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A Foucauldian Ethics of Positivity in Initial Teacher Education

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FOUCAULDIAN ETHICS OF POSITIVITY

A Foucauldian Ethics of Positivity in Initial Teacher Education

This article explores ways pre-service teachers learn to work upon their positive emotional conduct during an initial teacher education course. The article argues that education practice today promotes the acting out of positive emotions, creating conditions within which pre-service teachers ethically shape their emotional conduct. Utilising Foucault's four-part ethical framework, the article draws on longitudinal research of pre-service teachers in Western Australia to analyse the crafting of emotional conduct through techniques of the self. The techniques the participants came to employ during their course learning aligned with a telos of the resourceful, positive, and professional teacher. The article argues that this ethical enterprise relies on a certain model of teacher subjectivity which is inseparably linked with normalising governmental power. Such disciplining of emotions, however, is neither one-dimensional nor deterministic; rather, work at the intersection of the government of others and of oneself. We argue this allows pre-service teachers the freedom to care for the self as they seek to foster their own ethical practices as teachers.

Keywords: Foucault, emotions, ethics, initial teacher education.

I loved my first placement experience! I could literally see the difference I was making and this made me feel real joy. I felt like when I was able to be positive, passionate and happy with the students and I could see they responded to that. I was just constantly smiling like an idiot to myself, thinking yes! This is exactly what I'm meant to be doing! When it comes to teachers there should never be a limit on showing happiness. Happiness and passion are always transferable, smiles are contagious and all that jazz. So, my goal for the next prac is to keep doing this, working on it, staying positive and being positive is how I want to approach it.

Pre-service teacher Semester 1, 2015

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3 *I'm about to start my next prac in is a really challenging school, behaviour wise. The*
4 *kids are going to be tough, dealing with a ton of issues, abuse, trauma, neglect and*
5 *poverty. You definitely have to stay positive as a teacher because you have to be that*
6 *positive role model for kids, especially those facing issues at home. Like the old saying*
7 *goes "nothing good comes to bad people", so if you are positive, positive things*
8 *happen... teachers just have to be positive with the kids, to be that one sense of hope,*
9 *that one ray of sunshine that they can always turn to and think they believe in me, or it*
10 *must not be that bad because that teacher is happy and laughing.*

Pre-service teacher Semester 2, 2015

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26 (Multiple sources of data from pre-service teachers were utilised in the above semi-
27
28 fictional vignette. See 'theory and research approach' section)
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Research Context

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36 The opening vignette of this paper is an amalgam of different pre-service teacher
37
38 voices collected from interviews, diary entries and focus groups for a research study
39
40 that is the focus of this article. We contend that this composite depicts a significant
41
42 cultural phenomenon which is described by Ahmed (2010, p. 3) as the "happiness turn".
43
44 In opposition to an outlook characterised by "pathologies and negative states" (Saari,
45
46 2018, p. 149), there has, in recent decades in the post-industrial world, been a shift
47
48 towards a "promise of happiness" or a "wish" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 3) for an existence
49
50 defined by positive wellbeing. According to the advocates of the modern positive
51
52 movement, our innately human virtues, character strengths and positive emotional
53
54 experiences are what *should* give each of us meaning, purpose, and fulfilment in both
55
56 our personal and professional lives (see Seligman, 2011; Sheldon & King, 2001). This
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1
2
3 positive emotion of happiness is popularised in the mainstream media and on social
4
5 media with myriad explanations, accounts and testimonies focused on its “science and
6
7 economics” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 3).
8
9

10
11 Positive emotions such as joy underpin the multiplicity of “self-help courses that
12
13 provide instructions on how to be happy” as the pursuit of positivity fosters a “feel-good
14
15 industry” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 3). Private and public organisations alike are on a mission
16
17 to ‘unlock’ the productive capabilities of their staff through the development of
18
19 “positive emotions”. Positive “virtues such as responsibility, nurturance, altruism,
20
21 civility, moderation, tolerance and work ethic” (Fineman, 2006, pp. 270-271) have
22
23 become the new managerial tools for directing employees’ commitment to
24
25 organisational outcomes. Most saliently, this shift is evident in the popularity of the
26
27 “new science of happiness”—positive psychology (A. Miller, 2008, p. 591).
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33 Adherents of positive psychology describe the appellation as an “umbrella term” for the
34
35 study of “positive emotions and character traits” (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson,
36
37 2005, p. 410). An overt and major objective of the movement is to better “enable
38
39 institutions” by ensuring that members are “lastingly happier” and “less depressed” (p.
40
41 420). Positive psychology has struck a responsive chord in education. Its close
42
43 relationship with the psychological concept of emotional intelligence seems, as A.
44
45 Miller (2008, p. 592) notes, to “promise achievement and empowerment for all”.
46
47 Psycho-metric tests developed by its practitioners purport to measure, for example,
48
49 one’s “optimism”—conceived by positive psychology as a measure of one’s ability to
50
51 be “positive and look at the brighter side of life” (Bar-On, 2006, p. 21). As Berlant
52
53 (2011) cautions, however, positive affect is not simply an individual phenomenon but,
54
55 rather, should be conceived as a both a cultural and political condition. Specifically, this
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1
2
3 entails conceiving optimism as possibly being “cruel” when “something you desire is
4 actually an obstacle to your flourishing” (Berlant, 2011, p. 1). Stephens (2015, p. 279)
5
6 draws on this notion to suggest that optimism is far from universal and is, in fact, only a
7
8 luxury for some noting that: “for whom the good life is experienced as good are those
9
10 privileged by existing cultural institutions and knowledge making practices” (Stephens,
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Many critical scholars have launched a substantial critique against positive psychology and the positive movement more generally. For example, the work of Martin Seligman, who is viewed as the architect of positive psychology, has recently been critiqued by Peters and Tesar (2020) in the pages of this journal. Peters and Tesar (2020) portray Seligman, whose books are best sellers in the popular ‘self-help’ genre, having sold millions of copies, as little more than a “snake oil” (p. 1118) charlatan. Even within the discipline of psychology itself, there is an emerging concept known as “toxic positivity” which explains a pattern of behaviour in which a person keeps believing that “everything’s great! Even in the face of irrefutable evidence that everything is not great at all” (Cox, 2020).

