



LOOKING FOR LEARNING THROUGH THE LENS OF GROWTH MINDSET

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Abstract

Today success is not merely found in one's natural ability but in the continuous development of those abilities. A mindset is a belief about oneself and one's basic qualities. According to Dweck, there are two different types of mindsets—fixed and growth. A person who has a fixed mindset (entity theory of intelligence) believes that their qualities such as intelligence, creativity and talent are predetermined and finite, fixed traits. On the other hand, a person with a growth mindset (incremental theory of intelligence) believes that their basic abilities can continue to be developed through hardwork and dedication. This paper focuses on igniting abilities through various growth mindset activities that will enable the secondary school students to realise their abilities and provide an environment that values challenge seeking learning and effort above perfection. It focuses on nurturing natural ability that leads to success.

Keywords: *growth mindset, fixed mindset, intelligence, creativity*



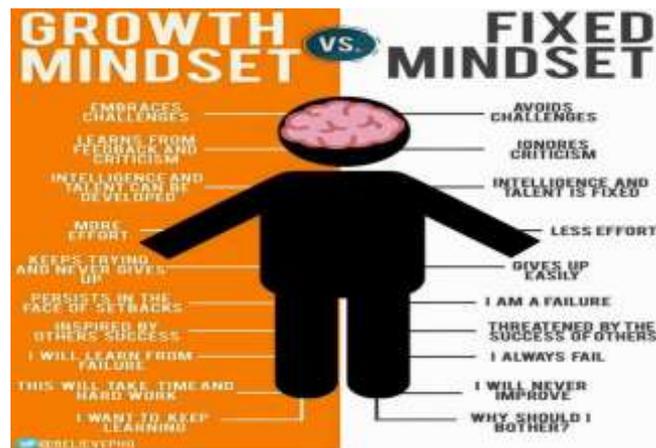
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Introduction:

“Great works are performed, not by strength, but by perseverance.”

Samuel Johnson

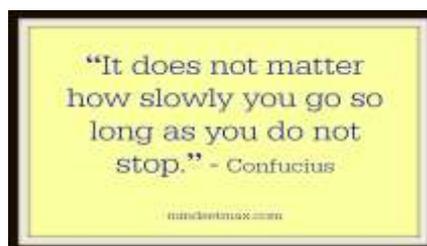
Today being successful is a biggest indicator of the various achievements that you have gained in life - it could be societal position, fame, fortune etc. We can base it's foundation to a large extent the opportunity provided in school and the way h/she succeeds in school. Hence it becomes to groom the child to succeed. Today success is not confined in one's natural ability but in the continuous growth and progress of those abilities. Mindset is a simple idea discovered by world-renowned Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck, she discovered two mindsets – Growth and Fixed Mindset. In people with a fixed mindset their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are assumed to be fixed traits. While people with a growth mindset their basic abilities are developed with sheer hardwork and utmost dedication. This creates a drive for learning and achieving to a large extent.



Each person is endowed with a unique genetic talent. People may have different personalities and different capacities, but the experience, training, and personal effort take by them paves them to higher altitudes of success. Today intelligence is not a fixed but it is development through purposeful engagement.

Since the genesis, people have thought in a different way, acted in a different way, and fared in a different way from each other. Each individual displays his set of talents, emotions, beliefs and faith.

We are constantly engulfed with negative, out-dated scenarios that restrict us from maximising our potentials. The two self-crushing and crippling impressions are, we feel “I’m not good enough” and “I can’t succeed” or “I can’t do it”. Apart from this are the other situations such as – societal interference, social restrictions, crunching fears and heavy aspirations. Categorically when strong and stubborn thoughts about one’s capacities are tightly locked in our system, our dreams, hopes, desires and aspirations are always negotiated.



Hence opportunities for motivation and success should be provided. This gives emergence to the role of a teacher in school who can provide this motivation and thus help the student to succeed.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the mindset among students of standard 7th of Lions Pioneer School, Mumbai.
2. To explain the growth and fixed mindset to the students.

