

The LMD System: A Major Issue in Higher Education Reform

Dr. MELOUK Mohamed

Djilali Liabes University

Rapid and continued globalization places pressure on Algeria as many countries to reform its higher educational system to improve the quality of university education as well as to offer training courses tailored, diversified and responsive. The main goals behind the introduction of the LMD system in Algerian universities are the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, and the establishment of a system of credits for promotion of mobility for students and academic and administrative staff. It also aims at harmonizing our system of Higher Education, with the rest of the world. It is worth noting that the new system goes through three phases:

1-License with 6 semesters (three years of study and the equivalence of the BA i.e. Bachelor Degree);

2- Master degree of two years of study (4 semesters)

3- Doctorate Doctorate studies of three years of research (6 semesters)

The new elements that appear in managing teaching are: Semestrialization, and educational Units (EU). The studies are organized into semesters to relax the organization of training programmes, and students are expected to attend around 400 hours in a 16 week period (i.e. 25 hours per week. Lessons, however, are grouped into educational units: Fundamental, Methodological, Discovery and Transversal.

1-Basic or (fundamental) Unit : This Includes core subjects for a particular discipline

2- Methodology Unit : This gathers the subjects taught methodological tools aimed at helping the learner to accomplish his training course

3- Discovered Unit: it is anticipated all along the lessons of training materials relevant to other specialties,

4- Transversal unit: Students are exposed to other languages , social sciences and technical communication.

Difficulties of Reforming Higher Education:

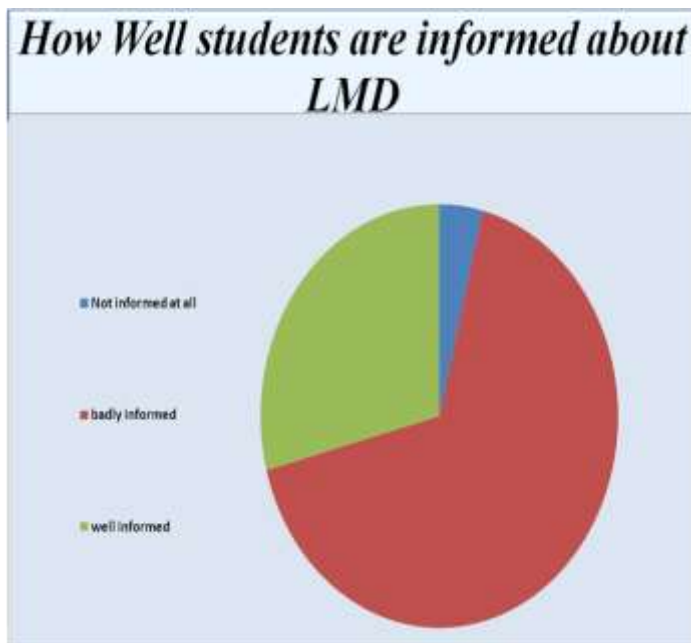
Reforming the higher education and implementing the LMD system in Algerian universities has been very challenging due numerous obstacles facing both teachers and students. To state a few of these obstacles, lack of information, lack of teachers taking in charge the huge number of new university students coming from secondary schools each year. To illustrate this reality, Djillali Liabes

University has experimented the new system and has drawn the following conclusions.

-Lack of information:

The problems encountered during the application of this system are due to the ignorance of the system's goals and utility. This ignorance is directed to the students inscribed and the teachers working under this system.

