Traditional Guidance
And Counselling: A
Case Study Of Bongo-
Gurigo Traditional Area
In The Upper East
Region Of Ghana

Alfred Anovunga Alunga
Department of Education, St. John Bosco’s College of
Education, Navrongo, P. O. Box 11, Navrongo, Ghana

Isidore Ayariga Anovunga
Atwima Kwanwoma District, Ghana Education
Service, PMB Foase, Ashanti
ABSTRACT

Traditional Guidance and Counselling has been offered in different forms, with different interpretations in various ethnic groups for a long time. Even with the emergence of modern Guidance and Counselling, Traditional guidance and Counselling still plays a vital role in society. This is due to the fact that, people in societies continue to experience emotional or psychological distress and behavioural problems. In each cultural or ethnic group, there have been well established ways and methods of helping individuals with their problems. In the light of this, this piece of work attempted to trace the historical foundations of Traditional Guidance and Counselling among the Gurise popularly known as the “Frafra” in the Upper East Region of Ghana. For the sake of this work, it was further narrowed down to the Bongo-Gurigo ethnic group in the Bongo Traditional area to examine how Traditional Guidance and Counselling is practiced and what makes for success in traditional therapy. A structured interview guide was administered to 10 elders who were purposively selected for the study. The study took into consideration the kind of people who offer traditional guidance and counselling, the tools that are used, the situations that call for guidance and counselling, the pros and cons of using traditional guidance and counselling among others. The study explored in details some traditional guidance and counselling aspects common within the Bongo traditional area. It further revealed hidden traditional norms, value and customs embedded in the Bongo tradition regarding Chiefs’ installation, marriage, naming and funerals ceremonies, traditional worship, soothsaying, proverbs and many others. The study revealed that, traditional practitioners need to be trained either formally or informally in order to modify and revise some aspects of the practices that are obsolete in this contemporary time.

Key words: Therapy, Tradition, Guidance, Counselling, Ethnic group, ‘Gurise’ Frafra

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Guidance and Counselling has been in existence among the indigenous people and practiced according to their tradition within the various ethnic groups all over the world before the emergence of modern Guidance and counselling which is now making a good beginning. We have sought through the ages to understand ourselves, offer counselling and develop our potential, become aware of opportunities and, in general, help ourselves in ways associated with formal guidance practice. The history of guidance begun with the ancient Greece and Rome. According to Buku and Taylor (2006), the philosophical teaching of Plato and Aristotle sought to train and develop their citizens so that they become useful to themselves. Parents in ancient Rome served as role models to their children and encouraged their occupational exploration. This was done to assist the youth to know which occupation to choose bearing in mind their potentials as individuals with different and special capabilities.
In Africa, there was also evidence that the early Egyptians were much concerned with guidance as early as 250BC where they offered guidance to their citizens to maximize their potentials. Ghana is not left in isolation, as people in all societies and at all times have experienced emotional or psychological distress and behavioural problems and as such, each Ghanaian culture has well established ways and methods of helping individuals with their problems.

Although, there are no sufficient written sources about traditional guidance and counselling practices, but like other places before the colonial era which introduced modern day guidance and counseling, there were outstanding unique elements which held the societies together in their livelihood. The elements included the extended family system including the clan, the tribe, chieftaincy, taboos, various forms of initiation and close links with ancestors and elders (Makinde, 1978). All these were done differently in accordance with the tradition of the people, of which the Gurise of Bongo-Gurigo in the Bongo traditional area have their own unique way of offering traditional Guidance and Counselling to assist the youth make appropriate career choices, live lives worthy of emulation and able to solve personal life problems.

The purpose of the study was to explore in details some traditional guidance and counselling aspects common within the Bongo-Gurigo ethnic group and to critique the various ways in which it is organized.

2. A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE GURISE OF BONGO-GURIGO ETHNIC GROUP

Bongo-Gurigo is a suburb of Bongo which is located in the north-eastern part of the District capital Bongo and shares boundaries with Balungo and Namoo to the east which is next to Bakina Faso. The people in this community speak Gurine with the total population of about 1,219 (population census in 2000). According to Emmanuel Azubire, the then Assemblyman of the community, they originated from Nalerigo and settled at their present location due to a conflict between them and the Mampurisi over a piece of land around the 1930s. Upon arrival, they met the Balusi who were already stationed there so they decided to embark on a war through the use of fire as a strategy to chase the Balusi away. They were able to defeat the Balusi and took over the land. For this reason, the entire Bongo Traditional area celebrates the “Azambene” festival (Fire festival) every year in remembrance of their victory. According to the chief of Bongo-Gurigo, Naba Apika, the Azambene festival is a very important ancestral heritage which is full of lessons to the youth and every member in the entire community.