3. To develop strategies to bring a growth mindset in the forefront.

Hypotheses of the study

1. There is no significant difference between the Pre-test and Post-test scores among the students of standard VII in fostering of Growth Mindset.
2. There is no significant difference between the Pre-test and Post-test scores among the students of standard VII in fostering of Growth Mindset based on gender

Literature Review:

Brien, Mia, (2015) highlights on how Inquiry Pedagogy Enables Teachers to Facilitate Growth Mindsets in Mathematics Classrooms(ED572476)

They state that growth mindsets are vital for effective lifelong learning and such students are more willing to learn new things, take risks and embrace new challenges. Their study focussed on the analysis of inquiry mathematics in a primary classroom and reflect upon the potential of growth mindset.

Auten, Marianne (2013) empahsies on Helping Educators Foster a Growth Mindset in Community College Classrooms

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore how community college educators create classroom environments that foster a growth mindset. The conceptual framework for this study was a social constructivist approach where the interviewer and the participants co-constructed the interpretation of how to influence a growth mindset in the community college classroom. The findings of this study indicated that the mindset of the student and the teacher play an important role in academic success at the community college and that faculty desire training in tools and strategies to create classroom environments that foster a growth mindset. Recommendations include an in-depth, experiential professional development program based on research where community college educators from a variety of disciplines can collaborate to gain new knowledge and skills. Training community college educators using the most effective ways of fostering a growth mindset to increase students' motivation, effort, and persistence will lead to greater academic success and degree completion.

National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools (NCSU) spent the 2011-12 school year conducting intensive case studies of four Fort Worth, Texas, high schools to understand what differentiates higher-performing from lower-performing schools. In their paper ***Developing a Growth Mindset among High School Students. Practitioner Brief*** it was found that high schools can address gaps in student achievement, especially with traditionally underserved

student populations, by developing policies and practices that help students take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. In collaboration with a district innovation design team, a practice was identified that can increase student ownership and responsibility in schools: helping students to develop growth mindsets and build problem-solving skills. This brief discusses the advantages of a student with a growth mindset and how schools can help students adopt growth mindsets.

Sample for the study

The sample for the study was 60 students of VII of Matunga Lions Pioneer English High School. The sampling procedure followed was Incidental Sampling. The questionnaire was distributed among these candidates, the data was collected and conclusion was drawn.

1. Age: 12-13 years
2. Area: Matunga and Sion.

Tool used for the study:

The researcher adopted a questionnaire in the form of true or false response for a particular question to carry out the research, as a means it helps in securing answers to the question in which the answers are filled by the students themselves based on the practical situations, applicability and opinions of the respondents. It was a very concise, pre-planned set of questions designed to yield specific information to meet a particular need for research information about a pertinent topic.

Statements:

I want to be better than other students in my class; An important reason why I do my class work is because I like to learn new things; I'd like to show my teacher that I'm smarter than the others in my class; I like class work that I'll learn from even if I make a lot of mistakes; It's very important to me that I don't look stupid in class; If I do poorly on an assignment or test, it's because I didn't try hard enough; Natural ability is more important than effort for doing well in school.

The aspects were the basic everyday experiences of winning, losing, failing, doing well and the daily classroom undertakings. Also, the perception of talents, ability, efforts and success was catered to as well.

Activities

Several activities were conducted over a span of 15 days (10 days- activities, 2 days-tests, 3 days-simple discussion and doubt solving) as a corrective measure to improve their mindset

which would ensure they solve their problems more easily. The activities aimed at fostering a growth mindset.

Day 1: Paper Perseverance Task

The class was divided into groups of. each group was given sheets of paper and scissors. A simple paper structure had been kept on the table. The students had to watch this structure without touching and replicate the structure. They were given a time of 10 minutes. Following this, questions were asked to them regarding how they felt? What were their thoughts? How many attempts did it take?

