Students' Emotional Learning and the Act of Public Speaking: Role of School Counsellors in Building Students' Confidence.

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Abstract- The very first day we enter school, through our secondary to tertiary institutions we would have to answer one question or another by speaking in class or through making presentations. How many students really are intelligent and have knowledge in their subjects but do not have the confidence to articulate them? School counsellors are particularly trained to undertake guidance and counselling in schools due to their specific knowledge, awareness and skills that other school professionals may not have to help students recognize their inherent social and emotional competencies. School counsellors are therefore to devote time and attention towards nurturing students' self and social emotional needs to help students gain the needed confidence to articulate themselves in school and in public.

Index Terms- Confidence; Public Speaking; School Counsellors; Self-Awareness & Social Awareness; Students Emotional Learning.

I.   INTRODUCTION

According to a report by Isaac Amoah Asare on Friday, 24 April 2015 on Ghana web, Edmund Duodu, President of Devine Mother and Child Foundation an NGO based in Koforidua, "called on the Ghana Education Service to strengthen its Guidance and Counselling Units in all Schools and build the confidence of pupils and students to report cases of abuse in schools." The story stated that, Edmund Duodu indicated that "the rate, at which sexual abuse and other forms of abuses are being recorded in schools, raises doubt about the effectiveness of Counselling and guidance units in public schools". Students are only not facing these forms of abuses but are going through self and social problems as basic yet as important as having confidence and speaking in public amongst others that warrant guidance and counselling.

From the very first day we enter school, through our secondary to tertiary institutions we would have to answer one question or the other by standing up and speaking or through making presentations. Again, after school through our working life, and even presidents and heads of states would have to make presentations at international assemblies and forums as the UN forum amongst others on behalf of their countries. How many students are confident enough to answer questions in class? How many of these students really are intelligent and have knowledge in their subjects but do not have the confidence to articulate them? And how many of these students for lack of confidence to articulate themselves hide their inherent intelligence and for that matter do not attain their rightful positions in life because they cannot project themselves?

There are many reasons why students will have difficulty in articulating themselves in class or at public places. Some students actually understand what is being taught and understand what is expected of them but do not have the courage and confidence to speak out. Other students struggle academically and for that matter lack the confidence to answer in front of the whole group. These students may also just have the fear they may be wrong and for that matter answer incorrectly. It is for this reason, that educators most importantly school counsellors are called upon to use the students' emotional learning competences to build students overall success of which confidence is a crucial element. (Casel, 2008; Tengey & Ganu, 2015).

II.   SOCIAL AND STUDENTS EMOTIONAL LEARNING

According to Freedman, Jensen, Rideout and Stone-McCown (1998), the six seconds model of emotional intelligence outlines three stages of emotional intelligence advancement where children learn the eight emotional intelligence competencies that forms the three stages; know yourself, choose yourself and give yourself.

Know Yourself: The essential elements in knowing one's self are the knack to tag emotions and cultivate an emotional literacy. This competency necessitates practice in as much as we must work out to advance our reading and comprehension skills to become literate. Individuals must be "self-observers" in so as to collect forms of behaviour that have become a part of an individual's behaviour routine. An important aspect of this practice is Reflection. It is very essential to be able to discover types of behaviour and their leading circumstances. Stakeholders such as peers, a significant others, family, teachers, school counsellors amongst others should help an individual reflect on patterns of behaviour.

Choose Yourself: choice equates feelings of control for most individuals. Feeling in control raises confidence in individual's abilities and capabilities. It is vital that students feel that they have choices in their schools. A school that doesn't permit student-choice, shows or implies that students are not proficient. This can kill students' confidence.

Choice also helps in the improvement of Optimism, a significant emotional intelligence competency that allows student to feel that they have the ability to fight difficulties. Difficulties

and problems are part of life but the confidence, belief and certainty that it can be curtailed lies in the hope of optimism (Seligman, 1995). Intrinsic motivation is an emotional intelligence competency which helps grow when a student can accomplish, assess and learn from a choice made. Schools that permit students to make choices inspire students to think about the consequences of choices and prompt them to consider errors as opportunities and chances to learn assist students cultivate self-efficacy, optimism, and intrinsic motivation.

Give Yourself: Linking a drive that is associated with a student's goals provides the student with the intrinsic motivation to pursue those goals. Schools that encourage and inspire students to fix and meet goals and to comprehend why those goals were chosen by the student kindle this connection. Student fulfilment and contentment originates not only from good work done but also from the awareness that finishing the job fulfilled an inner satisfaction which is bigger and greater than the self.

