

Design and Evaluation of an International Baccalaureate Educator Certificate (IBEC) Programme as an Alternative Teacher Education Programme

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Abstract: IBEC program is an international certificate program aiming at educating in-service teachers to be IB teachers by offering them opportunities to improve the quality of their classroom teaching, increase their access to teaching jobs worldwide, interact with leading academics for research and publishing consultation, demonstrate their deep understanding of and engagement in student learning. With this aim and objective, an alternative teacher education program to offer IBEC was designed. This is a two-folded case study; in the first part, the design process, and in the second part, the evaluation of the program is discussed. The evaluation of the program was done with the SWOT analysis results of the 70 trainees who attended the program and received their official IBECs. The analysis revealed that while the content of the courses, the quality of the instructors, and the program itself are among the strong areas, a load of assignments, the attitude of some instructors, the last-minute changes in the syllabi were listed among areas of concern.

Anahtar Sözcükler:

Uluslararası
Bakalorya, IBEC,
öğretmen eğitimi,
program tasarımı ve
değerlendirmesi

Alternatif Öğretmen Eğitim Programı olarak Uluslararası Bakalorya Eğitimci Sertifika (IBEC) Programının Tasarımı ve Değerlendirilmesi

Özet: IBEC programı, hizmet içi öğretmenleri, sınıfta öğretimlerinin kalitesini iyileştirme, dünya çapındaki öğretim işlerine erişimlerini artırma, araştırma ve yayın danışmanlığı için önde gelen akademisyenlerle etkileşimde bulunma fırsatları sunarak IB öğretmeni olmaları için eğitmeyi amaçlayan uluslararası bir sertifika programıdır. Bu amaç ve hedef doğrultusunda, IBEC'i sunmak için alternatif bir öğretmen eğitimi programı tasarlanmıştır. Bu iki aşamalı bir vaka çalışmasıdır; birinci bölümde tasarım süreci ve ikinci bölümde programın değerlendirilmesi ele alınmıştır. Programın değerlendirmesi, programa katılan ve resmi IBEC'lerini alan 70 kursiyerin SWOT analizi sonuçlarıyla yapıldı. Analiz, derslerin içeriği, öğretim elemanlarının kalitesi ve programın kendisi güçlü alanlar arasında yer alırken, görevlerin yükünün, bazı öğretim elemanlarının tutumlarının, müfredatta son dakika değişikliklerinin zayıf yönler arasında sıralandığını ortaya koymuştur.

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1. Introduction

Educating young people with the idea of internationalization has resulted in the need for increased quality in education and international job opportunities (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2008). In addition, 21st-century skills that people have been required to have cannot be gained through traditional education programs and systems, which are generally teacher-centered and mostly based on individualized work (Payne & Kyllonen, 2012). Among these skills solving problems, self-efficacy, time management, leadership, cultural awareness, strong communication are only a few of them. As can be considered, all these skills necessitate people to get involved in an active learning process during which they have autonomy and responsibility. In this sense, especially with the European Union integration process, we have to be in strong communication with European Countries with specific regards to education. A great number of students in our country have visited other countries and get engaged in international and intercultural communication with different groups of students. This interaction also resulted in preferring foreign countries for higher education (Ates, 2011).

As a result, several education organizations have appeared with the idea of educating young people to meet this international need. One of these organizations is International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). The International Baccalaureate (IB) is an advanced learning program that grows fast in the last decade (O'Connor, 2011). IBO has been designed with the idea of forming schools all around the world. It has also aimed to have teachers and students with a shared mission to enable young people with the values, knowledge, and skills to create a better and more peaceful world. The aim of the IB programs aims to provide an education that enables students to make sense of the complexities of the world around them and equips them with the skills and temperaments needed for taking responsible action for the future. They provide an education that is transdisciplinary, intercultural, international, and above geographical boundaries and that forefront critical engagement, encouraging ideas and relationships (IB, 2017). The IB programs are being progressively accepted as the most demanding educational programs offered to students (Perna et al., 2015). They are known to be in “gold star” status because of the respected curricular and instructional model they offer (Byrd, 2007). The Diploma Program (DP), which is the first of four IB programs, was established in 1968. It pursued to provide a challenging and also a balanced education that enables geographical mobility by providing required qualifications to enter universities internationally with the purpose of endorsing intercultural understanding and respect. With the introduction of the Middle Years Program (MYP) in 1994 and the Primary Years Program (PYP) in 1997, students with the age range of 3 to 19 have had the chance to get a continuum of international education. The introduction of the Career-related Program (CP) in 2012 improved this continuum by providing “a choice of international education pathways for 16- to 19-year-old students” (IB, 2017g).

