Evaluating the Effectiveness of Assessment Methods in Moulay Ismail University: Insights from Postgraduate Students

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Abstract

The present study evaluates and measures the effectiveness of the assessment practices promoted in the LMD system (Licence, Master and Doctorate) implemented in Moroccan universities from the perspective of postgraduate students at the open-access institutions affiliated with Moulay Ismail University (UMI), namely the School of Arts and Humanities (FLSH), the School of Sciences (FS), the School of Law, Economics and Social Sciences (FSJES), and the Polydisciplinary School of Errachidia (FP). To achieve this objective, the study deployed a mixed-methods; two-phase case study design. In the initial quantitative phase, a questionnaire was administered to 742 postgraduate students to investigate their evaluation of the assessment practices promoted in the LMD system. Further, in the follow-up qualitative phase, interviews with 28 doctoral students were conducted to extend and explain the quantitative results. It has been found that continuous assessment is not used by most teachers and that the final exams are the only method used by professors to assess students' performance. Likewise, the study revealed that the compensation system negatively affects the quality of higher education training by allowing students to pass and study more difficult modules while they have not learned the necessary prerequisites from the basic modules. Equally significant, the study found that most students struggle with the end-of-study research module, blaming their supervisors who do not provide sufficient or appropriate supervision. In conclusion, this paper offers several pedagogical implications for stakeholders and teachers at the UMI to make assessment more effective.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper measures and evaluates the effectiveness of assessment practices promoted within the LMD system (Licence, Master, and Doctorate) implemented in Moroccan higher education from the perspective of postgraduate students at the open-access institutions affiliated with Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco. It focuses on three specific assessment practices: continuous assessment, the compensation system, and the mini-monograph or 'rapport de fin d'études' required for completing bachelor studies. Alongside an introduction and a conclusion, the present paper consists of four major sections. The first section reviews the importance of assessment in education and examines previous studies on

the effectiveness of assessment practices in Moroccan higher education. The second section presents the methodology employed to operationalize the study's objectives and address the research questions. The third section presents and describes the findings obtained from the questionnaire and interviews. The fourth and last section discusses the study's findings, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence with previous research. Finally, the paper presents several implications for helping stakeholders and teachers at the UMI address the assessment dysfunctions emerging from the discussion of findings.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It is common sense that assessment in education plays a crucial role in enhancing both teaching and learning processes. In fact, it has been proved through research that the outcomes of assessment provide teachers with valuable insights into students' understanding, skills, and progress, allowing them to tailor instruction to meet individual needs (Greenstein, 2010; Young & Kim, 2010; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). In addition, by regularly evaluating student performance, teachers can identify areas where students struggle and provide timely, targeted interventions to address these gaps (Supovitz, 2003; Maki & Kuh, 2017; Kostyo et al., 2018). Through assessment, teachers can also receive feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching methodologies and decide on what teaching practices should be continued or reinforced and what should be discontinued or improved. For students, assessment offers a clear understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, motivating them to reflect on the effectiveness of their learning strategies (Nicol & Macfarlane, 2006; Brown & Race, 2012).

For all these reasons, a large number of researchers share the belief that assessment has always been considered a reliable benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of education systems (Rowntree**,** 2015**;** Suskie**,** 2018**;** Knight, 2001**;** Ewell, 2009; Stiggins, 2005**).** For example, Rowntree (2015, p. 1) contends "If we wish to discover the truth about an educational system, we must look into its assessment procedures". Within the same line of thought, Ewell (2009, p. 3) argues that assessment "serves as a cornerstone for educational effectiveness, offering a mechanism for accountability and continuous improvement. By integrating assessment into the evaluation process, educators can track progress, identify areas for enhancement, and ultimately ensure that their programs are meeting the desired standards of quality." Likewise, Stiggins (2005, p. 29) considers that "the effectiveness of educational programs hinges on the quality of the assessments used to evaluate students. Through rigorous and well-designed assessment practices, educators can gather the data necessary to make evidence-based decisions that enhance student learning and program efficacy ".

