

Reconceptualizing Academic Advising Using The Full Range Leadership Model

John E. Barbuto, Jr.
Associate Professor of Leadership
300 Agricultural Hall
University of Nebraska- Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68583-0709
jbarbuto@unl.edu

Joana S. Story
Ph.D. Candidate in Leadership Studies
300 Agricultural Hall
University of Nebraska- Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68583-0709
jstory3@unlnotes.unl.edu

Susan M. Fritz
Associate Vice Chancellor
202 Agricultural Hall
University of Nebraska – Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68583-0708
sfritz1@unl.edu

Jack L. Schinstock
Professor of Biological Systems Engineer
University of Nebraska – Lincoln
201 Chase Hall
Lincoln, NE 68583-0726
jschinstock1@unl.edu

Abstract

Developmental and prescriptive advising styles have been the focus of the academic advising literature for the past 35 years. Academic advising scholars have called for a new paradigm in the field. Drawing from leadership theory, a new model for academic advising is proposed. Full range advising encompasses laissez-faire, management-by-exception, contingent rewards, and transformational behaviors. The long-term impact of transformational advising is one that will likely take years to fully realize, however measures of transformational leadership are both reliable and valid. These measures can be used to determine whether

advisors' use of transformational advising behaviors is related to positive student outcomes.

Introduction

The academic advising field started to grow increasingly since Beal and Noel's (1980) report on the importance of academic advising in promoting student satisfaction and retention across 947 institutions of higher education. Two advising styles have been the focus of the field for the past 35 years: prescriptive and developmental (Smith, 2002). Prescriptive advising is reported as being more authoritarian, where the advisors are expected to take control of students' programs. The advisor is primarily responsible for decision-making, which allows for the possibility that decisions may not be in the students' best interests. Developmental advising encompasses a more holistic approach; all efforts are focused on student achievement of educational, personal, and career goals (Weir, Dickman, & Fuqua, 2005).

Since the introduction of developmental advising by O'Banion (1972), scholars of the field reported consistently that developmental advising was rated as the most effective advising approach by students (Gordon, 1994). Thus, the notion of faculty members as role models, mentors, and friends to students became the mode of thinking (Grites & Stockton, 1994; Pardee, 1994). Studies reported that strong, positive relationships between advisors and students correlated significantly with retention and proved to positively influence the development of students (Ender, 1994).

Consensus that developmental advising was the best strategy was not supported by Fielstein's (1989) earlier research that reported that some prescriptive strategies were valued over developmental strategies. Scholars started to investigate whether the preference for prescriptive or developmental was dependent on some student characteristics. Andrews, Andrews, Long, and Henton (1987) reported that students with lower grades wanted more personal contact with their advisors. Crockett and Crawford (1989) in comparing MBTI and advising style preferences reported that intuitive students preferred developmental over prescriptive advising and that thinking students preferred prescriptive over developmental advising. Fielstein (1994) argued that with the excitement over developmental advising, scholars overlooked the benefits of prescriptive advising. Furthermore, Saving and Keim (1998) reported that advisors thought they were using developmental advising, but students disagreed. Pardee (1994) argued that there are many difficulties imposed by universities that explain the lack of adoption of developmental advising: advisee load is too large, lack of training for advisors, and among others a lack of incentives. This suggests that developmental

advising has not been practiced at the same rate that is prescribed in the literature (Grites & Stockton, 1994).

Furthermore, scholars critique the advising field for its two dimensional approach (Fielstein, 1994; Laff, 1994; Hemwall & Trachte, 1999). Strommer (1994) proposed that instead of continuing to use the developmental model as the standard of advising maybe a new paradigm needed to be adopted. This challenge presented the need for a new model of academic advising.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a new mode of thinking about academic advising based on the leadership literature. The model proposed considers advisors as leaders of students in their academic programs. Despite this natural application, to the knowledge of the authors no work has been done in this area that applies leadership theory in an academic advising context. Although advisors are considered the leaders of programs, effective leadership behaviors can be adopted to empower students to take control of their programs. The model provides a new paradigm of advising where advisors' behaviors are placed in a continuum varying from least effective to most effective (transactional to transformational behaviors).

Full Range Leadership

Contrasting the advisor-student relationship with the leader-follower relationship, it makes sense to consider ways of capitalizing on what is known in the leadership field in order to enhance advising. The full range leadership model has been studied extensively with both organizational and educational samples (Crawford, Gould, & Scott, 2003; Crawford & Strohkirch, 2004; Rosenbusch & Townsend, 2004) across a diverse sample population (Smith, Matkin, & Fritz, 2004). The model is comprised of two groups of behaviors – transactional and transformational. Leaders operate across the two groups, but operate decidedly more in one of the groups, and consequently, exhibit the associated behaviors. Transactional behaviors include: *laissez-faire* (hands-off leadership); *management-by-exception-passive* (leader deals with problems after they occur); *management by exception-active* (leader allows followers little latitude); and, *contingent reward* (leader makes deals). Transformational behaviors include: *individualized consideration* (considerate leader); *intellectual stimulation* (leader encourages independent thought); *inspirational motivation* (leader excites followers about the future); and, *idealized influence* (leader as role model) (Bass, 1985). Followers of transformational leaders feel trust, admiration, respect, and loyalty towards the leader. They are motivated to perform extra-role behaviors, are highly satisfied, and think that the organization they work for is highly effective (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). Considering that leadership theorists have proven that transformational leadership is perceived by followers as

the most effective means of leading, similarly, transformational advising could be an equally effective means of advising students. Full range leadership behaviors will be linked to academic advising approaches and activities to propose a conceptual model for advising.