Criticism such as this is important and, indeed, is vital work, especially in terms of questioning the scientific validity of the movement’s truth claims and examining its significant cultural reach (see Ahmed, 2010; Fineman, 2006; McDonald & O’Callaghan, 2008; A. Miller, 2008; Wright & McLeod, 2015). In this paper, we build upon such work by extending its critique to the field of teacher education. We view the science of positivity as an instrument of governmentality and subjectivity. Our argument is not aimed against the scholars of positive psychology; nor do we wish to question positive psychology’s potential in a therapeutic context. Rather, our argument concerns the way

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1
2
3 the positive movement shapes the emotional “mode of being” (Clarke, 2009, p. 186) for
4 pre-service teachers.
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8 Teachers’ emotional lives have been a focus of research in recent years with issues of
9 retention, attrition, wellbeing, and resilience emerging as key themes in this literature
10 (see Bennett, Newman, F., & Hazel, 2016; Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney,
11 2012; Mason & Matas, 2015). Previous research on emotions in the teaching profession
12 has occurred within a socio-political context of successive policy reforms by
13 governments that have shaped teaching practice to be highly demanding, accountable,
14 pressured and unduly stressful (Clement, 2017). Researchers have noted that novice
15 teachers are particularly susceptible to experiences of negative emotions, as they
16 encounter feelings of guilt, self-doubt, anxiety and exhaustion arising from bullying by
17 experienced colleagues, onerous administration and numerous work load pressures
18 (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Education researchers have argued that teaching results in
19 considerable emotional labour as it is “intensely emotional work” (Bullough, 2009, p.
20 33) that demands teachers to actively cultivate practices of “enhancing, faking and/or
21 suppressing emotions” (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006, p. 121). What is less well
22 understood is *how* pre-service teachers learn that such emotional work is required of
23 them in the role—a gap that this article seeks to address.
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46 A range of research endeavors from different theoretical perspectives have examined
47 pre-service teachers’ emotions, yet these studies are “few in number” (Bellocchi, 2019,
48 para. 21). Previous research has shown that learning to become a teacher can be an
49 “intense”, “dynamic and ever-changing process” resulting in significant changes to an
50 individual’s trajectory into the profession (Bullough & Young, 2002, p. 429). This
51 research shows the initial years of teaching evokes surprising and powerful emotions,
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3 such as fear, vulnerability, hopelessness, anxiety, discomfort, inter-personal conflict as
4
5 well as pride, joy, care, fulfillment, and even love (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Chang,
6
7 2009). Retention of teachers in the early phase of their career is of significant concern in
8
9 countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (Buchanan et al.,
10
11 2013). This is largely due to beginning teachers having a significantly higher attrition
12
13 rate than experienced colleagues. As many as 50%, it has been reported, reach ‘burnout’
14
15 or simply leave in the first five years (see Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Gallant & Riley,
16
17 2014). In response to these workforce issues there have been a number of studies that
18
19 argue emotional intelligence training is needed in initial teacher education courses (see
20
21 Turner & Stough, 2019). Governmental programs in Australia have also sought to
22
23 address the issue of early career teacher burn out by focusing on the individualised
24
25 emotional practices of teachers (e.g. "Be You," 2021; "MindMatters," 2014). The
26
27 current Australian Government mental health and wellbeing initiative *Be You* (2021)
28
29 explicitly draws from the positive psychology play book. The website outlines that
30
31 although factors such as “poor working conditions” causes “stress” for teachers,
32
33 individual teachers can learn to “enhance” their wellbeing by managing stress in
34
35 “positive ways”—such as through “exercise, relaxation, breathing, yoga and positive
36
37 self-talk”. As noted, the positive movement is also global. In the United Kingdom, a
38
39 recently launched program aims to use eight million pounds to “boost pupil and teacher
40
41 wellbeing” in response to “the emotional impact of the coronavirus pandemic”
42
43 (Department of Education, 2020) In Latin America, the United States, Europe, and
44
45 South East Asia the International Positive Education Network (2021) has extended the
46
47 reach of the positive movement to the global North and South.
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51 Taking a Foucauldian approach to the employment of positivity in education, our
52
53 analysis concerns its “mode of subjectification” (Foucault, 1997b, p. 264) or, what Dean
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(1996, p. 224) explains as, “the position we take or are given in relation to rules and norms, with why we govern ourselves or others in a particular manner”. The use of Foucault’s work in this regard in education has been extensive (e.g. S. Ball, 2015; Keddie, Gobby, & Wilkins, 2018; Niesche & Haase, 2012; O’Brien, 2017; Peters, 2009); this paper’s innovation is the use of such theoretical tools to examine emotions in teacher education. We focus on the ways in which the positive scholarship movement has found its way into the granular and particularistic emotional practices of individual selves in a teacher education program. The individuals who took part in the research case study—as portrayed in the vignettes opening this paper—were immersed in a cultural and social milieu of the modern positivity movement in education in which pre-service teachers “shape themselves to take up the subject positions that these discourses hold out to them” (M. Ball, 2008, p. 164).

This paper argues that prominent discourses made available to pre-service teachers through their studies establish the role of positive emotions in education, including the benefits of cultivating such conduct. Pre-service teachers use certain positive emotions discourses to discern and arrive at truths about their own emotions, with these ‘truths’ then guiding their emotional conduct in the process of learning to teach. Importantly, we consider the political and ethical implications of the positive movement in teacher education and the movement’s ability to reach into and actively form the emotional lives of pre-service teachers.

