

In this course, students explored the fundamental methods of research writing and acquired the essential skills to write up and present their research. By the end of the course, each student submitted a documented essay, of around 3000 words, on a topic of academic, cultural, or social importance. Students were required to use primary, popular, and academic sources.

**The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) and the National
Curriculum in Turkey**

International Relations, Kadir Has University

KHAS118: Academic Writing Workshop

June 7, 2021

Abstract

This research examines the effects of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) and the national curriculum on the academic performances of the students in undergraduate education. For the research, 10 students of 2020 graduates of Kartal Anadolu Imam Hatip Lisesi are chosen. Students separated into two categories as DP graduates and non-DP graduates. The DP graduates studied the DP curriculum as well as the national curriculum, whereas the non-DP graduates studied the national curriculum only in the last two years of high school. We decided to conduct our research on two groups' academic performances during their first year at the university. Academic performance is defined by adaptation to the university environment academically, GPA, time management skills and stress levels. We prepared a questionnaire for 5 DP graduates and 5 non-DP graduates that are studying the same major. Then, their answers to the questions were compared and discussed.

Keywords: International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP), national curriculum, Turkey, university entrance examinations, academic performance, Kartal Anadolu Imam Hatip Lisesi

Effects of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) and the National Curriculum on the Academic Performances of Students in Turkey

International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme has a well-known curriculum. “Established in 1968, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) was the first programme offered by the IB and is taught to students aged 16-19. As of 3 September 2019, there are 3,421 schools offering the DP, in 157 different countries worldwide” (Organization, 2021). This research will compare the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) with the national curriculum in the context of the students’ performances in the first year of their university life in Turkey. The research focuses on only one IB school in Istanbul, Kartal Anadolu Imam Hatip Lisesi. Most of the sources in the literature conclude that although the IBDP does not seem to prepare students for the university entrance examinations in Turkey, it offers a higher quality of education compared to the national curriculum and the DP students tend to perform better academically during their university life than their non-DP peers.

Unlike the national curriculum, IBDP is a two-year programme. The programme is intense. DP students need to take six courses: three of them at high level, three of them at standard level. They have the option to choose from variety of courses offered by their schools (note that not all schools offer various courses). They also need to complete the DP core consisting of the TOK (Theory of knowledge), extended essay and CAS (Creativity, activity, service).

In a research conducted with gifted students, students highlighted some advantages of the DP as the opportunity to explore one’s skills, the opportunity to study abroad, to acquire self-discipline, the sense of responsibility as well as the ability of thinking critically (Sahin, 2018). The content of the curriculum allows students to explore their skills and areas of interests. The IB diploma is recognized and respected across the globe. The assignments help

students to develop self-discipline, ToK classes contribute to critical thinking skills and CAS is beneficial for every student in the process of becoming a responsible individual. The research report on examining college readiness prepared for the IB by David Conley, PhD, Charis McGaughy, PhD, Whitney Davis-Molin, Rachel Farkas and Erin Fukuda shows that majority of DP students persevere in university compared to non DP students (2021). Another report published by Bilkent University Graduate School of Education on IBO's official website shows that the DP students tend to have higher cGPAs compared to their non-DP group, and the DP students performed better for different subject areas in the first and second undergraduate years (Ateskan, Onur, Sagun, Sands & Corlu, 2015).

The IBDP has some disadvantages repeated by the students. Students list some of these disadvantages as intensive workload, and IBDP being as a tiring, costly and risky option (Sahin, 2018). These motivations of not choosing the DP are significant since it gives us an insight about the competitive nature of the process of preparation to the university entrance examinations and the anxiety students experience throughout the process. Studying two curricula at the same time means doubling the assignments, deadlines and stress. The time allocated on the preparation for the university examination automatically decreases for the DP students and this is what makes to choose to study the DP a risky selection for the majority of students. Another important point is the cost of the DP. The cost is not affordable for some of the students. On top of these, although schools are working on to provide advantages for the DP students, IBDP diploma does not provide any official advantages in the university placement yet (Sagun, Ateskan & Onur, 2016). There are some benefits for students that have IBDP diploma: "Based on their IBDP scores, students get various financial scholarships, the chance to have a double major, and/or the ability to transfer from one department to another" (Sagun et al., 2016). However, the fact that diploma is not recognized in the process of

placement overshadows these advantages and students tend to choose the less risky option, the national curriculum.