However, over two decades after the implementation of the LMD system in Moroccan universities, it turned out that this education system suffers from some weaknesses regarding its assessment innovations, which are the core issues of the present study, namely the compensation system, continuous assessment and the mini-monograph or 'rapport de fin d'études' required for completing bachelor studies. The main focus of the following paragraphs is to highlight and discuss the outcomes of previous studies that evaluated the effectiveness of the assessment practices promoted in the LMD system.

The compensation system is one of the central pedagogical features which characterize the LMD system. It is based on the premise that students can validate the disciplinary units or even modules in which they got less than average by compensating them with the ones in which they got more than 10 out of 20. Some researchers (Hanifi, 2018; Meziane & Mahi, 2006; Labed, 2007) have criticized this evaluation procedure, arguing that although it increases the chance that a student will get the BA in three years, it goes against the principle of assuring quality training.

According to Hanifi (2018), this system of evaluation developed in students a mindset focusing more on transition than on their intellectual growth, which "worked negatively on developing their learning skills and knowledge development" (p. 8). Meziane and Mahi (2006) alluded to the same point, contending that "The compensation system caused a negative impact on students' training quality, as they became focused on modules they consider easier and expect to get high grades with minimal efforts" (p. 276).

The researcher has also witnessed this from experience as a part-time teacher. Some students attend courses from different semesters simultaneously, and sometimes they attend advanced modules, which necessitate the mastery of the basic modules that they have not validated. For example, how does it make sense that a student who has not validated grammar modules is introduced to the module of advanced composition and introduction to research, given the fact that mastery of grammar is a prerequisite to excel in writing? For all these reasons, (Labed, 2007, p. 13) described the compensation system as "a pedagogical cemetery." This is so true because the compensation system deters from the quality of training and inculcates in students pragmatic habits as they become obsessed with validating modules and not with expanding their knowledge.

Undoubtedly, continuous assessment plays a crucial role in the teaching and learning process. It has always been considered an instrument that provides feedback about the progress of students and the efficacy of professors' teaching methodologies. Against this background, the Ministry of Higher Education replaced the one-shot examinations, which used to be a characteristic of the classical system, with continuous assessment as part of the LMD educational reform in 2003. However, it has been proved through research that there exist several challenges hindering the effective implementation of this pedagogical innovation in most Moroccan higher education institutions, especially those affiliated with open-access schools **(**Kaaouachi, 2004; Kaaouachi, 2009; Sbai, 2015; Azzi, 2012; Meziane & Mahi, 2006; Hanifi, 2018; Ghaicha, 2018; El Kirat and Laaraj, 2020**).**

The poor attitudes of professors towards continuous assessment and insufficient resources to support its implementation are often cited as the key challenges hindering the adoption of this pedagogical innovation in Moroccan universities. El Kirat and Laaraj (2020) found that the chaotic classroom environment resulting from overcrowdedness and the exhausting workload involved in correcting papers implement continuous assessment a daunting task. Consequently, most professors avoid it and suffice with a one-shot exam at the end of the semester to measure students' achievements. This resolution, according to Hanifi (2018), is not fair as it deprives students of the opportunity to receive corrective feedback from their professors.

Along the same lines, Kaaouchi (2009) and Azzi (2012) consider ongoing assessment to be time-consuming and effort-intensive for professors. For these two researchers, overloading professors with this extra task makes their job tiresome and, therefore, negatively affects their instructional performance. This is corroborated by Ghaicha (2018), who contends that, after the incorporation of continuous assessment in higher education, professors have less time for research and professional development because they are overwhelmed with the duties of designing programs and correcting students' work.

