

Appreciative Advising and ePortfolios: An Example of Technology-Mediated Pedagogy

MICHELLE K. SMITH WARE

University of Notre Dame

Advising Scenario

In preparation for an initial meeting with a first year student, the information an advisor has about a student is contained in the admissions file. First, the advisor prepares for the student's arrival by considering the following: a) the admissions information being reviewed is based on a snapshot of the student's educational record submitted during the junior year of high school and maybe almost a year old; b) the student could have changed a lot or little since submitting the admissions application; and c) the student compiled this information to impress an admissions counselor(s) so this information may not authentically reflect who she is at all. Second, the advisor considers how the student's admissions information can be used to facilitate their brief, initial meeting together. After introductions, the advisor begins asking questions (e.g. what are you most looking forward to, how are your classes going, what do you hope to accomplish during your first semester?) in hopes of sparking conversation and building rapport with the student. Although having had an engaging conversation, the advisor feels as though the conversation has only scratched the surface in beginning to understand the student's background, experiences, skills, strengths and goals. Next, the advisor acknowledges how the documentation of the meeting will be captured, which is in the form of abbreviated internal university advising notes highlighting the main points discussed and questions or concerns that arose. Lastly, the advisor begins thinking about how to assess the student's learning that has taking place as a result of their student-advisor interaction.

In the scenario above, there are many moving parts and aspects to consider in the academic advising process. Given this scenario commonly experienced in academic advising meetings, advisors might ask themselves, is there a way to get an authentic snapshot of students throughout the advising process considering the limited time available during initial face-to-face meetings? Is there a way to more accurately assess students' progress toward learning outcomes? Essentially, is there a pedagogical approach that could better inform their advising practice?

An academic advisor's values, beliefs and assumptions influence their pedagogy (or advising approach) and ultimately their practice of advising (Kimball & Campbell, 2013). Identifying a pedagogy that provides a means to connect an advisor's values, beliefs and assumptions with theory and practice is a key aspect in the professional development of an advisor within higher education. Although research and advising discussions centered on interaction between advising theory and practice are common, research and discussions regarding the intersection of theory, technology-enhanced pedagogies, and practice is limited. This gap in literature infusing technology and advising pedagogy supports the need for the current discussion. The intent of this article will be to extend the discussion of advising pedagogy by exploring the development of an emerging technology-mediated advising approach. A focused discussion on how electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) can be incorporated into Appreciative Advising (AA) will be highlighted.

Pedagogy

The term pedagogy is traditionally associated with the field of education. A pedagogy or instructional method used by a teacher is often grounded in their philosophical beliefs. These philosophical beliefs guide teachers toward an instructional methodology that closely aligns with their beliefs. Beetham and Sharpe (2013) argued the teaching pedagogy that results is a “dialogue between theory and practice” (p. 2). Although pedagogy has roots in traditional instructional settings, the term has also been used within other contexts where the outcome of interactions between teachers and students is also focused on achieving learning goals or objectives within a educational environments, such as within academic advising contexts.

Advising Pedagogy

It has been argued that a parallel exists between teaching and advising (Crookston, 1994; NACADA, 2006; Lowenstein, 2009). As teaching is guided by philosophical beliefs and theory, advising is also based on similar beliefs and driven by theory. In fact, the leading professional organization for academic advising, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), defined academic advising as consisting of three components “curriculum (what advising deals with), pedagogy (how advising does what it does), and student learning outcomes (the result of academic advising)” (p. 1). These components are influenced by individual or institutional factors (i.e. student learning outcomes), theory (i.e. curriculum) or both (i.e. pedagogy). Advising discussions and past research have highlighted advising curriculum (Lowenstein, 2009) and learning outcomes (Muehleck, Smith & Allen, 2014), however; more attention needs to be given to rethinking academic advising pedagogies in the technology rich 21st century.

Hemwall and Trachte (2005) extended the discussion of advising pedagogy by offering principles related to the curriculum and instructional aspects of advising situating the practice of advising within a learning paradigm. Hemwall and Trachte added that an effective advising pedagogy acknowledges the potential for learning within the student’s learning process, social context and through student-advisor interactions. NACADA also provided a perspective on how pedagogy informs the practice of advising in that “academic advising, as a teaching and learning process, requires a pedagogy that incorporates the preparation, facilitation, documentation, and assessment of advising interactions” (NACADA, 2006, p. 1). Synthesizing these points, an advising pedagogy is most effective when it acknowledges student learning is impacted by not only students’ prior learning experiences but also by the educational context and student-advisor relationship. In addition, an advising pedagogy should also include a systematic process that guides an advisor from preparation through to assessment, with the goal of positively impacting student learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the student-advisor relationship (NACADA, 2006).

