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## Well-being for whom? Unpacking the teacher well-being discourse of the South African Department of Basic Education

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Neoliberalism has adjusted society's role allocations related to who is responsible for looking after the welfare of whom. Based on the assumption of advancing human well-being, the neoliberal narrative renders the individual free, autonomous, and self-sufficient, but also with the obligation to assume responsibility for their own welfare. This duty is also shared with non-state agents such as employers. This article analyses the well-being discourse evident in two reports of the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) to establish how the department as employer and as public service department understands its role in taking care of the well-being of teachers. The analysis indicates that the texts portray a relationship of care and a desire to create a well-resourced and safe learning organisation in which teachers can be inspired to grow professionally and personally. However, this is a transactional relationship, and in return for investing in teacher well-being, the employer expects commitment to the aims and objectives of the state. The neoliberal rationality necessitates balancing the well-being of teachers as autonomous persons with teachers as economic-rational actors transforming well-being into self-care, which is defined and controlled by the employer.

**Keywords:** discourse analysis; individualisation; instrumentality; neoliberalism; professional development; self-reliance; teacher well-being

### Introduction

Neoliberalism has adjusted society's role allocations related to who is responsible for looking after the welfare of whom. As a system based on the advancement of human well-being (Bal & Dóci, 2018), the neoliberal narrative renders the individual free, autonomous, and self-sufficient, altering the social contract between state and citizens. It has reassigned the responsibilities of protecting, providing, and fostering the potential of the citizens from the state to the individual (Robertson, 2008). The result has been cutbacks in public and social services and tasking non-state agents such as the market, non-governmental organisations, and individuals themselves to do the caring (Patterson, 2017; Robertson, 2008). This shift is also reflected in private and public-sector employment relationships globally, including emerging economies, as it veers towards the free market and workers are confronted with different assumptions about employment, workplace well-being, and professional development.

### Socio-Political and Historical Context

Neoliberal theory holds that both employer and employee are driven by self-interest and wanting to gain maximum influence based on the free-market principles of autonomy and choice. Employers require resources, of which labour is one, to maximise profit, while employees sell their labour for money, benefits, and recreation (Budd & Bhawe, 2019).

Despite the ambitious restructuring and development ideals of South Africa's first democratic government constituted by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994, this paradigm has permeated society on every level. It reaches from macro-political and economic policy to the shop floor; from private companies to the public service; from manual work to professional services including teaching (Bal & Dóci, 2018); and from the public sphere to the personal. Within two years of coming to power, the ruling party was assimilated into the market-dominated global economy and replaced what Sebake (2017:2) describes as a "leftist, basic-needs-oriented" economic programme with the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy "stressing privatisation, deregulation, and trade liberalisation." Reasons given for this turnabout included inheriting an already weak economy; the high cost of undoing historical injustices, delivering to the needs and aspirations of the new democracy, and accessing international funding (Christie, 2003).

One of the logical places to jumpstart rebuilding the country was the education sector. However, politics of compromise, economic realities and resources and capacity shortages in the department and schools, also forced the modification of education-related pre-election ideals. The social-welfare approach to education management and practice was replaced with a market-related paradigm organised according to business principles and technocratic goals like academic achievement (Christie, 2003). The shift towards neoliberal rationality is evident in the 1994 post-apartheid educational transformation process and legislation. The DBE's national development plan called *Action Plan to 2019* and its *Annual Performance Plan 2018/2019*, declare quality education imperative for national economic growth and development; improving employment levels and earnings; eradicating poverty; reducing inequality (2015:26), and supporting innovation (DBE, Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2019:5). This approach altered the relationship between teachers and their employers and therefore their world of work on three levels – teaching (teachers as professionals), labour (teachers as employees), and teachers' welfare (teachers as embodied beings in the workplace and outside).

