

Students' Attitudes towards the LMD Assessment System and its Impact on their Performance

Dr. Souad Guessar¹

¹University of Bechar- Tahri Mohamed, Algeria, Email: guessar.souad@univ-bechar.dz

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Abstract:

Student assessment is considered one of the most important parts of the learning and teaching process. In education, knowing how much students have achieved during their studies can be easily determined through the evaluation process. The present work investigates the LMD evaluation through first year students' attitudes. It attempts to provide a general overview of this newly implemented reform and its main objectives, as well as to define some key terms related to the subject. This research aims to investigate whether or not students are informed about the criteria of evaluation under the new educational reform. It should be known that students are evaluated and given marks throughout the semester through continuous assessment and at the end of the semester final examination. The survey was conducted using questionnaires to collect the necessary data. One questionnaire was distributed to teachers in the department of languages. Another questionnaire was administered to the first year students of University of Bechar- Tahri Mohamed. The questionnaire aims to assess students' attitudes towards the completely new reform and to see if they are familiar with the evaluation criteria.

Keywords: LMD system, assessment, students' attitudes, performance, University of Bechar- Tahri Mohamed, Algeria.

1. General introduction:

The Algerian educational system has undergone several changes over the last years in terms of the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The learning process concerns not only the mind of the learner but also their views, and their vibrations towards this process. Evaluation has long been one of the crucial issues to be discussed in higher education, with a particular focus on EFL teaching under the new education system (L.M.D.). It has a crucial role to play in shaping the future of learners, either pushing them towards success or hindering their progress.

This research aims to address the (LMD) reform because it is a newly introduced system in Algerian universities and the evaluation criteria needed to be examined from a purely student perspective to find out the realities related to this issue. The results will serve as a key component in finding the best solutions to this particular problem. The paper deals with a general background of the implementation and objectives of the LMD system, which means the definition of LMD, and the main objectives that leads to the adoption of this reform in higher education. This paper also sheds light on how students are evaluated under the new reform, with some definitions and key concepts related to the topic.

In the present work, this study hypothesizes that EFL students are not informed about the new reform in general and specifically about the evaluation criteria used. The questions that arise are:

*Did the EFL students have any kind of information about the LMD system?

*How will their performance be assessed in this new reform? Also, how does such an educational process affect their performance?

2. Definition of LMD system:

Serbanescu -Lestrade 2007 stated that "The Master Licence Doctorate (LMD) or 3-5-8 system is being implemented within the framework of the Bologna process, which refers to the European harmonisation of higher education". The new educational system of eight years of study and research has been adopted through the above-mentioned Bologna Process, which is a procedure of cooperation and reform in the field of higher education that provides students with the skills and competencies needed for the labour market. (Mignanwande, Hounmenou, 2016).

The Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (2011) has defined the LMD as a higher education system that mainly consists of three types of qualifications (license, master and doctorate). The license degree requires six semesters of study, which means three years of university study, while the master's degree requires four semesters of study (two years after the license). The doctorate requires at least

three more years of study and research, followed by a dissertation, after completing the master's degree and passing the doctoral competition.

3. Definition of evaluation:

Screven (1991) in his book *Evaluation Thesaurus* defines this term as "the process of determining the merit, worth, and value of things, and evaluation is the product of that process" (James. Mc Namara, 1999). So the process of evaluation is to make judgments about the value of data collected through observations and descriptions. Evaluation is the set of procedures used to determine whether the student meets a predetermined criterion. It uses assessment techniques (both measurement and non-measurement) to determine whether or not the student qualifies. Evaluation requires the collection of data for informed decision-making by educational stakeholders. (Mohan, 2016).

3.1. Types of evaluation:

Airasian (2008) in his book *Classroom Assessment* has stated that assessment can be divided into three types:

3.1.1. Diagnostic evaluation:

"When learning difficulties persist, diagnostic assessment is required. This helps to identify the underlying causes of the problems and to formulate an appropriate remediation plan". In this sense, diagnosis involves finding out the weaknesses of the students and determining the most relevant remedial programmes. It is also a way for teachers to know the number of prerequisites acquired by the students and to plan their teaching based on the diagnosed strengths and weaknesses of the latter.

