PEDAGOGICAL DILEMMAS FOR SOCIAL WORK IN ACADEMIA

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The authenticity of pedagogy becomes compromised when students' psychosocial needs are considered paramount, especially in the current transformation-driven context, when overstepping boundaries flies in the face of academics' terms of employment, their teaching responsibilities and the academic canon. The nexus between the practices of this helping profession and the academic development of social work professionals has ignited considerable debate and presented significant challenges. This article explores academics' conditions of employment regarding their teaching and learning responsibilities alongside the profession's ethical obligation to respond to students' psychosocial needs, a duality that presents numerous pedagogical dilemmas.

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INTRODUCTION

The increased emphasis in recent years on alleviating the plight of vulnerable students in academia to bolster student success and throughput rates, has shone the spotlight on students at risk or in dire need of care.

The social work profession is defined by its helping and caring nature. It is, therefore, a natural progression to extend care into the realm of pedagogy with social work students. The question is whether this personal attention is appropriate to the social work ideals of academia or whether it encourages other behaviours, such as learned helplessness or boundary diffusion. Aultman, Williams-Johnson and Schutz (2009) and Mart (2013) indicated that passionate educators are supportive, committed to teaching and learning, and concerned about caring for their students. Most South African universities acknowledge that commitment to teaching and learning, and ensuring students' well-being are integral to student success (North-West University, 2020; University of Cape Town, 2013; University of the Free State, 2018; 2019; University of Johannesburg, 2016; University of Pretoria, 2019; University of the Witwatersrand, 2019a; 2019b). However, enhancing student success requires a reciprocal relationship, which is yet to be clarified.

This article argues that caring, empathy and empowerment are an inherent part of the identity of the social work profession while also delineating the potential drawbacks to this notion. Universally accepted ethical standards regulate professionals' care relationships with their clients. The purpose of social work in academia is to empower professional social workers to tackle the complex needs of the people of South Africa. Therefore, social work academics should carefully consider the appropriateness of the care or helping relationship extended to their students. The blurring of roles between social work in the field and in an academic context has become a contentious issue in the literature (Aultman *et al.*, 2009; Congress, 1996; De Witt, 2016; Linder, 2013; Owen & Zwahr-Castro, 2007; Plaut, 2012; Reamer, 2003; 2012; Strom-Gottfried, 2000). In social work departments, this duality has elicited complicated pedagogical issues regarding the role and responsibilities of academics.

In addressing this complex matter, as indicated by Owen & Zwahr-Castro (2007), Reamer (2003; 2012) and Strom-Gottfried (2000), this discussion will commence by reflecting on the fundamentals of the social work profession and its ethics. Social work councils have been inconsistent in managing social work relationships in academic contexts, but this discussion will examine universities' mandate concerning academics' role. The discussion will expound on the main argument that ethical principles guide the social work profession and that caring or helping is natural. It will also argue, however, that ethics speaks clearly and concisely about the regulation of the relationship between client and social worker. It will conclude that the extension of the caring relationship that results in the duality of roles is not part of academics' mandate, nor is it part of the job description or academics' career trajectory.

Caring for students may seem inconsequential considering performance management and probation requirements. Based on the literature and both authors' extensive experiences in their employment and involvement with four academic institutions, eight pedagogical dilemmas are indicated and their consequences examined. For the purposes of this discussion, these dilemmas are grouped, analysed and summarised as: (i) duality and blurring of roles or boundaries; (ii) teaching and learning, and disciplinary

matters; (iii) students at risk; (iv) risk to ethics and the nature of the social work profession; (v) role modelling; (vi) career trajectory versus helping; (vii) personal matters; and (viii) risk to collegiality. The benefits and positive aspects of this duality will also be highlighted. Four major guidelines are offered in conclusion: (i) adherence and commitment to a shared vision for social work students and the profession; (ii) agreement to comply with ethics and other requirements for the profession and academia; (iii) a collegial code of good conduct and practices; and (iv) an accepted contingency plan for students at risk.

The arguments presented in this article do not intend to suggest that academics should not support their students. However, the authors propose that caring should be informed by professional ethics and agreed contingency plans, rather than personal motivation. They explain how duality could give rise to pedagogical dilemmas, which may be minimised by following a shared vision and agreement.

