**The Growth Mindset in a Cultural Context**

**in Arab Society in Israel:**

**A Study of Student Positions in Al-Qasemi Academy – Academic College of Education**

**Introduction**

The growth mindset is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the development of intelligence and learning capabilities alongside practice in setting challenges and facing complex learning assignments. It is successfully implemented in different places around the world, and has led to improvement in learning achievements. The growth mindset approach is based, to a large extent, on the learners’ positions and beliefs regarding their ability to learn independently, face learning challenges alone, and change.

C.S. Dweck’s studies indicate that approximately 40% of learners in the United States have a growth mindset, while 40% have a fixed mindset, and 20% are characterized by mixed mindsets. When learners shift from a fixed to a growth mindset, they tend to demonstrate higher levels of performance in school. The intervention program developed for students in the framework of Dweck’s study is an online program for junior high school students (ages 11–13), which introduces them to the potential of the brain’s malleability and the effect of practice on intelligence development (Dweck, 2006a).

So far, this approach has been examined with regard to the learners’ subjective perception, while, to the best of our knowledge, social and cultural variables have not yet been explored in this context. Such questions for exploration might include: How do different cultural views influence mindsets? Do traditional and collective societies and communities characteristically hold different positions on mindsets than more open and individualistic societies? To what extent are change, independence, and personal development perceived as desirable and achievable in different societies? While we can assume that a cultural viewpoint opposing change will find it difficult to implement the growth mindset approach, an opposite effect may also be possible: that the growth mindset approach will impact cultural perceptions and positions (Dawiry, 2010).

The present study seeks to address these questions by means of a comprehensive position survey amongst 1000 students in teaching colleges within Arab society in Israel. Studies dealing with education in Arab society in Israel indicate that this society’s patterns and characteristics are relatively more conservative than those of the Jewish society in general, and that its communal-collective patterns are more emphasized. We can assume that these cultural perceptions will influence the students’ positions regarding the growth mindset, and that their inclination will be more toward fixed, rather than growth, mindsets. Such positions may present an obstacle in the way of attempting to assimilate the growth mindset approach amongst students of education in the Arab society. However, if we substitute the focus on individual ability with a conception of the growth mindset as a cultural issue – that is, emphasize the principles of the approach on the collectivist and cultural level – we may be able to propose an efficient way to assimilate it and expand the research discourse on the growth mindset. To the best of our knowledge, a broad study seeking to examine the positions of students of teaching in Israel on the growth mindset approach, has not yet been conducted. Moreover, we did not find any references to studies dealing with the growth mindset as a cultural issue, which involves not only the personal attitudes of students of teaching, but also social, religious, and sociological contexts.

In the current study, a questionnaire will be distributed amongst 1000 students in teacher training colleges in the Arab sector in Israel. Part I of the questionnaire determines the students’ positions between the growth and fixed mindsets. This section leans on studies conducted in the field throughout the world and seeks to propose a comparative view between these students and other student groups. Part II of the questionnaire seeks to examine the Arab students’ positions on development, change, and the possibility to impact different life situations. Part III deals with the students’ positions regarding the degree of changeability versus fixity in their culture.

**The research questions address the following areas:**

Where are the positions of Arab students of teaching located between the growth and fixed mindsets?

What are the students’ attitudes towards development, change, and the possibility for impact on different life circumstances?

What are the students’ positions towards the degree of changeability versus fixity in their culture?

**Research hypotheses**

1. Given that the Arab society in Israel is undergoing change, we hypothesize that a high percentage of Arab students of teaching will demonstrate fixed mindsets.
2. The second hypothesis is that the explanation for these fixed mindsets is rooted in the students’ cultural, rather than pedagogical, positions. In other words, the positions of students of teaching in the Arab society towards development, change, and possibilities for impact on different life situations will be more negative than those of students in more “modern” societies.
3. Our third hypothesis is that there is a connection between the ability to adopt a pedagogical growth mindset approach and traditional and religious characteristics.

Provided that the research hypotheses are confirmed, further studies will be required to examine means of intervention and position changing, which in turn, cultivate a linkage between the growth mindset and these cultural and social characteristics.

**Method**

*Participants*

Participants in the study will be 1000 students of teaching in Al-Qasemi College, in the first, second, third, and fourth years of the B.Ed. and M. Teach programs, in various specializations.

*Instruments*

Three-part Questionnaire

Part I: A student position questionnaire regarding mindsets consisting of twenty-six statements, designed to identify whether the student is inclined toward a growth or fixed mindset.

Part II: A student position questionnaire regarding education in a traditional society, which examines general and cultural perceptions of change and openness.

Part III: A demographic survey—cultural background, age, gender, level of studies, disciplinary affiliation.

*Procedure*

At the first stage of the study, all questionnaires will be translated to Arabic. By applying the test re-test translation method (Butcher, 1982), the Hebrew questionnaires will be translated into Arabic, and then from Arabic back into Hebrew. Both Hebrew versions—original and translated—will then be compared to establish their equivalence.

At the second stage, the questionnaires’ credibility will be validated, with an emphasis on testing for biases or placating.

The questionnaires will be distributed by a research assistant to all of the students in the college in the framework of lectures and by way of prior coordination with department heads and course lecturers. In total, the study cohort will include a minimum of 1000 respondents. The questionnaire will be answered in the framework of lectures to ensure that the students approach it seriously and devote the time necessary to complete it.

*Protecting Respondent Rights*

To maintain the participants’ rights, they will be informed as to the aims of the study, provided with a detailed explanation of its contents, and given the option to withdraw from the study. Likewise, respondent anonymity will be emphasized throughout the study, while the study’s findings will be used solely for research purposes.

*Statistical Analyses*

Averages and standard deviations will be calculated for all research variables. Pearson correlates will also be calculated in order to examine a correlation between the students’ positions regarding mindsets and their positions towards development, change, and the potential for impact in the context of their cultural environment in the Arab society.

In light of the results, we will conduct a discussion and reach conclusions regarding the connection between the growth mindset and cultural positions and beliefs. We will attempt to examine and focus on these connections in terms of the students’ level of education, their social environment, gender, and teaching experience.

**Resources**

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