

## TACTics Journal

A Publication for and by TOC for Education Practitioners  
November 2012

In this issue:

- **14<sup>th</sup> TOCfE International Conference:** *Kathy Suerken, Manfred Smith, Nancy Stempel, USA*
- **TOCfE Virtual Conference Results:** *Kathy Suerken*
- **“Shift Happens”**—*Debi Roberts, United Kingdom*
- And Finally...***from Alan*

### 14<sup>th</sup> TOC for Education International Conference

Dates: April 18-21, 2013

Location: Baltimore, Maryland USA

Airport: Baltimore/Washington International Airport (BWI)

Venue: Embassy Suites Airport

*(Venue is 30 minutes by train to downtown Washington D.C)*



### TOCfE Virtual Conference: The RESULTS

*by Kathy Suerken*

According to our records, 323 people from almost 30 countries on 6 continents registered for our 2012 Virtual Conference! Our speakers represented the countries of Peru, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Colombia, Philippines, Poland, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Nicaragua, and United States.

Success of an event, of course, should not be measured solely by the number of participants or where they live. Those are inputs. What about outcomes? Such as.... although many participants already receive TACTics, we received almost 40 new requests to receive our newsletter and that includes ones from 8 countries where TOCfE has no active program— thus expanding our outreach.

Several participants from two of those countries—India and Brazil—have written requesting to get in touch and network with others in their countries who would be interested in helping to launch a TOCfE program. If you would like to respond to these requests please email me at [suerken@cox.net](mailto:suerken@cox.net).

It's been said 'the audience is 50% of the performance'. Thus, the synergy of participants' questions, comments and especially requests to learn more, are driving our actions to leverage initial outcomes. Therefore, due to the large volume of requests (and thanks to

Dr. Danilo Sirias and his University), conference registrants will be able to download power points and to view the videos for several more months. You can access the site through: <http://www.tocforeducation.com/what.html>; Click on the flashing 'Go to Registration' button to access the portal to the TOCfE Virtual Conference site. **If you have not previously registered, you may still do so!** You will need to provide your email and create a password.

We have also received mail from several people who want to learn more by attending our Baltimore conference. One is a principal who intends to introduce TOCfE into his school; another is a business person and parent who wants to launch TOCfE in her country and is developing a plan to build a network of interested parents, teachers and company employees.

Responses such as these are driving our TOCfE Process of Ongoing Improvement as we think through how to leverage our existing resources--particularly in how we design the content of the next conference—in order to meet the accelerating demand for TOC for Education.

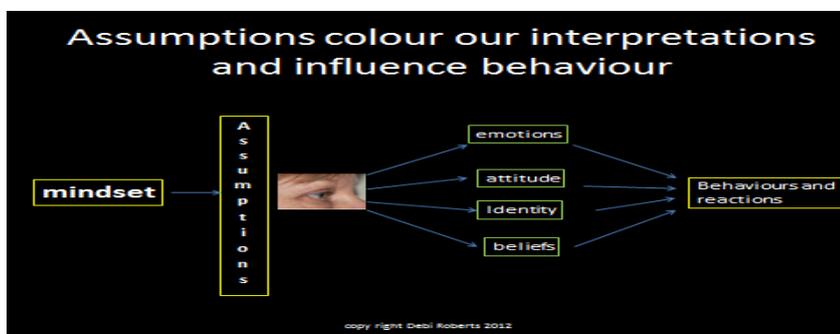
**WATCH THIS SPACE** ...more to come!

## *“Shift Happens” by Debi Roberts, United Kingdom*

### *Some thoughts on mind-sets and TOC*

The understanding of how mind-sets impact education is gaining momentum, largely due to the studies of Carol Dwek, Professor of Psychology at Stanford University.

If you are not familiar with the idea, mind-sets are like wearing a tinted pair of glasses, they filter everything we see and colour all our experiences and are likely to create a predisposition for how we receive and react to information too.



Your mind-set colours your basic assumptions about life and will unconsciously drive behaviour, decision making, life chances and ultimately our mental and physical health.