Schools can implement these four IB programs independently or all together as a continuum. They all share the common values about educating learners who are international-minded lifelong learners. “The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect” (IB, 2017a).

Based on recent educational research, in IB world schools, educators and students implement six varying approaches to teaching and five approaches to learning. Each of these helps to realize the objectives of IB education in the classroom. A cycle of inquiry, action, and

reflection are the major content of the approaches. In other words, learners and educators are involved in an interaction of “asking, doing and thinking” (IB, 2017h). The approaches are designed to allow teachers to be flexible to decide on specific strategies to implement according to the needs of their students.

In all IB programs, the inquiry is accepted as the basis of teaching. It places a strong emphasis on students’ searching for information and constructing their own understandings. In addition, conceptual understanding through which concepts help deepen disciplinary understandings and make connections and transfer learning to new contexts is the basis of teaching. On the contrary to the general idea that IB education ignores local needs, teaching in IB education makes use of real-life contexts and examples, and students acquire new information by personalizing them. Effective teamwork and collaboration are also one of the significant approaches applied in this program. It refers to the collaborative relationship among the learning community. IB Education is also informed by assessment to support the learning. Within this approach, the significant role of providing students with effective feedback is also focused. All these approaches underline the belief that learning how to learn is fundamental to education (IB, 2017h). Fabian (2011, p. 47) explains seven pedagogic principles of the IB, which are all rooted in the constructivist model of teaching and learning: 1. Appreciating the students’ knowledge and experiences, 2. Conceptual teaching, 3. Learning in context, 4. Differentiating the learning experience for the range of learning abilities and experiences, 5. Being based on inquiry and critical thinking, 6. Educating students as independent, life-long learners, 7. Creating a stimulating learning environment and a community of learners.

IB Education programs also state that there are some skills aiming to empower IB students of all ages to become autonomous learners who can ask quality questions, set effective goals, pursue their ambitions, and have the determination to accomplish them. These skills are listed as follows, (a) thinking skills such as critical thinking, creative thinking, and ethical thinking, (b) research skills such as comparing, contrasting, validating, and prioritizing information, (c) communication skills such as written and oral communication, effective listening, and formulating arguments, (d) social skills such as forming and maintaining positive relationships, listening skills, and conflict resolution, (e) self-management skills such as managing time and tasks, and (f) affective skills, such as managing state of mind and motivation. Improving these skills is valuable to support the mission of IB that is to develop lifelong learners who are active and concerned (2017i). With these strong features of this organization, all four programs proposed by IBO, which are all designed to meet the needs of the new century and the skills it requires young people to have, have been applied worldwide in more than 5000 schools. In Turkey, being one of these countries, IB started to be applied in 1994. There are 76 IB world schools (36 PYP, 14 MYP, and 50 DP). 13 universities in our country also recognize the IB with official policies for admitting IB students to their course (IB, 2019).

Having this many IB world schools with the above explained approaches, skills and principles caused a great demand for differentiated in-service teacher education from traditional ones. Teachers who work in IB World Schools are required to have the necessary certification to be able to teach in line with the IB program principles and standards. IBO has suggested and offered some ways of professional development (PD) for in-service teachers. Some district and cluster events, in-school workshops, online and face-to-face regional workshops, and other certificate programs such as IB leadership research and practice, teaching, and learning are the professional development programs. Some of these PDs are organized by the IBO

itself and some other are offered by different institutions which are authorized by IBO (2017c).

1.1. What is IB Educator Certificate in Teaching and Learning?

The students with IB certificate in teaching and learning have the chance to examine the principles and practices related to one of three IB programmes (Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma Programme). The courses that enable students to receive this certificate develop pre-service, new and experienced educators into reflective practitioners and teacher-researchers.

IB educator certificate holders receive some benefits. First of all, they are educated to have a deep understanding of IB programmes. Moreover, with this knowledge base, they increase their acceptance rate as IB teachers. Hiring teachers with this qualification saves institutions a great amount of money that they normally spend on obligatory introductory IB training of new staff. Additionally, having the certificate, teachers have access to the programme resource centre and the programme communities, the online networks that keep them connected to the worldwide IB network. Moreover, they subscribe to IB World through IB's official magazine, which will keep them informed of news and stories happening within the IB community. They will also find opportunities for collaboration while connecting with IB educators in the online communities, at regional conferences, and other events (2017f).

