**The Students’ Guild leaders’ Induction Course 25-27th April 2016**

**Nkumba University**

**Date 27th April 2016: 12.30 Pm- 1.30 Pm**

**Venue: Kintu Hall**

**Topic: Psychosocial Dynamic Aspects of a leader**

**Presenter: Norman D Nsereko (PhD) Counselling Psychologist**

**Introduction**

This paper explores how a leader’s psychosocial capital influences service delivery and personal functioning. Awareness and critical thinking are proposed as important tools to mitigate the challenges of personal development and leadership expectations.

**The major questions** that we ought to ask ourselves and try to address include:

1. What is my psychosocial standing-Awareness-
2. Can my psychosocial status affect my roles as a leader? -Critical thinking.

**Session expected outcomes:**

Participants will be able to:

* Understand the role of awareness in improving personal effectiveness
* Apply critical thinking skills in dealing with the challenges of leadership

**Definition:**

Psychosocial Dynamics in this paper will refer to the intrapersonal (i.e. internal) emotional and mental state (psycho-) and the interpersonal network of human relationships and social connections and functioning (-social) (Laelia, Apicella, Brakarsh, Dube, Jemison, Kluckow, et al., 2006).

The intrapersonal or psycho includes:

* Mental health constructs that reflect people’s intellectual well- being; their capacity to think, perceive and interpret adequately; their psychological well-being, their belief in their own self-worth and abilities; their affective state or mood;

The interpersonal refers to:

* One’s social well -being, the ability to interact effectively in social relationships with other people and to be able to work to one’s potential [ university leadership structure; guild leaderships team; students’ body/community; outside community]

These constructs tell us about our behaviours. One’s standing on the health continuum of these constructs will determine either worthwhile behaviours or compromised ones.

**Exercise for self- awareness on Psychosocial status: University Students Evaluation of Psychosocial Problems (USEPP) scales**

Let us try this exercise. Confidentiality is guaranteed. Do not write your name on the questionnaires. Freedom to fill the question rests on you. On completion add up as by the scoring guide. Keep the results to yourself.

**Studies on prevalence of psychosocial dynamics among the youth, students**

**Studies in Uganda:**

* Recent research in Uganda has identified four categories of psychosocial classifications of university student psychosocial states. These include: emotional, academic, trauma and antisocial behavior. Students can be well on these or may experience poor psychosocial overall status or on just any of them (Nsereko, Musisi, & Holtzman, 2014)
* In another study, it was found out that students who had poor psychosocial status also manifested psychopathology in forms of depression and anxiety (Nsereko, Musisi, Nakigudde & Ssekiwu, 2014).
* In yet another study on Prevalence, types, distribution and associations of psychosocial problems among university students in Uganda The estimated prevalence of psychosocial problems among the university students was 36.5%. Students living in off- campus hostels, having chronic medical conditions, and those with a previous history of mental health problems and who perceived their health as poor/fair were at a higher risk of psychosocial problems (Nsereko, Musisi, Nakigudde & Holtzman, 2014).

**Other studies:**

* Prevalence of psychosocial problems among children, adolescents and the youth indicate a wide variation with ranges of 20-33% in epidemiological studies and 10-40% in individual studies (Ahmad, Khalique, Khan & Amir, 2007).
* Psychosocial problems are reported to be highly prevalent among children and adolescents as well as the youth and this will include university students (Reijneveld, Vogels, Brugman, Van Ede, Verhulst & Verloove-Vanhorick,, 2003; Laelia, et al., 2006).
* Psychosocial problems other than psychiatric illness have been shown to occur among university students at study time or examination times and in relation to entering university and in relation to important events in the student’s personal and family life (Lucas, 1976).
* In the US, student psychosocial problems were reported to be increasing among students in institutions of higher learning and often resulting in serious mental illness (ACHA, 2006). In that report 10% college students with psychosocial problems reported attempting suicide.

**Conclusions triangulation: Uganda studies, other studies and our statistics**

**Links to compromised psychosocial status**

The students face multiple protective and risk factors to developing psychopathology like, many students lead "hyper-enriched lives", with their cell phones, computers, classes, jobs, sports, travel, volunteer work, and more (Kneser, 2004); being young adults, and in some parts of the world have serious financial problems, development of personal relationships, and for some, parenthood, pursuit of greater educational opportunities and employment prospects **(**Mikolajczyk, Brzoska, Maier, Ottova, Meier & Dudziak et al., 2008**)**; Blanco, Okuda, Wright, Hasin,, Grant, Liu et al., 2008); academic unreadiness, inadequate study habits (Harper & Peterson, 2005); cross-cultural issues, family dysfunction, poor frustration tolerance, experimentation with drugs and alcohol, and weak interpersonal attachments (Kitzrow, 2003); academic overload, constant pressure to succeed, competition with peers and concerns about the future (Tosevski, Milovancevic, & Gajic, 2010).