Dwek's work identifies two opposite mind-sets which she believes can determine whether

we rise above the challenges we face or sink under the weight of them. And this she suggests, in the end is what supports long term outcomes and what ensures some of us (can) make the most of opportunities (like education) and some of us don't.

She labelled these opposite mind-sets 'growth' and 'fixed'. One believes that abilities are pretty much fixed, the other, that there is no limit to what one can achieve. These two polar positions can result in a typical range of assumptions about life and as a result, can often lead to stereotypical behaviour.

A growth mind-set, assumes there is inherent potential in everyone and although will be disappointed by 'failure', they have the capacity to engage with failure, even seeing it as an opportunity to learn and consider what didn't work well on this occasion. And so the 'failed' attempt has its lessons extracted and becomes the starting point for the next endeavour. Because of this, 'growth' mind-sets are far more likely to bounce back after a set back and rise to a challenge. Growth mind-sets assume there is no reason why (eventually) their efforts will not be rewarded. They understand the importance of the

journey and that hard work and determination are key, and that no matter what the starting point, it's possible to achieve the goal.

A 'fixed' mind-set assumes intelligence and skills are fixed traits that you really can't change too much, it's what you are born with. But just like those who believe you can only win if someone else loses, this is a very hard paradigm to exist in because it often results in people interpreting failure as personal – if something goes wrong it means they have failed as a person. And this in turn can develop the attitude that it is better not to try than to try and fail. How many very capable students have you known who coast through years of education, and then remove themselves from the process at the point where even they have to put some effort in? When we consider their actions through the cause and effect logic of their mind-set, we can see this is not so much to do with being lazy but more a consequence of the assumptions their mind-set generated.

'Fixed' mind-set personalities are at risk of confusing their personal value with their successful endeavours and this can create a need to succeed at all costs. For some, it also means being seen as better than or smarter than others. But this sense (and often need) to be or appear to be smarter or more successful isn't simply arrogance, it's essential to their well-being because success has been blended with their identity. Being smart and being successful has been equated through their personal experience with acceptance. An equation Dwek suggests may have been created in their childhood by their primary care givers. Childhood inter-actions may have helped the child conclude that being accepted is connected with their achievements or how well others perceive them to do. They have come to understand success and doing well, not merely as positive aspects of one's endeavours, but the only aspect of importance.

Praise such as 'you are such a clever girl – you did so well on that test' makes no mention of how much better they may have done, how hard they worked to achieve a good result, in fact, those words in that order, imply that the only reason the girl did well is because she is clever. What Dwek suggests is that when we praise the outcome, or when we praise fixed traits, we lead our young people to assume that these are the things that matter, not the journey, not how well they have progressed, not the effort put in or the knowledge absorbed, or the attitude or diligence shown.

Once I began to look closely at the assumptions that are born from a belief that abilities are fixed, I began to see something else too – fear. The strategies fixed mind-sets develop are protective. The range of typical responses seen in fixed mindset personalities can actually be placed on a 'fear of failure' continuum. The fear is that they might be ostracised or kicked out of the group and consequently not loved or cared for – and this is as old as time.