The influence of neoliberalism on the South African education landscape has been investigated extensively (Anderson, 2003; Vally & Motala, 2017) as have aspects of teacher workplace well-being such as health, violence, bullying, and sexual harassment (De Wet & Jacobs, 2013). In this article I call attention to the South African DBE's own narrative on teacher welfare by unpacking the discourse evident in two DBE reports to establish how official texts frame the department's understanding of its role in taking care of the well-being of teachers. The documents comprise the *Annual Performance Plan 2018/2019* (DBE RSA, 2019) and the *Action Plan to 2019 Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030* (DBE RSA, 2015).

### Theoretical Framework

This paper seeks to briefly discuss the theories of well-being and care in the employment relationship and teacher well-being as 1) an imperative to invest in and develop teachers as a resource for national economic growth; and 2) fostering teachers' self-reliance and autonomy through life-long learning to supply healthy, capable and disciplined citizens who shape their own behaviour to the advantage of the state.

#### *Well-being*

Although the concept "well-being" has of late pervaded informal and formal discourses in healthcare, economics, geography, social science, business and human resources management, and marketing, no one definition exists (Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders, 2012). Authors tend to describe well-being according to the context. Measuring the quality of life using statistical indicators such as education, poverty, inequality, and employment establishes a population's **objective well-being** (Western & Tomaszewski, 2016). **Subjective** or **psychological well-being** denotes one's own evaluation of work-life quality as the product of objective markers and the effective integration of cognition and affect (pleasant and unpleasant) (Diener & Suh, 1997; Western & Tomaszewski, 2016). Studies in the workplace usually investigate this aspect of well-being (Dodge et al., 2012). Subjective well-being models fall in two groups, hedonistic and eudaimonic.

The **hedonistic model** accentuates employee experience of work as pleasurable and fun (Turban & Wan, 2016). The happy-productive worker thesis is exemplified by the tech company Google, offering perks like free meals, on-site gyms, and massages. This aligns with the neoliberal approach to work blurring the work-leisure divide. Also, the drive for self-fulfilment is seen as an aspect of human capital and another economic resource (Lemke, 2001).

**Eudaimonic well-being** marks a life that is meaningful, purposeful, and deeply satisfying through one's own 1) experiences and assessment;

2) values, motives, objectives (the "why" of behaviour); 3) actions and environmental mastery; and 4) functioning (relationships with self and others, self-actualisation and growth) (Diener & Suh, 1997; Turban & Wan, 2016). Eudaimonia has its origins in the Aristotelian concept of living a virtuous life and serving a greater good (Turban & Wan, 2016).

The happy worker-productive worker thesis suggests that workers who experience high levels of well-being also perform well and vice versa (Nielsen, Nielsen, Ogbonnaya, Käsälä, Saari & Isaksson, 2017). As a result, employee well-being is primarily measured by factors such as engagement, job-satisfaction, meaning-making, purpose, happiness, organisational commitment, and low levels of absenteeism and attrition (Kruger, 2018; Nielsen et al., 2017).

However vital psychological wellness is, teachers remain embodied beings located in time and place. I therefore apply an expanded and multi-faceted model of workplace well-being based on that of the American National Wellness Institute, taking into account eight interdependent dimensions of life in the workplace – physical (health and fitness); intellectual (mental health and development); emotional (self-regulation, and attitudes); social (maintaining healthy relationships and leadership); inspirational (life enrichment; finding meaning, purpose consistent with values, goals, and lifestyle); professional (life-long learning, job-satisfaction); financial (budgetary and wealth management) and environmental (being mindful of social, natural, and manmade environments on health and well-being).

#### *Caring for well-being and the employment relationship*

Caring for someone's well-being assumes relationality. Mutual trust between employer and employee contributes to the happy worker-productive worker thesis and supports organisational growth (Xesha, Iwu, Slabbert & Nduna, 2014). The nature of this relationship is articulated formally in policies, procedures, and human resource management, including employee well-being programmes. However, such a relationship is located within a particular context and based on ideological assumptions and expectations from both parties.