The people of Bongo-Gurigo clothes are homespun which includes smocks, a full dressed Gurigo man always has on his left shoulder a clean towel (for the purpose of wiping sweat) and a hat. A woman’s dress consists of traditional skirt and blouse with two pieces of cloth and a handkerchief. The question of equality is irrelevant since women play the role of hearth and housekeeping whilst men played the role of family heads.
The main occupation of the people is subsistence farming, which they do once in a year (due to climate change). Farming is mainly the work of men and the women support by planting and harvesting of crops. A typical Gurigo man or woman is endowed with proverbs and wise sayings which form the foundation of traditional guidance and counselling.

3. THE CONCEPT GUIDANCE

The term guidance have several definitions due to the fact that guidance is an all-embracing discipline whose tentacles reaches almost every, if not every facet of human endeavour (Bedu-Addo, 2000).

According to Moses and Moses (1968) cited in Kankam and Onivehu (2000) agree that “guidance is a term with many meaning. It is a point of view, it is a group of services and a field of study”.

In view of the above, the definition given by nelson Jones (1997) cited in Numale (2007) “guidance seeks to help the individual student to understand himself, the environment and its demands and to bring a reasonable harmony between himself and his environment.

4. THE CONCEPT COUNSELLING

Counselling is defined by Gibson and Mitchell (1995) as “a one-to-one relationship that focuses on a person’s growth and adjustment, problem-solving and decision making needs.

Another definition by Carl Rogers (1942), cited in Taylor and Buku (2006) is “counselling is a definitely structured permissive relationship which allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take positive steps in the light of his new orientation”.


From the above definitions of modern day guidance and counselling one can come to the conclusion that both guidance and counselling seeks to focus on solving the problems of the individual or assisting the individual so adjust properly in his/her environment, bring about increased understand of the self; abilities, aptitudes, attitudes, interest, strengths, weaknesses, which will lead to intelligent choices and maximal personal development.

5. TRADITIONAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

The word “tradition” is defined in oxford English dictionary (sixth edition) as the “passing on of customs or beliefs from generation to generations, or a long established, custom”. The term “traditional” is widely used to
refer to the period of pre-colonial era, a period whose customs, beliefs or methods that have existed for a long time without changing.

Horner (1990) also raises consideration of the idea of tradition as a reservoir. Tradition as a reservoir is the concept that tradition is strength to draw upon, a source of historically defined identity, and a source of a sense of safety, specialness, or difference.

According to Claude Levi-Strauss (1966), tradition was the name given to those cultural features which in situations of change were to be continued to be handed on, thought about, preserved and not lost. "Tradition" in this context refers to those beliefs, customs, and practices of a living community of people that have been passed down through the generations, usually orally or through practice. For instance among the Gurise, they belief in the protection of their ancestors who have passed on by using objects to represent them and communicates with them through those objects.

Traditional guidance can be explained as outstanding unique elements that held societies together in their livelihood at all times, in all societies that have sought to help individuals with emotional or psychological distress and behavioural problems. They included the extended family system, the clan, the tribe, chieftaincy, taboo, various forms of initiation and close links with ancestors and elders.

Traditional guidance included giving directions to people like the adolescents who could not find right path to a particular industry (“the act of “guiding” an individual with a profession and offering suggestions for life skills” Neukrug (1999)), point to some possibilities of thinking, feeling and acting, for instance issues concerning family dispute resolution, giving direction to a lonely, confused, unloved, sick and suffering old man or woman. Also, leading and accompanying a lost stranger to his/her place of destination.

In addition traditional guidance involves leading a person psychologically, emotionally and even spiritually to some newer ways of meaningful living. It is accompanying those who are fearful and uncertain, who need someone along the rugged path of life’s journey. For instance, Among the Gurise an adolescent who was identified with a bad behaviour as stealing was seen constantly in the company of an uncle or family elder trying to guide him to refrain from it.