Theory and research approach

This paper explores data generated through research of a postgraduate secondary teaching initial teacher education program in Western Australia in 2015-2017. The theoretical approach of this paper is primarily Foucauldian. Foucault (2000b, p. 131)

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1
2
3 used the term “regime of truth” to refer to a society’s “general politics of truth”, or those
4
5 discourses that people in each cultural context are enmeshed within. We examine one
6
7 specific regime of truth that seeks to shape patterns of emotional conduct within the
8
9 personal-professional practices of self-formation undertaken by pre-service teachers.
10
11 Our approach is responsive to the array of forces—social and historical—that shape
12
13 “*how* emotions and their public expressions can become the sites of action by teachers
14
15 upon their personal-professional self” (Karnovsky, 2020, p. 72). In the opening vignette,
16
17 for example, we glimpse an insight into how pre-service teachers strive towards an idea
18
19 that *good* and *positive* teachers should conduct their emotional self. Namely this is
20
21 achieved by using an “agglomeration” of technical skills for “doing things” (Kendall,
22
23 2011, p. 72) with their emotions to maintain a positive disposition. The teaching *self*
24
25 that is formed by the participants of the research is conceived, as Kendall (2011, p. 72)
26
27 describes, as a “contingent, transitory, piecemeal and above all, technical” fabrication.
28
29 Such a fabrication is formed, primarily, through the continuous rehearsing of
30
31 appropriate “ways of comporting oneself in public life” (Kendall, 2011, p. 72) that, we
32
33 argue, is an intimately *ethical* exercise. Ethics is here understood as the “the kind of
34
35 relation one has to oneself” (O’Farrell, 2005, appendix 2).
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43 For Foucault, power is not simply oppressive or dominating, but relational and
44
45 productive. The exercise of power, be that governmental or institutional, generates
46
47 forms of conduct, knowledge, or events that can be manifest in a range of possibilities
48
49 (Kendall, 2011). Power, therefore, operates through discourse, establishing conditions
50
51 of possibility of action, thought and speech and, in relation to this paper, the rules that
52
53 shape what can be uttered, recorded, communicated or felt as legitimate knowledge
54
55 about emotions in the work of teaching (Foucault, 1980; Peters & Burbules, 2003). We,
56
57 therefore, do not assume human emotions to be predominately private psycho-biological
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2
3 phenomena. Our perspective on emotions counterposes positive scholarship and its
4
5 grounding in a liberalhumanist and totalising orientation to human emotions (Chokr,
6
7 2007; Gross, 2006). Drawing on Karnovsky's (2020) conceptual framework, we also
8
9 accept that human emotions comprise both *interactional and performative* (Zembylas,
10
11 2007) practices of the self. This understanding of emotion draws upon post-structural,
12
13 feminist and Foucauldian concepts to theorise how thinking, feeling and acting work as
14
15 multidimensional "complexes" shaped by cultural *and* embodied forces linked to
16
17 diverse kinds of power relations (Zembylas, 2007, p. 63). This understanding of
18
19 emotional complexes foregrounds the performative cultural practices or conduct of
20
21 emotion which operate in conjunction with embodied sensations and which both inflect
22
23 one another so that they "flow together in the same mould" (Fineman, 2000, p. 11). This
24
25 approach seeks to disrupt assumed binaries that are often present in the popular
26
27 representations of emotions, such as the artificial divisions between culture and nature
28
29 or the interior self and the external world.
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36 Working from a post-structural theoretical framework involved designing a data
37
38 collection process that could generate insights on the diverse kinds of social and cultural
39
40 dynamics that come to shape pre-service teachers' emotional lives. Karnovsky's (2020)
41
42 collection of data was approached with awareness and sensitivity to the context of the
43
44 research setting given it is assembled from different social, historical, cultural, political
45
46 and temporal forces (p. 100). Semi-structured, conversational interviews were chosen as
47
48 the primary research method with pre-service teacher participants as this would not
49
50 reduce the participants to mere numbers or statistics (deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002). Other
51
52 qualitative data collection methods, such as open-ended questionnaires, focus groups
53
54 and arts-based activities provided powerful tools for "grasping and articulating"
55
56 (Karnovsky, 2020, p. 99) the "messiness" of the participants' emotional reality and
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1
2
3 helped to illuminate the “everyday lived experiences” of these individuals (St. Pierre,
4
5 2000, p. 486).

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7
8 For the purpose of this article, data is largely grouped together from 149 participant pre-
9
10 service teachers who responded to interviews, contributed to questionnaire responses,
11
12 provided drawings and online diary entries on their emotional experiences over a three-
13
14 year time frame. This grouping has been done not to universalize pre-service teacher
15
16 emotional experiences but to illustrate the taken for granted assumptions and culturally
17
18 prevalent practices of emotional conduct in an institutional context of learning to teach.
19
20 In some instances, we have used pseudonyms for participants who provided in-depth
21
22 responses during interviews and other data collection activities. The research context is
23
24 defined both by teacher performance standards (*Australian Professional Standards for*
25
26 *Teachers*, 2014) embedded in course learning as well as professional norms
27
28 underpinned by “well-worn and commonsensical images of teachers’ work” (Britzman,
29
30 2003, p. 27) derived from European and North American culture.

31
32 We accept that the study’s methods influenced what participants consider to be true and
33
34 false about the role of emotions in their teaching. Only one of us, Saul Karnovsky (the
35
36 primary investigator), had a relationship with the participants. This relationship was
37
38 defined only as a researcher and not as an active educator in the participants’ course
39
40 learning program. Moreover, we do not treat the “truths and experiences” expressed by
41
42 the participants as a “thing” that has happened *to* them but as “something that has been
43
44 filtered, processed, and already interpreted” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 28). In doing
45
46 so, we recognise that power operates through this research.

