AN INVESTIGATION OF ACADEMIC ADVISORY SYSTEM AS A CORE OF SMART EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Academic Advisory system is an important system to be implemented at the universities. The students will refer to the academic advisor (PA) once they face the problems. The research has been carried out in order to see the effectiveness of the academic advisory system at University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). There are twelve questionnaires that had been given to the students about their opinions and experiences in the system. The results showed that more than fifty percent of the students believe the Academic Advisory system affected the quality of their studies. It means that the Academic Advisory system gave a big impact on students’ performances. However, some results showed that the Academic Advisory system were lacking due to the poor relationships between lecturers and the students. This shows that this system needs some improvements and it will be further discussed in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Academic Advisory System is one of the channels that allow an interaction between advisor and advisee. Advisor assisting advisee in specific academic matters such as course selection, scheduling courses and advice rendered to advisees concerning academic programs ("Pejabat Pengurusan Akademik," 2005, p.1, 3). The main purpose of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of Academic Advisory system that has been applied in UTHM more than ten years. The investigation is done through questionnaire that involves students/respondents from each year in Faculty of Electric and Electronic Engineering. Based on the result, 87% of respondents agreed that this system is an important system. In the other hand, the result also shows that the system needs some improvement such as the relationship between P.A and advisee. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews the related work. Section 3 is more on methodology while Section 4 is present the result and discussion via graph. The paper is concluded in Section 5.

RELATED WORK

Mentoring system was identified as a positive and effective mechanism to maximize the individual potential. Therefore, this mentoring system is suitable modus operandi to be implemented at higher learning institution in order to produce an excellent student academically and morally.

Mentor-Mentee program was introduced at University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) since 1994 by Fakulti Sains Kognitif dan Pembangunan Manusia. However, this program was implemented informally (Zuraidah Abdul Rahman, 2004). Besides responsible to communicate effectively with their mantee, the mentor should complete themselves with training, knowledge and activities which can help them for mentoring process.

The universities students still need a guide from the adults even though they are considered matured and independent. The challenges of the problems in real world will expose them the
pressures, tensions and eventually torture their mental. Thus, the useful information is vital for them in order to solve and absorb such problems. The mentor-mentee program will help them to select the correct information so that they are always in the right track. Students nowadays are not only having problems in their choice of career but also in the self-development part itself. Therefore, the experienced person is needed in order to run mentor mentee program smoothly and successfully. For example, the lecturers are responsible to monitor their students under his/her program continuously.

However, a significant problem that continues to confront our higher education institutions is the efficiency of academic advisory system in the institutions. Studies by researchers indicates that a new look at advising in the institutions of higher education is needed in order to serve the diverse needs of students and make these institutions more effective in developing students. Academic advising by faculty is linked to student involvement and persistence in University or College. Student involvement includes the investment of time and energy to studying, participating in student organizations, and interacting with faculty or academic advisor and other students (Astin, 1984). One of the most important roles played by academic advisory system is to guide and monitor student's performance (Khalid Isa et. al., 2007). Studies also indicate that more informal quantity and quality contact with academic advisor, especially contact focusing on intellectual or career-related issues, increases students' involvement, motivation, academic achievement and satisfaction with the University and their institutional persistence (Pascarella, 1980, Pascarella, 1985, Terenzini et. al, 1982).

Academic advising is one of the best vehicles for promoting the intellectual, personal, and social development of students (Creckett, 1985). It is a systematic process, based on student-advisor relationships, conceived to aid students in achieving academic goals, career goals, and personal goals (Ender et. al., 1984). As such, academic advising is a service that links students’ academic and personal worlds and, hence, promotes holistic development.

A high level of academic and social integration of students leads to high student retention (Tinto, 1987, Tinto, 2003). Learning is another contributing element to retention. When students learn more, they find more value in their educational experience, and they are more likely to finish their degree program (Tinto, 2003). Holistic student development is the core of the mission of many institutions of higher education. A theoretical base of a holistic view of student development is proposed in a 4C schema--culture, curriculum, co- curriculum, and community (Braskamp, 2006).

The literature reports that academic advising, at one time, was housed in the academic sector in most institutions. Academic advising by faculty was characterized by clerical and mechanical tasks such as filling out class schedules and calculating credits for graduation (Winston, 1989). This notion of academic advising was challenged because of its narrow focus on academics (Crockrett & Levitz, 1984).

In order to fully evaluate and understand effective developmental advising, it is necessary to examine all classifications of advisors. The behaviors and perceptions of professional academic advisors (PAs) is one perspective on developmental academic advising that has not been extensively examined. While academic advising still belongs in part to the academic sector of the campus, there continues to be a movement towards advising centers staffed by professional advisors (Habley, 1993), (Winston, 1989).

