

**Developing the profession and practice of academic advising for
South African universities**

by

Gugu Wendy Khanye

2006025759

submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

in the subject

Higher Education Studies

at the

University of the Free State

Supervisors:

Professor Francois Strydom

Dr Sonja Loots

July 2024

DECLARATION

I declare that **Developing the profession and practice of academic advising for South African universities** is my own work, and that all sources used have been acknowledged within a complete reference list. I further declare that this work has not been submitted to any other university.

Gugu Wendy Khanye

Student number: 2006025759

Signature

Date

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

Harriet Tubman

Acknowledgements

Years of perseverance, persistence, and resilience have been the story of this journey. I have worked on this dissertation and aspired to complete it, and today, here it is. I express my greatest gratitude to my parents, my partner, Namisa (Julile), and my family, near and far, my friends for instilling in me this deep sense of purpose and upholding our family values; I will forever treasure your presence in my life. Your relentless and unwavering love and support through the ups and downs of my personal, academic and professional journey has been the wind beneath my wings and has kept me going; when it was an uphill battle, you were with me. To my late grandparents, this bears testament to all your prayers.

To my supervisors, Prof Francois Strydom and Dr Sonja Loots, I have no words. You kept my chin up and wiped my tears during the hardest times of this journey. You challenged me, encouraged me and inspired me to remember that the end was always in sight. From day one you availed yourselves and provided the right light to keep me on track. Thank you for the feedback and guidance. Your support has been a cornerstone of this study and the advancement of academic advising scholarship in South Africa. You have moulded me into not just a leader but also a scholar and researcher, and for that, I will forever be grateful; thank you.

To my UFS and national advising community, my day ones, thank you to each and every one of you for allowing the vision to bite and committing to carrying this baton with me. My CTL colleagues, my besties and friends, you are all a force! Thank you for listening and always laughing with and at me through this journey.

Khanye,msuthu,mwelase!

Summary of the study

Internationally, academic advising plays a critical role in supporting student success, promoting retention and contributing to positive graduation rates, while facilitating a positive and fulfilling experience. It has become the cornerstone for higher education institutions in how they guide and support students and connect students to the institution and resources. In the South African context, similar developments have been observed. In recent years, academic advising in South African higher education has shown significant increases in the advancement of it as a practice and profession. It has helped facilitate how students are supported, how students access and navigate higher education successfully. With the intentional efforts to advance the professionalisation of academic advising through the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) short course, this study has the dual purpose of reflecting on whether the AAPD meets the needs of both practitioners and students in the South African higher education context.

Reflecting on literature and international best practice, work by Yarbrough (2002), as well as Troxel et al. (2021), has demonstrated that it is the engagements between advisor and advisee that are amongst the most impactful encounters that influence a student's sense of self-efficacy towards completing their degree requirements. Adopting a meta-approach, this study evaluates whether the use of the AAPD and its foundational theoretical approaches support the development of academic advising in South Africa by aligning conceptual and practical needs of students. The first paper uses a constructivist paradigm to explore how AAPD participants between 2018 and 2021 acquired knowledge and learned. Building on this, the second paper focuses on the practice, reflecting on whether the students who went for academic advising had their needs met by the AAPD using a pragmatic paradigm.

The significance of this study is that core to academic advising, the informational, conceptual as well as relational components are at the core of what students need support with and what should form the base of the AAPD short learning programme. Some advisors still find it challenging to distinguish conceptual and informational components, which is usually caused by the reality that when students do seek advising support, they are confronted by a combination of needs. When considering how advisors are trained, the AAPD forms an introductory basis to the profession and practice. There are, however, gaps for advisors with regard to leading and coordinating the work. There is a need for ongoing communities of practice that afford for advisors to reflect and continue realigning their practice, especially within the conceptual and relational components.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

AA: Academic Advising

AAPD: Academic Advising Professional Development

DHET: Department of Higher Education and Training

DUT: Durban University of Technology

HEI: Higher Education Institutions

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising

NMU: Nelson Mandela University

NSFAS: National Student Financial Aid Scheme

PSET: Post-schooling education and training

QLFS: Quarterly Labour Force Survey

SASSE: South African Survey for Student Engagement

SLP: Short Learning Programme

UCDP: University Capacity Development Programme

UFS: University of the Free State

UKZN: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

UP: University of Pretoria

Wits: University of the Witwatersrand

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation of the study	10
1.1 Introduction	10
1.2 Literature review	14
1.2.1 International perspective on the development of academic advising	14
1.2.2 Academic Advising in South Africa	15
1.2.3 The pillars, competencies required for Academic Advising.....	16
1.3. Rationale of the study	18
1.4 Research questions	20
1.5 Research methodology	21
1.6 Ethical considerations	21
1.7 Limitations of the study	22
1.8 Overview of thesis.....	22
Chapter 2: Article 1: In what ways does the Academic Advising Professional Development Short Learning Programme contribute to the profession and practice of Academic Advising in South Africa?	23
1.1 Introduction	24
1.2 Academic advising as a practice.....	25
1.3 Academic advising as a profession	26
1.4 Academic advisor professional development in South Africa	28
1.5 Methodology.....	33
1.6 Results and discussion	34
<i>Informational</i>	37
<i>Conceptual</i>	40
<i>Relational</i>	41
<i>Technology</i>	42
<i>Personal (professional)</i>	43
1.7 Conclusion.....	47
References	49
Chapter 3: Article 2: Are students' advising needs met by the current Academic Advising Professional Development approach?	54
3.1 Introduction	55
3.2 Academic advising professional development.....	57
3.3 International student realities, needs, and academic advising support.....	59

3.5 Theoretical underpinning.....	63
3.6 Methodology.....	64
3.7 Results and discussion	65
3.8 Conclusion.....	77
References:	79
Chapter 4: Conclusions and implications	84
4.1 Introduction.....	84
4.2 Research focus	84
4.3 Value of the study and conclusion	88
4.4 Limitations and recommendations	89
Appendices:.....	96

List of figures and tables

Chapter 2

Figure 1: Overview of the five academic advising components

Figure 2: Number of years academic advisors have been involved in academic advising

Figure 3: The distribution of the types of information disseminated by academic advisors

Figure 4: The extent to which the AAPD has supported and contributed to advisor development

Chapter 3

Table 1: Number of academic advising appointments per year 2018 – 2020

Figure 2: Faculty distribution of academic advising appointments 2018 – 2020

Figure 3: Advising session formats 2018 -2020

Figure 4: Advising session themes 2018 -2020

Figure 5: 2018 session themes per faculty

Figure 6: 2019 session themes per faculty

Figure 7: 2020 session themes per faculty

Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation of the study

1.1 Introduction

Academic advising as a profession and practice is gaining serious momentum in conversations surrounding student access, support and success across South African institutions of higher learning. According to de Klerk and Dison (2022), those who serve as academic advisors get an array of academic and non-academic requests. These requests, in addition to the academic support they provide, range from food insecurity, stationery, personal hygiene items, accommodation and funding opportunities. Based on these realities, advisors are faced with the conundrum of identifying the behaviours and support strategies that enable access with success for students while registered at an institution of higher learning, which remains unresolved. Within the South African higher education landscape, the intentional effort has led to the implementation of varying policies and practices and has resulted in modest increases in access, throughput, and graduation rates (Essop, 2020). Although this is positive, the sector continues to battle nuances of narrowing the achievement gap between students of colour, particularly black students and white students. This underscores the point that the system should continue to prioritise the improvement of academic and student success efforts, but the definitions and practices also require alignment (Valentine, Hirschy et al. 2011).

Unfortunately, the National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education 2001) highlighted that the higher education system during the first decade of democracy represented a typically low graduation rate and high dropout rates, which represented a typically inefficient and ineffective system and a lack of resources. The Plan then subsequently proposed an increased focus on academic and student success as a key priority. Building on the Plan, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (PSET) (Department of Higher Education and Training 2013) makes an evident and intentional call for the expansion of access with success, improved quality, and increased diversity of higher education provision in South Africa. These publications over the years all emphasise the importance of ensuring that the higher education system is responsive to the needs of students and employers in both public and private sectors, as well as to the broader societal and developmental objectives of the country.

As a practice, academic advising encompasses an increasing level of presence and involvement in the development of students and the educational paths they choose. According to Light (2001), through the lens of academic advising, research findings have

confirmed the value of academic advising and its positive influence on student retention through a conclusion that “good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience”.

Through the reinvigoration of the process of student support and success in higher education – a space academic advising ought to occupy and facilitate students’ dreaming and thinking, the academic advising experience has great potential of systematically increasing student retention as a by-product. Tinto (2002) describes the potential of academic advising as a paradigm of learning focusing on outcomes to address key conditions for student success particularly when approached as a process grounded in teaching and learning.

Hunter and White (2004) attest that academic advising is perhaps the only structured campus activity that has the potential to guarantee students sustained interaction to guide the student in shaping a meaningful learning experience.

The core purpose of advising being to enhance learning, help guide students craft a coherent educational path that integrates with their desired career path (Drake, 2011), a structured academic advising plan is a functional tool in guiding the processes and procedures that inform institutional policy to best support students from enrolment through to graduation. Developmental academic advising is both a process and an orientation. It reflects the idea of movement and progression, it goes beyond simply giving information or signing a form.

As a practice in higher education, academic advising continues to provide an avenue by which universities may improve, among other experiences, student satisfaction and retention and assist students in selecting and committing to an academic programme that will filter into their desired career. The process of academic advising through continuous research has been found to directly influence student persistence and affect student grades, intentions, and satisfaction with their own role, factors that indirectly lead to student retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). According to Yarbrough (2002, p.63), “brief exchanges between advisor and advisee may have the greatest impact on the student’s sense of self-efficacy in completing his or her degree requirements”, and therefore, by adapting practices to match the needs of current students, advisors may help them decide on and commit to academically.

Drawing on a decade of global research conducted on academic advising and tracing the inception and evolution phases, as a practice, research exemplifies that academic advising as a practice has undergone rigorous development and as a result has become one of the immediate focus points for South African Higher Education and Teaching and Learning. Scholars have conducted research in the field of academic advising and among other findings have come to conclude that various factors critical for crafting a grounded and influential experience for students in higher education specifically play a facilitation role in the students' experience, progression and ultimately success. Boylan (2001), and McGillin (2003) established through findings that for an institution seeking to improve university readiness, success rates and graduation, the institution ought to lobby for a developmental approach that encompasses a three-way-split approach that will:

- lay the groundwork for access with success;
- provide content and structure for curricula and co-curricula activities; and
- develop resilient students who, despite sometimes improbable circumstances, can persist to succeed.

Looking beyond the borders of the curriculum, the holistic design of academic advising as a practice has through its evolution established itself to be a practice grounded in paedagogical nuances of curriculum design, co-curricula activities as well as teaching and learning practice in and outside the classroom as form as critical experiences in the paradigms of advising.

Reflecting on literature and international best practice, work by Yarbrough (2002) has demonstrated that the engagements between advisor and advisee are among the most impactful encounters that influence a student's sense of self-efficacy towards completing their degree requirements. Building on this, Drake (2011) also established that academic advising has a positive influence on student retention. With much evidence in the domains of overall Academic Development, Student Affairs as well as Teaching and Learning, singling out specific practices that exist in the curricula and co-curricula spaces contributing to student success, inferences can be made that academic advising is that one midway practice intersecting the curricula and co-curricula towards contributing to student success. According to Evans et al. (2010, p.6) "the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases their development capabilities as a result of enrolment in an institution of higher education" is defined as student development. McGill (2019) further attested to the academic advising profession being a direct response to the intricate students' encounter along their academic journey.

From a teaching and learning perspective, Lowenstein (2014) suggests that advising is a 'locus of learning' that helps students better understand the 'logic' in their academic curricula. In terms of Academic Advising as a practice, the viewpoint of Lowenstein (2013) echoes a deeper definition of academic advising and provides meaning to the practice and profession as not just a prescriptive, paper signing exercise, but rather a learning and development process. According to Light (2011), through the lens of developmental academic advising, research findings have confirmed its value as well as its positive influence on student success and retention. Conclusive findings have thus confirmed that *"good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience"* (p. 81).

South African context:

Although academic advising in the South African context was not part of the higher education sectoral projections in 1997 when the Higher Education Act no. 101 was drafted, in recent times, research and practice in several higher education streams focusing on student success have since advocated for its existence and integration into student support services. National policy frameworks such as the University Capacity Development Plan (UCDP) have since made provision for a practice such as student (academic) advising because it aims to enhance the behaviours of students to foster a sense of belonging while also improving student success opportunities. In an explicit pronouncement on 'student advising', the 2017 Ministerial Statement tabled by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) was one of the first national documents to describe what is envisaged for advising. To establish a structured approach for student development, student (academic) advising is herein being identified as a critical pillar within student support provision that offers integrated support to improve student success (DHET, 2018).

Despite the fact that there has been minimal conceptual description and policy guidance as to what is meant by student (academic) advising, the practice has been rapidly developing in South African public higher education institutions in response to the need for holistic student support. With the commitment to the widened provision of access with success opportunities in South African Higher education, some institutions have been confronted with the need to meet students where they are, particularly with a growth in students accessing university from lower resourced schools, which might impact students' level of preparedness for higher education studies. Lee (2018) describes this as the emerging unique challenges experienced by historically marginalised students studying at institutions of higher learning.

Indeed, less than 30% of students enrolled for three-year degrees graduate in the allocated three years, suggesting a substantial need for support (DHET, 2019). Such realities are among what has urged a need for academic advising.

This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the exploration and contextualisation of academic advising for South African higher education through the lens of student needs and staff training, development, and professionalisation. For the purpose of this study and as informed by international literature and best practice, the term academic advising is adopted as opposed to student advising and other terminologies. The alignment with international best practices prioritises and positions academic advising as an important policy imperative. As such, the shaping of academic advising in practice within the professional domain will enable practitioners to have a common understanding of the conceptual underpinning of what academic advising entails, and how its conceptualisation and definition hold true for the South African context and aims to advance the student success agenda.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 International perspective on the development of academic advising

There has been much emphasis to define academic advising as a practice that considers a students' personal, academic and career aspirations and steers students towards support for success. Drawing on four international eras describing the existence and practice of academic advising, the practice of academic advising has shifted from an undefined and unexamined activity to a defined activity that is examined and practised. A developing and rather unique field to South African higher education, the practice and profession have been observed from varying angles. Many researchers and practitioners have come to argue that advising ought to be scrutinised from multiple lenses as it carries varying degrees of developmental aspects. The first era of academic advising is recorded and described by Kuhn (2008) and Daly and Sidell (2013) as the period during which students were assisted during a time in higher education when curricula electives were introduced to the academic study programme. Distinctive of the first era of academic advising is that the practice was very rigid, formal and prescriptive. Students did not have any staff with whom to have personal and career-related conversations beyond academics. With the growth and expansion of higher education and curricula, academic advising was defined and examined as a practice during its second era. This second era, 1930 to 1940, was also the time during which there was a flourishing of student support services. Towards and into the 1970s, academic advising transitioned into its third era. Crookston (1994) during this era defined

and differentiated academic advising into two domains in accordance with the approach: prescriptive and developmental academic advising. This historic emergence and defining era of academic advising further gave rise to specific theory directing the practice and profession but also improved practice. Borrowing from O'Banion (1972, p.62), who said "the advisor serves as a teacher and guide in an interactive partnership aimed at enhancing the student's self-awareness and fulfillment" and Lowenstein (2009, p.127) stating that "an excellent advisor does the same for the student's entire curriculum that the excellent teacher does for one course", a combination of just these two perspectives affirms that advising is intended for students to understand and also engage in the critical connections aligning their personal, academic and career aspirations. The fourth era, one may argue to be the current era, describes the existence of academic advising practice encompassing the inclusion and identification of data-driven, technology-enabled, and holistic elements to the practice.

With global literature defining academic advising to suite various contexts, the Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA) in it's early worked simply described academic advising as follows:

Academic advising takes place in "situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach" (Kuhn, 2008) (p.3).

One can conclusively attest that drawing on this range of practical and theoretical developments, these contributions and advancements have indeed aided the practice and profession to be better understood by advisors and directly impact their understating of the students they serve as well as their educational experiences (Burgess & Cisneros, 2018; Erikson, 1958; Erikson, 1963; Ewing-Cooper & Merrifield, 2018; Hagen & Jordan, 2008; Marcia, 1966; Schlossberg, 2008; Shaffer & Zalewski, 2011).

According to Rhodes (2001, p. 238), "The successful university will be knowledge-based but student-centered, research-driven but learning-focused." Through the formalisation of higher education, the development of the student followed naturally because most students were being trained to be professionals. During this time, students and faculty often shared residences, providing the faculty with a close disciplinary relationship with the students both in and out of the classroom (Brubacher& Rudy, 1997). This maintained discipline but also

afforded students a space to connect and establish a sense of belonging to the institution through staff presence.

In international literature, Busato et al. (2000) and Mihaela (2015) confirmed that factors such as student motivation and their learning styles directly correlate to their academic success. Suggesting responsive strategies to the challenges students face, Cachia et al. (2018) went on to advocate for opportunities for enhancing self-awareness for students in the form of responsive student support practices.

1.2.2 Academic Advising in South Africa

Mirroring international perspectives to the South African context, I have come to understand that South African students' needs include, but are not limited to, academic advising, self-efficiency, parental engagement and support, motivation, time management, adjustment, emotional well-being, and access to information (Thomas & Maree, 2022).

With the catalytic work of student engagement making ground for academic advising, defined in student engagement literature as a high-impact practice, 2006 was the emergence of academic advising in South African higher education. The involvement of two South African universities in the Global Academic Advising Association, NACADA, strengthened the conversations about the role of academic advising in student engagement and, more intently, student success. With the first investigations of academic advising in South Africa being linked to how students are registered and how curriculum credits are loaded, those conversations between the students and a dedicated institutional representative and efforts to support students towards degree completion served as enablers for the practice. Almost ten years after the emergence of academic advising in South Africa, 2018 saw the establishment and implementation of the first contextualised professional development training for academic advisors.

Though South African higher education institutions have not yet developed contextual best practices or guidelines for student success and, more specifically, academic advising, work by NACADA, through the Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2005), the Concept of Academic Advising (2006) and defining of the core components and competencies has afforded the sector a springboard and framework to guide the contextual advancement of the practice and profession.

The South African Academic Advising Association (Eletsa) for their context further defines their practice and scholarship as:

An ongoing and intentional teaching and learning practice that empowers the student in their learning and development process to explore, align and succeed in their personal, academic and career goals. This definition is based on NACADA's conceptual framework which serves as the model for academic advisement globally. This model lays the foundation for the advising practice with three content components – conceptual, informational, and relational. An understanding of these content areas provides Academic Advisors the knowledge and skills they need to be effective guides for their students. Therefore, as a shared responsibility between the Academic Advisor and advisee, advising aims to maximise the students' potential by facilitating a conceptual understanding, sharing relevant information and developing a relationship focused on promoting academic success. The envisaged result is that students have a meaningful academic experience while in higher education and feel a sense of belonging to the institution while maximising their potential to succeed.

Knowing that effective academic advising is at the core of institutional efforts to retain students (Tinto, 2017), the task for countries and institutions outside the boundaries of the United States of America (USA) remains to define, align and contextualise academic advising as a practice and a profession. In the South African higher education context specifically, patterns similar to those observed internationally have been observed in the development and advancement of the practice and profession. Zooming in and narrowing in on the global advancements and developments of academic advising as a profession and practice in South Africa, I concur with the proposition made by De Klerk (2021) that academic advising as a practice is and should be positioned to address the day-to-day challenges students are confronted by along their educational journey while academic advisors be the professional positioned to support and establish enabling experiences for students to access and ultimately succeed beyond graduation.

1.2.3 The pillars, competencies required for Academic Advising

Borrowing from international best practice, what NACADA describe as the *Pillars of Academic Advising*, this structural framework has afforded for the contextual defining and provision of principles that guide the profession and practice in the South African context. Looking particularly at the Concept of Academic Advising (2006), which was produced “for the good of the profession”, it frames academic advising as being structured within three key components: the curriculum of academic advising, the pedagogy, and thirdly, student learning outcomes (SLOs), which are indicators of what students are expected to know, be able to do and value and appreciate as a result of their engagement in the practice. As the second pillar and extension of the concept of Academic Advising, for the purpose of this study, that has provided an opportune landscape for the advancement of academic advising is the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model (2017), informed by Habley’s (1987) framework.

Habley (1994, p. 10) has gone on to investigate the practice and profession further and deduced that “academic advising is the only structured activity on the campus in which all students have the opportunity for on-going, one-to-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution”. Taken from these lessons, researchers have further established that the goal of academic advising is the education and development of students (Creamer, 2000; White, 2015; Zelanzy, 2017; Powers & Wartalski, 2021). As a result, academic advising has become an increasingly visible and important part of the university experience.