Full Range Advising Behaviors

Transactional Behaviors

Laissez-faire is characterized by avoiding decisions and refraining from intervening (Bass, 1985). Conceptualizing laissez-faire advising would be similar to an advisor being unavailable to students and sending the message that students are on their own. Students of a laissez-faire advisor would likely become frustrated with the apathetic responses and general unavailability.

Management by exception passive is characterized by setting standards but waiting for problems to arise, and then reacting to mistakes (Bass, 1985). Conceptualizing management by exception passive advising would be similar to an advisor that would only take action after a student makes a mistake. Students of a management by exception passive advisor would become frustrated by the lack of guidance and information shared by the advisor.

Management by exception active is characterized by enforcing rules, searching for errors to then correct, and monitoring for deviations to occur to then correct (Bass, 1985). Conceptualizing management by exception active advising would be similar to an advisor searching for mistakes, enforcing university rules, and then correcting the problems. Students of a management by exception active advisor would likely become frustrated by the insistence of the advisor in checking rules, regulations, and mistakes.

Contingent reward is characterized by clarifying desired outcomes and exchanging rewards and recognitions for meeting these expectations (Bass, 1985). Conceptualizing contingent rewards advising would be highlighted by an advisor giving recognition (i.e., good grade, good feedback) to students that achieved desired outcomes. Students of a contingent rewards advisor would likely achieve the expected outcomes, but would not likely achieve at greater levels than was expected.

Transformational Behaviors

Individualized consideration is characterized by giving personal attention to subordinates. Each subordinate is treated differently according to the needs and abilities of the individual (Bass, 1985). Conceptualizing individualized

consideration advising would be highlighted by an advisor helping to develop a customized program around each student's needs and professional aspirations. Furthermore, the advisor would value individual needs, would be empathetic, and encourage continuous improvement. Students of an individualized consideration advisor would likely exhibit a willingness to develop.

Intellectual stimulation is characterized by valuing the intellect, encouraging the imagination, and challenging the old ways of doing things (Bass, 1985). Conceptualizing intellectual stimulation advising would be exhibited by an advisor helping students question assumptions and consider new and innovative ways to solve problems. Students of an intellectual stimulation advisor would likely show a willingness to think for themselves.

Inspirational motivation is characterized by envisioning an attractive attainable future and aligning individual and organizational needs (Bass, 1985). Conceptualizing inspirational motivation advising would be highlighted by an advisor communicating an appealing future state or vision to the student and actively using this vision as the backdrop for rationale in advising matters. Students of an inspirational motivation advisor would likely show a willingness to excel.

Idealized influence is characterized by exhibiting persistence in pursuing objectives, being confident in the vision, and having a strong sense of purpose and trust (Bass, 1985). Conceptualizing idealized influence advising would be similar to an advisor demonstrating a passion for student development and a true commitment to making positive differences in the lives of the students. Students of an idealized influence advisor would more likely trust the advisor and emulate positive behaviors. Taken together, these four dimensions comprise transformational advising.

Conclusion

Those that have examined the field of academic advising have expressed important concerns about the lack of scholarship in this area (Saving & Keim, 1998). However, the role and importance of academic advising has received increased attention in higher education literature over the past years (Light, 2004). Furthermore, inconsistent reports of the two-dimensional model of advising have resulted in calls for a new mode of thinking about academic advising.

The goal of this article was to reconceptualize the academic advising field using the full range leadership model as the basis for a new model of advising. The model proposed described a continuum of advising behaviors from the most

effective to least effective and is intended to close the gap in the advising literature.

The literature on leadership consistently predicts transformational behaviors to be more effective than transactional behaviors (Lowe et al., 1996). Thus, advisors that display more transformational behaviors should be considered more effective by their students.

Furthermore, transformational behaviors can be taught and universities should invest in programs to enrich advising experiences for both students and faculty. It is our hope that this article will stimulate further research in academic advising. Future research should test the relationships between advising behaviors and student outcomes.

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Biography

John E. Barbuto, Jr. (Jay) is an Associate Professor of Leadership in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication. His current research projects include transformational advising, dramaturgical teaching, servant leadership, work motivation, emotional intelligence, cross-cultural and diversity issues, and antecedents of leadership. He has published over 65 journal articles and 140 conference proceedings in the leadership, organizational behavior, and social psychology field, which have included: *Journal of Leadership Education*, *Leadership Quarterly*, *Sex Roles*, *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, *Group & Organization Management*, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *Journal of Social Psychology*, and the *Journal of Leadership Education*.

Joana S. Story is a Ph.D. candidate in Leadership Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She graduated with a B.S. in Communication Studies from the Pontificia Universidade Catolica de Minas Gerais, Brazil. Her research global interests include leadership, cross-cultural leadership, and global mindset. She has published in *Psychological Reports*, *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *Leadership and Organizational Management Journal*, as well as the *Journal of Leadership Education*.

Dr. Susan M. Fritz is the Associate Vice Chancellor of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Professor in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research interests are in gender and leadership, community leadership, antecedents of leaders' behaviors and the impact of leadership development programs. She has published in the *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *the Journal of Extension Education*, *the NACTA Journal*, *Psychological Reports*, as well as the *Journal of Leadership Education*

Dr. Jack L. Schinstock is an Associate Dean in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and Professor in the Department of Biological Systems Engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He has published in the *Agricultural Engineering International: The CIGR Journal of Scientific Research and Development* and the *Applied Engineering in Agriculture Journal*. He has received the North America Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) John Deere Award for outstanding post-secondary teaching, and the L. K. Crowe Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Student Advising.