


Chapter 10

Online Academic Advising to Support Part–Time Students: A Case Study at a University in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the benefits of online academic advising for part-time university students. Understanding the importance of academic advising in relation to students' academic success, the limited contact that part-time students might have with academic staff and faculty makes advisement even more crucial to fostering a productive academic environment for students like these. Drawing on the Core Competencies of Academic Advising developed by the Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA, 2017), this chapter presents a case study featuring two part-time students at a university in Vietnam who encountered difficulties in their academic journeys and required special support from university advisors. The authors, through an ethnographically-oriented approach as academic advisors, present student narratives at various points of the advisement process, detailing how student support services led to favorable academic outcomes. This chapter presents how advisors demonstrated conceptual, informational, and relational competencies in supporting learners and limitations of the advisement process. Findings from this investigation revealed that the advisement process transcended one-on-one interactions, instead being a collaborative and community-based endeavor requiring input from both

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institutional and professional networks. In sum, the authors argue for the use of online advisement as a tool for creating an equitable learning environment for university students and to enhance their sense of institutional belonging.

INTRODUCTION

Student success, underpinned by individual effort, largely depends on the extent to which institutions support students in solving their existing problems or answering their questions. When attending college-level degree programs, students face significant challenges while joining new community discourses. For example, in educational settings, international students may fail to understand the requirements and expectations of their assignments. Lecturers generally attempt to provide academic support by offering prompt feedback and consultation, helping them achieve desirable outcomes (Kettle & Ryan, 2018), thus creating greater equity in the classroom. To foster equity in educational settings, one common strategy among modern higher education providers is the concern given to both students' academic needs and personal preferences.

These two considerations often contribute to institutions' positive global reputation and student retention. The World Bank (2021) continues to re-emphasize the benefit of investment in higher education as it is "instrumental in fostering growth, reducing poverty and boosting shared prosperity". Many approaches to modern higher education are extremely diverse and often reflect multicultural values influenced by factors of geography and culture, bringing many unique characteristics into classrooms. Therefore, to sustain entrepreneurial educational competitiveness, higher education institutional leaders often commit to academic excellence by providing the maximum range of educational services in response to sociocultural, political, and economic landscapes. Local and global forces shape institutional strategies to be both entrepreneurially and academically oriented, as higher education institutions strive to be both financially independent and responsible (Brown, 2021).

One of the common forms of equitable assistance with student matters is the use of advising services to support student bodies (Mu, 2016). Academic advising is when a professional advisor works closely with a student, understanding their learning goals, and guiding them to achieve their goals using multiple resources (Erlich & Russ-Eft, 2013; Grites, 2013; Powers, Carlstrom, & Hughey, 2014). Academic advising is also a powerful tool to maximize students' learning potential, foster students' development, strengthen the reputation of the institution, and promote equity as a core value in education (Lawton, 2018). The significance of academic advising as it contributes to greater classroom equity should not be overlooked.

Being able to provide such advising services could contribute to the advanced reputation of institutions and their competitiveness, particularly with the increasing number of educational institutions. To illustrate, in Vietnam, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of domestic and international students attracted to private and foreign-invested universities (WENR, 2017). The popularity of private and foreign-invested institutions creates competitive pressure on public institutions, urging them to enact relevant changes in a sustainable manner. In response, higher education institutions have been upgrading student support structures because they play a large role in providing high-quality academic and non-academic services for student populations (WENR, 2017).

Vietnamese public universities have been concerned about student support services in general, and academic advising in particular, in order to attract greater numbers of domestic students (L. H. N. Tran,

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