CAS Implementation in Turkey: A Study of Six Schools

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Research Questions

1. How is CAS being implemented in the six participating IB schools of Turkey?

2. What are the assets and barriers for implementing CAS in Turkish schools?

3. What are the perceived benefits of CAS participation for students?

Primary Findings/Themes that Emerged in Our Research

1. How is CAS being implemented in the six participating IB schools of Turkey?

CAS Coordinators are key to implementation of CAS. Each CAS Coordinator brings a certain individualized understanding about the purpose of CAS. That understanding directly informs the communication infrastructure put into place for making CAS work in each school. Most of the CAS Coordinators (and CAS supervisors) were teaching full-time course loads, with one or two who had a 3-hour reduction in teaching hours.

Coordinated systems for CAS are limited. Although CAS is a required component of the IBDP in all schools, in most schools it is perceived as an extracurricular component and not integrated into academic coursework. Only one of six participating schools was using a CAS parent/student contract. Another school had implemented panel presentations midyear in which teachers are required to participate and students present on their projects and activities to receive teacher feedback. Two of the six schools were using ManageBac to help them coordinate communications with students and teachers serving as CAS supervisors and/or advisors.

Students are oriented in a variety of ways to CAS. Given the flexibility of CAS, schools are able to experiment with different ways of orienting students to CAS. In one school, students had developed a video to introduce CAS to incoming students. Another school used a creative TOK/CAS town trip to begin the 11th grade year. Other schools delivered a one-hour workshop with PPT and handouts.

Student support and monitoring varied across schools. Especially variable was how students were engaged through individual reflections or discussions about what they were learning from their CAS experiences.

Service is emphasized. Schools strive for a balance of creativity, action, and service. However, four of the six schools put heavy emphasis on service.

2. What are the assets and barriers for implementing CAS in Turkish schools?

Student motivation varied by school culture. In three of the schools, we observed strong student motivation and engagement in CAS. Students named a number of personal reasons why they were engaged in particular projects (e.g., exploring interests, developing skills, and a few students also mentioned helping others). In the three other schools, students described their personal interests but also noted that CAS interfered with their academic life, and they saw it more as a tool to support their college applications. In these schools, students perceived CAS as an add-on component that was required whereas in the other schools it was perceived as an important piece of the school culture.

Parent connections and the greater community. Schools with the strongest CAS programs had parent communities behind CAS, financially and verbally. Some parents also helped with connections to local NGOs and organizations that expanded or stabilized the outreach of projects.

Academic priorities pose a challenge. Overall, CAS was viewed as a lower priority to the academic demands of the IB and MoNE curricula. *Yet, given so many time conflicts with higher priority academic requirements, remarkable CAS projects and activities were described in every school.*

Students perceive paperwork as a challenge. In focus groups, almost all students noted the level of paperwork required for CAS. However, it appeared that when CAS Coordinators could discuss the value of facilitating the reflection process, the complaints of students were less intense.

Teacher engagement in CAS is minimal. Across schools, a handful of teachers were helping with CAS-related events and activities beyond supervising students when asked to do so.

3. What are the perceived benefits of CAS participation for students?

CAS provides a number of benefits. Students often mentioned the benefits of CAS, including social awareness, learning to work collaboratively, and self-discovery of new skills and interests, as well as most of the other desired outcomes specified by the CAS Guide. Two pre-defined CAS outcomes were not mentioned as frequently: (1) understanding the ethical implications of one's actions, and (2) engaging with issues of global importance.

Increased social awareness was observed in all schools. Several schools were particularly concerned with providing students with opportunities to develop their awareness of social differences, working especially with those from disadvantaged populations (such as the blind, those with Leukemia, or mentally-challenged). Most schools in our sample had also developed partnerships to support schools in need in the rural areas of Turkey.

Characteristics of our six study schools

- The schools in this study were located in Istanbul (2), Ankara (2), Izmir, and Bursa.
- The schools varied in their student population and the number of students involved in CAS, ranging from 64 to 357.

- These schools also varied in how long IBDP/CAS had been implemented, ranging from since 1994 to 2006.
- The CAS coordinators are regarded as the key stakeholders who will utilize the findings of this research and disseminate it in their schools.

Research Method

The research team visited five schools in December 2013, with a final school visited in March 2014. Data collection at each school included interviews with the CAS coordinator (or CAS supervising team), an administrator, a focus group of teachers, a focus group of students, and documents collected on CAS. Each interview and focus group was recorded and transcribed for analysis. All transcripts were coded using NVivo 8, a qualitative analysis software using content analysis. A school profile/summary was created for each school using a template that was organized by constructs that characterized CAS implementation. These 10-to-12-page summaries were reviewed, edited, and revised by the research team members. Next, these summaries were shared with the CAS coordinators at each school and revised as needed based on feedback received.

Next, common themes were pulled across the schools that characterize CAS implementation among these schools within the context of our research questions. We are currently finalizing this stage.

IB GÜNÜ, March 28: Proposed CAS panel discussion questions

1. What can be done to engage teachers more in CAS?
2. What are ways to develop community outreach for establishing and stabilizing service partnerships? How can parents help more?
3. Given the new *2015 CAS Guide*, what strategies are schools developing to give students more responsibility?
4. Can the reflection process be improved to better support students' experiential learning? If so how?
5. In the next three years, what components of CAS do you see your school working to improve?
6. [Time allowing:] How can schools begin to integrate CAS more into academic areas?

Next steps

- We will publish our current research findings in at least two journal articles.
- We will seek opportunities to continue research on CAS in Turkey, with increased emphasis on examining program outcomes.