Removing Limitations – Inverting Maslow

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**Abstract**

Removing limitations – Inverting Maslow is a report based on a personal interest in education – teachers and students.

The aim of the report is to open a new door or perhaps introduce a new path in learning as well as teaching.

This report will examine results of removing limitations, setting higher goals and directing learners to become self-directed learners. All the results are based on weekly examinations – individual written exams, group work and observation - as well as student interviews and recordings.

Removing limitations will argue that perhaps we should be considering Maslow’s hierarchy of needs from “self-actualization” stage - the peak - moving down, as opposed to moving from “physiological” stage, upwards.

Trusting my learners, and having a clear vision, I was sure this project would produce positive results.

To this end, notes were made on the learning behavior of the learners after each of the lessons and were later analyzed to reach a conclusion.

Obviously this project is still in its teething stages but nevertheless the results are fascinating.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my leaners for their cooperation and their trust and of course my college, BDC, for giving me the chance and the opportunity to conduct this research.

It is hoped that all the teachers will find this report beneficial in their daily teachings and target settings.

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## Background

All the students involved in this project are currently studying Entry Level 3 ESOL and come from various backgrounds – some have been to school in their country and some have never had any formal education.

## Preparing learners for their new adventure

It was of great importance to prepare learners mentality in the first instance to undertake a **Level 3** Anatomy & Physiology course whilst studying ESOL at **Entry** Level 3.

I started my lesson by asking the leaners to put their hands up if they wish to go to university. Not many did. In fact, only 2 learners out of 21- that is 10%.

I needed to change this percentage. To this end, everyone watched a video of a graduation ceremony. Students were then asked to identify names of graduates whom, they believed were from their own country. A discussion followed this process and it was rather moving when I watched them talk about their own aspirations and dreams. The percentage changed to 95% - that is 20 out of 21.

It is important to note that perhaps a small % of them may have just put their hands up because the others did (**conformism**) or perhaps even been told by others to put their hands up (**totalitarianism**). Nevertheless, it had moved up.

My learners were becoming equipped with the new state of mind and the mentality needed to start their Level 3 adventure.

Preparation mode continued for another hour and their fear of doing a level 3 course seemed to diminish by the end of the 2nd hour. This process was repeated throughout the year and at the start of each semester.

## Day 1 – First semester

Students were finding new vocab very difficult to pronounce and I found that when a question was asked they refrained from responding, only because of the fear of getting the answer wrong.

Each word was then drilled – just as we do when teaching English to ESOL learners – this helped them learn faster. I used to use drilling with the Access to Nursing as well as Health and Social Care learners and knew it would have a positive impact. Students were encouraged to give their answers regardless, and as a result they become ever more confident. Surprisingly, most of the time their responses were correct.

## study mode and written weekly exams

Level 3 Anatomy & Physiology consists of all the systems and organs, diseases and many other elements that are also studies in both Level 3 Health and Social Care and Access to Nursing courses under the name of Social Science.

One difference being that in BTEC Level 3 for instance, leaners produce assignments, however, Entry Level 3 ESOL learners had to pass weekly exams called formative assessments.

**2 hours of A&P and a real exam on weekly basis, meant that the learners really learnt each of the topics very well.**

In order to prove this theory that if learners have timed exams on weekly basis, they will learn better, I decided to set 2 assignments for 2 of the topics in various times.

