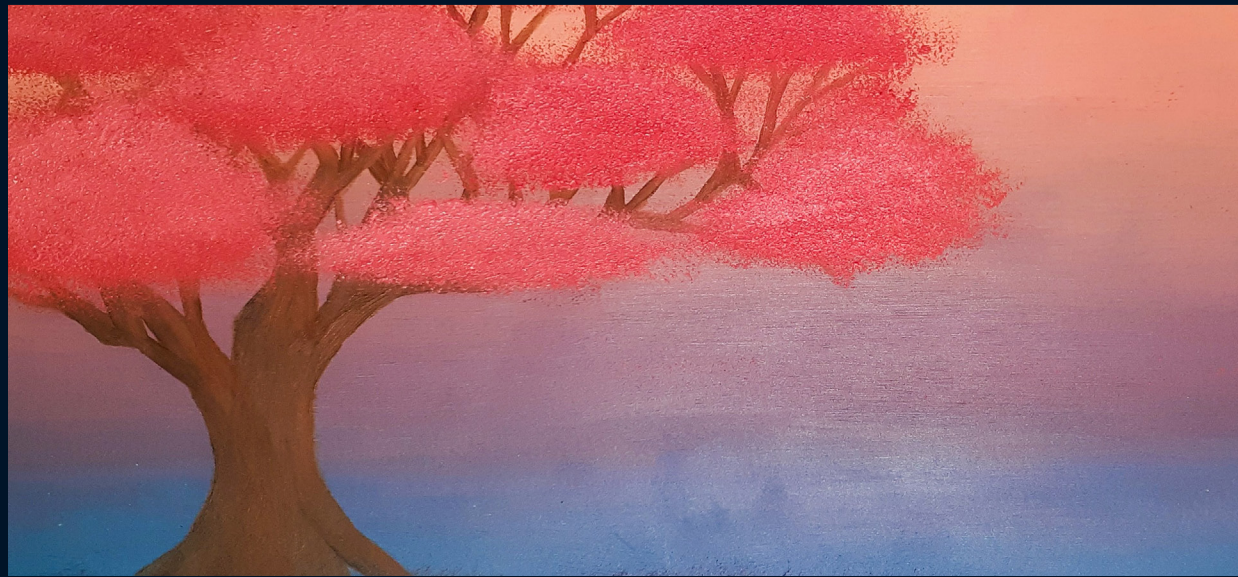


NEWS



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A Message from the Acting Dean

Dr Tulsi Morar



In March this year, the academic year was put on halt. Lecturers were anxiously treading in anticipation of how the academic year would conclude. Eight months later we can with confidence say, "We are surviving!"

The pandemic took the world by storm. It forced us to do things differently, think differently and be different. At the beginning of 2020, no one imagined that online would be the primary platform of teaching and learning. And due to the circumstances, lecturers had to be bold, adapt and change. Like a fish out of water, both lecturers and students navigated through multiple teaching and learning platforms, using innovative techniques to ensure that the academic year will be completed.

In this newsletter, I would like to focus on a particular

article which caught my attention as she raises awareness of mental health and wellness. Ms Blaauw has written about her mental health struggles. She encourages each one of us to ask for help if we are not coping and informs us that it is okay to ask for assistance. Asking for help, according to her is not a weakness. I particularly like how she explains one's growth since the quarantine and how she emphasizes that nothing is more important than your wellness. I quote from her article:

"You are not the same person you were at the start of quarantine and no matter how you look at it, you are older and therefore wiser and mentally stronger than when you started. And for that, I'm proud of you. Nothing is more important than you being okay."

I was drawn to the article because the journey

of these past eight months has not been easy. The adaptations were frustrating and disturbing for many. It is through these difficult times that we need to be there for each other, to listen, to support and to give hope and confidence. However, all in all, we have grown tremendously from this experience. I am proud of my colleagues and students who have shown extraordinary levels of confidence, self-discipline, independence and resilience.

In conclusion, I am reminded of a quote by Robert Tew: *"The struggle you're in today is developing the strength you need for tomorrow."*

Please be safe and take care.