A lot of schools in these modern times want students to accomplish a certain number of hours of community service. Community service learning model is one of the methods schools attempt to use to support students grow and improve on the emotional intelligence competency of following principled goals. Leadership jobs in institutions and organizations also permit students to examine and cultivate their skills in this arena. Also, improvement of the emotional intelligence competencies generates empathy for others that are essential for an individual's healthy emotional progress. According to Goleman, 1995, "Empathy shatters rigid ideologies and destroys stereotypes", Students who advance in the emotional intelligence competency of empathy appear as confident, natural leaders, win the respect of their schoolmates and teachers, augment their own advancement as individuals with a consideration of the productivity and variety in the world we dwell in.

III. CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCES

Students' Emotional Learning (SEL) which other researchers term "Total child education" (Tengey & Ganu, 2015) can be defined as the way in which persons become socially and emotionally intelligent. A group of researchers like Zins, Bloodworth and others (2004) have defined SEL as "the process through which children enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaving to achieve important life tasks".
A non-profit body that promotes and offers leadership for high quality SEL programming and learning standards, The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) organizes five fundamental competencies connected to SEL. They are categorized as; self-awareness, self -management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making.

Self-awareness is the capability to precisely identify one's feelings and thinking processes and the way it impacts on behaviour. It comprises exactly evaluating one's strengths and weaknesses and having a well-grounded sense of confidence, hopefulness and positivity.

On the other hand, Self-management is the ability to control one's emotions or feelings, thoughts and behaviours efficiently in different situations (Casel, 2008). This includes handling stress, regulating impulses, inspiring one self, and working at attaining and accompanying personal and academic goals.

Furthermore, Social awareness according to Casel (2008) is to be able to take the viewpoint of and empathize with other people from different and various backgrounds and cultures, to comprehend social and ethical norms for behaviour and to identify family, school and community possessions and supports.

Relationship Skills is the ability to create and sustain healthy and fulfilling relationships with various personalities and groups. Relationship skills comprise of communicating clearly, listening keenly, and co- operating, fighting unsuitable social pressure, talking about conflict practically, looking for and giving a helping hand when required (Casel, 2008).

More so, Responsible decision making is to be able to make productive and polite decisions about one's behaviour and social interactions centred on deliberation of ethical principles, safety misgivings, social norms, genuine assessment of concerns of different activities, and the well-being of one's self and of others. (SEL Competencies adapted from CASEL.org).

IV. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Student Emotional Learning is established on the positive youth development that calls for the essential requirements of youth to be seen by structuring upbringings or environments that inspire outcomes like school achievement, mutually compassionate relationships with adults and peers, problem solving, and community engagement (Catalano et al., 2004; Greenberg et al., 2003). Efforts to back positive youth development are different from those centred on limiting risk factors because they are to develop skills, build assets, and encourage flexibility to accomplishing positive outcomes (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002). Positive youth development interventions like as SEL programming typically use a skill-building, whole-child, total child process which is based on continuing things and not only on stopping problems (Catalano et al., 2004; Tengey & Ganu, 2015). Because Schools are purposely settings and environment that offer educational and developmental needs of youth, they are for that matter the influential objects for public and collective efforts to encourage positive youth development.

Bronfenbrenner in 1979, author of the Ecological systems theory posited that, the backgrounds and experiences of youth, for instance, school, form their development characteristics of school backgrounds that are linked to positive youth development comprise chances for empowerment and skill building. Catalano et al (2004) are of the opinion that the manifestation of helpful adults and peers aid in modelling students therefore emanating in their well-being and consistency.

