

College Administrators and Faculty Perceptions on Academic Advising at Three Colleges of Education in Ghana

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Abstract

The success of Ghanaian Colleges of Education increasingly depends on student retention and degree completion. Views and Opinions about college administrators' and faculty participation in academic advising are still developing. Despite the paucity of data on the topic, some college administrators, lecturers and tutors were encouraged to provide academic support. It also discusses the strength and challenges of college administrators and faculty perceptions on academic advising, strategies and provides details on the way forward to address them. This study examined college administrators' and faculty perceptions on academic advising at Ghana's three colleges of education. The research methodology used in this comparative study was constructionist epistemology. College administrators find it difficult to assist students because of their schedules and workloads; as a result, they recommend employing professionals to perform the task. The second finding was that accessibility and services were crucial to academic advising. Finally, access to student data and technology posed challenges to faculty.

Keywords- Colleges, Administrators, Academic, Advising, Ghana.

Introduction

Years ago, some colleges of education and universities in Ghana boasted better retention of (first-year students returning to the same institution for their second year degrees, students continuous enrolment from semester to semester), and degree completion rates varies greater from time to time by public colleges (Astin, 1997). Success was partly due to selective admissions standards, enrolling primarily residential students or regular students who were not required to work to support themselves or their families, and smaller environments that promoted institutional

connections and involvement (Freeman et al., 2007). However, as the growing nature of the economy increases with large students' populations, during the admission periods, enrolments at many public and private institutions continues to emerge. The decrease in attendance at private colleges was possibly as a result of student financial tussles that contributed to increased enrolment in public colleges in Ghana because they were often perceived as being more affordable and reliable than private colleges/universities (Zumeta, 2010). Private institutions that are affected includes religious ones that focus on changing or making a distinctive difference in people's lives by offering deep, spiritual meanings (Woodrow, 2006), that also wanted to remain accessible and affordable for students who desired a religious education. In other words, college administrators are persons or individuals who manage the operations of a college or university, including academics, student services, and faculty research. They also help students to navigate the university's services in areas such as students' records, grade issues, transcripts, accommodation issues and many more.

Many others building on their seminal works, have maintained that the best way for students to engage in an institution is through relationships with college administrators (Tinto, 2001). Relationships are easily fostered at small institutions, as there are often more opportunities for students to interact with their tutors inside and outside of the classroom due to the size of these institutions (Kuh & Hu, 2001). Additionally, many colleges and universities with enrolments below 1,500 students utilize a tutor/lecturer advisory model system, in which faculties in academic department's advice students in their majors programs regarding which courses to take, as well as giving guidance and counselling towards career prospects and internship options to consider after leaving the college. Also, college administrators plays a very essential role to students by giving them some key academic advises in regards to how they should go by their course work and lectures either in a form of orientations or through seminars and workshops for students.

Tutor/Lecturer advising models system is likely to enhance student experiences at many public colleges of education in Ghana with the sense that, students get enough time to interact with their tutors as a result in student to teacher ratio, relatively low including private ones that struggle with enrolment of students due to financial

difficulties which may further reduce the likelihood of student retention for a period of time that would range within the four-year degree completion (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). With this, it simply implies that, public colleges of education has the capacity to take more students since is government funded through subventions as compared to private colleges of education and hence, teacher to student ratio increases as a result of student retention in progression.

Literature review

The various models and structures of academic advising that currently exist indicates that nearly all full-time colleges of education and university administrators are expected to advise students in some capacity in respect to their works. The expectations of college administrators' who serve as advisors at some of these institutions, however, are mostly not enough. In regards to faculty-student mentoring relationships at some colleges, (Noble, 2018) explained: I and my colleagues at various private colleges regularly interact with our students outside the class in a number of settings: trips to academic conferences, excursion trips, study-abroad trips, dinners on campus, dinners in the professors' homes, games, book club, social media interactions, sports, bible studies and many others. Obviously not all students or professors may be involved in the campus community trips, but a few may wish to do so. Nationally, faculty advisors have an average of 26 advisees and spend about 11% of their time meeting with students about their academic issues (Gordon et al., 2011). These faculty advisors are perceived as effective if they accomplish the following goals: assist students in self-understanding and acceptance, especially as it relates to career goals and life decisions; assist students in developing an appropriate educational plan and aid their decision-making abilities; and provide specifics about policies and support programs and resources. Yet, it is important to recognize that the abilities and skills associated with effective academic advising do not always come naturally to tutor/ lecturer advisors, and administrators, but most often are not trained to be effective advisors (Myers & Dyer, 2005). It also means that, some college administrators who are with the expertise and skills in managing students relate problems on various campuses, can succeed effectively when there is a need for counselling session on

academic advising to be carried out to enhance their academic skills using their professional abilities, therefore there is a need for these administrators to have a professional background in order to support this task.

