

## *LMD System: How to Organise Support Pedagogy in Retake Courses*

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### **Abstract**

The LMD system is designed and implemented to maximize students' chances of success. However, after some years of its implementation in different departments of our faculty, including the department of English, figures show that success rates are often lower than what they used to be in the old system. Measures should therefore be taken to handle students' failure, measures that must be in line with both the spirit of the LMD and the background realities of Algerian universities.

In the light of this situation, this paper will be concerned with support pedagogy in re-take courses and the way to cope with the large number of students in these classes. It is intended to provide a battery of innovative and effective measures that address English teachers' concerns over course design and classroom management.

### **Introduction:**

The LMD system is designed and implemented so as to maximize the students' chances of success. However, after some years of its implementation in different departments of our faculty, including the department of English, figures show that success rates are lower than what they used to be in the old system. Many factors, some of which are exogenous and others endogenous to the system, contributed to this frustrating situation. Nonetheless, whatever their nature, these factors defy the purposes for which the LMD has been set forth, and it is our duty as higher education professionals to face them.

In this paper, we'll try to address the issue of students' failure by invoking the idea of "Mobility", which is a key word in the educational and organizational policy behind the LMD. Mobility

refers not only to the flexibility granted to students to shift from one course discipline –*filière*- to another within a given field of learning – *domaine*- (e.g. from Licence in French to Licence in English within the common field of Foreign languages), but also to the actual organisation of individual classes. In what follows, we’ll build on this concept to suggest a battery of innovative and effective measures that address English teachers’ concerns over course design and classroom management.

Let us start by reviewing and comparing the success criteria in the old system and the LMD:

**Old System:**

- student’s average > 10: student moves to upward course
- student’s average < 10: student drops

**LMD:**

- Student’s average > 10: student moves to upward course
- Student’s average < 10: check number of annual credits. Two cases:

cases:

- o Number of credits  $\geq 30$ : student has a pass to the upward semester but is bound to retake one or more courses (*rachat*)
- o Number of credits < 30: student drops

As noticed, LMD breaks away from the *Manichean* assessment of the traditional system. It allows an intermediate category of students to move to the upward course but binds them to register at some units to be taken again.

In this way, the deliberation process in the LMD system will result in a third category of students whose results lead them to retake some credits to better their score:

Teaching U ↓ Students	TU 1	TU 2	TU 3	TU n	Average	Nbre of Credits (/60)
Student 1	<b>Banked</b>	<b>Not gained</b>	<b>Banked</b>	<b>Banked</b>	<b>11,67</b>	<b>60</b>
Student 2	<b>Not gained</b>	<b>Not gained</b>	<b>Banked</b>	<b>Banked</b>	<b>9,71</b>	<b>41</b>

Student 3	<b>Banked</b>	<b>Not gained</b>	<b>Not gained</b>	<b>Banked</b>	<b>9,20</b>	<b>30</b>
Student n	<b>Banked</b>	<b>Not gained</b>	<b>Not gained</b>	<b>Banked</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>

**Table 1:** LMD Deliberation Table

Retake classes involved within upward course are unusual in traditional Algerian university course. They require a new and innovative course organisation that allows students to register in upward courses (e.g. Semester 3) and to take again a course (e.g. Semester 1). In **Table One**, this category is illustrated by TU 2, and TU 3 which will be retaken by students 2 and 3.

A retake course means more teachers and more facilities – classrooms and amphitheatres. This situation is overwhelmingly frustrating to the administrative staff and teachers alike: the first must provide for more facilities, and the latter must develop a new pedagogy. But is that so simple?

How to organise retake classes so as to overcome the problem of infrastructure? What classroom management and pedagogy suit these classes? What is/are the role(s) of the learners? In our view, Tutoring may offer some help and some answers to these problems, and it is our intention to investigate into its implementation in Algerian university education.

**Definition of Tutoring:**

Tutoring in education is a teaching assistance which provides expertise, experience, and encouragement. It is meant mainly to assist achievers who are generally inline with their curriculum, but may need extra-help in a specific field in which they failed. Hence, it suits perfectly the profile of the students concerned with retake classes.

In this paper we address the issue of Tutoring from a fresh perspective by endeavouring to accommodate it to our Algerian ground realities, and the profile of our teachers and students alike. If in some educational settings, such as American universities, it is performed by senior students, in Algeria things are different in that Tutoring is designed by policy makers to be implemented by teachers.

As such, it is regulated in terms of time (4h30' / week) and of kinds of students who should be targeted (achievers).

**Students Organisation:**

To best effect Tutoring, we suggest to start by organising retake subjects according to the number of students in each teaching unit. It must be noted, however, that these groups should be independent from the groups of the downward course. Here’s an example:

Teaching Unit	TU 1	TU 2	TU 3	TU n
Total number of students	96	20	62	n

**Table 2:** Number of students/retake subject

If we organise groups around 20 students in each group, this table will result in the following number of tutors:

TU	TU 1	TU 2	TU 3	TU n
Nbre of Tutors	5	1	3	n/20

**Table 3:** Number of Tutors/Teaching Unit

**NB.**The number of students may vary according to the number of teachers as well as to the specific needs of each Teaching Unit. Thus, Writing Expressions classes may involve 15 students, whereas literature classes may involve more than 20 students.

