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Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research



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Teachers' Beliefs and Views on Grade Inflation in the Algerian Universities

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master Degree in "**Didactics and Applied Languages**"

Submitted by

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Dedication

To my dear parents.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Mrs. Amel Derraz for her guidance and patience in directing me throughout this journey. My deepest heartfelt gratitude goes to all the teachers who have contributed to the successful conduction and orientation of the research work. Thanks also go to the board of examiners who accept to read my humble work and give valuable remarks.

Abstract

Grade inflation is commonly known as giving students higher grades without an increase in their performance. Grade inflation has become a sensitive topic in the field of education. Thus, it is widely debated among scholars since it affects the students' career. Many studies were conducted concerning the issue of grade inflation in higher education but few (not to say any) were carried on grade inflation in the Algerian higher educational context. This study aims to explore the beliefs and views of Algerian university teachers regarding the issue of grade inflation. The study used a questionnaire designed to twenty EFL teachers (working in different universities) in order to quantitatively and qualitatively check their opinions about the existence of grade inflation at their departments as well as their causes and consequences. The findings reveal that most of teachers believe that grade inflation exists to some extent in their departments. In addition, the main reason of inflating grades is considering students' failure. As for their beliefs regarding the consequences, the participants agreed that the main consequences of grade inflation are deteriorating the work ethics of students and causing grades to fail their positive functions of providing feedback on students' performance.

Keywords: Grade inflation, teachers' beliefs, the English department, Algerian University.

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General Introduction

University grades are important not only because they are used in graduation, sorting students for scholarships but also for jobs. Some companies are best known for their competitive criteria for selection; employers and managers recruit competent people only and they use grades as a measure. Thus, inflating students' grades may affect those important decisions. The issue of grade inflation has been raised in the last two decades because it was observed that the grades in some prestigious universities and colleges are high.

The issue of grade inflation has been subject to debate among scholars all over the world. Scholars have different views concerning grade inflation. Some of them consider it to be just a myth and others believe in its existence. On several occasions, through the researchers' experience as a student in the English department at Mostaganem University, it has been observed that students complain about grades, accuse, and claim that some teachers inflate grades for some students.

Based on some previous research, and in order to check the issue of grade inflation in the Algerian universities, teachers' beliefs and attitudes are targeted in this research. The aim of this study is to explore teachers' beliefs and views on grade inflation in the Algerian universities. The researcher targets the EFL teachers at some departments of English in different Algerian universities. In this respect, the following questions are raised:

- To what extent does grade inflation exist in the Algerian universities?
- What are EFL teachers' views and beliefs about the causes and consequences of grade inflation in their departments?

It is hypothesized that:

- Grade inflation exists to some extent in most of the Algerian universities.
- Teachers at the English Departments of some universities consider grade inflation as unethical and unjustified, and its major consequence for them is deteriorating the ethics of learning and teaching.

The tool used for investigating such issue is the questionnaire. Including quantitative and qualitative items, it targets the teachers' opinions on inflating grades. The sample of the EFL teachers is twenty (20) participants working in different Algerian universities.

This dissertation consists of three chapters. The first chapter introduces the meaning of grade inflation, the rise of GPA's, some possible factors responsible for grade inflation, possible effects of grade inflation, grade inflation and ethics, low and high grading departments, and some grading standards in Algeria. The second chapter describes the research methodology including the research design, the target population and the sample selected. It also provides a detailed description about the research instrument used for investigation. In the last chapter, the collected data from the teacher's questionnaire are analyzed and discussed. Some limitations of the present study as well as insights for further research are suggested.

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

Introduction

The present chapter is concerned with the theoretical framework of the study. It is devoted to reviewing the relevant literature on grade inflation. First, some major studies on grade inflation concerned with its meaning, the rise of the GPA, and its causes and consequences will be reviewed. Then, an explanation of the matter of ethicality of grade inflation and the notions of high and low grading departments will be discussed. Because it is necessary to consider the Algerian context, this chapter devotes a section to discuss the grading standards in Algerian universities to gain a deep understanding concerning the issue of grade inflation.

1. Defining Grade Inflation

Over the last few decades, grade inflation has been experienced in different areas around the world. Grade inflation is used in “a pejorative sense” (Goldman, 1985, p.98).

Birnbaum (1977) claims:

In economic terms, inflation is defined as an increase of money and credit relative to available goods, resulting in a substantial and continuing rise in the general price level, thus decreasing the absolute value of currency. In the context of grades, inflation can be viewed as a process in which a defined level of academic achievement results in higher grade than awarded to that level of achievement in the past. (p.522)

For him, grade inflation is now easier than it was in earlier decades because the academic standards have changed and been reduced and, thus, grades are inflating. Eisler (2002) defines grade inflation as “student attainment of higher grades independent of increased levels of academic attainment” (p.489).