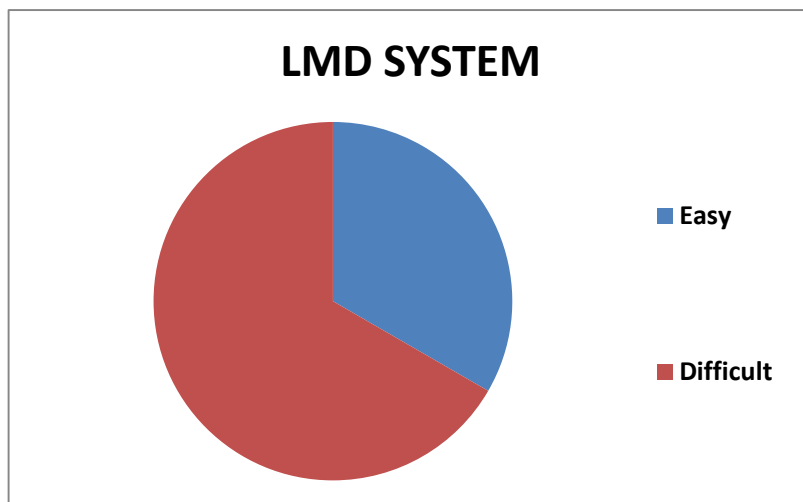
In a questionnaire addressed to two LMD promotions of English students (2nd and 3rd year), they were asked whether they were informed about the new system, i.e. studies, modules, success and failure as well as other requirements and criteria regarding semestrialization, credits, coefficients and post graduation studies. Only one student said that he was not informed at all which represented 02.94 %, 67.64 % were badly informed and 29.41% said to be well informed about the new system as it is shown in next pie chart. The lack of information and the insufficient time to become acquainted with the new system have engendered a negative attitude and lack of motivation for these novice students.



Students' information of LMD system

-Difficulties:

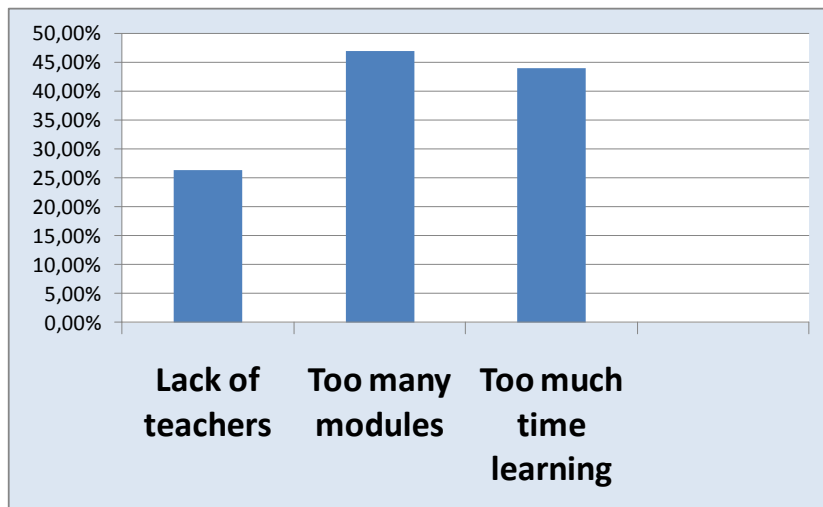
Then 66.66 % of these students viewed LMD difficult and felt afraid of. This fear might be explained by the lack of information and the sudden change of adopting the system at the expense of the classical license of English as it is shown in the following pie chart.



Students' view on the LMD System

Other problems:

Asking these participants about the daily problems they face as LMD students of English, both second and third year students listed other problems related to their studies like lack of permanent teachers. In fact, managing the two systems together the department of foreign languages, section of English was in a delicate and fragile situation where it was incapable to solve a three elements equation: lack of teachers, too many modules and very large groups.



LMD students' problems

For the second year LMD students, they added other problems to those of the third year. It is worth noting that the differences between the two forms are summed in two main ones: the first is that the mark acceptance in the English subject at the “Baccalaureate” was over 15/20, the second was that the LMD choice was a protected branch. After that, things have changed completely and any student who desires to follow the LMD system is accepted regardless the basic criteria of selection.