METHOD OF REVIEW

This article draws on the authors' employment experiences with four different universities within Gauteng, and examines the literature that addresses duality or boundaries within the social work profession. Unfortunately, much of the literature is more than a decade old. While reflection on boundaries, crossing of boundaries and duality has occurred within other disciplines, there has been little follow-up on social work in recent years. Therefore, much of the discussion around boundaries and the associated dilemmas is based on seminal works. However, this article reflects on the limited current literature on the subject.

FUNDAMENTALS AND ETHICS OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

Social work is a helping profession guided by ethical principles and values. Service and help must be provided within a particular and necessary framework. This empathic framework is guided by principles governing social justice, human rights and client participation in decision making while emphasising the continual reinforcement of boundaries to ensure ethical and professional conduct. The South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) (2004) regulates the client–social worker (helper–helpee) relationship within a particular framework. It stipulates that all social workers should embody these principles in their responsibilities towards the profession, clients, colleagues and social workers, practice settings, and communities. For student training, however, the roles are not those of helper and helpee, but of student and lecturer or academic (Baggio, Paget & Chenoweth, 1997; Congress, 1996). While a specific code of conduct for social work in academia has not been established, it could be extrapolated from the values and principles of the general code of ethics.

Baggio *et al.* (1997), Congress (1996), Reamer (2003; 2012) and Strom-Gottfried (2000) commented that the caring nature of the social work profession requires the enactment of empathy and empathic interaction with clients. The International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) (2018) recorded the principles of social work as follows: (i) recognition of the inherent dignity of humanity; (ii) promoting human rights; (iii) promoting social justice; (iv) promoting the right to self-determination; (v) promoting the right to participation; (vi) respect and confidentiality; (vii) treating people as whole persons; (viii) ethical use of technology and social media; and (ix) professional integrity.

Strom-Gottfried and D'Aprix (2007) reviewed several social work councils' codes of ethics to explore how student–staff relationships were addressed and found that this relationship was not well described. What was clear, however, was that professional boundaries should be respected (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2017; SACSSP, 2004). Conversely, Nsonwu, Casey, Cook and Armendariz (2013) argued that the professionalisation (rules and regulations) of social work contributed to silos in the profession and the loss of care. This begs the question of whether enforcing boundaries and professionalism means that there is a lack of care. The way care is presented by Nsonwu *et al.* (2013) appears to contradict the recommendations of most social work councils. Perhaps the term 'care' needs to be more carefully conceptualised when formulating a code for academic purposes. The South African Council for Educators (2016) has specific conditions regarding the ethics that should guide educator–

student relationships. It emphasises respecting boundaries along with showing respect for students and preserving their dignity (South African Council for Educators, 2016).

Ethics may form the backbone of social work, yet appears to be one of the profession's most challenging features. Even though ethics is taught from the first year in professional degree courses, the literature reveals the complex nature of teaching and embodying ethics among students and professionals alike. Ferreira and Ferreira (2015) pointed out that social work students enter the programme with their own beliefs and values that, often unconsciously, guide their behaviour. To best serve their clients, Ferreira and Ferreira (2015) suggested that academics facilitate critical reflection which, contrary to popular belief, was not an automatic outcome or by-product of the educational experience, but needed to be nurtured and developed. Critical reflection promotes the objective evaluation of a person's approach to social work challenges and their decisions around the interventions they suggest or provide. It includes evaluating the steps taken to offer support, independent of their own values, opinions and beliefs.

Davidson (2005) reported that most postgraduate students overstepped boundaries despite having received training in ethics. De Witt (2016) discussed the dilemmas encountered by occupational therapists in balancing the role of clinician and educator. There has been limited reflection on such ethical dilemmas in social work in academia, especially in the South African context.

SOCIAL WORK IN ACADEMIA

Academia focuses on student teaching and learning, or training and development, but also on research and cultivating academic citizenship (Mampane, 2020; North-West University, 2020; Rhodes University, 2018; University of Johannesburg, 2013; University of the Witwatersrand, 2019a; 2019b;). Social work in academia requires adherence to institutional policies of teaching and learning, requirements that enable research intensiveness in keeping with the academic's identified career trajectory and deliverables. At times it appears that the research-intensive agenda is a priority in academia, and that academics' deliverables are far removed from the helping mandate of the social work profession. The key performance indicators in universities emphasise research, teaching and learning, and community engagement (Mampane, 2020; North-West University, 2020; Rhodes University, 2018; Seyama & Smith, 2015; University of Johannesburg, 2013). Addressing student well-being usually occurs within a set framework, which may be limited. Academics need greater clarity as to how to ensure student well-being within the framework of their careers. Both North-West University (2020) and the University of Cape Town (2013) acknowledged student diversity and the need for redress but added that orientation programmes to connect students with appropriate resources to empower them was equally important.