Similarly, traditional counselling was mainly expressed in the form of advice-giving, sharing of experiences, treatment of the psyche and vocational orientation, through wise saying, storytelling, poetry, proverbs, folklore, totems and many others. According to Mark Gerig (2006), traditional counseling services are time tested and evidenced based approaches to helping people work through a variety of life’s challenges. Traditional counseling typically takes the form of talk therapy and offers a proven way to treat and provide support for emotional distress including Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.
Indigenous guidance and counselling therefore are closely woven into a people’s traditional education to help make a person a “functional person” who becomes well-adjusted in the society and contributing his/her roles as expected, especially within the family system to help sustain the sanctity of life.

**What Constitute Traditional Guidance and Counselling among the Gurise (Frafras) of Bongo-Gurigo**

Traditional guidance and counselling is embedded in everyday life of the Gurise of Bongo-Gurigo. It employs indigenous and informal ways to reach out to its clients in such a way that it is unplanned, unconscious and unnoticed, it happens simultaneously yet its lessons may last for a life time. According to Nukunya (2003), in traditional African societies, counselling was given in various forms, the most common of which were giving advice and sharing wisdom. To him, wisdom generally refers to experience and knowledge about life and using them judiciously. Another aspect of wisdom is sharing proverbs or folk stories. A well-known African proverb is, ‘When elephants fight, the grass suffers.’ Folk stories about the ‘hare’ are told in many parts of Africa including Bong-Gurigo.

Traditional guidance and counseling among the Gurise is made up of life experiences of the elderly which is passed on to the younger generation at any time and at any place by an experienced person (grandfather, grandmother, uncle, traditional priest, chief, elder brother/sister, etc). To confirm this, an elder from the community upon an interview said;

“We guide the youth in this community by sharing with them our experience, wisdom, believes, custom and sometimes our achievements. We believe that this will serve as a guide to the person as he/she progresses in life.” - ED1.

Makide (1978) has this to say, “The traditional practitioners engage in sharing of wisdom which is a more sophisticated form of prediction without a paper and pencil test”.

According to ED2 (an elder in the community),

“our form of guidance and counseling is not written down but they are well known among the elderly and we pass them on to the youth through wise saying like (ba ka pa’ali bunvua yem) stories, myths, proverbs like (bisɛka n mi nu’esi peere n lagum la bunkɛka dita), etc. This constitute guidance in this community”.

According to a speech made by the paramount chief of Bongo traditional area on the occasion of Azambene festival on 14th November, 2013,

“The wisdom and pieces of advice you have head today are the bases of life in tradition. This constitutes our culture and tradition which serves as a guide to the younger generation, so let the wisdom you have heard today guide you to become responsible citizens in the community”.

Traditional guidance and counselling is really made up of the rich experiences, values, customs, attitudes, taboos and wisdom of individuals in society of which Bongo-Gurigo ethnic group is not left out. Makinde (1978), we need to adopt the local practitioner’s store of experience and wisdom and combine them methodically with western approaches to guidance and counselling.
6. TOOLS USED IN DELIVERY OF TRADITIONAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

A tool in this sense refers to the medium through which traditional guidance and counselling is offered in a particular ethnic group to ensure an optimum functioning of the individual in society. The tools employed for the offering of traditional Guidance and counselling among the Gurise include traditional songs, proverbs, riddles, puzzles, storytelling, folk tales, fables, dirges, taboos, symbols and emblems, among others. Though traditional guidance and counselling in Bongo-Gurigo is not structured, the practitioners use their experiences and expertise in the practice of guidance and counselling. The tools aid the practice which is geared towards the developmental, preventive, crises, and career counselling among others when compared to the types of the organised or western counselling.

**PROVERBS (Magsa):**

Makinde (1990), proverbs are accumulated treasures of African Philosophy. They contain the observations, knowledge and wisdom of our forefathers who condensed what they would have put down in writing into short witty phrases that could be transferred from generation to generation. A proverb is a short wise saying which plays a vital role in everyday language of Ghanaians and forms an essential ingredient for traditional counselling. Proverbs help in social life of a people and in the practical education and guidance of our children because it covers all aspect of our lives.

Among the Gurise, most of their ideas about virtues are expressed in proverbs. When a proverb is given, the listener tries to find what lesson it is meant to teach. They educate, bring out the point of a matter for clearer understanding and adorn a speech to make it beautiful.

There are different proverbs for different situations. For instance, a proverb that will be used when a lazy child is being advised will be different from when a hard working child is being praised. Sometimes one or two proverbs may convey almost the same meaning.