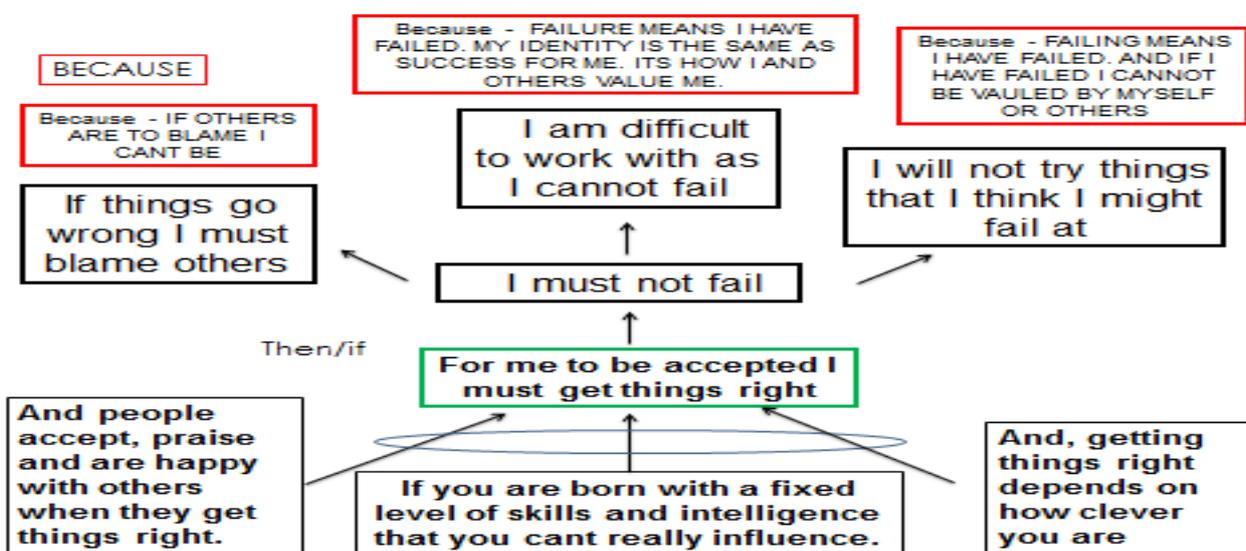
We are hard wired to work towards acceptance because acceptance usually means survival. In pre-historic times, being part of a group was essential to our survival, therefore being removed from the group constituted a major threat to our survival. So what might get you kicked out? Standing out in some way, saying something offensive or stupid, or not performing up to expectations.

Fast forward a millennia or two and some of us, having considered our experiences of the world so far and the feedback we have been given from parents and teachers (those adults who we trust to mirror the world for us), have led us to conclude that ability and talent are hugely desirable AND somewhat fixed. This can (and often does) lead to the conclusions that not only must we always do well, we may want to put some safety in there – perhaps we should always aim to be the best! Now I can hear you saying, hang on, this isn't such a bad thing, and perhaps it's not. However, when it becomes 'vital' to always be seen as clever, performing well and never failing and when we confuse our identity with

our success, we put ourselves at risk of all sorts of negative consequences that those with 'growth' mind-sets don't seem to be as bothered by.

Let's consider the following three statements and what happens when they become blended to create a core position; 'skills and ability are something you are born with, fixed at birth, you either got it or you haven't' (the core belief of a fixed mind set) AND, 'doing well results in being accepted by others and held in high esteem' AND, 'being accepted is necessary to my well-being.' The combination of those beliefs are often seen in fixed mind-set reactions and result in behaviour that can be placed somewhere along the fear continuum. At one end we see some people refusing to take on challenges for fear of failing, and at the other, people who are highly driven but cannot cope with failure and find it extremely difficult to bounce back when things go wrong.

Apart from anything else these reactions will have associated risks to health and well-being not to mention the cap that can be placed on individuals reaching their potential and consequently their ability to maximise the potential of the groups they are a part of.



As a community interested in growth potential and developing young people you will be really interested to know that Dwek and her team have made some startling discoveries in terms of how mind-sets are cultivated and developed.

She has shown how our interactions as teachers and parents influence the development of mind-sets. Dwek has observed a very interesting phenomena resulting from the praise we give and the message that is heard. It seems that students unpick the logical meaning behind the content of our well-meaning praise and often absorb a different message to the one we intended!

Consider the following phrase;

*'Ella, you did that so easily, you are such a clever girl.'*

The teacher intends to praise Ella and highlight positive attributes, however, Ella's brain, which is trying to help Ella make sense of the world and understand her position in it, applies cause and effect logic to analyse this statement and may conclude that things are easy for Ella because she is clever. This assumption can lead to a variety of negative consequences. The first is that Ella may assume she does not have to try, because Ella is already clever. If Ella doesn't have to try (and it's possible at the current level of study she may not be being stretched) then Ella stops trying. If Ella stops trying she is not engaging fully with the process of her education. And what happens if Ella is not fully engaged? She misses vital sound-bites, those experiences and practices that are essential later on - the

business of how to learn. Another potential consequence that can result from this type of praise is that Ella may decide not to engage in anything too difficult in case people realise she isn't actually that clever. So she stops stretching herself and fails to reach her potential.