The authors identified a need to find a balance between passion and care within the academic context. Aultman *et al*. (2009), Hagenauer and Volet (2014), Owen & Zwahr-Castro (2007), Slonimsky and Shalem (2006), Turnball (2005) and the University of the Free State (2018) indicated that curriculum responsiveness requires a relationship with students to encourage learning, and that this positive relationship contributes to student success. Scager, Akkerman, Pilot and Wubbles (2017) agreed that teaching involves much more than classroom interactions and acknowledged the complexity of the student–academic relationship. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) and Mart (2013) indicated that success depends on the passion and commitment of academics in developing professionals.

PEDAGOGICAL DILEMMAS AND CONSEQUENCES

Scager et al. (2017) stated that there is no single acceptable solution to address or resolve these dilemmas. However, if academics clearly understand teaching practices as they change and develop, this will help in dealing with the dilemmas. (Scager *et al*. 2017; University of the Free State, 2018). Although this discussion examines eight dilemmas and the consequence of each, this list is not exhaustive.

Pedagogical dilemmas related to duality and blurring of roles or boundaries

It is easy to confuse the expectations of a social worker and those of an academic. Boundaries help to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate relationships, but also ensure a separation of roles

(Owen & Zwahr-Castro 2007). Plaut (2012), the South African Council for Educators (2016) and the Australian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (2015) stated that professional boundaries in academia offer protection as they provide clear indicators to address power imbalances.

Notwithstanding these measures, overstepping of boundaries will still occur. Aultman *et al.* (2009) noted that crossing boundaries should always be in the student's best interest. Duality refers to a situation where the social work academic has an additional role to their primary role of teaching (Bonnstetter & Pedersen, 2005; Congress, 1996; Owen & Zwahr-Castro 2007; Tollerud & Halizer, 2017). However, duality need not necessarily lead to violations or inappropriate behaviour. Linder (2013) acknowledged that healthy boundaries can promote well-being but added that regular, honest self-assessment is essential. Baggio *et al.* (1997), Davidson (2005), Linder (2013) and Plaut (2012) indicated that entangled professional boundaries refer to frequent over-involvement in relationships that may complicate professional decision-making. However, academics also need to guard against the detrimental effects of creating boundaries (Baggio *et al.*, 1997; Linder, 2013; Plaut, 2012; Schwartz, 2020).

Academics have been known to overstep their professional roles by entering into personal relationships with students, whether to provide support or financial assistance, to show favouritism, or for their own personal gain. The question that inevitably arises is: at whose expense is this duality accepted? Is it at the cost of the ethics of the social work profession or of other colleagues? It should also be noted that students compare academics' involvement and label them according to the support they provide. Davidson (2005) suggested that where dual roles exist or a relationship becomes entangled due to over-involvement, this breach should be considered harmful. Kolbert, Morgan and Brendel (2002) indicated that duality may be ambiguous and attention to relationships divided, which can be detrimental to all parties concerned.

Boundaries may be described in various ways – nature, range, continuum (suggestive of types), and according to themes. The manner in which boundaries are interpreted determines their complexity. The duality of boundaries and roles may occur sequentially or concurrently (Zur, 2019). Reamer (2003) classified boundaries in terms of themes and Zur (2019) according to ranges. Both are connected in that they are described as social, intimate or sexual relationships, personal benefits, emotional dependency needs, altruistic gestures (including monetary aid) and unanticipated circumstances (Reamer, 2003; Zur, 2019). Congress (1996) classified the types of relationships with the educator as (i) sexual partner, (ii) friend, (iii) therapist and (iv) employer (especially for postgraduate students as research assistants). These categories are aligned with Reamer's themes and Zur's ranges. Davidson (2005) described the boundary continuum as ranging from entanglement, to the midpoint of balance, to rigidity, noting that both entanglement and rigidity are extreme and equally harmful to student success (Davidson, 2005).