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48
49 The researchers analytical framework was informed by Foucault’s genealogy of ethics
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51 (Foucault, 1997a). This enabled the examination of how pre-service teachers construe
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1
2
3 and construct themselves in relation to the emotional norms and rules of teaching, using
4
5 data drawn from Karnovsky's (2020) research. Foucault's notions of ethical self-
6
7 formation have been deftly used by education researchers, including in relation to
8
9 emotions (Clarke, 2009; McCuaig, 2008; E. R. Miller & Gkonou, 2018; Niesche &
10
11 Haase, 2012; Saari, 2018). For example, Niesche & Haase (2012) provide a nuanced
12
13 examination of emotional subjectification using Foucault's ethics in the Australian
14
15 context. The following section examines those parts of the emotional self that the pre-
16
17 service teachers worked on during their studies. We also consider the techniques and
18
19 practices they used to do this emotional work to create a certain kind of positive
20
21 professional-emotional self. Following this, an extended discussion explores the ways
22
23 this work is authorised and legitimated by the positive discourse and the implications
24
25 this has for initial teacher education more broadly.
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Emotions of pre-service teachers

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37 Pre-service teachers who participated in the research study underwent a broad
38
39 spectrum of emotional experiences. Karnovsky (2020, pp. 164-165) found participants
40
41 suggested through interviews, diary entries, focus groups and questionnaires that
42
43 teachers "should practise both mental and bodily techniques aligned with a positive
44
45 disposition" as a teacher. Emotional conduct aligned with positivity was "conceived as a
46
47 productive way to achieve one's goals" (Karnovsky, 2020, p. 165) as a teacher by many
48
49 participants. Positivity was frequently equated with professionalism. There was a
50
51 substantial focus by participants to conduct ethical work upon the self along a positive
52
53 dimension. Pre-service teachers suggested specific forms of, what Foucault (1997b, p.
54
55 265) termed, "*askesis*" to cultivate the appropriate emotional "style or attitude" as a
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2
3 “practice of their selfhood” (S. Ball, 2013, p. 171). Instances of emotional work that the
4 participants suggested should be cultivated included practising ‘thinking positively’¹ by
5 ‘always looking on the bright side’ and ‘emphasising happy emotions’ (Questionnaire,
6 2016). Other responses involved recommending that a teacher’s ‘body language’ should
7 convey publicly a ‘confident presence’; should ‘show positivity’ to others; should
8 display a ‘love what [the teacher is] doing’; and exhibit a ‘friendly gesture’
9 (Questionnaire, 2016).

10
11 This ethical work or, as Foucault (1997b, p. 265) termed it, those “self-forming
12 activities” we undertake to “transform ourselves into certain kinds of moral or ethical
13 beings” (Karnovsky, 2020, p. 89), focused primarily on the participants’ attitude and
14 professional demeanour—qualities they were “enjoined to make positive during their
15 course learning” (p. 165). Particularly, this involved the participants foregrounding a
16 requirement that they should focus on learning to cultivate a positive emotional
17 disposition to be deemed competent and effective by professional others. Karnovsky
18 (2020) explained that one aspect of this “sharpening of focus” on their ethical work was
19 conceived by the participants “as a *tool* in the service of meeting teaching and learning
20 goals” (p. 165). Participants in the study proposed several ways in which practices of
21 ‘positive’ emotions “act as an instrument or lever in achieving goals or as markers of
22 role competence” (p. 165). One instance, cited by participants, saw positive emotional
23 conduct as a vector for ‘building relationships’ and at the heart of a teacher’s ‘people
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53 ¹ Note on style: use of quotation marks for participant data throughout the paper will be shown
54 using single quotation marks around words or phrases in text accompanied with a data
55 source reference. Double quotation marks will indicate use of theoretical literature to support
56 the analysis of data.
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3 skills' (Questionnaire, 2016). Emotions such as 'excitement', 'enthusiasm', 'happiness',
4
5 'confidence', 'pride', 'care', 'love', 'empathy', 'calm' and 'passion' were all considered
6
7 'appropriate' emotional conduct by pre-service teachers (Emotion diary entries, 2015;
8
9 Focus-groups, 2015; Questionnaire, 2016).

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13 Pre-service teachers worked on themselves during their course learning and on
14
15 professional experience placements to be positive in their conduct because they believed
16
17 this supported development towards being effective and professional teachers. The
18
19 positive emotions listed above, for example, were understood to 'help' a pre-service
20
21 teacher 'conduct lessons' to 'encourage and motivate' the 'learning and engagement' of
22
23 students (Interview, 2015). According to participants, positive conduct in the classroom
24
25 supported the 'quality of teaching', specifically impacting 'student learning outcomes
26
27 and objectives' (Questionnaire, 2016). Positive emotional conduct was cited as a key
28
29 characteristic of an 'approachable teacher' who 'knows what he/she is doing'; is 'more
30
31 successful and friendly'; and who has an 'ability to deliver content', 'facilitate an
32
33 enjoyable lesson' and 'impact student behaviour and learning'. As one participant
34
35 remarked, 'students just learn better when the teacher is in a good mood'
36
37 (Questionnaire, 2016). A number of responses centred on the benefits of 'positive
38
39 emotions' in establishing 'student-teacher relationships'. Positive emotions were
40
41 proposed to affect 'how a teacher reacts', 'engages' and 'connects with students' as
42
43 these emotions would help teachers 'understand their (students') circumstances and how
44
45 they learn'. Emphasizing the practical quality of these emotions, one respondent
46
47 explained that positive 'energy' (as they put it) and was a 'helpful guide' for a teacher
48
49 to be 'more in tune with the needs and abilities of students' (Questionnaire, 2016).
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58 In these examples, pre-service teachers learn to orientate their emotional practices to
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3 align with the accepted norm of what ‘good’ and ‘professional’ teachers *do* with their
4 emotions. To be what one participant described as ‘that one ray of sunshine’ (Interview,
5 2015) for students, pre-service teachers were required to undertake significant “work”
6 (Foucault, 1997c) upon the self. In this regard, certain styles of emotional conduct are
7 considered desirable, appropriate, and professional; those, essentially, which allow for
8 the formation of the ‘good’ or ‘quality’ teacher (Questionnaire, 2016). We argue that
9 these subjects freely and ethically adopt practices of the self in relation to a
10 constellation of rules, norms, and codes both governmental and ethical.
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22 The tertiary institution in which participants were enrolled plays a significant role in
23 setting normative expectations for emotional conduct in pre-service teaching. Particular
24 emotional rules were “fashioned and prescribed” (Bloomfield, 2010, p. 223) through set
25 texts, course materials and guidance from tutors and higher education staff. This
26 includes more immediate and directly mandated sources, such as the professional
27 experience placement, and associated workplace codes of conduct; the prescriptions of
28 the national professional teacher standards; as well as the various models of the “good”
29 teacher transmitted to participants through course learning. One example of institutional
30 “assumptions and expectations” of what pre-service teachers “should do” and what they
31 “should avoid” (Zembylas, 2005, p. 56) in their emotional conduct are to be found in
32 the thoughts of Samuel².
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50 Karnovsky (2020, p. 198) explains that Samuel stated he felt the ‘emotionally mature’
51 pre-service teachers with whom he has worked have an ability to ‘cope’, are ‘more
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59 ² Email exchange conducted with professional experience placement officer in 2017.
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FOUCAULDIAN ETHICS OF POSITIVITY