The skills that are most important for effective advisors to master include listening, counselling, referring, challenging, and supporting. (Gordon et al., 2011) recommended that specific expectations of advisors begin with the mission of the institution, which influences the goals of specific academic advising programs and faculty advisors. Significant research shows that effective academic advising is often not rewarded at colleges and universities (Swanson, 2006). Rather, research is the most rewarded activity in rank and tenure considerations and processes, particularly at large public four-year institutions (Tien & Blackburn, 1996). Although rank and tenure rewards possibly motivate faculty to be active in scholarly research and publications, wondered if intrinsic motivation (enjoyment and interest in research) could result in greater research productivity than extrinsic motivation (faculty promotion, money) alone. The same possibilities have been stated about academic advising over decades of research. Even if an institution does not reward faculty for fulfilling their academic advising expectations, the tutors/lecturers who enjoy advising students are more likely to do it and do it well without any motivations. The same may be true for the additional engagement of faculty at other private colleges and universities, as explained by (Noble, 2018), a prominent voice in Christian Higher Education. Tutors/Lecturers who enjoy time with students both inside and outside the classroom and make additional opportunities to interact with students in both spaces when they are motivated through some kind of empowerment towards their professional development, such as grants, sponsorships, that is to say, through intrinsic motivation ways always wish to support students' academic advising in most cases.

Although tutors/lecturers are experts in their academic fields, many start the teaching profession with few skills or training in academic advising (Gordon et al., 2011). Also, college administrators, have their skills in handling administrative duties by ensuring that, the skills they acquired has a requisite application to academic skills that can be used in managing students' academic issues that needs the attention of

management. Therefore, the colleges and universities where they are employed do little to meet their professional development needs in this area (Myers & Dyer, 2005). Consequently, tutor/lecturer advisors must make their own efforts to improve their academic advising abilities. (Trigwell, 2011) stated that doing so requires faculty to first understand their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses, while acquiring a positive attitude toward their academic advising processes and responsibilities. As expected, tutor/lecturer attitudes should be an integral part of this equation to enhance students' academic achievements and the institutions should enhance upon tutors/lecturers professional development towards academic advising for those who wish to take up these roles and responsibilities attached to their areas in the academia. This can be done, by supporting or encouraging tutors/lecturers to belong to some professional bodies that empower students through academic counselling to be trained and have the pre-requisite knowledge and skills in order to assist students aside their teaching, learning and research.

'When researching faculty attitudes toward academic advising, (Allen & Smith, 2008) identified 12 functions of academic advising and assessed faculty members' views on how important each of those functions were, how responsible they felt for accomplishing each of those functions, and how well they believed that they satisfied each of the functions as a faculty advisor. Perhaps not amazingly, the tutor/lecturer respondents believed that all 12 functions were important, including the lowest rated function, which was helping students choose extra-curricular activities. Additionally, the researcher identified significant contrast between how important tutors/lecturers viewed some functions and how responsible they felt they were for them. Remarkably, providing accurate information about degree requirements and explaining how academic policies and procedures worked ranked as the two most important functions, but tutor/lecturer advisors did not believe that they were primarily responsible for either of them. The functions that tutor/lecturer advisors do see as their responsibilities were more related to connecting to the coursework in their major fields (and not necessarily their general education courses), as well as being counselled into internships, graduate schools, and specific career paths. These findings, then, highlight the conclusion that college administrator advisors

need thoroughly and regular training, along with reminders of advising functions, or should tasked these academic advising responsibilities to professionals who have the skills to manage students' academic issues across the various colleges.