As mentioned above, an effective advising pedagogy can positively impact student learning, in addition to enhancing the student-advisor relationship. In so, an advisor’s pedagogy is strengthened when grounded in a theoretical framework that complements advisors’ beliefs, which ultimately inform their advising practice. There are several theory-based models of advising in higher education that have emerged in the last three decades including: Prescriptive advising (Crookston, 1994), Developmental advising (Winston, Ender, & Miller, 1982), Intrusive advising (Earl, 1988) and Appreciative Advising (Bloom & Martin, 2002). As the profession of academic advising moves into the 21st century, Kimball and Campbell (2013) argue that, “the field needs flexible, eclectic practitioners able to adapt their advising strategies in accordance with the needs of their students” (p. 6). Acknowledging that advisors need to explore diverse approaches to meet students’ needs, Bloom and Martin’s (2002) Appreciative Advising (AA) approach will be discussed in this article as representation of a versatile, research-based, theory-to-practice model that illustrates the intersection of theory, pedagogy and practice.

Appreciative Advising. Appreciative Advising has a social constructivist lens and is guided by the theory of appreciative inquiry (Bloom, Hutson & He, 2013). The perspective that individuals

acquire and understand (or learn) new information through their social interactions within various contexts guide social constructivist theory. Social constructivists believe that social interactions between two or more people are critical for learning (Schunk, 2012). Complimentary, Appreciative Inquiry is a systematic process of discovery that brings about change within an individual or organization through positive inquiry (Cooperrider, 2005).

Incorporating the principles of social constructivism and appreciative inquiry, AA includes six phases highlighting the "appreciative mind-set" (Bloom et al., 2013, p. 82) that include progression through disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and don't settle phases. Although the progression through the Appreciative Advising phases does not need to be linear, the most appropriate phase to meet the needs of the student at that particular time should be considered when moving through the phases discussed. These phases are briefly summarized in Table 1; see Bloom et al. (2008) for a more in-depth description of the Appreciative Advising phases.

Table 1. Summary of Appreciative Advising phases. (Bloom et al., 2008; Bloom et al., 2013)

AA Phase	Description
Disarm	Assists advisors and students with the initial relationship or rapport building process by establishing an understanding of the advisor-student as supportive, encouraging and welcoming environment where students are aided in achieving their goals.
Discover	Provides students with an opportunity to share their stories, by utilizing positive, open-ended questions, advisors gain insights into students' experiences, aspirations, skills and strengths, which lay the foundation for other AA phases.
Dream	Guides advisors in eliciting and students' with articulating their hopes and dreams for the future. Advisors begin to understand what motivates and energizes their students, while students begin to connect what they discovered about themselves with their future dreams.
Design	Uses information provided by the students during the dream phase to allow advisors and students the opportunity to co-create a plan that assists students with achieving their life and career goals.
Deliver	Requires that students take responsibility for following through with the plan that was co-created with their advisor. In this phase, advisors play a critical role in continuing to support their students by helping students prioritize plan objectives while also assisting them with recognizing and addressing any roadblocks or challenges that may arise while working to achieve plan objectives.
Don't Settle	Guides students toward continuously setting new expectations and new goals to aid them in achieving ongoing improved performance. During this phase, advisors and students work together to re-evaluate or re-structure the plan created during the design phase to assist students with maintaining their momentum toward achieving their goals.

The Appreciative Advising framework illustrates how an advising pedagogy creates a connection between theory and practice that allows advisors and students to engage in a reciprocal learning process while progressing through the Appreciative Advising phases (Bloom et al., 2013). Admittedly, the way students and advisors engage and learn from each other in the 21st century continues to evolve. Most notably, the integration of technology within educational environments allows students and advisors diverse opportunities to communicate and learn from each other.

Technology in Advising

Technology is well positioned in our global society. As technological innovations develop and the potential benefits of integration into educational contexts emerge, the presence of technology within educational contexts elicits an interest in exploring its impact on teaching and learning. Given the role of academic advisors within higher education contexts, the intersection of academic advising and technology has gained interest in recent years, yet the literature on the development of pedagogy using technology in advising remains sparse.