The duality of relationships concerning intimacy, sexual involvement, vulnerability, power dynamics, and exploitation of students has received substantial coverage in the literature (Aultman *et al.*, 2009; Baggio *et al.*, 1997; Congress, 1996; Davys & Beddoe, 2009; Nsonwu *et al.*, 2013; Owen & Zwahr-Castro 2007; Reamer, 2003; 2012; Walker & Clark, 1999; Zur, 2019). Duality may concern students and staff about its appropriateness and the power relationships that may emerge. In their study, Owen & Zwahr-Castro (2007) found that 72% of students agreed that crossing boundaries (including socialising and financial aid) were inappropriate. Similarly, Congress (1996) reported that 72% of academics counselled students, creating power imbalances that could jeopardise objectivity during assessment. Davidson (2005), Kolbert *et al.* (2002), and Rupert and Holmes (1997) also pointed out the potential threat duality posed to objectivity and fairness.

A lack of clarity around boundaries obscures the true role and purpose of the social work profession, academia and the university. Familiarity with students may lead to disrespect, abuse and favouritism. Jackson (2007) classified the consequences of duality as the impact on students, faculty, the institution, and the clients that students will serve. The effect on students refers directly to exploitation of power, lack of objectivity, and inequitable assessment practices (Aultman *et al.*, 2009; Baggio *et al.*, 1997; Congress, 1996; Davys & Beddoe, 2009; Jackson, 2007; Nsonwu *et al.*, 2013; Owen & Zwahr-Castro 2007; Reamer, 2003; Walker & Clark, 1999; Zur, 2019). The impact on faculty and the institution refers

not only to collegiality, but also to the institution's reputation (Jackson 2007; Strom-Gottfried 2000). Wooten and Condis (2018) were unequivocal that collegiality contributes to the health of the faculty and esteem for the school or the department. Impact on consumers refers to how behaviour is modelled for the student to enact with the client (Jackson, 2007), implying that if academics have not enacted roles appropriately, students may also follow suit.

Another aspect observed by the authors and which the literature has not addressed well is the manipulation or exploitation by students of certain academic staff. While Plaut (2012) made some reference to this, he did not indicate manipulation as such but referred rather to the sense of entitlement that sometimes emerges from students seeking help. Where an academic has been known for their 'goodness' or care, especially regarding providing students' physical and financial needs, this academic will be targeted for aid. Unfortunately, people whose innate nature is to feel needed and rescue will provide assistance even when it is undeserved. Therefore, careful assessment should be conducted of the exact need before responding.

Positives of duality

Notwithstanding, the downsides, it is imperative to acknowledge that duality may offer positives that will aid student learning, growth and success (Hoffman, 2014; Plew, 2011; Sugimoto, 2010; Sugimoto, Hank, Bowman & Pomerantz, 2015). Bonnstetter and Pedersen (2005) noted that academics need to teach from their strengths, and Sugimoto *et al.* (2015) stated that this and duality humanises the social worker in academia. Kolbert *et al.* (2002) stated that sharing life experiences may contribute to learning experiences. Owen & Zwahr-Castro (2007) maintained that duality helps with the socialisation of the future professional. An engaging environment may also add to student learning (Turnball, 2005).

Other examples of the positives of duality as observed in the literature (Aultman *et al.*, 2009; Hagenauer & Volet; Kolbert *et al.*, 2002; Nsonwu *et al.*, 2013; Owen & Zwahr-Castro, 2007; Reamer, 2003; Turnball, 2005; Walker & Clark, 1999; Zur, 2019) and by the authors include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Needs of both student and academic are fulfilled.

- It presents an opportunity to get to know students and their circumstances.

- Mutual respect is shown.

- The academic is perceived as approachable. This links to the humanism of the

  academic as postulated by Sugimoto *et al.* (2015).

- Students are helped, especially where a crisis may have been evident, or food parcels or financial aid were provided regularly.

- Both parties experience feelings of support.

- Issues are resolved, and the student may now focus on the academics.

- Students receive counselling.

  The student receives a handout. This is relevant where there was a once-off need, which the academic was able to satisfy.

- Academics are rewarded for their goodness. This is where the academic may have received appreciation from the students or others for their good deeds.

- The academic may be deemed the best lecturer, a good person or a saint, or be held in high esteem.

These points suggest the potentially positive impact of duality, which may aid classroom success. The benefits of enhancing student success cannot be ignored and need to be addressed within the formalisation of academic–student relationships.

Pedagogical dilemmas related to teaching and learning, and discipline matters

Once the boundaries of professionalism are overstepped, it produces a ripple effect for all subsequent aspects. It poses a significant threat to the requirements and responsibilities of teaching and learning. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) and Mart (2013) stressed that passionate and committed academics enhance teaching and learning. Therefore, any aspect that jeopardises teaching and learning should be corrected. Inappropriate relationships with students severely affects objectivity during assessment (Linder, 2013).