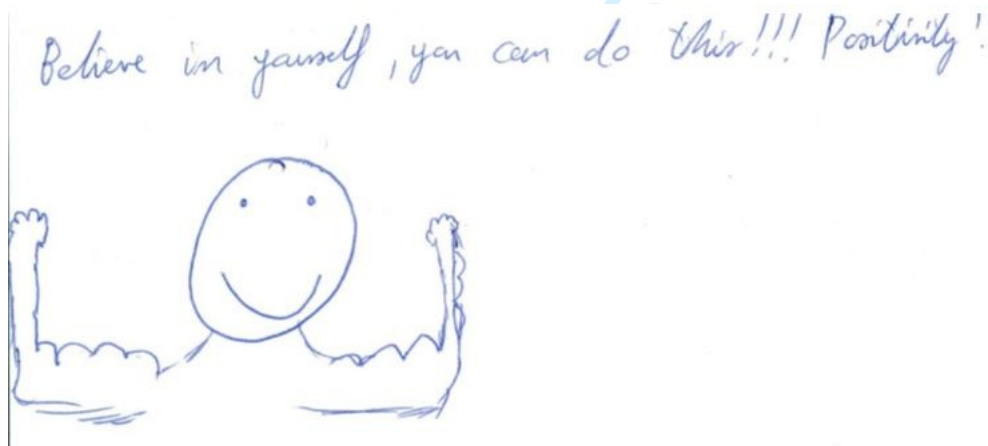
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2
3 balanced' and 'measured' and have 'passion, positivity and empathy'. They are also
4
5 'less impulsive, 'make better decisions under pressure' and can 'deal better with
6
7 difficult students' (Email exchange, 2017). According to Samuel these qualities in pre-
8
9 service teachers 'correlates strongly with success on prac' (professional experience).
10
11 Samuel is communicating the accepted standard of emotional conduct that pre-service
12
13 teachers are required to achieve. He equates conforming to emotional rules to
14
15 competency on placement. He opposes these students to those who fail to meet these
16
17 standards, subtly labelling their behaviours as undesirable (M. Ball, 2008, p. 74).
18
19 These "emotional rules" are "legitimated through the exercise of power" (Zembylas,
20
21 2005, p. 37) by Samuel's position of authority within the institution and his experience
22
23 and supposed expertise within the realm of teacher education. Samuel's "regime of
24
25 practices" (Foucault, 1991b, p. 75) not only supports the pre-service teachers, but also
26
27 regulates by guiding, directing, modelling and demonstrating professional behaviour
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29 (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010).
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36 Institutionally desirable and productive emotional conduct is illustrated in the figures
37
38 drawn by participants below³. In Figure 1 the mental practice of positive self 'belief' is
39
40 equated to the physical strength of the body, whilst the physical practice of 'keeping' a
41
42 smile in Figure 2 represents a type of bodily emotional work upon the self that is
43
44 deemed necessary by these pre-service teachers (Karnovsky, 2020, p. 135). Positive
45
46 emotions were foregrounded by numerous participants because these emotions helped
47
48 to frame productive and professional relations one had to oneself, or with others. As
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57 ³ Pre-service teacher participants were asked to "draw a representation of the emotions of
58
59 teaching"
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3 Figure 3 shows, the understanding that one is ‘making a difference’ to the lives of
4 young people produces positive affect (smiling face) for the individual in teaching.
5
6 These individuals, to use Fineman’s (2008) words, understand that “far from being an
7 out of control impulse”, a teacher’ emotional conduct should be performed through
8 “vocal and bodily postures aligned to the micro-structure of the situation” (2008, p. 4).
9
10 This can also be seen in Figure 4, a visual example of a pre-service teacher working to
11 outwardly conduct themselves in a positive way with a student. Despite the pre-service
12 teacher’s best efforts, they are experiencing a range of different emotions some of
13 which are counter-posed to the positive dimension. Karnovsky’s (2020) analysis
14 suggests that a “specifically defined model of subjectivity underpins the ethical
15 standards by which pre-service teachers seek to discern, problematise, and conduct
16 themselves emotionally” (p. 148).
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50 Figure 1: Believe in yourself, you can do this!!! Positivity! (Questionnaire, 2016)
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Figure 2: Just keep smiling (Questionnaire, 2016).



Figure 3: I'm making a difference (Questionnaire, 2016).

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Figure 4: Working to achieve a positive disposition for students (Questionnaire, 2016).