In conclusion, advising is an important task for success of university students, especially students with professional majors, such as engineering. In a global sense, advisors provide the service of career development ranging in process from selection of major to professional development and management of a system of life-long learning (Gregory et. al., 2001). Many researchers identify the duties of a modern advisor and discuss the advising process with the aid of web-based tools or software tools (Bykat, 1997), (Marques, 2001), (Tin, Serpin, 1994) to increase both the efficiency and quality of advisement (Beaudin, 2001). The results revealed that e-mail was the most effective and preferred method when communicate between distance learning students and advisors.
METHODOLOGY
In this paper all the data has been collected through questionnaire from twelve questions. From each question there have a scalar which is 1 for strongly not agree, 2 for not agree, 3 for not sure, 4 for agree and 5 for strongly agree. If student answer for 1, 2 and 3, this will assume that student not agree with the statement, but if student answer for 4 and 5, means that student are agree with that statement.

From the questionnaire itself, there are relations with each other means one question has it impact and reason to other question. For example Question 1 and Question 4 have their relation where, if the student say that academic advisor is important they should also say that PA can give advices when the students face problem. These data must agree with each other. Here are the twelve questions that have been answered by the student.

1. Academic Advisory System is an important system.
2. I am comfortable when communicate with PA.
3. PA is easy to be contacted if needed.
4. PA can give advices when the students face the problems.
5. PA concerns towards me
6. PA is knowledgeable and gives the exact information that related to the UTHM academic’s system.
7. PA system affected my CPA performances
8. PAs have an initiative to create activities which can help self improvements
9. I am comfortable to share non academic problems with P.A
10. I always discuss the listed problems with P.A.
11. How frequent you meet PA in a month.
12. Common activities done by PA when meet you

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
This research involves 490 students from each year in Faculty of Electric and Electronic Engineering. The following graphs are the results that shown the effectiveness of the Academic Advisor system in UTHM.

Figure 1: Student assessment towards important of PA system

Figure 1 shows that 87% of the students agreed to have PA system at the university. This shows that student believe PA system is very important and able to give the positive effect to their academic performances.

Moreover, figure 2 shows that 75% of the students said that advices from PA helped student’s problems very much. However, figure 3 shows the conflict of the above statements. It shows that 83% of respondents meet their PA less than 3 times in a month. From here, 22% of respondents never meet their PA.
Question 4: PA can give advices when the students face the problems.

Figure 2: PA can give advice towards student’s problem.

Question 11: How frequent you meet PA in a month.

Figure 3: The frequent students meet PA for discussion and academic advising

The readiness of student to share their problems with PA is seen to be an important factor to confirm PA able to help student to identify and handle student problem in the initial stage (Holmes, 2004). From the finding, the readiness of student to share their problem is 79% as shown in figure 4. In this paper, student problems can be categorized into academic matters and non-academic matters. Figure 5 shows most of the discussion is regarding academic matters. However, only 38% of respondents believed that this system gives positive impact towards student academic performance (figure 6).

Figure 4: Students comfortable share problem with PA
Question 11: I always discuss the listed problems with P.A.

![Graph showing the number of respondents discussing different problems with P.A.]

**Figure 5:** The problem that always be discussed with PA

Question 7: PA system affected my CPA performances

![Graph showing the influence of PA system on CPA performances.]

**Figure 6:** The influences of PA system to the student’s CPA

Meanwhile, about 62% of respondents feel uncomfortable to share the nonacademic problems with their PA (Figure 7). There are many factors why students are uncomfortable to discuss the nonacademic problems with PA. One of the factor is PA is not trained to be a qualified counselor. If students have problem beyonds PA capabilities, they will be refered to Pusat Kaunseling and Pembangunan Pelajar, UTHM.

![Graph showing the comfort level of students sharing nonacademic problems with PA.]

**Figure 7:** Student comfortable to share problem with PA

According to McClellan (2006) and Smith & Downey (2003), PAs had to present themselves as approachable and knowledgeable. Based on respondents’ response, the readiness of PA to be contacted is 56% (Figure 8), concerned PA is 45% (Figure 9) and knowledgeable PA is 62% (Figure 10). They also claimed these are reasons why some student failed to communicate effectively with their PA.
Question 3: PA is easy to be contacted if needed.

![Bar Graph](image1)

**Figure 8:** The level of PA that easy to contacted

Question 5: PA concerns towards me.

![Bar Graph](image2)

**Figure 9:** Concern manner of PA to student

Question 6: PA is knowledgeable and give the exact information that related to the UTHM academic’s system.

![Bar Graph](image3)

**Figure 10:** Level of exact information and knowledgeable of PA towards academic UTHM's system.

Despite of that, 47% respondents claimed that PA has initiatives to do activities that might help student performance (Figure 11). Figure 12 shows such activities during the official meeting.
CONCLUSION
The important of PA system can not be denied. It is because it will effect the reputation of the student whether he/she can success or not in the university. The academic advisory system is completely perfect but because of the lacking in responsibility and not taking seriously between both parties this system will fail to produces the excellent graduate. Therefore, the cooperation between advisor and the student is the core element to solve any weaknesses in the system.

REFERENCE


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