In the same research mentioned above, scores of the DP and non-DP students in the university entrance exam compared and it was found that the students studying the national curriculum had clearly better results which supports the idea that students studying the national curriculum were better equipped for the multiple-choice questions of the university entrance examinations (Ateskan et al., 2015). In his article, Sahin (2018) highlighted the theme of better preparation for the university entrance examinations as well as the abolishment of uncertainties.

The national curriculum is criticized of being prescriptive (Onur, 2008). There is lack of practice in the curriculum; students are not encouraged for extracurricular activities. There are unwritten rules for every student preparing for the exam such as going to a private institution to prepare for the exam. Students need to follow certain strategies such as fast reading in order to achieve higher scores in the multiple-choice exam. Inevitably, this situation impairs the creativity. In an article that focuses on students studying the IBDP with the national curriculum at the same time, students studying only the national curriculum stated that the national curriculum did not prepare them for the university and they had difficulties in the university (Sagun et al., 2016). This is why the students are critical about the national curriculum. Students criticize the national curriculum's competitive nature rooted in the university entrance examinations, methods of teaching that are based on memorization, lack of practice, weakening of critical thinking skills, and excessive daily studying (Sahin, 2018).

Although some high schools have a one-year compulsory preparation class, the ninth grade is the foundation year in high schools in Turkey in general. At the end of the tenth grade, students choose to proceed with science & mathematics, Turkish & mathematics, Turkish & social sciences or linguistics for the eleventh and final grade of high school. This choice is particularly important for the students and parents since it is the first step in deciding the faculty

of students' future university. At the end of the final year, students enter a multiple-choice exam conducted nationwide in Turkey. However, the exam does not take students' performances throughout the high school into consideration. The national exam is not interested in student's cognitive levels or the other activities of the student (Sahin, 2018). After the examination, central placement is implemented following the results of the exam. The results of the exam are the main factor in determining one's university. Student's GPA is less significant. In her doctoral thesis, Onur (2008) suggests that the high school curriculum in Turkey is driven by the university entrance examinations. Thus, independent schools are not able to improve the quality of the national curriculum.

Method

Participants

For the questionnaire, the research focuses on 10 university students studying their first year. Students are chosen from Kartal Anadolu Imam Hatip Lisesi's¹ 2020 graduates. Students studying the English preparation class were not included in the research. Half of the participants went through the DP as well as the national curriculum, half of them studied only the national curriculum in the last two years of high school. Two of the male students study Political Sciences and International Relations at Bogazici University. Two of the female students study Sociology at Bogazici University. Two of the students (non-DP graduate being male and the DP-graduate being female) study Law at Galatasaray University (note that the first year is allocated for learning French in the Galatasaray University). Two of the female students study Medicine in different universities. The DP graduate is studying at Medeniyet University whereas the non-DP graduate is studying at Bezmialem Vakıf University. The last two students

¹ The name of the school will be abbreviated as "Kartal".

(non-DP graduate being male and non-DP graduate being female) study English Language and Literature at Bogazici University.²

Materials

A questionnaire consisting of 16 questions (13 of them being open-ended) was conducted (see appendix A).

Procedure

Due to the difficulty and risks of the program, DP is not prevalent among students of Kartal. Only a limited number of students choose the IBDP. Students sometimes drop the DP and proceed with the national curriculum. In 2020, thirty-two students managed to get the IB diploma. Eighteen of the IBDP graduates continued their education at the university either in Turkey or abroad (only two students went abroad for their undergraduate education) in 2021. The rest of the IBDP graduates chose to prepare themselves one more year for the national university entrance examinations in Turkey. Therefore, we were left with sixteen students in total. Only five of them were appropriate for the research since we decided to compare those studying the same major such as Political Science and International Relations.

Discussion of the Results

In the questionnaire, we asked questions that aim to learn more about students' expectations before they did not start university, their reactions after they started their university and whether their opinion changed over time or not. We wanted to learn about their GPA, main differences between the IBDP and the national curriculum from their perspective, their adaptation to the university environment academically, time management skills, stress levels as

² For the list of students, their universities, majors, and diploma grades, see appendix B.

well as their general thoughts on the two curricula. Lastly, we wanted to learn about their satisfaction with their performances and plans for doing a double major or a minor.