How academic advisors are trained informs much of what they do and how they do it. Hagen and Jordan (2008) explored the role of theory in academic advising and reached the conclusion that academic advising is informed by two aspects: scholarly inquiry and practice. This being said, they further assert that theory is critical for both these aspects. With this in mind, a contextualised perspective of the scholarly inquiry and practice surrounding Academic Advising as well as the theories that inform its practice is warranted in the South African context. Further building on his own earlier work, Habley (1995, p. 76) wrote that “without understanding (conceptual elements), there is no context for the delivery of services. Without information, there is no substance to advising. And, without personal skills (relational), the quality of the advisee/advisor relationship is left to chance...”. In stating this, he accentuates the importance of these three components. In unpacking the three components, Habley (1995) and McClellan (2007) explain that the informational component represents the knowledge and information that advisors should possess and be able to

disseminate to students. Unlike the other two components and rather than intending to inform practice, this component represents the actual information that advisors anticipate sharing with students in order to equip them with the essential information that may afford them better chances of success. The second component Habley describes is the conceptual component. Also explained by Nutt (2003, p. 10), “the conceptual component encompasses ‘the concepts and theories that undergird academic advising.’” With advancements in technology, Higginson (2000) includes the technological component and argues that it is fundamental to both the advisor and advisee and their comfort with computerised academic advising beyond the traditional parameters of face-to-face. The personal component of the interactions between advisor and advisee transcends the mere transference of information and requires unique processes and skills in both training and practice (McClellan, 2007). It is further seen in literature and practice that an understanding of the personal component by the academic advisor acts as a lever for effective, integrated and holistic advising relationships (Higginson, 2000). The third of the three core components of academic advising is the relational component. This component focuses on the establishment of personal relationships between advisor and advisee through the demonstration of appropriate behaviours and upskilling with transferable attributes that will enhance the chances of success.

For the purpose of this study, the merged work by Habley (1987) and McClellan (2007) will be referred to as the Informational, Conceptual, Relational, Technological and Personal (the latter of is also interchangeably referred to as the professional component) (ICRTP) framework. This framework has formed the basis of the development of academic advising as a practice and the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) Short Learning Programme (SLP) in South Africa. Holding a national dictionary-styled definition to academic advising in South Africa “An ongoing and intentional teaching and learning practice that empowers the student in their learning and development process to explore, align and succeed in their personal, academic and career goals” (Siyaphumelela, 2017), I will use the Concept of Academic Advising (NACADA,2006), Core Competencies (2017) and (2022) together with the ICRTP framework to explore the practice and professionalisation of academic advising in South Africa. For the SA context, the ICRTP framework is fit for adoption as it is underpinned by international core competencies for effective academic advising. This framework further offers the SA context the ability to identify the broad range of understanding, knowledge, and skills that support academic advising, to guide professional development, and to promote the contributions of advising to student development, progress, and success which is necessary for a growing practice and profession.

1.3. Rationale of the study

Limited research and inquiry exist into the facets of prescriptive and developmental academic advising as an amalgamated practice in higher education. With the significant advancements in the practice of academic advising, both international and national research shows that academic advising improves student engagement and success by facilitating better coordination and integration of support, which empowers students with information, enhances their conceptual understanding, and provides an opportunity to form a relationship with the institution through an advisor and/or advising interventions (Centre for Teaching and Learning, 2018; Habley, 1994; Kuh, 2005; Strydom et al., 2017). Academic advising is a service that links students' academic and personal worlds and, as a result, promotes holistic development. However, little is known about professional advisors, specifically to what extent professional advisors use an approach to advising that can be characterised as developmental and synthesising the students' educational experiences beyond campus. The development of academic advising as a profession has evolved in parallel with the change observed within higher education over the past two centuries. Many practitioners currently define it as the "hub of the student support and success wheel that establishes reciprocal connections to other support services on campus" (King & Kerr, as cited in Workman, 2013, p.14), the by-product of good advising is student success. The recent context of academic advising emerged during the latter parts of the 19th century, which was necessitated by the increasingly diversification across academic degrees with the introduction of more fields of study and career options for students.

The potential of academic advising to advance student success has been recognised in South Africa in recent years. However, the profession has not been solidified conceptually and professionally in South African policy and practice. The development of the AAPD has been a strong response to these challenges, however, there has not been an evaluation of the alignment between the professional development offered by the AAPD or to what extent it responds to students' advising needs.

In order to acquire insight into the contextual theoretical underpinnings to the practice and profession of academic advising in South Africa, my research hypothesis is that academic advising has very limited contextual reflections guiding the premise of the practice. Through existing student support initiatives, there are activities that align student support with teaching and learning practice, but the concept of academic advising (curriculum, student

learning outcomes and pedagogy) is not in its entirety aligned to articulate into a full process in South Africa.

This study would be one of the first mixed-method investigations of academic advising in South Africa. It would therefore have the potential to expand the field in this context and contribute to a national perspective of how academic advising, student support and development communities could contribute to students' success. Overall, the study will contribute towards the sector having a shared understanding of academic advising and how it should manifest to meet the needs of students in South Africa. The study aims to contribute to the conceptual and professional development of academic advising in South Africa by exploring whether the current advising training, based on the ICRTTP, aligns with the needs and experiences of students seeking academic advising.

1.4 Research questions

The primary question guiding the study is:

How can the profession and practice of academic advising in South Africa be best aligned with the IC RTP framework to support the needs of students?

To answer this quest, the study is structured such that it responds to the question by asking two (2) subsidiary questions in the form of articles to gather a deepened insight into the potential academic advising as a practice and profession. The following questions will guide this research:

1. In what ways does the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) Short Learning Programme contribute to the profession and practice of academic advising in South Africa?
2. To what extent does the current Academic Advising meet students' advising needs Professional Development approach?

Answers to these questions may shed light on the practice and profession of academic advising to better explain what matters most and what institutions need to consider regarding where efforts for intentional and holistic student support are concerned. Furthermore, answering these questions will guide the national post-schooling sector on how to address and enable the existence of levers that promote student retention and better propel the notion of access with success.

1.5 Research methodology

While the study aims to contextualise, improve, and refine the lens through which the practice and profession of academic advising are understood in South African higher education, the overall study follows a formative evaluation approach. According to Miller and Archer (2010), formative evaluation as a research approach provides for early detection of deficiencies, allowing for immediate responsive redesign. Patton (2002) discussed formative evaluation as part of the theory-to-action continuum of research. Unlike action research, which attempts to solve a specific problem in a programme, organisation, or community, “formative evaluations aim at [shaping] the thing being studied. In this instance, the formative evaluation will be used as a meta-approach to evaluate whether the AAPD and its foundational theoretical approach support the development of academic advising in South Africa by aligning conceptual and practical needs. Within this overall approach, each article will adopt additional nuanced methodologies.”

Premised on being an exploratory study and aiming to understand to what extent the ICRTF framework in the AAPD advising practice shapes the conceptualisation of the profession and practice of academic advising in South Africa, Article 1 adopts a constructivist paradigm and a qualitative methodology. In contrast, article 2 focuses on identifying students’ academic advising needs, which is explored using a mixed-method design informed by a pragmatic research paradigm.

1.6 Ethical considerations

The ethical committee of the University of Free State approved this study, which was conducted under its endorsement and guidance. The ethical clearance number provided is UFS-HSD2022/0907/22.

With the two articles forming the basis of this study, the primary data collection and participation will be voluntary. For Article 1, the respondents will be made aware of the limitations of confidentiality. Participants’ responses were collated via an email survey on Questback. Article 2 uses institutional data where all data is anonymised and can, therefore, not be linked to any student.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study does not make the claims that academic advising responds to all students' needs outside of the classroom; it does, however, propose and support the intentional structuring of advisor professional development in accordance with the ICRTTP framework as proposed by Habley (1987) and further expanded upon by McClellan (2007). The ICRTTP framework is not a new concept in the field of academic advising; it does, however, contextualise and reflect on the framework's impact in the practice and profession of academic advising to be responsive to students' needs. The study aims to contribute to the conceptual and professional development of academic advising in the South African context. Findings confirm the alignment of the practice and profession to the framework but point to areas for further advancements of the technology and personal components to strengthen and enhance the training and practice overall in the South African context.

Adopting a formative evaluation approach, limitations to the study are that the data used to reflect on the students' experiences and needs is dated (i.e., pre-covid and during the COVID-19 pandemic) and the response rate of the professional advisors who participated in the AAPD short learning programme that responded to the survey, was low. The rich extensive qualitative analysis and reflection of the data per component in the framework compensated for the limitations.

1.8 Overview of thesis

This introduction and literature overview provide an orientation for the thesis. In the next two chapters, the two research articles prepared for this thesis are presented. Both articles 1 and 2 are centered around the academic advising framework informing the profession and practice in South Africa. Article 1 focuses on how the Academic Advising professional development short learning programme has enabled for the professionalisation of academic advising as a profession and a practice in South Africa for participants who have completed the SLP. Article 2 reflects on whether because of professionals participating in the short learning programme and using the informing framework result in the practice of being responsive to addressing students' needs.

The concluding chapter reflects on the significance of the two articles and their respective findings while mapping the findings against the overall research questions of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Article 1: In what ways does the Academic Advising Professional Development Short Learning Programme contribute to the profession and practice of Academic Advising in South Africa?

Abstract

Currently, the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) short learning programme is the only intervention contributing to the professionalisation of academic advising in South Africa. To effectively and efficiently support student growth, development and success, academic advisors need to develop a set of professional skills, knowledge and behaviours. Only through a combination of continuous formal and informal professional training, development and learning opportunities can students and institutions attain success. The AAPD is a contextualised formal training that borrows from international literature and practice for academic advisors to learn about and acquire the knowledge and skills to develop intentional and responsive academic advising programmes while helping advisors refine their advising values and philosophy. This paper builds on and contributes to both international and national work in the field of academic advising as a practice and a profession. The study uses a constructivist approach to reflect on participants' experiences post-AAPD completion in alignment with their professional identity and practice. The study draws on conceptualisation of academic advising from Habley and McClellan that identifies five core components that contribute to the professionalisation of advising. Using these conceptual frameworks to map the content of the AAPD against, key findings show that while the AAPD provides a comprehensive introduction to the components of academic advising contextualised for the South African higher education landscape, early career participants still have a disjuncture in their understanding of the components. This demonstrates that the framework used in the AAPD is promising for the advancement of the practice and profession, with the opportunity to strengthen existing components with the addition of components, such as career advising, contextual to the South African landscape.

Keywords: academic advising, South Africa, professional development, practice, training

1.1 Introduction

The growth of academic advising as a profession in South African higher education is leading to many support staff joining the profession from other student support and development entities (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). Some have stumbled across the profession coincidentally and have developed as advisors in parallel to the development of the profession. Creating a common professional identity that can help academic advisors take control of their careers and design a path to personal and professional fulfilment has been identified as a necessary step for personal and professional growth in the field (Justyna, 2016). With ongoing advancements linked to the development of a knowledge base for academic advising, informing both its practice and scholarly identity independent of other fields and professions (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008, p. 44), these efforts have largely been exclusive to the international community. South African higher education practitioners have for over a decade adopted and adapted academic advising best practices; however, they are very limited within the domain of advancing the professionalisation thereof. While the work of advisors differs from institution to institution, a definitive path for professional advancement is proving essential for the South African landscape to conceptualize.

The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA), an association serving the international academic advising community, has globally served as the coordinating body driving the professionalisation of the practice. Informed by the Core Competencies of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2017), and in response to establishing and strengthening the identity of academic advising professionally in South Africa, significant strides have been made in formalising the professional identity through the development and implementation of the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) short learning programme, offered by the University of the Free State (UFS). The AAPD contextualises the core competencies of NACADA for the South African landscape in an effort of upskilling practitioners to be professionals.

With this knowledge, this article aims to reflectively consider how the academic advising professional development short learning programme contributes to the profession and practice of academic advising in South Africa.

1.2 Academic advising as a practice

The sector has globally expanded opportunities for students to access higher education, but there is also a need to provide students with a reasonable chance of success. Academic advising as a practice has evolved beyond just being prescriptive, offering students module selection; it has become a practice that exists along a continuum of both prescriptive as well as developmental approaches where personal, academic, and career aspirations make for the conversations with advisors. Drake (2011) and Cuseo (n.d) both agree that academic advising is a supportive practice that provides students with an opportunity to connect and explore their personal academic journey alongside their future life aspirations. Academic advising teaches students the ins and outs of navigating university. It is furthermore described by Crookston (1994) as practice that offers students curriculum advice in terms of majors, minors, but also includes mentoring that promotes persistence in students to progress towards graduation. As the theoretical base for academic advising as a practice and profession has been developing over the years, Pasquini and Eaton (2019) flagged that there is a need to identify advising competencies. While many in the field of advising have established that the core competencies for the advising profession and practice are grounded by theories and approaches, Herdlein (2004) and later Pasquini and Eaton (2019) make the case that with the emphasis on student success and transformation in the higher education landscape, academic advisors in their profession and practice need an array of skills including, but not limited to, administration skills, research skills and teaching and learning pedagogical practices. Decades of international research and literature have been pointing out the positive impact of academic advising on student success, particularly the positive association between student success and the advisor-advisee relationship (Mu & Fosnacht, 2019; Young-Jones et al. 2013; Mayhew et al. 2016, McClellan, 2007).

The global evolution of academic advising traces its existence back to 1877 (Rudolph, 1962) where the primary focus of advising was for students to be offered counselling on academic curricula and academic decision-making (Cook, 2009). Through the evolution of the university systems, course offerings introduced diversification. The diversification of educational options and types has prompted universities to employ staff whose primary responsibility is to provide academic guidance to students, thus giving birth to the occupation of primary role academic advisors. Through the introduction of primary role advisors across the international higher education sector, there has been evidence of its positive spinoffs. While early academic advising approaches were highly prescriptive, there is much evidence

that has consistently linked academic advising practice with student success (Aiken-Wisniewski et al. 2015; Larson et al. 2018; McGill, 2019; White, 2020). Reflecting on literature and international best practice, work by Yarbrough (2002) as well as Troxel et al. (2021) has demonstrated that the engagements between advisor and advisee are amongst the most impactful encounters that influence a student's sense of self-efficacy towards completing their degree requirements.

Students entering and participating in higher education in South Africa come from diverse experiences in the basic education system. Academic advising has also become one of the high-impact practices which meet students where they are offering the support they need and offering them individualised and equitable opportunities towards success. De Klerk (2021) states that while the practice of academic advising is largely focused on the everyday challenges students experience, academic advisors are furthermore occupied with efforts to enable students to gain access to knowledge bases. From an overall reflection it is safe to note that the landscape of academic advising in South Africa has undergone significant progress over the recent years (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). More recently, policy frameworks have made provision for a practice such as academic advising because it aims to enhance the behaviours of students to foster a sense of belonging while also improving student success opportunities. The inclusion of 'student advising' in the 2018-2020 Ministerial Statement tabled by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) was one of the first national documents to describe what is envisaged for advising. The recent nature of this inclusion highlights the need for more research on academic advising both as a practice as well as a profession in South Africa. Schoeman, Loots, and Bezuidenhoud (2021) point out that there is a gradual emergence of academic advising scholarship in South Africa and emphasise the promising positive shift towards a more authentic, localised (South African), contextualised profession and practice.

1.3 Academic advising as a profession

As the practice of academic advising has been growing with the increased need by students and institutions, there has been a parallel need for the professionalisation of the staff working in the practice. Gordon (1992) documents that during the nineteenth century, advising emerged out of what was known as academic guidance. In recent times, Troxel et al. (2021), McGill (2019); and Shaffer et al. (2010) have all looked into academic advising as a profession and found that evidence of academic advising as an academic profession is emerging. The emergence of the profession is as a result of the advanced complexities of the higher education sector, making it difficult for students to navigate, thus needing

someone to guide and support them. In what Troxel et al. (2021) describe as a growth in the discipline and profession, they assert that because the advancements have resulted in the existence of a professional community with identifiable competencies, academic advising is indeed a profession. As the practice of academic advising has been growing in parallel with the demand for structured, evidence-based support, the need for structured professional training, development and identity is also emerging. While advisors see their work as highly relational and developmental, other student support practitioners and university administrators believe the work of advisors to be prescriptive and limited (Menke et al. 2020). The effects of these perceptions are broadly explored in recent advising literature as a significant issue for the professionalisation of advising (Aiken-Wisniewski et al. 2015; Cate & Miller, 2015; Larson et al. 2018; McGill, 2017, 2019; White, 2020).

In recent years, leaders in the higher education sector worldwide have discussed the critical issue of advisor retention. Scholars have emphasized that retaining academic advisors, especially those in positions providing relational student services as their primary core, should be a high priority (Selden & Sowa, 2015). Research shows that one of the main benefits of defined career paths is the retention of high-performing employees (Selden & Sowa, 2015; SHRM, 2021). A 2008 international academic advising survey found that only 10% of universities offered a career pathway for their academic advisors (Iten & Matheny, 2008). With this statistic making for much demotivation, there has, however, been countering commitments by institutions to develop academic advising career ladders contextual to their environment and student needs. While little research has investigated whether advising career pathways were value-added, Thomas and Cunningham (2018) have demonstrated an awareness of the benefits of employing career pathways within the advising community.

Described as an emerging profession (McGill, Dulsak et al., 2020), it is worth noting that even though the Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA) is taking a broad stance in defining the purpose and function of academic advising is used. While both scholars and practitioners can attest to academic advising being a unique field, the theories used in academic advising as a practice provide frameworks for understanding student development and learning and ultimately inform the professionalisation thereof. With no unified theory of academic advising practice in existence, Gordon et al. (2009) describe how advisors need a metatheoretical understanding of theory to ensure practice is applied appropriately. Hagen (2005) describes the theories of advising in two main paths, namely: normative theories which inform how advising should take place and analogic which borrow from others' (or other) theories and apply them to the practice.

Institutions have also come around to adopt varying career pathways for academic advisors, many still employing a combination of primary-role academic advisors as well as faculty advisors. Reed (2022) describes that the core function of a primary role academic advisor is to provide academic guidance to students while supporting them with the alignment of their personal, academic and career aspirations. Furthermore, the primary-role advisors contribute their own social, academic, and vocational expertise; they also establish and nurture professional relationships with students who rely upon them for academic guidance and success. In a publication by NACADA (2017) on the Academic Advising Core Competencies model, the model identifies four main categories of advisors they deem would gain value from its existence : primary-role advisors, faculty advisors, advising leaders (i.e. supervisors, managers etc.) as well as learning professionals and researchers. The model furthermore outlines a conceptual framework that describes the foundational elements for effective advisor training. Three core components are described herein. The components are those Habley (1987) developed and described as core for training academic advisors. Further building on the three components, Higginson (2000) and McClellan (2007) proposed the addition of the technological and personal components, respectively, each extending to create more concrete efforts to professionalise the practice.

With the growing need for academic advisors to support student success within the higher education sector nationally and internationally, academic advising is at present an occupation that lacks a consistent occupational career pathway (McGill, 2019). The inconsistency in role definitions and lack of a universal advising structure complicates structural factors for implementing progressive career pathways for primary-role advisors (Aiken-Wisniewski et al. 2015; Larson, et al. 2018; McGill, 2019). In an effort to respond to the need for better coordinated advisor training and professional development efforts in South Africa, the AAPD integrates the five core components described by Habley (1987); Higginson (2000) and McClellan (2007).

1.4 Academic advisor professional development in South Africa

In South Africa, as discussions of access with success continue to permeate the higher education sector, the sector is at a critical juncture necessitating for higher education institutions (HEIs) to internalise the situation and determine what exactly should be happening in initiatives such as academic advising. Efforts further need to explore what is happening in the actual advising processes and understand the status and experiences of students and staff as a result of these student support practices. Today, academic advising is considered one of the best vehicles for promoting the intellectual, personal, and social

development of students. Because of this understanding through literature and practice of the role and potential of academic advising, efforts such as keeping students satisfied with their personal, academic, and career aspirations have proven to be key to increasing students' likelihood of feeling a sense of belonging, being supported, and thus able to complete their studies. Hale et al. (2009, p. 313) captures the role of academic advising by articulating that “given the important role facilitated by academic advising in student retention, serious efforts to improve retention, efforts should be grounded in the evaluation of student perceptions, desires and satisfaction with academic advising”.

Within the South African context, the combination of the knowledge and understanding that academic advising as a service in linking students' academic and personal worlds does indeed promote holistic development. However, because the practice and profession have only existed for less than fifteen years in South Africa, little is known about professional advisors, specifically to what extent professional advisors use an approach to advising that can be characterised as developmental.

Although academic advising was not part of the higher education policy development in 1997 when the Higher Education Act no. 101 was drafted, research and practice in several higher education streams focusing on student success since then, have warranted its existence and integration into our learning and teaching practices. In a desire to establish a structured approach to student development, academic advising has since been identified as a critical pillar within student support provision that offers integrated support in an effort to improve student success (DHET, 2018). While Strydom and Loots (2020) describe academic advising as a high-impact practice as informed by student engagement frameworks in the South African context, very few in research have been able to prove this practice. Moodley and Singh (as cited in De Klerk, 2021), however, have found complimenting evidence, describing how academic advising is a proven high-impact practice as there is evidence supporting how the practice is aiding the decrease in student dropout rates and inversely increasing student retention and success.

Despite the fact that there has been minimal conceptual description and policy guidance as to what is meant by student (academic) advising, the practice has been rapidly developing in South African public higher education institutions in response to the need to support students. Indeed, less than 30% of students enrolled for three-year degrees graduate in the allocated three years, indicating a substantial need for support (DHET, 2019). The most prominent effort to develop contextualised professional academic advisors has been through the development of the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) short

programme in 2018. The bottom-up approach employed in developing academic advising in South Africa via the AAPD has been aligned conceptually with national expression but more importantly student needs. Placing great emphasis on the need for qualified staff to carry out the role of academic advisors, Levin et al. (2010) articulate the need for qualified, competent, and caring staff to take on this role. Extending and borrowing from the NACADA core competency model (2017), the AAPD is the first of its kind produced for South African higher education in an effort to formally define the practice of academic advising as a profession. Figure 1 describes the overview of the five components adapted from the Habley (1995) and McClellan (2007) frameworks that inform the AAPD. Adapted from what NACADA's professional development committee drafted and coined the Core Competencies Model of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2017), the AAPD distinguishes the information, knowledge concepts, skills, and technology associated with academic advising. The AAPD units are arranged in accordance with the Informational, Conceptual, Relational, Technological, and Personal (ICRTP) framework, which introduce academic advisors professionally to the practice through training and assessment of these components, which contribute to the advancement of the practice and student success. While the informational component forms the substance of academic advising, it refers to what information formal and informal academic advisors should know. NACADA (2017) and (2022) adds that advisors within the informational component should understand the characteristics, needs, and experiences of the majority and emerging student population.