As personal well-being is considered a subjective appraisal, the aim of this analysis is not to examine teachers' experience of the DBE's understanding and implementation of well-being advancing measures. Analysing the discourse presented in the reports, it uncovers the department's reading of its role in looking after teacher well-being.

#### **Method**

Discourse, according to Foucault, is "practices that systematically form objects of which they speak" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006:333).

Texts in the form of plans and reports are such objects. Considering the five distinct meanings listed by Gasper and Apthorpe (1996), analysing these texts requires a tiered approach covering:

1. Concepts and models rendering meaning to circumstances and experiences;
2. Syntactic segments like phrases and paragraphs;
3. Verbal, written and non-verbal communication, symbolic and semiotic meanings, phrases indicating intention, delineation, rules, role allocation, context and social structuring;
4. Theory-practice links ascertaining power agents' motivations, endorsement and execution of the narrative; and
5. Expression of power formalised in policy, all the way to individuals exercising self-regulation.

Discourse analysis can thus emphasise linguistic structure or contextual function, or both. This study uses a blended design of structural-functional and qualitative methods and analyses to establish how Gasper and Apthorpe's first three discourse types (paradigms, language, and symbols) inform and reveal the fourth and fifth meanings (praxis and power), as well as to identify the social practice constructed around teacher well-being. In this analysis, more important than the meaning of words, is what kind of caring relationship it creates.

Two documents available on the Internet that have bearing on how the DBE regards and administers teacher well-being, were selected for analyses: 1) the *Annual Performance Plan 2018/2019* (DBE RSA, 2019) and 2) the *Action Plan to 2019 Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030* (DBE RSA, 2015). The objective of both documents is for the DBE to self-assess its progress and achievements and to present short and long-term plans and targets for teaching and learning.

As the principal instrument of analysis (and to ensure research rigour) (Terre Blanche et al., 2006), I immersed myself in the context by reading and re-reading the texts to become acquainted with the content and "the ways of speaking." I colour-coded passages pertaining to the general well-being of all role-players in schools and sections dealing with teacher well-being in particular. In both cases I used the eight dimensions of the well-being model as a guide. I scanned for language use, labelling often-repeated words and phrases and syntactic devices, while exploring the authors' personas and the portrayal of the audience and subjects under discussion. All the while I maintained a critical stance allowing reflection on the *why* of speaking by probing word choice, arguments, and meaning that contextualise and uncover the official view of teachers' world of work and well-being, and to identify themes (Gasper & Apthorpe, 1996; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

As it involves only one party in the employment relationship, this study has limited application. A more complete picture of the understanding of teacher well-being will require an investigation into

teachers' experience of the DBE's perception and implementation of looking after their welfare.

### Discussion of Results

Work, according to Abbott (2006:187), is "fundamental to the human condition," underscoring the significance of the employer-employee relationship. This study focuses on the relationship of care and specifically the perception of the DBE as employer regarding its role in advancing employee well-being across eight dimensions of workplace well-being, from the classroom to the macro level via policies and legislation (Abbott, 2006:187).

Workplace well-being is influenced by, and influences people's professional and personal quality of life (Diener & Suh, 1997). Work not only helps to fulfil our material and social needs, but gives meaning and aids identity construction (Abbott, 2006). We spend many hours at work and expend substantial physical and mental effort on work-related responsibilities, often deriving enjoyment from it. Yet, the control over assigning, structuring, managing, and compensating work remains primarily with the employer, notwithstanding labour union input (Dutton, Roberts & Bednar, 2010). The nature of this power differential is rooted in the dominant ideology and conveys "much about the views and values we hold as a society" (Abbott, 2006:187). As in other fields, the teachers' work world has changed significantly in the last two decades, fashioning a workplace care relationship according to a global, neoliberal economic paradigm. This is borne out by the discourse analysis of the DBE's views on its role in advancing teacher well-being, the wellness discourse evident in the reports, and the emphasis on two neoliberal values that emerge: instrumentalism and individualism. Foucault's distinction between disciplinary and pastoral power is applied to explain the way the DBE views its role in advancing employee well-being.