Consequences of Grade Inflation

The issue of grade inflation has become an international dangerous phenomenon that affects all segments of society starting by students and ending by the whole community. This section introduces the different possible effects of grade inflation and how the victims are affected.

The issue of Grade inflation harms students as individuals as it gives them a fake picture about their level. Chowdhury (2018) asserted that "Grade inflation may delude students regarding their real degree of academic achievement"(p.88). Similarly, Lippmann et al., (2009) state that "grade inflation fosters and reinforces an inflated perception about one's knowledge, skills, and competencies" (as cited in Miller, 2014, p.16), which means they try to convince themselves that they are capable of achieving their goals and ambitions; but the fact is that their abilities and skills maybe insufficient to do so. This type of grade inflation affects negatively students as it can destroy their morale and confidence in themselves and make them demotivated to learn and make efforts when they collide with the fact that the grades they get do not reflect their own performance.

Grade inflation also may affect the course selection of students. Stanoyevitch, (2008) claims that "students rapidly realize instructors who practice grade inflation and seek to choose their classes", which means, students select courses depending on the teacher himself whether he inflates grades or not. They even select their specialties or major fields according to the departments that give high grades more than others do.

Another problem is related to motivation. When an excellent competent student who scores always As and Bs shares the same grade with less able ones because of inflating grades, this may discourage him from accomplishing his goal and achieving his dreams because his opportunities and chances in having a good job.

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Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the meaning of grade inflation and GPA. It has also presented some possible factors responsible for grade inflation. The possible effects of grade inflation have also been stated. It has included low and high grading departments and some grading standards in Algeria. Thus, the attitudes of teachers towards the issue of grade inflation in Algerian universities need to be investigated.

CHAPTER TWO

Research Methodology

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the theoretical part of the study was presented, which is the literature review. It was mentioned that other practitioners and researchers wrote about this area of interest. However, in the present chapter, the practical issues are presented. This study aims at exploring EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes about grade inflation in the Algerian universities. For this reason, a questionnaire has been selected as a tool for data collection from the teachers. In this chapter, the research design is provided. After that, a description of the participants is provided. The tool of investigation is then described, and the procedure of collecting data is presented.

1. Research Design

The main research question is “what are EFL teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards grade inflation in some departments of English at some Algerian universities?” In other words, the research goal is to explore and extend the understanding of those beliefs and attitudes, which underlie teachers and learners’ behaviours towards the issue.

Since, to our knowledge, there have not been much studies that attempted to investigate this phenomenon in the Algerian context, another objective is to raise awareness of learners, teachers and educational managers about the issue of grade inflation by presenting some of its causes and potentially dangerous effects. Another research objective consists of attracting the attention of other researchers to investigate more this issue especially for possible solutions.

This research is based on an exploratory research design, which is considered the more appropriate design for the topic under discussion because the stated assumptions or hypotheses reflect the need for exploring opinions, beliefs and attitudes of experts, teachers,

educationalists and policymakers. In this respect, the section below describes the target population and the research method to be used in this study.

2. Participants

The target population or the whole group of interest in the study are EFL teachers working in five different Algerian universities. Since the aim of our research is exploring EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes about grade inflation, a number of teachers and also administrators must be involved in the investigation to represent the whole Department of English and give opinions as representative of the university.

2.1 Sampling

Since it is difficult to enrol all the teachers of the English Departments because of the issue of time, we have selected twenty teachers, permanent and part-time workers as a sample for this research. The sample to an acceptable extent represents some departments of English at five Algerian universities.

All participants, male and female, are of different ages and different teaching experiences. Choosing EFL teachers particularly is due to their professional career in the field of teaching, they probably have faced and experienced the issue of grade inflation. Therefore, it is necessary to explore their beliefs and attitudes concerning this issue and what strategies they use or recommend to reduce this phenomenon. Some participants might have already been a part of an administrative body. The different academic backgrounds of the informants could be supporting them to provide different views and insightful remarks.

3. Research Tool

The research method used to answer the research questions is one tool of investigation. The questionnaire has been designed to be administered to twenty teachers. With its detailed content, the questionnaire is to some extent sufficient to collect primary data about the beliefs and attitudes of teachers concerning the issue of grade inflation at some departments of English in some universities.

3.1 Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is one of the most popular research tools due to the fact that it is easy to administer and it helps to gather a large amount data. The main aim behind designing a questionnaire for teachers is to detect their perspectives about grade inflation, what their beliefs, attitudes, impressions, and reactions are.

The teachers' questionnaire consists of twenty questions (personal information, close-and open-ended, justifications and comments). It is composed of three parts. The first one consists of two (2) questions that aim to get information about the participants' gender as well as information about their years of teaching experience.

The format chosen for part two is multiple-choice questions. It consists of four (4) items containing three to four choices described as follows:

Item 1: The form of assessment that most accurately reflects students' learning

The aim of this question is to explore teachers' beliefs about assessment and its role in grading. It directly targets the kinds of activities or factors of enhancing learning. This may be like another face of the question "Do grades reflect the level of learning?". Teachers have to choose among: written assignments, exams and tests, and presentations.