Discussion

For Fineman (2008, p. 1), emotions are not “ideologically neutral, within-the-individual, experience”. Rather, emotions are “embedded in the political agendas of organisational life” and “shaped by social structures and the norms and values of the organisation” (2008, p. 1). Pre-service teachers’ emotional conduct, as outlined in the previous section, is a form of ethical work related to a perceived reality or image of being a teacher in the present. To achieve a mode of being that is not only ‘positive and happy’ but also ‘professional and effective’ (Interviews, 2015; Questionnaire, 2016) the participants scrutinise, monitor, test and transform themselves through thinking and acting positively. The turn towards positivity is a “seductive discourse” (Fineman, 2006, p. 270) to educators and policy makers. Constructions of negative emotions and

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1
2
3 thinking are viewed as disruptive or destructive and are “sidelined” or become the target
4
5 for learning strategies of emotional self-regulation (Fineman, 2006, p. 274). Further to
6
7 this, the pre-service teachers often proposed that teachers must be self-disciplined and
8
9 practise self-mastery by ‘controlling’, ‘regulating’, ‘tailoring’ and ‘managing’ emotions
10
11 that may be considered problematic (Questionnaire, 2016). Participants also suggested
12
13 that conduct that indicated a lack of control of negative emotions marked those pre-
14
15 service teachers and teachers as ‘crazy’ (Lorene; focus group, 2015); as ‘being filed
16
17 under cause for concern’ (Jodi; focus group, 2015); or raised questions for assessors that
18
19 they may ‘not be right for the job’ (Sharla, interview, 2015). Because this conduct
20
21 marked teachers as incapable of mastering the emotional rules of teaching, their
22
23 emotional conduct was governed more strictly, more overtly and in a more explicit
24
25 manner (Zembylas, 2005).
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32 The positivity movement, typified by the popularity of Seligman’s positive psychology,
33
34 proposes to ‘better’ society, as Rose (1996, p. 121) describes, through the “calculated
35
36 transformation of human conduct”. It does this by linking the knowledges and “human
37
38 technologies” (Rose, 1996, p. 121) of the positivity movement—like building one’s
39
40 character—to the sites (e.g. schools) where transformation can happen. We argue that
41
42 the science of positivity feeds directly into the exploitation of human capital (Sellar &
43
44 Zipin, 2019). Positivity work, or “happiness as enterprise” (Binkley (2014, p. 5),
45
46 involves adopting and incorporating a “new emotional and cognitive disposition”— this
47
48 work is asked of pre-service teachers by others, but it should also create a field of
49
50 possibilities in which we are free to act. This enterprise is “a point of transfer” or
51
52 “relay” for the operation of power. The pursuit of happiness is a strategy for governing
53
54 individuals and groups because it enrolls them (e.g. teachers) in the “art of governing
55
56 one’s self, one’s own subjectivity and emotional life through one’s freely chosen
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3 practices” (Binkley, 2014, p. 5). Through positivity, the self is “impelled to make life
4 meaningful” in a concerted “search for happiness and self-realisation” (Rose, 1996, p.
5 79). By carrying out this positive ethics of subjectivity, pre-service teachers become
6
7
8 “inextricably locked into the procedures of power” (Rose, 1996, p. 79).
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13 Much like the pre-service teacher who states at the outset of this paper, ‘if you are
14 positive, positive things happen’, the popular discourse of positivity certainly presents
15
16 “a broad vision of the sunnier side of life, where positiveness can be harnessed for noble
17 individual and organisational needs” (Fineman, 2006, p. 270). Within education, the
18 seemingly honourable intentions of positive scholars, who focus their interventions on
19
20 “emancipation, autonomy, and individual happiness”, can make it “difficult to criticize”
21 (Saari, 2018, p. 150). Karnovsky (2020, p. 171) argues that the “science of human
22 happiness is entangled with relations of power” as this knowledge “relies on a specific
23 model of subjectivity” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 6) where emotions are clearly identifiable and
24 the distinction of what are “good emotions” and “bad emotions” is secure (p. 6). In
25
26 Karnovsky’s (2020, p. 172) study pre-service teachers often delineated “between ‘good’
27 emotions in teaching—such as ‘love’ and ‘care’ being ‘appropriate’ to express—whilst
28 ‘bad’ emotions—such as ‘anger’ or ‘fear’—were considered ‘inappropriate’” and, as
29 such, in need of rigorous policing (Questionnaire, 2016). Furthermore, this defined
30
31 model of teacher subjectivity necessitates a certain kind of work of self-transformation.
32
33 Pre-service teachers seek to become the kind of professional that the positive movement
34
35 hopes to create in institutions such as schools—a professional who is defined by the
36
37 qualities of “positive emotions”, “engagement at work”, “meaning in life”, “success”
38
39 and “prosperity”(Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009, p. 308).
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58 Tertiary and schooling education settings easily provide sites in which a “culture of the
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2
3 self' (Foucault, 1997bp. 271) can flourish. The various techniques offered by the
4
5 positivity and wellbeing movement which encourage self-inspection and regulation of
6
7 one's emotions are considered by the authors of this paper, as an example of "secular
8
9 technologies of the self where "self-regulation and self-examination comes to occupy
10
11 centre ground" (Besley & Peters, 2007, p. 17; Reveley, 2015, p. 83). The science of
12
13 positivity contains a range of "human technologies" that seek to coordinate the
14
15 "activities of humans" under a calculated and practical rationality (Rose, 1996, p. 153).
16
17 This program of rationality works to augment the positive capabilities of individuals,
18
19 families, communities and organisations whilst attempting to constrain negative affect
20
21 (Amsler, 2011). These programs occur in line with the principles and styles of living
22
23 proposed by the movement, with the objective of 'better wellness' in the workplace
24
25 becoming enmeshed in teacher's personal and daily aspects of professional or personal
26
27 existence. One example is the breathing exercises suggested by the *Be You* campaign to
28
29 ameliorate workplace stress.
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36 Pre-service teachers, along with many others employed in the sphere of education, may
37
38 find "energy, initiative, ambition and personality responsibility" (Rose, 1996, p. 154) by
39
40 adopting the technologies offered by the positivity movement. In a project of becoming
41
42 they learn to be an "active and calculating self, a self that calculates *about* itself" along
43
44 positive dimensions and, thus, "acts *upon* itself in order to better itself". These self-
45
46 making strategies aligns with the liberal-democratic "enterprise culture" (Rose, 1996, p.
47
48 154) that has found purchase within all aspects of organisational life, including
49
50 schooling and teacher development (see; S. Ball & Olmedo, 2013; O'Brien, 2017). The
51
52 language of positivity is enacted by members of school systems through various
53
54 institutional systems of reward and acknowledgment, forming as Rose (1996, p. 154)
55
56 explains "an array of rules for conduct of one's everyday existence". The "good
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3 teacher” has been “reconstituted as a self-entrepreneur who adds value to his or her self
4
5 and school as teachers understand and conduct themselves in terms of operationally
6
7 defined standards” (Holloway & Brass, 2018, p. 378). One example of this is from
8
9 Steven, who stated early on in the course that his professional goal was to be teacher
10
11 who could be ‘happy’ ‘effective’, ‘professional’, and most importantly, someone who
12
13 could ‘give back to the community’ (Interview, 2015). Later in the course Steven came
14
15 to the realisation that, in the face of confronting emotional labour in the work of
16
17 teaching, he needed to ‘reconsider the professional relationship between teacher and
18
19 student’ (Focus-groups, 2015). This required learning ‘where he stood’ to ‘toe the line
20
21 of the school policy and teacher standards’. In thinking about the ethical work that was
22
23 necessary, Steven explained that he worked on his conduct to ‘come back to this neutral
24
25 professional teacher that’s not fobbed the problem off, but hasn’t taken it on board’
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31 (Focus-groups, 2015).

