Advising as Educating: A Framework for Organizing Advising Systems

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A shared perspective on the extant and ideal organizing principles for an institution's advising system is important to the overall effectiveness of advising. In this essay, I develop a vision of advising as educating, and from that vision, derive some higher order principles for an institutional advising system that will accommodate the widest range of prevailing theories and practices of advising and still allow for meaningful assessments and evaluations of advising effectiveness. Seven basic principles for organizing and managing institutional advising systems are identified.

KEY WORDS: administrative organizational systems, advisor role, educational planning, philosophy of advising, student educational objectives, theory of advising

Introduction

Advising systems operate within the context of the institution's educational and organizational environment. Like all systems in the organization, advising must be designed to contribute to the institution's educational mission and goals; advising personnel must be held accountable for reaching identified goals; the processes and practices must deliver quality and effectiveness while institutional resources are used most efficiently. A conceptual framework is needed to guide the design and management of advising systems such that educational and organizational functionality, areas of responsibility, and management and practitioner accountability can be monitored and improved.

I propose that an *advising-as-educating* framework is appropriate to guide the design and management of advising systems, processes, and practices in higher education. I assemble key concepts drawn from scholarship on organization, management, education, teaching, and learning to define a vision of advising as educating and identify essential characteristics of an institutional advising model. By designing, organizing, and managing an advising system such that the essential objectives are realized, an institution can claim to have an advising system that simultaneously is centered on educative and learning development and through which advising is effectively (of high quality) and efficiently (via the best use of resources) delivered.

Why the Interest in Theories and Models of Advising?

A practicing academic advisor might proclaim:

> I just go about the practice of advising on a student-by-student basis; I care about each of my advisees. I know a lot about the majors and courses offered at my institution and the places where students are likely to encounter difficulties. I work hard to build a trusting relationship with students and learn what is important to each of them, and in turn, I try to help them make the right decisions about what to major in, what courses to take. And when they get in trouble in some way, I offer guidance on how they might solve their problems. Where's the theory or modeling in that? I just introduce them to useful information and offer practical advice and counsel. They choose what's best for them.

If advisors within the institution build their advising practices on their own assumptions regarding the mission and outcomes of higher education or the purposes, processes, practices, and outcomes of advising, the quality of advising within the institution cannot be judged. Without standards or common benchmarks to reference, attempts at judging and improving advising are without direction or focus. Assessments are constrained to individual advisor-advisee relationships and cannot be aggregated and used to point to system-wide improvements in advising. Students are left to experience whatever advising goals and strategies (good or bad) that their particular advisors happen to follow.

In the meantime, the stakeholders for institutional educational programs (e.g., legislators, students, and budgeting administrators as well as the institutional leadership and the public) have all placed an enormous amount of trust in an institutional system where advisors are expected to efficiently practice quality advising. How can advisors know and demonstrate that the advising system is honoring that trust?

Theories and models of advising provide a conceptual basis for organizing and managing advising systems so that they are driven by the proper purposes and deliver services in the appropriate ways. Model- or theory-based advising can be

assessed and evaluated in terms of effectiveness and efficiencies. Such evaluation demonstrates that advisors are meeting their goals and providing quality services. The scholarship on advising provides a number of theories and models of advising. Each is based on different assumptions or propositions about educating a person, and each relates unique roles for advisors and students. Many differ on the subject matter that is appropriate for advisor-advisee interactions (Beck, 1999; Burton & Wellington, 1998; Chickering, 1994; Crookston, 1972; Frost, 1994; Grites & Gordon, 2000; Hagen, 1994; Hemwall & Trachte, 1999; Kirk-Kuwaye, 1998; Lowenstein, 1999; Miller, 1994; O'Banion, 1994). Which of these theories or models should be adopted as the framework for an institutional advising system?

Many of the oft-cited theorists have referred to the advisor's role as that of a teacher. They make references to teaching-like activities of the advisor such as: "The advisor should engage the student in dialogue" (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, p. 8), "should encourage the student to consider or reflect on . . ." (Grites & Gordon, 2000, p.14), or "should require the student to construct a plan or schedule" (Frost, 1994, p. 55). However, they have never fully elaborated the teaching responsibilities, activities, and materials of the advisor. They have placed little or no emphasis on the knowledge that students should be constructing, the pedagogy the advisor-teacher is to employ, or the learning activities the advisee should be undertaking to develop the knowledge and the skills needed to navigate an educational plan. A well-specified advising curriculum for students is never identified. As a result, students do not necessarily learn and construct the knowledge necessary to be effective educational planners, navigators, and assessors.