Some research studies investigated the required distinctive features of IB teachers from traditional ones. In one of the studies, for instance, Sturm (2017) investigated how IB teachers view their professional identity. Results revealed that the participants perceived their professional identities holistically and divergent from traditional teachers. It appeared that the participants constructed a professional identity as a result of the unique experiences and distinct instructional factors which are part of the IB framework. The contributing factors to their professional identity included preparation, context, instructional approach and emotional connection to the IB profession.

Another study was conducted to document the course delivery and teaching experience of IB teachers, as experience and delivery impact the efficacy of the IB curriculum (May, 2018). Findings showed that IB teachers are satisfied with the programme and with their role in the programme. Teachers feel that they can give important educational decisions within a strong curricular framework, and they are happy to collaborate with colleagues both within their schools and within the international IB community.

The factors influencing teachers' motivation and their perceptions towards change in initiating and implementing International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IB MYP) in a middle school were also explored with an earlier qualitative case study (Walters, 2007). The findings demonstrated that teachers experienced personal and professional changes by being involved in the initiating and implementation processes of IB-MYP.

As it is also clear in the literature, teachers experience distinctive professional gains and changes by being involved in IB programmes. Therefore, participating teachers who attend this certificate programme are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the principles and practices associated with implementing IB-PYP. The certificate is basically designed to train reflective practitioners and teacher-researchers. So, IB certificate in teaching and learning is a great choice on the condition that a teacher is willing to teach in an IB World

School, improve her/his practice in an IB World School, and increase their international teaching job opportunities worldwide.

In this article, the authorization (design) process of an institution that is the first to offer IB Educator Certificate in PYP in Turkey and the evaluation of the programme are explained in detail. As was stated previously, this case study aimed at reporting on the design and evaluation process of an IBEC programme. With this purpose, following research questions were addressed;

1. What are the needs and expectations of the stakeholders regarding an IB-PYP teacher?
2. Did the IBEC programme meet the needs of the participating in-service teachers?
3. What were the participants' evaluations about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the programme?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

Case studies are empirical studies in which a contemporary phenomenon is analysed in depth using multiple data sources in the context of real life (Yin, 2008, p. 18). This research was carried out according to the single case design, one of the case study types. Case studies take advantage of the development of theoretical propositions in advance to guide data collection and analysis, and aim to follow the effect of a well-formulated theory in single case patterns (Fraenkel & Devers, 2008; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016; Yin, 2008, p. 18). In this study, IBEC programme was designed in line with the education needs of the IB-PYP teachers in Turkey, and it was then evaluated. The single case study design of the research is depicted in the following figure:

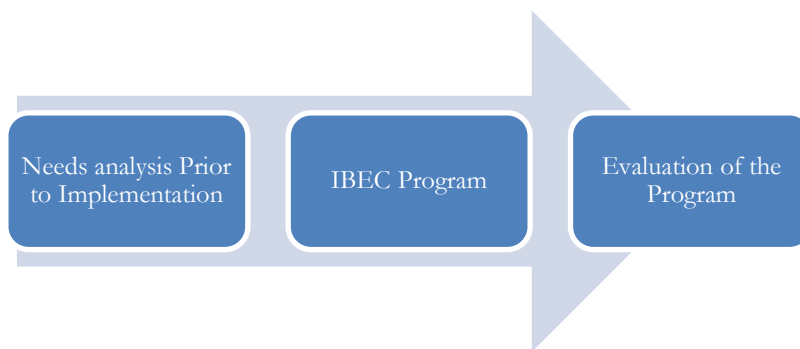


Figure 1. Design of the research methodology

2.2. Participants

The study was conducted in the education faculty of a foundation university located in the South-east region of Turkey. With five different majors, nearly one thousand students, and more than fifty academics, it is one of the biggest faculties in the country. In the design process, all stakeholders participated, namely, administrators (N=5), teachers (N=10), students (N=10), and parents (N=10). They contributed especially to the investigation of the needs. In the evaluation section, which is the second phase of the study, seventy in-service teachers who attended the IB programme and received their certificates took part. Sixty-four

of these participants were teaching young learners, six of them were secondary school teachers of different majors such as science, visual arts, and physical education.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to the design process of the programme, we have conducted official and unofficial negotiations with all the stakeholders in 5 different IB-PYP World Schools. In these negotiations, we mostly focused on the expectations of administrators (N=5), teachers (N=10), students (N=10), and parents (N=10) from IB –PYP teachers. Some of the questions we asked are; What kind of personality do you expect from an IB-PYP teacher?, What should an IB-PYP teacher do for professional development? What kind of a relation do you think a PYP teacher should have with students, parents, and other teachers?, What content knowledge should a PYP teacher have?, What kind of strategies and methods do you expect a PYP teacher to apply?, What should be the distinctive features of a PYP teacher from teachers teaching in non-IB schools?. All interviews were transcribed, and the analysis of the texts was done through open coding and content analysis.