The conceptual component includes the ideas and theories that need to be understood by advisors in order to provide responsive support, and the relational component is the skills needed to convey the informational as well as conceptual components. Denoting what concepts advisors need to understand in order to carry out the practice, the conceptual component forming part of the core competencies of academic advising outlines the context for the delivery of academic advising. According to King (2000), this component of the competencies entails the ideas and theories that advisors need to understand about the students they serve and the work they do in order to be effective. Keeling (2014), in describing the conceptual component in the practice of academic advising, emphasises the notion that advisors who consider themselves thought leaders and leading professionals when applying the conceptual component, work collaboratively in ensuring that students are supported and persist throughout to graduation. Menke et al. (2020) summarise and describe that the conceptual components in the practice and profession of advising are theories, outcomes of academic advising, and NACADA's core values in action.

The relational component refers to competencies related to how advisors engage with advisees and help build a sense of belonging. It includes the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values and abilities associated with good advising. As many would underestimate the power of a relationship, academic advisors advocate for its significance in relation to student success. A study conducted by NACADA (McGill et al. 2020) explored what academic advisors value most, and findings revealed that advisors value interpersonal skills, multicultural competence and an understanding of students and student success. This underscores how advisors understand and relate to students. In an early description of the relational component in academic advising, Habley (1987) described it as what academic advisors do. In later developments of the practice, Drake (2009) went on to support and unpack what Habley (1987) described and underscored that good advisors use questions to converse with students to understand their needs and provide responsive support that enables success.

In the professionalisation of the practice, McClellan (2007) asserts that within the relational component of academic advising, much is practical and comprises skills such as rapport building, communication, problem-solving and effective questioning. In underscoring the importance of the relational component in advising, Heikkila and McGill (2015) in a study argue that in the absence of an advisor-advisee relationship, that practice is reduced to being a one-dimensional dissemination of information, almost similar to just being a prescriptive practice. In their concluding findings, Heikkil and McGill (2015) make a case for the importance of the relational component. They argue that both practice and the professionalisation of academic advising require a relational component, with learning opportunities focussed on practical skills and techniques.

As a fairly new component to the academic advising competencies framework, the technological component refers to the embrace and leveraging of technology in the facilitation of academic advising. With the technological advancements in the higher education sector, the effective use of technology is becoming a necessity. According to McClellan (2007), it has become essential for advising professionals to understand the significant role of technology in academic advising as a practice for the delivery of student support information within the advising session.

For ease of reference and organisation of the types of technology critical in academic advising, Steele (2016) outlines the intentional use of the technology model. This model fits both the practice and the profession. The model arranges three categories of technologies, namely: service technology, learning technology and engagement technology. The overall

objective for proposing the adoption of the technology component in advising through this lens is because the model offers optimisation in alignment with advising outcomes, which are directly linked to the practice of advising. Conclusive evidence in literature and practice points out that the deliberate adoption of this model within the profession affords the practice opportunity for enhanced efforts that ultimately contribute to the overall student retention and success outcome (Grites et al. 2016). Although the COVID-19 pandemic has indeed accelerated the use of technology in teaching and learning, particularly in advising, there remain areas requiring further strategic development and advancement. Addressing these areas will help alleviate the pressures on other components of advising, such as the informational and conceptual aspects.

In the personal component, interchangeably referred to in some literature and practice as the professional component, academic advisors need to be self-aware as well as have sound self-knowledge in order to be an efficient and effective academic advisor for students. An interesting contestation exists whether the fifth component in the profession and practice of academic advising is personal or professional. In a reflection of the professionalisation of academic advising McClellan (2007) views it as the personal component. Borrowing from what Higginson (2000) terms this 'advisor self-knowledge', it is clear from literature that the component is underscored by how the advisor understands their role, their knowledge, skills and competencies to fulfil the requirements of the practice. McGill (2019) suggests and confirms that through literature three key characteristics to professionalise academic advising have emerged and become critical over the years: scholarship, professional community and professional development programmes. While the practice in itself holds varied applications to suit the specific student needs and environment, there are definitional elements that form the foundation for a standardised practice making room for structured elements informing a framework for the practice and profession.

The use of this framework for the AAPD has been the critical lever driving the advancements of the academic advising practice and profession globally. Research has shown that by means of the integration of these components and their application, advisors have been able to achieve what academic advising is intended to achieve, student retention as a by-product and academic success (NACADA, 2017 and 2022).



Figure 1: An overview of the five components (units) that are comprised in the AAPD

To better understand the ways in which the AAPD, as informed by the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model, has contributed to the breadth and depth of the role academic advisors have in facilitating student success, this study reflects on each of the units (i.e. advising components) and how advisors have used this to inform their practice. Using the ICTRP framework, adopted from Habley (1987) and McClellan (2007), this study thus seeks to use this framework to map the experiences of AAPD participants and see how the short learning programme has contributed to the development of their practice and professionalisation

1.5 Methodology

This qualitative study adopts a constructivist research paradigm. It is described by Honebein (1996) as a paradigm through which people construct their own understanding and knowledge through experiences. As the AAPD is designed and informed by Kolbs' experiential learning theory (1984), this paradigm is fitting for the reflection of participants on their experiences post-AAPD in alignment with their professional identity and practice.

AAPD participants between 2018 and 2021 were invited to complete a qualitative survey reflecting on the demands of their professional practice, with the core aim of exploring to what extent the AAPD had supported their practice. The study was approved by the University of the Free States' Research Ethics Committee. A total of 153 participants were invited to participate in the study. Questback software was used to design and distribute the survey, and a link to all AAPD participants who completed the course within the relevant timeframe was shared via email. All AAPD participants were invited to participate voluntarily in this study. Informed consent was obtained from participants prior to the completion of the survey. Because the AAPD is offered across the South African higher education sector to the 26 Universities, the participants were also representative of different institutions. Using the ICRTTP framework as adapted from Habley (1995) and McClellan (2007), the data was analysed thematically, which allowed for easy identification under each component of significant factors contributing to a deepened reflection and understanding of the state of the practice and profession.

1.6 Results and discussion

This section draws on data stemming from the survey responses completed by participants as arranged within the ICRTTP framework. The thematic analysis and interpretation of the data affords deepened insights into participants' reflections on how and in what ways the AAPD influences and informs their practice and profession. The results shared herein are from 19 participants, of which 14 opted to proceed and complete the survey. Although the response rate was quite low (9%), the purpose of the qualitative survey was not to generalise findings, but to gain an overall understanding whether and in what ways the AAPD is fulfilling its purpose to advance the professional development of its participants. Therefore, interpretation of the data will take this into account. The 26 South African universities are represented by the following six: the University of the Free State (UFS), the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Nelson Mandela University (NMU), the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), the University of Pretoria (UP) and Durban University of Technology (DUT), the sample indicates how young the profession and practice is in South Africa. Many of the participants in this survey are considered early-career advisors, with the majority having five years and less exposure and involvement in academic advising. Figure 2 shows the distribution in the number of years the participants have been involved in academic advising. Linked to this, the participants also have had limited exposure to other professional associations and groupings, with only five participants holding professional membership to either NACADA or the South African Academic Advising Association (Eletsa).

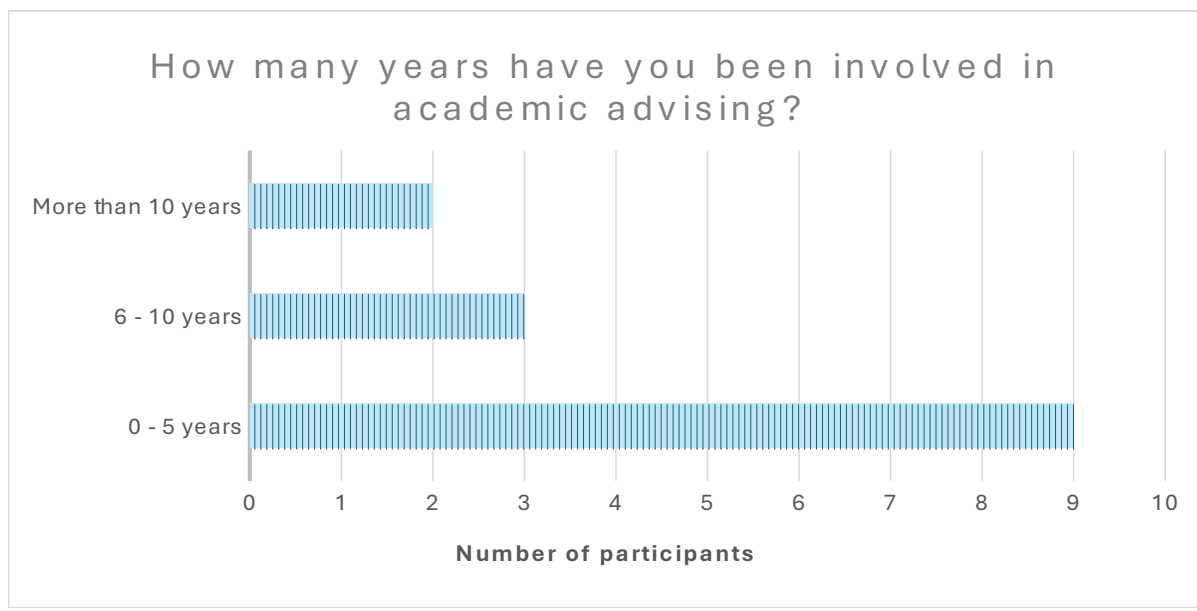


Figure 2: Number reflects years respondents have been involved in academic advising

It is interesting to note is that while academic advising dates back to slightly more than a decade in South Africa, five (36%) of the respondents have been involved in academic advising for over 6+ years (6-10yrs and more than 10yrs). The majority, nine (64%) of the respondents, are still in the early years of being involved in academic advising, with their experience in the profession being five years or less.

Participants were asked to describe their roles as academic advisors. While the roles described by participants differ, most reflect the informational and relational aspects of academic advising, with varying emphasis on each aspect. For example, one participant noted that their role as an advisor is mainly about providing individual consultations and workshops to support students with developing skills and helping them cope:

Individual consultations and workshops on general academic support; goal setting & motivation; adjustment to university life; time management skills; basic study methods skills; test/exam preparation; stress management and; career exploration.

Others described their informational roles as intertwined with establishing a trusting and supportive relationship with students. For example:

I often engage with students regarding their academic progress, personal challenges, hopes and aspirations.

I assist students to navigate the [university] terrain as far as the registration of correct modules/curriculum is concerned...I assist students in monitoring their academic progress as per the applicable rules...AA allows me to assess student needs and to refer them to much-needed services available to them at the[university]...

A support structure that provides an individualised student-centred approach, which can help students to find effective ways of dealing with their academic challenges, connect them to helpful resources, and assist in the development of improved levels of self-awareness, self-responsibility and strategies and skills.

My academic advising role in my institution is to provide a supportive role to faculties (specifically the teaching and learning department) and students. Ensuring that I equip my students with academic success strategies that they require to become successful in their academic journey and make it to graduation.

My role consists of offering time management skills to students, looking at their academic journey and making sure that they are on the right path in terms of academia, how they are able to handle the pressures of their academic journey and how they are coping as students and as human beings outside of work.

Only one participant mentioned the conceptual aspect of academic advising as being part of their role, and combined it with the informational aspect of advising:

My role as an academic advisor is to give academic support through academic guidance strategies. It is important to note that, academic support is embedded within a human being's holistic being. Thus, in addition to being an academic advisor, it is also my role to detect whether the academic issues are indeed the problem or challenges. If not, it is my duty as well to know where to further refer the student to get additional support either psychologically or socially.

Only one participant mentioned the technological aspect of advising as being part of their role as an advisor, albeit just a tool or a platform to engage with students:

I assist students with individual academic advising sessions online / face to face on various topics such as: institutional rules, time management, stress management, lifestyle, study strategies, and career decisions. I also teach and academic advising is not my only role.

One participant indicated that “Academic advising is still a project in our institution, I do not have a role yet.”

Nine of the 14 respondents indicated that their institutions have a formal definition for academic advising at an institutional/faculty and/or departmental level. Two indicated that they have a definition in one or more departments, and three indicated that they do not have a definition for academic advising at an institutional, faculty, and/or departmental level.

A summative assessment of the overall state of academic advising, according to the responses, is that academic advising is still an evolving profession in South Africa with varying degrees of advancement among institutions. The responses confirm that institutions are largely committed to the practice as there are formal definitions; however, support for the profession lacks steady growth as role clarifications are not yet concrete. To gain a more in-depth and detailed understanding of how the AAPD has contributed to participants' professional identity and development as well as the manner in which they do academic advising, the discussion of participants' responses is arranged in accordance with the ICRTF framework that forms the conceptual basis for the AAPD.

Informational

While the roles are varied among the respondents are varied, when unpacking the types of information disseminated, the responses, as illustrated in Figure 3, show that on a daily basis respondents, on a daily basis, disseminate student support services information, goal setting, study strategies, time management, career information, academic information, academic progression, and curriculum information. Similarly, the same types of information are also disseminated on a weekly basis. It is also worth noting that practical information such as goal setting (seven), study strategies(nine), and time management (eight) are the top three types of information disseminated by respondents daily, thus signalling what

students' needs. Interestingly, an almost similar trend is observed between academic information and career information. Information is disseminated daily, weekly, and monthly, showing a linked relationship between these two types of information.

Further analysis of the respondents' data also indicates that 'other' information is disseminated as part of their function as an academic advisor. This 'other' elaborated on includes: module related information, writing place (writing centre) activities, and any other key messages relating to their curriculum or teaching and learning activities; appeals processes, NSFAS propensity requests, and referral for service rendering by other student support stakeholders. Respondents in their description of what the 'other' information indicate:

Key important dates in the academic calendar that students should be aware of.

Psychosocial issues that affects students academic success

Dealing with academic stress, living a balanced lifestyle for long term success, dealing with career indecision, university policies e.g. pregnant students.

General rules and specific faculty rules they may not be aware of (related to progression and assessments), application and registration information.

This data confirms the importance of the informational component in academic advising practice and how broad it can be. It underscores that advisors need to stay informed from an internal (institutional), external (sectoral) and student needs perspective in order to be responsive to students' needs.

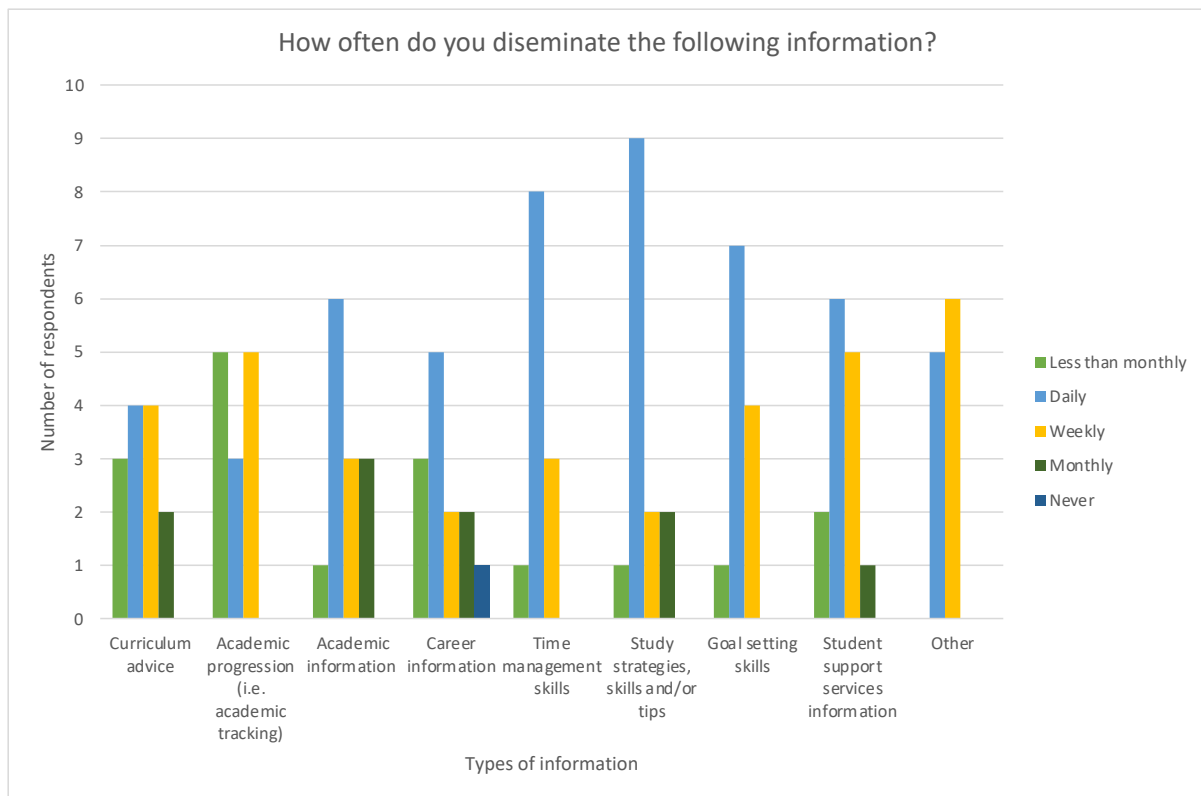


Figure 3: Distribution of the information disseminated by academic advisors

The informational components provide the core of academic advising as a practice. It is made up of the knowledge that academic advisors ought to acquire in order to be able to guide students throughout their university journey. Participants describe the informational component of the academic advising practice and profession in their responses. The overall responses indicate that a fragmented availability of information is still disseminated in the advising practice. As in the case of students who do not know and understand what information to request and seek from academic advising, the respondents have a similar understanding.

Higginson (2000) broke down the informational component into four informational dimensions in an effort to organize and ensure that one type of information does not overshadow the other in practice. The informational dimensions include internal and external environmental information, student needs, and advisor self-knowledge. The responses, the responses suggest that the internal environmental information and student needs are the dimensions most understood. The following responses are supportive of this:

Providing a student with adequate information enables them to make good decisions.

Being able to convey relevant information that supports students' success and decision-making

Knowing which information to disseminate to students.

Know (and/or know where to find) and be able to impart knowledge, explain processes, policies, etc

Institutional knowledge advisors must know to guide students

Resourceful- giving students something tangible to go and implement

Being able to provide students with information related to the institutional ecology and support networks.

There are, however, some vague responses suggesting that a more in-depth understanding of the informational component is required.

Collecting and disseminating information; being up to date with information

Very important to keep up to date with correct information, so that the information we give to students, is accurate and up to date.

Overall, the qualitative responses herein demonstrate two broad themes: those who have an understanding and those with a limited understanding of the informational component. Thus, the informational component is significant and important for the organisation and facilitation of academic advising as a practice and profession.

Conceptual

Reflecting through a conceptual lens on the description of academic advising in practice, respondents use varying descriptors which illustrate and suggest only a partial understanding of the conceptual component in relation to the practice. Showing a clear and aligned understanding, three respondents describe the conceptual component, which is the conceptual framework and basis as follows:

Conceptual and contextual framework informing practice

Concepts advisors must understand to effectively advise students

Being able to explain in basic terms what rules/regulations etc. mean in relation to a students studies.

Other descriptions used by respondents to explain the conceptual component suggest that for these participants, there is still a basic understanding of the conceptual component:

Understanding what academic advising entails.

Understand how academic advising fits in my institution as well as in the higher education environment

Although the responses reflect that most of the respondents are still in the early stages of understanding the conceptual component and its role in the profession and practice, the AAPD provided a learning and meaning-making platform. According to the literature, a thorough understanding of the conceptual component means that advisors understand, value and have the skills to act upon the concepts affecting students' needs and success through an advising lens.

Relational

In an analysis of participants' responses regarding their understanding and interpretation of the relational component and how it is understood in their profession and practice, two themes emerge: interpersonal skills and practicality. Ten of the 14 responses support participants' understanding of the relational component as being linked to interpersonal skills. An example of such responses refers:

Understanding the interrelatedness of people, processes, success, failure etc.

[...]requires a connection between more than 1 person

Building strong supportive relationships with students.

Very important to establish good relations with students. To get them to trust you and open up to you.

[...]being able to interact with students on a individual or group platform to help them see they are not alone in their academic journey.

Relating to students, stakeholders and other support structures

The above supports Heikkal and McGill (2015) in their proposal that the relational component through a developmental approach is underscored by the advisor-advisee relationship. Demonstrating an opportunity for future areas to focus on enhancing the understanding of the relational component both in practice and profession, it is worthwhile to explore and strengthen the skills of rapport building, communication, problem-solving and effective questioning. Only three responses spoke to the relational component's practicality as McClellan proposed (2007).

How elements in the system (academic advising) are interrelated and work together

Continuously work on competencies and skills that enable fostering a healthy and supportive relationship with students and colleagues

This is a big one, this to be speaks to contextualising your core theories to the students understanding (decolonisation of academic advise)

Technology

Responses of participants with regard to the technological component were analysed and categorised in accordance with the three categories of the model as proposed by Steele (2016). The use of this model (Steele, 2016) enables better understanding of how advisors are developing new and improved processes, methods, systems and services.

With regard to the thematic analysis of the three categories, there is still room for the practice to leverage the use and integration of technology in the advising practice and profession, particularly in the direction of making more intentional use of the service technology, technology that provides personalised student support services and information. This is applicable because none of the responses from respondents reflected the category. The integration of service technology as a category in the practice and profession of advising holds the potential of lessening the heavy reliance on advising being facilitated exclusively in-person and creates opportunities for high tech and high touch. The two prominent categories evident from the responses are *learning technology*, technology that facilitates the delivery of academic advising, as well as *engagement technology*, technology used to inform and build community and connect students to each other and the institution.