Three areas in which college administrators need assistance in developing their academic advising skills include career advising, curriculum and/or academic programmes advising, and developmental training (Myers & Dyer, 2005). However, only limited research has examined faculty attitudes toward academic advising, how they prepare for such responsibilities and roles, or how they execute these tasks when advising students, leaving the area of college administrators. One of the few exceptions is a study by (Myers & Dyer, 2005), who attempted "to determine the attitudes, needs, and self-perceived level of competence in advising by faculty of agricultural and land grant institutions" (p.38). Their research revealed that faculty's advice mostly the undergraduate students and that their advising sessions with undergraduate students are longer the same as their advising sessions with graduate students. Out Of the faculty participants in the study, 91% believed that academic advising should be part of rank and tenure decisions and count toward their teaching loads and promotion. When asked if such practices already existed at their institutions, 56.4% of faculty reported that academic advising was part of rank and tenure considerations, and 41.3% of faculty said that their teaching loads does not allowed enough time to advise students. To this effect, it has become necessary to conduct this research to know the perceptions towards academic advising by college administrators to enhance and to support students' needs on campus for their academic achievement. From this study, it can be inferred that, academic advising should be made independent from teaching and learning in order to create better avenue for students to interact with professionals who can handle key areas by providing psychological, social and emotional well-being needs such as; counselling and placement needs, programme guidance needs, to students at all times, whiles on campus, since these students majority of them are above 18 years of age.

Moreover, private institutions in the United States, including those affiliated with the Christian denominations, full-time faculty often assume the role of academic advisor (Noble, 2018). Academic advising is not prioritized by administrators as a

whole, but rather by those with knowledge of academic skills in handling students' issues professionally, because the job descriptions of college administrators in Ghanaian educational institutions primarily involve administrative and supervision responsibilities in addition to other duties rather than academic. Effective advising is essential to improve students' retention rate, persistence, and degree completion (Allen & Smith, 2008), and the use of faculty advisors is unlikely to change at small colleges. However, the effectiveness of tutor/lecturer advisors at colleges of education and universities may be improved if perceptions of the advantages and difficulties of such advising are better understood and well outlined in the job description of their roles as tutors/lecturers.

Managing academic advising to improve academic work is largely the responsibility of college administrators, but tutors/lecturers can only support the task, in this way, it helps the students stay update on the information they need to accomplish their academic goals and develop capabilities as leaders in their future endeavors. Also, college administrators' roles may differ based on their job descriptions but in somehow related to the capacity in which they may find themselves, hence there is a need to have a professional staff who has the knowledge and experience to carry out such task on academic advising in various institutions in Ghana.

Methods

The study was guided by this research question: "What are college administrators' perceptions of the strengths and challenges of current systems of academic advising at these three Teacher Colleges in Ghana?" The design of the study was rooted in the epistemology of constructionism, in which meaning is not found, but constructed by the meaning-maker (Crotty, 1998). That is, there was no one objective truth to address this research question; rather, the people who experienced a certain phenomenon created their own meaning or reality about that phenomenon. Such different truths can only be explored and understood through qualitative research, which uses data collection and analysis methods to highlight individual experiences and perspectives, not to produce generalizations. This type of research is derived from the theoretical perspective of constructivism, which focuses "exclusively on 'the

meaning making activity of the individual mind” (Crotty, 1998). This method was adopted to solicit experiences and opinions through interviews from participants who had rich information to assist for investigation. In this case, the theoretical perspective of constructivism identified the culture-sharing group of college administrators as advisors at some, teacher training, colleges of education in Ghana on the study of their perceptions of academic advising expectations and responsibilities.

Research Design

The research strategy for this study was a case study. According to (Yin, 2009), “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). Thus, other defining characteristics of a case study is that it “explores in-depth, program, event, activity, process, and one or more individuals” (Creswell et al., 2007), is bound by a set period of time, and strives to result in a well-rounded understanding of the case being studied (Patton, 2014). Although there were no limitations of data collection for this case study, data were collected from multiple sources to strengthen the description and understanding of the arguments. Thus, the case study could also be described as particularistic, meaning that it focused “on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon” (Merriam, 2001). The study was a comparative case study, in which multiple cases were researched to understand one culture and issue (Creswell, 2009), hence allowed its design to fit within the existing definitions of case studies.

Research Location

Data collection for this study took place at the three Teacher Training Colleges located in different districts within the Volta region of Ghana, West Africa. Each institution/college granted an approval for entry from the College Principal for data collection to take place on campus. The pseudonyms of these institutions were Evangelical Presbyterian College of Education, Amedzofe (AMECO), Peki College of Education (PKCE-GOVCO), and Akatsi College of Education (AKATSICO). Although the three campuses shared certain characteristics in common, they differ in

other ways in terms of infrastructure. To provide an idea of an ongoing reference, a summary of descriptors of study locations were made available in Table 1.