Upon designing the programme depending on the results of the needs analysis, the evaluation of the programme was done through SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis can be considered as the examination of the internal strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of an educational setting. It is an instrument designed to be applied in the preliminary stages of decision-making and strategic planning (Bartol & Martin, 1991; Johnson, Scholes & Sexty, 1989). Seventy participants were asked to evaluate the programme in the last session of the programme they attended and write their ideas. The written documents were coded by the researchers. Both inter-rater and intra-rater reliability values were calculated and found 86% and 95%, respectively.

2.3.1. Design of the HKU-ITTC (IBEC PYP) Programme

The IB certificate in teaching and learning is programme-specific which means that the institutions that are recognized to offer programmes of study eligible for this certificate focus on one of the IB's four programme. Participants in that specific programme investigate one IB programme with respect to the following areas of inquiry; (a) curriculum processes, (b) teaching and learning, (c) assessment and learning, (d) professional learning.

In line with this information, as a group of academics in the Education Faculty of a foundation university in Turkey, we decided to design an IB Certificate in teaching and learning, in other words, IB educator certificate programme (IBEC), by focusing on PYP. This alternative teacher education model would be the first intensive teacher education programme in Turkey which is specifically designed in line with IB principles and standards.

Societies, schools, teachers, students, parents consider education programmes as a primary force to meet students' expectations (McNeil, 2014). For this reason, it is necessary to develop programmes in determined educational practices and to determine the effectiveness level of the developed programme. Conducting educational activities under the guidance of the programme brings systematicity to the practitioners. A systematic way has been followed in the development of the IBEC teacher training programme. Firstly, IB-PYP teaching framework was taken as a reference in the development of the programme. IB-PYP education is based on the constructivist learning approach, and all necessary knowledge and skills related to life are acquired with a transdisciplinary understanding. Teacher competencies are also considered important in education, which aims to raise the profile of

the learner in an international context. For this reason, the IB-PYP framework was taken into consideration while designing the IBEC programme. Programme development processes and models were examined by scanning related literature (Henson, 2006; Oliva, 2005; Ornstein, & Hunkins, 2018; Posner & Rudnitsky, 1987; Taba, 1962; Tanner & Tanner, 2007; Tyler, 1969). A 6-step interrelated process was followed in the development and evaluation of the IBEC programme:

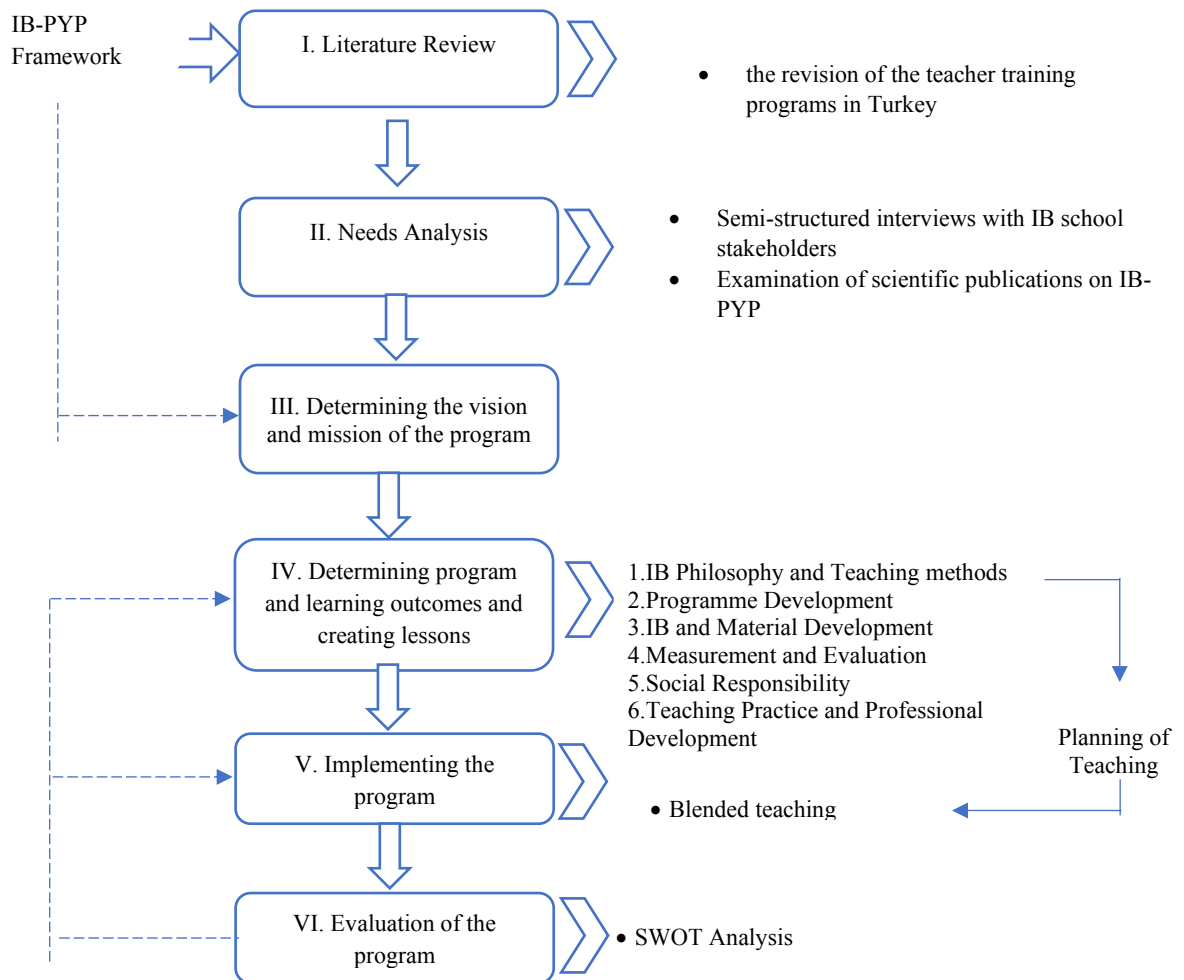


Figure 2. IBEC programme design and evaluation process

As demonstrated in figure 2, the study started with an intensive literature review that sheds light upon the teacher training programs in Turkey. With the information retrieved, the needs analysis was conducted to determine the vision and the mission of the program. In the light of the results gathered from needs analysis, the courses were decided and designed to be implemented. After the program was implemented, the SWOT analysis was conducted for the evaluation of the program. This process was explained in detail in the following section.

Step 1. Literature review

This step includes a literature review, in which the necessary information is obtained for the design of the programme. First of all, the IB-PYP teaching framework was read, and the basic lines were drawn. The teacher qualifications framework and teacher training system in

Turkey were reviewed and the results were compared to IB PYP training programme. Thus, a general framework for the programme designers started to be structured.

Step 2. Needs analysis

This step is the stage where data is collected from the stakeholders in order to determine what the programme will serve, how to set it up, and what it will teach. While preparing the IBEC programme, stakeholders and scientific publications were the main sources. First of all, the professional development needs of IB-PYP teachers have been focused. Therefore, semi-structured focus-group interviews were held with administrators, coordinators, teachers, students, and parents in IB schools. In these meetings, semi-structured focused group interviews were held. Thus, the scope of IBEC training was tried to be established.

As for the content and construct validity of the interview questions, experts in the field checked the questions. The questions were revised depending on their feedback. The reliability of the data was also checked through member-checks. Some of the interviewees were asked to check the transcriptions for reliability. The transcriptions were open-coded by two researchers. The inter-rater reliability of the codes was found to be 84%. The codes that were not agreed on were eliminated. The results of the needs analysis were provided in the following table.

Table 1.

Common Codes and Categories Revealed from Needs Analysis

Personality	Professional Development	Strategies and Methods	Knowledge Base
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-minded (N=15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong relation with other teachers (N=24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directing to Inquiry (N=27) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of planner (N=16)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective (N=21) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to attend workshops and conferences (N=22) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding for research integration (N=22) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing units of inquiry (N=18)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerant (N=13) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to team-work (N=15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking open-ended questions (N=24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment (N=22)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly (N=16) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following recent developments (N=17) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using visuals and authentic materials effectively (N=21) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying appropriate provocations (N=14)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimistic (N=18) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing materials (N=19) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective Feedback (N= 24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Responsibility (N=8)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International-minded (N=12) • Empathy (N=21) • Efficacious (N=6) 			

Upon the analysis of the data gathered through the negotiations, we have decided on the courses, course descriptions, duration, assignments and tasks, and assessment.

Step 3. Programme mission and vision

In this step, the teacher education vision and mission of the programme has been established within the context of PYP general framework and needs analysis. Attention is paid to the

harmony of the philosophy of IBEC teacher education and the philosophy of IB-PYP education. The IBEC programme aims to train teachers who adopt contemporary learning approaches, internalize student-centered education, are open to professional development, compatible, have high self-control, and lifelong learning. Thus, it contributes to the existence of these teachers with a national and international perspective.