Two participants reflected on learning technology and how, in their practice, this category enables them to disseminate and make available information and foster relationships with students. One of these comments refers:

Accessibility, the information that you need or that you came for into the office is also accessible at your fingertips as a student, just strengthen your relationship with your LMS-BB (Blackboard) Collaborate

While some responses were generic and overarching, and not very explicit, others reflected specifically on engagement technology. The responses addressed the issue and suggested that engagement technology enables the practice and professionals to cast a wider net in offering support and resources to students. Three such responses refer:

Being able to reach out to more students via emails/social media platforms etc.

The use of equipment used, having access to reaching students

Being able to reach out to a wider audience of students. Sharing resources.

In the generic responses, it is clear that participants appreciate the overall role of technology in their practice and profession. One of the participants' reflection makes mention and appreciation of how the COVID-19 pandemic enabled better use of technology in their advising practice:

Plays a very important part in advising today. Especially during the Covid epidemic.

Personal (professional)

Highlighting the significance of the personal component in promoting advisor efficiency and effectiveness, McGill (2019) summarised that the personal component in advancing the advising profession and practice should include on the part of the advisor: self-reflection of one's practice, belief and further growth and development. Two of the responses by the participants capture this and describe the personal component for them as:

"How this relates to my personal and professional development and competencies - and how this will influence how ... engage in my workspace with staff and students." and "Assisting students with guidance in terms of being healthy on a personal level in order to be successful in their studies. Everything is interconnected."

Placing emphasis on the elements within the personal component, the majority of participants singled out parts of the personal component that resonate with them in describing what it means in their profession and practice.

Constantly reflect on my advising philosophy. Take care of myself. It will not be possible to pour to students from an empty cup.

Development and care

Competence and cultural awareness

There are, however two responses suggesting that the participants, even after participating in the AAPD find themselves in liminality and have not quite discovered what the personal component means for them in their profession and practice:

Not actually sure how to answer this one.

necessitates a relationship of some sorts

Summative of the reflections by the participants of the survey on the extent to which the AAPD has enabled them to advance their practice and profession, in Figure 4 illustrates that to a greater part, very much and quite a bit, the AAPD afforded the respondents a developmental opportunity. For the majority of the respondents, the AAPD clarified and helped with the understanding the role of an academic advisor as well as the formulation of a growth mindset, speaking to the willingness to learn and grow as a professional. To a lesser extent, the AAPD did not afford respondents space to practise self-care or strengthen their cultural awareness, and this suggests that these components are difficult to measure and will require deeper investigation. Since all institutions represented in this study having an institutional definition of academic advising, it is promising for the advancements of the profession and practice as the definition is an essential building block for implementation. The AAPD has further enabled overall mind shift and learning opportunities on how to integrate the self into the advisor role. The data suggests that the areas of self-care, cultural awareness, and opportunities for implementation are areas where the AAPD needs to be strengthened and improved.

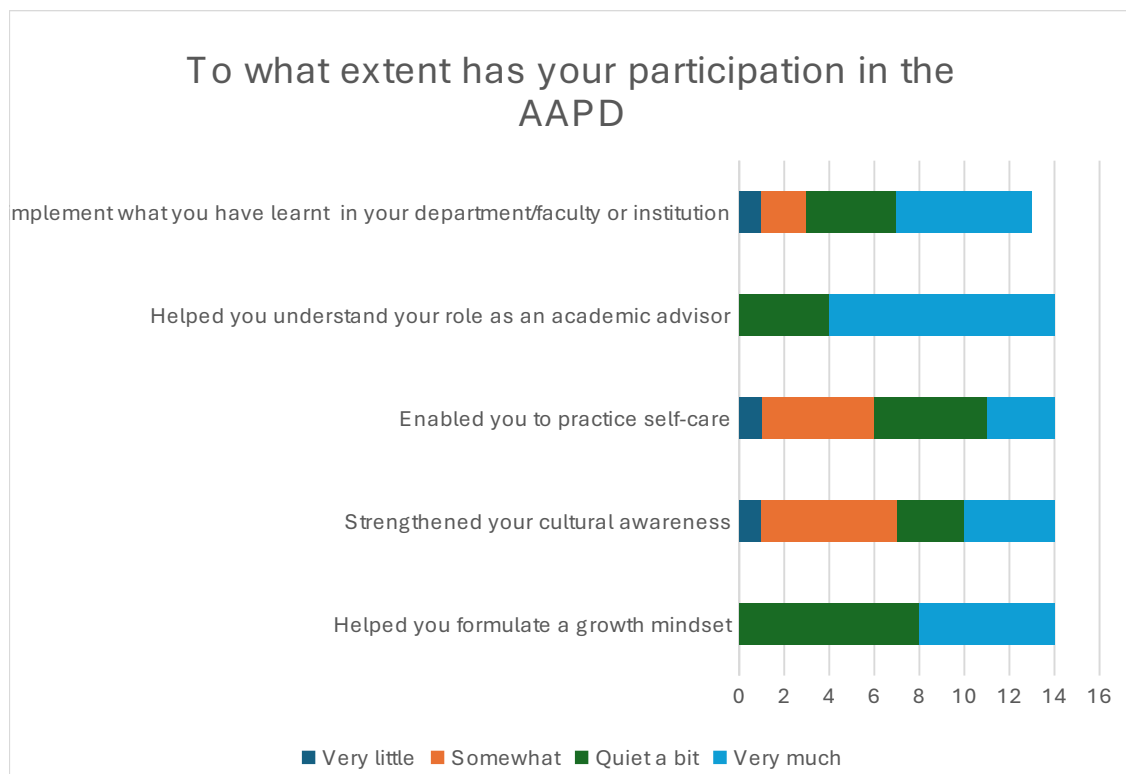


Figure 4: To what extent the AAPD has supported components of the profession and practice

An analysis of the participants' responses suggests that the AAPD provides the foundational knowledge base of professional development and prepares advisors for practice. While most participants are early career academic advisors, many benefited as the SLP created more in-depth exposure and engagement with the theories and concepts underpinning academic advising. The following participant's reflection describes how for an early career academic advisor, the AAPD influenced and informed their practice:

I participated in the AAPD the same year that I started with academic advising. It provided me with a lot of insight in terms of theory and practice. I enjoyed to learn that it can be a structured process backed up by theory. Additionally, looking at academic advising in terms of cycles that speak to the student needs at certain points of the year was very insightful and helped me to frame my thoughts on ways to assist students.

Other participants indicated that for them, participation in AAPD, to a great extent, helped them understand academic advising in a more practical way, thus enabling more informed and structured practice.

I have benefited from the programme. Going through formal academic advising training, understanding that there are processes and practices that exist in the field of academic advising has been beneficial in instilling confidence in myself and improving my advising processes. A major benefit is knowing through the AAPD programme that the processes I employed as an academic advisor were good processes.

I am more aware and reflective. This has enabled me to also improve my way of doing, acting and thinking in this space.

I was able to implement and coordinate academic advising in my institution

Participation in the programme, gave me the starting and thinking tools, to develop my own coaching style that assists me in becoming a successful academic coach

I am now able to reach and impact more students. As I was once a student, and worked with students I know the importance of sharing my journey with students. Hosting weekly webinar sessions with students and being apart of their realities has

helped me come up with initiatives that allow us the staff know the realities of our students.

It provided a foundation of knowledge to help better understand the role of academic advising, which has helped me feel more grounded as a advisor. This foundation also helped me structure strategies/ideas to help improve how effective advisors can be within our faculty.

Three participants allude that further to the AAPD contributing to their professional development, the AAPD created extended awareness and a reflective space for them. One participant indicated that in addition to the AAPD being reflective, it further aided them to be more intentional in their practice. This translated to positive implementation institutionally.

It increased my awareness in terms of the existence of AA as a profession as well as the efforts made to coin and categorize it as such. Being in a venue full of AAs from various institutions made me realise that AA is not a UFS-only practice. I observed that there are differences in how AA service rendering is done across the various institutions and how AA practices in some institutions are advanced. I appreciated the thorough and relevant material provided and presented to us during the training workshop, it indicated that the practice is informed by the latest research. This allowed me to reflect on my service rendering, relevance, and impact thereof.

The programme gave me in-depth awareness of advising a a professional practice and the areas of development one needs to engage with in order to be responsive to their students and to create a programme that has impact.

Since completing the AAPD, I am constantly reflecting on the competencies I possess to do my "job" well. In relation to all the 5 components of advising, I am ensuring that I reflect on whether my conceptual understanding of Advising a year ago for instance is still the same as currently, If it has changed then how has it changed and what does it mean now. The AAPD has helped me become more intentional about being curious about developments in the advising space as well as being a part of communities that foster that growth and curiosity, especially become I engaged in the programme in my first 6 months of being an advisor.

Many of the participants' responses confirm the valuable contributions of the AAPD to their professional development and practice. Although for some, the use of the ICRTTP framework to advance the professionalisation and practice of academic advising to be responsive to student needs, has proven to have a positive impact. From an informational perspective, it is evident that advisors disseminate an array of information, and the AAPD creates greater understanding and contextualisation. In the case of the conceptual component, while it introduces participants to theories and approaches to academic advising, there is a gap in that none of the theories, although aligned to international theories linked to academic advising, limitations exist as no local theory, models and approaches linked to student support and success are discussed in the AAPD. A participant articulated this by saying:

"...include a clear model which has been combined and adapted from local psychology and education to speak to academic advising specifically."

1.7 Conclusion

Findings from the survey responses on the ICRTTP framework offer valuable insights into the perceptions and practices of academic advisors in South Africa. While some respondents have extensive experience, most are still in their careers' early stages. Institutions represented by participants in this study are also in the early to mid-development phase of the profession, with data leaning toward a description of the practice as a combination of developmental and intrusive approaches. Roles described by participants primarily focus on providing both informational and relational support to students, highlighting the multifaceted nature of academic advising. However, there are varying levels of understanding and implementation of the five components of academic advising as proposed by Habley (1987) and McClellan (2007): informational, conceptual, relational, technological, and personal.

Regarding the informational component, participants demonstrate a fragmented understanding, with some acknowledging the importance of providing relevant information to students while others show a need for a more in-depth grasp of this aspect. The conceptual component, emphasising understanding the theoretical underpinnings of advising, is still in the early stages of development among respondents, although the AAPD programme facilitated learning and meaning-making opportunities in this area. The relational component, crucial for building rapport and supporting students effectively, is widely recognised by participants, with interpersonal skills being highlighted as essential for successful advising.

Technological integration in advising emerges as an area for further development, with participants acknowledging its significance in facilitating advising and helping track, identify, and reach students, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. The personal (professional) component, often overlooked but essential for advisor effectiveness, is highlighted by participants as integral to their professional growth and competence. Reflection, self-care, and cultural awareness are emphasized as crucial elements within this component, although some participants express uncertainty about its application in their practice.

There is still a need for further extensions proposed by participants to meet their needs to advance both the profession and practice. Overall, the study demonstrates and underscores the positive evolution and advancement of academic advising in South Africa, with the AAPD programme serving as a valuable platform for professional development and enhancing advisor competencies. For those not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of academic advising, senior leadership, the AAPD helps formulate a better understanding of the practice but offers very little as to how to lead advisors as well as the management thereof. Unlike those in early career transitions into the practice and others transferring from other entities in higher education, the AAPD provides fundamental and comprehensive exposure to understand, acquire the skills and have a blueprint for the operationalisation of practice. There is a need for further studies and professional development opportunities in the form of webinars, conferences, and training to continue building on the AAPD that will enable further advancement efforts to strengthen the understanding and implementation of academic advising across all five components as proposed by McClellan (2007) and ensure effective support for student success.

References

- Aiken-Wisniewski, S. A., Johnson, A., Larson, J., & Barkemeyer, J. (2015). A preliminary report of advisor perceptions of advising and of a profession. *The Journal of the National Academic Advising Association*, 35(2), 60-70.
- Boylan, H. R. (2001). Making the Case for Developmental Education. *Research in Developmental Education*, 12 (2), 1-4.
- Cook, S. (2009). Important events in the development of academic advising in the United States. *NACADA Journal*, 29(2), 18–40.
- Crookston, B. B. (1994). A developmental view of academic advising as teaching. *NACADA Journal*, 14(2), 5–9.
- Cuseo, J. (n.d.). Academic advisement and student retention: Empirical connections & systemic interventions. Retrieved from <http://www.uwc.edu/administration/academic-affairs/esfy/cuseo/Academic%20Advisement%20and%20Student%20Retention.doc>
- Drake, J. K. (2011). The role of academic advising in student retention and persistence. *About Campus*, 16(3), 8–12. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20062>
- Gordon, V. N., Habley, W. R., & Grites, T. J. (Eds.). (2011). *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Grites, T. J., Miller, M. A., & Voler, J. G. (Eds.). (2016). *Beyond foundations: Developing as a master academic advisor*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Hagen, P. (2005). Theory building in academic advising. *NACADA Journal*, 25(2), 3–8.
- Hale, M. D., Graham, D. L., Johnson, D. M. (2009). Are students more satisfied with academic advising when there is congruence between current and preferred advising styles? *College Student Journal*, 43(2).

Herdlein III, R. J. (2004). Survey of chief student affairs officers regarding relevance of graduate preparation of new professionals. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 42(1), 51-71.

Honebein, P. C. (1996). Seven goals for the design of constructivist learning environments. *Constructivist learning environments: Case studies in instructional design*, 11(12), 1

Hunter, M, S., and E.R. White. 2004. Could fixing academic advising fix higher education? *About Campus* 9 (1):20-25

Iten, C., & Matheny, A. (2008, September). Promoting academic advisors: Using a career ladder to foster professional development at your institution. *Academic Advising Today*, 31(3).

Kolb , D. 1984 .*Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* , New Jersey : Prentice-Hall .

Justyna, E. (2014). Developing a professional identity. *Academic Advising Today*, 37(1). Retrieved from [<https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Developing-a-Professional-Identity.aspx>]

Justyna, E. (2016). Creativity in higher education curriculum: A qualitative case study of pedagogical processes and practices (Doctoral dissertation).

Larson, J., Johnson, A., Aiken-Wisniewski, S. A., & Barkemeyer, J. (2018). What is academic advising? An application of analytic induction. *NACADA Journal*, 38(2), 81-93.

Lee, J.A. (2018). Affirmation, support, and advocacy: Critical race theory and academic advising. *The Journal of the National Academic advising Association*, 38(1), 77-87.

Light, R. 2001. *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lowenstein, M. (2009). If advising is teaching, what do advisors teach? *NACADA Journal* 29(1), 123-131. (Reprinted from *NACADA Journal* 25[2], 65-73.)

Mayhew, M. J., Rockenbach, A. N., Bowman, N. A., Seifert, T. A., & Wolniak, G. C. (2016). *How college affects students: 21st century evidence that higher education works* (Vol. 1). John Wiley & Sons

Menke, D. J., Duslak, M., & McGill, C. M. (2020). Administrator perceptions of academic advisor tasks. *NACADA Journal*, 40(2), 85-96.

McGillin, V.A. (2003). Academic Risk and Resilience: Implications for Advising at Small Colleges and Universities. In Hemwall, M.K. & Trachte, K.C. (Eds.) *Advising and Learning: Academic Advising from the Perspective of Small Colleges & Universities*.

Miller, A., & Archer, J. (2010). Impact of workplace based assessment on doctors' education and performance: a systematic review. *Bmj*, 341.

Mu, L., & Fosnacht, K. (2019). Effective advising: How academic advising influences student learning outcomes in different institutional contexts. *The Review of Higher Education*, 42(4), 1283-1307.

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2017b). NACADA academic advising core competencies model. Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2022). *Academic Advising Core Competencies Model* (2nd edition) Retrieved from <https://my.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Product-Details?ProductsDetails=yes&ID=PG23>

Pascarella, E., & Terenzini, P. (2005). *How college affects students* (Vol. 2): A third decade of research. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pasquini, L. A., & Eaton, P. W. (2019). The# acadv community: Networked practices, professional development, and ongoing knowledge sharing in advising. *NACADA Journal*, 39(1), 101-115.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative social work*, 1(3), 261-283.

Reed, S. M. T. (2022). Using arts-based research methods. In *Scholarly inquiry in academic advising* (pp. 195-213). Routledge.

Rhodes, F. H. (2001). *The role of the American university: The creation of the future*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Rudolph, F. 1962. *Me American Calor and Intivrcity: A Mikity New Y4 irk: Rana an House*.

Selden, S. C., & Sowa, J. E. (2015). Voluntary turnover in nonprofit human service organizations: The impact of high performance work practices. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, 39(3), 182-207. doi:10.1080/23303131.2015.1031416

Schoeman, M., Loots, S., & Bezuidenhoud, L. (2021). Merging academic and career advising to offer holistic student support: A university perspective. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 9(2), 85-100.

Schulenberg, J. K., & Lindhorst, M. J. (2008). Advising is advising: Toward defining the practice and scholarship of academic advising. *NACADA Journal*, 28 (1), 43–53. doi: 0.12930/0271-9517-28.1.43

Steele, G. E. (2016). Technology and academic advising. *Beyond foundations: Developing as a master academic advisor*, 305-326.

Strydom, F., & Loots, S. (2020). The student voice as contributor to quality education through institutional design. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 34(5), 20-34.

Tinto, V. (2002, April 15). *Taking Student Retention Seriously: Rethinking the First Year of College*. Address presented at American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Tiroyabone, G. W., & Strydom, F. J. (2021). The development of academic advising to enable student success in South Africa. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 9(2), 1-15.

Troxel, W. G., Bridgen, S., Hutt, C., & Sullivan-Vance, K. A. (2021). Transformations in academic advising as a profession. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2021(195-196), 23-33.

White, E. R. (2020). The professionalization of academic advising: A structured literature review—A professional advisor's response. *NACADA Journal*, 40(1), 5-9.

Yarbrough, D. (2002). The Engagement model for effective academic advising with undergraduate college students and student organizations. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 41(1).

Young-Jones, A. D., Burt, T. D., Dizon, S., Hawthorne, M. J. (2013). Academic advising: Does it really impact student success? *Quality Assurance in Education*, 21(1), 7-19. doi. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09684881311293034>

Chapter 3: Article 2: Are students' advising needs met by the current Academic Advising Professional Development approach?

Abstract

This article explores whether the academic advising needs of students are met through the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) short course. The AAPD, developed from the work by Habley (1987) and McClellan (2007), comprises five components of academic advising guiding the professionalisation of the practice in South Africa. This article interrogates the responsiveness of the advisor's professional training. Although a number of studies have examined the professional development of academic advising and why a practice such as academic advising is critical in terms of being supportive to students, there has not been a strong focus on linking the two and reflecting on how they complement and support each other, especially in the South African context. As such, this study draws on existing advising training components as defined in international literature and practice and contextualised for the South African landscape in the AAPD. The study uses mixed methods to analyse student narratives captured during their academic advising appointments against the theoretical foundation of the AAPD. Key findings show that students' needs are mainly centred around the informational, conceptual, and relational components of academic advising, with the technological and personal component forming more of a supportive tool for advisors and not directly expressed as a need by students. These findings hold promise for the further development and strengthening of well-designed student support programmes and interventions underpinned by these three academic advising components as core facilitators of helping students feel a sense of belonging and succeed while aligning personal, academic, and career aspirations.

Keywords: academic advising, professionalisation, student support, advisor training, success

3.1 Introduction

As there is a diverse higher education system comprising traditional universities, comprehensive universities, and universities of technology, many South African students dream of accessing this system with a desire to be economically active citizens. While one can acknowledge that South Africa has made significant progress in widening access to higher education over the last three decades post-apartheid, we also need to reflect on the success of students who have been able to access higher education. In contrast to the increased access opportunities created within the system, we see the system confronted by the alarming unemployment rate. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), during the first quarter of 2023, the graduate unemployment rate was 10.6%, against the national unemployment rate of 32.6%. For those graduating from other post-school institutions (i.e., other tertiary), the unemployment rate during the same period was 23.5% (Statistics South Africa, 2023). Despite the statistics, South Africa has seen significant strides in expanding access to tertiary education. However, the graduate unemployment issue continues to persist, prompting questions about how the higher education system can improve pathways to create economically active citizens.

For a country such as South Africa, its broader post-school sector, which includes the higher education system, is *“not well equipped to enable the country and its citizens to harness the full social and economic potential of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) effectively”* (DHET, 2020 p.8). Linked to these findings, DHET (2020) further emphasises that the higher education system should provide educational experiences that provide students with relevant skills and capabilities to help them engage with technology in the workplace. Taking centre stage in conversations across the sector, the transformation of the sector as well as enabling access with success has remained consistent discussion points. Further adding to these discussions on a national basis, many scholars have placed great emphasis on the challenge that students are underprepared (Foxcroft, 2009; Scott, 2010, Wilson-Strydom, 2009, 2010; Yeld, 2010).

As early as 2010, the challenge of student success rates between students of designated groups versus those confronting institutions of higher learning was the achievement gap. In a recent CHE VitalStats Report (2021), statistics show that while the overall higher education participation rates overall have remained constant at 24% since 2018, there are differing patterns between racial groupings. With many conversations advocating for widened access with success, the participation rate remains a cause for concern when comparing that of

white students, which dropped from 60% in 2018 to 48% in 2021, and for African students over the same period, increased by 2% from 21% in 2018. These statistics point to perpetual challenges for the sector of narrowing the equity gaps in participation, retention as well as success.