Table - 1

Descriptors of the study Location

College /Institution	Location (Population)	Size (Student Enrolment)
Evangelical Presbyterian College of Education (AMECO)	Amedzofe, Ho West District	1,096
Peki College of Education (PKCE-GOVCO)	Peki, South Dayi District	1,230
Akatsi College of Education (AKATSICO)	Akatsi, South District	700 / 1000

Similarities

The main characteristics that **AMECO**, **PKCE-GOVCO**, and **AKATSICO** shared were similarities of location, and student enrolment size. The Colleges of Education are positioned in the same region but close districts within the Volta Region of Ghana and face vicious competition with other private and public ones in the other regions, and now, it has changed from two-year programme to four-year degree programme institutions. Because they all have same objectives and visions but not similar to private ones, there are similar influences on the way the administrators and tutors/lecturers advise and interact with students, since more emphasis is placed on “teaching and learning” of the students. Also, vital to focus on the case study is that the colleges were similar in size; AMECO, PKCE-GOVCO, and AKATSICO enrolments vary from 1,000 to 1,200 with undergraduate students for varied educational degrees both in Primary and JHS education programmes in the various colleges. All the three colleges expected full-time faculty to serve as academic advisors to students and also provide key administrative guidance towards students’ academic path on various campuses but it has become challenging to the fact that, they enjoyed teaching and supervising their students more than giving them academic advise due to time constraints and the heavy workloads on them with project supervisions.

Differences

The main distinct features among these colleges is that they are affiliated to different Public and Private Universities in Ghana that met the standard of Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) criteria as established by law and award degree certificates to students after the completion of their various degree, certificates and diploma programmes in the colleges of Education in Ghana. However, the specific affiliations are identified in order to protect the ethical principles of the colleges involved in the study.

Research Participants

One college administrator from each college of education were recruited together with two full-time tutors/lecturers who were selected to participate in the interviews, document collection, and observations at each college for the study. The selection process employed was purposeful sampling; that is, participants were chosen because they could provide rich information about a phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2014). In compliance with the colleges' ethical rules and regulations, each tutor/lecturer advisor was asked to sign a consent form to participate in the study. The process of selecting participants included discussions with professional contacts at each college to determine who was eligible for the study, how long they worked at the college, the subject(s) they taught, and at what level, and the number of students they supervised. Efforts were made to select academic advisors who taught in different academic areas and have experience in years of service. Consequently, college administrators who were also selected from diverse administration backgrounds were in relation to their academic knowledge in the field of administration and experience in the number of years in that position. Pseudonyms were used by the colleges of education, as research participants were identified with affiliation as "tutor/lecturer 1, and 2" with their academic fields as "Primary Education and JHS Education as department/division" whereas; college administrators remain as "Administration". These descriptors were used to identify the research participants from the various colleges of education as indicated in Table 2.

Table - 2
Descriptors of research participants

Pseudonyms	Colleges / Participants	Academic Field	Experience (Years)	Advising (Years)
AMECO	Evangelical Presbyterian College of Education			
	1. College Administrator	Administration	12	10
	2. Tutor /Lecturer 1	Primary Educ.	10	7
	3. Tutor /Lecturer 2	JHS Education	14	12
PKCE-GOVCO	Peki College of Education			
	1. College Administrator	Administration	8	6
	2. Tutor /Lecturer 1	Primary Educ.	15	14
	3. Tutor /Lecturer 2	JHS Education	18	18
AKATSICO	Akatsi College of Education			
	1. College Administrator	Administration	5	5
	2. Tutor /Lecturer 1	Primary Educ.	10	9
	3. Tutor /Lecturer 2	JHS Education	12	11

The academic fields provided a more comprehensive view of faculty-provided advising at their colleges and a deeper understanding of answering the study's research question because these fields necessitate different career paths and course counselling information and will help the students meet their desired interest in the chosen field.

Data collection and analysis

The data for this study were extracted from interviews, collected documents, and observations with each of the faculty participants and the college administrators

towards their perspectives on the topic. The interviews lasted from 20 minutes to 40 minutes in length, and provided valuable insights to participants' behaviors, feelings, intentions, and thoughts. After these one-on-one meetings, each participant also submitted documents that they referenced in the interview to support their opinions. The interview protocol was designed to identify what documents the participants chose to mention on their own, with those materials subsequently gathered. By allowing information about these documents to emerge during the interview responses without prompting, insight was gained regarding which resources were most typically used during the advising process. Four-year degree and course sequencing plans, an academic advising manual, and a written proposal on faculty advising that was distributed to an academic curriculum approval board were among the materials gathered. Observation of advising sessions between the faculty and administrator participants and their advisees were carried out after the interviews and document collections. Student advisors also completed consent forms to enable their advising sessions to be seen in accordance with GTEC rules and regulations governing data collection. One session per faculty advisor participant was observed; whereas another session with administrator participant were also observed at each college, however, no recording was made from the sessions, instead, the researcher took field notes of each interview, which were important as they revealed their academic advising styles by faculty and administrator participants and the interactions they had with their advisees.