YOU ARE IN THE NOW...

by Tatum Blaauw (s223479063)



*This is an oil painting I call: Under the Peach Blossom Tree
It is a safe place to take your mind when you feel overwhelmed.*

As a first year, being told that your entire syllabus is being moving online due to a pandemic is not only terrifying but exciting at first glance. Having to not leave your house for days on end is almost every introverted student's dream. Until it actually happens.

The transition from in person lessons to online assignments and tests was a difficult and rocky road. Especially to us first years who were completely unfamiliar with the Moodle platform but after a late assignment and test or two. We kind of got the hang of it.

Personally, I believe quarantine isolated people in a way most have never experienced before. Some have taken the time to reflect upon themselves, others have delved deeper into their hobbies and some just got really tired of their 4 bedroom walls and spontaneously decided that white was a good colour to repaint their room only to later regret their decision.

Times like these have especially been difficult to those

with already pre-disposed mental health issues. And while most people have been supportive. Mental health is the type of thing that you have to be constantly aware of and get through by yourself. While there is always a shoulder to lean on. You have to be able to take the first steps forward to get the help you need.

And this was my experience... regretfully.

After months of ignoring my symptoms they had finally gotten the better of me as I once again ended up in a hospital bed wondering how I got there.

After being tossed around in the medical public health system like a ragdoll. I thought that going back to the hell I crawled from was better than this. So, I decided to take my mental health into my own hands. After High School I was more than looking forward to starting the new chapter in my life known as University and for the first few months I was doing excellently. I calmly settled into my new life in Port Elizabeth and made some friends I'm absolutely

grateful to have... until the pandemic hit, and I was sent back home.

Without the distractions of university and the constant hustle and bustle of living on my own. My symptoms slowly crept up on me once again, I was losing weight because I wasn't hungry most of the time. I would stay awake for 48 hours or sleep for 13 hours. And the biggest symptom came when one day I looked into the road and realised that I wanted to smear my brain across the pavement. I instantly burst into tears and realised that as terrible as being in the system was. Being out of it was worse.

As I said. 2020 has been a year of self-reflection for most people and realising that you need help has never been a sign of weakness and I implore anyone who feels the same to seek medical help. Yeah, it's gonna suck, it's gonna suck for a long time. But whenever you try anything new it's naturally gonna suck. Like exercising, which is something else I still haven't gotten to but it's on the bucket list.

What I'm trying to say is that life is always going to kick your ass. That's kinda what it's supposed to do, but it only does that to make you better than you were before. You are not the same person you were at the start of quarantine and no matter how you look at it, you are older and therefore wiser and mentally stronger than when you started.

And for that, I'm proud of you.

Nothing is more important than you, being okay. And that I think is the hardest part of growing into an adult. Understanding your limits and knowing when you need to stop and recharge. Nothing is going to stop you from living a full and happy life, not your failures and not even yourself. No matter what you do, never apologise for prioritising yourself when you need to because ultimately you are your harshest criticizer. And almost always, the most unnecessary one.

So if you take anything from this piece, take this.

You matter.

You are here.

You are in the now...

and that ladies and gentlemen, is amazing.

Forever my role model

By Muki Moeng

Illustrated by Sphatho Mzantsi

In response to a call by Rapid Response Research and Innovation, Prof Nokhanyo Mdzanga and a few colleagues chose to put together a multidisciplinary project to the theme on 'public understanding and awareness'. They agreed upon an educational response to the COVID-19 situation in the form of story telling; the writing of multi-lingual stories. The aim being to educate and raise awareness about issues around COVID, with the hope to also inspire, motivate, entertain, educate and influence what families do during this time. The stories will be widely disseminated as a reading resource digitally and as hardcopy supplements.