One group said, *they were so confused looking at the structure, they didn't try only*, another one stated, *"We tried but this girl dominated and didn't give us enough chances."* One group said, *"I told these people it is to be done like that. The idiots didn't listen."* The words that could be heard were negative ones like, *"Oh God! this is tough," "This can't be done," "I give up," "There's no glue, how will this structure even be possible"* and so on.

Day 2: Sharing Stories and Anecdotes

To begin the session, I started off with asking them about the first reaction we give when someone fails or someone does not perform well in a task. Children answered, "he's so dumb", "foolish", "dull", "unintelligent" etc. The next thing I explained was that it is human tendency to label someone's failure which curbs their learning and seeing failure as the end! To get the students to share their stories, I started with my story of determination and perseverance in school to improve my command over English. Many students shared incidents they remembered.

Anuj Tiwari, a child of class 7th said, *"I loved playing football and I thought I was really good at it until one day I failed to score any points. It hit me really hard that I can't do well in the one thing I liked. Still, I didn't let that stop me. I worked hard and eventually managed to win many more games for my team."*

Another student said, *"I repeatedly underperformed in science. I seemed to never gauge this subject. Anything I did, never worked. Finally, I started to write answers, ask my friends and paying more attention in class. It did work. My efforts paid off."*

Day 3: What I Should I Say to Mind and What I Shouldn't.

A list of sentences was put up on the board. The board was divided into two columns; what I should say to my mind and what I shouldn't say. The students had to put the correct sentences in the right column.

The day concluded with telling the students, what they can say to themselves in the face of failures and adversity. Some students wondered why certain statements would be positive. Instead of giving the answers myself, I asked their classmates to help their peers out.

Day 4: The Power of Yet!

This was followed by explaining to them ‘the power of yet’ by adding the word in front of each of the sentences in the column of what I shouldn’t tell my mind? Using the previous day’s activity sentences we added ‘yet’ in front of the sentences. This changed the negative sentence to a positive one making all the difference that was needed to grow and evolve the mindset. A student, Vikas Rajput said, ***“YET is such a small word but the meaning and use is not only big but also so positive. It adds so much vigor to your thoughts. A beautiful little word!”***

Day 5: Audio visual aids

2 videos were shown to them. The first being on paramedics Olympics where the differently abled people performed various tasks that people with the so called normalcy find onerous to perform. The second was on the famous failures. This video was meant to inspire, motivate, embolden and give impetus to the children, allow them to understand that it’s okay to make mistakes as long as one doesn’t stop or give up.

A discussion of what they took back from the videos followed. A student named Abussaid Sayed gave an answer that took me by surprise. He said, ***“If they can do it, why can’t we?”***

Some others said, *“In spite of the lack of certain abilities, they worked hard to achieve success.”*

Day 6: worksheets

The worksheet had to be given to the students to be filled. It was one similar to Johari window. This worksheet aimed at helping creating awareness amongst students about themselves, their weakness and their strengths. The best way for them to overcome their problems will be best paved by themselves and hence this activity become important.

The worksheet also helped them know where they need to work on and also what they’re good at so they can only improve at it. This activity bough them a step closer to understanding their capabilities and the ones they lack but can develop.

Day 7: quotes

A presentation with several quotes about hard work, success, perseverance, efforts, facing problems and so on, was put up. The children were given the chance to first analyze what they thought of the quote and how it relates to mindset. The role of the teacher was that of the facilitator, adding points as they go, if they miss anything or need correction on.

“Wether you think you can or you can’t, you are right.”

~Henry Ford~

Day 8: chutes and ladders game

The old school, snakes and ladders game was modified to suit the needs of the activity. Groups of 10 were formed. At the bottom of a ladder or top of a chute, the teams draw a card, describing either a growth mindset scenario or a fixed mindset one.

If the card is growth, they advance on ladders or stay where they are on chutes.

If the card is fixed mindset, they stay on ladders and are pulled back on chutes.