Workplace well-being encompasses all aspects of working life: **working conditions** (workspace design, comfort, safety, ergonomics, equipment, and resources); **health** (physical and mental); **employees' attitudes** (cognition, affect, job engagement, and satisfaction); **organisational culture and functionality** (work and information management, leadership, social support) and **professional development**.

A preliminary reading indicated references to several dimensions of teacher well-being such as Goal number 17 in the *Action Plan to 2019* discussing teacher supply, development, and utilisation, and "striv[ing] for a teacher workforce that is healthy and enjoys a sense of job satisfaction" (DBE RSA, 2015:36). When reporting on environmental well-being, it is to improve working facilities like media and nutrition centres, science laboratories, administrative blocks, water and electricity supply, hy-

giene, sanitation, etc. (DBE RSA, 2019:2, 51). These all benefit teachers and learners by restoring their dignity (DBE RSA, 2019:2), inspiring learners to come to school and learn, and teachers to teach (DBE RSA, 2015:3). Safety concerns during violent community protests and incidents of rape and carrying weapons to school are also addressed (DBE RSA, 2019:17). However, no explicit mention is made of an employee wellness programme, while teachers' physical well-being is dealt with only in terms of HIV and AIDS education (DBE RSA, 2015:37). Health screening and education to prevent physical and emotional ills including bullying, sexual harassment, and drug abuse are proposed, but again, exclusively for learners. On the whole, however, the documents indicate that the DBE as employer accepts its obligations towards teacher well-being and lists as one of its values to create "a learning organisation in which staff members seek and share knowledge and information while committing themselves to personal growth" (DBE RSA, 2019:5).

Applying Michel Foucault's theories on the relationship between institutional and individual governability and pastoral power, the paper discusses two commitments to advancing the well-being of teachers and highlight the neoliberal values of instrumentalism and individualisation underlying each:

- Commitment 1: To invest and develop teachers' well-being as a resource supporting national economic growth.
- Commitment 2: To foster teachers' self-reliance and autonomy through life-long learning to supply healthy, capable and disciplined citizens who shape their own behaviour to the advantage of the state.

#### Commitment 1: To Invest in and Develop Teachers' Well-Being as a Resource for National Economic Growth

Both reports give prominence to professional development as a means to ensure that quality of education contributes to the country's economy growth. By leveraging the neoliberal assumption that life-long learning is a personal choice and source of self-empowerment, teachers' professional development becomes, according to Olssen (2006:223), a Foucauldian "technology of control and power" and life-long learning, "a discourse which aims at resolving the individual and the general ... in the interests of the smooth functioning of the whole." Continued professional development is one of several instruments at the DBE's disposal to achieve its objectives of aligning strategies and optimising investments (Bal & Dóci, 2018):

In terms of the need to strengthen the human capacity of the State, the Department will continue in its efforts to capacitate its employees to be more efficient and effective in their current work, through the Workplace Skills Plan and the skills and personnel development plans of its officials. (DBE RSA, 2019:16)

The preface to the *Annual Performance Plan* sets the scene for this neoliberal approach with a quote by a former South African president, Nelson Mandela, that "(e)ducation is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (DBE RSA, 2019:1). This changed world is one where the education system 1) aligns with the country's national development goals of eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, growing the economy (DBE RSA, 2019:3); 2), increases employment prospects and earnings (DBE RSA, 2015:26); and 3), prepares "highly skilled citizenry" (DBE RSA, 2019:6) to participate actively in the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" and become "gainful employees and entrepreneurs" (DBE RSA, 2019:3).