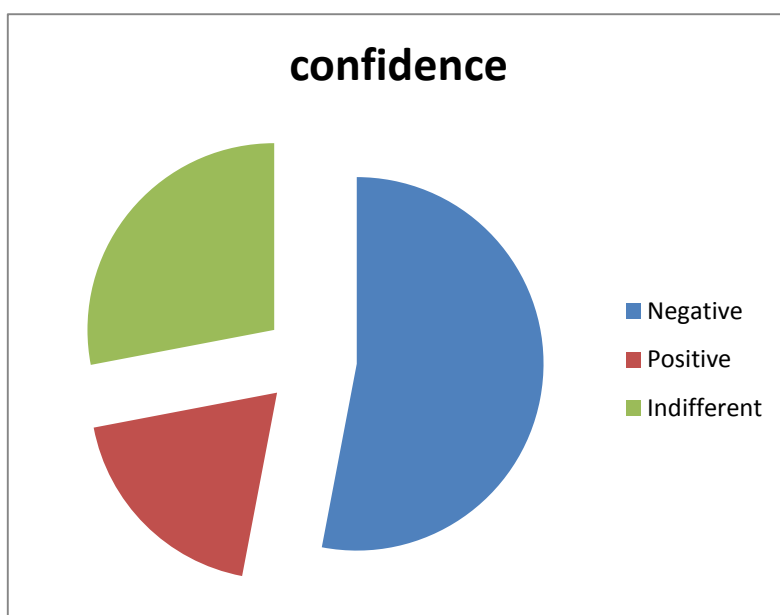
In addition to the problems listed by the LMD students, we can also mention the quality of studying, and all admit that our universities become incapable to achieve the expected goals because of the overcrowding of campuses. The huge number of the students made it hard to control the situation either administratively or academically. The piloting phase needed a more limited number of students and better conditions.

The huge number of students who pass the “Baccalaureate” and the absence of training teachers have made the working environment very poor. The evaluation system during the last years was not homogeneous as teachers used different evaluation techniques where a learner obtained very elevated marks in one subject and an extremely poor outcome in another. Furthermore, the participants pointed at other obstacles namely the lack of documents for research, old books, limited lab equipment and poor accessibility of ICT. Last but not least, the shortness of the academic year which usually engenders unfinished programmes –In fact, do we really teach for sixteen weeks in each semesters?

(400 hours- 25 hours a week for students). If the system is still struggling in its beginning, this might be due to resistance to change by many teachers. We all confess that these teachers have not been trained for this reform particularly in a time when the Algerian university is seriously affected by brain drain.

Students' confidence:

While asked if they were confident about future, the answers were 53 % negative, 19% positive and the remaining 28% indifferent - The reasons for such an attitude were 38.23 % recognition of diploma and 35.29% afraid of failing in Master; whereas the rest of the students were afraid of unemployment.