Step 4. Determining learning outcomes of the programme and the courses

In order to meet the needs of the stakeholders in IB schools, we have decided to design an intensive professional development programme which is not as loaded as an MA programme but which is also not too short and skin-deep. With this idea in mind, we have planned a 252-hour programme including six courses which will last between 3 and 6 months depending on the weekly class hours. Developing such an intensive programme made us think about the blended form as the way of instruction. Otherwise, it would be difficult to make the participants attend 252-hour face-to-face education. Therefore, one-third of the programme was planned online. In other words, one hour of each course is offered online.

We have also decided on the courses according to the purpose of the IBEC programme and the needs of the stakeholders. To exemplify, all parties who participated in the needs analysis generally focused on the need for some IB specific subjects such as teaching strategies, methods, use of materials, use of a planner. Therefore, we planned all the courses and the duration by taking such needs into consideration. While preparing the description, the content, and related tasks of each course, we have also considered gaining the personality traits, knowledge base that IB teachers are believed to have. Another significant issue that we considered is that in-service teachers attending this programme experience what they are going to require their students to do. For instance, they are engaged in a reflective practice which is a task they would ask their students to do. Another example is that participating teachers will do research and experience the process before they ask their students to do so. In other words, in-service teachers in the programme will gain hands-on experience to internalize the details of the IB PYP programme. The details of the programme are given in the following table.

Table 2.

Programme Details

Course	Course Description	Learning Process	Assessment & Evaluation
Curriculum Design and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With this course, PYP teacher candidates are trained to develop transdisciplinary inquiry programmes. • It is offered 3 (2 hrs face-to-face/ 1 hr online) hours for 14 weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this course, teaching techniques based on active learning approach (discussion, group work, brainstorming, educational game, KWFL...) are used. • The course focuses on the development of higher-order thinking skills (critical, reflective, creative, empathy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective writing • Peer assessment • Self-assessment • Micro teaching (Presentation) • Class participation

IB Philosophy and Teaching Methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With this course, PYP teacher candidates are provided with knowledge and skills related to the PYP teaching framework (contextual learning, concept-based learning, inquiry-based learning, transdisciplinary learning). • It is offered 3 (2 hrs face-to-face/ 1 hr online) hours for 14 weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this course, teaching techniques based on active learning approach (discussion, group work, brainstorming) are used. • The course focuses on the development of higher-order thinking skills (critical, reflective, creative, empathy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective writing • Micro teaching (Presentation) • Class participation
Educational Technologies, Materials Design and Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainees are educated to be able to develop teaching and learning tools through technology for their practice in PYP education • It is offered 3 (2 hrs face-to-face/ 1 hr online) hours for 14 weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainees are guided to implement transformative thinking, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking skills with teaching based on constructivist learning theory, contextual and interrogative learning approach, interdisciplinary thematic teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the materials developed • Reflective essays they write both during the designing process and the application process • Presentation
IB and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With this course, trainees are instructed regarding the effective assessment forms (e.g. diagnostic/pre-assessment, summative assessment, formative assessment, portfolio assessment and other alternative assessment tools). • It is offered 3 (2 hrs face-to-face/ 1 hr online) hours for 14 weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a constructive and active learning manner, group, pair and whole class activities are used. • Essential elements of PYP such as; knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes and action are aimed to work on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample evaluation rubrics • Reflective essays • Formative and summative assessment projects • Presentation
Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This course aims at raising the awareness of trainees regarding the importance of being involved in social responsibility projects by assigning them to some voluntary work • It is offered 3 (2 hrs face-to-face/ 1 hr 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this course, teaching techniques based on active learning approach (discussion, group work, brainstorming, educational game, KWFL...) are used. • The course focuses on the development of higher-order thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project proposal • Project report • Reflective essays • Class participation

	online) hours for 14 weeks.	skills (critical, reflective, creative, empathy).	
Teaching Practice and Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With this course, it is aimed to provide a variety of high-quality professional development opportunities to help new, experienced and expert school leaders and educators understand, support, and successfully deliver IB programmes reflecting IB standards and practices. It is offered 3 (2 hrs face-to-face/ 1 hr online) hours for 14 weeks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In this course, teaching techniques based on active learning approach (discussion, group work, brainstorming) are used. The course focuses on the development of teachers' IB implementation both in real IB classroom and with micro teaching experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflective writing Real teaching Micro teaching (Presentation) Class participation

Step 5. Implementation of the Programme

This phase includes the 14-week implementation period of IBEC training. Trainings were conducted face to face and online.

