

Frequency of Interaction between Advisors and Adult Learners during Mentoring and Academic Advising in Universities

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Abstract

The study intended to find out the frequency of interaction between Advisors/lecturers and adult learners. The objectives were to find out: the regularity of adult learners talking to an advisor, factors that contributed to the regularity of meeting and how readily they accessed advisors. The study was significant in that faculty members realized that frequent interaction with adult learners was more strongly related to satisfaction than any other type of involvement. The respondents included fourteen academic advisors and three hundred and twenty students sampled in one of Kenya's public university. Stratified and systematic random sampling technique was used. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The study established that a high percentage of adult learners rarely talked to advisors and 167 (69.0%) considered availability of advisers as scarce and not available. The study recommended that university students should be allocated academic advisors.

Keywords: Interaction, Mentors, Adult Learners, Satisfaction, Higher Education

1.0 Introduction

The emergence of knowledge society, rapid introduction of technology and the changing work place increases the importance of Academic advising and interaction in adult learning. Academic advising is an educational interaction between students (advisees) and faculty members (advisors) in which both have responsibility to one another. Interaction is usually defined as a two-way communication process requiring two objects and two actions (Moore, 1989; Muirhead & Juwah, 2004; Wagner, 1994). With the focus on people's learning, interactions can occur in formal and informal educational contexts alike (Anderson, 2003). Interactions in formal educational contexts mainly take place between any combinations of two of the following three elements: students, lecturers, and content (Anderson, 2003; Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010a). Interaction is a basic element in any educational process. Such interaction, which is always explicit in classrooms due to the face-to-face relationship established between lecturers and students, and among students, is an element that various authors have reconsidered in the light of Adult Learners (ALs) and technology in education. The concept of interaction is a core element of the seven principles of good practice in education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). These practices include: encouraging faculty/students contact; developing reciprocity and cooperation; engaging in active learning; providing quick feedback; emphasizing the amount of time dedicated to a task; communicating high expectations; and respecting diversity. To facilitate learning in ALs frequent interaction with faculty is strongly recommended. Frequent interaction with faculty is more strongly related to the satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or, any other student or institutional characteristic.

Students who interacted frequently with faculty members were more likely than other students to express satisfaction with all aspects of their institutional experience, including student friendships, variety of courses, intellectual environment, and even the administration of the institution. Research shows that interaction between students and faculty increases student involvement on campus and makes them more likely to remain in school (Astin, 1984). Interaction should be a basic element in an educational process. If, in the planning of that process, the face-to-face element is reduced, then we have to place greater emphasis on being able to compensate for the lecturers' non-presence so that students feel accompanied and supported at all times.

Thus, finding ways to encourage greater student involvement with faculty (and vice versa) could be a highly productive activity in universities (Astin, 1999). According to Wyckoff (1999), interpersonal relationships are important in determining the success of mentoring and academic advising. As the author argues, persistent research shows that undergraduate students value most highly academic advisors who function as mentors or counsellors, and who are available and accessible, knowledgeable and approachable.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

To find out the regularity of ALs talking to an advisor when in need of academic advice, factors that contributed to the regularity of students meeting advisers and how readily the ALs accessed advisers in case they had issues.

1.3 Significance of the study

The findings will contribute on how universities can improve the quality of their diversified programmes by enhancing academic advising and interaction between advisors and ALs among other interventions. Institutions can also put in place learning needs of ALs who do not attend the institutions full-time and therefore, are in more need of interaction and academic advising services.

1.4 The Scope and Limitations of the Study

Due to constraints of time and resources, this study was limited to one public university in Kenya. The respondents for the study were limited to the enrolled institutional based students (adult learners) in the School of Education (SOE). A total of three hundred and twenty ALs were sampled.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Social Support Theory by Williams, Barclay and Schmied (2004). In this study Social Support Theory was used to partially explain the success of student mentoring. The theory posited that the degree of social support availability was positively correlated with the degree of effective coping measures that an individual employed in response to stressful circumstances. If support was available, coping might have been more rational and effective; if support was lacking coping might have been absent and the individual might have given up. Social support theory encompasses the concept of social integration which is a term used frequently by researchers of attrition and retention in universities (Tinto, 1997, 1998; & Goodsell-love, 1993).