Some of the cards were:

<p>Matt wants to get better at skateboarding. He’s just starting to learn. Matt’s friends, who have more experience, tease him when he falls down. Matt wants to give up because learning how to skateboard is harder than he thought it would be. However, Matt continues to practice every day.</p>	<p>With enough passion, hard work, and drive, anyone’s skills can improve.</p>	<p>Richard feels comfortable with the risk of failing while learning something new.</p>
<p>Hector believes that with enough effort you can become better at anything.</p>	<p>For fitness week, Joe has to run the mile. He’s not very fast. Joe fears he won’t be able to run the mile, even if he tries. When Joe is supposed to run, he decides to walk instead. Joe believes he can avoid embarrassment since he “is not really trying.”</p>	<p>Jane grew up in the city and never learned how to ride a bike. Now, as an adult, she tries to learn how. She falls often and is embarrassed about not being able to do something many younger people in her neighbourhood can do effortlessly. But she continues practicing and is eventually able to balance by herself. Soon, she is riding her bike like a natural.</p>

Day 9: Case study

The next activity was a case study analysis and what would the children do if they were to be placed in the same scenario. The case and sentences are given below:

Read the following story below about Elizabeth and answer the questions below.

Nine-year-old Elizabeth was on her way to her first gymnastics meet. Lanky, flexible, and energetic, she was just right for gymnastics, and she loved it. Of course, she was a little nervous about competing, but she was good at gymnastics and felt confident of doing well. She had even thought about the perfect place in her room to hang the ribbon she would win.

In the first event, the floor exercises, Elizabeth went first. Although she did a nice job, the scoring changed after the first few girls and she lost. Elizabeth also did well in the other events, but not well enough to win. By the end of the evening, she had received no ribbons and was devastated.

What would you do if you were Elizabeth's friend? Circle the number.

1. Tell Elizabeth you thought she was the best.
2. Tell her she was robbed of a ribbon that was rightfully hers.
3. Reassure her that gymnastics is not that important
4. Tell her she is a skilled gymnast and will surely win next time.
5. Tell her she didn't deserve to win.
6. Ask her what events went well for her and what skills she wants to work on for the next competition.

Why would you tell Elizabeth that message? Think of at least 3 reasons why you chose that message. Explain how the message promotes a growth mindset.

After the student explained why they chose their message, I explained to the following:

There is a strong message in our society about how to boost a person's self-esteem, and a main part of that message is: "Protect them from failure!"

While this may help with the immediate problem of a child's disappointment, it can be harmful in the long run. Why?

I further Explained to the students the repercussions of each message. Each message carries a "subliminal message" that can affect the way Elizabeth perceives her own skills and abilities. It can also affect the way she reacts towards failure. It also went to explain how people react

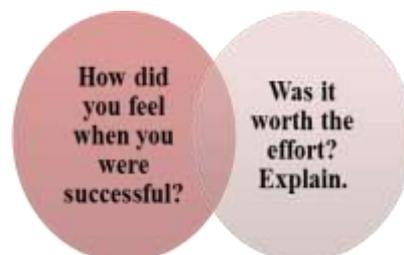
when faced with such a situation and this eventually adds to their woes. Growth mindset thus, is also to a very large extent facilitated by our social environment. If our parents and people around us encourage us to persevere, never give up, we all would nurture and harbour the growth mindset. Vinayak Anuhere jeered, *“I was so wrong with my words. often, in situations like these, I would’ve said something like ‘you were the best’ but words have so much power and I never quite considered the subterranean message I passed on. Thanks to this activity, I know now.”*

Day 10: Reflection

The students were asked to Remember a time when they worked extremely hard on something that was at first difficult, but after practice and effort they were able to succeed. On a sheet of paper, they had to draw the following and complete the sentences as appropriate.