Qualitative data analysis includes a number of different processes. The one used for this study involved organizing data through field notes, coding and interpreting data, displaying and discussing findings (Creswell, 2009). After each interview was completed, the field notes taken were read thoroughly to ensure accuracy of the data extracted with assigned codes from the interviews with the participants. Such organizational processes and initial analyses continued as documents were collected and observations took place. Throughout the observations, the researcher continued and took thorough field notes of the interactions between the participants and some students, as well as the details of their discussion. This can be asserted by (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) "Peer debriefing or peer scrutiny are solid communication habits that create trust. Using another researcher to read and react to field notes, with their embedded researcher interpretations, is a confirmation that creates a tacit reality for the researcher". The field notes were transcribed within 24 hours after the observations to ensure the data were clear and timely. The transcripts were read and re-read prior to

the coding assigned to each of them with memos. Data was uploaded into MAXQDA, a qualitative data software that generated themes from the interviewed field notes gathered by the researcher and was used for the analysis. After the organization of the field notes by the researcher using the software, they were sorted chronologically to reflect each piece of data that was collected. Qualitative data analysis is rarely linear. In this study, data were coded as they were collected. This aspect of inductive coding occurred in different phases, beginning with first phase coding. From the themes that emanated from the software, that identified the first participant as faculty was of the view that “academic advising should be a sole responsibility of the college administrator since it deals mostly with students’ academic progression in the college”. Also, from the interviewed field note generated as a theme, was again identified as a college administrator who is of the view that, “academic advising forms a crucial aspect of students engagement with their lecturers, hence, lecturers should be given the role to play in academic advising to students to support and enhanced their leaning needs in the college”. Therefore, in the first phase of the analysis from the themes identified, it was in line with the view of (Saldana, 2014) that inductive coding was vital in the data analysis process, as a theoretical lens was not applied to the data; rather, it was beneficial to see what themes emerged from the data on their own.

In the second phase of the coding, the researcher with another college administrator was observed that “due to the heavy workload of administrative task, academic advising to students should be made as a separated task to be handled by a well-trained professional within the college to solely handle the works of academic advising to students in order to effectively meet the needs of students progress” although there were other themes that emerged, the most prevalence ones were taking in support of this study to reflect the primary findings. When the themes emerged, they were captured with memos that were used to depict interview transcripts. At this point, analytical memos of occurrences in the data were used “to document and reflect on the coding processes and code choices, how the process of inquiries is taking shape, and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts in the data” (Saldana, 2014).

Results

Although (Jnanathapaswi, 2021) defined a theme as “an outcome of coding, categorization, or analytical reflection” (p.14), he simply described findings as “buried treasure” (p.259) within the themes that emerged from the data in the study. A

systematic analysis of the themes that emerged from the interview data were assigned memos with indicated colors to differentiate each one of them and were used to give a reflective picture of the opinions and views of each selected faculty and college administrators as a participant in the study. The researcher, after the analysis of the themes that emerged familiarized himself with the data and was of the view that there is a need for a support system that should be adopted to solve academic advising as challenges faced by the three colleges of education in a sense that, there should be a provision of a qualified and professional advisors that should perform the task of academic advising and to address students' needs in the colleges of education respectively. Therefore, the findings were to address the research question for this study that states that: "What are college administrators' perceptions of the strengths and challenges of current systems of faculty-provided academic advising at the three Colleges in Ghana?" Based on the finding from the interview themes, it was found out that, the strength of academic advising can only be ensured if its operations is completely separated from the roles played by college administrators to give a strong service provision to students in the colleges, hence there is a need to recruit a professional personnel to undertake these tasks. Also, on the side of the faculty, as academic advising help to know the students more and better and to understand their academic needs, it was found out that, the workload on faculty with supervision roles and teaching roles, adding academic advising makes it more tiring, therefore there is a need for motivation for faculty who wish to carry out academic advising to students irrespective of their workloads.