Zigler and Bishop-Josef (2006) are researchers amongst others that are of the opinion that, the overall achievement of educational goal, school-based programming must meet two standards: (1) improve the social and emotional properties and learning of students through the curriculum, and (2) advance the quality of the environments in which academic, social, and emotional learning takes place. The effort for the education of the whole child or total child education to be prosperous will be determined by the extent to which learning takes place in
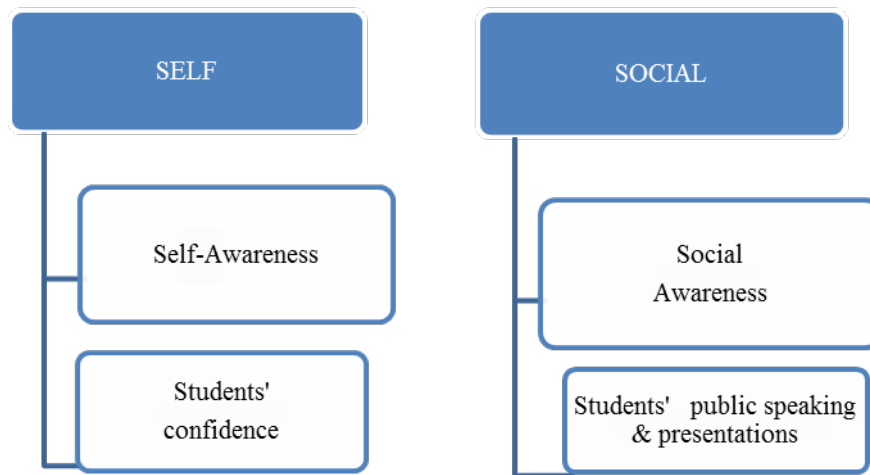
thoughtful, supportive, safe and enabling backgrounds and locations (Tengey & Ganu 2015) which is profoundly embedded in the ecological systems and self-determination theories.

In lending more support to the theoretical foundations of SEL, the Self Determination theory states that, youth are most likely to flourish when in atmospheres that see to their social and emotional desires like undergoing important and cherished relationships, having confidence in their skills, and feeling liberated (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Students are most likely to succeed in school environments that nurture speaking, thoughtful, harmless and enabling relations (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997; Tengey & Ganu, 2015).

V. USE OF SEL COMPETENCIES IN BUILDING STUDENTS CONFIDENCE

Manswell Butty in 2001 posited that students need to be primarily cushioned with opportunities, encouragement, and assistance before they can participate in thinking, reasoning, making and taking sensible decisions. Majority of the problem is that educators, emphasis mostly on the classroom information and training than knowledge outside of the classroom (Anamuah-Mensah & Towse, 1995; Stevenson, 1995; Tengey & Ganu, 2015). Students are therefore coming out of schools with very good grades yet lack the necessary knowledge to excel in the outside world. (Tengey & Ganu, 2015). The fact that most of students' learning is classroom based, students seem to concentrate a lot on that thus neglecting the practical aspect. This leads to students not being confident and lagging behind in students' emotional learning. It is for this reason therefore that researchers are calling for educational institutions to call on educators particularly School counsellors (SCs) who are mandated to be advocates of total change through the provision of a developmental school counselling programme (ASCA, 2008; Tengey & Ganu, 2015) to use SEL competences especially self and social awareness competences to help build students confidence.

An illustration is as follows presented below;

VI. USE OF SELF-AWARENESS IN BUILDING STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE

The SEL spelt out five competencies as mentioned earlier on; self-awareness, self -management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. Out of these competencies, self-awareness, borders directly on confidence (Casel, 2008). Self-awareness according to casel is to precisely identify one's emotions and thoughts and their effect on behaviour. Casel further on stated that, it includes correctly weighing an individual's strengths and limitations and retaining a well-informed sense of confidence and optimism.

Zins and colleagues classified a developmental outlook of each of these skills based on the grade level of students. In their classification, self-awareness includes identifying simple emotions for elementary students, scrutinising issues that accelerate their emotions for middle school students, and recognising how communication of emotions affects others for high school students. (Zins, Payton, Weissberg & O'Brien, 2007). It is therefore imperative that educators most especially school counsellors take particular interest in shaping up students in their developmental stages. School counsellors' are particularly charged to take active role in students because, at the stage when students are developing self-awareness skills, they are mostly at the elementary stage. Students will mostly be in school and spend most of their time in school. They leave the care of their parents and spend majority of their time with other students from different walks of life and upbringing. This is the time they develop emotional skills and if not guided may not develop these skills adequately. It is therefore very crucial that school counsellors are available and easily accessible by students. It is also worth mentioning that, at the elementary level, students may not be aware of their strengths and limitations and for that matter, school counsellors should make the effort to reach out to them and help discover these inherent strengths whiles curtailing the limitations.