The adopted framework should provide for a wide range of individual differences in the roles and activities of advisors and advisees; however, while an allowance for the great diversity among participants is important, the framework should also provide a shared overall vision to guide the design and assessment of the advising system processes and practices. The shared vision should be the source of the organizing principles for the institutional advising system.

An overarching advising theory is needed. It should appropriately recognize the different dimensions of student-learning development (e.g., cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) and acknowledge that knowledgeable and skilled staff of all curricular (academic, cocurricular, or advising) domains have shared responsibilities for collaborating on the development of the whole student. I propose that the advising-as-educating model is just such a comprehensive theory of advising.

The Vision of Advising as Educating

The term *vision*, as used in the context of an advising framework, indicates a conceptualized view of a desired organizational system. It describes an idealized outcome toward which the institutional faculty and staff work (Bereiter, 2002, p. 438). The vision should spur commitment and generative actions designed to close the gap between an extant and a desirable system. Through the vision of advising as educating, student education and development can be focused in accordance with the institution's educational mission and goals.

To construct a systematic, principled response to questions of efficiently delivered services, I drew on some basic principles from theories of organization, management, education, and learning. In the process, I constructed a vision of advising as educating that can serve as a framework for designing, managing, assessing, and improving an institution's advising system.

From organizational and management theories (Kaplan & Norton, 2001), I refer to strategic planning principles that call for the alignment of organizational units, in terms of purposes, goals, policies, processes, and practices, with their intended function and with the parent organization's mission and goals. The organizational functionality typically assigned to advising systems within higher education institutions can be characterized in simple terms: Advising serves as the personalized interface between the institution and individual students, helping the latter understand their educational options and assisting them in navigating the institution's educational environment.

At their core, all postsecondary institutions have the mission for educating students, and many also have goals that call for student-centered programs and services. For example, The Pennsylvania State University (2004, p. 7) has as the second of five strategic goals "to enrich the educational experiences of all Penn State students by becoming a more student-centered University." In an educational context, being student-centered translates to concentrating on the student's role as learner and partner in the educational process. To satisfy this goal, the educational processes of the institution, including the advising system, should be directed to the learner's role as well as to the impact of the process on the learner.

The institution's mission and goals are the fundamental bases for determining if quality advising is being offered. If the advising system is aligned with and maximally contributes to the achievement of the institution's educational goals, stakeholders can legitimately claim that the advising is of high quality. So, the institution-wide vision of advising should focus on educating the student and meeting the functional responsibilities for guiding students through the institution's educational opportunities.

To provide a sense of direction for the vision of advising as educating, I offer a definition of *educative advising:* Advising is an educative process centered on assisting individual students in planning, acquiring, and assessing their own educations as learners while navigating the institution's educational opportunities. This initial definition needs elaboration; that is, clarity about the meaning of an *educative process* is needed. Also, more information is needed to explain the specifics of "planning, acquiring, and assessing their own educations."

To be an educative process, advising must expose the student to intentional learning experiences that lead to the achievement of educational objectives. Intentional learning experiences in academic settings are typically referred to as the curriculum with responsibilities for their design and delivery assigned to teachers/educators (Gowin, 1981). An educative-advising process involves an advising curriculum on which the advisor provides instruction. The objective of the advising process is the education of the student as a learner who is recognized as having individualized educational goals as well as specific learning characteristics and capacities.

The term, "planning, acquiring, and assessing their own educations as learners" is subject to a broad array of interpretations, especially with respect to the meaning of acquiring an education. In the traditionalist's view, acquiring an education has been akin to filling the student's mind with (mostly) subject-matter content and also with certain primary-thinking and reasoning (cognitive) skills. In this view, the mind is presumed to be like a container storing knowledge much like a library or a computer hard disk (Bereiter, 2002, p. 13). The mental database is loaded via cognitive skills and is organized and searched via memory. Under the traditional venue, curriculum issues are resolved by defining core content in the major and general-education knowledge domains, and pedagogy is based on the student's broad exposure and mastery of content through prescribed acquisition and memory exercises.

An advising system under this traditional view of education will be focused on advisor understanding of the academic environment. Under a traditionalist advising system, advisors need only to identify and prescribe the content of an educative-advising curriculum that points students to opportunities for knowledge acquisition. They are not focused on answers to questions relating to the development of individual learning capacities. Students are grouped to receive instructional treatments that are similar to those in the academic curriculum. Individual differences in learning readiness, goals, and outcomes are not accommodated, nor are they elaborated upon within the advising system. Individuals are deemed responsible for acquiring the self-knowledge and direction needed to benefit maximally from the curriculum. The traditionalist advising system is knowledge and teacher centered, not learning and student centered.