Additionally it had been suggested that the more effective 'helpers' were those who had successfully navigated stressful circumstances similar to their 'helpees' (Thoits, 1995). This was easily applied to the concept of student mentoring as student mentors had successfully completed their first year at university. University students arguably, differed from school students in regards to both time of the day and venue they learn best, this being one proposal of adult learning theory. This theory suggested that adults learn better by incidental learning as opposed to either formal or informal learning (Lieb, 1999). Incidental learning is learning that takes place at a time and venue that is best suited to the learner (Marsick & Watkins, 2001) – the theory suggested that the learner would retain the information better if they could access it at a time and place when they needed it most – 'I want it and I want it now'. They want 'at call information' and a mentor program that offered assistance and information readily through interaction and in multiple formats would presumably have fulfilled this need.

This theory was applicable to the ALs since they spent less time at the institutions, and most had stayed away from academic environments for a length of time and they might have needed more social support mechanisms and interaction to cope with the demands of academic life. Such social support ranged from assisting the ALs on personal issues that emanated from the academic culture of the institutions. This might have brought about stressful circumstances that led to attrition as they tried to balance academic and non-academic affairs.

Therefore, if the ALs would be supported and engaged in Academic advising through interaction with faculty members, they would have been motivated, satisfied, felt recognized and belonging to the university community and persisted to the end and hence increased student retention and high rates of graduation.

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Who are Adult Learners?

Higher education institutions define adult learners using chronological age and additional factors such as delayed post-secondary enrolment, part-time attendance, full-time work while enrolled, financial independence, single parenthood, military service, and lack of a standard high school diploma. The literature surrounding ALs suggests that learning across the lifespan, culture, personality, political beliefs, and ethnicity are additional factors of far more significant than chronological age.

2.2 The Need for Interaction among Adult Learners and Advisors

Today almost three-quarters of undergraduates are in some way non-traditional/adult learners with more than one-third of all students being 25 years or older. Adult learners come to our campuses with lives full of experiences, challenges and responsibilities adding to the weight of their studies in ways that set them apart from the traditional-aged student. Adult learners enrol in college for many different reasons and at different points in their careers, but they often face similar logistical, academic and financial obstacles when trying to achieve access and success in higher education. In short, they face barriers because institutions and policies continue to focus on traditional students. Compared to traditional students, many more ALs have full-time jobs, spouses, and/or dependent children—in short, they are place-bound and busy people and hence the need for interaction. Adult learners bring strengths to the learning environment that mentors need to recognize, honor and build on both in their one-on-one work with students and as they design any studies to be engaged in by students in whatever learning mode. Mentors can use these strengths both to support new students as they experience the transition to college work and in designing learning activities through interactions. Adult learners know why they are here, are used to accepting responsibility, organizing tasks and meeting deadlines, have experience and learning that can be captured through interaction and built on in the design of new studies and are often in a position to test what they are learning in their work, home and community. Many ALs are understandably anxious about entering college or about returning after being away for a long time delaying their enrolment into postsecondary education because their lives have taken them down a different path, including marriage and raising a family, and/or working full-time. Adult learners need to find their academic stride as well as their academic voice on campus. Kasworm (2008) points out that ALs “face challenges in gaining a place, position, voice and related sense of valued self in the cultural worlds of higher education” (p. 32).

Some adults come to college with considerable real world and/or academic experience that, if recognized, would promote program completion and reduce costs and time-to-degree. In addition, policies on assessment of prior learning can support the granting of credit for life experiences and for courses taken outside of traditional academic settings (e.g., industry-provided courses). Adults learners generally tend to have different educational goals and learning styles than traditional students, with a particular focus on how their courses relate to their lives and jobs. Colleges need to recognize these differences and capitalize on them as strengths that adults bring to the classroom. Small group discussions, for example, allow adult learners to connect to each other as well as tie classroom learning to real world experiences.

2.3 Importance of Frequent Interaction between Mentors and Adult Learners

Interaction is a basic element in any educational process, and it is something that needs to be reconsidered in the light of ALs and faculty advisers in higher education. A student's faculty Advisor/mentor can offer great advice about what the classes are like, what is covered in a course and what former students have shared about their experience in the class. Faculty advisors are also resources for career planning information and possible internships. On the other hand, academic advisors or advising compliment the mentor's knowledge by advising students on what classes are available, clearing them for graduation, assisting with scheduling or registration issues, and providing academic policy and procedural information as needed. Additionally, advisors are available to help track students' degree progress and offer referrals to helpful student services on campus. All these issues were considered important in improving the quality of students' lives and the need for advisor and ALs interaction in HE institutions and determining the quality of learning outcomes.