An issue that has received considerable attention when debating the transformation of the curriculum is the pressure to improve throughput rates. While academics believe students should have produced the required outcomes before graduating, they may feel compelled to bow to pressure to maintain throughput rates (Baggio *et al*., 1997; Congress, 1996; Davys & Beddoe, 2009; Owen & Zwahr-Castro 2007; Reamer, 2003; Walker & Clark, 1999; Zur, 2019). Universities in South Africa are clear that assessment should be based on genuine learning (North-West University, 2020; Rhodes University, 2018; University of Cape Town, 2013; University of the Free State, 2018; 2019; University of Johannesburg, 2016; University of Pretoria, 2019; University of the Witwatersrand, 2005; 2019a; 2019b).

Standards are significantly compromised where there is a lack of objectivity, which may be evident when a student is favoured or even if the academic sympathises with a student's difficulties. Where boundaries were overstepped previously, students may disapprove when rules and boundaries are reinstated. An essential question that the social work academic should continually ask is, '*Am I assessing the performance, or am I assessing the impact of the context or challenges experienced on the performance?*' Therefore, the academic must ensure that their sensitivity to the student's situation does not filter the assessment process or fairness of assessments and that standards are upheld across the board (Baggio *et al*., 1997; Congress, 1996; Davys & Beddoe, 2009; Owen & Zwahr-Castro 2007; Reamer, 2003; Walker & Clark, 1999; Zur, 2019). Plaut (2012) maintained that a the relationship between the academic and student should mirror the type of relationship that should exist between a professional and a client.

Standards and outputs are compromised to the extent that evaluations of students are not objective, or the core values outlining an academic's role cannot be enforced. Academics should recognise that these actions may result in (i) a lack of growth for students who may not have been sufficiently challenged, and (ii) inferior quality in the end-product (the graduating student).

Pedagogical dilemmas for students at risk

Academics sometimes need to assist vulnerable students. But how do they help them while still maintaining academic integrity? The authors believe a possible solution is *equity enablement*, which refers to assisting students to be on par with their classmates, i.e., to redress inequalities. Usually academics will provide a referral that gives a student access to resources they can use to help themselves. Resistance to being empowered and to resolve the problem appropriately may be evident, with some students opting rather to seek direct assistance from the academic, in which case the problem will persist. The academic needs to record these situations and should inform the department, especially if the problem persists. Students should also be required to offer proof of help-seeking behaviour. Responsible record-keeping within the department will safeguard all parties, ensure transparency of aid and identify whether help was sought from multiple academics, i.e., 'shopping around' behaviour. Academics need to recognise the significance of developing professionals as a whole and that a student's resistance to seek appropriate counselling and assistance from suggested sources may be indicative of the student's lack of professional potential. Plaut (2012) emphasised that students should be informed of policies and procedures early in their academic journey. The North-West University (2020), the University of Cape Town (2013) and the University of the Witwatersrand (2019b) highlighted the importance of communicating resources available to students for psychosocial help during the first-year experience.

In the post-colonial context, universities pay extensive attention to diversity, transformation, and empowering students to fulfil their potential. Several programmes and resources are available to ensure student well-being and performance (North-West University, 2020; Rhodes University, 2018; University

of Cape Town 2013; University of the Free State, 2018; 2019; University of the Witwatersrand, 2019b). They have been established to mitigate the dilemma of caring for and assisting students and to maintain academic integrity. When a student does not receive help or is hungry, pedagogy inevitably breaks down. The question that arises here is: in these cases, is it the social work academic's responsibility to provide the service, offer money, or buy groceries? Such challenges should be addressed and agreed upon at a departmental or school level.

Pedagogical dilemmas presenting a risk to ethics and the essence of the social work profession

If academics do not follow the requirements and embrace the boundaries that should be upheld, they directly contradict the essence of the social work profession, its code of conduct, and its ethics. Plaut (2012) stressed the importance of role modelling, especially regarding students' future behaviour as professionals.

Compromised ethics is evidenced in a lack of clarity of boundaries, which translates to the broader view of social work as a profession that lacks standards. This links to Jackson's (2007) and Plaut's (2012) consequences of duality regarding its impact on the faculty and the institution. Wooten and Condis (2018) addressed the compromised identity of the social work profession's ethics, norms and standards, arguing that one individual's conduct may affect the perception of the whole group or the entire profession.

