

Holistic educational advising: promoting self-efficacy through the dual role adviser

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Abstract

The dual role Student Success and Learning Adviser at the University of the Sunshine Coast brings together academic and pastoral advising and is underpinned by frameworks of advising (Lochtie et al., 2018) and the Advising Curriculum (Picton et al., 2021). The rationale behind the dual advising approach is the combination of learning and teaching pedagogy, underpinned by a wellbeing approach, for the purpose of developing a wide range of student skills and competencies. Initially developed from an authentic need for holistic educational advising in regional campuses, an increase in complex student needs has seen an evolution of practice for these roles. This emerging initiative examines the conceptual framework and theories that support the dual role practice and explores the concept of coaching students to develop self-efficacy, outlining a brief history of the role and our current experiences as dual role advisers.

Introduction

The concept behind the dual role Student Success and Learning Advisers is to provide students, regardless of undergraduate/postgraduate status, with a student-centred, personalised advising consult that promotes self-efficacy. According to Kahu and Nelson (2018) self-efficacy, the belief that one can succeed through an understanding and awareness of their own actions and abilities, is a pathway to student engagement. Academic self-efficacy is a key factor in maintaining student motivation and learning (Bandura, 1997). To develop this construct, dual role advisers offer a holistic educational approach tailored for individual students, identifying not only the necessary academic skills required but also the student's emotional capabilities for managing the university journey. Applying the LEAP framework (McIntosh, 2019) the dual role adviser identifies academic and wellbeing needs, recommends academic and emotional goals, and provides learning development opportunities whereby students can experience success. These support structures are aligned with the Advising Curriculum framework's goal of developing student autonomy within a structured support system (Picton et al., 2021). The dual adviser's role is to coach and guide the student's academic success through empathetic understanding and guided actions, applying educational pedagogies to encourage the creation of a personal holistic toolbox for the student.

Shifting from reactive to proactive support: coaching students to increase self-efficacy

Initially, these roles were introduced in the smaller, satellite campuses to meet the needs of students who required access to multiple support structures. The more familiar, personalised style of the smaller campuses facilitated the evolution of this dual role. When the pandemic shifted learning online, student self-efficacy for navigating a new mode of learning was impacted. The dual role, and the need for holistic support was critical to positively impacting students' self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), particularly where socio-economic challenges compounded disengagement.

In current practice, dual role advisers respond to the intersection of socio-emotional factors impacting learning engagement concurrently with the need for academic skill development (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Guided by the LEAP framework (McIntosh & Barden, 2019) students' needs are assessed to identify the issue/s impacting their study and provide targeted and sequenced support (Picton et al., 2021). Assisting the student to navigate student systems and resources so they can develop self-efficacy is key as is providing check-ins and support as guided by the student's needs. For some students developing self-efficacy is a quick process as they develop mastery, and for others the ongoing accountability of case management, the use of both verbal persuasion and positively influencing physiological and affective states provides them with greater confidence to engage with their learning (Bandura, 1997).

As the demand for holistic educational support increases, dual role advisers focus on the key goal of successful student outcomes through the development of self-efficacy and autonomy. While this initiative is in the preliminary stages of measuring impacts, an exploration and evaluation of how the approach influences student self-efficacy is planned, drawing upon the Autonomous Learning Scale (ALS) and how students perceive their autonomy (Henri et al., 2018).

Discussion

1. Does your institution have similar dual role advisers?
2. What frameworks have you used to respond to student needs?
3. How does your institution evaluate student success interventions?

References

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