**In both times, they submitted their assignment on time and passed the criteria, but when questioned, their knowledge was minimal.**

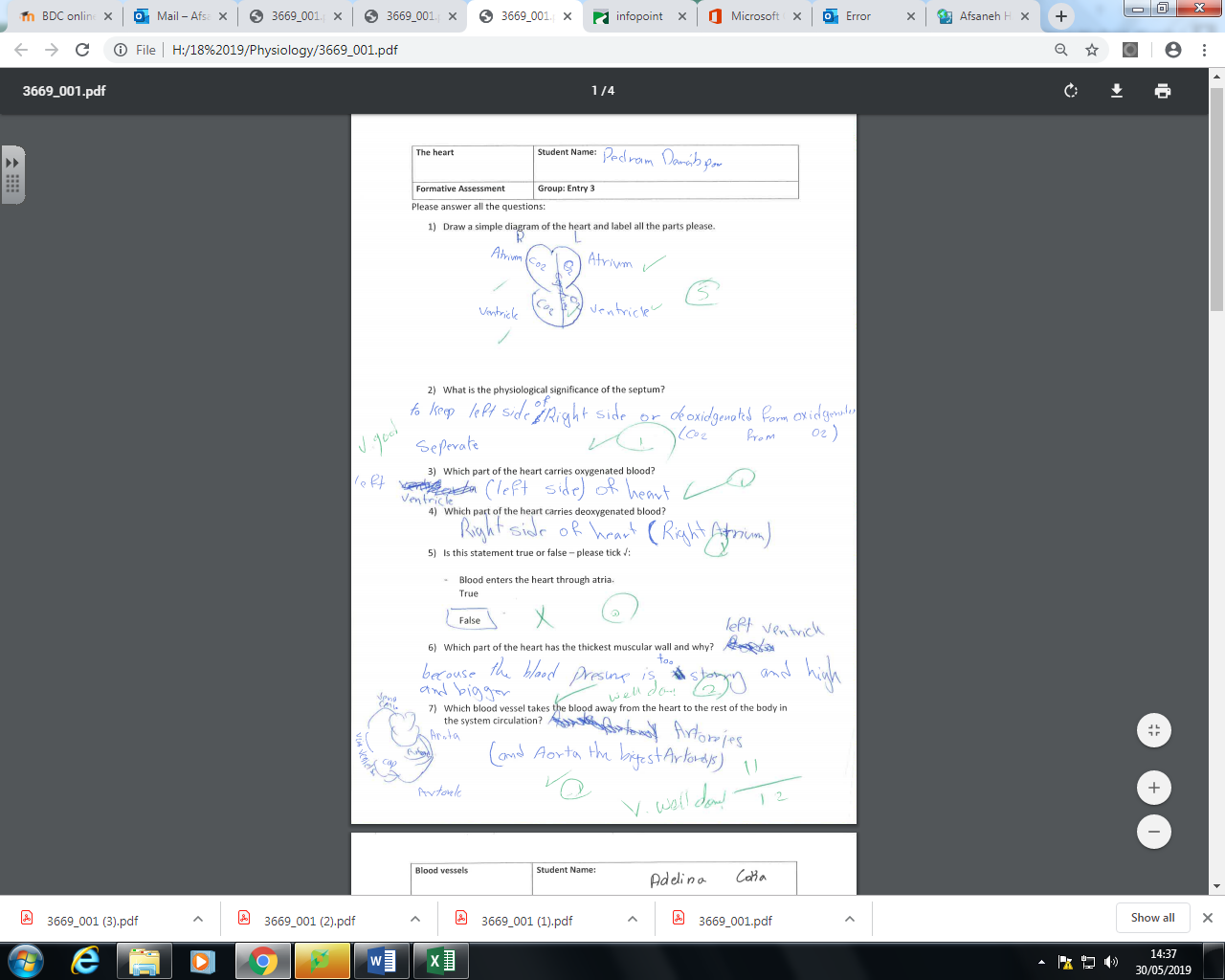
It may be worth mentioning here that if there were no weekly exams – as some topics took longer than one week to cover - learners had to do some kind of investigation and present their findings to the others. Again, gaining more confidence and taking control of their own learning. This really helped with the process of re shaping their mental state.

