Title: Ethical Issues in Individual Student Support

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

• By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:
• Explore the ethical issues presented by the student support scenario within a virtue ethics framework
• Recognize the usefulness of a ‘professionality’ framework for working ethically with students
• Recognize the ethical role of the institution in demonstrating care for staff undertaking one-to-one student support work

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

This paper arises from data emerging from my doctoral research, an objective of which is to produce a framework for staff development and support around the task of supporting individual students. Some of the data arising from interviews in a pilot study presents professional practice dilemmas which lend themselves to an ethical framework of analysis and interpretation.

My research explores the emotion work undertaken by higher education practitioners in one-to-one student support work, and how higher education institutions can appropriately and effectively support staff who are undertaking this role. Scott (1995: 23) contends that individual student-teacher exchanges are resonant of the ‘pastoral intimacy’ of a past elite higher education system. My research suggests a practice climate more resonant with Macfarlane (2004) who contends that such individual interactions lie at the heart of good teaching, which means helping students to learn.

I consider the roles of individual practitioners and the institution in addressing ethical dilemmas. As Macfarlane (2004) and Scott (2004) both point out, there is a discrepancy between working with bureaucratic and procedural mechanisms, and working within an identified professional framework of ethics. I take this forward using Hoyle and John’s definition of ‘professionality’ (1995). Noddings (2002) argues that being cared for is a significant force in the development of caring individuals. Participants in my research have reflected on feeling unsupported by their employing institutions, and I use Noddings’ work to consider how institutions can demonstrate an ethic of caring in order to support practitioners in their student support work.

• Using a virtue ethics framework, I will consider ethical dilemmas that can occur for practitioners during student support interactions. These can be grouped into two themes: moral motivation and authenticity;
• Using themes of ‘professionality’ and the ethics of caring I will consider appropriate individual and institutional practice frameworks for ethical student support work.
Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Presentation of key themes of discussion paper 20 minutes
(participants will be invited to make comments during the presentation if they wish)

Discussion 25 minutes

Indicative Questions:

What is the meaning of authenticity in our interactions with students?

What is the importance of authenticity?

What institutional and practitioner processes would be appropriate and effective in supporting and protecting practitioners and students in one-to-one staff/student interactions?

How can these processes be taken forward within a professional rather than a bureaucratic framework?

Responses to these and other questions that emerge from participants will be used to evaluate the usefulness of the discussion paper in taking forward ideas to inform practice.

References