Item 2: The reason of today's high grades as compared to grading in the past

This question aims at checking the teachers' views on the reasons behind high grades in today's higher education. The idea of comparing them to the past would help teachers think of their past as students in order to guess the reasons. The options include: technology availability, improvement of training, and students' self-motivation.

Item 3: How teachers consider themselves in terms of grading

This question triggers teachers to think about what characterises them as assessors and grade-givers. They have options like: generous, tough, fair, severe.

Item 4: What teachers consider when assigning grades

This question aims to reveal side-affecting elements in the mission of grading. That is, to check what can be intervening in the teachers' grade choices. Teachers have some options in this question which are: students' pressure, parents' pressure, teachers' pressure, students' failure, and students' bad reactions.

The last part of the questionnaire consists of eight main questions (close-ended). Some of them are followed by required justifications.

Item 1: The state of grade inflation at the departments

This question aims at revealing the extent to which inflating grades is apparent at the departments of English. Three options are provided for teachers to choose: apparent, apparent to some extent, absent.

Item 2: Grade inflation as a solution for failure

Teachers are required by this question to share their thoughts about changing students' grades as a trick or a way that helps the administration reduce the number of repeaters (failed students). The question is directly targeted to the teachers' acceptance of such act. It is a yes/no question that reflects the appropriateness of grade inflation in such a case. The question is followed by a sub-question where teachers are required to justify their answers.

Item 3: The state of students when grades are inflated

Some options are provided for the teachers to guess or confirm the state of students when their grades are inflated. Options are: students are not challenged to do their best, motivated, avoided complaints, encouraged to select specific majors.

Item 4: The value of transcripts and degrees

This question aims at exploring teachers' views on the value of transcripts and diplomas in the case of grade inflation. Transcripts and degrees that provide academic proof of credentials may -teachers would choose among-: lose their value, give employment chances, or deteriorate learning ethics.

Item 5: The state of grade inflation for scholarships

As suggested for teachers that candidates for scholarships should or must have high grades. In this case, teachers are asked to declare their beliefs about the necessity of inflating the grades of students who will study abroad. It is a yes/no question followed by a sub-question of justification for the main one.

Item 6: The students' pressure over teachers to change grades

Teachers are asked about another source of grade inflation. This question explores whether teachers have been under students' pressure in order to give them high grades or to change their low grades. It is a yes/no question followed by a sub-question of justification for the main one.

Item 7: The teachers' pressure over other teachers to change grades

Teachers can also exert pressure for the sake of changing some students' grades. For that, this question targets another source of grade inflation and explores whether teachers have been under other teachers' pressure in order to give high grades or to change low grades. It is a yes/no question followed by a sub-question of justification for the main one.

Item 8: Grade inflation as a way to avoid catch-up exams

The aim of this question is to check whether teachers inflate some grades to avoid students taking other exams or to avoid the burden of preparing for extra exams. It reflects some information about another source of grade inflation. It is a yes/no question followed by a sub-question of justification for the main one.

At the end of the questionnaire, informants are allowed to add further information about the case of grade inflation, to comment on some sources existing at some universities, and to provide any suggestions and recommendations relevant to the issue of grade inflation in Algeria.

4. Procedure of Data Collection

The conduction of the research method has been made online. Data have been collected via the online forms from twenty (20) teachers working at the English Departments,

during the academic year 2019/2020. The questionnaire has been administered in May 2020 to participants.

The information provided by all participants are kept anonymous as their answers are very important for the validity of the research. Despite depending on one tool of investigation, the questionnaire design tends to provide both quantitative and qualitative data as to be driven and analysed in good conditions.

Conclusion

To conclude, the current chapter described the research design, the population of the present study, the sampling procedure, and the data collection procedure. The instrument used to collect data has been described in details. The following step is analysing and interpreting data gained from the teachers' questionnaire in order to explore thoroughly the beliefs and attitudes of EFL teachers at the Algerian University concerning grade inflation and to know from them what its causes and potential consequences are. For that, the following chapter will be devoted to data analysis, discussion of findings and some implications.

CHAPTER THREE

Data Analysis & Findings

Introduction

The present research work attempts to explore the views and opinions of teachers at the department of English in some Algerian universities regarding the grade inflation. As the previous included, the researcher depended on one research instrument which is a questionnaire designed for twenty teachers. In this part of the study, the answers of participants are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition, the findings are provided and discussed. The researcher finally provides some implications and limitations in the conduction of the study.

1. Data Analysis

In this section, the answers of participants are presented and analysed. Statistics are provided for the quantitative items of the questionnaire.