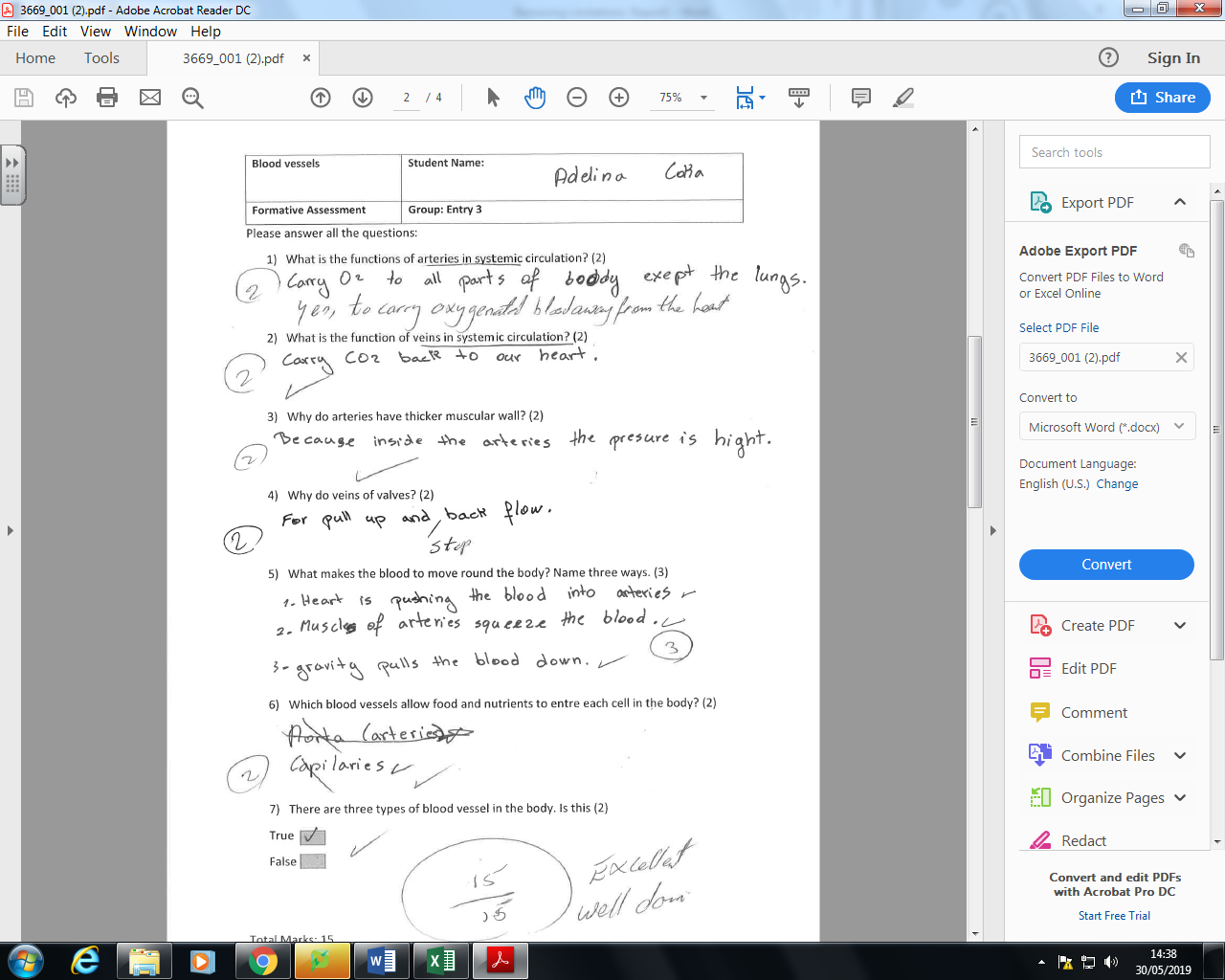
## a look at exam results

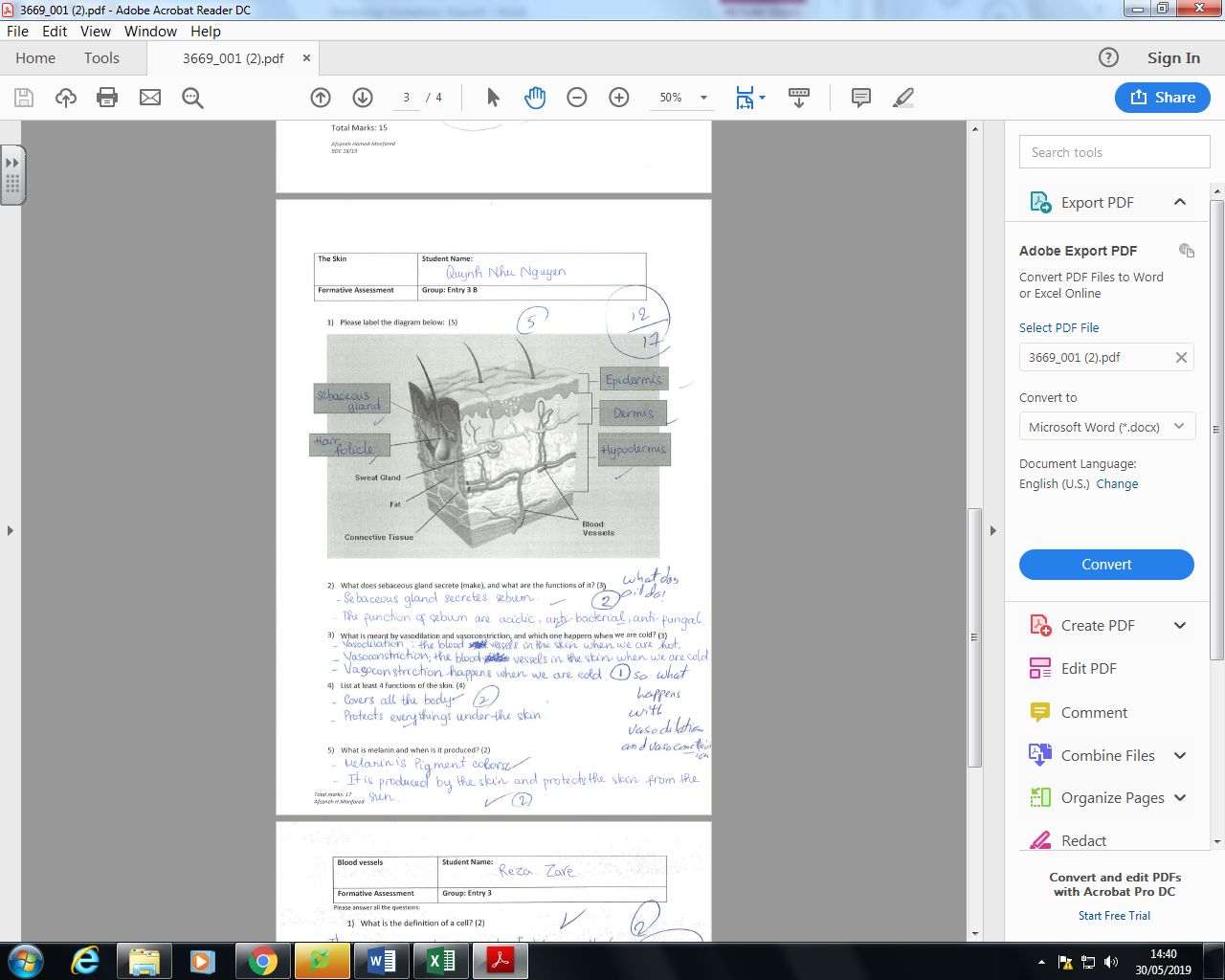
Though the language level of the learners was Entry Level 3, their physiology questions were not set at that level. Questions such as “what is the physiological significance of the septum in the heart”, are of much higher level than Entry Level 3. Yet, almost all the learners were able to comprehend all the given questions. Of course, some got the answers wrong but most of them responded correctly.