According to Wilson-Strydom (2012), students in the South African higher education sector who have not successfully graduated from an institution, a greater majority of them come from financially disadvantaged backgrounds. While many may argue that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has made significant progress in covering the financial challenges linked to further education and training and in supporting those from disadvantaged backgrounds, more is needed than just tuition fees being covered by NSFAS to contribute to student success for such students.

According to the South African Survey for Student Engagement (UFS, 2016), findings indicate that the unique characteristics of South African students are:

- The majority of students of colour, i.e. black and coloured, and first-generation students are more vulnerable financially.
- 69% of students indicate that they have run out of food without being able to buy more.
- Students who indicated that they experience high stress levels regarding their finances also indicated that they had less time to spend on their studies because they were required to spend more time taking care of others, working, and travelling to and from class, when compared to other students (with lower levels of stress regarding their finances).
- 25% of first-year students and 31% of senior students attend class unprepared.
- Many students have unrealistic expectations about the university (related to the difficulty of university-level work, time-management, and the ability to pay for university expenses).
- First-year students rate the following as very important to them: support to succeed academically, learning support services (for example tutoring and writing centres), opportunities to interact with diverse peers, challenging academic experiences, and assistance in managing non-academic responsibilities (for example, family responsibilities).

It may be argued that these realities and characteristics are not unique to specific institutions or even South Africa, they demonstrate the need for a practice facilitated by knowledgeable, skilled and networked professionals. It is a practice such as academic

advising that can help facilitate this type of responsive support. In efforts to provide responsive strategies to address these challenges faced by the higher education system in South Africa, academic advising has come under the spotlight nationally more intently since 2018.

In an effort to better identify and understand students' needs, a high-impact practice such as academic advising has come into the focus of attention and in practice has made a significant contribution to student needs and, ultimately, their success. With its professional development playing a central role in how support is designed and deployed, this paper explores whether in response to student needs the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) short learning programme facilitates and responds to students' needs in practice. McGill (2019) expands on the work of Habley (1987) and McClellan (2007) that the professional development of academic advisors should consist of informational, conceptual, relational, personal, and technological (ICRTP) competencies. This paper adopts and arranges these competencies in a framework, ICRTP, for ease of reference. With the aid of the ICRTP framework, it reflects on the AAPD and how it was developed in response to contributing towards the provision of a more appropriate and responsive support to students. Data collected between 2018 and 2020 by academic advising staff at the University of the Free State (UFS) is analysed thematically to determine whether students' needs, captured in the advising narratives, align with how advisors are trained and structure their academic advising appointments.

3.2 Academic advising professional development

The global coordination of the Global Community for Academic Advising, NACADA, is based in the United States of America (USA), where the professional development of academic advising is traced back to the early 1980s. Habley (1986) described that for academic advising to be considered a professional practice, it must consist of informational, conceptual, and relational components. In 2007, when McClellan incorporated personal and technological competencies into what was purported by Habley (1987), the profession and practice were integrating into these five components. McGill (2019) further described that in having a literature base, the practice can be assessed and considered a professional practice. In a country like South Africa, evidence of the growth and positive impact of academic advising on student success has been gaining much momentum and, since 2018, has warranted institutions to formalise and professionalise academic advising. Lowenstein (2013) outlined a vision for the future of academic advising, stating that it is linked to the academic project anchored by faculty. He directly described the professionalisation of

academic advising as existing in two domains, that of an educator and that of a scholar, characterised by a commitment to a purposeful and empowering student support approach within defined standards of practice.

To contribute to finding solutions that address the student success debate, and after almost five years of piloting boutique academic advising initiatives, 2018 saw the formal establishment of intentional efforts to better structure and formalise the profession and practice of academic advising in South African higher education. The AAPD, as a short-learning programme, is designed to provide academic advisors with the knowledge and skills to support students more intentionally. The programme has been designed and presented by the UFS since 2018 to form part of national efforts to enhance and professionalise academic advising. The main objective for professionalising academic advising is not merely effort centred around growing advising services but rather improving the quality of training and support advisors receive. Informed by Habley's Academic Advising Framework (1987) and Kolb's Experiential Learning theory (1984), the AAPD is designed to provide advisors with a holistic developmental approach to their advising practice and professionalisation.

While there are no other academic advising professional development pathways contextualised for South African higher education, the AAPD covers various components that inform academic advising as a practice. With the aim of academic advising being to support students and help them navigate and align their personal, academic, and career goals, the AAPD strives to be responsive to student needs, thus offering the following to both advisors and advisees:

- Informed knowledge and understanding of the concepts and theories related to academic advising;
- Informed knowledge and understanding of roles and responsibilities of advising
- The ability to engage, disseminate, and use information in practice (as academic advisors);
- The ability to integrate technology and technological tools to provide support in their role as academic advisors; and
- The ability to reflect on one's own and learn from best practices to continuously grow in the field and practice of academic advising.

The defined functions that academic advisors have come to understand through the AAPD and practice have brought about a unified commitment to student support and the profession in South Africa. Work by Surr (2019) endorses the work by Tinto (2014), which proposed that

what is critical for student success is that practices need to be intentional, sustainable, and coherent. The AAPD's structured support has resulted in academic advising pragmatically contributing and, to a certain degree, coordinating efforts to increase students' likelihood of succeeding in tertiary studies.

3.3 International student realities, needs, and academic advising support.

Maslow (1943) stated that a sense of belonging affords the attainment of esteem, which within the hierarchy of needs is a higher level need that influences confidence, self-worth, and the capability to persist. Building on and interpreting higher education against Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Lotkowski et al. (2004, p.10) argued that without quality advising, students may master their academic content yet still be at risk of dropping out if they "fail to develop adequate academic self-confidence, academic goals, institutional commitment, achievement motivation, and social support and involvement".

Across the world, the theoretical and practical conceptualisation of academic advising is attributed to focusing on student development, their sense of belonging to an institution, and retention. Habley (2004) asserts that the quality of interaction between a student and a concerned individual on campus, often through academic advising, is a key contributor to university and college retention. Research has also proven that student development is influenced by various overlapping institutional efforts outside of classroom-related connections with faculty (Kuh, 2001). Numerous countries around the world have come to the realisation that education is the cornerstone of having a healthy and effective economy. Work by both Claudio (2002) and Flores-Caballero (2022 p. 1) confirms that the presence of learned citizens accounts for fore-fronting society's social, financial, and political development.

While financial debt, retention, dropout, and time to graduation remain the international challenges faced by students in higher education, much work has gone into understanding and developing responsive strategies to address these challenges. Hanover's (2010) research collectively describes that the barriers affecting retention, dropout, and graduation in the post-schooling system include but are not limited to financial insecurity, conflicting family, work, and school responsibilities, personal problems, and unclear career goals

Bloom (2005) suggests that a practice like academic advising is underpinned by ensuring that students learn about themselves and where they see themselves beyond university.

While it is clear that students who were affected during and after the COVID-19 pandemic are now confronted by academic and psychosocial challenges, many are also still battling to outline their personal, educational, and career aspirations (Govender et al. 2021). According to Stewart et al. (2020), professionals in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic had to develop and deliver experiences to keep students engaged academically while supporting them with skills such as managing time outside of the classroom in order to reach and achieve academic success and career aspirations. The COVID-19 pandemic and other previous disruptive events have resulted in a global shift in the higher education landscape. Even if these realities are taken into account, the challenges students face and their needs have not become less. Instead, they have become more complex due to these environmental stressors, leaving traces of positive and negative spin-offs for both teaching and learning and student success.

Research in the USA has shown that students from poor backgrounds take longer to obtain their degree. Similar research in other parts of the world has provided findings that these students spend less time on their academic work and more time being engaged in activities that are not in line with their academic endeavours; these include working or taking care of the family (Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001; Walpole, 2003). These very findings underscore the importance of having a 'safety-net' practice, such as academic advising, that can catch and support students by connecting them to various supports to address these shortcomings, which can be a solution to address these challenges. Zhong and Nan (2021) highlighted that the changes brought about by the pandemic and other disruptions experienced by the global higher education systems will have a lasting effect on students. In response to these realities, the intentional components that make up the blueprint of academic advising as a practice and profession and other innovative teaching and learning practices can help address this. Expanding on success that has resulted from deploying academic advising in higher education, it is clear that academic advising remains central to student success efforts and assists students to better understand their educational path and the benefits of being engaged in higher education. Tinto (2002) captured this as the potential of academic advising in addressing key conditions for student success, mainly when approached as a process grounded in teaching and learning.

3.4 South African student needs, realities, and academic advising support

With higher education in South African observing an overall increase in the national number of graduates exiting the system, there are parallel emerging practices contributing to the student support and success discourse. Outlined in the 2030 National Development Plan

(NDP), three core functions of higher education are articulated. The first is that higher education ought to strengthen social justice, equity and democracy through the provision of opportunities for social and economic mobility. The second is that higher education should educate and equip students with high-level employability skills needed in both public and private sectors, and thirdly to produce new knowledge, assess and find applications for existing knowledge. Expanding on these core functions of the NDP, through focused national communities such as the Siyaphumelela project, institutions have become intentional in how they design and implement student support initiatives for success.

A Dinokeng Scenarios (2009) publication presented findings wherein almost 40% of households in South Africa were living below the poverty line. Almost fifteen years since that publication, NSFAS provisioning has resulted in students having around R50 per day for meals, which has become a challenge faced by many accessing the system but struggling to succeed. The publication further describes how hunger remains a common condition among those living under the poverty line. While some may argue that there has been overall progress for higher education, the reality that students are still facing financial hardships remains true. According to Lynch and O'Riordan (1996), their findings confirmed that students' environmental surroundings also contribute to student success. Their study concluded that the lack of a conducive study space and access to study material were among the main barriers for students achieving the envisaged success in higher education. In the South African context, research, and practices have found that poor retention rates across institutions of higher learning result from institutions not being 'student ready' (van Zyl, 2013); others have presented financial, social and emotional well-being and academic factors (Sharp & Theiler, 2018) as central barriers to the retention challenges faced within the sector (Tindle et al. 2022).

As the number of students accessing higher education continues to grow, the system is still experiencing the challenge of addressing the throughput, retention, and achievement gap. Letseka et al. (2009) showed how a high number of students drop out before the completion of their undergraduate degree. Inferences made about this are that institutions are not 'student-ready' and students entering the system are from low socio-economic circumstances, thus being confronted by financial and psychosocial challenges before they enter and while being in the system (Blanden & Macmillan, 2014).

Various other studies and efforts have explored what the underpinnings might be to this perpetual problem, but no conclusive solution has been sought. The mere fact that the greater majority of students participating in South African higher education are from low-

socio economic backgrounds, and first-generation, these realities have presented as a great disadvantage (Fischer et al. 2017).

The Students' Access to Use of Learning Materials report (2020) further highlights that as we move toward being 'student-ready' within the higher education sector post the COVID-19 pandemic, our new normal requires the embrace of technology. Great emphasis is placed on how technology-infused teaching and learning and student support environments will not only expand opportunities for engagement, but also enable more responsive practices toward supporting student success. Academic advising is a profession that helps institutions to be more responsive to students' needs in South Africa, which can potentially be a meaningful and transformative practice to contribute to systemic change efforts. Ukpokodu (2016) describes a critical need for transformative and social justice practices to improve academic achievement. To date, academic advising has been adopted and adapted in such a way that its core functions and ultimate goals are strengthened through the training of professional staff, which translates to how they teach and support students to adopt academic behaviours that promote overall success beyond their personal and environmental realities.

University students in higher education are currently faced with a myriad of challenges that make achieving their goals and graduating in minimum time tough, and sometimes even impossible. While some of their challenges are a result of not being able to cope with university studies, they are also confronted by factors such as coming from high-school systems that make them underprepared for the rigours of the academic load of higher education. Work by Engle, Bermeo, and O'Brien (2006), as well as Warburton et al. (2001), has also shown that first-generation students are usually non-English speakers, thus bringing in a dimension where the language spoken at home is different from the institutional language of teaching and learning. There have also been studies that have shown that a common challenge faced by students, who are not succeeding, is the inability to establish and foster a sense of belonging to the institution. Sithaldeen et al. (2022) and Croxon and Maginnis (2006, p.132) describe this as students experiencing a sense of alienation, which can impact student behaviour and directly contribute to the success or failure of the student. With the understanding that student success efforts are also heavily dependent on addressing the academic and psycho-social components of life that students face, Wilson-Strydom (2012) describes the notion of the 'humpback bridge,' describing the relationship between universities and high schools, arguing that what is known on this side is not necessarily known on the other side. Considering all of these challenges and student needs, Ludwig-Hardman and Dunlap (2003) contend that the provision of quality student

support services is the key strategy to improving student success and addressing the challenges of student dropout and failure to progress within the allocated time. It is with this awareness that a practice such as academic advising is critical. As articulated by Cheung et al. (2017), the availability of academic advisors ensures that students have support towards resolving academic and personal issues. As a multidimensional high-impact practice, academic advising is thus a useful form of support for students as it implements student support and retention strategies.

3.5 Theoretical underpinning

In organising Academic Advising, Habley (1984) outlined a framework that guides the development and professionalisation of academic advising. This framework is based on three core components: informational, conceptual, and relational. Expanding on his earlier work, Habley (1995, p. 76) stated that "without understanding (conceptual elements), there is no context for the delivery of services. Without information, there is no substance to advising. And, without personal skills (relational), the quality of the advisor-advisee relationship is left to chance...". This underscores the importance of these three components. Habley (1995) and McClellan (2007) further explain that the informational component encompasses the knowledge and information that advisors should possess and share with students. Unlike the conceptual and relational components, this element focuses on the information advisors provide to students, equipping them with essential knowledge to enhance their chances of success. The second component Habley describes is the conceptual component. Also explained by Nutt (2003, p. 10), the conceptual component encompasses 'the concepts and theories that underpin Academic Advising.' With advancements in technology, Higginson (2000) includes the technological component and argues that it is fundamental to both the advisor and advisee and their comfort with computerised Academic Advising beyond the traditional parameters of face-to-face.

The personal component of the interactions between advisor and advisee transcends the mere transference of information and requires unique processes and skills in training and practice (McClellan, 2007). It is further seen in literature and practice that an understanding of the personal component by the academic advisor acts as a lever for effective, integrated, and holistic advising relationships (Higginson, 2000). The third of the three core components of Academic Advising is the relational component. This component focuses on establishing personal relationships between advisor and advisee through the demonstration of appropriate behaviours and upskilling with transferable attributes that will enhance the chances of success. For this study, the merged work by Habley (1984) and McClellan (2007)

will be referred to as the Informational, Conceptual, Relational, Technological, and Personal (ICRTP) framework.

Identifying the need for consistency in how advising is designed within institutions to be responsive to student needs, Gallo (2021), in a research study, concluded that while there is the existence of a range of Professional Development practices and activities for advisors that aid and enhance advisor knowledge and skills, the assessment of advising practices and its impact and contribution to student needs is still in its infancy state. Efforts should be made to develop meaningful assessment practices that determine how advisor professional development practices influence practice in response to institutional and student needs.

The theoretical professional development framework pronounced on in this study thus informs how advisors are trained and, subsequently, how the practice is responsive to the institutional objective and, more importantly, student needs.

3.6 Methodology

To better understand whether students' needs are being met by the AAPD approach, I use a mixed-method design informed by a pragmatic research paradigm. At the University of the Free State (UFS), academic advising is strongly informed by evidence-based and data-driven practice. Using Learner Case Management (LCM) to capture student appointments is a central systemic platform that integrates academic advising data. Academic advisors are compelled to keep a record of their interactions with students with every formal engagement (i.e., student appointment). While the data from the LCM can be used to establish and maintain continuous support for students, it is also used as a reflective data point to inform the improvements and gaps within practice to further the profession. Data collated between 2018 and 2020 comprises quantitative as well and qualitative data describing how the student contacted and connected with an academic advisor, their reason for the appointment (i.e., theme), the format in which the advising appointment took place (i.e., face-to-face, online), the narrative describing what the advising appointment covered as well as whether a referral to other services is made. LCM data is used as a proxy to identify student needs. The data is analysed through sorting and mapping the advising narratives against the ICRTP framework. The results are then used to inform how advisors are professionally trained. By so doing, the analysis aids the understanding of whether advisors are professionally equipped, as trained via the AAPD, to be responsive to students' needs for academic advising and whether the appointment engagements are responsive to the needs.

A mixed method research design informed the combination of descriptive statistical and thematic analysis. The descriptive analysis helped to identify the frequency of needs and thematic analysis helped identify the needs of students that were captured on the system. For each year, from 2018 to 2020, the session theme together with the advisor narratives informed the categorisation and sorting in accordance with the IC RTP framework, which was used as the lens through which qualitative data were analysed. The data points were further sorted from the 2018 to 2020 LCM datasets; this included the removal of identifiable data and the sorting of multiple entries to reflect unique appointments.

Each dataset was cleaned and analysed independently, and results were mapped comparatively to better understand why students were seeking academic advising support. Table 1 describes the distribution of student appointments in the overall dataset. 2018 had 989 (N) cases; 2019 had 1629 (N) cases; and 2020 had 965 (N) cases. Cumulatively, 3583 unique advising cases were analysed over the three years. It is worth noting the decline in advising appointments between 2019 and 2020. This decline is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted and shifted how advising took place as well as the type of support students required.

3.7 Results and discussion

This study aims to understand the needs of students who participate in academic advising appointments and to evaluate how academic advisors trained through the AAPD short learning program present and facilitate these appointments. By conducting a qualitative and thematic analysis of the academic advising narratives recorded during advising sessions from 2018 to 2020, the study maps the needs and responsive support (themes and narratives from advising sessions) against the IC RTP framework.

Table 1 details the number of appointments per academic year. All appointments analysed in this study were those of undergraduate students including first-time entering (FTEN) and seniors (returning) students. While the data in this study includes student appointments pre-COVID-19 and during the pandemic, it is interesting to observe that appointments in 2019 were close to double those in 2018 and 2020. Moving from an upward trajectory between 2018 and 2019 (pre-COVID), a significant decline between 2019 and 2020 is observed. The COVID-19 pandemic is the primary reason for this change because institutions moved into emergency remote teaching and learning and student support. This then, to some degree, limited students' access to support, although it was moved to online methods. The data

underlines the inequities of our society, this was, to an extent, limiting for students as not all students possessed the skills and resources to use online advising support.

Academic year	Total number of appointments
2018	989
2019	1629
2020	965

Table 1: Number of academic advising appointments per academic year 2018 - 2020

While academic advisors at the UFS are designated a specific faculty to support, they have appointments with a mix of undergraduate students. Figure 2 depicts the distribution of students per faculty using academic advising services in the form of appointments. The faculties of the Humanities and of Natural and Agricultural Sciences across all three years make up the top two faculties for which students had advising appointments. Mirrored against overall institutional undergraduate programme enrolments, these two faculties are among the top three largest faculties. For students in the faculty of the Humanities, it is almost natural that they are the highest cohort of students seeking academic advising support. With very few structured academic programmes, students in the Humanities have greater variation in their selection of majors, thus needing a professional to guide them to better understand the different majors and supporting them in the alignment of their personal and career aspirations with an academic programme. As the literature describes, academic advising is a process where academic advisors facilitate a meaning-making process for students (Kincanon, 2009).

For students in the faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, unlike the reasons for students in the Humanities, their need for academic advising support is different. With research describing that 40% of students who pursue studies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) obtain their qualifications (Seymour & Hunter, 2019), the UFS data explains why these students in the faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences are among the top two faculties seeking academic advising support. Other studies have also highlighted the reasons why STEM students do not obtain their degree and drop out. Among the reasons described by Emekalam (2019) and Seymour and Hunter (2019) for students not persisting in STEM programmes is that students either lose interest in the discipline, cannot identify with the discipline, or encounter experiences that are off-putting. Taken from the findings of Rozhenkova et al., (2022), who make an emphatic call for institutions of higher learning to pause and understand the significant role that caring for students plays in positive and productive student learning experiences, a practice like academic advising is a lever for enabling this.

It is notable also to see that students in the faculty of Education across all three years also have high attendance of academic advising support and there are similar to reasons for students in the Humanities. Education programmes have three phases; Foundation Phase, Intermediate phase, and Senior and Further Education and Training phase within which various specialisations are also offered. While a lower number of students from the faculties of Economic and Management Sciences, Health Sciences, Law, as well as Theology and Religion, have attended academic advising support over the three-year period, their academic programmes are more structured with little room for major variation, chances are that their reasons for making use of academic advising support are different.