**Classroom Organisation:**

Retake classes may result in over-crowded classrooms. In such cases, the number of students may exceed 30 students. To handle this problem, we suggest administering a needs analysis checklist for each teaching unit.

A Needs analysis will highlight each student’s area of weakness. It enables the teacher/tutor to target the specific need(s) of each student. It thus results in further divisions of students.

**Example:** Study Skill Needs Analysis Checklist

*Read each statement and consider how it applies to you. If it does apply to you, check Y. If it does not apply to you, check N. The purpose of this inventory is to find out about your own study habits and attitudes.*

Skills	Questions
Time Scheduling	1. Y__ N__ I spend too much time studying for what I am learning. 2. Y__ N__ I usually cram my revisions one day or two before an exam. 3. Y__ N__ I can't achieve a balance between the time for my social activities and the time for studies.
Concentration	4. Y__ N__ The radio and TV are always turned on during my revision. 5. Y__ N__ I rapidly get tired or distracted by revisions. 6. Y__ N__ During class, it usually happens that I doodle, daydream, or feel asleep.
Listening & Note taking	7. Y__ N__ Most of the time, I can't understand most of the notes taken during class. 8. Y__ N__ I fail to take the important and appropriate notes during class. 9. Y__ N__ I don't review my class notes regularly throughout the semester in preparation for tests.
Reading	10. Y__ N__ When I engage in a reading activity, I can't remember what I've just read. 11. Y__ N__ I don't know how to pick out what is important in the text. 12. Y__ N__ I don't like reading assignments, and then I have to survey them all the day before a test.
Exams	13. Y__ N__ I lose a lot of points on essay tests even when I know the material well. 14. Y__ N__ I work hard enough, but when I get to the test my mind goes blank. 15. Y__ N__ I often study in a haphazard, disorganized way under the threat of the next test.
Reading	16. Y__ N__ I often find myself lost in the details of reading and I never succeed in identifying the main ideas. 17. Y__ N__ I adopt a constant reading speed even when I'm familiar with the content. 18. Y__ N__ I often wish that I could read faster.
Writing Skills	19. Y__ N__ When my teachers assign papers I feel so overwhelmed that I can't get started. 20. Y__ N__ I usually write my papers the day before they are due. 21. Y__ N__ I can't seem to organize my thoughts into a paper that makes sense.

**Table 4:** Study Skill Needs Analysis Checklist

From **Table 4**, it becomes obvious that each student who has answered “yes” to two or more questions in a given category needs help in that category. The teacher is thus informed about every student’s area of weakness, and can easily design his course so as to target it.

**Tutoring Plan of Intervention:**

To ease the pressures which result from overcrowded classes, the teacher may individualize his teaching and plan his intervention in a four stage method, involving direct, personal communication or online communication via the Internet:

- 1- To plan the intervention according to the needs of the students
- 2- To help students to establish attainable objectives
- 3- To make sure that students’ work is completed and that they understand what to do and how to do it
- 4- To encourage students to develop strategies

To ensure the follow-up, the Tutor may ask the learners to use a portfolio in which they take notes and perform assignments. These portfolios are gathered at regular time intervals in order to check the students’ performances and assignments.

An additional and/or alternative organisation to ensure follow-up is the Internet. This means of communication enables the Tutor to organise the students in groups and to forward to them any question, advice, document, etc as well as to receive their questions and their assignments.

Online follow-up can be performed by:

- 1- Collecting email addresses of all students
- 2- Organizing email addresses into groups, depending on clear criteria, such as chapters to be covered, students’ weakness areas, etc
- 3- Setting up folders to store emails connected with the course
- 4- Keeping and forwarding responses
- 5- Creating templates for lessons, assignments and responses to frequently asked questions.

However, we need to stress here that the two methods –Portfolio and Internet- cannot be effective without being attached to an agenda

or a contract between the tutor and the students. The agenda shows exactly **what** the students have to do, **what** they have accomplished, **where** to submit their work, the **appointments** with their tutor, their **exam dates**, their **evaluation dates** and the **results of the evaluation** to specify the acquired competencies and the weaknesses observed.

### **Tutoring Pedagogy:**

Tutoring addresses learners' needs in a way that is different from that of the traditional university system. The latter adopts a descriptive way of delivering the course (conferences, explanation, note taking, handouts etc). Tutoring on its part focuses on assignments and students' autonomy construction.

This brings to the fore the necessity to review the role of the teacher who has to combine conventional education (class meetings and face to face meetings), institutional control and students autonomy construction via scheduled assignments. The dichotomous relationships class teacher/online tutor reveals the big shift which must be made by the teacher whose profile should meet many requirements.

A competent Tutor should perform and combine three roles: a subject expert, a coach/mentor/counsellor, and an assessor. As a subject expert, he supplements self-study materials and points learners to sources of information (books, articles, journals, websites...); as a coach, he provides constructive feedback, and encouragement; and as an assessor, he makes written assignments as email attachments and checks that students have achieved their learning objectives (Keith J. Topping 1996).

It becomes obvious that these roles raise the problem of teacher education. Being rooted in traditional ways of delivering courses, Algerian university teachers are usually inadequately educated and lack professional training as tutors. This inadequacy becomes more acute when the need to use ICTs, which prove to be inevitable in tutoring. Many university teachers are still unfamiliar with the educational applications of ICTS, even when they know that the use of ICTs have become a necessity for students who have taken unsuccessfully a credit and who need goal-oriented control to better their scores.

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