**Common Gurise (Frafra) proverbs and their moral teaching:**

- **Ba ka ti’ibere tun tuna yaga.** Literally meaning, they don’t search to see what is in a hard worker’s mouth. This implies that, if you are hard working you will never go hungry.

- **A ta wibera daana n diti nauregu iilum.** (those who are patient and can endure become prosperous in life.). This implies that good things are achieved through hard work and endurance.

- **A lagum gube n de ke’ego.** (Unity is strength). That is, when two or more people do a piece of work together, it is easier.

**RIDDLES (Solegirisi):**

Riddles and puzzles are traditional games that we play, they are some oral or verbal arts forms that have been handed down to us by our forefathers. They play a very important role in the Ghanaian language. The Gurise call riddles “solegirisi”.
Riddles among the Gurise help children to think fast and to decide what to do, and also help to test the intelligence of children. For example, they help them to know the characters and behaviour of things around them. Riddles are presented by the elderly among the Gurise as a game in the form of questions and correct answers. Though presented in the form of a game, they are used by elders to teach moral lessons, discipline, among others.

Some Gurine riddles and their solutions;

Bem yuugo n esigre ba la? (What smells good?)
Answer: Kaam (Shea nut in a distance)

**FOLKLORE (Solema):**

Folklore characters identified among the Gurise include such characters as the tortoise (Kakute), hare, vulture (zuure), and crow (gɔɔ).

**TABOO (Sisego):**

According to Myrick (1987), all the things that the society is trying to prevent young people from experiencing such as abusing drugs, sexual promiscuity, unwanted and teenage pregnancy, smoking, alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, unemployment among others are all within the purview of preventive counselling. Taboos are prohibitions imposed by social customs as protective measures on the society. In some cases among the Gurise taboos are used to prevent certain occurrences that are harmful to the individual and society. For instance, among the Gurise it a taboo for a woman to walk alone in the night while backing a child. The lesson here is that, the child can be attacked by spiritual forces without the knowledge of the woman.

**7. THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN BONGO-GURIGO**

Traditional guidance and counselling perform three key roles in the lives of individuals in society not only among the Gurise of Bongo-Gurigo but Ghana and the whole of Africa; these roles are Educational, Vocational and Socio-personal development of the individual. This was confirmed upon interviewing one elder from the community. He said;

“It is through indigenous guidance and counseling that has helped our children to be respectful, hard working in farming, fishing, waving and rearing. They care for us when we grow old and live to inherit what our forefathers handed down to us”. -ED5

This is in conformity with the purpose of modern education which is a process by which people acquire knowledge, skills, habits, values and attitudes in order to improve upon their lives. Education is therefore viewed as being holistic that is developing the whole person likewise indigenous guidance and counselling. The focus of education is in three main areas namely: Cognitive, Affective and psychomotor.

- The cognitive area: It is concerned with increasing a person’s knowledge and intellectual skills.
- The affective area: Deals with feelings, values and attitudes. It aims at helping an individual develop moral and spiritual values healthy attitudes and emotions.
- The psychomotor area: This involves the development of a person muscular and mechanical skill. These skills are often related to course in speech, physical education, among others.

In the same way, traditional societies (pre-colonial) era before the introduction of formal education, children were given mental or intellectual training. In cognitive development, the child’s intellectual training including the study of local and oral history, poetry, legends riddles and proverbs. Children had to keep all these in memory and upon demands recall them accurately and exactly.

Vocationally among the Gurise, a child is expected to learn all the fundamentals of his or her profession before attaining a marriageable age, especially boys. It must be said that, vocational training within the traditional society was a matter of importance; as a result all children are introduced to their professions at an early age. It was largely based on the system of apprenticeship in which relatives and master craftsman in selected fields trained children for their chosen vocations to ensure discipline, efficiency and economic survival.

Counselling offered in a vocational training was also in the area of agricultural, industrial and professional training. The agricultural aspect focused on farming, fishing, animal care and rearing. Industrial training included weaving and cloth-making, smiting, leather work carving, soap-making, brad-making and pottery, professional training and counselling were given to those who played the roles of native doctors, priest, linguist, musicians and goldsmith.