3.1.2. Summative evaluation:

"Summative evaluation is designed to determine the extent to which teaching objectives have been achieved and is used to assign grades and certificates to students. Techniques used include teacher-made achievement tests..." This means that summative evaluation is used to determine the extent to which the predetermined instructional goals have been achieved. The main purpose of this type of evaluation is to give marks to the students to show the degree to which they have mastered the content of the lesson. It is usually the work of periodic tests.

3.1.3. Formative evaluation:

"Formative evaluation is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. This last type is usually informal; it often takes place during instruction. It provides both teachers and learners with continuous feedback on learning achievement or failure. The latter is useful for monitoring and improving student performance. (Mohan, 2016)

3.2. Evaluation in the LMD system :

Under the LMD reform, students are assessed on a semester basis through summative and formative assessment. The former involves continuous assessment, including homework, student participation, presentations, etc., while the latter involves the assessment of student performance through a test or series of tests and a final examination at the end of each semester (Article 18 of Decree No. 137 of 20 June 2009). Accordingly, a student passes a course if the average is equal to or higher than 10 out of 20.

3.2.1. The continuous assessment:

It focuses on specific questions (courses, assignments and personal work) to check the student's understanding at the end of the tutorial (TP) and directed work (TD) sessions or additional sessions by the teacher in charge of the subject in collaboration with the department.

3.2.2. The final examination:

It depends on the subjects studied during the semester. The duration of the examination is announced and set by the administration. The evaluation in this new reform includes the evaluation of the subjects, of the teaching unit, of the semester and finally of the academic year, it is clarified as follows:

3.2.2.1. The evaluation of the subject:

The grade of a subject includes continuous assessment and- or the exam average. To obtain a module the mark should be superior or equal to 10 out of 20. (Article 24 of the order N°137 of June 20, 2009).

3.2.2.2. The evaluation of TU:

The student will pass all the subjects in case the TU is validated. The teaching unit can be also validated related to its coefficient through compensation if the global mark is superior or equal to 10 out of 20 (Article 24 of the order N°137 of June 20, 2009).

3.2.2.3. The evaluation of a semester:

The progression from one semester to another demands obtaining grades in the teaching units integrated. The semester can be also acquired through compensation between different teaching units according to its coefficient; the compensated average should be superior or equal to 10 out of 20 (Article 25 of the order N°137 of June 20, 2009).

3.2.2.4. Evaluation of the academic year:

The progress from one academic year to another is acquired once the student passes the two semesters. It can be also acquired through compensation during the Licence. The academic year allows the acquisition of three levels of license (L1, L2, and L3) by calculating the average of TU which this year is made of, according to its coefficient. If the average is superior or equal to 10 out of 20, the student will obtain 60 credits for the year (Article 29 of the order N°137 of June 20, 2009). In case, the students fail in the final examination, in other words, if their marks are less than 10 out of 20, they will pass the catch-up exam.

3.2.3. The make-up exam:

If the student does not pass the final exam, he/she will pass the make-up exam. The final grade for a subject will be the best average between the final exam and the make-up exam (article 27 of decree n°137 of 20 June 2009). In case the student does not obtain the average of 10 out of 20 in the make-up exam, he/she can keep the credit of the TU and the subjects of the final exam where the marks are equal or higher than 10 out of 20 (Article 28 of the order N°137 of (20 June 2009)).

3.2.4. Debts:

It is about the organisation of the catch-up session of the previous debts for the students of L2, L3 and M2; it needs some steps to organise such an examination:

- Organise a meeting with the heads of the domains, sectors and specialities by departments to plan a suitable schedule.
- Announce the timetable of the exam.
- During the corrections of the catch up exam, the department should send, register the grades to the tuition department.
- Before the end of the semester, the Heads of Departments, Sectors and Specialities should organise the validation of the grades of the catch-up exam.
- The make-up exams concern the students who have benefited from the admission to the next year without having validated all the credits, i.e. the students of L2, L3 and M2. The organisation of these make-up exams can be as follows
- Dedicate one day a week (e.g. Saturday) to the organisation of these make-up exams throughout the semester.
- Prepare a schedule that includes one or two subjects per day, depending on the subject, sector or field.