Babies and children are like little scientists, experimenting, analysing and adapting accordingly as they try and make sense of the world. And the conclusions they make form the mind-sets they use to engage with the world and which go on to influence all their choices.

These choices and behaviours can be influenced for better or worse by their interactions with the primary adults in their life. We have come to understand that praising the outcome and connecting it to traits that could be out of a student's control can enhance fixed mind-set development. On the other hand, noticing effort and application seem to enhance growth mind-sets.

Having used TOC thinking processes for a number of years now, I have come to realise that in addition to Dweks' fixed and growth mind-sets there are two additional mind-sets equally important to education and leadership, and which also filter people's perceptions and experiences at a very core level.

The two additional mind-sets are *win-win* and *scarcity*.

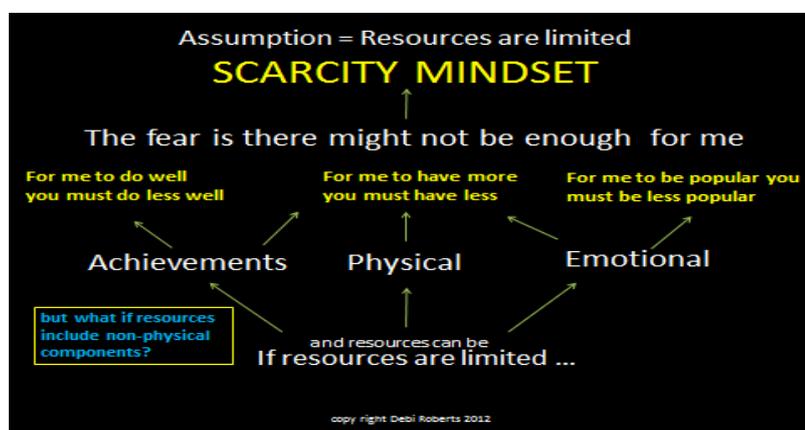
A win-win mind-set is not defined by an individual's *need* to win (quite the opposite,) or their determination or belief that if they try harder they *can* win – that would be a growth mind-set. WIN-WIN mind-sets have a core belief that there is enough for everyone, that everyone can have their significant needs met. This means they do not instantly assume for one side to win the other side should lose or that for one side to have the other side must not have.

Statements that WIN -WIN mind-sets would agree with are – 'it's possible for both sides to be right but disagree with each other.' 'It's possible that opposing sides can both get what they need.' 'It's you and me against the problem and not me against you.' 'Conflicting *wants* rarely find peace without a compromise.' 'Compromise is not necessary because win-win solutions exist when you change your focus from wants to needs.'

What about scarcity mind-set- what do they believe?

Scarcity mind-sets believe that non-physical as well as physical resources are limited, and can even get used up!

If resources are physical then for me to have more, then you must have less. But what if



resources can be things like attainment, how well I do? Then for me to do well, you should do less well. And what if resources are our emotions and feelings? Then perhaps for me to be popular, you must be less popular????

'Win-win' mind-sets are nearly always the smallest population in any group, if they exist at all, because the majority of us have

scarcity mind-sets. We have grown up in a cultural paradigm based on the assumption that for one to have more (of anything), the other must have less.

And what we have learnt from Dwek's work is that *our* mind-set as a teacher and parent flows through our words and interactions and influences the development of a similar mind-set in the children we care for. In other words, we mirror our own internal position to the young people we are nurturing, and so the cycle continues.

Let's just take a minute to remind ourselves, mind-sets effect what we see, colour all our experiences and influence the way we respond to others .... They become the way we measure the world.