Comparative case study findings

The data, themes, and commonalities at the three (3) colleges of education resulted in two main converging findings for the comparative case study. First finding related to perceptions of the strengths and challenges of faculty provided academic advising at the three Colleges in Ghana. The second finding focused on college administrator advisors perceptions of the strength and challenges on academic advising services at the three Colleges of Ghana. These two findings were discussed below.

a. Perception on the strengths and challenges of tutor/lecturer (Faculty) advisors knowing their students and enjoyed interacting with them always through teaching and Learning, research supervision at the three Colleges in Ghana

Across the three colleges of education in Ghana, where the study was carried out, the faculty advisors indicated that they enjoyed spending time with their students both in and out of the classrooms. Also, working at some colleges of education in Ghana that are primarily oriented toward teaching and learning, research supervision allows most faculty to know their students individually as well as also support their academic and career achievements through academic advising purposes. The faculty also attributed the encouragement and positive environments to the mission and visions of the colleges. It suggested that when faculty are concentrating on teaching, learning and research rather than advising, it is simple for them to get to know their students and for students to get to know their lecturers; hence smaller class sizes, allotment of students for supervision works were also seen as a benefit. Additionally, faculty advisor participants connected the college's goal, school culture, and surroundings to staff members who prioritize students' academic needs. Nearly every participant mentioned how their Christian faith has an influence in shaping the purpose of their interactions with students. Therefore, it was clear from the study that the faculty advisors at these three (3) Ghanaian colleges of education viewed these interpersonal contacts as a strength of the tutor/lecturer advisor model. Notwithstanding the strength alone, it was also realized that the faculty advisors were faced with challenges of meeting with the students especially with female students, who were allotted to male faculty for supervision and vice versa. This was a crucial challenge most female students who needed academic advice from them faced on campus.

b. Perception on the strength and challenges of college administrator advisors due to their busy administrative schedules and did not feel like they had enough time to thoroughly advise students on their academic advising services at the three (3) Colleges in Ghana

Although the nature of administrative task being performed by college administrators in these three (3) colleges of education in Ghana was huge, the participants had many tasks to accomplish beyond academic advising. The combination of such tasks varied, but seemed to result in less time for meaningful, personal, or productive academic advising sessions with students. Also, comparing the first findings as a strength of tutor/lecturer advisors role, it can be seen that tutor/lecturer advisors were expected to teach classes and grade assignments, hence they held office hours to help their students with coursework and other questions and concerns. Whereas with the college administrators, perform various administrative duties most often, attend to board meetings and take necessary minutes, writing of

letters, memos, dispatch correspondence and ensure records are kept administratively for easy retrieval at all times. This makes it more challenging for administrators to have enough time to provide academic advising services to students, mostly within their capacity as college administrators. Some of the college administrators who were participants also serve on committees and conducted occasional research to enhance their professional development in administration. In fact, at the time of the case study, it was found out that two of the college administrators from Peki and Akatsi College of Education were in the process of completing their Ph.D. degrees. Consequently, almost all of them expressed that they felt stressed to meet with their advisees as often or for as long as they desired, particularly if they had heavy work schedules to attend to. Despite the participants' claims that their administrative workloads were somewhat lightened in order to provide academic advising to students. Every administrator interviewed said that they were not compensated or motivated for their efforts, which made them occasionally hesitant to help students with academic advising, since it is not their core mandate but rather optional. This study aligns with the pattern found in the literature that was reviewed (Winniford et al., 1997)

Findings from the three (3) Colleges of Education in Ghana

Apart from the comparative case study analysis indicated above, the data also revealed specific institutional findings. The sections that follow describe unique themes for each of the three case study locations.

Evangelical Presbyterian College of Education (AMECO)

A theme emerged at this college which indicates that; the tutors/lecturers saw the functions and the processes of academic advising as different from teaching and other related academic services such as students' enrolment, course counselling, etc.

At AMECO, the frustration that was expressed by the tutors/lecturers as advisors related to their perception that most of their workload was on advising that related to enrolment instead of teaching. For example, a tutor/lecturer who handles primary education courses specifically emphasized that academic advising and enrolment are not the same, therefore there is a need to separate them, thus; he believed that enrolment should be the students' responsibility with the assistance from the college administrator or registrar of the institution, hence it should be channeled towards the office of the principal of the college, if necessary. In that development, the college administrator or principal of the college should provide students with semester

plans on how they can go about with information relating to their academic needs through the guidance of the registrar's office. Also, another tutor/lecturer from the JHS education department is of the view that since it is an administrative task to be performed, the office of the college registrar, should create an office space and recruit a qualified permanent staff who can handle cases of students' affairs needs while the tutors/lecturers served as coursework/project work counsellors and a mentor to the students. Similarly, from the observation, it was realized that, both tutors/lecturers from both Primary and JHS education department of the college were of the view that, academic advising should solely be the responsibility of the college administrators or with the office of the registrar and not the responsibility of the tutors/lecturers. Therefore, there should be clear boundaries between academic advising and that of providing academic guidance to students as academic counsellors or mentors. Also, it was suggested that a different academic advising model should be adopted in order to give a clear difference between academic advising and course enrolment in the college.