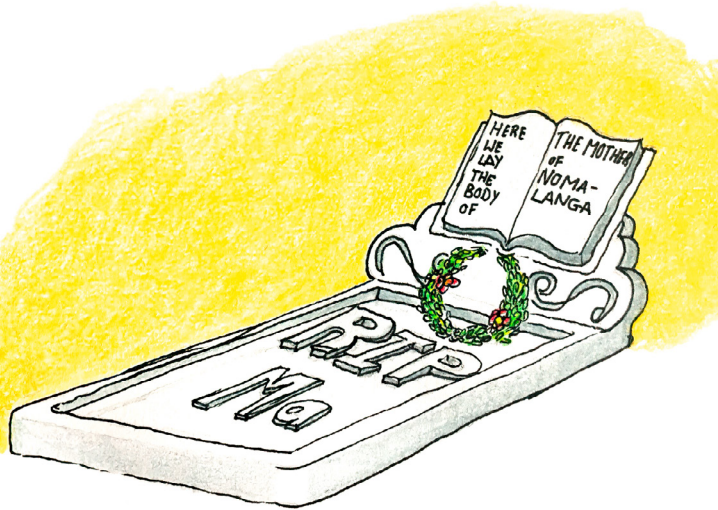


"Nomalanga, weeeee Nomalanga! Akuva ndiyakubiza?"

Nomalanga's grandmother always called her before sunset, while she was still playing with her friends. She used to get very upset because the games were at their best just when she had to go home.

Nomalanga was a bubbly little girl who lived with her grandmother. She always played with other children in her neighborhood. Her mother died two years ago in a car accident on her way back from work. She was a social worker who liked to help people who did not have enough food or clothes. Nomalanga used to enjoy their monthly trips to the township where they would go to a few houses to drop off food and sometimes clothes. She remembers how she used to ask her mother many questions, like why



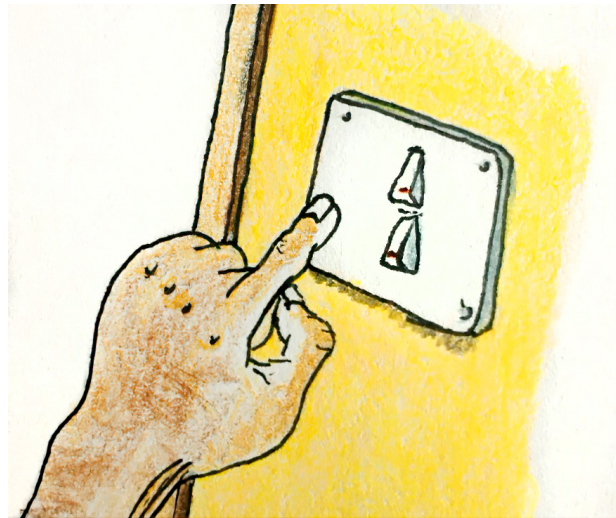


she was doing this. She cannot remember what she said, but she can clearly remember how her mother felt after every trip. She would be singing and cooking and be very friendly.

"Makhulu!" Nomalanga eventually responds. "Kutheni uthanda ukundikwaza nje Makhulu?" Her grandmother gave her a mouthful about how she must listen to her because she is trying to raise her well. Her grandmother further explained that she has chores that she must do before sunset, like closing the windows, drawing the curtains, switching on the lights and doing your homework. She said, "These are your responsibilities in this house. None else is going to do them for you. Your older brother and sister make sure that the house is clean and that there is water in the house. When I get back from work, I want to rest before I cook for you and check your homework." After hearing this, Nomalanga felt very sad because she could see how upset her grandmother was. Makhulu does not usually get upset. She is very loving and caring.

See, school holidays were especially exciting because she would visit Makhulu in the township. There, life was

vibrant and children played in the streets. Unlike in the suburbs where she used to stay. In the suburbs, she was often bored because they were not allowed to play in the street. Every child in her block played in their own yard and never outside. Her siblings did not always want to play with her because they were older. She resorted to playing with her dolls, watched TV and played games on her phone.



However, today her grandmother is very upset with her and that makes her upset too. When she gets upset, she remembers the day when her mother's brother, umalume, came to their house. His face was very sad. Until this day, Nomalanga cannot forget that image. She remembers how she felt about the news that her mother was killed in a car accident. Usually, when umalume came to visit, it was a joyous occasion because he brought sweets, cake, cool drink and everything that was nice. This time around, it was different. It was a sad day for everyone. After hearing the news, Nomalanga felt numb and the world stopped for a moment. He uncle tried to be brave but his eyes told a different story filled with pain. Her brother and sister could not stop crying.