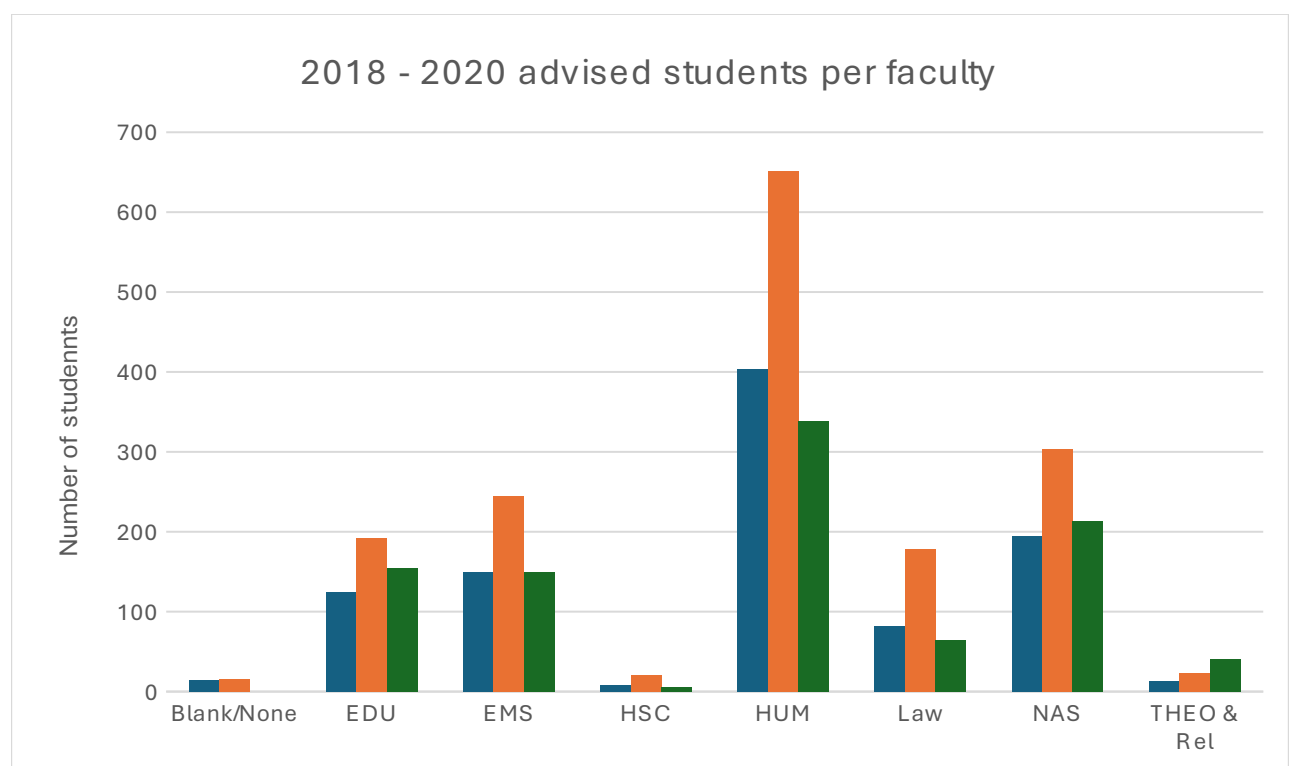


Figure 2: Faculty distribution of student advising appointments 2018 – 2020

Figure 3 further describes the format of advising sessions during the same period. As expected, most sessions were in the form of appointments and walk-ins in 2018 and 2019. An exciting shift is evident in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the majority (504) of the overall 965 sessions took the form of proactive calls (tracking and technology-enhanced outbound calls to students), supportive of the shift in academic advising and other supports. With the advancements in the growth of academic advising, the session formats confirm that growth, but also demonstrate the changes as a result of COVID-19 and remote

support to students. 2018 and 2019 had a significant number of sessions aside from being appointments being walk-ins, while in 2020 these became 'proactive calls' as a result of the introduction of remote teaching and learning.

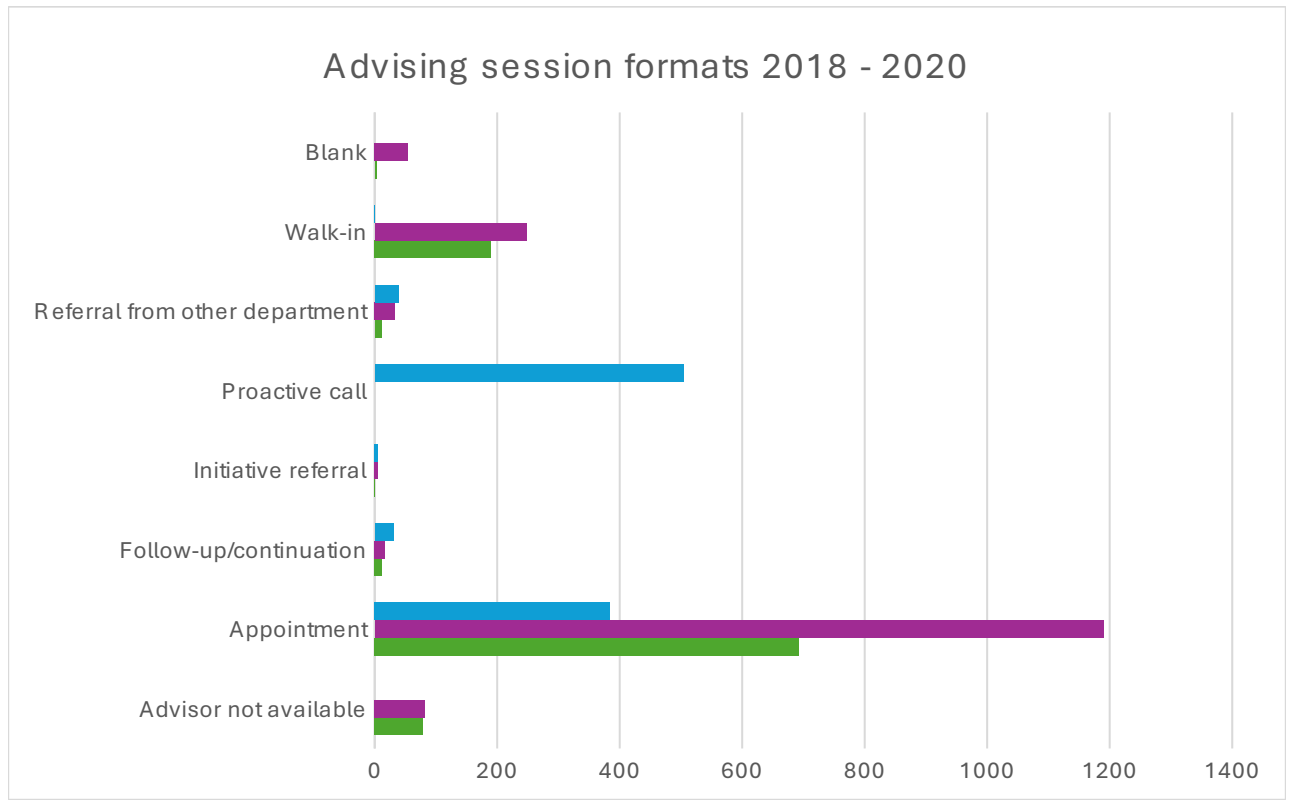


Figure 3: Academic advising session formats 2018 – 2020

Considering the themes describing why students had appointments with academic advisors during 2018 and 2020, the themes were somewhat similar if not related. Figure 4 depicts the combination of themes collectively for the period from 2018 to 2022. The themes, in many instances, single out only one specific topic but in many instances, when a student is sitting with an academic advisor, linked themes emerge from the conversation. For ease of capturing and analysing the overarching theme of the appointment, the advising themes are sorted under components making up the IC RTP framework. For the informational component, the following themes reside herein: informational, subject/module choice, deregistration/defer studies and appeal/academic exclusion. The conceptual component linked themes discussed between students and advisors include career advising, educational planning, credit check, study skills/strategies, and educational planning. The relational component is linked to the informational and conceptual components. The distinguishing factor is that the relational component is more towards the shared responsibility between advisor and advisee, based on the relationship forged with their

advisor. Themes linked to the relational component as described and discussed include time management and feedback from the students (i.e., follow-up). The themes captured as 'other' and 'multiple/combination' were appointments that either discussed an array of themes or in some instances the conversation was more a referral to other services and not necessarily within the domain of academic advising. A theme that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning and teaching is 'no student left behind'. This theme unlike the other themes was not as a result of students reaching out to academic advisors. It was instead the academic advisors implementing intrusive advising, wherein students 'at-risk' were identified and subsequently reached by advisor to determine the type of support required. In 2018, the top five themes why students sought academic advice support include follow-up (feedback), time management, career advising, credit check, and educational planning. The relational component was prominent in 2018, with over 60% of the themes captured for the advising sessions being 'feedback from students'. The 2019 top five themes include a combination of academic-related concerns and support, time management, information, subject/module selection, and educational planning. Interestingly, it was in 2019 that the common theme at 80% for advising sessions was for 'multiple/combination' reasons. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, with the move to online remote teaching and learning, students sought academic advising predominantly under the following themes: No Student Left Behind (an institutional strategy aimed at ensuring that students were able to continue learning) 100%, deregistration/deferral of studies 100% and approximately 85% appeals/academic exclusion.

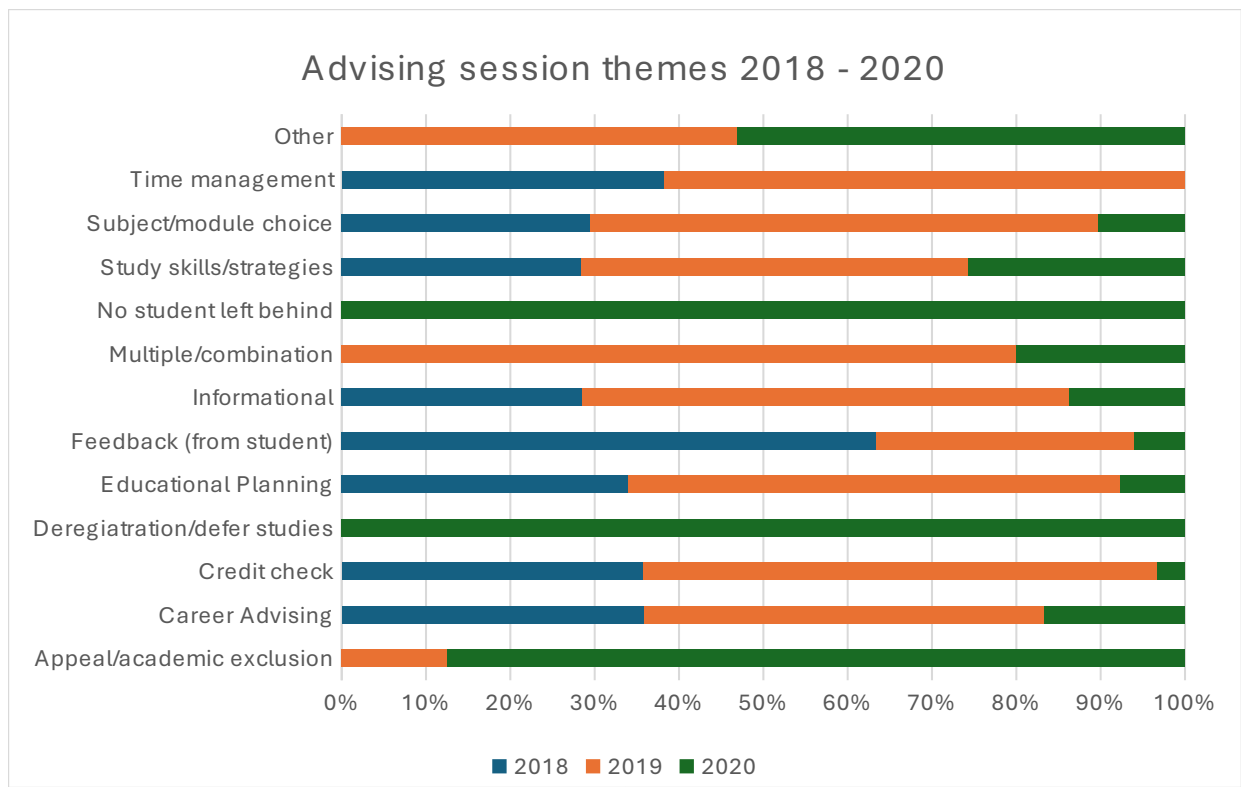


Figure 4: Advising session themes 2018 - 2020

Figures 5, 6, and 7 further illustrate each year's theme distribution per faculty. Worth noting is that both in 2018 and 2019, similar themes were observed regarding students' needs. In terms of faculty needs, students in the faculty of the Humanities in 2018 and 2019 needed predominantly support with career advising, information, and time management, this suggesting that the informational and relational components are most common and most needed by students. Across all the other six faculties, there is an almost even distribution of student needs, with time management and study strategies as equally needed support. Students from the faculty of Health Sciences across all three years had minimal needs. Notably, shifts are observed in the themes for which students sought academic advising support in 2020. Across all the faculties, during 2020, students reached for academic advising for proactive/intrusive advising support, which aligned with the shift of student support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although to a small degree, 2020 also saw students reaching out to academic advisors for academic appeals/exclusions and deregistration/request for deferral of studies, suggesting that during 2020, some students were not coping, thus exploring such options. Reflecting from an overall faculty perspective, the data suggests that through the lens of the IC RTP framework, the informational, conceptual, and relational components are the themes under which students need academic advising support. The use of technology is not an explicit component and themes are

emerging, but it is important that advisors explore technologies to leverage and facilitate these commonly needed supports. An example is that the informational component can be fully facilitated with the aid of technology allowing for one-on-one advising sessions to focus on the conceptual and relational components which can be highly effective towards contributing to students feeling a sense of belonging and being empowered to succeed.

With similar trends emerging for faculties across all three years (2018 – 2020), based on the data describing the session themes (i.e. students needs for academic advising), the themes for faculties are clustered under the IC RTP framework to better describe student needs:

1. Economic and Management Sciences: conceptual
2. Education: informational and conceptual
3. Health Sciences: conceptual and relational
4. Humanities: informational and relational
5. Law: relational
6. Natural and Agricultural Sciences: conceptual and relational
7. Theology and Religion: conceptual

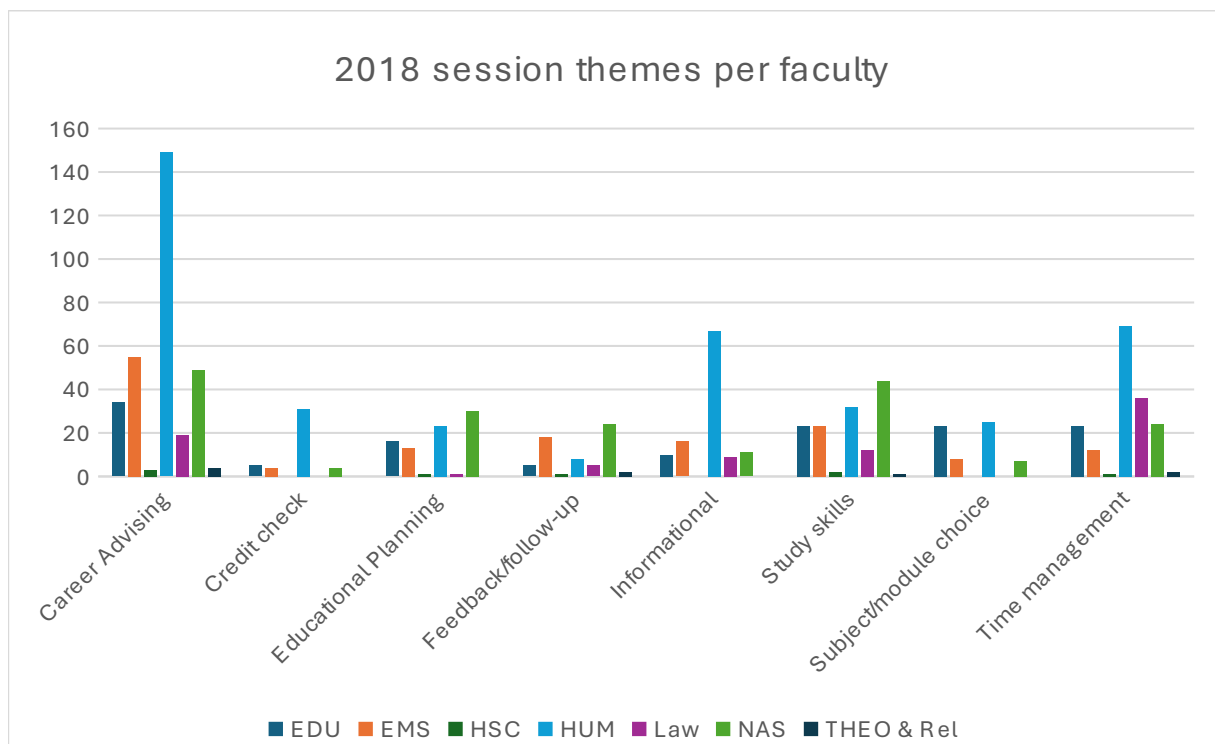


Figure 5: Session themes per faculty 2018

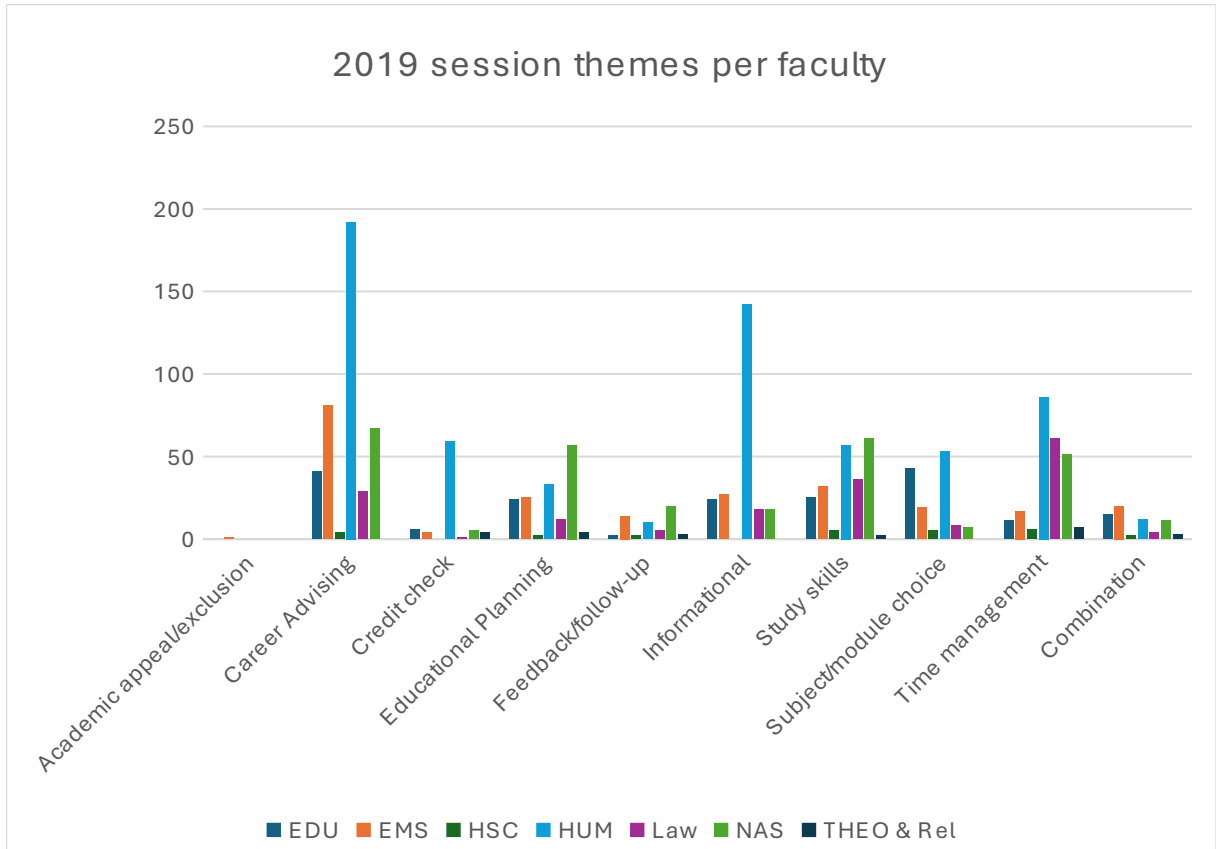


Figure 6: Session themes per faculty 2019

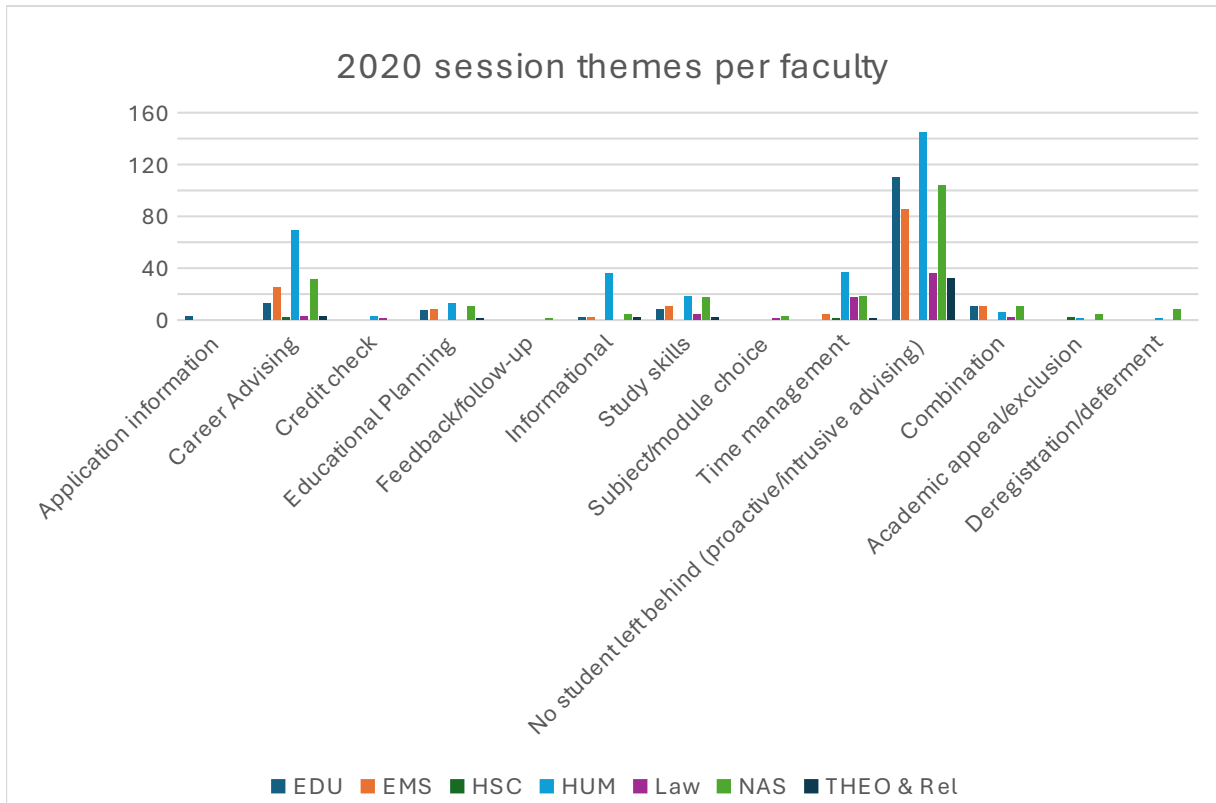


Figure 7: Session themes per faculty 2020

Aligning the session themes for which students were seeking academic advice between 2018 and 2020 against the IC RTP framework, students' needs were aligned with more components over others.