Peki College of Education (PKCE-GOVCO)

At PKCE-GOVCO, this two distinctive themes emerged: (1) Accessibility and customer service were vital to academic advising, as personal interactions were believed to contribute to student success; (2) inadequate information at the disposal of tutors/lecturers to guide students towards academic advising.

Accessibility and a customer service orientation were evident in the exact words used by both tutor/lecturer advisors as participant at PKCE-GOVCO, words that were repeated in the academic advising manual and at an observed academic advising session: having an "open door policy." Tutor/lecturer (JHS education, division) used a language to address the phenomenon of advising students who were not her official advisees. She said that students at PKCE-GOVCO knew they could walk into any advisor's office to receive help but it sometimes become difficult for them due to the fact that, most of the tutors/lecturers have busy schedules, either teaching or preparing their lecture presentation notes and so forth. Moreover, a lecturer/tutor from (Primary education, division) stated that although, his work is loaded, he can still make time to assist students with academic advising towards their academic achievements, hence he is ready to support the college administrator to provide that support to students as and when needed. He also indicated that he was willing to talk to these students, by organizing a zoom meeting at a scheduled time to engage newly admitted students

with the academic advising services they may need. Similarly, as he said, advising his students throughout every semester and the academic year. With his experience, he saw accessibility as an important part of customer service for students, stating that, it gives the students the chance to understand what they really need especially when it comes to academic advising on their course of studies as students affairs in the college, he indicated that he gave his phone number to students and inform them to call or text him any time they had a question concerning their studies. One of the tutors/lecturers also said from his perspective that, his students were paying for his services, and therefore willing to receive them by providing them with academic advising services.

Although, the college administrator plays the role of ensuring that students had their orientation before the beginning of the academic work, students seem not to be satisfied with that but still need academic advising toward the progress of their academic work whiles on campus and outside campus. Therefore, it has become the continuous responsibility of the administrators to ensure its effectiveness.

In view of the above, another point which was raised by tutors/lecturers were as a result of inadequate information at the disposal of tutors/lecturers to guide students towards academic advising. Students may have to "run around" to gather information before they can finish their enrolment procedures since lecturers/tutors are unable to help them because they lack access to information and are not aware of certain restrictions, hence makes it difficult for students to attend to academic service orientations, which faculty or an academic advisor may occasionally do in brief to assist students. To sum it up, these faculty advisors were supposed to offer students full-service advice in some cases, but the process is hindered by the restricted access to data to be used.

Akatsi College of Education (AKATSICO)

One recurring theme in the interviews with AKATSICO tutor/lecturer advisors was of the view that the faculty's capacity to provide students with suitable advice was inhibited by time and technological challenges.

The college's transition from a manual enrolment system that had been in place for a number of years to a new automated system that processed student records using software is probably what caused this theme to emerge. Although the department permitted any faculty member to enroll students, a JHS division tutor/lecturer explained that only the designated advisor could view or modify the student's

information in the college's recently automated system; as a result, other tutors/lecturers were not granted access to help students using the same system due to issues of confidentiality.

Also, the college administrator is of the view that the newly automated system of enrolment would flag-out possible challenges that existed and pave way for smooth operations on enrolment procedures. Another tutor/lecturer from the primary division of the college described the problems associated with the old system and said that enrolment of students is a huge challenge faced by the college, but as it stands now, the automated system would go a long way to address these challenges and also urge the office of the college registrar, to pilot tutors/lecturers who can be of assistance to help provide academic advising to students by giving them access to students records to enhance effectiveness using the newly adopted automated system.

It was evident that the participants at AKATSICO could benefit from thorough training about the new system being implemented to enhance efficiency and hence increase students' enrolment, as well as provide faculty with the necessary technological support to assist students' academic advising, even though the tutors/lecturers were not quite as concerned with the enrolment technology as indicated by the college administrator.

Implications for practice

The results from the individual colleges and comparative case studies have many implications and suggestions for the way faculty advising should be carried out at Ghana's three colleges of education. In order to promote comprehensive and high-quality advising consultations between faculty and their students, recommendations for academic advising models were made by the faculty advisors.