Montgomery College, the community college system for Montgomery County, Maryland, provides adult learners with a kind of one-stop webpage that addresses many questions that they may have.

This page links to a comprehensive advising-oriented page, which indicates the Montgomery College provides a range of adult-student-friendly operating times for academic advising (depending on the campus, this varies between being open until 6:30pm or 7:00pm on up to four days out of the week). Students may also benefit from online/email advising.

Especially worth mentioning is the Germantown Options for Adult Learners (GOAL) Program. This “academic and social support program” for adult learners, based at the Germantown Campus, offer students the ability to interact with each other and learn to overcome the initial anxiety involved in tasks like “taking assessment tests, registering for courses, and taking classes online.” Related to advising, the site provides information on open houses for adult learners (scheduled in the evenings), ways to receive credit (by exam, transfer, or portfolio assessments), a range of financial aid information, specific resources for military-affiliated adults, child care, transportation options to get to campus, and more. In September 2005, the universities in United Kingdom set up Personal and Academic Support System (PASS). Each PASS tutor ran a programme of small group tutorials throughout the first-year with tutees. Eight tutees were allocated to each tutor strictly within their discipline, giving cohort identity among that tutor’s students and building empathy between tutor and students. Students benefited from structured study skills training, and helped combat information overload that happened at the start of the year by drip-feeding information to students at the time when it was relevant. Groupwork brought cooperation between students and helped build cohort identity and peer support among students within the discipline. Face-to-face meetings built student confidence with staff and provided tutees with a feeling of belonging in the academic community. Through fortnightly tutorials, students got to know one faculty member well, so they had somebody to contact if they experienced difficulties which interrupted their studies. When students approached tutors with non-academic issues, they were referred for professional help for example counselling, financial aid, or accommodation.

Findings of the study showed that interviewees of a minority group of students supported the concept that interventions needed to be inclusive and ongoing. Additionally, these interventions took into account the changing socio-cultural aspects of these new students and offered supportive environments designed to help them acquire strategies that led to mastery in HE. McCabe (2000) notes, “Minorities had made progress but were far from achieving educational equality” (34). The strengths of these programmes lay in the close connections that students were able to work with faculty and staff throughout the length of the programme. They also experienced the demands and expectations of academic and social life on campus. This interdisciplinary approach to a course of study provided comprehensive instruction that was designed to enhance reading, writing, critical thinking, and time-management skills. Students were able to gain confidence and experience in academia within a sheltered, supportive environment. Other interventions used included coursework that enhanced students with multiple opportunities to practise and develop transferring strategies and skills within an authentic, meaningful context.

The implication of this study is that quality academic advising and interaction should be one where both the perspectives of the student advisees and advising scholars are integrated into the advising process. According to the study a process where both the perspectives of the students and advisors are integrated means that the advisor is seen as a humanizing agent, a counsellor, a mentor, a confidante and an educator. In a nutshell, whereas progress had been made in increasing student enrolments in African universities, there was a compelling imperative to establish management systems in the institutions to ensure that expanded enrolments were accompanied with quality academic processes if HEIs had to contribute to the economic and social development of societies (Duraismy, 2000; Schady, 2002 & Lam, 1999). Interaction and Academic advising is one such intervention that institutions can implement to address the above situation.

In Kenya statistics available from the 2009 Republic of Kenya Economic Survey showed that part-time students (ALs) constituted about 44% of total enrolments in public universities. There were cases, in individual universities and academic programs where enrolment of module 2 part-time students had overtaken that of regular full-time students. Module two (Parallel) students referred to a varied group of students who differed from the regular students in terms of their mode of study (part-time, school-based or open learning, (the time they took to enrol into the institutions (some enrolled immediately after high school, while others had stayed home for a longer time).

In this particular University for example, which was the site for this study, the part-time students (adult learners) by year 2004- 2009 were 44,426 compared to 42,010 full-time students which were over 51% (UNESCO, 2010-2011).

The contact and quality of time that the students had with the institutions and lecturers had become so differentiated that issues of increased access and diversity of the student body brought into question the issues of quality and frequency of interaction.