Some believe that student development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and personal identity are to be addressed outside the core academic curriculum. They invoke the phrase "educating the whole student" as they consider interpersonal and intrapersonal development to be part of the cocurriculum. Responsibilities for the cocurriculum typically fall under the banner of student affairs rather than academic affairs. Advisors and students are challenged to determine the particular interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies an individual should be developing and where in the academic curriculum or cocurriculum they can acquire experiences to enhance such development. Those concerned with the academic curricula often eschew questions of pedagogy and curricular content that are useful for student social and psychological development. These issues are not considered to be under the purview of the academic side of the institution. The flipside of this commonly held assumption is that, because the cocurriculum does not feature instructional elements, student affairs cannot be held directly responsible for the learning and developmental outcomes of students.

Under a system in which education is defined as whole-student development, the advising curriculum will be used to identify and prescribe content that provides for the identification of important interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies. In addition, the curriculum will be used to identify the educational environment within the institution where these intentional learning opportunities are available to students. When organizational responsibilities for whole-student development are separately maintained by student and academic affairs, the advisor may have difficultly identifying and

understanding all the curricular elements necessary to provide quality advising.

According to a long-standing proposition in education literature, students should be educated to realize fully their unique individual potential in their adult lives (Gowin, 1981, p. 11). Proponents suggest that students should be liberated from obstacles to full self-realization, and they consider ignorance a primary obstacle. Other obstacles include underdeveloped intellectual and moral capacities for self-authoring the construction and uses of knowledge, such as understanding, judgment, prediction, and problem solving. The term *liberal education* is commonly used to label a curriculum designed for student self-actualization (e.g., Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2003, p. 25). To reach the whole-student development goals, education is extended beyond content acquisition to include the development of intellectual and moral capacities of the individual. Under this paradigm, learning and knowledge are used by students to form higher-order knowledge construction and application, including skills in the development of mental capacities for processing knowledge in making meaning, gaining understanding, and forming judgments. Gowin (1981, p. 11) phrased the premise of education for development as follows: "Educating helps people come into possession of their own powers and their own world, especially the flourishing integration of thinking, feeling, and acting."

Gardner (1999), who wrote about multiple intelligences, and Lazear (1991), who explained ways of knowing, offer support for the following premise: Skills in knowledge construction and learning are highly dependent on the development of the student's values as well as his or her intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. The person being educated in academics must also focus on her or his own intrapersonal and interpersonal development; that is, she or he takes a whole-student approach to learning. The person educated as a whole is able to self-author knowledge construction and its uses and thus has the capacities to be a lifelong learner (Baxter Magolda, 1999).

In fact, the development of lifelong learners is often a central aim in institutions with learner-centered educational goals (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2003, p. xi). However, the descriptor is typically invoked without recognition that a clear, specific curriculum of learning experiences is required for the development of higher-order knowledge construction and learning competencies. The implicit assumption is that by fulfilling normal academic-curriculum requirements for a degree, the student will simultaneously acquire the special capacities of a lifelong learner. However, this assumption is rarely addressed, let alone validated, in assessments of learning processes and outcomes. An advising system aimed at contributing to the development of lifelong learners must provide for student understanding of the characteristics of a lifelong learner and the ways the individual can develop these traits.

For the purposes of this essay, I define an educated person as a competent lifelong learner: someone who is capable of being a self-author of knowledge construction and its uses by having developed capacities for learning, understanding, forming judgments, and solving problems. The educated person has acquired a mastery of knowledge about her or his own mind as well as the physical, cultural, and knowledge domains in which she or he will function as an adult. Competent lifelong learners will have been specifically prepared to take responsibility for and manage their own learning and intellectual development so that they may realize their full individual and unique potential over their lifetimes.

According to the advising-as-educating perspective, learners plan and assess their own educations while navigating through the institution's educational opportunities. In contrast, traditionalists treat planning and navigating as technical processes that can be completed through a requirement checklist for the chosen degree and prescriptively selected courses available from the semester-by-semester schedule of offerings. The student's educational progress is systematically assessed in terms of number of completed required courses in the student's selected academic-degree program. If the student's own educational goals extend beyond those established in courses for the chosen academic program, no systematic plan or assessment of progress is available to either the advisor or the student. In the traditional view, the planning, assessment, and navigation of the institution's educational environment are all driven by academic curriculum requirements and are conducted in predefined, mechanical, nonindividualistic ways; the process reflects the perspective that education is measured by knowledge content acquisition.