Moreover, it is highly argued that professors' pedagogical beliefs and traditional teaching approaches can impede continuous assessment implementation (Mpapalika, 2013; AlAlili, 2014; Buehl et al., 2014; Mohamed, 2006). This applies to most Moroccan university professors who, according to Sbai (2015), reject adapting their classroom practices to a learner-centred approach for fear of losing their role as the main actors in the classroom. These traditional pedagogical beliefs are against the integration of continuous assessment because it

is based on the assumption that the learner is the principal agent in the classroom who produces knowledge in the form of presentations, classroom participation, or homework. These activities, when encouraged in the classroom, maximize learner-learner and learner-teacher interaction and, in return, result in a positive classroom environment that affects the learning and growth of students positively. However, professors resist these pedagogical innovations because they challenge their longstanding pedagogical habits, and they prefer to stay secure within their comfort zones.

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1. Research design

The researcher employed a sequential explanatory mixed method case study design. As implied in its name, this design combines mixed methods research and the case study design in a single investigation (Cook & Kamalodeen, 2020). The objective behind combining these two types of research, according to Plano Clark, Foote and Walton (2018), resides in "offering unique methodological advantages for researchers wanting to address the complexity of these research problems and issues" (p. 4). In other words, the researcher prioritized collecting and analyzing the quantitative data to have a general picture of the research problem. Then, he/she collected and analyzed the qualitative data, which was used to extend and explain the quantitative results. Accordingly, the quantitative data of this study, generated through questionnaires, was used to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment practices promoted in the LMD system, and the qualitative one, generated through semi-structured interviews, was used to extend and explain the initial quantitative results. Afterwards, the two types of data were integrated into the discussion section to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the assessment practices in question. To summarize the research strategy of the present research, the study is broken into three separate phases, shown in Figure 1.
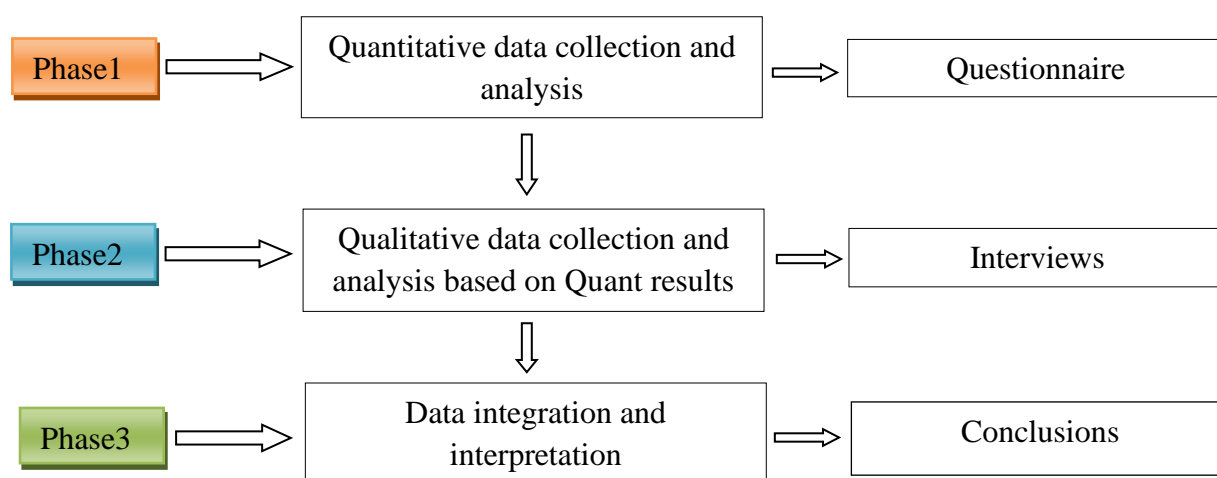

Figure 1. Overview of the research design of the study

3.2. Quantitative phase

The quantitative phase of the present study is guided by the following research question:

RQ1: How do Moulay Ismail University postgraduate students measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the LMD's assessment practices?