It is further tasked with improving quality of life and opportunities for all (DBE RSA, 2019:5), based on ability, education, and hard work, and allowing them to reach their "full potential" (DBE RSA, 2015:9). Furthermore, it has to help build a socially cohesive, "peaceful, prosperous and democratic South Africa" (DBE RSA, 2019:1) without which, according to the World Bank (Robertson, 2008:para. 9), there "can be no economic growth or human well-being or stability." Education is further tasked with eradicating the apartheid legacy (DBE RSA, 2015:9) and improving the country's ability to "contribute to global development" (DBE RSA, 2015:8).

Stakeholders are identified as parents, teachers, school principals, officials, government and civil-society organisation leaders, including teacher unions. Private-sector collaborators and "international partner agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank," as well as "people outside the country, including foreign investors" (DBE RSA, 2015:8) are also mentioned, illustrating the global interconnectedness of the neoliberal economy. Tellingly, the *Action Plan to 2019* states that teachers "understand the importance of their profession for the development of the nation" and they "do their utmost to give their learners a good educational start in life" (DBE RSA, 2015:9). However, the opportunities available to "influence young people's lives and build a better, more equitable nation, should be properly communicated to young teachers-to-be" (DBE RSA, 2015:32).

To achieve these goals, employees have to be capacitated to be more current, efficient, and effective, ensuring that their skillset matches the "needs of the changing world" (DBE RSA, 2019:1). The DBE is committed to investing in its human resources and "creating a learning organisation in which staff members seek and share knowledge and information while committing themselves to personal growth" (DBE RSA, 2019:5).

The choice of the verb "capacitate" to describe the DBE's role in teachers' professional development is revealing. To capacitate suggests rendering

a person able to act in a particular way by providing what they need. It is prescriptive and restrictive alluding to a less-than-equal relationship and one not in line with the view of neoliberal citizens as autonomous and free to choose. By contrast, to develop implies a personal approach, wanting to foster growth or encourage change towards a more advanced state. Nominalising verbs like supply, develop and utilise, and referring to teachers as human resources reinforce the process of instrumentalisation. Educators become human capital (Klees, 2014), no different to any other commodity. Their work environment evokes a corporate setting, despite them being public service workers. This reading of the texts is supported by other linguistic features such as business jargon and recurrent phraseology like “accountability imperatives” (DBE RSA, 2019:1), “evidence-based evaluations” (DBE RSA, 2019:16), “institutional performance,” “effective supply,” “development,” and “utilisation of human resources” (DBE RSA, 2019:42).

To ensure a return on investment, the employer is willing to help teachers advance their professional and personal well-being by way of workplace skills and personal development plans. At the same time they need to be held accountable and their progress effectively monitored, necessitating systems that meticulously manage, monitor and measure all aspects of organisational life, not only teacher performance. Information is central to community accountability because information is central to the marketplace (Weber, 2007). Goal 16 of the Action Plan addresses “professionalism, teaching skills, subject knowledge, and computer literacy of teachers throughout their entire careers” (DBE RSA, 2019:43), stating that policy has increasingly been informed by teacher testing and “self-assessment through special diagnostic tests,” while the “(m)onitoring of the investment made by teachers in their own development has improved through the School Monitoring Survey.” The *Annual Performance Plan 2018/19* states that,

(e)valuation and research has been a serious deficiency in the country and the education sector, but over the years with the introduction of Monitoring, Research and Evaluation in the Sector, performance has also improved. There is substantial research conducted within the sector which assists in identifying gaps and also creates a platform to monitor the sector through evidence-based evaluations. (DBE RSA, 2019:16)

The ever-increasing performance demands on teachers and learners imply more bureaucratic systems holding teachers to account “according to the goals set for them or agreed with them” (Parker, 2017:46). This neoliberal managerialisation ideology emphasises not the teacher as a person, nor the “the process of teaching but ... the effects of the teacher upon student performance” (Parker, 2017:46). The result is a workplace culture of constant surveillance, system-

ised performance assessment reinforcing individualisation and rivalry (Angus, 2013). It is evident that the DBE appears not to require an “engaged, relational” type of professionalism (Angus, 2013) matching the traditional notion of teacher professionalism. Rather, it necessitates a “technical-managerial” competence (Angus, 2013) to maximise teacher efficiency. The neoliberal objectives demand the production of a particular type of subject, one that is fit-for-purpose, manageable, and efficient.