Male	Female	Total
4 (20%)	16 (80%)	20 (100%)

Table 3. Teachers' Gender

Starting by the general information, four-fifths of the participants are female teachers (80%), and only four participants are male (20%)

Less than 10 years	10-20 years	More than 20 years	Total
4 (20%)	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	20 (100%)

Table 4. Teachers' Experience

Moving to the participants' experience in teaching, there are several levels of experience provided in the answers. The researcher categorized them as "less than 10", "10 to 20" and "more than 20 years". The majority of participants have the experience of 10 to 20 years (60%). However, four participants answered that their experience is less than 10 years, and other four teachers answered with more than 20 years. The diversity of their experiences could help the researcher gain different and insightful information and opinions.

Q1. What form of assessment do you believe most accurately reflects students' learning?

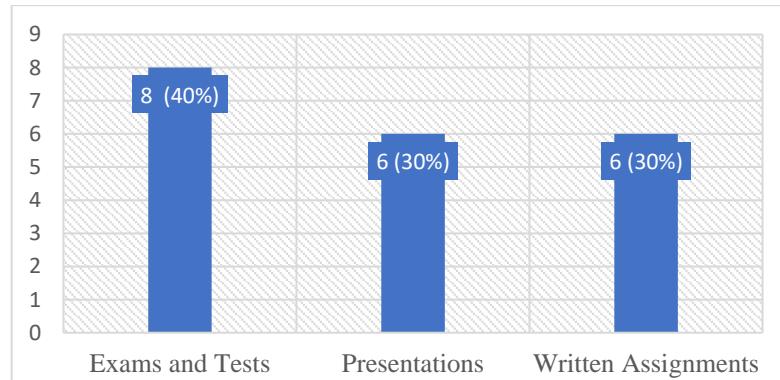


Figure 1. Forms of assessment reflecting students' learning

The informants have answered differently on the form of assessment that mostly reflects the students' level and achievement in learning. Eight (40%) participants chose exams and tests; six teachers (30%) went for 'presentations' and other six teachers answered that assignments reflects the students' learning the most. This confirms that assessment should not be based on one form or tool, and perhaps informants could have thought of other forms.

Q2. Students are getting high grades more than students used to get in the past because:

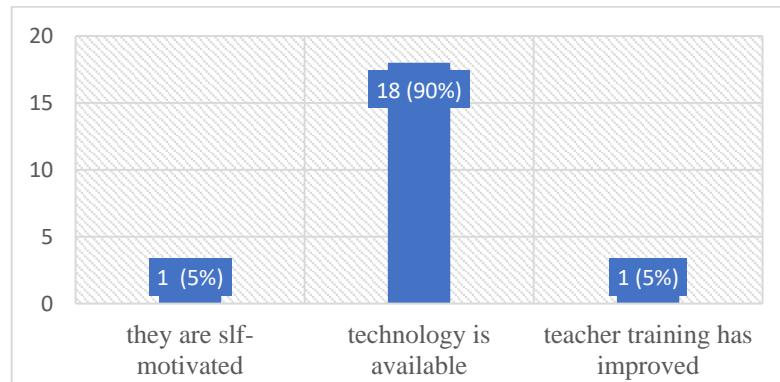


Figure 2. Reasons of getting higher grades than in the past

Almost all the participants agreed on the fact that technology is available nowadays is a helping hand for learners to find other sources and learn and get high grades. Eighteen (90%) teachers opted for that answer; however, one teacher chose the improvement of teacher trainings as a reason while another teacher went for the students' self-motivation.

Q3. How do you consider yourself as a teacher in terms of grading?

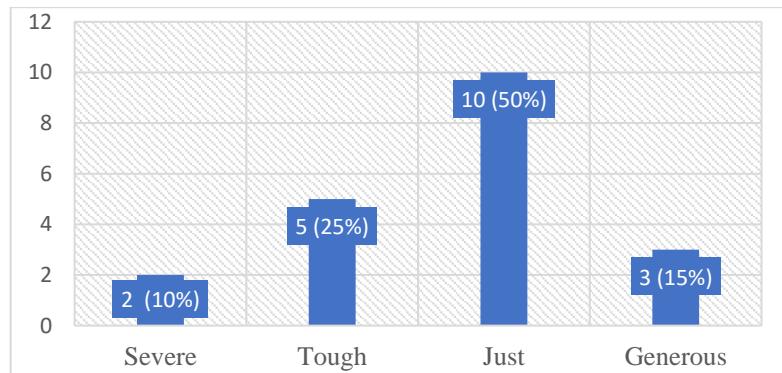


Figure 3. Teachers' self-evaluation in terms of grading

Teachers were asked about the way they consider themselves in terms of giving grades/marks to their students. Half of the informants considered themselves as 'just'. Yet, five (25%) teachers answered that they are tough and two others (10%) as 'severe'. Only three (15%) informants chose to describe themselves as 'generous' when grading. It is hard to make teachers decide what to say about themselves in such a feature because they know they are already fair assessors and their goal is to teach and enhance the learning proficiency.