The use of technology in advising paralleled the emergence of new technologies in education. As a result, academic advising literature has focused on the use of technology to support advising systems and technology to support the delivery of advising (Leonard, 2008). Paying particular attention to technologies that support the delivery of advising, the use of email/listservs (Steele & Gordon, 2001; Steele, 2006; Joslin, 2009), social networking sites (Gaines, 2014), and course-management systems (Joslin, 2009) has been discussed. The use of these technologies within advising contexts seems to primarily view technologies as one-dimensional tools advisors use to quickly gain access to information (e.g. grades) or perform daily tasks more efficiently (e.g. communicating with students). Viewing technology in this way perpetuates the notion that the integration of technology within advising has limited functionality and decreases advisors face-to-face interactions with students. This perception of technology in advising fails to explore multi-purpose technological mediums that can holistically support advising pedagogy and practice. Electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) are one such medium that can complement advising pedagogies as well allow advisors to build more meaningful relationships, increase student engagement, and assess more authentic learning outcomes (Ambrose & Williamson Ambrose, 2013).

ePortfolios in Advising

Similar to other mediums (e.g. pencils, chalkboards, etc.) traditionally used in educational contexts, portfolios evolved as technological advances emerged. An example of the evolution of portfolios is seen in the development of web-based portfolios, a digital form of traditional paper-based portfolios. Heinrich, Bhattacharya and Rayudu (2007) argued ePortfolios offer "a wider range of media formats, linking between entries, ease of access beyond physical constraints, and opportunities for collaboration and feedback" (p. 656). ePortfolios sparked interest within educational contexts in recent years as a result of their potential to support student-centered learning environments, provide rich data to aid in institutional assessment of learning outcomes, engage students in the process of learning, and allow students to objectively reflect on past work (Babson, 2010).

Given the versatility of ePortfolios, narrowing down a single definition inclusive of the varying contexts and functions in which ePortfolios are used has been difficult. A conceptual definition offered by Babson (2010) stated portfolios are "a method to improve learning that is appropriate in this digital age" (p. 1). Chen and Black (2010) described ePortfolios as "a technology, a pedagogical approach, and a process, as well as a product" (p. 1). Viewing ePortfolios as a pedagogical approach opens the door for ePortfolios to be integrated into the process of teaching through advising.

Ambrose and Williamson Ambrose (2013) argued when "advising is a teaching process that can utilize an advising syllabus as a tool to identify learning outcomes; the ePortfolio can serve as a medium for documenting evidence of growth and achievement of these learning goals" (p.78). In addition, ePortfolios can also assist students in transition (Chen & Black, 2010), specifically first year students. Encouraging first year students use of ePortfolios provides a way to document advising outcomes and a means to capture students' college experiences thus "[creating] an ongoing electronic document which advisor and advisee can use as a foundation for advising sessions" (Ward, 2008, p. 1). Ambrose and Williamson Ambrose

(2013) termed the product of blended web-based ePortfolios with traditional advising methods the Advising ePortfolio. Table 2 provides examples of the elements that can be included in a first year Advising ePortfolio. Fusing traditional advising methods with ePortfolio technology, ePortfolios for specific use in advising can transform advising pedagogy and ultimately advising practice.

Table 2. Example Elements in First Year Advising ePortfolio (First Year of Studies [FYS], 2014)

Advising ePortfolio Elements	Completion Time frame during First Year		
	Pre-Matriculation	First Semester	Second Semester
Bio	Before arriving on Campus		
Initial Thoughts	Before 1st Advising Meeting		
Mid-Year Adjustments and Plans		Between 1st and 2nd Semester	
Second Semester Wrap-Up			End of 2nd Semester
Journal	Anytime throughout first year		
Goals	Anytime throughout first year		

An Example of a Technology-Mediated Pedagogy in Practice

As suggested by Okojie, Olinzock & Okojie-Boulder (2006), an important aspect of technology integration involves identifying the pedagogical principles that will guide the successful implementation of technology within teaching and learning contexts. Using the phases of Appreciative Advising (i.e. disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, don't settle) and elements from a first year advising ePortfolio, the opening scenario is revisited to demonstrate how an advisor can incorporate ePortfolios into an advising pedagogy.