The next thing they were to answer were:



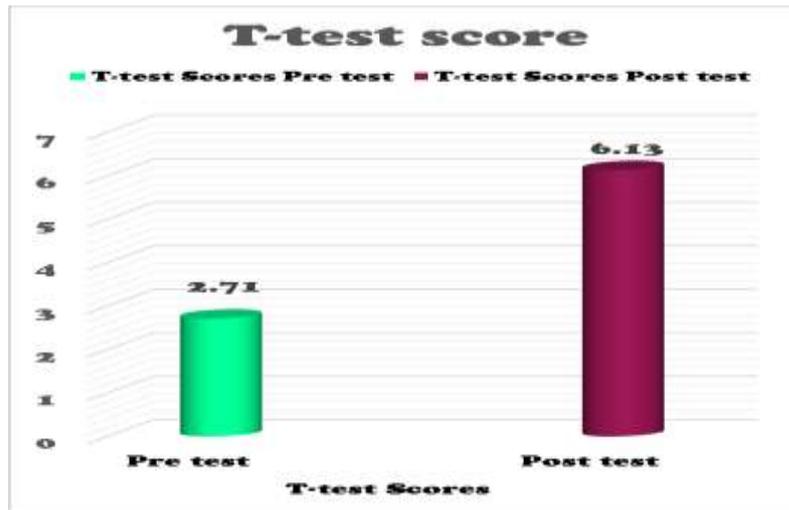
The activities had a lot of connotation attached to them. They were aimed at allowing the students to know themselves better, to go beyond the obvious, dig deeper into their memories for moments where they must have promoted their fixed mindset. The activities gave them scope to think of what they would do differently had they been given another chance and when faced with challenging situations further in life. The activities were kept simple, lucid and full of interaction.

Findings of the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the Pre-test and Post-test scores among the students of standard VII in fostering of Growth Mindset.

Pre-test and Post-test mean scores of fostering Growth Mindset

	Pre-test	Post-test
t-test	2.71	6.133



The findings revealed that the Growth Mindset activities showed a remarkable difference among the students, it helped the students to change the perception towards things, people and life. The students were more confident and shirked their inhibitions to a large extent. Since the students came in from a lower socio-economic status, the major hindrance for them was speaking and interacting. They always felt that they were subdued and not given an opportunity. The activities helped them to come out of their shell and emerge beautifully to this dynamic world.

2. There is no significant difference between the Pre-test and Post-test scores among the students of standard VII in fostering of Growth Mindset based on gender.

Pre-test and Post-test mean scores of fostering Growth Mindset based on gender

	Boys	Girls
t-test	6.28	5.8

The scores revealed that the boys showed more difference as compared to girls, it could be due to the opportunity that was provided which helped them break the shackles of being passive, the girls might have to be interacted for a longer period which may help them foster

their growth mindset, however there was a difference seen in the pre-test scores of girls and the post-test scores of girls. This showed that there was difference in them and regular activities will help them bloom to a different person.

Conclusion:

People with a growth mindset are also continuously observing what's going on, but their internal epilogue is not about mediating themselves and others in this manner. Certainly everyone is sensitive to positive and negative facts, but they're accustomed to its implications for learning and constructive accomplishment: *What can I learn? How can I learn and improve? How can I help my peer to do it better? The teacher needs to teach and train her students in this entire process and continue it with them. H/She has to drib her inhibitions and be willing to change the mindset of the children in her class.* These strategies can help students to plan from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset. It will enable them to *fine-tune the internal self that scores every aspect of their lives.*

Suggestions:

1. Acknowledge the efforts taken by students, their hardwork matters a lot to them
2. Repeatedly use words like "innovation," "creativity," and "growth."
3. Plan for activities such as Genius Hour, Passion Projects and Creative centres that will give opportunities of growth mindset.
4. Give positive comments on assignments.
5. Give achievable goals to students and make their path easy, avoid complicating their goals with too many tasks.
6. Praise the efforts of the children, don't undermine their motivation and performance, these children will display less task persistence, less task enjoyment and overall performance.
7. Guide students to focus on and the value the process of learning.
8. Re-design classroom activities that involve cooperative--rather than competitive or individualistic--work. Students feel a sense of responsibility to the group to try their best, and thus will experience the positive feedback loop of effort and success, encouraging the development of a growth mindset teach children the following things:
9. View challenges as opportunities.

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