A questionnaire was designed and administered to the participants to answer this research question. This questionnaire consists of two sections, the first of which covers the demographic information of the sampled students, particularly their age, gender, institution, cycle of education, type of studies, and the institution where they had their undergraduate

studies. The second section contains seven items measuring students' evaluation of the assessment practices of the LMD system on a five-Likert scale of agreement.

In the four non-randomly sampled higher education open-access institutions, a total of 235 doctoral students and 545 master's students completed the questionnaires. Excluded from the analysis were the respondents who left one or more items unanswered, as well as those who did not pursue undergraduate studies at Moulay Ismail University. Eventually, the quantitative sample for this study comprised 742 postgraduate students conveniently chosen. The sampled students are categorized by gender, education cycle, and schools, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1:*Distribution of the students' sample by gender, school, and education cycle*

Institution	Gender		Education cycle	
	Male	Female	Doctorate Students	Master Students
FLSH	108	129	76	161
FS	79	82	49	112
FSJES	101	87	61	127
FPE	86	70	35	121
Total			N= 742	

After the questionnaire was designed, internal reliability checking was performed. Bryman (2012, p.168) refers to internal reliability as "the consistency of measures". More specifically, the researcher needs to make sure that all the items in a scale measure the same construct consistently and do not fluctuate. The Cronbach alpha test is the most reliable and frequently used internal reliability test in research. It is expressed as a number that ranges from 0 to 1. Zero stands for no internal reliability, whereas 1 means perfect internal reliability. The coefficient alphas of the scales of the questionnaires were calculated using SPSS. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: *The alpha reliability of scales in the questionnaires*

Scale	The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient	Number of items
Assessment Evaluation	.725	7

Results show that the correlation between the items in the questionnaire is good. The coefficient exceeds 0.70, which is considered a satisfactory test level according to Bryman (2012).

3.3. Qualitative phase

The follow-up qualitative phase of this study was conducted to explain the results of the quantitative phase. In fact, the questionnaire did not explore the reasons behind the failure of the assessment practices promoted in the LMD system. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to build up on the quantitative results and explore these reasons. Interviewees were purposefully selected and interviewed to elaborate on and expand upon the results derived from the questionnaires. The focus was on students enrolled in doctoral programs. This choice was based on their extensive academic background, with a minimum of six years of experience, rendering them a more mature and reliable source of information compared to master's students. In essence, the rationale for incorporating qualitative data lies in its potential to cross-check, validate or disconfirm, and explain the quantitative results. The qualitative phase of the present study is guided by the following research question:

RQ2: How do Moulay Ismail University postgraduate students explain the failure of the assessment practices promoted in the LMD system?

After the administration and analysis of the assessment practices evaluation questionnaire, interviews were used as qualitative data collection methods to cross-validate and

explain the quantitative results. Unlike the questionnaire, which consists of closed-ended questions and pre-set statements that gauge the degrees of agreement or disagreement of the participants, interviews were used to elicit detailed and in-depth information from the respondents and gain deeper insight into the effectiveness of the assessment practices promoted in the LMD system. The students interviewed are distributed vis-à-vis their gender and institutions, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3:*Demographics of the interviewed students*

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
	FLSH	4	3	7
Institution	FS	6	1	7
	FSJES	5	2	7
	FP	6	1	7
	Total		N= 28	

4. RESULTS

4.1. Results for research question 1

To reiterate, the first research question of the present study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment practices promoted in the LMD system implemented in Moroccan universities from the perspective of postgraduate students at the open-access institutions affiliated with Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: *Students' evaluation of the assessment methods promoted in the LMD system*