We assumed that the DP graduates would not be satisfied with their university at the beginning because they might have different plans for their undergraduate education such as going abroad. On the contrary, we assumed that the non-DP graduates would be satisfied with their university from the beginning since they studied hard to get into a specific university in Turkey. We also assumed that the DP graduates would be disappointed in the university as they already study within a familiar curriculum and maybe consider university as the continuation of the IBDP, whereas the non-DP graduates might find the university environment new and challenging. We assumed that the DP graduates would have no problems with adapting to university academically and have higher GPA's compared to their non-DP peers' GPA thanks to the effective use of English, academic writing skills and familiarity with the education in general. We did not have any predictions for the time management skills of the students since we find this topic quite connected to the character of a person. It is a similar case for stress level. We predicted that the DP graduates might be less stressed since they used to have deadlines for various assignments. Yet, taking into consideration the fact that pandemic has affected everyone's life negatively, stress levels could be higher for both groups. Again, we did not have predictions on which points would each group highlight as an advantage or disadvantage for either the DP or the national curriculum. Lastly, we assumed that the DP graduates might tend toward doing a double major or a minor since the IBDP is a well-rounded programme that aims to raise well-rounded individuals.

The two male students studying Political Science and International Relations at Bogazici University were both content with their university before they did not start and their opinion did not change over time, they are still happy with their university. Both of them have high GPAs (3.91/4.00 & 3.74/4.00); DP graduate has a slightly higher GPA. The DP graduate

believes that the national curriculum is like a four-year preparation to the national exams whereas the IBDP is a systematic program that gives comprehensive knowledge upon subject matters. According to his opinion, character development is what differentiates IBDP from the national curriculum since its aim is to raise individuals that are able to self-educate themselves with necessary skills and principles. DP graduate stated that he is sufficiently adapted to university whereas non-DP graduate stated that he is finding it hard to adapt to university due to the content of the courses he has taken and the pandemic. Both students stated that they are having difficulties with the time management. Their stress level is similar (4/10 & 3/10), the non-DP graduate has a slightly lower stress level. The DP graduate mentioned advantages he experienced during exams. Social skills and advancing in English were the advantages of the IBDP listed by the non-DP graduate. Answers to the 15th question (see appendix A) were different. DP graduate stated that he would choose IB again, non-DP student stated that he would choose IB too if the programme was not interfering with the exam. Both students plan to do a double major.

The two female students studying Sociology at Bogazici University were both content with their university before they did not start but the DP graduate's opinion changed over time in a negative way. The DP graduate has a significantly higher GPA (4.00/4.00 & 2.10/4.00). She listed main differences of the two curricula as the level of opportunity for students to express their personal interests, extracurricular activities one has to complete to achieve the IB diploma and the level of stress. She believes that the IBDP is more stressful than the national curriculum. The non-DP graduate mentioned the disadvantage of the national curriculum as being based on memorization and IBDP as being a risky option for those who will study at Turkey. The DP graduate was on the same page with the non-DP graduate on this issue. Like the students compared above, students stated that they are having difficulties with the time management. The DP graduate has significantly higher level of stress (10/10 & 5/10). Answers

to the 15th question was the same: “I would choose the IBDP”. Both students plan to do a double major.

The two students studying Law at Galatasaray University both study the preparation class, which is in French. They were both satisfied with their scores, and their university before they did not start their education. Both students’ ideas on the university changed over time. The DP graduate mentioned her disappointment; she found university life “boring”. Since the preparation class does not contain a GPA system, we asked about their general grades. The non-DP student has slightly higher grades compared to his DP graduate friend. The non-DP graduate listed some differences between the two curricula as the way literature classes were taught (IB is based on analysis, whereas the national curriculum is based on memorization) and developing English skills. The DP graduate listed some differences between the two curricula as “to learn using the language(s) effectively and producing high-quality academic papers”. The non-DP graduate believes that he is not adapted to the university environment academically due to the pandemic and the online education whereas the DP graduate believes she is “very well” adapted to the university environment academically. Both students state that they are having difficulties with time management. When we come to the stress levels, the non-DP graduate has a significantly higher level of stress (4/10 & 8/10). The DP graduate states that the IBDP helps her to adapt herself to academic life in general. The non-DP graduate states that some classes he took such as history, literature, geography, and mathematics help him understand some classes at the university such as constitutional law and criminal law. Both students are dissatisfied with their performances, believing that they can do better. The non-DP graduate’s criticism of the national curriculum was being superficial, whereas the DP graduate’s criticism of the IBDP was negative effects of the programme on her spiritual well-being. The DP graduate was not sure about the 15th question (see appendix A). The non-DP graduate, on the other hand, gave a straight “no” since he wanted to get into the best law faculty in Turkey and it would not