With the Socio-personal role of Guidance, Numale 2007, personal-social guidance focused on interpersonal skills. By helping an individual to understand himself or herself, one is in a better position to relate to others. This is best done when information is provided about human relationship. Traditional guidance and counselling has helped individuals to improve upon their relationship with others through activities like physical fitness where boys learn battle strategies, wrestling, swimming, archery, horse riding and how they can safeguard cultural activities from adulteration.

**Situations that precipitate traditional Guidance and Counseling in Bongo-Gurigo ethnic group**

Situations that precipitate traditional guidance and counselling are many. People in all societies in Africa have experienced emotional or psychological distress and behavioural problems at all times. In each cultural certain, there have been well established ways and methods of helping individuals with their problems. Among the Gurise of Bongo-Gurigo ethnic group one of the situations that call for traditional guidance and counselling is puberty. Puberty rites among the Gurise is call “pogyabesi gmaa” (female genital mutilation). This is a traditional rite which is unique for only girls who have been able to preserve their virginity up to puberty. These girls are secluded from the community for a period between two and three days during which they are taught
the secrets of womanhood and have their clitorises cut off by a traditional female expert. Upon an interview, one of the elders had this to say,

“……there is the need for the young generation in this community especially the girls to know the right values and customs that will make them responsible house wives. That is why in every year as custom demands in this community to bring all girls who have attained the age of puberty together and let them pass through puberty rite which we call “pogyabesi gmaa” (female genital mutilation). The clitoris is cut so that the girls will remain loyal to their future husbands and to prevent them from having extra marital affairs. - ED3.

This is a situation that calls for indigenous guidance and counselling which is unique for only girls who have been able to preserve their virginity up to that stage. During this rite the girls are guided by the queen mother of the community in collaboration with some traditional female opinion leaders who offer traditional guidance and counselling to the girls in the form of education about how to be good house wives, nursing mothers, how to cook, the values of womanhood, lessons in sex education and birth control as well as personal hygiene. They are also taught how to relate properly with men so that they can maintain good marriages and their dignity in society. This is a form of developmental counselling. According to Bedu-Addo (2000), developmental counselling is an on-going process that occurs throughout an individual’s entire life span. It focuses on helping clients to achieve positive self and personal growth at any stage of their lives. Gbedy (2005), the Ghanaian culture views human life as a cycle which revolves round various stages. This cycle of life starts from the conception of a child and ends when the person has passed through adulthood and died later on in life. These stages in the life cycle mark very important stages in the person’s life and indicate new experiences as they arrive. The indigenous Gurise of Bongo-Gurigo have not left this out as they offer traditional guidance and counselling for girls at the age of puberty and continue as they progress to other stages of life.

Apart from the above, other situations that precipitate traditional guidance and counselling in Bongo-Gurigo ethnic group are; marriage rites, enskinning/installation of a chief, periods of war, when a person is going wayward, health problems, selection of a vocation among others. All these are in conformity with modern day types of guidance and counselling services which include developmental counselling, preventive counselling, remedial or facilitative counselling and Crises counselling as well as placement service, referral service, information service and orientation service.

With regards to marriage ceremony (pogdire) as a situations that precipitate traditional guidance and counselling among the Gurise, they regard it as the most essential aspect of life that makes a traditional Gurigo man or woman responsible. According to Antwi (2007) Ghanaian marriage is a traditional ceremony where the groom accompanied by his family formally asks for the bride's hand in marriage in the presence of family, friends and well wishers. The traditional ceremony is a necessary common rite of marriage for all Ghanaian couples. Because of this, proper consultation is always carried out and adequate information about the girl is always given. According to Gbedy (2002), before the commencement of marriage rites, both families usually investigate each other’s background to find out if there is anything that would work against a successful
marriage. They try to find out if the woman has good character and there is no chronic or hereditary disease such as epilepsy, leprosy, barrenness or behaviours such as stealing, records of murder, madness, litigation and so on in the family. During the investigations, consultations are made in order to make informed choices. So they ensure that family heads and elders act as patrons in guiding the couple in their day-to-day activities to ensure success after marriage. This is not different from the Gurise of Bongo-Gurigo ethnic group. Upon an interview with a family head, he said:

“…………we regard marriage as an achievement that makes one responsible in this community. That is why we the elders guide a young man and sometimes take part in investigating the background of a woman of interest and again work hand in hand with a newly married man/woman to ensure that the marriage succeeds. We do this by converging in the house of the couple every evening for the first three days after the marriage ceremony to keep them in company through story telling (solema), drumming and dancing (wama mge’a), among others. Not only this but, we allow someone to accompany a newly married woman to the river side for water, to the farm, the chicken, the market, etc. The woman is left alone only at the time she is going to bed with the husband. All these are to ensure that, she becomes comfortable and properly guided” - ED4.