According to the advising-as-teaching model, the advising process for producing a lifelong learner must consist of an advising curriculum of intentional learning experiences that guide the individual in the development of self-knowledge and skills about learning and thinking. It must provide a means for

the student to develop the capacities to be his or her own agent in authoring learning, meaning, understanding, judgments, and problem solutions within the university environment. Learning opportunities must be available for learners to gain competencies as planners and assessors of their own educations while simultaneously navigating the institutional academic requirements toward the degree.

By incorporating learner development perspectives, I expand the definition of advising as educating: It is a process through which a curriculum of intentional learning opportunities allows students to plan, acquire, and assess their own educations. It is centered on the student gaining capacities as competent lifelong learners who are able and motivated to take responsibility for managing their own learning and intellectual development. The process culminates in the individual's realization of her or his unique potential over a lifetime.

Gowin (1981, p. 25) identified four basic components of a formal education system: teacher, curriculum, student, and governance (policies and social setting). An advising-as-educating process must include all four components.

Educative-Advising Curriculum

In educative advising, students simultaneously learn the advising curriculum along with the information typically provided, with extensions and augmentations, through degree program requirements and student affairs programming. Learner-centered advising is intended to increase students' capacities to manage their own learning processes and goals; engage larger goals for their learning; set expectations for their own accomplishments; acquire through guidance greater capacity for self-reflection and the construction of meaning; develop personal learning portfolios to document their achievements; and work with advisors and faculty members to design educational experiences that integrate learning activities (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2004, p. 11).

The content of the educative-advising curriculum is drawn from four knowledge domains that inform student learning in the advising experience. It needs to promote the development of students as self-advisors (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2003, p. 34). It should specifically help students develop capacities for a) understanding and assessing their own development as learners (self-knowledge); b) understanding the nature of learning and development opportunities available in the institution's educational environment (institutional knowledge); c) setting self-learning and development goals and for planning and assessing a path of educational experiences aimed at achieving these objectives (manage learning knowledge); and d) understanding the structure of knowledge, how to think about thinking, and how to learn about learning (this might be identified as metaknowledge about knowledge, cognition, and learning).

The Educative Advisor

In the educative-advising process, the advisor is a teacher providing for the design and delivery of an advising curriculum. He or she also offers guidance as the student gains capacities for self-navigating the educational opportunities, expectations, and institutional requirements. The advisor is responsible for adopting and assessing pedagogies and practices that incorporate generally accepted, research-based principles on how students learn (American Association of Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1998).

The Educative Advisee

Under the educative-advising paradigm, the student is a learner and educational planner seeking to become a competent lifelong learner; that is, she or he is capable of being a self-author of knowledge construction and its uses in managing learning, developing understanding, forming judgments, and solving problems. In addition, the learner understands how to navigate through the institution's educational environment to meet goals. The student is responsible for managing his or her own learning and for setting learning goals as well as planning and assessing a personal learning agenda.

Educative-Advising Governance

The educative-advising governance structure refers to the management policies and infrastructure that define and support the construction, delivery, and assessment of the advising curriculum. The governance structure assures that the advising system is aligned with the institution's mission and goals and is efficiently providing quality services.

Seven Organizing Principles for Advising Systems

Educational institutions are challenged to provide an advising system that satisfies the definition of educative advising and that also has organizational capacities for managing and demonstrating that it is efficiently providing effective advising. To meet the institutional advising challenge, what

characteristics should be designed into the institutional advising system?

For assurances that it is aligned with the institution's educational mission and goals, the educative-advising system should be assigned advising functional responsibilities, and its purposes, policies, processes, and practices should be intentionally made consistent with the institution's educational mission and goals. To ensure that the advising system embodies quality, effectiveness, and efficiency in its operations, criteria for excellence in advising policies, processes, and practices must be defined and met. Quality depends on the adoption of excellence criteria and performance monitoring; effectiveness refers to the degree that outcomes contribute to goal attainment; efficiencies are defined as the best use of resources to achieve desired outcomes.