Advising Scenario Revisited

In preparation for an initial meeting with a first year advisee, the advisor begins the discovery phase. After examining the student's information contained in the admissions file, the advisor also reviews the "Bio" and "Initial Thoughts" section of the student's first year Advising ePortfolio. In these sections, students can be encouraged to reflect on general ePortfolio prompts (e.g. What skills do you hope to develop through you first year classes and experiences? How do you plan to find your place at the University?) or adapted Appreciative Advising Inventory (Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008) ePortfolio prompts (e.g. What role does college have in preparing you for a better job? When you find yourself in a difficult academic situations, how might you resolve the situation?). The reflections provided by the student allow the advisor to begin understanding the student's strengths, first year expectations, skills the student wants to develop and interests the student

wants to explore even before the advisor meets the student face-to-face. The advisor makes note of the pertinent information in the student's ePortfolio to use the student's own words in the disarm phase as a way to begin building rapport and facilitate conversation when the student arrives for the face-to-face meeting.

When the student arrives, the advisor greets the student in the lobby entering the disarm phase. Using information previously obtained from the student's admissions information and the Bio section of the student's ePortfolio, the advisor asks disarming questions (e.g. How has your day been so far?, Coming from California, what do you think about the weather here?, etc.) as both of them walk to the advisor's office. Once in the office, the advisor transitions the conversation by describing the role of the advisor as well as invites the student to discuss the role of the student will have in the student-advisor relationship. The advisor re-enters the discovery phase using information obtained prior to the student's arrival. Using the student's own words to facilitate the face-to-face discovery phase, the advisor asks questions such as "You mentioned in your ePortfolio that your interest in Electrical Engineering developed during your junior year of high school, please describe other engineering experiences since junior year that have deepened your interest in engineering" or "You mentioned in your ePortfolio that you feel your writing is one of your strengths, but also discuss wanting to improve your writing skills, can you talk to me about your pre-college experiences with writing." Building on these same statements, the advisor enters the dream phase inquiring about the student's hopes and dreams that may include asking, "Ten years from today, where do you see your passion for engineering leading you?" or "Four years from now, in what ways do you hope to advance your writing skills?" The advisor encourages the student to add their responses to the "Personal Goals" section of the ePortfolio as a record of their conversation for use in future reflections and as an evaluation of the student's progress.

Based on the information provided in the student's admission file, ePortfolio, and face-to-face student-advisor interaction, the advisor and student begin the design phase where a plan is co-created focused on assisting the student with developing Electrical Engineering competencies, which were highlighted by the student in the discovery phase. The advisor begins brainstorming with the student stating, "Let's talk about the steps needed to accomplish your goal of being an Electrical Engineer" or "Let's identify the campus resources (e.g. people, offices, research opportunities, etc.) available to assist you with achieving your goal of becoming a CEO of an Electrical Engineering company." The advisor encourages the student to add responses to the "Professional Goals" section of the ePortfolio, again, as a record of their conversation for use in future reflections and as an evaluation of the student's progress.

Using the plan now documented in the Professional Goals section of the student's ePortfolio, the advisor progresses into the deliver phase by helping the student understand the progress toward identified goals is now the student's responsibility and through future meetings the advisor will offer support and encouragement. At the conclusion of the meeting, the advisor schedules an appointment for the student to return to the office in four weeks to discuss goal progression, thus allowing the next student-advisor interaction to enter the don't settle phase (e.g. continuously evaluating and establishing new goals) or revisit the discover or design phases.

The advising scenario revisited demonstrates an Appreciative Advising approach mediated by ePortfolio technology, providing a more authentic snapshot of students' experiences throughout the advising process, facilitation of student and advisor engagement advising relationship and a more accurate assessment of a students' progress toward established learning outcomes. Although ePortfolio technology was the only technology highlighted in this article, developing technology-mediated advising pedagogies inclusive of other technologies are crucial within technology rich higher education environments. Incorporating emerging technologies into advising practice is not instantaneous and may require a period of transition including evaluating how an advising peda-

gogy fits with a particular technology and professional development to acquire the skills needed for successful integration. A key aspect of the development of technology-mediated advising pedagogies is connecting the technology-enhanced pedagogy with the advisor's values and beliefs, theory and daily practice of advising. The development and incorporation of technology-mediated pedagogy with theory-based advising frameworks such as Appreciative Advising will be advising in the 21st century.

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