In this study the advisor student interaction in the university was found to have had four avenues through which students could access Academic advising services which would enhance interaction. The first avenue and more formal one was the mentoring unit. However, this unit was only tailored to the needs of regular undergraduate students and even for this group of students, the unit was limited given the high undergraduate enrolment which was about 40,000 students (Students Finance Office, 2012) and the small number of lecturers (247) who volunteered to serve as mentors of which 200 served at the main Campus. There were 145 lecturers and 2,321 adult learners in the SOE, at the time of the study. The SoE had 50 lecturers serving as mentors. It is however, possible that the existence of the unit, though not meant for ALs, created awareness of the need for such services and therefore, partly influenced their perceptions on interaction and the responses they provided for this study.

The second avenue was the Dean of Students' Office which, though not meant purely for Academic Advising services addressed the various academic and welfare issues that affected students while on campus. The third avenue was school and departmental Academic advising services offered to all groups of students and tailored to addressing the academic needs of students. The university regulations required all departments to appoint two lecturers to serve as Academic advisors for undergraduate and postgraduate students respectively. The fourth avenue was more informal. Lecturers as professionals also advised their students on various academic issues and this meant that students were likely to see their lecturers as the first point of contact.

3.0 Findings

The researcher began by finding out some of the characteristics of ALs sampled for the study which showed the need for interaction.

3.1 Demographic Profiles for Sampled Adult Learners

The profiles summarized in Table 1 indicate the characteristics of the ALs in this paper who were sampled and responded to the students' questionnaire.

3.1.1 Gender and Residential Status of the Sampled Adult Learners

Table 1 provides a summary of details about the gender and residential status of the ALs who participated in the study. These two characteristics were thought important as they determined students' needs for some aspects of interaction to cope with the academic life during the short period they were in the university.

Table 1: Gender and Residential Composition of Sampled Adult Learners (N=320)

Residential Status	Gender Composition		Totals
	Male	Female	
Residents	109 (34.1%)	112 (35%)	221 (69.1)
Commuters	52 (16.3%)	47 (14.7%)	99 (30.9%)
Total	161 (50.3%)	159 (49.7%)	320 (100%)

Table 1 show that the ALs composed of 161(50.3%) male students and 159 (49.7%) female students making a total of 320. All ALs sampled for the study were in the IBP. The table further shows that out of the 320 ALs sampled for the study, 221(69.1%) were residents and 99 (30.9%) were commuters. The residents composed of 109 (34.1%) male ALs and 112 (35%) female ALs. The commuters were 52 (16.3%) male students and 47 (14.7%) female students. The sample for the study therefore had an evenly distributed sample of males and females. This was important as the needs and perceptions of the different genders were bound to differ. The presence of commuter ALs in the programme further warranted an exploration of how interaction could be provided to the students to help them in balancing their academic work, commuting and family responsibilities. These characteristics are indicators of non-traditional students/adult learners which continue to show the importance of frequent interaction of ALs and faculty as observed by (Astin, 1984) when he argues that academic advising for the non-traditional students is important as it assists them in navigating the university system, in general advising, course selection, time management and study skills development.

3.1.2 Age of Sampled Adult Learners

The second characteristic of the students in the sample that was captured in regard to interaction was their age profiles. Generally students who transit from high school straight to university in the Kenyan education system are likely to be between the ages of 18 to 23. This group of students is considered in the literature to have less problems fitting into the demands of academic life and other institutional cultures. A summary of the age profiles of students in the sample as generated from responses in the students' questionnaire is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Age Profiles of the Sampled Adult Learners (N=320)

Age (Years)	Frequency	%
20-25	42	13.1
26-30	73	22.8
31-35	67	20.9
36-40	69	21.6
41-45	42	13.1
46-50	23	7.2
Above 51	4	1.3
Total	320	100

Table 2 indicates that a majority of the respondents (22.8%, 20.9% and 21.6%), were within the 26-30, 31-35 and 36-40 age brackets respectively. Only 13.1 % of the respondents fell in the threshold of regular students with their ages ranging from 20-25. Overall, information from Table 2 supports the claim as seen from the literature review that most of the students in the IBP in the SoE in the university qualify to be categorized as non-traditional students who require more institutional programmes and interaction to help them adjust to the academic life of the institutions. Interaction also helps them to focus on their academic work and directly contribute to the quality of the graduates at the end of their time in the institutions. This finding agrees with Astin (1984) who indicates that non-traditional student designation could be because of age (25 or older) or self-identified based on family or other circumstances.