Informational

According to the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model (2017), the informational component is described as a component that includes what an academic advisor needs to know about their institution and external environment as well as the student's needs to provide students with appropriate and accurate support. As evident in the data, students in 2018, 2019, and 2020 sought informational support from academic advisors, which aligns directly with the component within the framework. The following narratives provide an example of the narratives describing students' needs from an informational perspective:

Returning student. She wanted to check if she is still on track.

She needed help with an assignment on career prospects for students with B.Admin degree. I provided her with resources.

Information on processes for applying for special exam and credit count

She wanted to find out about the subject choices for 2019 and 2nd semester.

The student is struggling to connect with the Global Protect App, and will be without a laptop soon. I have referred her to the TLM, so that we can get an indication of where the student lies with regards to the VSI, and so that further support can be explored.

The qualitative data demonstrates the significance of the informational component within the broader context of practice and professional identity. While there is a basic understanding of the role of the component, there is no clear recognition that advisors require requisite knowledge to be able to guide students effectively and efficiently.

Conceptual

The conceptual component, an extension of the informational element within advising, speaks to understanding students, their needs, and the environment. Referring to context and concepts advisors need to know in order to be able to deliver quality advising, this also refers to ideas and theories that advisors must understand to advise their students effectively. Themes emerging from the LCM data between 2018 and 2020, narratives that directly link to the conceptual component in the academic advising profession and practice include: credit check, educational planning, and career advising. These themes, although informational to a small degree, are technical and require in-depth understanding. Narratives captured by academic advisors describing the themes discussed under the conceptual component refer.

Educational planning: [...] is looking at courses in Humanities or honours *in education*. She is looking at adding to her current qualifications rather than starting afresh. She was given homework to go and do research on possibilities.

Educational planning: [...] is struggling with practical exams in nursing, and is wondering if she should change course. She is not sure what to do forward.

Career advising: She wanted to know about the modules for next year and what options she will have. We spoke about the different modules and how she might even be able to continue more with Economics if she wishes to depending on her marks.

Educational planning: She is looking into Development Studies, however, this is a Masters degree, hence she can look at PGDips like Gender Studies and Public management which can provide her with a good background for a masters. However her marks may disqualify her for any postgraduate options.

Career advising: He did not study in 2018 due to finances. He is interested in International Relations which is why we looked at Governance and Political Transformation and B.Admin. He decided to stick to Governance & political transformation. He wanted to know if he could break up the modules in order not to be so overloaded. I explained what the conditions were and he decided to rather take fewer modules this year. I referred him to Juanita. He felt that he did not want to go to the faculty advisors since he felt that it is due to that advice given that he ended up failing so much.

It is evident from the qualitative data that was thematically analyzed from the narratives that the conceptual component's application is crucial. A thorough and well-articulated definitional understanding of academic advising across an institution, is important and becomes clear when considering the value of the conceptual component and its function in the field and practice of academic advising. Advisors risk giving students false information if they don't fully grasp conceptual concepts like credit checks, which could be harmful to their success.

Relational

Regarding the skills academic advisors need to know, understand, and demonstrate, building on them and enabling students to do so, the relational component refers to practical. According to Ford (2007), the relational component in the advising practice addresses the process through which academic advising ought to be presented and delivered to students. This component addresses the student's ability to communicate, advisors' ability to problem solve, and the fact that they offer students practical support towards their academic success. The themes emerging from the LCM data aligning with this component include study strategies, time management, referrals, and feedback/follow-up appointments.

Supportive narratives linked to this component facilitated and captured by academic advisors refer to:

Appeal student, 9th year at UFS. The discussion highlighted that his study approach and time management strategies can be improved. Due to tests in the upcoming week, the session focused on the PRSST (adapted SQ3R) study approach. Next session: Time management

The student needed assistance with study methods. Planning was done for the upcoming assessments. A study schedule was compiled. The SQ3R method was explored, as well as the Questioning method. Follow up session will be held in five days.

Because she needs to work through the work and have many assignments, we made a schedule with the amount of time for the work in a week and adapted an honours research/assignment workplan.

[...] drew up a timetable for the semester and also calculated how many hours she needs per week and in a day for each module. We also drew up a schedule for time for the upcoming tests.

She is worried about the research in Sociology, so we created a plan based on the honours' template. She decided to work on research in the mornings between 04:00 and 06:00 in addition to the weekly hours needed to make her notes.

Technological

While many practitioners in academic advising advocate for a balance between technology and face-to-face interactions in practice, some have started moving more online to cope with the high demand for support and almost impossible advisor-advisee ratios. The use of analytics is also fast becoming a norm in the advising practice, enabling proactive/intrusive advising in many spaces. Bates (2015) suggests that integrating technology in academic advising can allow flexible delivery of the practice. A significant shift is evident with this study reflecting on qualitative data captured pre-COVID-19 (2018 -2019) and during the pandemic (2020). From both the 2018 and 2019 narratives, little to no technology was incorporated into the advising practice; however, from 2020, a prominent and intentional theme reflecting the integration of technology into the practice is 'No student left behind.' Although very limited during the pandemic, it would be interesting to see how this has been leveraged in recent times to facilitate both proactive/intrusive advising and the informational and conceptual components in the profession and practice. Narratives in relation to the relational component refer:

Student confirmed that she is on Blackboard, submitting work and working on Blackboard.

The student stays in Escort in KZN and has poor network coverage in her area but mostly the GPA doesn't work on her phone and then she is required to use data to be able access her school work. I have emailed the student ICT help desk details with assistance with regards to the GPA

From Bergville - Global protect is challenge, Communication with classmates via WhatsApp, cant connect to online classes, he is left behind. to be honest its difficult to study at home, parents don't understand, 8 hours per week. Materials are at his renting place and his friends sends via WhatsApp. Global protect, cant access

sources and it freezes. Would like assistance with getting data. referral to Advising mail

Ntokozo has network problems in his area and as a result he admits that he has missed a few assessments. I have asked him to always email his lecturers and make them aware if he misses an assessment.

Reflecting on some shortcomings and limitations technology presents in overall teaching and learning and academic advising, advisors need to be skilled in various technologies to advance their practice to remember where students are, understand their realities, and consider whether the technology will address their needs.

Personal

Unlike the other four components of the IC RTP framework, the personal component refers to the development of the academic advisor professionally enabling them to carry out their role. The personal component strengthens and aligns the academic advisors' professional development with their practice. If an academic advisor is not intentional about their professional development, sense of belonging to a community of practice, and other advancement opportunities, the way in which they carry out their practice is impeded. From the thematic analysis of the LCM data and mapping against the IC RTP, findings suggest that academic advisors supporting students between 2018 and 2020 were well-equipped to support and address the needs of students. The information is conceptual and supported by both qualitative and quantitative data. With the technological component being in its infancy stages with regards to being deeply embedded into the advising practice to respond to students' needs, much work still needs to be conducted to reflect on how and what technologies can enhance academic advising. While artificial intelligence (AI) is fast-tracking specific areas, an integrated and evidence-based approach to the understanding and application of technology in the academic advising practice and profession is still required.

3.8 Conclusion

Being responsive and supportive of students' needs spans broader than the provision of information and supplemental academic support. Practice and literature point to the need of students requiring well-coordinated and intentional holistic efforts. The academic advising IC RTP framework is a starting point for the provision of this type of support. The analysis of

academic advising narratives for students who sought academic advising support in this study has also confirmed the multifaceted nature of student needs.

Results reflect possible spinoffs that can come from having intentional alignment between the professional development of advisors and their practice and meeting students at their point of need, particularly policymakers, leaders, and student support professionals.

Although to varying degrees, findings from this study illuminate the importance of academic advisors being fluent in information and skills, understanding the role and purpose of advising, and being adaptable to offering effective support. Across all three years, students' needs grew more intense within the components of informational, conceptual and relational. For students pursuing degrees that do not necessarily lead to a single career, the students need a combination of informational, conceptual and relational support. Reflecting the students' needs against the AAPD components, the study confirms that the IC RTP framework does enrich and support advisors in being responsive toward addressing students' needs. Although there are nuances within institutions, it is the conceptual. While there was a decrease in the number of appointments during the COVID-19 pandemic; there was a steady increase again post-COVID. Student narratives confirm that students need academic advisors to cover overlapping practical needs such as career advising, time management, and educational planning during their appointments. While there is very little reference to technology as a student need, it would be worthwhile for advisors to consider exploring the use of technology to facilitate the informational component, leaving the appointments to teach and facilitate the relational and conceptual needs of students,

For early career advisors, the AAPD is well positioned to introduce and set a tone for advising professionals to the core components of academic advising. In future training and development opportunities for advisors, greater exposure to technology will be essential so that it augments and facilitates the informational component as the need for advising support increases. This will help address resourcing constraints and better manage the advisor/ advisee load. As observed in literature and practice both in South Africa as well as globally, students' needs have become very individualised, meaning advisors need to strengthen their conceptual and relational training to be able to address the changing needs.

References:

Collins, K. M. T., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Sutton, I. L. (2006). A model incorporating the rationale and purpose for conducting mixed methods research in special education and beyond. *Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal*, 4, 67-100. doi:10.1.1.454.4544

Council on Higher Education (2013). *A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: The case for a flexible curriculum structure*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Council on Higher Education. 2017. *Vitalstats 2015, Public Higher Education 2017*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education

Council on Higher Education. 2021. *Vitalstats 2021, Public Higher Education 2023*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crookston, B. B. (1994). A developmental view of academic advising as teaching. *NACADA Journal* 29(1), 78-82. doi:10.12930/0271-9517-29.1.83 (Reprinted from *NACADA Journal* 14(2), pp. 5-9, 1994).

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2018). *Ministerial Statement on University Funding: 2018/19 and 2019/20*. Government Printer
<https://www.dhet.gov.za/UCD%20Policies/Ministerial%20Statement%20on%20the%20Implementation%20of%20the%20University%20Capacity%20Development%20Programme.pdf>

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2019). *2000 TO 2016 First time entering undergraduate cohort studies for public higher education institutions*. Pretoria: DHET.

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2021). *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2019*

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2020. *Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Implications of the 4th Industrial Revolution for the Post-School Education and Training System.*

[https://www.dhet.gov.za/Social%20Inclusion/Report%20of%20the%20MTT%20on%204IR%20Implications%20for%20PSET_Final%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.dhet.gov.za/Social%20Inclusion/Report%20of%20the%20MTT%20on%204IR%20Implications%20for%20PSET_Final%20(1).pdf)

Fosnacht, Kevin & Dong, Yiran. (2013, November). Financial Stress and its Impact on First Year Students' College Experience, Paper presented at the Assoc, for Study of Higher Education, St. Louis.

Govender, N., Reddy, P., & Bhagwan, R. (2021). Academic and psychosocial challenges of Health Sciences students during the COVID-19 pandemic: A University of Technology perspective. *Perspectives in Education*, 39(3), 44–61. <https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v39.i3.5>

Habley, W. R. (1987). *Academic Advising Conference: Outline and Notes*. The ACT National Center for the Advancement of Educational Practices. (pp. 33-34). Iowa City, IA: ACT.

Habley, W.R. (1994). *Key Concepts in Academic Advising*. In *Summer Institute on Academic Advising Session Guide* (p.10). Manhattan, KS: NACADA The Global Community for Academic Advising.

Habley, W. R. (1995). *Advisor training in the context of a teaching enhancement center*. In R. E. Glennen and F. N. Vowell (Eds.). *Academic Advising as a Comprehensive Campus Process* (National Academic Advising Association Monograph Series, no. 2), Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.

Habley, W.R. (Ed.) (2004), "The status of academic advising: findings from the ACT sixth national survey", Monograph No. 10, National Academic Advising Association, Manhattan, KS.

Higginson, L. C. (2000). *A framework for training program content revisited*. In V. N. Gordon, Habley, W. R., & Associates (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 298-306). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Portals/0/Clearinghouse/documents/2000-Higginson-Informational-Components.pdf>

Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) Retrieved from
<https://lawlibrary.org.za/akn/za/act/1997/101/eng%401997-12-19>

Hunter, M. S., and E. R. White. 2004. Could fixing academic advising fix higher education? *About Campus* 9(1): 20-25.

Kuh, G. (2001), "Organizational culture and student persistence: prospects and puzzles", *Journal of College Student Retention*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 23-9.

Lotkowski, V.A., Robbins, S.B. and Noeth, R.J. (2004), "The role of academic and non-academic factors in improving college retention", ACT Policy Report, available at: www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/college_retention.pdf (accessed 28 September 2008).

Lowenstein, M. 2005. If advising is teaching, what do advisors teach? *NACADA Journal* 25(2): 65–73.

McClellan, J.L. (2007). Content Components for Advisor Training: Revisited. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Training-Components.aspx>

McGill, C. M. (2019). The professionalization of academic advising: A structured literature review. *NACADA Journal*, 39(1), 89–100.

McGill, V.A. (2000). Current issues in advising research. In V. N. Gordon & W. R. Habley (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 365–380). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nastasi, B. K., Hitchcock, J. H., & Brown, L. M. (2015). Conceptualizing mixed methods design typologies: Moving toward fully integrated synergistic research models. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* [SAGE digital edition]. doi:10.4135/9781506335193

National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) (2004), "NACADA statement of core values of academic advising", available at: www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Core-Values.htm (accessed 28 September 2008).

National Planning Commission. (2011). National Development Plan: Vision for 2030. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/devplan2.pdf

Nutt, CL (2003). Creating Adviser-Training and Development Programs. In *Adviser Training: Exemplary Practices in the Development of Adviser Skills* (pp. 9-16). (National Academic Advising Association Monograph Series, no. 9). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.

O'Banion, T. (1972). An academic advising model. *Junior College Journal*, 42, 62, 64, 6M9.

Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2011. Access to Higher Education: Challenges: Higher Education Briefing. Meeting Report Information. Date of Meeting: 07 February 2011 Retrieved From: <http://www.pmg.org.za/node/25042> (accessed 09.05.14).

Sayer, M., De Saintonge, M. C., Evans, D., & Wood, D. (2002). Support for students with academic difficulties. *Medical Education*, 36(7), 643-650. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2923.2002.01259.

Scott, I. (2009). Academic development in South African higher education. In E. Bitzer (Ed.), *Higher education in South Africa: A scholarly look behind the scenes*. (pp. 21–49). Stellenbosch: SUNPress.

Scott, I., Yeld, N., & Hendry, J. (2007). Higher education monitor: A case for improving teaching and learning in South African higher education. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Stewart, B. L., Miertschin, S., & Goodson, C. (2020). COVID-19 transitions to online formats and pre-pandemic foundations for student success: time management and lifestyle variables. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 20(10), 173-189.

Surr, W. (2019). Student advising: An evidence-based practice. Midwest Comprehensive Centre. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED599037>.

Tindle, R., Abo Hamza, E. G., Helal, A. A., Ayoub, A. E. A., & Moustafa, A. A. (2022). A scoping review of the psychosocial correlates of academic performance. *Review of Education*, 10, e3371. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3371>

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropouts from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent literature. *A Review of Educational Research*, 45, 89-125.

Tinto, V. (2004). *Student retention and graduation: Facing the truth, living with the consequences*. Washington, D.D.: the Pell Institute.

UNSW. 2016. "Student-Centred Teaching UNSW Teaching Staff Gateway." <https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/student-centred-teaching>.

Universities South Africa. 2015. "Reflections on Higher Education Transformation." Discussion Paper Prepared for the Second National Higher Education Transformation Summit. In *Higher Education Summit*, 1-24. <http://www.justice.gov.za/commissions/FeesHET/docs/2015-HESummit-Annexure05.pdf>.

University of the Free State. (2016). *SASSE: Engaging the student voice. SASSE Report 2016*. University of the Free State.

University of the Free State. (2016). *Teaching and learning strategy*. Centre for Teaching and Learning, University of the Free State.

Young-Jones, A. D., Burt, T. D., Dixon, S., & Hawthorne, M. J. (2013). *Academic advising: does it really impact student success?*. Quality Assurance in Education.

Chapter 4: Conclusions and implications

4.1 Introduction

In the context of higher education, especially post-pandemic, the shift towards a student-centred environment has become a focal point. This shift necessitates that institutions prioritise what students need and do alongside what teachers teach. In South Africa, academic advising is a little over a decade old, with limited contextual literature outside of the national definition identifying its practice and professionalisation. For institutions to truly achieve a student-centred approach, intentional efforts must be made to provide high-quality support services that promote student success. This study utilises the Habley (1987) and McClellan (2007) advising frameworks as a theoretical basis to advocate for embedding certain advising components to advance the practice and professionalisation of academic advising. In this study, chapter one provides an introduction and overview of the study. I ventured into my position as a scholar, explored international and national literature of academic advising and its components, and expanded on what I aimed to achieve through the study by highlighting why this study is significant. In chapters two and three, I position the study through two articles. The first article investigates the way in which the AAPD short learning programme contributes to the professionalisation of academic advising in South Africa, and the second article explores whether the components in the AAPD short learning programme translate into a responsive practice that meets students' advising needs. The current chapter provides a high-level summary of the overall study, its key findings as informed by the research questions, and a general conclusion, ending off with the overall limitations and recommendations for future studies.

4.2 Research focus

Academic advising revolves around seven core values: care, commitment, empowerment, inclusivity, integrity, professionalism, and respect (NACADA, 2017). These values shape the professional framework known as the core competencies of academic advising. This study adopts these core competencies as academic advising components proposed by Habley (1987) and McClellan (2007). These five crucial components: informational, conceptual, relational, technological, and personal, are foundational to the practice and profession of academic advising.

In South Africa, while these core values and components are recognised globally, their local adaptation is only explicitly expressed in the AAPD. The inception of academic advising in South Africa dates back to 2010, primarily at the UFS. Initially, the focus of the practice was to identify systemic obstacles to student success, narrowly defined as graduation rates. Over time, academic advising has evolved to encompass a broader definition of student success. Today, academic advising is recognised for its multi-faceted, teaching and learning practice that contributes to student success, by providing students with information, supporting them in conceptually understanding higher education, and building necessary relationships and connections with the institution.

Since few South African studies are asking what academic advising as a practice and a profession looks like, this study's primary aim was to contribute to the exploration and contextualisation of academic advising. Positioned as a mixed-method investigation of academic advising in South Africa, this study further expands the field to contribute towards a national perspective of how academic advising and advising professionals contribute to students' success, addressing systemic challenges faced by the sector and students within it. The deep-dive of the study to understand students' advising needs, the impact of the AAPD on the responsiveness of advisors in their practice as well as the contributions of the AAPD to the professionalisation of the practice, is underpinned by the ICRTTP framework adapted from international literature. Through the alignment of evidence-based literature and practice, this study enhances the understanding of the practice and, moreover, the implementation of academic advising to promote and contribute to student success. Through the interrogation of the types of information disseminated, the conceptual understanding, the relational elements enhancing the practice, as well as technologies embedded into the practice, these layered explorations have helped shape a high-touch and high-tech practice within the student success agenda.

The overall study informs policymakers, scholars, and practitioners about the significance of the effective implementation and professional development of academic advisors in South Africa. The study advocates for the widespread adoption and contextualisation of the ICRTTP framework in South African higher education to enhance and support student success. In order to address the overall aim, in the next two sections, I draw on the reflections and findings of each article, chapters two and three, and how they each contribute to the synthesis of the study's findings.

4.2.1 In what ways does the Academic Advising Professional Development Short Learning Programme contribute to the profession and practice of academic advising in South Africa?

Chapter 2 (Article 1) focused on the contributions of the AAPD in advancing the profession and practice of academic advising in South Africa. The survey completed by AAPD participants reveals that most advisors are early career academic advisors with less than five years on the job, and that the profession itself is still developing and evolving within the South African context. Advisors reported using a combination of developmental and intrusive approaches to academic advising, with a primary focus on providing informational and relational support. Based on the findings, varying levels of understanding and implementation of the five advising components are identified. Academic advisors demonstrate a fragmented understanding of the informational component, are not entirely clear on the internal, external, and student needs information. Findings further point to the early development of advisors within the conceptual component and strong recognition of the importance of relational skills. Technological integration and the personal component are identified as areas needing additional development to further advance the profession.

While the above demonstrates progress, the findings also demonstrate the lack of an explicit understanding of two of the advising components, namely, the conceptual and technological components by AAPD participants. While institutions are rolling out student support practices, which they call academic advising, in some institutions academic coaching, their definitions are still broad and do not fully demonstrate a contextual understanding of a responsive practice. ??? Eletsa (the National Academic Advising Association) is formally giving a foundational national definition for academic advising, and the AAPD also assists participants to craft a contextual institutional/departmental definition for academic advising, creating an opportunity for conceptual unpacking of the practice. Parallel to understanding the definition of academic advising, these findings point to the need for more formal institutional structures that clearly outline the purpose and tasks of advisors. By so doing, there will be congruency in the professional development and institutional advancement toward understating and implementing academic advising. This speaks directly to the positive contribution and advancement of the profession and practice without creating a disjuncture.