be possible for him if he had taken the IBDP. The two students do not have a plan for a double major or a minor.

The two female students studying Medicine in different universities (The DP graduate studying at Medeniyet University and non-DP graduate studying at Bezmialem Vakif University) were both satisfied with their scores and their universities before they did not start. Their contentment did not change over time, they are still happy with their universities. The non-DP graduate has a slightly higher GPA (3.50/4 & 3.80/4). The DP graduate believes that the main difference between the two curricula is the way examinations are conducted: “IBDP exams are mostly based on experimental questions. Recently, national exams are also being prepared in this way. However, teaching progress is not the same. It needs time to change the whole system”. The non-DP graduate believes the main difference between the two curricula is IB’s students-centered approach. Both students state that they believe they adapted well to university environment academically. The non-DP student states the pandemic affected her sleep routine negatively so she had difficulties with meeting the deadlines, whereas the DP graduate states “time management was not a big deal after the last year of the high school”. Interestingly, students have the same stress level (4/10). The DP graduate believes that the biggest contribution of the IBDP to her academic life was the time management skills. The non-DP graduate on the other hand, believes that the lack of quality in her education forced her to learn how to study on her own and this helped her a lot in the university. Both students are satisfied with their academic performances in general. The DP graduate avoids giving a definite answer to the 15th question (see appendix A): “The IBDP is the right choice for someone who wants to make research and focus on analysis, for someone who doesn’t have stress issues”. The non-DP graduate gives a straight answer to the same question: “I would choose the national curriculum to get into my desired department with less stress”. Students’ field do not allow them to do double major.

The last two students studying English Language and Literature at Bogazici University were both satisfied with their scores and the university. The non-DP graduate has a slightly higher GPA (3.81/4.00 & 3.88/4.00). The DP graduate states main difference between the two curricula as IB being more focused on certain skills such as time management and critical thinking. For the non-DP graduate, he states one of the main differences is in literature: “In terms of literature classes, IBDP focuses on literary analysis, whereas the national curriculum focuses on the history of the literature and the linguistics of Turkish”. Both students find themselves quite adapted to university environment academically. The non-DP graduate mentioned that he had difficulties with time management, which he did not have in the second semester. The DP graduate stated that she had no difficulties with time management all. The DP graduate has a significantly higher level of stress (3/10 & 8/10). She stated that the reason for her high level of stress is the desire of doing her best. Both students are satisfied with their performances in general. Answers to the 15th question were “I would choose the IBDP” for the DP graduate and “I would choose the national curriculum since I believe the IBDP curriculum is too heavy for high school” for the non-DP graduate. The DP graduate plans to do double major, the non-DP graduate is not sure about it.

We can deduct from the discussions of the results above that unlike our assumption, the members of the DP group was happy with their university from the beginning, and in general, their opinion did not change negatively over time. As we predicted, some of the members of the non-DP group found the adaptation process to university environment academically hard compared to the members of the DP group, the DP group did not have any trouble in the adaptation process. The average GPA of the DP group is higher than the non-DP group (3.80/4.00 & 3.38/4.00)³ as we expected. As far as we can see, time management is a

³ $3.88 + 3.80 + 3.74 + 2.10 = 13.52$, $13.52/4 = 3.38$ (The non-DP group's average GPA)
 $3.91 + 4.00 + 3.81 + 3.50 = 15.22$, $15.22/4 = 3.805$ (The DP group's average GPA)

controversial topic that needs further research. Again, unlike our expectation, the average stress level of the DP group was higher (6/10 & 4.6/10)⁴. We believe that this situation can be explained by students' unsolved traumas of the last year of the high school in which they had to study two curriculum at the same time as well as the negative effects of the pandemic on individuals. The last point we can highlight is that regardless of their group, graduates of Kartal plan to do double major in the following years. This shows that the students do not find the course load too heavy; they are confident and believing in themselves.