Step 6. Evaluation of the programme

This stage is the stage where IBEC education is evaluated according to the opinions of participating in-service teachers. In the light of the obtained data, it is aimed to strengthen the course contents and application processes. The SWOT technique analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, the opportunities provided by the programme, and threats it caused. Seventy participants took part in the evaluation process of the programme. All of the participants were the in-service teachers who attended the IBEC programme in three different cohorts. All the written documents were coded by the researchers, and the results were depicted below.

3. Findings

3.1. Strengths

The areas that participants considered as the strength of the programme were about the (a) knowledge gained in courses, (b) instructors, and (c) the programme as a whole. Regarding the courses, they felt that learning how to be open minded (N=52, F=74%), to respect others (N=36, F=51%), to question (N=58, F=82), to empathy (N=55, F=79%), to be student-centred (N=62, F=88%) as the strong areas of the programme related to the content of the courses and the knowledge they gained. These results are also apparent in the following quotations;

S5: I was aware of the importance of some concepts in teaching. However, I was not that informed about the results on students and their success.

S22: I always claimed that I am very open-minded and very respectful to others' ideas and beliefs. However, with real-life examples shared in the courses, I learned how to reflect them in my practice.

Another area that was considered a strength is the quality of the instructors. Participants stated that methods used by the instructors (N=63, F=90%), their being experienced academics (N=55, F=78%), their IB experience (N=38, F=54%), their friendly and sharing attitude (N=65, 93%), their readiness for the classes (N=64, F=91%), their use of techniques suggested by IB (N=57, F=81%), being experienced IB teachers (N=52, F=74%) were the strong points about the instructors of the IBEC programme.

S14: Observing the instructors while they are teaching also helped us understand how an IB teacher should be. They served as role models.

S32: The atmosphere in the classroom was very friendly and stress-free. Despite being academics and experienced IB teachers, they were very approachable. This attitude and they desire to share information was very motivating.

The final area of strength identified by the participants was about the programme as a whole. The common ideas are as follows; being practice oriented (N=65, F=93%), opportunity to practice theory (N=55, F=79%), planning of the programme according to the work hours of the participants (N=45, F=64%), certificate given at the end of the programme (N=37, F=53%), location of the programme (N=62, F=89%), use of real life samples (N=61, F=87%), use of a variety of instruction delivery methods and activities (group work, videos, hands-on exercises, class observation, online classes) (N=58, F=83%), having participants from different majors (N=32, F=46%), a sincere and positive atmosphere both in class and social media groups (N=42, F=60%), being the only programme to offer this certificate (N=52, F=74%), making use of Turkish translation of the IB materials (N=24, F=34%), opportunity to watch the recorded online classes later (N=33, F=47%), being a long and intensive programme (N=49, F=70%), access to a variety of international resources (N=36, F=51%). Some of the vignettes about these strong areas are given below.

S56: When I heard the length of the programme, I was a bit worried. But the variety of methods implemented, the positive atmosphere in the classroom, the sharing among participants from different majors were all great experience.

S67: Knowing that the certificate I would get at the end would serve for many benefits was worth all the tiring days.

S18: For me the most important strength is the opportunity to visit an IB school, do observations and practice what we learned. It was really valuable experience.

3.2. Areas of Concern (Weaknesses)

On the contrary to the strong points of the IBEC programme, participants also agreed on some areas of concern about (a) the programme, and (b) the instructors. With specific regards to the programme, they mostly complained about the load of assignments (N=42, F=60%), online classes (technological problems) (N=58, F=83%), the amount of time spent on planning a lesson (N=50, F=71%), changes made in the content of the syllabi during the programme (N=32, F=46%), difficulties in project based assignments (N=28, F=40%), lack of creativity development in the assignments (N=24, F=34%).

S30: I am very much aware of the fact that all the tasks and assignments were for our benefit. However, we are all full-time working teachers, and sometimes I really felt trapped because of the load of the assignments. And I just completed some tasks without enjoying and internalizing.

S46: During some online classes, the communication broke down frequently because of the system, and this discouraged me, and I stopped following online classes.

There were also some concerns about the instructors. Some students were not happy with the off-task discussions in some classes (N=25, F=36%). Some others considered that they had to receive individual feedback more often (N=28, F=40%), and despite being a few, some others thought the attitude of some instructors was against the IB philosophy (N=18, F=26%).

S12: Most of the instructors were very careful with their behaviour in the classroom. They always acted as IB PYP teacher role models. However, one of them was totally against the philosophy with strict rules and unfriendly attitude.