Q4. When you assign grades, you consider:

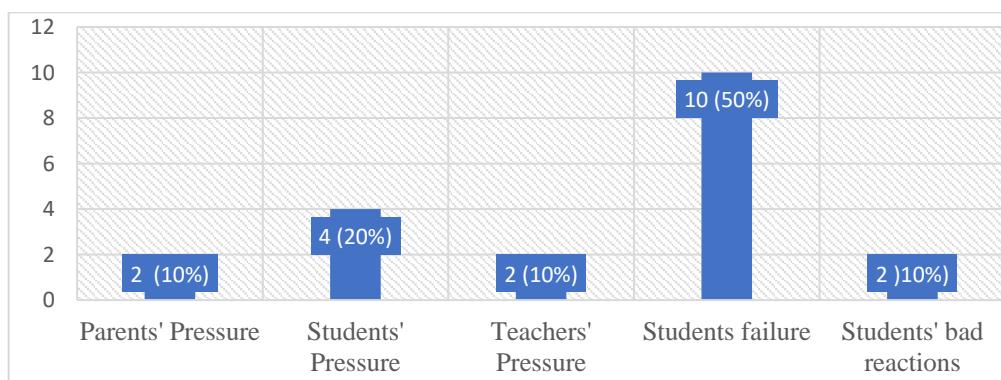


Figure 4. Considerations related to grading

Some factors that might intervene in changing students' grades were provided to informants to reflect on. Half of them (10 teachers) answered that they consider students' failure when they come to assign grades. In addition, four (20%) teachers claimed that students' pressure is a factor in their grading. However, two (10%) participants went for each of the other

considerations. The factors that intervene may not be limited to these ones, but the answers of teachers can reveal how some teachers are firm in their grading standards.

Q5. To what extent does inflating grades exist in your department?

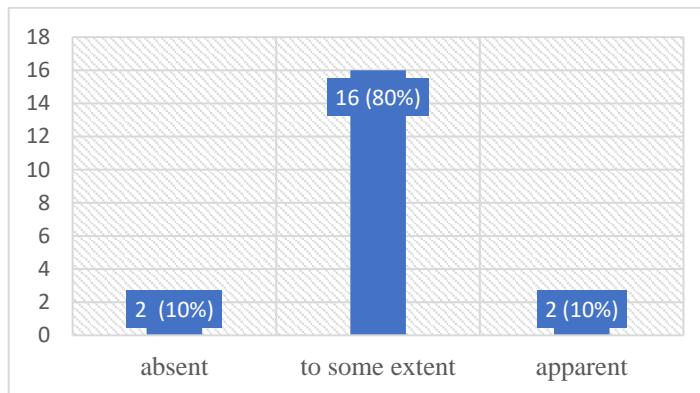


Figure 5. Existence of grade inflation at their departments

The direct question came here. The majority of the participating teachers working at the English Departments in the targeted sample universities confirmed that inflating grades to some extent exists (80%). Two teachers (10%) said that it is apparent, while other two teachers confirmed its absence. The result of this question was expected since teachers have already answered that they can change grades due to some factors.

Q6. Do you think that changing students' grades to reduce the number of repeaters (failed students) is acceptable?

Yes	No	Total
0 (0%)	20 (100%)	20 (100%)

Table 5. Acceptability of inflating grades to reduce failure

The question did not tend to check whether avoiding failure was the purpose of inflating grades. Yet, all participants chose the more ethical option which is ‘no’. Indeed, even if it is existent, such act is still not accepted. The question required the teachers’ justifications. For that, some commented that “we need to be fair whatever the circumstances”, another claimed “this will encourage more students to cheat and rely on easy-grade donations”. As it does not

reflect the real level, teachers described such act as unfair, unethical, immoral and illegal. One teacher added “though it is an educational policy, it may affect students’ motivation.”

Q7. When grades are inflated, students are:

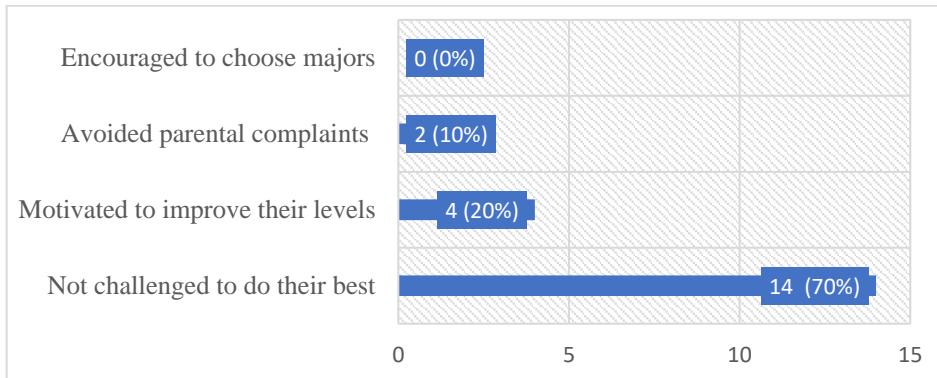


Figure 6. Effects of grade inflation on students

Teachers were asked about how inflating grades affect the learning course. Fourteen (70%) participants answered that students would not be challenged to do their best and learn if they are given higher than what they deserve. However, four (20%) teachers chose the motivational factor to be the victim of grade inflation. Moreover, two (10%) teachers said that giving higher grades would avoid some complaints from parents and even administration. The results of this question hint that all teachers agree on the negative influence of grade inflation on students’ learning performance.