Main criticism to our own research is that it was conducted only in one school and with a limited number of students. Comparing same-sex students studying in the same department would have been healthier in terms of seeing the results of compared elements such as time management. In some cases, we were able to meet this requirement, but not in all because there were departments within IBDP graduates that could not match national curriculum graduates. Another weakness of the research was that the views of students studying in natural sciences were not adequately covered; our research focused more on students of social sciences. The strength of the research is that the survey questions were detailed and open-ended, and we discuss these results in depth, as can be seen above. The survey results shed light on many issues that we had not thought of before. For example, a study could be conducted on the effects of IB on students' spiritual wellbeing as one of the DP graduates mentioned, or (based on our research) a study could be conducted on the stress levels of DP graduates at university.

CONCLUSION

Onur (2008) claims that goals are clearly stated in both of the curricula and they show similarities at some point. The national curriculum positively contributes to the student's preparation for the university entrance examinations rather than providing the necessary

⁴ $3 + 4 + 3 + 5 + 8 = 23$, $23/5 = 4.6$ (The non-DP group's average stress level out of 10)
 $4 + 4 + 10 + 8 + 4 = 30$, $30/5 = 6$ (The DP group's average stress level out of 10)

equipment for the undergraduate education itself. The IBDP gives great importance to the IB learner profile that aims to develop inquirer, knowledgeable, thinker, communicator, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-taker, balanced and reflective learners. One of the clear indications that the IBD has been able to achieve the IB learner profile to some extent in its graduates is the result of our research, which we have explained in detail above. Our research has shown that the IBDP graduates have almost no problems in adapting to the university environment academically, achieve high GPAs and see the benefits of their education in a variety of ways in the long term. However, it is seen that the IBDP graduates also have difficulties in areas such as time management and stress control further in their undergraduate education. More research is needed in these areas to get to the core of problems.

References

- Onur, J. (2008). A study of the effects on teaching methods and teaching styles of converging national and international curricula at the Koç School - Istanbul. University of Bath.
- Sahin, F. (2018). Gifted Students' Perception of the IBDP and National Programme, and the Effects of these Programmes on their Academic Achievement: A Review within the Context of Turkey. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 14(4), 52-69. doi: 10.29329/ijpe.2018.154.5
- Sagun, S., Ateskan, A., & Onur, J. (2016). Developing students for university through an international high school program in Turkey. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 16, 439-457.
- Ibo.org. (2021). <https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/publications/ib-research/dp/turkey-postsecondary-study-report-en.pdf>.
- Ibo.org. (2021). https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/publications/ibresearch/dp/ib_diploma_programme_examining_college_readiness_2014_0715_000.pdf.

Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Name & Surname:

- 1- What was your score in the university entrance examination? (Optional)
- 2- Were you satisfied with your results of the university exam?
- 3- Were you satisfied with your university before you did not start?
- 4- Did your opinion change over time on the previous question?
- 5- Does your university have a one-year of preparation class for English or any other language?
- 6- Are you studying the preparation class or did you skip it?
- 7- What was your GPA in the first semester of the academic year?
- 8- What do you think are the main differences between the IBDP and the national curriculum?
- 9- How well do you think you are adapted to university environment academically?
- 10- Are you having difficulties with the time management?
- 11- If you were to choose your stress level from zero to ten in the university, what would you choose and why?
- 12- How do you think the IBDP/national curriculum help you in the university?
- 13- Are you satisfied with your performance in the university? Why or why not?

14- What are the disadvantages of the IBDP/national curriculum?

15- If you were to make a choice between the IBDP and the national curriculum, what would you choose and why?

16- Would you consider doing a double major or a minor in the future?

You can write down anything else you want to add, any experiences or thoughts.

Appendix B

Name Surnmae	University	Department	IBDP Grade
B.T.	Bogazici University	English Language and Literature	35
M. F. İ.	Bogazici University	Political Science and International Relations	42
M. U.	Bogazici University	Sociology	33
S. K.	Galatasaray University	Law	39
H. H. T.	Istanbul Medeniyet University	Medicine	34