It is crucial here to state that the word “Fail” did not appear in any feedback or grading. Fail is merely the “First Attempt In Learning”; and in my opinion no one fails – each learner learns as much as they can. Thus, there can be no fail as long as one is learning.

Below you will find examples of weekly exams. Please note that each topic was assessed twice to ensure learners have learnt very well. You will also find a number of charts which show data reflecting exam results.







Above you can see a number of assessment results. As explained earleir, everyone achieved the highest grade of 50 for their muscular systerm assignment, however, when questioned orally, only a few of the questions were answered correctly. Again, as you can see, even weaker leaners started to pick up and achieve higher grades as we progressed.

It can, therefore, be concluded that exams are more effective way of learning a topic.

In the first semester, a survey was carried out on they way learners like to learn and to this end 42 students were asked to complete the survey.

Looking at the chart, the results were self explanetory. This showed how reliant each learner was on the teacher. The shift that took place towards the end of the year showed a different chart. Mission accomplished.

## A shift from approval seeker to a decision maker

It was rather easy to identify all the learners who were in the category of “**approval seekers** “; those who asked for teacher approval every step of the way. However, as they gained much knowledge and could see a sense in how the body worked to maintain homeostasis, and felt more confident, they were allowed to choose the next topic, and decide on how they should learn.

“For the learners to gain personal fulfilment, the need for approval must go. Dr. Wayne Dyer describes such a need as a psychological dead-end.” (1)

As we progressed, the approval seeking period was diminishing slowly but surely.

There were still one or two learners that needed to master this. One of them did shift from that mode and tried his best to be his own decision maker and started to become self-reliant.

They became so good at this, that I would go in unprepared and they would tell me what it was that they wanted to learn. Allowing leaners to be the decision makers.

**The Maslow’s hierarchy of need had turned upside down.**

Learners were becoming **self-managers**. I did not consider any other steps and kept my focus on teaching them to become more and more independent. That was the focal point of my teaching.

At the end of most lessons I would give a lecture about **self-realization** and we would identify how a **self-actualized** person would react in given circumstances.

*(1) Dr Wayne W. Dyer, “Your Erroneous Zones”, 1976, P 89.*

## The self diminishing circle

Observing learning patterns and not learning patterns, I found that students who are underachieving, are those who will use such vocabulary as “I have never been good at….”, “I have always been bad at it”; i.e. hanging on to the past with the reward of avoidance.

To put it succinctly, this means, “I am not even going to try and have a good excuse for it too.”

I am not good at physiology. (I have always been this way)

1

Because

I have to learn endocrine system and complete my homework.

2

5

3

(After a few minutes)

I can’t do this stuff.

4

I think I will do my homework.

“Rather than stop between 3 and 4 and put in extra time, ask a teacher (or attend all the revision classes which have been set up during every half term) the learner simply stops. And when questioned about it, he will say “I have always been bad at..”.

“These infernal I’ms are the things that you call upon to exonerate yourself and to explain to others why you persist in a self-defeating pattern.” **(2)**

This circle can be applied to virtually all the self-diminishing I’ms.

## Conclusion

Learners need to be inspired. As the inspiration comes from “in spirit”, meaning from within, removing the past learnt patterns and replacing them with the new I’ms and enhancing the inspiration takes a vital role, without which, one cannot achieve full potential.

Here, the importance of having motivational sessions, at least once every 2 weeks is highlighted.

Approval seeking which is often seen in classes, needs to be replaced by allowing learners to make mistakes and come up with their own version of corrected method, and then perhaps the teacher intervention – this goes hand in hand with the fact that as long as you allow learners to label themselves inept, you allow a built in reason to avoid learning. This culture needs to change. In other words, once you allow the “I am not good at it” to continue, the learners will not grow.

To this end, more focus is needed on developing learner self-esteem and promoting self-actualization, than focusing on lower level issues.

*(2) Dr Wayne W. Dyer, “Your Erroneous Zones”, 1976, P 89.*