3.1.3 Length of Time Stayed in the Field before Joining the University

The third characteristic of the students in the sample captured was in regard to the period stayed out before joining the university. This is because students who come after having stayed out of educational environments for some time have more problems adjusting to the academic environment and hence the need for interaction. According to studies, non-traditional students face more problems in the institutions as they have family and work related demands and the fact that they have not had to function in a student capacity for some time (Schlossberg et al 1999). The more time the students have taken outside academic settings, the more they require frequent interaction and academic advising to adjust and fit into the requirements of academic and institutional life. A summary of the period stayed in the field before joining the University as generated from responses in the students' questionnaire is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Length of Time Stayed in the Field before Joining the University

Period stayed in the field before joining the University	Frequency	%
0-5 yrs	137	42.8
6-10 yrs	92	28.8
11-15 yrs	33	10.3
16-20 yrs	40	12.5
Above 21 yrs	18	5.6
Total	320	100

N=320

Table 3 indicates that 137 ALs (42.8%) stayed in the field for 0-5, 92(28.8%) 6-10, 33 (10.3%) 11-15 and 40 (12.5%) each out of 320 had stayed for a period of 16-20 years while 18 ALs (5.6%) out of 320 stayed for over 21 years in the field before joining the university. Further, data from table 3 shows a gender balance in all categories of duration spent in the field.

For example, 67 male students (20.9%) and 70 female students (21.9%) each out of 320 stayed for 0-5 years in the field before joining the university. Sixteen male students (5%) and 17 female students (5.3%) each out of 320 spent 11-15 years in the field before joining the university. This is another indication that these ALs were coming back to college after a long time and therefore, needed frequent interaction and Academic advising to be mentored on the latest use of technology, use of library, latest study skills and how to negotiate their way in the campus to be able to achieve good academic grades. This finding was supported by statistics available from the 2009 Republic of Kenya Economic Survey which showed that part-time students (ALs) constituted about 44% of total enrolments in public universities.

3.2 Results

Three items were used to establish the frequency of interaction and academic advising services of ALs at the university. The first was an item in the questionnaire that required respondents to confirm the frequency of interaction of ALs talking to a lecturer/advisor when in need of academic advice. The second were items both in the questionnaire and FGD sessions that required the respondents to state factors that determined regularity of adult learners meeting lecturers and the third was how readily the ALs accessed advisors in case they had issues. The first indicator that was used to measure frequency of ALs talking to an advisor when in need of academic advising at the institution for ALs was time availability (the frequency with which students had time and lecturers availed themselves) for mentoring sessions with students. Both students and lecturers who were respondents in the study were also asked through the questionnaires and interview the frequency of the meetings. Table 4 summarizes students' responses on the regularity of talking to an advisor during mentoring and advising meetings.

Table 4: Frequency of Adult Learners talking to an Advisor when in need of Academic Advice

Frequency of Talking to an Advisor	Frequency	%
Rarely	125	39.1
Not at All	86	26.9
Occasionally	48	15
Sometimes	41	12.8
Many times	20	6.3
Total	320	100

N= 320 Source: Responses from the Institutions ALs 2012

Table 4 shows that out of 320 ALs sampled for the study, 125 (39.1%) reported to rarely talking to an advisor, 86 (26.9%) were not able to talk to an advisor at all, 48 (15%) were able to talk to an advisor occasionally, 41 (12.8%) talked to an advisor sometimes like when in need of academic advice and 20 (6.3%) of the ALs were able to talk to an advisor many times. From these responses, the study established that a high percentage of students rarely talked to an advisor when in need of academic advice. Overall, the results indicated that a majority of the ALs rarely interacted with advisors. These findings were supported by ALS during a FGD where one student said,

“I tried my level best to get the units that I wanted. I could not find someone to guide me. We had fears that when we were selecting the subjects we were taking what the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) would not have accepted as the combination, but according to most of us we wanted a certain course to make our lives better”.

The students were asked to give their opinions on the factors contributing to the regularity of ALs talking to an advisor when in need of academic advice. The responses from the ALS are summarized in Box 1.