Pedagogical dilemmas for role modelling

Social work academics have the privilege, not only of moulding future social workers, but also role modelling appropriate behaviour. Their behaviour is scrutinised and judged continually because the behaviour they model speaks louder than words. While students may create a pecking order of academics based on who is more sympathetic towards them, academics need to realise that their role modelling is what students take with them and apply in real-life situations. Bahman-Bijari, Zare, Haghdoost, Bazrafshan, Beigzadeh and Esmaili (2016), De Witt (2016), Linder (2013) and Plaut (2012) demonstrated that role modelling matters and influences the future practice of professionals.

Pedagogical dilemmas for career trajectory versus helping

When an academic places more value on being a social worker than on fulfilling their academic responsibilities, this may hamper the achievement of career-specific objectives. Universities emphasise achieving teaching and learning objectives, appropriate assessments, services and, importantly, research outputs (Mampane, 2020:206; North-West University, 2020; Rhodes University, 2018; Seyama & Smith, 2015; University of Johannesburg, 2013). An academic who is overly concerned with students' well-being may have to decide which is more important. Unfortunately, the care or training of students does not carry much weight in academia and contradicts the academics' indicated career trajectory. In terms of performance management, key performance areas do not include student care. An academic who does not meet the deliverables might not be reappointed, confirmed, or remunerated. Having scoped the teaching and learning documents and strategic plans of several South African universities, the authors found that the role of academics in aiding students in personal matters is not addressed. In fact, all their policies indicate that the role of academics involve three overarching key performance areas: research, teaching and learning, and community engagement (University of the Free State, 2018; University of Johannesburg, 2013). This was also confirmed in a study by Seyama and Smith (2015) with heads of departments and Mampane's (2020) reflection on applying key performance indicators in higher education. Therefore, social work academics need to be more mindful of their career trajectory requirements.

Pedagogical dilemmas which stem from personal matters

In the current post-colonial era, the contrasts between the haves and have-nots and different classes may give rise to feelings of guilt, evidenced by sympathetic actions and transference. To be liked and known as the best lecturer may also indicate academics' neediness, hidden agendas, desire for personal gain, uncertainties, and the need to be a rescuer.

The academic motivated by transference, a desire to be liked or to feel good, or a wish to alleviate student helplessness may be uncertain how to respond and would rather err on the side of doing good. They may also have a hidden agenda , such as promotion of self with students. The big danger is that continual assistance of students may encourage continued reinforcement of learned helplessness. In addition, the academic may be liked but may not be effective in executing their teaching and learning practices. The academic who struggles to say no may be inundated with students seeking help, which may lead to exhaustion, burnout, fatigue or depletion of resources. Where duality exists, there may also be reluctance or unease about failing students or barring them from social work where indicated. Linder (2013) and Plaut (2012) alluded to the impact of unhealthy boundaries on the staff member, students and the objective execution of tasks.

Pedagogical dilemmas causing risk to collegiality

The impact of overstepping boundaries needs to be understood in terms of its effect on collegiality. Caring for or helping students may stem from honourable intentions, but may have dire implications for collegiality. Unfortunately, the argument that '*what I do for students has nothing to do with others*', does not hold. It has a lasting impact, which may it be either positive or negative. In addition to upholding the principles of collegiality, academics need to view their conduct in accordance with their profession and its norms and standards, the department's standards, the Council on Higher Education's standards (2015a), and the code of conduct of the South African Council for Educators (2016). As with practices with indigenisation and ubuntu, they need to acknowledge that it takes an entire department to develop a professional social worker. Permitting absenteeism, or providing food parcels and money may reinforce learned helplessness. The colleague who enforces ethics, norms and standards and aims to empower is often marginalised as a member of staff that students do not like. Baporikar (2015) contended that such non-collegial practices can destroy a department and should be addressed immediately.

There is the view that giving of oneself, i.e., physically aiding others, is more important or noble. While this may be true in certain instances, it could equally be viewed as manipulative and may instil guilt, disrespect and devaluing of other colleagues without considering their points of view. There is the possibility that the academic who oversteps boundaries in terms of caring for students has learned this behaviour from previous exposure to such role modelling. This possibility underlines the importance of having appropriate role models. The pay-off for doing good is highly addictive and may be so rewarding that this becomes the yardstick for academia and professionalism. Wooten and Condis (2018) argued that senior staff overstep roles and exhibit a lack of collegiality when their focus on research outputs to achieve a promotion overshadows their other responsibilities. The authors witnessed several instances where doctoral qualifications and research outputs were pursued at the expense of other staff members who had to carry the extra load. Where teaching replacements were sought externally, the appropriateness of the appointee regarding collegiality, the department's vision and the profession were not considered.