4. The calculation of the average:

The calculation of the averages of the subject, semester, and academic year in the LMD system according to the Department of Foreign Languages at UTMB, as follows:

1)-The calculation of subjects' average:

The calculation of the subjects that include (TD):

TD= Directed Work

X= The Average / Mark

B) - $[X + (\text{exam} \times 2) / 3]$ = the subject' average

1) The calculation of the subjects without (TD):

2)-The calculation of the Unit's average:

(the subject 'average X coefficient)] / the unit's average

2) The calculation of the semester's average:

$[(\text{Average} \times \text{Ucoefficient}) / \text{semester}' \text{coefficient}] = \text{The semester}' \text{average}.$

In case each TU of the semester covers a superior or equal average of 10 out of 20, the semester is acquired along with capitalization. If the semester average is equal or superior to 10 of 20, the semester will be acquired along with compensation.

Coeff = is the coefficient.

2) The calculation of the annual average:

The annual average is calculated through the combination of the first and second semesters' averages divided by two. The calculation as follows: (first semester's average X first semester's coefficient)+(second semester's average X second semester's coefficient)/(first-semester average + second-semester coefficient)= the Annual Average

5. The role of evaluation in enhancing student's performance:

Thorndike and Hagen stated, "Evaluation of pupil progress is a major aspect of the teacher's job. A good picture of where the pupil is and how he is progressing is fundamental to effective teaching by the teacher and to effective learning by the pupil" (T.Swarupa, 2004).

This means the evaluation of students means to judge every student's requirements, efforts, and accomplishments. Moreover, it is useful in support of making judgments and modifications based on the information collected by the teachers, to provide feedback to students to keep them informed about their progress to curriculum goals. In his book, Educational Measurement and Evaluation Dr.T.Swarupa stated how evaluation helps the students in several ways to enhance their performance.

5.1. Awareness of objectives:

Through this procedure, the students will be aware of what the teacher anticipates from them. Therefore, they collaborate with him or her to accomplish the aims.

5.2. Increasing motivation:

The evaluation procedure plays a crucial role in motivating, directing, inspiring, and involving the students in the learning process. Furthermore, this latter rewards their learning and motivates them to study.

5.3. Encouraging study habits:

The evaluation is considered a constant process and periodic exercise, so it can be helpful to push students toward better studying' performance. Moreover, students will pay more attention to the learning process and be aware that today's tasks should be done today.

5.4. Greater chances for increasing abilities and skills:

Furthermore, it plays a significant role in determining the students' strengths and weaknesses, so teachers can take advantage of modifying and adopting an appropriate learning program. So, through evaluation' feedback will be easy to improve and enhance students' performance, then the learning process is a continuous process before, during, and after the evaluation practice.

5.5. Reporting students' progress:

The most important aim of students' evaluation is to keep them regularly informed about the lessons they are receiving, to inform them which level they have achieved, and to summarize their progress to report the latter.

6. Discussion and Interpretation

6.1. Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire

The main goal of planning the teachers' questionnaire was to collect explanations about the supposed issues concerning the L.M.D reform and the evaluation system of this latter. The gathered information from different teachers' views helps to indicate the main problems, obstacles, and challenges about the new educational reform.

6.1.1. Section One: Background Information

The first question concerned EFL teachers' gender, degree and teaching experience to know how long they have been teaching the English language in both systems (classical/L.M.D).The majority of teachers 60% engaged in this study were females. All of them have taught the English language in both systems for more than 10 years. Finally, the results show that an overwhelming majority of questioned teachers hold a Doctorate in civilization, linguistics, and literature.

6.1.2. Section Two: The L.M.D System

Replies to questions one and two reflect the efficiency of implementing the new educational system from teachers' views. According to the teachers, the results prove that the overwhelming majority of teachers find the L.M.D system as a beneficial reform in higher education.

Another important fact is the satisfaction of a great number of teachers with the new reform; fortunately, teachers show their acceptance of this system. A minority of participants consider the L.M.D reform as a negative system in Algeria.