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34 The positivity discourses explored in this article “form a rule that is intrinsically ethical”
35
36 and governmental; “good government is to be grounded in the ways in which persons
37
38 govern themselves” (Rose, 1996, p. 154). The participants have sought to self-style
39
40 along a defined positive character regime for a teacher, as this professional disposition
41
42 is perceived as a “commodity for hire” (p. 137) in a competitive education marketplace.
43
44 Our argument shows that the positivity movement has created an education culture of
45
46 individualised wellbeing practices that is “deeply imbued with normalising power”
47
48 (Zembylas, 2005, p. 24). The “rules, rituals, performances and habits” of positive
49
50 emotions “act to govern” the emotional conduct of pre-service teachers who are
51
52 learning to teach. These emotional norms direct their “emotional communication and
53
54 subjectification along particular lines” (Zembylas, 2005, p. 35). The pre-service
55
56 teachers in Karnovsky’s (2020) research study have constituted their own emotional
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FOUCAULDIAN ETHICS OF POSITIVITY

1
2
3 conduct to fall in line with this “political dimension” of a competent teacher’s
4
5 persona—a *telos* that is mainly “assigned” to them “through discourses, practices and
6
7 performances” (Zembylas, 2005, p. 24) guided by a culture of positivity and wellness in
8
9 education. The work upon the self that is carried out by these pre-service teachers is
10
11 evidence of what Foucault (1991a, pp. 135-136) describes as forms of “subtle coercion”
12
13 in which an individual’s “movements, gestures, attitudes”—such as ‘putting on a smile’
14
15 (Questionnaire, 2016) and ‘showing students you are happy and caring’ (Focus Group,
16
17 2015)—are held within “an infinitesimal power over the active body”.

22 The technologies of the modern positive movement in education seek to discipline pre-
23
24 service teachers according to certain norms of what *ought* to be practised emotionally.
25
26 This is not to say, however, that such technologies are necessarily negative. In fact, the
27
28 human technologies of positive emotional conduct in teaching might be more maturely
29
30 considered as producing and enframing pre-service teachers as “certain kinds of being
31
32 whose existence is simultaneously capacitated *and* [emphasis added] governed” (Rose,
33
34 1996, pp. 26-27) by the organisations of the university and the school. The ways in
35
36 which the pre-service teachers in the research study are emotionally capacitated is best
37
38 understood in terms of Foucault’s (1997a) notion of the ethical “care of the self” (p.
39
40 287). Such capacitation presupposes a free and self-determining subject—the subject of
41
42 liberal government such as those in the research study. This is a subject that, in ‘caring
43
44 for itself’, is enjoined to pursue goals that offer not only personal reward but
45
46 professional benefit and perhaps even national gain and advantage. The pre-service
47
48 teachers in the research study, for instance, are simultaneously capacitated and governed
49
50 as they practise their freedom to cultivate skills of both personal relevance and national
51
52 significance. This includes, not insignificantly, showing ‘enthusiasm and energy’ to
53
54 ‘help students learn’ (Questionnaire, 2016). The discourses examined in this paper
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1
2
3 demonstrate the ways in which pre-service teachers ethically engage such governmental
4 imperatives as a deliberate strategy—professional survival amongst others—to
5 complete their qualification. Keeping a ‘sunny’ disposition and maintaining a façade
6 that ‘all is well’ are certainly productive in the face of juggling numerous assessments
7 and relatively short encounters with professional others who are tasked with making
8 judgements of the individual’s capacity to enter the profession.
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11
12 In this analysis, the pre-service teachers in the research study are undertaking work “on
13 the self” to achieve a positive professional disposition. It is, in other words, a “practice
14 of freedom to take shape in an *éthos* that is good” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 287). For
15 Foucault (1997a), *éthos* may be conceptualised as “a way of being and of behavior” (p.
16 284)—“a mode of being for the subject, along with a certain way of acting, a way
17 visible to others” (p. 284). The emotional practices of pre-service teachers examined in
18 this article correspond with such practices as described by Infinito (2003, p. 165): “a
19 series of technologies, activities, and reflections by which one gains self-knowledge and
20 skill in the practice of relating to and improving oneself”. In the study, a significant
21 number of participants can be seen to be conducting a project of self-formation—of
22 forming themselves into positive teachers within the sphere of education with others. To
23 bring about a “positive, creative, and productive freedom” (Infinito, 2003, p. 157) is
24 dependent on how these pre-service teachers act with others, along with who they wish
25 to be in relation to those others and to the world (2003, p. 157).
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51 In this more nuanced theorisation, the self’s relation to the self requires the cultivation
52 of positive emotional techniques and routines as part of a regime of “self-care” in which
53 the self searches for a more meaningful life—in this case, within education. Indeed, in
54 relation to the practice of self-care, Foucault (1997a) reminds us that “the care of the
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3 self is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships with others insofar as this
4
5 ethos of freedom is also a way of caring for others” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 287). This is
6
7 apparent in the remarks made by the pre-service teachers’ where they suggest they are
8
9 working on themselves to ‘be positive and happy’ *in relation to* supporting and building
10
11 a relationship with the students that they are teaching. These positive and caring
12
13 practices extend beyond the professional relationships established with students. Sharla,
14
15 for example, spoke of experiencing a ‘really positive work environment’ during her pre-
16
17 service professional experience as being critical to her general wellbeing. Sharla added
18
19 that on a ‘daily’ basis the ‘staff room’ would be ‘supportive’ by ‘saying something
20
21 about how great it was to have such a good team’ or by reminding each other of
22
23 ‘something positive about the kids’ (Focus-groups 2, 2015; Emotion Diaries, 2015). In
24
25 this way, Sharla points out that, amongst teachers, developing such “commitments to
26
27 active caring” (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 523) in relationships can strengthen both
28
29 “emotional and intellectual understanding” amongst all parties involved (Hargreaves,
30
31 2001, pp. 523-524). Hargreaves (2001a) argues that such “strong sources of positive
32
33 emotion” (p. 523) in teachers’ work is vital for collegial support, social acceptance “as
34
35 well as creating the energy and commitment for joint work” to occur (p. 523).
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43 Teacher educators can also commit to fostering more open and caring practices within
44
45 initial teacher education courses. The authors of this paper recommend that teacher
46
47 educators critically reflect on *how* emotional rules and norms are embedded in everyday
48
49 practices of initial teacher education such that they become natural and taken-for-
50
51 granted. We argue it is vital for teacher educators to critique norms for emotional
52
53 conduct and hold up for examination the conditions under which pre-service teachers
54
55 learn “the rules one prescribes to oneself and the reasons one ascribes” (Bacchi, 2012, p.
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57 4). This approach can allow for safe conversations focused upon how pre-service
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2
3 teachers go about constructing “who they are and what they know” about their emotions
4
5 (Bacchi, 2012, p. 4) as emerging professionals. We believe that institutions offering
6
7 initial teacher education should re-shape course learning by adopting a pedagogy of
8
9 both support and experimentation by which pre-service teachers might explore and learn
10
11 about emotional rules of conduct.
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Concluding remarks