Q8. Due to grade inflation, transcripts and degrees that provide academic proof of credentials would

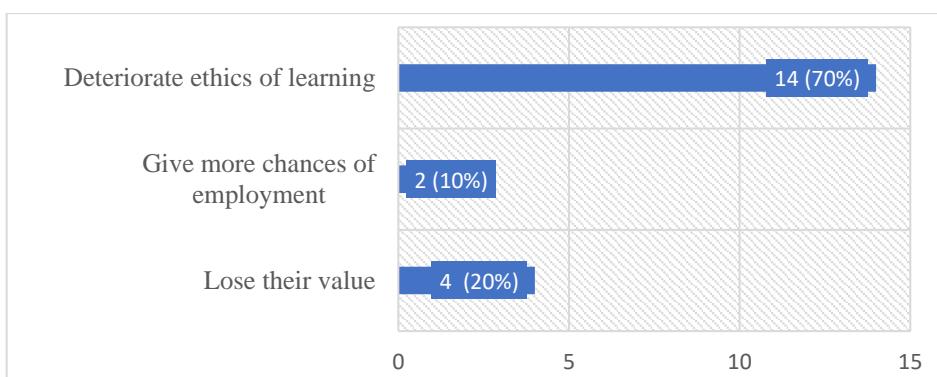


Figure 7. Transcripts and degrees affected by inflation

Fourteen (70%) participants answered that grade inflation cause deterioration the learning and teaching ethics and standards. Four (20%) teachers consider transcripts as nonvaluable if they include inflated grades. In addition, two (10%) participants claimed that such kind of grades result in more chances of employment. Despite its negative aspect, but that exists because employers cannot easily detect whether grades are inflated, they just consider how high they are.

Q9. When scholarships are available to students, it is necessary to “increase” students’ grades.

Yes	No	Total
0 (0%)	20 (100%)	20 (100%)

Table 6. The necessity of inflating grades for scholarship candidates

In order to check whether scholarships are acceptable justifications for inflating the grades of students, even if they have good levels. In response to such questioning, all participants considered that inflating grades for scholarship candidates as unnecessary and unacceptable. Informants added that scholarships should be given with merit. If students have good achievement, it is a shame when it comes to teachers who receive them abroad, let alone the credibility of their teachers. Participants also noted that hardworking students must be given their merits and priority in scholarships obtention. One teacher mentioned that such act would be disrespecting the ethics and morals which could affect the reputation of the university. Another informant mentioned that learners need to be highly qualified specially if they are to carry out their studies abroad.

Q10. Did any student exert pressure on you to change their low grades?

Yes	No	Total
3 (15%)	17 (85%)	20 (100%)

Table 7. Cases of changing grades due to students’ pressure

Teachers were asked whether changing grades happens due to pressure exerted on them by students. The majority of informants denied that such reason can cause them change grades. Seventeen (85%) answered with ‘no’ and only three (15%) teachers said that students may exert pressure and push them to change or rather increase their marks. These results may be related to the quality of teachers and learners. Teachers justified that such pressure was for the purpose of passing and avoiding repeating the year.

Q11. Did any teacher exert pressure on you to change students' low grades?

Yes	No	Total
3 (15%)	17 (85%)	20 (100%)

Table 8. Cases of changing grades due to teachers' pressure

Teachers may also exert pressure on other teachers to help a student get higher grades. When participants were asked about this, the majority again refused such act and justification. Only three teachers confirmed that their mates talked to them to cause an inflation in some students' grades. The latter justified that they only wanted to help students who do not attend the lectures. Other informants did not experience that.

Q12. Do you give higher grades to avoid catch-up tests?

Yes	No	Total
2 (10%)	18 (90%)	20 (100%)

Table 9. Inflating grades to avoid catch-up exams

Teachers may think of not planning for any extra tests when they expect few students retaking them. For that, they may think of compressing or inflating grades. When they were asked about grade inflation as a way of avoiding catch-up exams, eighteen (90%) informants confirmed that they do not do that. Only two (10%) teachers said that they can avoid extra tests through inflating some grades of some students. Some justified that exams and tests must be

done in the right time in order not to cause any way of inflating grades. Another teacher mentioned that such behaviour decreases students' esteem and encourages mediocrity.