When marital disputes and misunderstanding erupts, the couples again avail themselves to the services of traditional guidance and counselling from elders (keendoma) and significant others to ensure lasting and stable marriage life. Nukunya (2003), this is in line with Ghanaian marriages which involve the spouse immediate relations, distant kinsfolk, and even neighbours and friends.

With regards to installation of a chief as a situation that precipitates traditional guidance and counseling, it is crucial among the Gurise because, the proceedings involve in electing and installing a chief is not done in Bongo-Gurigo but rather at Nalerigo where they originated from. After all the proceedings involve in electing the chief which usually takes a whole period of dry season (November to May) at Nalerigo, the chief is inskinned and brought to the community. Before a chief is installed, he is usually kept in a room for a minimum of seven days. During this period, the would-be chief is trained and guided by kingmakers and elders on how to speak and walk in public, how to use appropriate proverbs in his dialogue with other council of elders and also during different occasions. The elders also counsel and guide the chief on how to chair meetings, especially at the palace (nayire), and how to dress and dance traditionally and also counselled on leadership styles and leadership qualities. On a wider pedestal the customs and traditions of the area is inculcated in the chief in order that he preserve and uphold its values and practices. The chief priest known as “Tindaana” also offers counselling on how to observe and perform some traditional rituals.

All these occasions are vital events to the individual and the community at large to the extent that without Traditional guidance and counselling they cannot fully meet the purpose for which they are meant for. The most exciting thing here is that, the guidance and counseling that is offered is not planned. It is offered as and when the need arises/a situation calls for it.
**Theoretical underpinning of traditional Guidance and Counselling practices**

According Cooper and Schindler (2001), as cited in Taylor and Buku (2006), a theory is a set of systematically inter-related concepts, definitions according and prepositions that are advanced to explain and predict a phenomenon.

A counselling theory to Shertzer and Stone (1976) is a collection of assumptions, interpretations and hypotheses about human behaviour that help to explain what happens in counselling, and that gives an observer a framework within which to make his or her future observations, evaluation and predictions about client behaviour.

In the light of the above definitions of a theory and counselling theory, it can be said that traditional guidance and counselling has theoretical underpinning because, traditional guidance and counselling practitioners use beliefs, superstitions, taboos, proverbs, poems, symbols and emblems, songs, riddles, puzzles, storytelling, folk tales, fables, dirges norms, and values of the society in their practice and these are obtained from repeated observations and experiences from the ancestors and forefathers and are passed down from generation to generation. Again, proverbs and stories provide the framework for explaining human behaviour both present and in future which is in line with the above definitions.

**8. THE PROS AND CONS OF TRADITIONAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

**Merits**

Traditional guidance and counselling as compared to modern guidance and counselling, can be said to have some commonalities since both perspective aim at the optimum functionality and progress as well as the emotional needs of the individual. Therefore, the merits of modern guidance and counselling are not farfetched from the merits of traditional guidance and counselling. Below are some merits of the practice of traditional guidance and counselling:

- The use of local language by traditional counsellors helps to release tension and bring clients home to their origin. This is an essential feature of counselling. For instance illiteracy does not constitute a serious obstacle in traditional counselling. This further complement the fact that they are not interested in long discussion (questioning) of what happened to client but focuses on the study of human behaviour, and how to prevent or cure nervous breakdown.

- The counsellors often have foreknowledge of the clients and their problems. They are therefore, not usually taken by surprise by the problems presented before them because the counsellors have the experience of those problems and live in the same environment as the clients. Presenting problem is therefore, easily verifiable.
Traditional guidance and counselling is done to cover all aspects of one’s life (physical, social, economic, psychological) of the individual and seeks to address all human problems in life. The first of these is that traditional guidance was readily available. Since the process does not require any specialist training, counsellors or any significant others assume the role.

Traditional guidance and counselling led to harmonious living, and co-existence of individuals and groups. For example the problems of divorce, quarrels and deviant behaviours in the society were minimized since members of the society were taught communalism to be there for each other and be parents to all children.