The second question of this section is whether the L.M.D system provides a better quality of education, and what is a pretty encouraging is that more than half the number of teachers said "yes", so they find that this system is very helpful and encourages students' progress. The following is the most depicted comment about this system:

Teacher (A): "The syllabus is very rich if only students manage to follow..."

Few teachers provided negative views about the L.M.D system, with some comments:

Teacher (A): "The L.M.D system is not well studied"

Teacher (B): "To my best knowledge, the L.M.D system has not contributed to master the language gradually" Replies to question three reflect that all of the teachers have no idea about the credits' weight for each diploma; however the credits related to the workload given to students to their performance.

The fourth question is related to the previous one, where teachers were asked to identify the different teaching units that mainly concerned with the type of studied courses.

6.1.3. Section Three: The L.M.D evaluation System

Concerning the first question in the third section, a great number of participants say that they did not inform their students about the L.M.D evaluation system, simply because even they have had no training or instruction about this process under the new reform. The other teachers said that they inform them about this procedure.

The second question was about the activities that teachers often use in tests or exams, the majority of teachers use the combination of the open-ended questions with paragraph /essay writing which means that they pay attention to the students' needs and what they prefer to see in their tests, while others try to vary these types from time to time.

Answers to the final question in this section show that the majority of teachers consider that the most appropriate system to teach the English language is the classical one according to these justifications:

Teacher (A): "I think that the classical system is the most suitable one, because of many factors. The L.M.D system, for example, is encountered with too many exams and modules, which can impede the students' progress"

Teacher (B): "The classical system is more suitable for teaching the English language because it focuses on knowledge, not the exams (assessment)"

Teacher (C): "I think the classical system was much better than the L.M.D system because of many reasons:

- 1- The students have enough time to study the required modules.
2. Teachers are not trained for the L.M.D system.
3. Four years were enough to teach the basics of the language.

To conclude, the sum of the results of the teachers 'questionnaire shows that they have a limited amount of information about the L.M.D system and still prefer the classical one for many reasons. The findings signify that this lack of information affects the students' performance.

6.2. Analysis of the Students 'Questionnaire

The first question deals with the students' gender, from the results, show that the majority of the participants are females. Concerning the second question, the results indicate that the overwhelming majority are very little knowledge of the L.M.D system. By being informed means the knowledge shared with students about the evaluation system. The third question is related to the previous one, and explains the lack of information about this system; where students were asked about whether they have any sort of training about this reform, unfortunately, the results were negative again, therefore; the lack of study days, conferences and of course the role of teachers during the beginning of the study year.

Responses to the fourth question, concern defining some key terms related to the L.M.D system, where the majority defined the term "Credit" because of they aware of how their asks are transferred to some credit. The following are some definition:

Student (A): "it means if you have 60 credits for two semesters, you will succeed"

Student (B): "it means the marks obtained for each semester" Concerning the second term "Teaching unit", almost none of the participants defined this expression correctly with only one correct answer, however, this is common term used by means of "Module" but they have no previous idea about this expression.

Concerning the credits required to pass the first year license, the results of the fifth question indicate that the majority selected the wrong answers, while the minority chose the right one "60 credit", due to the lack of information.

The results about the students' views about the different evaluation criteria by responding through "Agree" or "Disagree" for the following statements:

The first statement is about: The test/exams concentrate further on the replies' correctness; the responses clearly show that a huge number of students confirm that the chosen test' subjects focus on the answers' correctness. The focus on the answers' correctness will limit the students to be aware of the capabilities and deficiencies.

The second statement: The test/exams concentrate further on your capability to improve the thoughts; the results were equal between those who "agree" and those who do not. This may reflect the methods used by teachers, for example, the use of (MCQ) questions limited the students' ability to develop their ideas,

whereas the open/ended questions and paragraph/essay writing are very useful and helpful for them to improve their thoughts but their evaluation can be braced.

The third statement: The marks offered can inform you more about your real level, the responses to this question show that the majority disagreed. Accordingly, the students show their distrust of the scores of tests/exams to inform them about the true level of improvement.