**Conclusions: what are your protective and risk factors vis a vis psychosocial status?**

**Consequences of psychosocial problems**

* Being poor in psychosocial dynamics negatively affects a person’s ability to realize one’s potential, work productively and make a contribution to society or community.
* We can as well say that one may experience a state /condition of psychosocial mental health problems which include a variety of issues such as anxiety, mood (affect), behavioural and thinking problems, memory, use of mind altering substances, personality and IQ issues that may not meet diagnostic criteria of mental or behavioral disorders but that may impede effective functioning and, if unattended, may develop into diagnosable disorders.
* These psychosocial experiences directly impact on students’ ability to function effectively in classrooms, family settings, and social activities.
* Often they result in unprecedented study burn out among students with consequent various forms of psychopathology among this population than in other populations which may persist later in life (Kitzrow, 2003; Harper & Peterson, 2005).

**Why university guild leaders need to cultivate psychosocial well -being/capital?**

Top students’ leaders are considered to have the unique potential to serve as an energizing force within today’s university environment.

* Higher education in the developing world is becoming one of the most valued experiences today. Stake holders attach their aspirations on universities for a number of reasons i.e. source of advanced skills and knowledge, values acquisition, life satisfaction index, avenue for one’s career preparation, potential recruitment source for the world of work, national leadership training ground, capacity to solve society’s endemic problems through research, offering of viable leadership to meet/address stake holders’ aspiration, “getting the right partner” etc.
* Therefore it is not surprising that the number of students enrolling for university education in Africa has risen to unprecedented figures than previously.
* In Uganda over the last ten years, there has been a significantly observed upsurge in college student enrollment in the pursuit of tertiary training and in particular university education. This student enrollment over the recent years was recorded at 92605, 83640, 85622, 90396, and 98433 in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010, respectively from just less than a total of ten thousand university student population fifteen years ago (UNCST, 2011).
* This situation has led to recent changes in the psychosocial environment of the university campuses such as steep rises in enrollment of both local and international students and founding of new universities, higher cost of university education, increased pressures on the inadequate infrastructures coupled with deteriorating facilities and an unprecedented increase in university students antisocial behaviour, e.g., incessant strikes at both public and private universities involving looting shops, substance abuse, and cult activities on university campuses (UNCST, 2011; The Observer 2012; New Vision, 2012; ugandaradionetwork.com; Africa review, 2013).
* The majority of the university students in Uganda are young adults between 19-24 years old (The National Council for Higher Education, 2007). This age bracket depicts a transition from the developmental stage of adolescence to early adulthood. It is characterized by changes in brain development, endocrinology, emotions, cognition, behavior and interpersonal relationships. It is also malleable and plastic from a neurobiological, behavior and psychosocial perspectives (Evans, Foa, Gur, Hendin, O’Brien, Seligman et al., 2005).

**Psychosocial capital**

As elected leaders coupled with personal experiences you stand on a vantage point to influence the life of the university. A leader’s view of a challenging situation, including own psychosocial status/capital you bring to bear upon a situational problem, can affect how your leadership moves forward. Therefore being aware of your psychosocial dynamics is important in how your resultant behaviours may affect those you lead, with whom you lead and for who you lead (Gottschalk, 2013).

Today’s construct of psychosocial capital has been evaluated as having an impact in our places of leadership. We need to enhance this strategy. Those who scored favourably on the scale may be considered to have the capital as a starting point in the leadership. Those whose scores indicated compromised psychosocial capital need to work on it to enhance effective leadership and personal functioning. Allow me to share with you what Dr. Marla Gottschalk envisages in the resources psychosocial capital can offer: The HERO resources:

Hope. A belief in the ability to persevere toward goals and find paths to reach them.

Efficacy. The confidence that one can put forth the effort to affect outcomes.

Resilience. The ability to bounce back in the face of adversity or failure.

Optimism. A generally positive view of work and the potential of success.

As leaders it is not enough to only strengthen your psychosocial resources, but outwardly you must express positivity through critical thinking (coming out with alternative pathways in challenging situations) — and provide model behaviors when interfacing with your constituencies e.g. the student body, administration, teaching and non- teaching staff and other stake holders. This in turn can enhance your leadership and the achievement of valued outcomes. Those leaders that “flex their positivity”, may indeed have the ability to change the tenor of the university (Gottschalk, 2013).

**Conclusion: awareness of your psychosocial status, the environment, the leads, consequences of compromised psychosocial functioning and role modelling provide cues to critically think and act in a manner that can help you improve, sustain psychosocial wellbeing, to be able to take upon the challenges of leadership.**

**Thank you**

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