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21 The pre-service teachers in the research study worked on themselves using the
22
23 discourses of positivity in their initial teacher education course. Their practices of
24
25 positive conduct within a professional setting were seen to contribute to strengthened
26
27 relationships with others, such as students or mentor teachers. The ethical work of
28
29 crafting a positive disposition was conceived by the participants in the study as
30
31 hallmarks of competent and professional teachers, who can meet expected requirements
32
33 of an enterprising educator. We have detailed a range of ethical work that was cultivated
34
35 by the pre-service teachers as they learnt to enact various mental and bodily practices of
36
37 the self to sustain a positive emotional disposition in course learning experiences. The
38
39 article argued that these technologies are certainly imbued with a subtle form of
40
41 normalising power which makes such discourses difficult to resist. We have also argued
42
43 that self-formation of a professional teaching persona along positive dimensions can
44
45 support care of the self as these novice teachers learn to navigate the complex emotional
46
47 terrain of the course.
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54 We have argued that a Foucauldian approach to understanding emotional conduct in
55
56 initial teacher education is an important one at present. This theorisation recognises that
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58 in exercising freedom to care for oneself, whilst caring for the wellbeing of others,
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2
3 requires pre-service teachers to practise forms of emotional conduct in resistance to
4
5 “that which threatens to control” (Infinito, 2003, p. 158). Zembylas (2005, p. 24) argues
6
7 such practices can take form in negotiations of “subjectivity and emotion” to allow
8
9 space for “self-formation and resistance” (p. 24). It is clear that the subjectivities of pre-
10
11 service teachers addressed in this article are informed by “rule-governed discourses that
12
13 govern the intelligible” conduct of positive emotions, yet, we have also shown this
14
15 subjectification should not preclude the possibility of different kinds of professional
16
17 *selves* to emerge (Zembylas, 2005, p. 31). Our theoretical approach in this article
18
19 demonstrates that subjectification need not occur “in opposition” to professional self-
20
21 formation; rather, this negotiation of discourses may come to produce an ethical
22
23 teaching self which is “a necessary reciprocal element of the political valorisation of
24
25 freedom” (Rose, 1996, p. 98). We agree with Foucault (2000a, p. 342) when he explains
26
27 that the “crucial problem” of the “power relationship” should be located upon the
28
29 “recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom”, conceived as a necessary
30
31 “agonism”—a “relationship of mutual incitement *and* struggle”. In other words, the
32
33 *askesis* pre-service teachers learn to enact within their course can be thought of as a
34
35 “permanent provocation” or “double bind” of governmental power (S. Ball, 2013, p.
36
37 151).
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45 We suggest that both pre-service and in-service teachers can engage in such agonism
46
47 through a “renunciation of our intelligible self”—specifically, for example, the
48
49 individualising self-improvement strategies offered by positive scholarship movement
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51 —and by being ready to “test and transgress the limits of who we are able to be” (S.
52
53 Ball, 2015, p. 1141). One aspect of such work could involve both pre-service teachers
54
55 and in-service teachers cultivating open and safe dialogue that foregrounds emotional
56
57 understanding between one another, where *both* collective joy and pain can be felt
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3 together. Teacher leaders and teacher educators can also work at creating safe spaces for
4
5 the sharing of emotional vulnerabilities, without fear or shame of professional harm.
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8 Such practices of collective emotional transgression in the face of cultural and
9
10 professional norms and institutional pressure—without disregarding the “contextual
11
12 character of power” (Zembylas, 2005, p. 31)—comprise a crucial space we should be
13
14 exploring as scholars and teacher educators.
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For Peer Review

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