Finding a way forward

Given the magnitude of the dilemmas presented here, academics may be left confused about how to act. The risk to pedagogy is apparent when colleagues employ destructive communication patterns, underestimate each other's viewpoints and do not consider them valid, especially when differing from their own. These behaviours have a detrimental effect on everybody in the department. The impression of not adhering to standards or not complying with ethical and professional procedures may manifest when the reason given for passing a student relates to the student's personal situation, e.g. if the student is a mother, or needs to provide for their family, or does not have the finances to continue their studies. Not only does this give rise to feelings of unease, but it also degrades the status and respect of that particular department and the qualification. Typically, this occurs where like-mindedness is absent when providing motivations for throughput. A lack of collegiality may affect colleagues' desire or willingness to participate in any of the departments' activities. This separation and disengagement needs to be managed carefully as a lack of departmental cohesion will cause further compromises to the curriculum.

While teaching and learning should encompass a humanistic, positive learning environment to aid student success, over-involvement that violates the profession's ethics must be avoided at all costs. Certain guidelines can be followed to mitigate the pedagogical dilemmas that academics face.

GUIDELINES IN RESOLVING THE PEDAGOGICAL DILEMMAS

While there may be several solutions to addressing the complex pedagogical dilemmas presented here, Scager *et al.* (2017) considered critical reflective practices to be most valuable.

Boundaries should be reinforced as they provide protection and care for students, staff members, the profession and the department.

At a departmental level, boundaries should be drawn based on the profession's ethics, unequivocally prohibiting dualistic roles that directly violate those ethics. Authentic teaching and learning practices should be evident in the objective measures of assessments.

The emotional addiction to doing good or helping students may reinforce dualistic behaviour, and is a direct threat to safeguarding the profession and its ethics. As indicated by Jackson (2007), the clients that the students will serve should be top of mind. Therefore, social work academics must ensure that their behaviour will enable students to respond ethically and professionally to their clients' needs.

The following discussion examines four major concluding guidelines for addressing the eight pedagogical dilemmas outlined in this article, as established from the authors' experiences and the literature.

Adherence and commitment to a shared vision for students and the profession

When social workers enter academia, they need to be aware of the university's focus and career trajectory, and ensure ethical and authentic teaching and learning practices, and student involvement. South Africa's National Development Plan: Vision 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2011) highlights the vision for higher education in South Africa to be achieved by 2030 as the development of the nation, citizenship, enhancing diversity, empowering with knowledge and redressing apartheid. This plan also stresses the importance of humanities faculties to respond to the challenges South Africa faces (National Planning Commission, 2011). The University of the Witwatersrand, in its Vision 2022 (University of the Witwatersrand, 2010), reflected that its mandate is to position itself globally by being research-intensive and creating positive learning environments that will enhance the quality and standards of teaching and learning. This mandate, which echoes the commitment of several universities in South Africa, indicates that students need to assume responsibility for their learning, enact their citizenship and respond to the national and global agenda (University of the Witwatersrand, 2010; 2019a; 2019b; North-West University, 2020; Rhodes University, 2018; University of Cape Town, 2013; University of the Free State, 2018; 2019; University of Johannesburg, 2016; University of Pretoria, 2019).

The Bachelor of Social Work degree requires social work departments to provide professional education that produces professional and reflexive graduates who can offer exceptional service to their clients (Council on Higher Education, 2015b). Therefore, academics should be committed to developing professional and effective social workers aligned with the academic institution's vision and strategic plan, which involves authentic teaching and learning practices devoid of bias and over-involved duality.

Agreement to comply with social work ethics, and requirements for the profession and academia

In academia, students are the university's clients in terms of training and development. However, this relationship is very different from the professional helping relationship between a client and a social worker. In acknowledging this, social work councils need to provide an ethical framework to which academics must subscribe, which includes the performance mandate, institutional requirements and practices, as suggested by Baggio *et al.* (1997), Congress (1996) and Strom-Gottfried (2000).