3.3. Ideas for Future (Opportunities)

In addition to the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, participants also shared their ideas about the opportunities this programme offers for their future. International job opportunities (N=57, F=81%), integration to international PYP teachers' network (N=43, F=61%), strong communication with academics and other participants (N=63, F=90%), career and professional development (N=55, F=79%), being one of the first teachers to have this certificate in Turkey (N=47, F=67%).

S64: It is great to be involved in an international network of PYP teachers.

S16: This programme was a turning point in my career. I questioned my past practices, tried to improve my teaching skills. I cannot think of any other professional development opportunity.

3.4. Threats

Finally, the participating in-service teachers stated that the certificate they received at the end of this programme would increase the expectations of schools from them (N=23, F=33%), and in turn they would have to sacrifice from their personal life (N=34, F=49%).

S5: I am afraid the load that I am under will increase. The administration will expect me to share my knowledge with others and plan some extracurricular activities.

The results of the SWOT analysis depicted all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the program, which are all discussed in the discussion section in detail.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Present study aimed at designing an alternative teacher education programme within the framework of IBEC programme and doing the evaluation of the implementation. With this purpose, A 6-step interrelated process was followed in the development and evaluation of the programme. During the design process, after an intensive literature review and needs analysis, the programme was designed depending on the results. Results of the needs analysis showed that an IB-PYP teacher is expected to have some specific personality traits (e.g., being open-minded, optimistic, international-minded), open to professional development, have a large knowledge base with regards to IB programme, and have necessary information

and experience about how to teach (i.e., strategies, techniques, methods). Therefore, the programme outcomes, the courses, and the materials were all designed and preparing in line with these expectations.

Teachers who have this certificate become qualified enough to teach in IB-PYP schools according to the IB philosophy with the required knowledge, skills, and values (Sturm, 2017). Within the framework of this teacher education programme, trainees are first introduced to the philosophy of the IB, create a “we” culture, and become aware of the importance of being a global teacher with an international and critical perspective. This programme develops trainees’ skills to design, implement and evaluate their teaching according to the IB-PYP philosophy (May, 2018). Moreover, they gain experience and information about the student-centred education process in-depth and develop professionally through continuous reflective thinking. Besides, they acquire the significance of collaborative and transdisciplinary work. In turn, they are able to help their students be principled, open-minded, sensitive, risk-taker, reflective, and balanced. In a similar vein, they are able to support their learners’ improvement of conceptual thinking, critical thinking, inquiry and questioning skills, having healthy communication with others, and working collaboratively (Walters, 2007). With these principles in mind, a 250-hour blended training during which they are instructed six different courses in which they are required to combine theory and practice in every course through micro and macro teaching and practice teaching in cooperating IB schools has been designed as an innovative model to teacher training.

In the second phase of the study, the evaluation of this programme by the participants with SWOT analysis was reported. The results revealed that the content of the courses, the quality of the instructors, and the programme itself are especially strong areas. However, the load of assignments, the attitude of some instructors, the last-minute changes in the syllabi were accepted as areas of concern. On the other hand, being involved in an international network and being an IBEC holder were listed among the opportunities that the programme offers for the future careers of the participants. Finally, the possible increase in the expectations of the institutions from the teachers having this certificate was stated as a threat.

The results of the SWOT analysis also helped improve the quality of the upcoming implementation of the same programme. By taking the weaknesses into consideration, the design committee made some decisions and changed some features. For instance, the programme was decided to be implemented face-to-face instead of the blended form.

To conclude, HKU-ITTC (IBEC-PYP) Programme has been designed as an alternative teacher education model to train in-service teachers to become IB educator certificate holders by taking IB education programme standards, principles and approaches, the needs of the stakeholders in IB PYP world schools, and the 21st-century requirements into consideration. Teachers attending this programme experience all the skills and approaches through the tasks and assignments of the courses themselves before starting to apply them in their real classroom settings. Therefore, such a practice-oriented programme that aims to build reflective, teacher-researchers who are international-minded with the necessary personality traits serves as an alternative effective teacher education model.

This study suggests many implications for teachers, teacher educators, and Higher Education Council. First of all, the philosophy underlying this alternative education programme serves as a humanistic, student-oriented, international, and transdisciplinary education system. This philosophy should be accepted as a lifestyle and reflected in the classrooms in order to give students the responsibility of their own learning.

Secondly, teacher education faculties should give importance to such alternative education programmes which are international and practice-oriented and inform prospective teachers about their features. This would both help them enlarge their perspectives and follow the recent developments globally. Needless to say, this can only be realized with the permission of the Higher Education Council. Therefore, the teacher education curriculum should be revised, and recent topics and developments should be integrated.

Ethical Issues

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this paper.

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