Nacif Labed[1]
Faculty of Arts and Languages
University of Constantine Bros 1, Algeria

THUS SPOKE AHURAMAZDA: 2004: A SYSTEM*CIDE* -ON TO –THE-L.M.D. ODYSSEY

Abstract

The reform brought about in the tertiary tuition some years ago certainly had a well-intentioned aim of a transformation for better. The decision-maker behind such a reform pushed by a dire need of reform instead of taking us on an enthralling pedagogic voyage led us rather in the dire straits, on a odyssey of which Odysseus, Homerus' hero, could ne envious! Ever since the 2004 systemcide of the Classical System to the present day, the imperious problems of that new system have become standing out conspicuously! The return safely to our pedagogic Ithaca, we directly need an Ahumazda, a kind of lord of light and wisdom to lead us out of that rampant malarkey.

Keywords: Ahumazda, LMD system, odyssey, Odysseus, systemcide.

1. Introduction

Replacing one system by another means that there is need for change and sometimes even an urgency in doing so. Although nothing was really pressing to bring change, but in2004 the L.M.D. system was launched. A legion of teachers was thunderstruck when such a system arrived in our walls uninvited and without warning. The verdict was fatal: it is the *systemcide of the classical system*! The first palpable bad consequence of such a systemcide (suicide of a system) was swift: an unprecedented confusion! Yet, the introduction was not marked by a great excitement for indeed the passing of time brought a sense of demotivation among teachers and some hard working students and things started

To worsen, imperious problems started to stand out, and the list of drawbacks to elongate; it is the dreaded opening of the Pandora Box!

2. From Skill and Experience to Larcenous Idleness

It has always been possible to reconsider pedagogical matters of an educational institution from a number of different perspectives (Nunan, 1988). In a quest for change, for example, the best reconsideration is to seek easiness or curricula syllabi for easification of enhancement or otherwise. For change, we also move in a linear fashion, never backward. Thus started the odyssey!

When in 1982, the compensation system was launched; it had the pious claim to change things from difficult to easy, from blocking students by a hard (but a yielding système modulaire), to a less demanding and helping Samaritan educational system. Allowing learners to compensate for their weaknesses as modules compensated one another; in the long run, this system turned out to be *ruinous* to learning which little by little started to undergo an invisible degeneration. Students began to care less about their learning except for moving from year to

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[1]**Email : naciflabed@yahoo.com**

another making the least efforts. In addition, change continued, bringing other unwanted snags (Labed, 2007).

Indeed, in 2004, the ministry decision-makers brought about another reform, pushed by a dire need of change, but instead of taking us on an enthralling pedagogic voyage, led us in dire-straits, on an odyssey of which Odysseus, the Homer's hero, could not be envious. It is the LMD odyssey: with the compensation system maintained, such a system decided for dropping the "note éliminatoire" to allow a much easier move from one year to another together with the introduction of the system of credits which allow a student to move to the next year without necessarily having secured the average. The students have started to develop an attitude about studies and learning, the attitude of *larcenous craving of idleness*; "larcenous" because such learners succeeded in depriving pedagogy from the art and professionalism to inculcate skill and experience, and by consequence of which teachers are rendered lean providers of marks more than of knowledge.

The trench between pedagogy and larceny began to be seriously dug which has created a kind of isolation where some "teachers may feel that they are not really in control of the learning process, or even aware of how a learner is progressing" (Frendo. 2005, p.96). The same feeling can also be shared by some hard working learners who feel that they have been dispossessed of their motivation and their authentic working environment where fierce competition and will to succeed are masters! They see in front of them some idle students who gravitate around succeeding without the least effort, at times mocking at those who work hard!

3. The Odyssey of Pedagogy: From Self-concept to the Dire Straits

In normal instances where learning takes place, the main running theme in the learning enterprise is how the learner rates himself in accordance to his competence in doing his particular tasks. Add to this, the image he makes of himself and the self-evaluation (or self-value) he generates of himself. All these affect his way of approaching his learning and his learning problems and the way he solves them.

These conceptions the learner makes of himself and which influence his learning behavior in one way or another are known as self-concept, or how the learner perceives and conceives himself within the world of his education and learning and gain confidence of his academic prowess where in 'education is viewed as involving the emotions and feelings [not] merely transmitting pieces of knowledge' (Williams et al.1997, p.33). This is exactly the image we wish our learners develop in the course of their tuition for we do believe that coming to the university is not simply succeeding because of a Samaritan L.M.D. [and a compensation] system but rather for truly acquiring the notions of why and how he is *learning*. Actually, on the basis of a belief in his capacities, the learner may become more efficacious when [he learns to] masters his learning (vicarious) experiences. Such a boost in self-concept is expected to encourage for further achievements. Because of such a boost, the learner is also expected to affect his *self-esteem or* the judgments of the self-worth and his self-determination, which both help him show 'greater efforts and greater persistence in the face of setbacks' (Woolfolk.2004, p.369).