Students' evaluation of the assessment practices promoted in the LMD system	Agreement degree					Desc statistics	
	SA %	A %	CD %	D %	SD %	M	SD
1. The compensation system positively affects the quality of my learning.	5.5	15.0	0.2	17.7	61.6	1.85	1.30
2. The assessments in the program focused on problem-solving and critical thinking skills.	2.7	15.7	0.0	46.9	34.6	2.05	1.10
3. The assessments in the program focused on memorizing information and details.	12.8	66.0	0.3	18.1	2.7	3.68	1.00
4. Professors apply continuous assessment in the classroom.	0.0	24.6	0.7	66.9	7.8	2.42	.95
5. Sufficient time was allocated to complete the program assessment tasks.	14.2	11.9	0.9	43.2	29.9	2.37	1.39
6. The undergraduate end-of-study project improved my research and academic writing skills.	6.5	16.2	0.5	39.6	37.2	2.15	1.26
7. Overall, I am satisfied with the program's assessment procedures.	9.6	20.1	0.7	41.5	28.2	2.41	1.34

In light of the table above, it is clearly noticed that students have significant and consistent negative evaluations regarding the assessment procedures of the LMD system. The majority of them (69.7%) are dissatisfied with these procedures. For example, 17.7% of students disagree, and 61.6% strongly disagree that the compensation system positively affects

the quality of their learning. The same stance was, to even a higher significance level, held towards the content of exams, with 81.5% of students disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that assessments in the program focused on problem-solving and critical thinking skills, while 78.8% of them consider that these assessments are more focused on memorizing information. Additionally, only 24.6% agree that professors apply continuous assessment in the classroom, and only 26.1% thought that the time allocated for assessment tasks was sufficient. It has also been noted that students demonstrated a negative evaluation of the undergraduate end-of-study project, with 76.8% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that it has improved their research and academic writing skills.

4.2. Results for research question 2

Another objective of the present study was to explain students' dissatisfaction with the assessment methods and practices promoted in the LMD system, namely continuous assessment, the compensation system, and the mini-monograph or the 'rapport de fin d'études.' In this regard, the findings from interviews indicate that almost all the students hold unfavourable views towards how assessment is conducted in their schools for different reasons.

Regarding students' evaluation of continuous assessment, the majority of them declared that continuous assessment is not used in their schools and that the only way through which professors judge students' abilities is the final exams. This summative-oriented tendency in assessment, so to speak, was criticized by students. They considered the exclusion of their performance during sessions and sufficing by the final exams to judge their abilities to be unfair and irrational. A PhD student from the FSJES, for example, angrily asked, "Why do professors judge my potential based on my performance in a one-hour exam and pass over my attendance and participation in class over months?" a colleague of his alluded to the same point of view stating that "all that professors consider in grading is exam sheets containing names and numbers with no clues about the performance of students in class." A somewhat similar argument was advanced by a respondent from the FPE who highlighted that the absence of continuous assessment in his school reflects the fact that assessment of learning is prioritized over assessment for learning: "Personally, I value the progress I am making and how much I learn more than grades, but unfortunately without regular assessment, I cannot know about my progress pace till I get shocked with my grades in the exams."

Conversely, two PhD students at the FSLH and one from the FS reported that they had observed some forms of continuous assessment implemented in certain classes, but minimally. A female PhD student at the FLSH, for example, stated that some professors "ask their students to prepare and give short presentations." Others, according to a colleague of hers, "devote some time of the session to revising the previous lessons." The third respondent mentioned that "in-class tests are taken occasionally in some modules," but he considered those tests to have no significant impact on the quality of learning because, according to him, "professors do not correct in-class tests nor do they give them back to students to learn from their mistakes." However, these students maintained that the aforementioned forms of continuous assessment are occasional and not pervasive in all classes, while final exams are still the dominant methods used to assess students' achievement.

In this connection, the data from interviews showed that students are not satisfied with how they are assessed in the final exams. In this regard, two major concerns were emphasized by the respondents: the absence of exam coordination among professors of the same courses and the insufficiency of the time allotted in the resit exams. These assessment practices, as clearly stated in the quotes below, have resulted in unequal opportunities for achievement among students:

> Students' performance in exams is related to the degree of difficulty of the
> questions. Therefore, it seems unfair when students who are taught the same

module by different professors do not set for a common exam. Some professors' exam questions would be as easy as filling the gaps or matching items, while others ask students to develop coherent five-paragraph essays (Ph.D. student at the FLSH).