The AAPD programme in this study is thus highlighted as a valuable platform for professional development, especially for early-career advisors, but there is a need for continued professional development opportunities to enhance the understanding and

implementation of academic advising across all components and how it links to the notion of holistic student development and support

4.2.2 To what extent are students' advising needs met by the current Academic Advising Professional Development approach?

The academic advising framework in South Africa, particularly the IC RTP components, plays a crucial role in addressing student needs comprehensively. Chapter 3 (Article 2) focused on identifying students' advising needs and reflected on whether these needs are adequately met by the AAPD. The study highlights that effective academic advising requires more than just providing information; it demands a holistic approach that integrates well-coordinated support across various dimensions. The professional development of advisors through the AAPD programme equips them to meet these needs, particularly in areas like career advising, time management, and educational planning. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the number of advising appointments, but the need for academic advising has intensified post-pandemic, especially in informational, conceptual, and relational components. Early career advisors benefit from the AAPD in understanding these core components, and future training should emphasise the integration of technology to enhance informational support and expand on areas such as career advising, advising support tailored for senior students, advising ethics, and data analytics in advising. This approach can help manage advisor workload and better address individual student needs, ensuring that academic advising remains responsive and effective in supporting student success. The overall findings of the study highlight that each of the five components in the framework is crucial for both practice and profession, although the personal component is less emphasised when being responsive to students' needs overlaps with the relational component. It also found that the conceptual and relational components in South Africa are the most emphasised and practised. Students' needs predominantly revolve around the informational, conceptual, and relational components.

Regarding students' advising needs, post the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings show that there is a growing need for advisors to be informed in order to better meet students' needs, this being in the domain of career advising, time management, and having information readily available. The findings further reveal that faculties with degrees where students can select minors have a greater need for advising support in the form of career planning and career advising. Aligning students' needs with the IC RTP framework, this study confirms the notion that students registered in the faculty of the Humanities and Natural and Agricultural Science have a significantly higher need for advising support anchored by the informational,

conceptual and relational component as compared with others. Students' needs from the Faculty of Education are largely within the conceptual and relational components. In the instance of the faculty of Economic and Management Science, their needs are exclusively conceptual, and the faculties of Health Sciences, Law, and, Theology and Religion are very generic, with no component being in greater demand than the other. It is noteworthy in this study that key findings demonstrate that, while the AAPD exposes and trains advisors using the ICRTTP framework, students have differentiated needs per faculty. This suggests that having well-rounded, agile, and skilled professionals trained through the AAPD is non-negotiable. This enables advisors to fully respond to and be supportive of students' needs.

4.3 Value of the study and conclusion

In response to the overarching research question: *How can the profession and practice of academic advising in South Africa be best aligned with the ICRTTP framework to support the needs of students*, this study illustrates a sound approach of the ICRTTP framework spearheading the profession and practice of academic advising for the South African context. The findings confirm that the adopted and implemented framework in the AAPD short learning programme does contribute positively to the advancement of the profession and practice. The study also highlights that there is still a need for broader institutional buy-in for the adoption and further embedding and recognition of academic advising as a profession and practice.

Collectively, the overall findings of this study confirm that there is a need for ongoing professional training and development parallel to institutions adopting and defining academic advising per the ICRTTP framework. Without the requisite knowledge of information, an academic advisor cannot fulfil the role of disseminating the information students need to succeed. Without a thorough conceptual and definitional understanding of what students need or what higher education trends and conversations are, the practice cannot exist fully. The responses of advisors in relation to their understanding of the components make it clear that the components are not fully and equally understood. This also stems from evidence that while some institutions have a definition for academic advising, the implementation of the practice is still lacking. What could help address and strengthen the understanding as well as the implementation of a practice underpinned by the ICRTTP framework, is that institutions could develop communities of practice where advisors have successfully completed the AAPD. In addition, AAPD participants can take the Portfolio of Evidence completed as an assessment in the course, to reflect, unpack and plan for a contextual and institutional understanding of each component, which could then yield action points for

implementation. The ICRTTP affords advisors the opportunity to advance their professional development more intently and in a structured manner.

For institutions to better align their AA practices and the recognition of academic advisors as professionals, the ICRTTP framework should be adopted as the blueprint. For institutions to help academic advisors understand the practice and enhance their professional development, there could be the establishment of communities of practice where information from external, internal, and student needs are discussed and reflected upon continuously. To address the conceptual understanding of advisors, there also needs to be a broader determination of what the conceptual gaps are for academic advisors and what they need to know. This can be addressed and facilitated through stakeholder working groups and engagements where all student support stakeholders contribute to defining and segmenting what the practice should entail and who should respond to what kinds of needs at an institutional level. Lastly, because the higher education sector is fluid, in advancing the relational, technological, and personal components, institutions must consider at an institutional level what already exists, how their students respond to support, and who will drive the profession and practice. In so doing, institutions will be better positioned to help students acquire and understand the information and concepts of higher education, have the guidance and support they need to learn, persist, and ultimately graduate while aligning their personal and career aspirations.

This study is valuable for the professional advancement and practice of academic advising in that it underscores the importance of professional development in advancing academic advising as a practice and responding to students' needs in South Africa. By building their practice on the components of the AAPD and incorporating new training opportunities, advisors can better support student success. The establishment of the National Academic Advising Association (Eletsa) and more specialised AAPD programmes and webinars could expand and significantly advance this field.

Ongoing efforts are needed to ensure that advising practices evolve to meet changing student needs. This includes incorporating new research, leveraging technology, and providing continuous professional growth opportunities. By doing so, academic advising in South Africa can positively impact student success, helping them achieve academic, career, and personal goals.

4.4 Limitations and recommendations

While the articles in this study have their own unique limitations and recommendations, the overall study has several limitations and recommendations for future studies. Although the number of AAPD participants who completed the survey reflecting on their professional development and practice was low, the qualitative data analysed offers valuable insights as a result of a comprehensive question set that reflected on the role of each component from multiple dimensions. Future studies can delve deeper into understanding the unique role facilitated by the AAPD in the professional development and advising practice per institution and perhaps different types of advisors than those who participated in the AAPD and exist within the institutions can be included.

In terms of students' needs analysed and determined via the advising narratives, this study focuses on students before, during, and a year after the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the pandemic brought about significant shifts in how students learn, what their needs are, and how advisors support them, future studies could use the same approach of qualitatively analysing the advising needs and narratives by conducting a pre-advising assessment to understand student needs and a post-advising assessment before analysing the narratives, which can be done for advising that is centralised, decentralised as well as hybrid. This study can also be replicated in future studies at other universities, especially because to date, 23 of the 26 South African universities have had at least three or more participants completed and be certified through the AAPD since 2018. With much of the HE sector transitioning into blended learning and teaching modalities, it is worth further investigating the level of technology integration into the academic advising practice as there is very little to draw on. Much of the focus of technology use and integration has been crowded around academic teaching and not necessarily considering contexts beyond the classroom to facilitate student support.

A main recommendation of this study is that the AAPD should be augmented by webinars and other training and development opportunities with a focus on unique topics including, but not limited to: career advising, advising leadership and management, advising and analytics, advising students from unique living and learning communities. Institutions can look into more intentional integration of the ICRTF into their institutional academic advising strategy. This does not require elaborate strategies but, through intentional design, institutions can weave in elements that will make the academic advising practice more effective. Examples of practical considerations of how the ICRTF framework can be integrated into practice include (i) intentional embedding of the introduction of academic

advising to students and staff during annual registration and/or orientation; (ii) developing an institutional definition of what academic advising is, which will differentiate the practice from other student support practices and create opportunities for greater synergy; (iii) ensuring that the requisite skills for both the advisors and students are structured and contextualised to address the needs of students. Institutions have the opportunity through the relational component to foster a conducive learning and supportive environment for students, but without the requisite knowledge and skills, this is not possible. Because the integration of technology in advising practices is still quite undeveloped in South Africa, institutions ought to consider how technology can help facilitate informational elements of academic advising to create a high-tech and high-touch practice. In recent time, such efforts have attracted attention towards WhatsApp channels and other social media platforms being leveraged to facilitate and communicate academic advising related information. Lastly, for the personal component, which is more staff facing than it is student facing, institutions need to invest in the development of their academic advising staff. This can be done through establishment of an academic advising community of practice within departments and also participating in available professional development programmes like the AAPD.

These opportunities should introduce advisors to more current and conceptual student needs and more extensively expose the advisors to technology so that it can be integrated and leveraged to facilitate components such as the informational component. It is also suggested to adapt the AAPD based on this study's findings, replicate similar studies within institutions to enhance internal capabilities and gain a better grasp of students' needs and the variables affecting their achievements. These recommendations aim to strengthen the effectiveness and relevance of practical and professional strategies for academic advising contextual to institutions.

References:

- Brubacher, J. S., & Rudy, W. (1997). *Higher education in transition: A history of American colleges and universities* (4th ed.). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Burgess, J., & Cisneros, J. (2018). The semester of struggle: Male junior college transfer student-athletes' experiences. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 11(1), 12.
- Busato, V. V., Prins, F. J., Elshout, J. J., & Hamaker, C. (2000). Intellectual ability, learning style, personality, achievement motivation and academic success of psychology students in higher education. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 29(6), 1057-1068.
- Cachia, M., Lynam, S., & Stock, R. (2018). Academic success: Is it just about the grades?. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 3(1), 434-439.
- Cheung, R. Y., Siu, A. M., & Shek, D. T. (2017). Survey of needs and expectations for academic advising in a Hong Kong university. *NACADA Journal*, 37(2), 21-32.
- Creamer, D. G. (2000). Use of theory in academic advising. In V. N. Gordon, & W. R. Habley (Eds.). *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 18-34). Jossey-Bass.
- Crookston, B. B. (1994). A developmental view of academic advising as teaching. *NACADA Journal*, 14(2), 5-9. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-14.2.5>
- Daly, M. E., & Sidell, N. L. (2013). Assessing academic advising: A developmental approach. *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, 18, 37 - 49. <https://doi.org/10.18084/basw.18.1.v17k210462318075>
- De Klerk, D. & Dison, L. (2022). Demystifying the work of South African academic advisors: An exploration of students' structural and material constraints. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 10(2), 129-147. <https://doi.org/10.24085/jsaa.v10i2.3786>
- De Klerk, D. (2021). Making known the Real: An exploration of academic advising practices in a South African higher education context. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 9(2), 101-121.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2013). Report of the Ministerial Committee on Articulation Policy: The Purposes, Principles and Procedures of Programme Articulation in South Africa's Post-School Education and Training System.

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2018). Ministerial Statement on University Funding: 2018/19 and 2019/20. Government Printer.

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2019). 2000 To 2016 First Time Entering Undergraduate Cohort Studies for Public Higher Education Institutions. <https://www.dhet.gov.za/HEMIS/2000%20TO%202016%20FIRST%20TIME%20ENTERING%20UNDERGRADUATE%20COHORT%20STUDIES%20FOR%20PUBLIC%20HEIs.pdf>

Drake, J. K. (2011). The role of academic advising in student retention and persistence. *About Campus*, 16(3), 8–12. doi:10.1002/abc.20062

Erikson, E.H. (1958). *Young man Luther*. New York: Norton

Erikson, E.H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd Ed.). New York: Norton

Esop, A. (2020). *The Changing Size and Shape of the Higher Education System in South Africa, 2005–2017*. Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies.

Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F. M., Patton, L. D., & Renn, K. A. (2009). *Student development in college* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bas

Ewing-Cooper, A., & Merrifield, K. (2018, March). Advisors' perceptions, attitudes, and suggestions for working with parents. *Academic Advising Today*, 41(1).

Habley, W. R. (2004). *Current practices in academic advising: Final report of ACT's sixth national survey on academic advising* (NACADA Monograph Series, no 10.). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.

Habley, W. (1995) "Advisor Training in the Context of a Teaching Enhancement Center." In R. E. Glennen and F. N. Vowell (eds.), *Academic Advising as a Comprehensive Campus Process*. National Academic Advising Association Monograph Series, no. 2. Manhattan, Kans.: National Academic Advising Association.

Habley, W. R. (1987). *Academic Advising Conference: Outline and Notes*. The ACT National Center for the Advancement of Educational Practices (pp. 33-34). Iowa City, IA: ACT.

Hagen, P. L., & Jordan, P. (2008). Theoretical foundations of academic advising. In V. N. Gordon, W. R. Habley, & T. J. Grites (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 17–35). Jossey-Bass.

Higginson, L. C. (2000). A framework for training program content revisited. In V. N. Gordon, Habley, W.R., & Associates (Eds.). *Academic advising: a comprehensive handbook*. (pp.298-306). Jossey -Bass.

Kuhn, T. L. (2008). *Historical foundations of academic advising*.

Light, R. J. (2001). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Harvard University Press.

Lowenstein, M. (2014, August 12). *Toward a theory of advising*. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Retrieved from <https://journals.psu.edu/mentor/article/view/61268/60901>

Lowenstein, M. (2009). If advising is teaching, what do advisors teach?. *NACADA Journal*, 29(1), 123–131.

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3(5), 551–558. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0023281>

McClellan, J. L. (2007). *Content components for advisor training: Revisited*. Retrieved from <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/AdvisorTrainingComponents.aspx>

McGill, C. M. (2019). The professionalization of academic advising: A structured literature review. *NACADA Journal*, 39(1), 89-100.

Mihaela, P. L. (2015). Psychological factors of academic success. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 180, 1632-1637.

NACADA. (2017b). *Academic Advising Core Competencies Guide*. NACADA.

NACADA. (2017c). NACADA academic advising core competencies model. Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>

Nutt, C. L. (2003). Creating advisor training and development programs. *Advisor training: Exemplary practices in the development of advisor skills* (pp.9-16. NACADA).

O'Banion, T. (1994). An academic advising model. *NaCADA Journal*, 14(2), 10-16.

Powers, N., & Wartalski, R. (2021). Junior faculty advising for effective student growth and academic success: A qualitative study. *Teacher-Scholar: The Journal of the State Comprehensive University*, 10(1), 2.

Rhodes, F. H. T. (2001). *The creation of the future: The role of the American university*. Cornell University Press.

Schlossberg, N. K. (2008). *Overwhelmed: Coping with life's ups and downs* (2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub. Group

Shaffer, L. S., & Zalewski, J. M. (2011). Career advising in a VUCA environment. *NACADA journal*, 31(1), 64-74.

Thomas, T. A., & Maree, D. (2022). Student factors affecting academic success among undergraduate students at two South African higher education institutions. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 52(1), 99-111.

Tinto, V. (2017). Reflections on student persistence. *Student Success*, 8(2), 1-8.

Valentine, Jeffrey C, Hirschy, Amy S, Bremer, Christine D, Novillo, Walter, Castellano, Marisa, & Banister, Aaron. (2011). "Keeping At-Risk Students in School A Systematic Review of College Retention Programs". *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 33(2), 214-234.

White, E. R. (2015). Academic advising in higher education: A place at the core. *The Journal of General Education*, 64(4), 263-277.

Zelazny, M. (2017). *The impact of academic advising on developing purpose and selecting a major through exploratory studies*. Rowan University

Yarbrough, D. (2002). The Engagement model for effective academic advising with undergraduate college students and student organisations. *Journal of Humanistic Counselling, Education and Development*, 41(1), 61-68. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-490X.2002.tb00130.x>

Appendices:

Appendix A: Ethical clearance



09-Apr-2024

Dear Ms Gugu Khanye

Application Closed

Research Project Title:

Developing the profession and practice of academic advising for South African universities

Record Number: UFS-HSD2022/0907/22

This letter is to confirm that your project has been closed. This means that no research-related activities may continue. You may continue with the analysis of data, presentation and publication, however, no new participants may be recruited, and no further data may be collected.

Kind regards,

RIMS Admin

205 Nelson Mandela P.O. Box 339
Drive Bloemfontein 9300
Park West Tel: +27 (0)51 401
Bloemfontein 9301 7619
South Africa RIMS@ufs.ac.za
www.ufs.ac.za



Appendix B: Information sheet and survey consent and questionnaire

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

DATE

31 May 2022

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Developing the profession and practice of Academic Advising for South African universities

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Gugu Tiroyabone

tiroyabonegw@ufs.ac.za

051 4013798

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Centre for Teaching and Learning

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The study aims to contribute to a contextual understanding of the profession and practice of Academic Advising for South African universities as informed by the ICTRP framework.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

*This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher. **Approval number:** UFS-*

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Having been one of the AAPD participants, I would like to invite you to complete a voluntary survey which reflects on how following your attendance and participation in the AAPD has influenced your professional development and practice.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

You will be asked to participate in a questionnaire that should not take more than 15 to 20 minutes of your time.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Participation to this study is voluntary and participants will have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time and are under no obligation to *participate*.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The time participants set out of their schedules might be a bit of an inconvenience, however, I tried to keep the questions to the point and targeted to keep the engagement as short as possible.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

No names will be included in the analysis and publications stemming from this research, thus your participation will be confidential and anonymous.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

All data is electronic and will be stored on a UFS password protected laptop and UFS secure servers.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY

There are no payment or incentives to participants.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

The findings of the study will form part of a Master's study in Higher Education and will therefore be published and presented in academic fora. Participants interested in the results of the study can contact the researcher for a copy of the thesis.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

By continuing with the survey, I confirm that I understand the purpose of the research and what my rights are as a participant. I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time. I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into an institutional report and might be used for academic publications and/or conference proceedings.

Proceed to survey.

AAPD participants email invitation and survey

Email invitation

Dear _____

Thank you for participating in the AAPD Short Learning Programme (SLP). The Programme is celebrating its fifth year in advancing the scholarship of academic advising as a profession and practice across our South African universities. Having been one of the AAPD participants, I would like to invite you to complete a voluntary survey which reflects on how following your attendance and participation in the AAPD has influenced your professional development and practice.

The survey forms part of my Master's study, titled Developing the profession and practice of Academic Advising for South African universities.

If you are interested in contributing to the study by sharing your experiences, please follow this link for more information and to access the survey. (link to informed consent form and survey via Questback software)

For any additional information or queries, please contact myself, Gugu (Khanye) Tiroyabone at TiroyaboneGW@ufs.ac.za or my supervisor, Prof Francois Strydom at StrydomJF@ufs.ac.za

Questionnaire

Section 1:

1. Please describe your role as an academic advisor in your institution:
2. How many years have you been involved in academic advising?
 - a. 0 – 5 years
 - b. 6 – 10 years
 - c. More than 10 years

Section 2:

3. **Informational**
 - a. Does your institution/faculty and or department have a formal definition for academic advising?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. I am not aware
 - b. Describe your understanding of the academic advising components:
 - i. Informational:
 - ii. Conceptual:
 - iii. Relational:
 - iv. Technological:
 - v. Personal:
 - c. Which theories inform your academic advising practice:
 - d. What are the academic advising approaches adopted by your institution?
 - i. Prescriptive
 - ii. Developmental
 - iii. Proactive/Intrusive
 - iv. A combination (mention)

4. **Conceptual**

- a. What information do you disseminate as an academic advisor?
 - i. Curriculum information
 - ii. Academic information
 - iii. Career information
 - iv. Success strategies (i.e. time management, study skills etc.)
 - v. Other_____
- b. What percentage of advising time is spent on each?
 - i. Curriculum information
 - ii. Academic information
 - iii. Career information
 - iv. Success strategies (i.e. time management, study skills etc.)
 - v. Other_____
- c. How in your practice do you differentiate between:
 - i. Advising
 - ii. Teaching
 - iii. Counselling
- d. What are key activities in your academic advising practice?

5. Relational

- a. Does your institution have an academic advising contract?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. I am not aware
- b. Is academic advising compulsory in your department/faculty and or institution?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. I am not aware
- c. Which model/s of academic advising do you incorporate into your practice?
 - i. Appreciative advising
 - ii. Holland's six theme areas (RIASEC)
 - iii. Gordon's 3I process
 - iv. Other, please specify
- d. Do you have a formal referral process as part of your advising practice?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. I am not aware

6. Technology

- a. What technological tools do you use in academic advising practices (select all that apply)
 - i. Learning Management System (i.e. Blackboard; SAKAI, Moodle etc.)
 - ii. Email
 - iii. Microsoft Teams
 - iv. WhatsApp

- v. Website
 - vi. Other _____
- b. Do you use an academic advising booking system?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. I am not aware
 - c. Do you make use of an academic advising record-keeping system?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - d. Do you make use of automated data analytics software to support your academic advising practice?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
7. **Personal:**
- a. Do you have an academic advising philosophy?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. I have not gotten around to crafting one
 - b. Do you hold membership of a professional body
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. If yes, _____
 - c. Have you had other professional development and training opportunities beyond the AAPD?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

If yes, please specify _____
8. Please describe how your participation in the AAPD has influenced your own professional development as an advisor.
 9. Please describe whether or to what extent your participation in the AAPD has influenced your institution/faculty/department's approach to advising

Appendix C: TurnItIn Summary Report

Appendix D: Language Editing Declaration

Marianne Drennan
25 Westphall Street
Universitas
BLOEMFONTEIN
9301
marianne@mylaptop.co.za

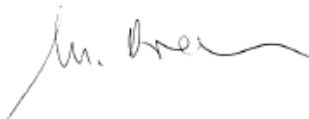
051-522 7142

1 July 2024

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Marianne Drennan, have edited the dissertation by Gugu Wendy Khanye titled:

Developing the profession and practice of academic advising for South African universities



BA Languages, University of the Witwatersrand (1972)

Translator/Editor, Language Service, Department of Arts & Culture,
Bloemfontein (1994-2007)