Apart from recognised and accepted ethics, this shared vision should also include the need for social work academics to value students' worth, be respectful, passionate, committed, continually developing teaching practices, committed to change, and collegial (Bonnstetter & Pedersen, 2005; Mart, 2013; Scager *et al.*, 2017). Barret, Casey, Visser and Headley (2012) stressed that professional standards should be upheld but that academics should be mindful of changes. The University of the Free State (2018; 2019) and the University of Pretoria (2019) addressed the need for transformation of the curriculum. Jackson (2007) also motivated the acknowledgement of dual ethical relationships by implementing a model for ethical practice. While academics should, by no means, ignore the plight of vulnerable students, they need to adhere to a professional set of standards to intervene and mitigate ethical dilemmas.

Collegial code of good conduct and practices

Academic institutions have several policies but do not have a guideline for collegiality or conduct of good practices. Universities should, therefore, adopt a framework of collegiality that forms part of management. Riccardi (2012) and Sahlin and Eriksson-Zetterquist (2016) maintained that because collegiality is not clearly defined, a common interpretation is not available. McFarlane (2016) pointed out that collegiality in today's competitive academic environment is considered archaic but is, simultaneously, a distinguishing feature of academia. Sugimoto et al. (2015) indicated a lack of evidence of policies and guidelines regarding collegiality and conduct of good practices. Jackson (2007) stated that several aspects need to be addressed to create a code of conduct: consideration of the university's policies, ethical teaching strategies, and using models for ethical practice. The Department of Higher Education and Training's (2017) good governance framework stresses adherence to universities' rules and operational strategies. Baporikar (2015) pointed to the complexity of collegiality, adding that it must be cultivated as it is essential for effective functioning. That said, collegiality needs a shared vision, strategic goals and mutual respect (Baporikar, 2015).

The SACSSP (2004), even though it does not address academia specifically, highlights as a core responsibility academics' ethical obligations towards their colleagues and social workers, which addresses collegiality. The South African Council for Educators (2016) highlights the role of educator as important and encourages respect between colleagues. Wooten and Condis (2018) indicated that universities should develop a toolkit for formulating policies and statements for collegiality. Kuhar (2011) suggested that collegial ethics should include mutual support. Furthermore, Kuhar (2011) indicated that ethics that guide collegiality enhance employees' mental well-being. To this end, appropriate communication and conflict resolution should be addressed in the institution's code of conduct.

In developing the code of conduct, McFarlane (2016) addressed the types of collegiality that should be evidenced. Structural collegiality refers to the inclusive, democratic and transparent processes that should be demonstrated in any academic setting (McFarlane, 2016). Cultural collegiality entails shared values, and behavioural collegiality addresses the relationship among academics (McFarlane, 2016). Riccardi (2012) suggested a description of collegiality as the ability to co-operate with others. But how should this manifest? According to Gmelch (2012), developing a sense of collegiality is challenging and starts with appointing academics who value collegiality (Baporikar 2015; Gmelch 2012). While collegiality should be at the forefront of the code of conduct, transparency is paramount. Achievements should be celebrated, and inappropriate behaviour and discrimination should be addressed and never ignored.

Accepted and mutually agreed contingency plan for students at risk

Most academic institutions have a plan of action for working with vulnerable students. All academics should subscribe to this plan of action and the resources provided, and not pursue their own agenda, e.g. offering to counsel students. The North-West University (2020), Rhodes University (2018), University of Cape Town (2013), University of the Free State (2018; 2019) and the University of the Witwatersrand (2019b) have made several action plans and resources available for students with diverse needs. Where an academic observes a student in crisis, they should refer the student to the appropriate resources and avoid overstepping the boundaries.

CONCLUSION

The social work profession will never escape the espoused values and ethics concerning helping and empathic action. Even though academics need to be cognisant of students' needs, throughout this professional, empathic relationship, the purpose should be to empower students to become their own problem-solvers. This empowerment is vital for enabling students to help not only *themselves* but also their clients. Pedagogy cannot occur where students are at risk, vulnerable or exploited. Where this compromising pedagogy exists, so too will the social work profession and ethics remain compromised.

A change in academics' approach will promote the creation of a cohort of accomplished, professional social workers. Greater emphasis should be placed on safeguarding the profession by reducing the pedagogical dilemmas that reinforce duality, not for academics' personal gain but the development of the teaching profession. The main focus should be on producing accomplished social workers, safeguarding the profession and being responsive to the South African context.

At the forefront of their agenda should be a commitment to subscribe to the ethics of the profession and good codes of practice. Where students, due to apartheid, have an observable disadvantage, social work academics should empower students to draw on all the available and appropriate resources.

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