

## ABSTRACT

### The Status of the Academic Advising at BirZeit University and its Developmental Requirements

The need for academic advising originated in international universities with the introduction of the implementation of the credit hours system. Several Arab and Palestinian universities followed suit amongst which was BirZeit University which is considered a pioneer in implementing academic advising since 1972.

Many researchers from foreign and Arab universities were keen to study the process of academic advising through carrying out studies for its educational necessity and the important role it plays in the student's educational life. The researcher chose BirZeit University as a case study in order to investigate the status of academic advising there. The researcher hopes the results of the study would help in the near future other researchers in studying the process of academic advising in other Palestinian universities.

It is worth mentioning that some of the shortcomings in the process of academic advising at BirZeit University have motivated the researcher to study the situation of academic advising there. In addition to that, this subject did not receive enough attention from researchers in other Palestinian universities.

The main objectives of this study are identifying the situation of academic advising at BirZeit University; checking its adaptability and sufficiency for the students' needs; defining the role of the academic adviser and the procedures of advising; pinpointing the developmental requirements necessary for the advising process; pointing to the possible developmental procedures; and introducing decision makers at BirZeit University and those concerned with university education in the other Palestinian universities with the above mentioned objectives.

The study claimed that the academic advising at BirZeit University is dissatisfactory and does not meet the student's needs. It also requires development in organizational and procedural aspects as well as in terms of the role of the academic adviser. In addition, there are no significant statistical differences among the points of view of the students, the deans and the advisers that concern the items of the questionnaire nor the domains it contains.

In his study, the researcher used the survey and the descriptive analytical methodology.

To achieve the researcher's set of goals, he has defined a case for his study that consists of the following:

- 1- A number of those concerned with the advising process amongst whom are: the deans, heads of departments and college advisers.
- 2- BirZeit University's student<sup>s</sup> who registered for the first semester 1991-1992 totalled 1984.
- 3- Head of the registrar's office, one employee from the office, first year students' schedule coordinator, and the social counsellor in advising section.

The researcher based his study on a questionnaire composed of close-end type of questions, where he implemented Likert's scale for the gathered estimates. The researcher provided five options for each item of the questionnaire. These options are:

- 1- Totally agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- No opinion
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Totally disagree

In its final form, the questionnaire consisted of four divisions that contain eighty seven items and is formed of four domains of advising.

After making sure that the questionnaire was valid and reliable, the researcher distributed it over a stratified systematic random sample chosen proportionally and classified according to faculty, major, and gender.

The questionnaire was distributed to 30% of the original student body; moreover, it was distributed to all members included in the case-study, and those concerned with the advising process, where the researcher handed it to most of them personally. He also conducted interviews with a great number of the people involved; and for those people with whom he could not make interviews the researcher sent the questionnaire through the university mail services.

The findings of the study were analyzed statistically by him and applied the "t" test with the significance level of .05

The findings of the test indicated that there are no significant statistical differences among the points of view of the different categories under comparative study on the questionnaire items.

The findings of the "F" values revealed that there are no significant statistical differences among the points of view of the deans, the advisers, and the students regarding the following domains, the concept and importance of academic adviser, the organization of the academic advising process. On the other hand, there appeared to be a statistical difference among the three points of view regarding the situation of the academic advising. That difference in points of view might be due to the different posts and responsibilities that interviewees held.

The researcher presumed the following agreement scales to judge the items of the questionnaire:

- 1- Low, the marks average below 60%.
- 2- Intermediate, the marks average between 60% -79%.
- 3- High, the marks average is 80% and more.

The researcher has found a common ground not only among the findings of the questionnaire and the findings of the interviews with those concerned with the advising process, but also among their answers to the



questions presented to them.

The researcher has arrived at the following conclusions after studying and discussing the findings:

1- The students, and those concerned with the academic advising at BirZeit University, are disapproving of the academic advising at the University. The study reflected that the advising at BirZeit University is not sufficient to satisfy the academic advising needs for its students. Moreover, the advising process is not done properly, nor is it given a proper attention. It only seems as a mere formality which doesn't go beyond registering materials for semesters. In addition, the role of some advisers is only limited to signing the registration form with the students' approval. It is not only that, but it also appears that some advisers do not have enough experience and qualifications and lack commitment to their work. Likewise, many of those concerned with advising, as well as many advisees, have reduced the concept of advising to a mere registering of materials.

2- The findings of the study shows clearly the importance of academic advising and the necessity for its development. Likewise, it shows the significant role which the academic adviser plays in the educational process, and the need or orienting both the students and the academic advisers.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned, it appears that the findings of the study concords with those of other similar studies that were carried out around the same subject. Similarly, it agrees with other studies in emphasizing the necessity of laying down a basis for a clear-cut academic advising system.

3- Peer advising is a common phenomenon amongst students and that is because some advisers only sign the registration form without providing the student with substantial assistance.

4- It is worth mentioning that coordination amongst those concerned with advising process is inadequate, and that meetings and seminars on advising are lacking.

- 5- One of the major shortcomings of academic advising is the absence of evaluation of the advising process, and that of the work of academic advisers. It appears that there is no credible methodology or a specified mechanisms for evaluation.
- 6- One of the major findings of the study is that it indicates the different shortcomings of the process of academic advising, which in turn, reflects upon the necessity and need for carrying it out.
- 7- It seems obvious that the study achieved its goals and proved its hypotheses which points out to the need for developing academic advising. The study shows that the developmental needs of the academic advising at BirZeit University are:
- a. The foundation of a clear advising policy, clear advising methodology and suitable advising mechanisms.
  - b. The organization of a central advising unit which carries out planning, supervision, coordination and assignment of procedures; which puts down bases and mechanisms for evaluation; and which includes highly competent and experienced professionals.
  - c. The appointment of full-time and trained advisers.
  - d. The usage of computers in the advising process by the advisers, which facilitates direct contact to obtain information from the registration and admission department.
  - e. The increase of coordination among those who are concerned with the advising process.
8. The researcher expects that the results, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions arrived at be of benefit towards developing an advising method that satisfies the need for developing and improving academic advising and help in focusing attention for more studies dealing with this subject of academic advising in Palestinian universities.