As Mulderrig (2003:104) explains, “the textual representations of educational roles and relations in policy, linking success (and by implication, failure) with individual commitment and aspirations, potentially acts as a powerful form of social control.” Deserving teachers are rewarded but those who do not make the grade receive “developmental support” (DBE RSA, 2019:17). Rather than growing teachers, life-long learning is used as a “strategy of government at the policy level” that “constitutes a form of bio-power” to “discipline subjects” (Olssen, 2006:223). In Foucauldian terms life-long learning can be considered a technology of control that governs individuals and their relationship with the collective.

While teachers become a tool for achieving organisational goals, their relationship with their employer is also transactional and inconsequential outside the workplace (Bal & Dóci, 2018). In the spirit of the free market, the workplace is a means to an end, satisfying the material, social, and self-development needs of teachers. According to Mavelli (2018) the neoliberal entrepreneurial subjects consider themselves a form of capital in which to invest to boost marketability and employability and ultimately enhance well-being – occupational and financial, in particular. Taking care of this aspect of well-being is a function the DBE considers to fulfil successfully:

One trend over recent years that has probably contributed to greater teacher job satisfaction has been substantial increases in the real wages, or purchasing power, of teachers (DBE RSA, 2015).

The term “purchasing power” identifies teachers as consumers. The definitive function of an individual in society is being a consumer. It takes precedence over the individual as worker and as citizen as it is in the marketplace where they can exercise their freedom of choice and “celebrate the power implied” therein. The marketplace is where consumers can invest in themselves, generate their own gratification and assemble identities and a lifestyle, and all of these opportunities hinge only on the resources available (De Castro, 2015). Moulding oneself to be functional increases employability, because the neoliberal rationality does not distinguish labour as a resource separate from the person who possesses it. Employees are rewarded for their innate physical, mental, and emotional disposition as well as their

skillset as the outcome of they themselves investing in self-care, be it nutrition, fitness, education, or improving emotional development.

Employees as human capital are therefore not dependent on a company to look after their welfare. They are self-reliant entrepreneurs answerable to themselves for their own “investment decisions and endeavouring to produce surplus value” (Lemke, 2001:199). Bearing in mind that the state, itself an active partner in the market, has increasingly cut back or renounced its welfare functions, leading to precarity in the workplace; diminishing purchase power and limited social welfare support, the DBE’s linking of purchasing power, job satisfaction, and improving well-being may come across as incongruent (Mavelli, 2018).

**Commitment 2: To Foster Teachers’ Self-Reliance and Autonomy Through Life-Long Learning to Supply Healthy, Capable and Disciplined Citizens who Shape Their Own Behaviour to the Advantage of the State**

The second finding of this study reinforces the perception of neoliberalism being an inherently individualistic ideology (Bal & Dóci, 2018). Neoliberal citizens consider themselves distinct from the collective; they are autonomous individuals, “rational utility maximizers” (Bal & Dóci, 2018:4) who actively pursue personal objectives, needs, and desires, are self-reliant and covet free choice. They claim elbow-room to invent and re-invent themselves and plot their own careers and life (Bauman, 2000, in Bal & Dóci, 2018). Employees are their own managers driven to ceaselessly upgrade their knowledge and adjust their employability while chasing ever better opportunities and positions (Bal & Dóci, 2018; Delbridge & Keenoy, 2010; Mulderrig, 2003). Kimathi and Rusznyak (2018:6) mention teacher professional capital as a “relentless, expert-driven pursuit” or the ability of educators to “make ethical, informed, rational decisions in complex situations.” They are “entrepreneurs of the self,” “responsibilized citizen of the post-welfare state” (Angus, 2013:175). They are homo economics, the rational person pursuing self-interest (Bal & Dóci, 2018).