Although resit exams are usually more challenging than regular exams, the time allotted to finish them is less than that allotted in the previous exams. I do not understand how I can do better in a more challenging exam when its duration is reduced compared to the one I failed! (PhD student at the FS)

During my studies at the university, I realized that passing exams with distinctions does not only depend on my endurance but also on the professor. When lucky enough, I get assigned a professor who is known among students for giving easy exams; otherwise, I can barely validate modules with an average (PhD student at the FPE).

Students do not have equal chances to pass exams as long as the time allotted in the first exams, and in the resit ones are not equal, and also as long as professors, especially those teaching the same modules, do not teach the same content and do not coordinate exam content (PhD student at the FSJES).

Another dysfunction of assessment in the LMD system, as stressed by the majority of student interviewees (19), is associated with the compensation system. When asked to comment on the impact of this system of assessment on the quality of their training, most of them highlighted the fact that it widened their learning gaps by allowing them to pass despite lacking the required skills. A respondent from the FLSH, for example, pointed out that:

[she] became aware of how much damage the compensation system had caused to [her] learning outcomes when [she] had to write [her] monograph; at that point, [she] realized that [she] had not developed the necessary research and composition skills because their corresponding modules have been validated by compensation.

Concerning the end-of-study research that students have to conduct as part of the requirements for the BA degree, the overwhelming majority of student interviewees (24 out of 28) expressed their dissatisfaction with this experience. From the analysis of their responses, it seems that they acknowledge lacking the skills needed to conduct research. This can be seen in statements like: "I had no clue about the research process, and I did not know where to start or where to end" (PhD student at the FSJES), "I thought that research was all about collecting information from the internet" (PhD student at the FPE), "when I had to write my monograph, I could not find a topic of research, and no one was there to help me with that" (PhD student at the FLSH), "I felt that all that I have studied in the university was useless and irrelevant " (PhD student at the FS).

However, when inquired about the reasons why they struggled with the end-of-study research module, most of the students seemed to put the blame on their supervisors who did not provide appropriate supervision. In this regard, a PhD student at the FLSH stated that "[his] supervisor has never responded to [his] emails or provided feedback on what [he] sent to him." Another student at the FS mentioned that "[her] supervisor has not scheduled any pedagogical meetings with his supervisees until they wanted to submit their final works."

5. DISCUSSION

The present study probed into the effectiveness of the assessment procedures of the LMD system and found that most students were hugely critical of the assessment practices in their schools. The assessment inadequacies that emerged from the data are discussed in the following paragraphs.

To begin with, the LMD reform stipulates that students' academic achievement should be evaluated not only based on their performance in final examinations but also through continuous assessment that can take different forms, such as projects, presentations, homework, or participation. Such forms of assessment, when encouraged in the classroom, maximize learner-learner and learner-professor interaction and, in return, result in a flourishing classroom environment that affects students' academic growth positively. They also provide feedback about the progress of students and the efficacy of professors' teaching methodologies. However, the questionnaire results showed that most professors do not apply these assessment techniques in their classes. When students were inquired in the interviews about the factors hindering professors from applying continuous assessment, although it is claimed to have several learning and teaching gains, they cited two impediments, namely large classes and the heavy workload entailed in the correction of papers, which exhausts professors' time and energy.

Similarly, 74.7% of students reported that the only way through which professors judge students' abilities is through the final examinations. This summative-oriented tendency in assessment was criticized by students for being unfair and irrational since it overlooks their performance during sessions and deprives them of receiving corrective feedback from their professors. These findings seem to be consistent with previous research, which converges on the existence of several challenges hindering the effective implementation of continuous assessment in most Moroccan higher education institutions, especially in open-access schools (Kaaouachi, 2004; Kaaouachi, 2009; Sbai, 2015; Azzi, 2012; Meziane & Mahi, 2006; Hanifi, 2018; Ghaicha, 2018; El Kirat and Laaraj, 2020).