2. Findings and Discussions

Before discussing the views of teachers regarding grade inflation, it is necessary to note that respondents of our research tool signified that inflating grades by teachers working at the departments of English in some universities, is an existing case with no big deal of appearance or being phenomenal. Indeed, the overall answers of teachers provided that the status of a serious grade inflation is not apparent for that no real or obvious consequences happening. Briefly, the degree of inflating grades at the Algerian universities does not seem at the level of worry or seriousness.

A major view shared by teachers is that the increase of grades level nowadays refers to the availability and diversity of learning sources. However, they had different beliefs concerning the methods of assessment that are the grades standards. For them, tests and exams do reflect students learning as any other methods like presentations and assignments. Therefore, grade inflation is not just when grades are given for no reason or with no form of assessment. Other items in the questionnaire targeted how teachers think of some sources and reasons for grade inflation.

Moreover, the participants shared the belief that students' failure pushes many teachers to think of ways to increase the marks on some occasions. However, this contradicts with their answers on whether inflating grades to reduce the number of repeaters is acceptable (see table.5). It seems that they agree on the fact that grade inflation is essentially illegal and unethical yet they have some considerations when they confirm that students' failure could be a motive for changing grades.

In additions, teachers showed their opinions regarding other intervening factors in changing grades like pressure from students, parents or other teachers. They believed them as considerable reasons of inflating grades and some participants mentioned illustrations (Like students who insist on changing grades due to their absence or other reasons). However, students' nuisance or the act of putting pressure on teachers to give them higher grades may not happen to all teachers or it could be explained as the teacher was unfair or committed mistakes in grading.

It is remarkable through the answers on some items that students pestering their teachers to give them higher grades because they want to avoid catchup exams. But such reasons can be corrupted when other teachers intervene to exert pressure on teacher. As noticed from the answers, the participants in this study did not show much appreciation to any kind of pressure from anyone to change the grades. As suggested by an informant, the administration can also have such kind of pressure on some teachers to change the grades regardless of the assessment form and the quality of teacher.

The findings of this research indicate that teachers had the common beliefs and views on grade inflation as unethical. Yet, focusing on its reasons and consequences, teachers shared different views about them. According to some participants, getting high grades in an easy way without making efforts makes transcripts with no value. For some others, insisted on the consequence that students would no longer care about working hard to succeed.

Through the results gained from the questionnaire, it is apparent that al teachers agree on the fact that grade inflation affects negatively students as it gives them false assumptions regarding their levels of competency, makes them believe that the mark they get is their real one, that they deserve it and that they are qualified enough to accomplish their goals. However, when they face the fact that they are misled concerning their actual performance and skills, they will probably become demotivated.

In this respect, Chowdhury (2018), for instance, asserted that “Grade inflation may delude learners concerning their real level of academic achievement” (p.88). All in all, as noted by the participant teachers, the main consequences of grade inflation instances in the English Departments at some universities are represented in deteriorating the work ethics of students, causing grades to fail their positive functions of providing feedback on students' performance, causing transcripts and degrees that provide academic proof of credentials to lose their values and demotivating students and preventing them from doing their best.

3. Implications and Recommendations

In EFL contexts, in order to reduce grade inflation and/or mitigate its effects, when grading any paper, teachers usually should implement certain grading standards for that any inappropriate use of grading systems can simply engender grade inflation. For instance, giving students the chance to assess each other anonymously (peer-assessment) can be a strategy that assist the teacher's grading. After students correct each other, the teacher will correct the papers for the second time to see whether their expectations match students' expectations.

Using rubrics to grade students can be accurate in grading or at least be fair with all the students since they will be assessed on the same criteria. Isaacson and Stacy (2009) state that “rubrics serve as a blueprint for grading” (as cited in Donaldson and Gray, 2012, p. 106). Rubrics help teachers allot grade points for specific verifiable and justifiable aspects of the learners' exam performance. Therefore, any attempt from teachers to inflate grades will be difficult.

Devoting marks for behaviour and participation can be unfair as they are classroom management issues not grading issues because when we assign a grade for something, which must happen anyway as good behaviour, we are actually inflating grades artificially and grades will no longer represent the mastery of subjects.

There are some common assumptions that grade inflation occurs in social sciences and humanities more than in scientific majors. For that, it is recommended for researchers to conduct more investigations in several fields and compare the rates of inflating grades. Research about grade inflation using data from students' averages and transcripts during a given period would yield in more accurate results concerning the rise of students' grades compared with the past. In this respect, administrative staff are required to be cooperative for the achievement of such realistic and reliable research.

4. Limitations of the Study

As in any scientific research, this study has some limitations that are worth mentioning. Limitations are summarized in facts about the Algerian university in general, the administrative staff of the universities, and the teachers. Despite the socioeconomic and sociocultural aspects of the students, grading and assessment are not well appreciated and well considered among university teachers in Algeria.

