

STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, AND ACADEMIC ADVISING : A META-ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Investigating students' motivation to learn especially among those with learning difficulties is crucial particularly in tertiary academic setting. Universities need to retain their students and reduce attrition. Keeping the students true to their academic calling can be daunting as they come from various backgrounds (e.g. academic, language, family and culture). These diverse and unique sets of challenges can pull the students off course as they may have difficulties adapting, adjusting and coping with new learning and social environments. Recognising these challenges may help universities to identify what affects students' academic achievement. As a form of student development support, universities' academics are assigned as academic advisors. The main roles of these academic advisors are to provide students with academic advice, assist in making goals, provide guidance and help them to achieve academically. Nevertheless, not much is known on how academic advising can be the important link that helps students to be motivated to learn, stay focused and achieve better throughout their tertiary years. Hence, this study aims to identify students' motivation to learn, their coping strategies and their use of academic advising as their support during their years in the university. After a qualitative analysis, there are three critical areas of learning associated with the importance of academic advising identified. They are (1) motivation levels; (2) learning difficulties and (4) academic achievement.

Key words: Students' motivation to learn, academic achievement, academic advising

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1.0 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Every higher education institutions (HEIs) aims in providing students from diverse backgrounds a favourable learning experience that could lead them not only to do well but able to complete their studies on time and earn the coveted certificates, diploma, degree or postgraduate degrees. Regardless of the opportunities provided, the aim could not be reached by every student as they may face challenges causing them to fail or drop out before they are able to complete their studies. Perry et.al (2005) as in (Remsing, 2013) discovered that adolescents normally find transition from secondary school to university traumatic as they need motivation and emotional support when adapting themselves to many new and unfamiliar academic and social environments. To help students with the support needed, academic advisors are tasked to assist and be the students' confidante and counsellors. Academic advising contributes significantly to first year college students' academic successes (Tracey, Kacin, & Remsing, 2011). Many researchers (Drake, 2011; Wolfe, 2016; Suvedi, Ghimire, & Millenbah, 2015) saw academic advisors as the main guide in helping the students, particularly new students, to cope with the drastic changes of lifestyles when they enter tertiary levelled education. However, more information is needed to justify the roles of academic advising in students' motivation to learn and how they handle their learning difficulties. (Henning, 2009) came to the same conclusion as (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002 as in Henning, 2009) that factors involved when students choose to utilize academic advising might be connected to a number of factors including students' perception on the importance of academic advising, the necessity of the service, and their time and convenience. This shows that despite the services provided to guide and help students, there is great possibility that the crucial role of academic advising may be underrated.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The conceptualization of this paper is to identify students' motivation to learn, their coping strategies and their use of academic advising as their support during their years in the university. It is hoped that the identification of these issues will help students to attain their main goals and utilise academic advising to help them stay focused throughout their years in the university.

■3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation to learn

Seen as a form of force, motivation arouses interest and persistence among learners. It is known to have the ability to initiate a learner's reaction towards a task. Motivation, driven either intrinsically or extrinsically, can be used in determining an individual's behaviour. (Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012) are of the opinion that motivational processes cannot be neglected in the field of education as it plays a fundamental role in instructive learning and achievement. This is consistent with (Hamjah, Ismail, Rasit, & Rozali, 2011) who stated that motivation is seen as the main factor that plays an important role in determining a student's achievement. Motivation is the key as highly motivated students have the tendency to do better than their less-motivated peers.

Gnambs and Hanfstingl (2015) described the quest of adopting self-directed motivation encourages the individual to use deep processing learning strategies, higher academic commitment and eventually leads to better academic scores. In addition, motivation is also one of the main factors that could influence students to be self-encouraged and aspired when performing learning activities. Devoid of motivation, learning process is perceived as challenging as tremendous effort and attentiveness are necessary to ensure that students can achieve their goals.

Academic Achievement

Academic performance is a reference to education's output and is mainly assessed with regards to subject grades with examination. Various literature measures academic performance as a course grade, Grade Point Average (GPA) or other form of scores based on classroom tasks or assignments. (Arshad, Zaidi, & Mahmood, 2015) defined academic performance as the outcome of education to the point which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals.

Being an achiever in the field of academics influences a student's self-esteem, motivation, and perseverance greatly particularly in tertiary levels (Jayanthi, Balakrishnan, Ching, Latiff, & Nasirudeen, 2014). However, it is important to remember that another factor affecting students' academic performance is that motivation differs from one student to another. Success is triggered by motivation and in that circumstance; students with better levels of motivation will perform academically better the unmotivated students. Poor academic performance or high failure rates may bring about undesirable levels of stress and regret, reduced number of graduates and cost of education increased. Poor academic performance may also reduce students' opportunities to obtain higher degrees.