VII.   SOCIAL-AWARENESS COMPETENCE AND STUDENTS' PUBLIC SPEAKING

School counsellors are being called specifically to help build student overall success with students emotional learning (Tengey & Ganu, 2015) and as discussed above, self-awareness is necessary mostly at the elementary stages of students development in helping build students confidence (Zins et al, 2007; casel, 2008). School counsellors are also called upon to help students develop their social awareness skills which lead students to be able to integrate well in social and in public settings. Zins and colleagues enumerated three levels of effective SEL programming, (i) formal and informal training in social and emotional skills all through the school practice, (ii) a safe school environment and atmosphere that provides social and emotional growth, (iii) and stakeholders who are leaders who are enthusiastically involved in SEL (Elias, Zins, et al., 1997) school counsellors are therefore called upon as stakeholders to use the SEL programming mentioned above to formally help students realize their social- awareness. If the self-awareness is attained successfully, students will identify their emotions and thoughts successfully which will impact on behaviour positively. This will also make students have a correct and true idea of their strengths and limitations and therefore obtaining self- confidence.

Social awareness is to be able to take the perception of and sympathize with others from various backgrounds and beliefs, to recognize social and ethical norms for behaviour and to identify family, school and community assets and supports. The identification of school comes to reality at this level because this is the stage that students transition from the elementary to the secondary and get to secondary schools. As per Zins and colleagues levels of effective SEL programming, a safe school environment and atmosphere is needed for students' social and emotional advancement. School counsellors amongst other stakeholders as educators are therefore to be vigilant in helping build students social and ethical norms. This is very imperative because most secondary schools in Ghana are boarding schools, which means students leave the care of their parents to these boarding schools. It is at this stage that students socialize with other students from different backgrounds and are forming and picking up attitudes. Students need to be confident to be able to discern right from wrong and also to articulate their views.

School counsellors are particularly trained to undertake guidance and counselling in schools due to their specific knowledge, awareness and skills that other school professionals may not have to help students recognize their inherent social and emotional competencies (Tengey & Ganu, 2015) that will lead to building up their confidence levels and help them prepare towards the tertiary institutions. Most Students will continue their journey from the secondary schools to tertiary schools or institution where majority of them will be on their own. School counsellors who are stakeholders in students' education are therefore called to be actively involved in refining and modelling students' social and emotional competencies (Brackett et al. 2009). Most of the universities or tertiary institutions although have boarding facilities, school authorities are not very strict on students as they are strict when students are in secondary schools. For instance, a student needs to obtain permission to do everything in secondary school. On the other hand, students do not need any permission in tertiary institutions to go out and to do other things. They leave on their own. Students come from different backgrounds and end up at schools and environments that are totally new to them. Some students especially those from the not so affluent communities (Tengey & Ganu, 2015) end up not being able to fit or adjust into these institutions well.

School counsellors are therefore called to nurture and guide these students as they are under their care to adjust well before transitioning into the tertiary world where they are all by themselves and on their own. School counsellors should go the extra mile in making sure they pay particular attention to students by detecting maladaptive behaviours that may trickle or extend into their adult lives. If students' confidence is built at the elementary stage, they are able to transition from elementary stage to the secondary stage successfully. Students are well able to build their social and emotional competences adequately and are able to communicate well especially articulate themselves in public speaking. It is in their presentations that most of their societal, career and leadership skills are unearthed and discovered. Often more than not, most students are brilliant but because they lack confidence and public speaking skills, they end up not able to articulate their views and intelligence. It is one thing being taught how to make a presentation and another having the courage and confidence in doing it. Courage and confidence is built over time, from the elementary stage, through the secondary and mastered by tertiary stage or outside school. This goes beyond just reading about presentation skills from books. stakeholders most especially School counsellors are therefore to take a very keen interest and devote time and attention towards nurturing students self and social emotional needs to help students gain the needed confidence to able to articulate themselves in school and in public.

VIII.   CONCLUSION

There are many reasons students will have difficulty in articulating themselves in class or at public places. Some students actually understand what is being taught and understand what is expected of them but do not have the courage and confidence to speak out. Students' Emotional Learning (SEL) which other researchers term "Total child education" (Tengey & Ganu, 2015), can be said to be the way in which persons become socially and emotionally intelligent. Student Emotional Learning is established on the positive youth development that calls for the essential requirements of youth to be seen by structuring upbringings or environments that inspire outcomes like school achievement, mutually compassionate relationships with adults and peers, problem solving, and community engagement. School counsellors are particularly trained to undertake guidance and counselling in schools due to their specific knowledge, awareness and skills to help students recognize their inherent social (social-awareness) and emotional (self-awareness) competencies that will lead to building up students' confidence levels which will also help boost their social and public speaking skills.

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