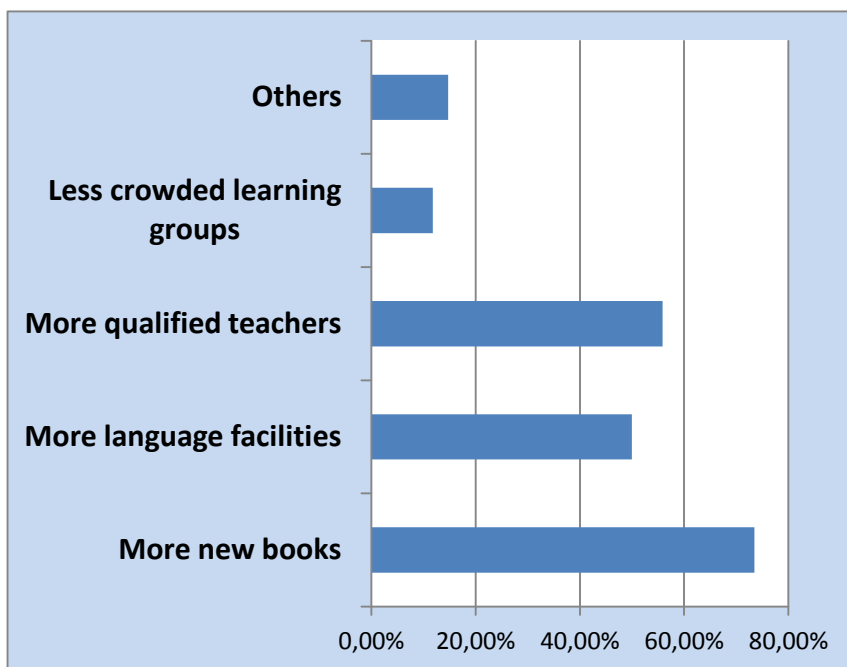


Students' confidence for the future

Students' wishes

At the end of this interaction, the participants were allowed to express themselves wishing some improvements to their situation. 73.52 % of the participants for instance, wished to have more new books since the libraries seemed very poor and do not help provide them with the necessary documents to achieve their learning goals and deepen their knowledge or make further researches. Since the department was in charge of running the two systems at the same time (LMD and Classical) many inexperienced part- time teachers were asked to give a hand in the teaching process at the expense of the expected objectives. Having suffered enormously by the lack of teachers in general and the qualified ones in particular, 55.88 % asked for more permanent competent ones.

50 % of them want more language facilities, while 11.76 % hope to have less crowded learning groups. The others insisted on success in both Master and Doctorate



Students' wishes

Conclusion:

This reform should be founded on three fundamental questions: *What*, *Why*, and *How*. What to include in it, how it is delivered and why changes (Tylor 1950). It is hoped that the new system will make programme offerings from Algerian universities more compatible with those around the world, thereby increasing the international mobility of Algerian faculties and students. Therefore, priority should be given to teachers- how to prepare them to changes, innovations and reforms that are likely to happen.

Recent reforms should see quality, competitiveness and accountability as the main goals in curriculum reform (Rappolt, 1993). If educating, instructing, socializing and preparing the student to acquire knowledge and a qualification constitute the essential duties of today's university, we wonder how we can achieve these goals without adequate higher educational reform. We should train teachers ongoing changes, they are the cornerstone and the secret of any

successful educational system, they contribute to a large extent in the achievement of all objectives. The recruitment and retention of good teachers is the key to the improvement of our educational system. Higher education reform cannot succeed unless it focuses on creating the conditions -- including the curriculum contexts -- in which teachers can teach well because there is a close relationship between students' achievement and the knowledge, skills, and practices of their teachers .

Bibliography:

- 1-Direction de l'enseignement Fondamental.(2003) Programmes De la Première Année Moyenne.
- 2-DUBIN,F and OLSHTAIN, E. (1986).Course Design. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 3-RAPPORT, G. (1993). "Towards Accountability and Results-Oriented education."
- 4-TYLOR, R.W. Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 5-WHITE, R. (1985) The English Teacher's Handbook. Nelson ed.

Appendix ☐ Students' questionnaire

Dear students :You are kindly asked to answer the following questions

Question one: How do you evaluate your three years experience as a student of LMD?

Positive Negative

Question two: Do you think you areinformed about LMD System? ☐

Not informed at all ☐ badly informed well informed

Question three: How have you found the LMD system ?

Easy ☐ Difficult ☐

Question four: Have you ever had any difficulties?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Question five: What kind of difficulties were there?

Lack of teachers ☐ Too many modules ☐ too much time learning

Question six: Are you satisfied with the evaluation system?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Question seven: Is your personal work like papers encouraged? ☐

Yes ☐ No ☐

Question eight: Do you feel confident about the future?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Question nine: If not, why?

Recognition of diploma ☐ Fail in Master ☐

Others:..... ☐

Question ten: What are your wishes as LMD student of English?

More qualified teachers ☐ language facilities

books ☐ Less crowded learning groups

Others:..... ☐

More new

