced its new CAS guide (IB, 2015), which gives explicit attention to the integration of CAS with its other core curricula (Theory of Knowledge and Extended Essay) as well as improved strategies for reflection. The benefits of this curricular integration and emphasis on reflection are reaffirmed by the findings of this study.

This study also raises implications for educational policy concerning supports and resources, which need to be strengthened in order to provide the educational opportunities that students need if they are to develop social and emotional skills. Teachers and students in our sample schools suggested that CAS experiences increased their social and emotional skills while promoting a clearer understanding of academic goals and future aspirations. Research about such programmes can inform potential programmes for other schools, both private (as our sample schools were) and public, about the importance of educating students not only academically but also socially and emotionally. Future research should also examine more rigorously student learning outcomes from CAS programmes.

This study was limited to one country and employed qualitative methodology with a case study design to improve our understanding of CAS implementation. In order to develop evidence-based strategies on experiential learning programmes in academic settings and validate the effectiveness of CAS as part of IBDP, incremental research using multiple approaches is needed. For example, we limited our scope to students, teachers and administrators. We did not explore the perspectives of parents or service organizations, which might further inform the understanding of CAS in Turkey.

This research also points towards experimental designs and impact research that may be worth investigating more carefully. For example, if schools were to improve their CAS orientations for

students and parents, what impact could it make? If schools were to introduce, encourage and train teachers to work as advisors and supervisors, how would this improve CAS outcomes? If coordinators were given a greater reduction in their teaching hours, would this improve CAS outcomes?

A rigorous investigation into such questions could greatly inform ideas for improving experiential learning programmes such as CAS. Improvements to programmes that support students' social and emotional development must be implemented before strong outcomes will be evidenced.

Funding

Stirling Perry received the IB Jeff Thompson Research Award that supported this study in the amount of \$2500.

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Author biographies

Robin Ann Martin works as an Assistant Professor at the Bilkent Graduate School of Education in Ankara, Turkey. She teaches general courses in curriculum and instruction for pre-service and in-service MA students. Since 2010, Robin has served as coordinator of the Graduate School's International Baccalaureate Certificate in Teaching and Learning for the pre-service teachers. From 2006 to 2009, she taught and supervised teacher trainees in The Sultanate of Oman.

Manolya Tanyu is a Senior Researcher at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) based in Washington, DC, with expertise in interventions in school and community settings, systemic change, programme monitoring, and evaluation in youth development, mentoring and social-emotional learning. Prior to joining AIR, Manolya worked with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Stirling Perry is a Researcher and Educator who has taught at international schools in Turkey, Taiwan, Ecuador, Colombia and Japan. In the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, he teaches English and Theory of Knowledge. With an MA in English from the University of Pittsburgh and an MA in Curriculum and Instruction from Bilkent University, he is currently working in Hiroshima, Japan.