Because the definition of advising as educating and the related advising conditions are aimed at effective, quality advising delivered efficiently, I identify seven higher-order organizing principles of educative-advising systems:

1. The educative-advising process must be offered in a functionally responsible system of assigned responsibilities: The advising system must provide guidance and support for the student who is seeking to gain an education as a learner and who is an educational planner navigating the institution's educational environment.
2. The educative-advising process is intentional: To reflect the institution's educational mission and goals, the advising process is designed to make learning opportunities available. Specifically, it must give students access to special domains of knowledge and skills, so that while navigating the institution's educational environment they can become lifelong learners and educational planners.
3. The educative-advising process is learning and curriculum centered: Educational learning opportunities are to be organized as an advising curriculum centered on the development of the student as a self-directed lifelong learner and self-advisor.
4. The educative-advising process is knowledge based: The advising system is to provide access to knowledge content. The subject matter of the advising educational system spans four knowledge domains: managing learning; student intellectual, intrapersonal, and intellectual developmental patterns and readiness; the institution's educational opportunities; and knowledge structures, cognition, and learning.
5. The advisor is a teacher: Based on a professional background in the domains of advising knowledge and skills, as well as a practiced familiarity with the scholarship of education, curricula, teaching, and learning, the advisor is to design, instruct, and assess educational opportunities in the advising curriculum.
6. The student is a learner and educational planner: He or she is to gain knowledge and skills from the four domains of the advising curriculum as well as from the institution's other curricula and to set personal educational goals, design action paths, and assess learning outcomes while navigating the institution's educational environment.
7. The educative-advising process ensures quality: Advising policies, pedagogies, processes, and practices are based on validated principles of management, teaching, and learning; that is, they must reflect and are to be assessed in terms of the principal findings of scholarship on education, curricula, teaching, learning, and organizational management.

Conclusion

The education process helps students come into conscious possession of their own powers of agency, especially through integration of thinking, feeling, and actions, in gaining an understanding of themselves and their world. It helps them develop their own capacities for constructive and responsible actions. It helps them increase their intellectual productivity (i.e., develop reasoning powers and gain understanding as well as develop and establish criteria) to make meaning, form judgments, and take effective actions in certain contexts.

When students increase their intellectual capabilities, they are learning. Learning occurs as students repeatedly study, experience, and reflect upon educative events and materials. When educative events and materials are intentionally designed as interventions in the student's experiences, they form a curriculum to guide learning. A broadly educated person has the ability to use her or his knowledge and intelligence with more power in making meaning, evaluating, and taking effective actions in a wide variety of situations than does someone with relatively little educational scope (Gowin, 1981).

Education also provides students with opportu-

nities to exercise their curiosity, to appreciate the human condition, to expand their capacities for invention or artistic expression, and to enrich their lives beyond the utilitarian. They also need to know that humans can be destructive and prejudicial, and that for any number of reasons, humans make errors, some of them inconsequential and some with devastating results. Education must also confirm for students the power of education, not just as a means to accomplish an individual goal, but as a liberating force that gives persons the power to understand, to make sense of apparent chaos, to seek solutions not only to individual concerns but to community, national, and international issues (E. White, paraphrased from a personal communication, September 2000).

Change is underway in higher education; principal among these changes is a paradigm shift in the generally accepted aims of higher education. The goals of higher education institutions have been traditionally centered on the students' acquisition of major and general-education knowledge, and educational processes have been centered on the role of the teacher in delivering knowledge to the learner. These goals are being replaced by student-centered goals that focus on the development of students' capacities as lifelong learners; that is, they are designed so that students can manage their own learning as well as self-author their own meaning making, knowledge construction, and bases for judgment, decision making, and problem solving.

The purposes, policies, processes, and practices of advising systems need to be shifted according to the changes in education such that they are aligned with the new, institutional, education goals. The needed advising systems should be centered on students as learners, and those in the system should be assisting students in developing their personal capacities for making academic choices about learning goals, majors, and courses as well as for planning and assessing their own navigation through the institution's educational opportunities to achieve their individual learning goals. In effect, they need to prepare students as lifelong self-advisors so they may guide their own lifelong learning activities.

In the advising-as-educating model, the goal of developing the learner as a lifelong self-advisor is translated as the goal for the educative-advising curriculum, and it defines the roles of the advisor as teacher and the student as learner and educational planner. Advising is educating. Advising is helping students come into conscious possession of their own powers of thinking, feeling, and action to gain an understanding and make meaning of their own educational environment. To be a curriculum navigator is to be a planner, evaluator, and decision maker in selecting a path among the institution's educational opportunities. To do this, students must gain and apply both explicit and tacit knowledge about themselves, their learning environment, and the processes for learning, thinking, knowledge construction, and decision making. To gain and apply this knowledge, students repeat cycles of study, experience, reflection, and taking action while discovering the knowledge of self, educational planning and opportunities, and metaprocesses used in making educational decisions. By designing and managing the institution advising system according to the seven principles derived from the vision of advising as educating, policy makers can assure interested stakeholders that the college is providing quality advising with effectiveness and efficiency.

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