The poor attitudes of professors towards continuous assessment and insufficient resources to support its implementation are often cited as the key challenges hindering the adoption of this pedagogical innovation in Moroccan universities. El Kirat and Laaraj (2020) found that the chaotic classroom environment resulting from overcrowdedness and the exhausting workload involved in correcting papers make the implementation of continuous assessment a daunting task. Consequently, most professors avoid it and suffice with a one-shot exam at the end of the semester to measure students' achievements. This resolution, according to Hanifi (2018), is not fair as it deprives students of the opportunity to receive corrective feedback from professors.

Along the same lines, Kaaouchi (2004) and Azzi (2012) consider ongoing assessment to be time-consuming and effort-intensive for professors. For these two researchers, overloading professors with this extra task makes their job tiresome and, therefore, negatively affects their instructional performance. This is corroborated by Ghaicha (2018), who contends that, after the incorporation of continuous assessment in higher education, professors have less time for research and professional development because they are overwhelmed with the duties of designing courses and correcting students' work.

Moreover, the students expressed additional concerns regarding the examination system. It has been found that the majority of students (81.5%) believe that assessments in their schools do not focus on problem-solving and critical thinking skills, while 78.8% believe that those assessment tasks focus more on memorizing information and details. These results suggest that some exams are designed to test students on how much information they can retain

rather than on their abilities to analyze and synthesize, which is in agreement with previous research by Ezzaki (1986), Mellouk (1992), and Bouziane (2017). The authors found that exam tasks in Morocco neglect high-order thinking skills and revolve around asking students to retrieve what has been taught in the classroom. This kind of exam, following the same scholars, negatively affects students' academic training by encouraging rote learning and making them resort to cheating to pass exams. Ouakrime (1986) alluded to the same stance, arguing that when we ask students to recall what they learnt literally, we give them little space to express their creativity.

Another closely related item that falls within assessment evaluation has to do with whether students are allotted enough time to complete assessment tasks. In fact, 73.1% of the students responded negatively to this question and explained in the interviews that the allotted time in the resit exams is less than that allotted in the ones they failed. This discrepancy in the time allotted to exams raises the issue of fairness and meritocracy of the grades assigned to students because those who validated a module in the ordinary exam and those who validated it in the resit one were not allotted the same period to think and polish their answers. This finding seems consistent with a previous study by Harrizi and Loutfi (2021). The authors evaluated the effectiveness of professors' assessment practices through the lenses of students in four different Departments of English Studies and found that the time allotted in exams is not consistent due to a lack of clear and adequate information in course descriptions on testing methodology.

The issue of the absence of exam coordination among professors of the same courses seems to be another dysfunction of assessment in the LMD system. In this regard, the majority of students argued that their performance is not only determined by how well they have prepared for exams but also by the degree of difficulty of exam questions. Therefore, it is unfair when students who are taught the same module by different professors do not set for a common exam. For example, some professors' exam questions would be as easy as filling the gaps or matching items, while others ask students to develop coherent five-paragraph essays, not to mention that these tasks are done within the same period of time. This variability in exam content results in unequal opportunities for achievement among students. The results of this study concerning the inconsistency in exam content and degree of difficulty are in accordance with those of El Kasri et al. (2023). These researchers explored assessment design practices in the Faculties of Letters and Humanities in three Moroccan universities (Moulay Ismail University, Meknes; Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra; and Hassan II University, Ain Chock, Casablanca). Results indicated that there is no consistency among most professors in terms of test designing for their students and that these tests lacked the main criteria of assessment, namely validity and authenticity.

Another assessment procedure that was hugely criticized by students is the compensation system. The latter is one of the central pedagogical features which characterize the LMD system. It is based on the premise that students can validate the disciplinary units or even modules in which they got less than average by compensating them with the ones in which they got more than 10 out of 20. Results from the questionnaire revealed that 79.3% of students believe that the compensation system negatively affects the quality of learning. These results were confirmed in interviews, where most participants argued that although this assessment procedure has a few merits in terms of increasing students' success chances, it has numerous disadvantages. Students highlighted the fact that the compensation system has widened their learning gaps by allowing them to pass despite lacking the required skills.