Academic Advising

In a tertiary academic institution, academic advising is an essential element system that assists students in resolving their academic problems and succeeds in their academic and professional careers (Suvedi, Ghimire, & Millenbah, 2015). Academic advising occurs in circumstances where the learning institution's appointed representative gives insight or guidance related to academic, social or personal matters. The insight given can be in the form of an advice, suggestion and the representative is seen as a coach or mentor to the student (Kuhn, 2008). Nutt (2003) in (Parget, 2011) described academic advising as the most important element of a successful learning institution's effort to educate and retain students. Based on this, academic advising should be seen as the heart of students' centred services and not just one of the optional services made available to the students. An academic advisor who is able to bridge the gap between the students and the learning institution as indicated by the research is can improve students' retention and their academic successes.

Damminger (2001) as in (Wolfe, 2016) defined academic advising as "developmental academic advising" where an advising relationship with students supports and inculcates a pursuit for rich learning experiences as the advisor, who represents the learning institution is the most responsible individual to ensure that the students gain utmost benefits from their higher education experience. Wolfe (2016) pointed out that based on her findings, students do meet up with their academic advisors seeking advice on academic/university related matters but do not see the relevance of the advisor's role as the 'go to' person for their personal issues. The research also discovered that students preferred to be under the mentorship of advisors within their majors. Her findings also discovered that the role of academic advisors should be made transparent to enable students to reach out to them and the advisor must be knowledgeable in order to meet the needs of their supervisees. (Remsing, 2013) shares the same conclusion with (Martin & Seifert, 2011) as they believe that advisors who are tasked with new students, specifically first year university students, must be trained to understand the desires and preferences of first-year students and they must also understand the potential influence they have on student curiosity and overall academic motivation.

■4.0 METHODOLOGY

The study aims to identify the link between students' motivation to learn, their academic achievement and academic advising. The study also aims in determining what motivates students to learn, how they cope with their difficulties and the role academic advising play in students' academic journey. The keywords used in the search process of previous related studies are students' motivation to learn, academic achievement and academic advising. Related literature was obtained through online database such as *ScienceDirect*, *Elsevier* and *Education Resources Information Center* (ERIC). The following criteria were used to search for related relevant studies (1) research on motivation to learn among students at tertiary level; (2) learning difficulty and coping strategies; (3) role of academic advising; studies between 2009 to date. After a qualitative analysis, a research-based on students' motivation to learn, their coping strategies when faced with learning difficulties and role of academic advising is carried out, and the summary of the findings are as follows.

■5.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the study's meta-analysis, there are three critical areas of learning associated with the importance of academic advising.

Table 1: Students' Motivation to Learn, Academic Achievement, and Academic Advising

No	Explanation	Study
1	Motivation to learn and academic advising	There are positive correlations between students' motivation to learn and academic advising.
2	Students with learning difficulties and academic advising	There are positive correlations between learning difficulty among students and how academic advising helps them to cope
3	Academic achievement and academic advising	There are significant correlation between academic achievement and academic advising

■6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The meta analysis showed the that there is a need to delve deeper into the role of academic advising in helping students to cope with the changes and challenges faced in their university years. The three critical areas of learning linked to academic advising are (i) students' motivation to learn; (ii) learning difficulties and (iii) academic achievement.

Motivation to learn and academic advising

The positive correlation between the motivation to learn and academic advising showed that academic advising may have specific impact on student learning but it can have difficulties to convince students on the influential value of education with regards to future career choices, which needs strong consistencies between goals linked to education and goals relevant to the students' personal dreams. This means that students with lesser interest in studies and lack in motivation would not come forward to meet their academic advisors compared to their more motivated peers.

Students with learning difficulties and academic advising

Students with learning difficulties benefits from academic advising as the service helps them with issues ranging from academic to personal challenges such as accommodation. The studies analysed showed that academic advisors can help students facing difficulties in coping academically by ascertaining the causes of students' problems and tracking the students' academic progress. The academic advisors are tasked with assisting the students to have the confidence to face the current challenges and for those with academic issues, the advisors can support them by steering them towards courses that strengthen these weaknesses, and especially if they are important for the students' final goals.

Academic achievement and academic advising

With regards to academic achievement, the analysis showed that the roles of the academic advisors are also to encourage students to take advantage of the learning and personal opportunities available in their universities. They will make the effort to ask students to apply what they are learning in their classes to real life issues, in that way it enhances student learning in ways that many academic courses alone may not be able to achieve.

Overall, the analyses showed that academic advising is a modern partnership between student and advisor. It focuses not just on the students' academic survival, but their lives and careers goals.

■7.0 CONCLUSION

More studies on the relevance and influence of academic advising is crucially needed as academic advising, along with teaching and learning, is the core to help students achieve the fundamental academic goals. Academic advising is important as it helps students to: (1) understand why they are in the university hence giving them the motivation needed to push themselves forward; (2) understand the university's curriculum therefore allowing them to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and helping them to adapt accordingly; (3) guide students as they struggle to adapt with the vibrant environment of campus life socially and academically.

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