A major constraint for achieving better and more valid and reliable results in this research is the lack of cooperation from the administrative staff. In some other works about grade inflation and more serious phenomena in education are given high importance by researchers, and their correlative administrations support them with documents they need and with statements they help their work. However, the idea of questioning whether grade inflation exists or not might not be accepted by some Algerian policymakers, educationalists, deans, inspectors or any other administrative staff.

It was hard for the researcher to take reports on the grading system or results of the few last years to check the rates of inflating grades at the target departments. Perhaps, complicated administrative mentalities would have stopped against the completion of the research just for its so-described daring step towards investigating issues that should not be tackled.

The one-instrument method was a must. Such limitation was due to the refusal of the deans of some faculties and the heads of some departments to cooperate in an interview was designed for administrative staff. However, after checking the teachers' answers, it seemed that even students should have participated in order to compare how they see reasons and consequences of inflating grades with how teachers see them.

Another limitation is that twenty is a small number of participating teachers. They gave insightful and different views though. More teachers were expected to participate. Increasing the number of participants helps increase the reliability of the research results. Indeed, the results of this research may represent the teachers at some departments of English yet they cannot reflect how students, parents and administrative staff perceive the status, causes and consequences of grade inflation.

Conclusion

To conclude, the current chapter provided data analysis and interpretation followed with a discussion of the major findings. In addition, the implications provided in the chapter can be useful for all teachers to avoid or mitigate grade inflation. It is also important to note that the implications suggest that teachers need to be more trained on different assessment forms and grading systems. Some recommendations have been listed for further studies about the issue of grade inflation. The chapter also provided some shortcomings and limitation in the conduction of the current research.

General Conclusion

Grade inflation is conventionally known as giving students higher marks more than they deserve. The aim of this research was to explore teachers' beliefs and views on the issue of grade inflation in the Algerian university. The first chapter provided a theoretical background on grade inflation. The second chapter of this study presented the methodological issues. While the last chapter provided the analysis of data and the discussion of findings.

The findings reveal that a good number of the teachers from different departments of English in some universities who participated in this study believe that grade inflation exists to some extent in their departments. In addition, as reported by the participant teachers, the main reason of grade inflation is considering students' failure and any form of pressure to change their low grades. As for their beliefs regarding the consequences, they have agreed that the main consequences of grade inflation are deteriorating the work ethics of students and causing grades to fail their positive functions and values of providing feedback on students' performance.

In addition, and as in any other research, this study has had some limitations, i.e., the limited number of the research tools due to the limited time available, some teachers did not complete the questionnaire, in addition to the small sample. For that, the researcher provided major suggestions. Teachers should be knowledgeable about the different grading systems, use rubrics, and use different types of benchmarking strategies. Besides, educational institutions need to train teachers on the different strategies and methods of assessing students.

Taking strict actions against instructors who inflate their students' grades intentionally and educating students about the grading policies can also help policymakers reduce the degree of grade inflation. In conclusion, the findings of this study reveal that EFL teachers at some universities share a common negative attitude towards grade inflation. For that, the researcher though of questioning students and administrative staff about the same issue. It is necessary for researchers in the field of grades to support their arguments with reports and official documents provided by the targeted institutions for a more reliable and authentic research.

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Appendix

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

This questionnaire attempts to investigate teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards grade inflation in the Algerian universities. As you are working in the English department at your university, be sure that any information you provide will be kept anonymous. Your responses will contribute to the fulfilment of a master dissertation.

Part One:

Gender: Male Female

Teaching Experience: ... Years

Part Two: Please tick the appropriate option (feel free to tick more than one)

1. What form of assessment do you believe most accurately reflects students' learning?

Written assignments Tests and exams Presentations

2. Students are getting high grades more than students used to get in the past because:

They are self-motivated
 Technology is available
 Teacher training has improved

3. How do you consider yourself as a teacher in terms of grading?

Generous
 Just
 Tough
 Severe

4. When you assign grades, you consider:

parents' pressure.
 students' pressure.
 Teachers' pressure.
 Students' failure.
 Students' bad reactions.

5. To what extent does inflating grades exist in your department?

Apparent
 to some extent
 Absent

6. Do you think that changing students' grades to reduce the number of repeaters (failed students) is acceptable?

- Yes
- No

Explain why?

7. When grades are inflated, students are:

- Not challenged to do their best
- Motivated to improve their levels
- Avoided administrative/parental complaints
- Encouraged to select majors and branches

8. Due to grade inflation, transcripts (relevé de notes) and degrees that provide academic proof of credentials would

- Lose their value.
- Give more chances of employment
- Deteriorate the ethics of learning

9. When scholarships are available to students, it is necessary to "increase" students' grades.

- Yes
- No

Explain why?

10. Did any student exert pressure on you to change their low grades?

- Yes
- No

Explain why?

11. Did any teacher exert pressure on you to change students' low grades?

- Yes
- No

Explain why?

12. Do you give higher grades to avoid catch-up tests.?

- Yes
- No

Explain why?

Thank you for collaboration