The current findings are in line with Hanifi (2018), Meziane & Mahi (2006), and Labed (2007), who have criticized this evaluation procedure, arguing that although it increases the

chance that a student will get the BA in three years, it goes against the principle of assuring quality training. According to Hanifi (2018), this system of evaluation developed in students a mindset focusing more on transition than on their intellectual growth, which "worked negatively on developing their learning skills and knowledge development" (p. 8). Meziane and Mahi (2006) alluded to the same point, contending that "The compensation system caused a negative impact on students' training quality, as they became focused on modules they consider easier and expect to get high grades with minimal efforts" (p. 276).

The researcher has also witnessed this from experience as a part-time teacher at the School of Arts and Humanities. After teaching different modules and supervising S6 students in monograph writing for three academic years, it was noticed that some students attend courses from different semesters simultaneously, and sometimes they attend advanced modules, which necessitate the mastery of the basic modules that they have not validated. For example, how does it make sense that a student who has not validated grammar modules is introduced to advanced composition and introduction to a research module, given the fact that mastery of grammar is a prerequisite to excel in writing? For all these reasons, Labed (2007) described the compensation system as "a pedagogical cemetery" (p. 13). This is so true because this assessment procedure deters from the quality of training and inculcates in students pragmatic habits as they become obsessed with validating modules and not with expanding their knowledge.

In brief, based on the findings, it could be concluded that the LMD system suffers from some weaknesses related to its assessment procedures. More specifically, it has been found that continuous assessment is not used, and the final exams are the only method used by professors to assess students' performance. Likewise, the compensation system negatively affects the quality of higher education training by allowing students to pass and study more difficult modules while they have not learned the necessary prerequisites from the basic ones.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Assessment is an integral component that needs to be considered in any educational program evaluation. In fact, the analysis of data related to this component indicated that most students were critical of the assessment procedures used in their schools. More precisely, students indicated that assessment in their schools suffers from three drawbacks: (i) the lack of exam coordination among professors, which raises concerns related to fairness and reliability of results; (ii) the insufficiency of the time allotted to students in the resit exams compared to the regular ones, and (iii) the focus of exams on testing students in how much information they can retain rather than in their abilities to analyze and synthesize. These assessment practices, as was argued by most participants, have resulted in unequal opportunities for achievement among students. Based on the above conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations:

- The size of groups should be reduced to enable professors to apply continuous assessment, which will provide constructive feedback for professors to assess the effectiveness of their teaching methodologies and for students to evaluate how much progress they are making;
- Professors are highly recommended to coordinate their exams to guarantee a maximal level of fairness and objectivity of the results and maintain equal opportunities for achievement among students;
- The time allotted to students in the resit exams should be equal to that of ordinary exams;
- Assessment tasks should target testing students not only in retaining and retrieving information but also in their critical thinking skills, such as their abilities to analyze and synthesize;

- The University of Moulay Ismail should provide training for professors on assessment;
- The compensation system goes against the principle of improving the quality of higher education. It negatively affects students' motivation for learning, as they tend to focus more on the modules they consider easier and depend on them to validate the ones they consider burdensome. Therefore, it should be discontinued.

In conclusion, this study highlights significant shortcomings in the assessment practices within the LMD system at Moroccan universities, particularly at Moulay Ismail University. The findings underscore the limited use of continuous assessment and the overreliance on final exams, which may undermine the depth of student learning. Additionally, the compensation system is found to adversely affect educational quality by allowing students to progress without mastering foundational knowledge. The challenges students face with the end-of-study research module further emphasize the need for better supervision. The study suggests that these issues must be addressed by stakeholders and educators to enhance the effectiveness of assessment practices in higher education.

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