For the traditional counselling programme, there was nothing like lack of counsellors because all experienced adults offered counselling. Counsellors were ever present, always ready to be of assistance to another in need.

**Demerits**

On the other hand, in contrast to the modern guidance and counselling, it can be said that traditional counsellors do not go through any formal training unlike the modern day counsellors who are given formal professional training. Additionally, traditional counsellors are people of age and well experienced with life issues while with the modern counsellors, age does not necessary become a factor since it is based on competence with theoretical knowledge of counselling. With this contrast in mind, the following are some demerits of the practice of traditional guidance and counselling:

- Traditional guidance and counselling promotes client dependence on the counsellor because, instead of helping clients to understand the sources and dynamics of their problems, traditional counsellors often present solutions to clients’ problems in mysterious or metaphysical terms. In other words, since the counselling given was in the form of advice giving and sharing of wisdom it did not offer adequate help necessary to promote development of the individual. Often than not, the client has to depend on the counsellor to apply the needed measures on his behalf since it is embedded in magical or supernatural practices that he does not fully comprehend.

- Counselling strives on Confidentially (i.e the ability of counselor to keep whatever he is told in the precincts of counselling room (Bedu-Addo, 2000) however, confidentiality in counselling, is not strongly evident in traditional guidance and counselling even though one form of it can be adhered to, but due to the social nature of the African community where the problems of one person is the problem of whole community. As such, the secret of clients can easily be spread out to other people because traditional guidance and counselling can be carried out by any elderly person at any place in consultation with others.

- The people who assume the role of counsellors in the traditional setting have no specialized training in the principles and practice of guidance and counselling. They therefore offer assistance based on their
subjective personal or various experiences. These experiences cannot be congruent with the subjective personal experience of the client. Thus, without the basic understanding of the principles of human behaviour and the practices of counselling, the counsellor efforts may in fact be counterproductive in enabling the client to overcome his problems.

- Having an intimate foreknowledge of the client and his problems prepares the counsellor to enter into the counselling situations with personal biases. Problems are therefore often not considered from the personal point of view of the client. Such a counsellor assumes an all-knowing position. This is especially so with elders whose ages are thought to confer with wisdom, priests and native doctors who are thought to possess super-natural powers. Solutions offered are often highly prescriptive such that the client cannot accept responsibility for their success or failure.

9. TRADITIONAL PRACTITIONERS OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING AND NEED FORMAL TRAINING

Formal training according to Career Kokua, Research and Statistics (2012) can be defined as a type of training recognized and accepted where workers gather to learn about occupational tenets. The training will require that certain standards are met, a certain number of hours of study are undertaken, taking courses and will usually be sanctioned by or even run by the recognized organization. Certification will be given to some extent if the participant meets certain criteria. For example, a company will offer formal training programs to train multiple workers about their modus operandi.

Looking at the concept of training, it is divided into three (3) main aspects that is formal, informal and non-formal training. By and large, indigenous practice of guidance and counselling is believed to be best practiced under the informal aspect of training because of its peculiarity in the Ghanaian society. Introducing formal training in informal practice of guidance and counselling in view of the definition by Career Kokua, Research and Statistics (2012), might more or less aim at trying to change the face of the practice to suit that of the formal practice of guidance and counselling. This might defeat the very concept of how traditionally guidance and counselling is practiced in our societies. From time immemorial, people for that matter practitioners and would-be practitioners were informally trained to uphold and preserve the modus operandi as well as the cultural heritage and also fully integrate the individual into functional roles in society to replace the dying generation.

Formal training which is particularly linked to modern guidance and counseling is necessary in view of the trend of developments and the changing nature of society, incorporating its concept in indigenous practice may mean that we are laying aside our culture of training the individual or handling situations. Apart from this, the introduction of formal training may bring about uniformity in practice in all ethnic groups in the country hence
the peculiarity and uniqueness in each ethnic group may be challenged, therefore we need to be circumspect in dealing with the question “do traditional practitioners need formal training?”

That notwithstanding, the formal training to an extent enable practitioners to be abreast with the principles underpinning the practice and to give the needed and concise information or offer quality services in this contemporary times. With the changing demands and the dynamic nature of society due to the dawn of technology, couple with ensuring confidentiality being the hub of the practice, it is essential that most of the traditional practitioners undergo training and in this regard formal training. Formal training is generally associated with the western culture of practice.