However, with the L.M.D. system as a guiding principle of our tertiary language policy, these self-schemes seem to pertain to a scientific paradise. Again classroom observation and monitoring revealed to us that these self-schemes are indeed manifested in some of our students' behavior but this remains, unfortunately, far below our expectancies. The consequence is that for eight years or more, pedagogy and some caring teachers are in the dire straits. Eight sheer years of an odyssey in unfriendly waters are enough. It is urgent to

draw the attention of the decision makers at every stance of the hierarchy that if such system if not immediately stopped, and its doctrine seriously revised for betterment, the rampant malarkey that we witness day after day will sure enough annihilate our tertiary educational system. These are the somber truths about such a system, and "all truths that are kept silent become poisonous" (Nietzsche. 1976, p.56).

Whether such a stand and warning smacks of exaggeration, the lucent truth is that a positive-thinking minded person would take it as an invitation for a 'change in the behavior, thoughts or feelings of an organism (…) that results from experience' (Sternberg,1995, p.236).It is precisely thanks to our experience that we cannot think or accept learning to take place precisely "*without some laws of learning*" (Palmarini, 1981, p.301. Original italics) that we advance the claim that if we accept as a charge of responsibility to write off for good at all such a system, this will have the redoubtable role in judiciously readjusting tuition in our colleges. For the interest of precision, it seemed that the LMD system has brought about some laws of learning that are alien to the Algerian realities. The dean of the University of Lille, who has "unlearned to keep silence" (Nietzsche, 1997, p.38), has *openly and simply* admitted in a meeting in circa 2005 that in his university where they have the LMD system for over a decade and they are "still groping around!" Such a declaration would allow to advance the thought that for the decision makers that maybe it has been a haste to adopt such a system without truly looking deeply and congruously into it to see whether it veritably suits our pedagogic environment; or at least try it with a sample class instead of an ad hoc adoption, pushing the twenty-year good old system to a *systemcide*.

4. Back to *Pedagogic Ithaca*: Incubation for Re-thinking the Pedagogic Route

To return safely to the *pedagogic Ithaca*, one needs to stop and think of how to break away from the herd mentality and live by one's 'will to power'. What we really need is an incubation time. As an operational definition, incubation means putting the problem aside for a while. In other words, when we are unsuccessful in solving a problem probably because one of the attributes discussed above are missing as motivation, proper environment, etc., we need to rest, to rethink all the strategies that have been adopted, to recalculate the risks, to re-order the system, name it! It is advisable to stop 'working' than continuing to work without interruption, which leads –as it is the case- to disappointment, or loss of self-confidence.

Many agree that incubation improves creative problem solving (c.f. Matlin, 2003). With taking a break, and with a top-down strategy, i.e. looking at the higher-level of the problem, that is beginning with a consideration of the overall organization developing a better idea of the problem, will allow the pedagogues to look at the problem differently. Furthermore, if necessary, the pedagogues can evenly take recourse to the bottom-up approach which consists in decoding the multi-cellular organism of reasonably complex structure of the system's problems step by step from the smallest elements on to gradually building up a larger understanding of it (Robinson, 1991 and elsewhere).

However, if incubation seems to be at times slow and does really solve problems, it remains nevertheless within the province of practice that when ideas block, it is better to stop, to change potion, or to postpone the task to a further moment. By taking a break, the pedagogues can rewrite the entire pedagogic road map to enable the university to carry on with her pedagogic voyage on a better and more appropriate route to reach back the so dreamed *pedagogic Ithaca*. After all, what matters most in any language policy is to help *maintain* among all learners, however difficult, the desire to follow with heartthrob their learning, and participate thoroughly in the 'ethos of *the* classroom' (Widdownson,1990). The voyage that took Odysseus back to his Ithaca lasted some twenty years; we hope our odyssey will be shorter, much shorter.

5. Conclusion

Isn't the university condemned to re-think her language policy? To answer such a question, one has to sincerely and judiciously look at the results of every year, and then *ascertain* whether the decision makers have been manipulated to adopt that system called the L.M.D.

Again, an invitation is sent to the pedagogues to make use of at the apocalyptic statistics of our repeaters and dropouts wherewith to measure the thickness of the layers of our troubles that pile up year after year owing to such a system. Then, the decision can be taken about which necessary alterations to make. The bottom line is that it is only by using the appropriate heuristics together with the consideration and evaluation of feedback that we can implement all these aspects of change in the Algerian tertiary language policy system. We believe that it is only by so doing that *we will for sure awaken in us the dormant Ahuramazda*, that lord of light and wisdom and upholder of truth, to lead us out that rampant malarkey.

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