Whereas on the surface it appears to be a self-affirming, authentic, and empowered way to conduct oneself in the workplace (think business self-help books and the portrayal depiction of the self-actualised careerist making it big in the world), the flipside is that it leaves people responsible and accountable for their own well-being including self-care, health, education, employability, and societal success (Lemke, 2001). At the same time, less public and labour union assistance and protective regulations are available (Bal & Dóci, 2018; Robertson, 2008). As Foucault puts it:

It may be that the problem about the self does not have to do with discovering what it is, but maybe has to do with discovering that the self is nothing

more than a correlate of technology built into our history. (Taylor, 2014:180)

This quote is illustrated by the use of two syntactic techniques in the reports namely nominalisation (changing verbs into nouns) and passivation. These are typically used in official documents to sustain a power ideology by diminishing agency, according to Billig (2008). The following example illustrates my point:

Monitoring of the investment made by teachers in their own development has improved through the School Monitoring Survey (DBE RSA, 2015:34).

Not only does nominalising the word “monitor” moderate the role of the DBE as overseer of teachers’ efforts at life-long learning; the sentence construction further distances the department as overseer from the act of overseeing to reinforce the idea that the individual has agency. This is done by emphasising teachers’ obligations (“investment”) to professional development and placing it between the act of observing and the instrument used by the DBE.

Although this observation underscores the DBE’s appeal to teachers to invest in their own professional development in service of a higher cause, it also highlights the nature of the power relationship between the parties. The attentive employer encouraging teachers to be self-empowered is juxtaposed with the depiction by Moore and Robinson (2016) of employees as observed, objectified, labouring bodies defining themselves and moulding their own behaviours as they adapt to the needs of the state. However, instead of wielding sovereign power, which according to Foucault, is overtly repressive and controls with coercion and force (Lemke, 2001), he introduces the notion of pastoral power, a productive power that shepherds people (and whole populations) from birth to death by regulating individuals’ behaviour. It expands on disciplinary power; however, instead of controlling space (workspace design), time (schedules), and people’s actions (including bodily movement, posture, and fitness), pastoral power generates self-regulating and useful subjects who are “healthy, self-controlled individuals, able and willing to work” (Jackson, 2003:38). Life-long learning is one such mechanism. Individualisation encourages self-reliance, which necessitates unceasing self-improvement and self-care, making it possible to manage people from a distance without “being responsible for them” (Lemke, 2001:202).

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this analysis indicate that the DBE cares for teachers and wants to see them flourish and become the best they can be by committing themselves to personal growth in a learning organisation. Yet, it is evident in the well-being discourse that the relationship of care between employer and employees is transactional by nature. The DBE reports convey the department’s awareness that a need exists to

concern itself with teacher well-being and its willingness to be involved in helping them attain well-being across all dimensions of life. However, professional well-being in particular is emphasised for its role in ensuring quality education to achieve the national development goal of growing the South African economy. For this reason, the DBE requires a particular type of thriving teacher for the task – a responsible, life-long learner who commits to the aims and objectives of the state. Consequently, the department actively needs to regulate the business of well-being advancement and keep their staff accountable by way of surveillance systems.

The DBE's well-being discourse illustrates a balancing act typical of neoliberal rationality where the well-being of the teacher as an autonomous person needs to be matched with the teacher as economic-rational actor. Wielding power is a strategic game to regulate conduct, stretching from the political sphere to the teacher's life-world. In the process, neoliberal forms of government simultaneously shift their responsibilities of protecting, providing, and fostering the potential of the citizens to the individual and increases its role as monitor and interventionist using surveillance systems to govern. As a result, teacher well-being is transformed into teacher self-care, but specified and controlled by the employer.

#### Note

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