Training in general is geared towards equipping individuals with skills, knowledge and worthwhile attitudes to enable an individual to undertake a particular profession. Nevertheless, traditional practitioners need training in order to fulfill this aim. But the question is what type of training or precisely do traditional practitioners need formal training?

Not drifting from the concept of training as stated in the previous paragraph, it is important to consider that training traditional practitioners is vital as far as the practice is concerned to enable them increase in knowledge, skills and values to be more efficient and effective in providing the needed assistance to society. Training is necessary to boost their acumen in the field of practice. Without training, to be in tune with the current state of affairs, the practitioner is more likely to be obsolete in the discharge of his duty and this may compound the individual’s problems to a wider extent. People will argue this out especially when looking at the unconscious aspect of guiding or counselling an individual in acquiring skills and knowledge in the field of work for instance.

In view of talking about formal training, the non-formal aspect of training can also be incorporated to equip the practitioner to be up to speed on issues and situations individuals are challenged with. There are aspects of our traditional practice that is obsolete with the passage of time and it is necessary to have practitioners undergoing formal training to modify and revise the old practice of the profession. Whether formal or non-formal training, it must be dwell on the tenets of the informal to revise some obsolete concepts and incorporate new techniques to enrich the practice in that setting other than fully incorporating formal concepts, throwing away some core values that are upheld in the practice of indigenous guidance and counselling.

**Ensuring the principle of confidentiality in Traditional Guidance and Counselling**

Confidentiality according to the International Charter (2011) may be defined as ensuring that information is accessible only to those authorised to have access and is protected throughout its lifecycle. Confidentiality is the prima facie of counselling. In other words counselling thrives on the ability of the counsellor especially to keep whatever he is told by the client within the precincts of the counselling room. This enables the client and other subsequent clients to have a lot of confidence in the counsellor (Bedu-Addo, 2000). The principle of
confidentiality is the hub of the practice of guidance and counselling. The communality aspect aligned earlier in this write-up with societal and individual issues somewhat defeat the principle of confidentiality in the traditional set-up. In most cases, the manner and way issues are handled in the traditional settings are such that other people who are not directly involved are made aware in one way or the other.

Haven said this, confidentiality can be ensured to some extent in the indigenous guidance and counselling practice. For instance, in the event where a mother wants to advice a child who is putting up a behavior that is dangerous to himself and the community, she does it at dawn or in the night when everyone is asleep. It is believed that the environment becomes serene and quiet at those times so whenever you talk to a child during this periods, he listens and changes in behaviour. This practice could be regarded as ensuring the principle of confidentiality. In the sense that, the individual was not in the midst of others neither was the practitioner with other practitioners and it is believed that whatever that transpired at dawn is between the individual and the practitioner.

Again, in the event where chiefs are enstooled, they are made to swear an oath of secrecy to uphold the secrets evolving around the tenets of ancestral gods on how things are done. Such information is kept around the chieftaincy without the citizenry knowing and even how the gods are pacified sometimes for information are not made public. This in a way also ensures that confidentiality is upheld in issues regarding the chieftaincy. When chiefs are made to swear an oath of secrecy, it is generally confidential with certain vital issues in the palace. But employing all practitioners in the indigenous practice of guidance and counselling is a demanding and challenging task.

To ensure the principle of confidentiality, it is important that the traditional practitioners are trained to uphold the ethics of guidance and counselling in order to build the individual’s level of confidence in seeking assistance from an experienced and knowledgeable practitioner.

10. CONCLUSION

The practice of traditional guidance and counselling is an age-old concept of practice which cannot be relegated to the background entirely in the advent of formal or western guidance and counselling practice. Historically, until the introduction of formal guidance and counselling on the shores of Ghana, traditional guidance and counselling has been feasible and effective in helping the individual to understand the tenets of its development and adjustment. Traditional practice to some extent has been the bedrock in the practice of formal guidance and counselling in our societies though with modernized practice, the proliferation of innovation is imminent and very essential in meeting the growing demands and needs of society.

The gaps in the practice of indigenous guidance and counselling has come as a result of its comparison with the practice of formalised guidance and counselling. This calls for the need to have traditional practitioners being
trained either formally or non-formally in view of modifying and revising some aspects of the practice that is obsolete in this contemporary time. By so doing the trainers of trainees need to be circumspect in their quest to modify those aspects in order not to throw away the core values and morals of the society or the cultural heritage of the society.

11. REFERENCES

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