Thomas Khun (1970), said paradigms are *'a set of concepts, patterns or assumptions to which those in a particular group (culture of professional community) are committed to and which forms the basis of all their decisions'*

Joel Barker (1986), said paradigms are *'frames of reference we use to 'see' the world and make decisions. Paradigms let through data that match our 'expectations' and block data that don't. What may be impossible to do with one paradigm may be easy to do with another...'*

Goldratt (1996), said paradigms are *'sets of assumptions we believe are valid. We go through 'paradigm shift' when we realise one or more of our assumptions are no longer valid'*

Shift happens! .... Well shift can happen, but it seems we may need to explore our assumptions for it to do so.

When we check what it is we really need and why we think the present course of action is the only way to achieve it, we can often learn much about ourselves *and* how creative we can be in overcoming obstacles. When we check our assumptions in relation to the 'other' side, our growth potential as well as our problem solving skills can grow exponentially.

When we consider what the 'other' sides needs are, or what needs they are trying to protect, or how our intended actions (or in-actions) threaten those needs, we allow ourselves many opportunities for growth because it stops us viewing the other side as a monster or nightmare in our life and allows us to consider what basic needs *they* might be trying to protect.

This humanises our enemy - and us!

We can stop seeing them only as a threat (to our needs and desires) but as someone, group or thing, trying to protect their own very important needs and desires. We may even enhance our ability to empathise as we explore two sets of legitimate needs being threatened by a particular course of action.

Resolution can be achieved when we realise there may be another way to meet our need without threatening the basic need/s of the other side. The growth potential comes when we realise it's me and you against the problem, not you against me. Sustainability comes from finding a way forward that does not require either side to compromise, instead, protects both side's core needs and uses them as starting point to find a win-win solution.

This is not merely rhetoric that describes an ideal; it is a description of what can be achieved using The Cloud, Branch and ATT Organisers, tools that make up part of TOC thinking processes.

Covey (2011) describes something very similar; he refers to it as the 3<sup>rd</sup> alternative. His book of the same name provides a deep and wonderful exploration of the inferred enlightenment in the well-known phrase 'there are three sides to every story, yours, theirs and the truth.

Mind-sets and paradigms are not fixed traits, they can be transcended. They are doors of knowledge which once opened are hard to shut. But they can also be subject to circular logic, or the 'Rumsfeld dilemma' – we don't know what we don't know! Which makes finding the door to a 'new' way of thinking seem pretty hard to find sometimes.

It doesn't have to be. Sharing with children a framework through which to explore both their own and other peoples decision making, as we do with TOC, provides opportunities that allow children to check assumptions and challenge 2 way, (Covey, 2011) or fixed mind-set thinking (Dwek, 2006).

And why is a framework so important? Because instead of talking about how it could or should be, providing a framework (in the shape of three graphic organisers), we *scaffold* the thinking we aspire too, allowing users to learn problem solving in a way that develops with their skills. Problem solving skills which in no time at all are internalised and become the new paradigm, or way of seeing and being in the world.

..... Shift happens; let's teach our kids how to think so that it can.

© Debi Roberts 2012. All Rights Reserved. If you want to use this article or quote any of it I'd be happy for you to do so as long as you include the copyright line, and include the following paragraph in its entirety:

**Debi Roberts** is an author, life coach, mentor, UK Director for TOC for Education and the founder of Goldratt Social Applications. Debi teaches conscious development and thinking skills to children and adults and is the author of *Storytelling for Better Behaviour* ISBN - 978 1 90651 748 9 and can be contacted at [storytellingforbetterbehaviour@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:storytellingforbetterbehaviour@hotmail.co.uk)

## And Finally – from Alan ...

This is a very interesting article from Debi; it stimulates my aversion to the culture we have developed of testing and measuring and, whilst I understand the need to oversee education, I do believe that setting targets for young people can, in some cases, do more harm than good.

A warm welcome to all of the new readers; I hope you find the journal interesting. Please ensure that we don't end up in your spam folder ☺.

Best wishes to you all.

Alan ...