The fourth statement: The test/exams fit much more than the students; the results indicate another that the tests suit the students' level which can be considered as a method to enhance their performance.

The final statement: there is coherence between the studied contents and the subjects of tests/exams; surprisingly, the results show an overwhelming majority of questioned students confirmed their satisfaction with the subjects' content.

The results for the seventh question show that the students of the first-year license prefer the combination of "MCQ" and "Open-ended" questions as the most suitable activities for tests, whereas the rest is divided between the "MCQ" and paragraph/essay writing, this reflect their different level of understanding.

The responses to the eighth question, show that the majority of students prefer the combination of oral and writing to evaluate their accomplishment, so to show their spoken and written abilities, while those who selected the written form still have some obstacles when they develop their ideas orally for example: lack of self-confidence, shyness and they may feel confused to speak in front of their classmates. Those who chose the oral form are more self-confident and try to enhance their levels in learning any foreign language. Concerning the ninth question, the students were asked to write comments or observations about the L.M.D system, the following are some examples of answers:

Student (A): "We have some problems concerning the number of subjects, the type of subjects"

Student (B): "The LMD is a system based on a very charged schedule that involved some worthless subjects"

Concerning the above students' views, very important observations can be depicted about the L.M.D system. The comments include generally the problem of a huge number of modules and charged schedule, which means this system offer many modules in limited time learning.

In the final question, the students were requested about what teachers could do to evaluate their performance. Here are some suggestions:

Student (A): "Teachers should allow students to search about the lessons"

Student (B): "I suggest using the written and oral exercises each week"

Student (C): "I think that the best way to improve the students' level is by focusing on the four skills and grammar, encouraging oral interactions between students and integrate them in the debate concerning different topics.

The results and findings establish in this section, show that some teachers and students still have no view on the L.M.D evaluation system like the option of a teaching unit, their visions were restricted to its form rather than its contents. The responses guide to shed light on the teachers' role in informing students about the evaluation process especially under this new reform, but still the problem of lack of information and training rose against teachers.

7. Suggestions and Recommendations

The results obtained from both questionnaires guide to suggest some recommendations concerning the implementation of L.M.D reform and the evaluation methods used under this system. As we know, evaluation is a crucial thing in the teaching, learning process that leads to identify mistakes and then correct them. Yet with the implementation of a new reform (LMD system) some concepts have emerged in the evaluation system, which should be clarified for both teachers and students. From the very beginning, teachers should have a kind of training about the new educational reform that includes identifying main goals, key components and give instructions about the evaluation system. For that, the administration has an important role in offering days of information to introduce the L.M.D system and guide fully both teachers and students. Moreover, it should be given more importance to the conferences, study days and mutual meetings between universities to obtain from the former's experience and knowledge.

For better learning, some evaluation basics should be respected. In this respect, the most suitable starting point is the motivational effects of evaluation practices that should be well designed to fit the students' needs. Then teachers have to plan and implement appropriate evaluation methods to suit the students' interests. The most important role of evaluation is to identify the strength and weakness of students that lead to improve their performance and correct their mistakes. Furthermore, teachers need to rethink about their evaluation methods to stimulate the students' interest, motivation in the learning process.

8. Conclusion

The evaluation of students' performance is an important component during the teaching and learning process that needs a great deal of time and effort. The new reform of the university takes into consideration the evaluation system by adopting continuous assessment and final examination and students' work. The students' attitudes help to determine their views towards the evaluation system under this new educational reform; it is also beneficial to detect the problems and obstacles the students face after the implementation of the LMD system.

This study was designed to examine the first-year LMD students' views towards the LMD system in general and particularly the evaluation system of the reformat Tahri Mohammed University. The results of the data collected from the teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire prove that teachers and first-year LMD students still ignore many things about the whole reform and specifically the evaluation system, because of the lack of training and information for both teachers and students.

Moreover, the findings have shown that both teachers and students are not given any sort of training or instructions about the evaluation procedure, which impacts negatively on the students' performance because of the huge number of subjects and the charged schedule. To sum up, the evaluation is the feedback from teachers to their students about the learning process to make the judgments and the modifications to enhance students' performance.

9. References

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