

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In this paper, I expressed my first impressions and experiences at an international school, BLIS. I divided my observations into parts in which I mentioned about school environment generally, students, teachers and my ideas on this issue. I also compared BLIS with OBO and OBL. I observed similar and mostly different things and noted them. At all I liked the idea of an international school and explained its reason in this article.

Key Words: international schools, national schools, culture effect in schools.

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Introduction

The purpose of this article was to express my impressions about Bilkent Laboratory International School (BLIS). I divided my observations into three parts as school's physical environment, teachers and administrators and students. Additionally I compared BLIS with Bilkent Middle School (OBO) and Bilkent High School (OBL) and explained my ideas on this issue.

The First Experience At An International School: A Day In BLIS

A General View to the Physical Environment of BLIS

On Thursday, when I entered BLIS my first impression was that BLIS did not look like any school I had seen until that day. It was quite big and sometimes it looked like such as a labyrinth to me because of its transitions between different floors and buildings. When we all student teachers had a quick trip in the school, I observed floors were allocated according to students' grades in middle school. On the other hand they were allocated according to lessons or social activities such as science floor, art floor etc. in high school.

School hallways were also large and it seemed to me they served a different purpose. There were some seats throughout the hallways which students wait there for the next lesson and communicate each other instead of doing such these things in a school garden. It was interesting for me that there was not a school garden image as I was used to see it in Turkish schools.

Library was spacious, light-well and with high ceilings. There were some artworks like ancient mosaics on the walls. As well as computers and seats which were suitable for individual work, there were also some groups of table and chairs in the middle of the library and a part separated with a glass compartment for group works. I also liked the books on shelves both in English and Turkish, classics and new publications even I took one and read half of it with relish.

Another different thing was teachers' room for me. Although there was a teachers' room, teachers were usually on their own classrooms even in break times. I am not sure if the teachers had meetings among themselves regularly, I think it is. But it seemed me everything worked at BLIS more individually and so professional since everybody knows what must/should do about their own work, school, students etc.

There was a large and colorful dining room at BLIS. Lunch time was different for middle and high school. I observed that teachers accompanied middle school students during their lunch and oversee them. Because of the Halloween Day at BLIS, the part between dining room and canteen was decorated with some pictures of pumpkins, cartoon bats at the ceiling etc. And high school students with witch costumes sold candies to middle school students. It was really funny.

After all, in comparison BLIS with OBO and OBL the school and its physical environment was quite different. OBL was a small school according to BLIS and easy to find the way and to feel confident. In OBL the classrooms were not allocated for different lessons such as math class, Turkish class etc. and the classroom environment was very traditional with a board, desks in a row, teacher's desk, and projector etc. There were not so many different projects/articles/workings of students on the walls of classrooms in comparison to BLIS.

However especially the artworks were much more than BLIS, not in classrooms, instead during school hallways and almost every wall in the school. Additionally it was a bit different at OBO. There were math class, Turkish class, English class etc. in OBO and classrooms' environment was more similar to BLIS with cupboards sources/portfolios/publications/games in it and there were lots of student workings about the subject area of the class on the walls. Additionally, the students' artworks were everywhere in school and even in the school garden!

Another thing that I found different was teachers' rooms between these schools. I was surprised when I first saw teachers' rooms for each different branch in OBO and OBL. During

my observations at OBO and OBL I liked this idea since it helps teachers in the same branch to share their ideas/workings etc. and usually being attached with each other.

Teachers and Administrators at BLIS

Administrators in BLIS were also expert teachers. When administrators welcomed us (teacher candidates) in library, they introduced themselves, talked about their rich teaching experiences in different countries, expressed BLIS was really different and nice school and they were glad since student teachers would experience the school and see what they mean.

Teachers at BLIS were from different countries like students. I think this made the school richer and colorful with their different backgrounds and teaching techniques. There were same things such as questioning-answering parts, engaging students, revision parts at the beginning of the class, using the students' names with a clear pronunciation, sometimes saying "Shh..." when noise was up, group works, monitoring students, giving feedbacks, encouragements such as "Come on, Ali. You can do it!" "It works Ezgi! Look, your way works!" "Good, right!" "Bravo!", transitions between activities by giving clear instructions such as "Now, turn the page 7, do exercise 8" "Let's look at rational numbers" etc. as in OBO and OBL. However, I observed different things. For example in the 5th grade almost each student asked questions by coming on the board without asking for any permission and they did not care about another student's question and the teacher did not warn them on these issues unlike just answered their questions individually. Sometime boys in the class lay down on the floor with their books and the teacher came near them, crouched and told the topic there. I did not see such these things in OBO and OBL. I think since it was evaluated as disrespect according to the traditions of Turkish culture.

In addition to these, one of the lessons that I observed was very similar to those videos I had in *Special Teaching Methods courses*. It was Paola's class with 9th grade. She reminded the last class first and then students began to work in groups, discussed about the data and made a

graph by using it. While they were doing their work, the teacher monitored each group, listened their ideas, questions etc. and helped them with sometimes gradual and sometimes challenging questions.

Middle and High School Students at BLIS

In BLIS, the 80% of the students were Turkish and 20% of them were foreigners. It also made the school more colorful, richer and special. It provides students different points of view and ability to understand each other and respect each other's ideas/culture etc. So such an environment helps peace, I think.

Students were very confident and relax in classes. Since their English were fluent and they knew about terminology, they communicated with the teacher, asked their questions easily. I think it was one of the reasons of their confident. On the other hand because of the school was international and there were not a particular set of traditions/rules etc. students were much more free about their behaviors in the class than as in OBO and OBL. They could lie down on the floor, walk around during the class, listen to music while doing their classwork exercises, come to the board whenever he/she wants, sit however he/she wants etc. I think it was thought that students should participate into class in which situation he/she feel herself/himself comfortable in BLIS.

Another interesting thing was students made peer teaching among themselves in Turkish. When the teacher told a confusing thing for one of them, they explained it in Turkish to each other. But they communicated with the teacher in English to resolve their questions/misconceptions etc.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to express my impressions of BLIS and compare my last experience with my previous experiences at OBO and OBL. I learned this culture plays a major role in schools as a whole. Because I graduated from national schools during my education life, now I observed OBO and OBL and then an international school BLIS so I realized the differences for each conditions. However I liked the idea of international schools for a much more peaceful world.

"A Bilkent student does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do. On my honor, as a Bilkent student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work."

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