Box 1: Factors that Determined Regularity of Adult Learners Meeting Advisors/Lecturers

Reasons for	
Regularly meeting Mentors	Hardly meeting Mentors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good relation between teacher and student. - During lecturing in class. - To get more information from lecturers. - For guidance on the use of computer. - In times of selecting units and credit waivers. - To get help on my parenting issues. - To get assistance on assignments. - I access them in case of missing marks. - For success in my studies. - To get assistance on academic issues. - We meet lecturers when we resume from holidays. - Through interaction with lecturers. - To get solutions on timetable clashing. - When I am financially challenged. - Whenever the situation demands. - To improve on my grades. - When I visit the Departments - Through mobile phone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some lecturers were not friendly. - Most lecturers were not willing to advise - E-learning not well-facilitated. - Lack of orientation at the beginning of every session. - Some lecturers felt they were too busy to mentor. - Poor co-ordination between administration and students. - Overwhelming workload. - Lecturers not readily available. - Students' very busy and limited time. - Short lecturer-student interaction period. - Timetable too tight. - Some male lecturers were not morally upright. - Lecturer-students ratio. - Most lecturers did not give out their phone numbers. - Fear. - Congested programme. - Crush programme. - Lack of introduction to lecturers. - Distance between student and lecturer. - Most information was relayed to us through internet. - Most lecturers not available in their offices. - Lack of proper communication channels. - Most lecturers did not receive students' calls. - Never been in a problem requiring a mentor. - Some lecturers insisted on us discovering our own methods. - I received help from other students. - No interest in getting involved with learners outside class.

Source: Responses from the Institutions Adult Learners 2012

The researcher further sought to find out how readily the ALs accessed advisors/mentors in case they had issues. Their responses are shown in table 5.

Table 5: Availability of Mentors

Responses on Availability of Mentors	F	%
Scarcely: There was no enough time to seek a mentor, I accessed them occasionally during unit registration, they were hardly accessed, difficult as most lecturers were uncooperative, the students and lecturers were always busy, one waited for too long before being attended to, had to mobilize others to have the chairman talk to us and hard to access lecturers as they were few and surrounded by many students.	114	47.1
Not Accessed: Never, not possible due to very tight schedule; not available at all, not readily available, no specific place to find them and I was not aware of the existence of academic mentors.	53	21.9
Readily: I contacted them via phone/email, followed the lecturer after class session, I visited the department after classes, through the chain of command, readily found, easily accessed mentors outside the institution and I booked an appointment in their offices.	52	21.5
Others: Consulted fellow students, I did not have the confidence to meet a lecturer, I did not access them, had one at my work station and I visited the institutions website to sort most of my doubts.	15	6.2
Very Readily: Very often and I asked lecturers questions when they came for lessons	8	3.3
Grand Total	242	100

N=242 because some students never responded

A qualitative analysis to responses in table 5 reveals that out of 242, 114 (47.1%) ALS who reported that they scarcely accessed advisors/mentors reported that they did not have enough time to seek mentors, accessed mentors occasionally during unit registration, waited for too long before being attended to, had to mobilize others to have the chairperson talk to them and found it not easy as the lecturers were few, and when lecturers were available they were surrounded by many students, difficult as most lecturers were uncooperative and not easy as the students and lecturers were always busy.

Fifty-three (21.9%) of the ALs who did not access mentors, gave the following reasons: found it impossible due to very tight schedule, not aware of any specific place to find them, did not find any available mentor and not aware of the existence of academic mentors.

Fifty- two (21.5%) ALS who reported to have readily accessed mentors revealed that: they contacted them through mobile phones and e-mails, followed lecturers after class session, visited the department after classes, used the chain of command, accessed mentors outside the Institution and booked appointments at mentors' offices.

Fifteen (6.2%) ALs used other methods to get help on their issues, these included: consulted their fellow students, did not have the confidence to meet a lecturer, had a mentor at the work station and visited the institution's website in case of doubt.

Eight (3.3%) ALS who accessed mentors very readily had this to say: availability of mentors was very often and lecturers were asked questions when they came for lessons.

Generally, most of the ALS 167 (69.0%) considered availability of mentors as scarce and not available at all, while 60 (24.8%) ALs considered mentors as very readily and readily available. The researcher further sought from the ALs, through the questionnaire if the institution had a programme of assigning them with lecturers as mentors.