One suggestion was for academic advising expectations and responsibilities to be clearly communicated to faculty advisors. If tutor/lecturer advisors were aware of their roles as academic advisors and received appropriate training of their responsibilities, they would be more likely to succeed in these areas. Similarly, intentional and meaningful rewards should be given to tutor/lecturer advisors who excel at academic advising. The form of such compensation would likely vary from one institution to another, depending on their qualifications and other reward structures, to encourage faculty advisors to invest in faculty- through academic advising models to help support the college administrators. Another suggestion to assist with faculty advising loads is that of a central advising office or staff to meet

with first and second-year students to help them enroll in their respective programmes of study in the college. Once students advance to their third and fourth academic year, they should be assigned to a faculty advisor in their major fields. Such models would allow tutor/lecturer advisors to have some relief from their academic advising loads and encourage faculty advising sessions to focus on academic and career objectives and mentoring rather than just course sequencing and enrolment (Allen & Smith, 2008).

The three colleges in this comparative case study may be limited in funds or other resources, which make it difficult to establish an academic advising office or staff responsible for first- and second-year students. In such situations, it may be possible to use existing academic support programs, such as first-year experience programs, a general education director, the Registrar's Office, or a student's counselling and placement center. These areas could act as an enrolment locations for these students of the college. Firstly, it allows first- and second-year students to connect with full-time faculty in their intended area of study, as the literature on retention and persistence repeatedly emphasizes (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). Secondly, it provides opportunities for academic major and career exploration as well as introducing a discipline to students early in their college careers, which helps them to determine whether or not the field is right for them. Furthermore, the college administrator at Akatsi College of education indicated in her submission that, the problems with faculty being engaged in academic advising is as a result of the overburden task on them, hence there is a need to engage faculty for their assistance. The management of the college should arrange appropriate technological training for faculty advisors. The college need to employ competent employees in information technology and make efforts to create and purchase technological systems that should align with institutional needs. The same should be provided for people who work in offices that handle sensitive information about students. As evidenced in these findings from the study, faculty and staff at the colleges may need more training to understand the newly automated system and to be able to use them effectively.

A centralized advising system, such as physical or virtual one, can be an alternative advising model. These programs facilitate the completion of many academic assignments in a single location, either online or in a physical building. This enhances the experience for both existing and potential students as well as their parents. While setting up these places, time, money, and organizational restructuring is an issue, but virtual centers are far less expensive and simpler to set up. Intentional

and well-communicated designs and goals for a central advising office space for a staff could be a key element of a successful solution to a number of the issues brought up by survey participants.

Limitations of the study

The study which was restricted to Ghana's three educational institutions, sought to understand how college administrators and faculty felt about the academic advising systems that were in place at these three colleges of education. The results were exclusive to the colleges that employed a faculty advising approach to assist the office of the college registrar because the colleges visited in this case study lacked professional advising staff. The results were not meant to be applied to other people or situations outside the ones that were examined, as a case with all other qualitative research

Future research

Based on the study findings, more research should be conducted on the roles and responsibilities of tutors and lecturers. This is because, even though they may differ from college to college, their roles and responsibilities should be important for all full-time faculty members. This will increase their effectiveness and encourage a high degree of improvement in the way academic activities are managed across different colleges. It also suggested that there should to be a positive correlation between academic advising expectations and institutional cultures and faculty members feeling overburdened and overworked, which would be interesting as a follow-up study.

Also, to examine potential changes to faculty duties to free up more time for high-quality academic advising connections with students in schools that use faculty advisor models. Some of the faculty in the study experienced worry and an increased burden as a result of these changes, which could be made in the training or use of technology systems. Furthermore, future research should also investigate the use of qualified administrators with relevant experience and backgrounds to manage academic advising services in order to ensure quality assurance services for students in the Ghanaian institutions.

Conclusion

In Ghana's three colleges of education, the work of college administrators is obviously more demanding than that of lecturers at the colleges where they were

employed. However, the problem was that because of the administrator's heavy workloads, they transferred the burden to the lecturers or tutors, who were unmotivated and thus considered to be overburdened with their responsibilities of teaching and supervision of projects. This study assessed academic advising, one of the duties of faculty that should be voluntary but has been forced upon them. It also highlighted the necessity of regular and comprehensive training in addition to their regular teaching and project supervision.

The equal concern for each other is a key component of these colleges to integrate campus- wide efforts to counsel students and help them graduate. Tutors or lecturers from various academic fields are therefore required to assist the college administrator in providing students with academic advice services in an efficient manner, thereby promoting the overall growth and development of the college.

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