Table 6: Students Responses on whether they were formally Assigned Academic Mentors

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	11	3.4
No	309	96.6
Total	320	100

N=320. Source: Responses from the Institutions Adult Learners 2012

Table 6 indicates that out of 320, only 11 (3.4%) ALs were allocated academic mentors. Three hundred and nine (96.6%) ALs were not allocated academic mentors. From these responses, the study established that a majority of the ALs had no academic mentors allocated to them. The results from the table show that majority of the ALS were not assigned mentors and this continues to explain for the scarcity of the mentors and the shortage of the frequency of meeting advisors. This further concurs with a study by Droege (2006) which found that Academic Mentoring and Advising services including interaction of faculty and the non-traditional students had been eliminated in HE leaving students feeling like they did not belong to the institution.

Table 7: Whether Adult Learners had an Academic Mentor and Advisor

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	76	23.8
No	244	76.3
Total	320	100

N=320. Source: Responses from Adult Learners 2012

Table 7 shows that out of 320, only 76 (23.8%) ALs had academic mentors and advisors while, 244 (76.3%) ALs had no academic mentors and advisors. This can explain why the frequency of interaction was minimal.

3.3 Conclusion

- i. With regard to the frequency of ALs talking to a lecturer, the study established that 125(39.1%) of ALs rarely met lecturers. On availability of mentors, 114(47.1%) of ALs reported that they did not have enough time to seek mentors, accessed mentors occasionally during unit registration, waited for too long before being attended to, had to mobilize others to have the chairperson talk to them and found it not easy as the lecturers were few and surrounded by many students, was not an easy task as the mentors were hardly accessed, difficult as most lecturers were uncooperative and was not easy as ALs and lecturers were always busy. This implies that the university should create a system where every mentor should have a well-stipulated schedule of how, when and where to meet the mentees. This schedule should be availed to the mentees and pinned on the door of mentors, notice boards at the School of Education, departments and also at the mentoring office.
- ii. Adult learners, who did not access mentors, reported finding it impossible due to very tight schedule, not aware of any specific place to find them, did not find any available mentor and were not aware of the existence of academic mentors. The implication to this finding is that both ALs and mentors were equally busy for the mentoring service as shown by 52(21.5%) of students, who reported to have readily accessed mentors. They reported to have contacted the mentors through mobile phones and e-mails, followed lecturers after class session, visited the department after classes, used the chain of command, accessed mentors outside the Institution and booked appointments at mentors' office.
- iii. Other methods used to get help included: consulting their fellow students, mentors at their work station, visited the institution's website in case of doubt and asked lecturers questions when they came for lessons. This implied that unless the institution encouraged face-to-face interactions, the frequency of interaction between ALs and mentors would remain rare/low. This was because some ALs did not have mobile phone contacts, others came from marginalized areas where access to internet was a challenge and some students reported that some mentors did not reply nor pick the phone.
- iv. In terms of allocating academic mentors to ALs, the study established that 309(96.6%) students were not allocated academic mentors while only 11(3.4%) students were allocated academic mentors. The study ascertained that 76(23.8%) ALs had academic mentors and advisors while, 244(76.3%) had no academic mentors and advisors. The implication to this finding was that the institution has not put adequate measures to ensure that ALs were allocated mentors.

- v. How they identified academic mentors and advisors, 76 (23.8%) students who had academic mentors reported to have identified the mentors as follows: identified mentors through a friend, identified the mentor as he/she was teaching and identified their mentors through the department.
- vi. The other methods of identification mentioned by the ALs were; through their dad, the church, through one-on-one interaction with the mentor, the internet and during meetings with lecturers. This implied that most ALs had not been allocated mentors within the institution and this explained why some ALs might have sought for mentors outside the institution due to their great need of academic mentoring which the institution could provide.

3.4 Recommendations

To ensure frequent interaction was adequately provided; the study recommended the following:

- Every university ALs should be allocated a mentor on registration day whose interaction should start immediately. For example, each administrator on duty on registration day should have a list of mentors and assign each mentor a number of students as directed/required by the mentoring directorate. Such a step would ensure that every student has a mentor to consult in case of any need.
- The university should ensure that they meet the ALS in the course of the semester in their distance learning/regional campuses to guide and interact with them on assignments or any issue, be it personal, academic or professional. This will make ALs feel they belong to the institution and someone cares for them. This will get rid of any uncertainty, gain confidence and self esteem and ensure successful completion of studies.

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