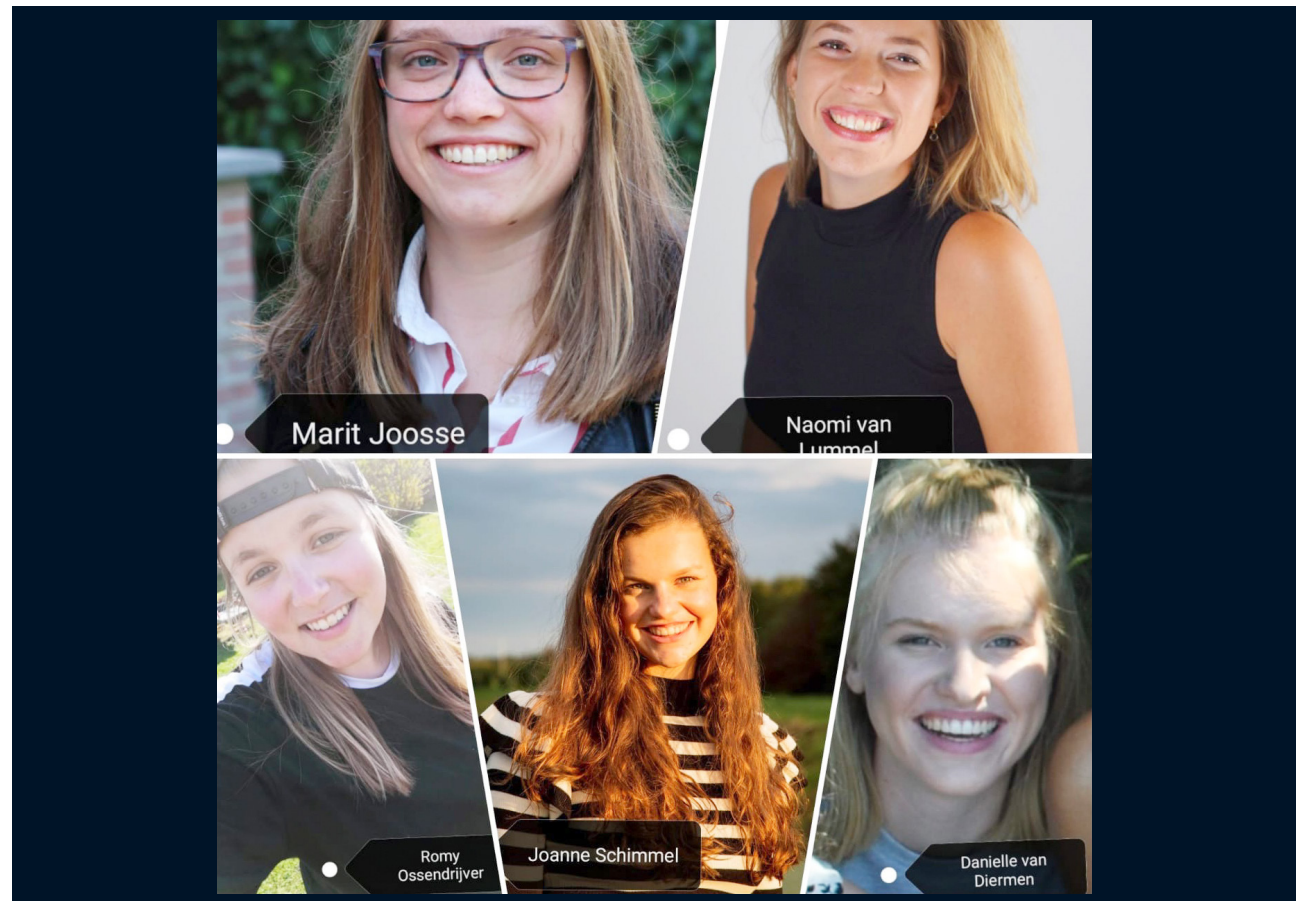
She pulled herself together and told her grandmother that she was sorry.

From then on, she did all her chores. She closed the windows, drew the curtains, switched on the lights and did her homework before sunset. Because she wanted Makhulu to be as happy as her mother, she decided to save her monthly pocket money so that she could give food to the needy. She took good care of her clothes so that when they were small she could give them to someone else who needed them.

NMU and Christelijke Hogeschool Ede (CHE) students share teaching experiences

Mr Dewald Koen

Despite facing a challenging year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of students studying Afrikaans Home Language in the Intermediate, Senior and FET-phases voluntarily participated in an online project in collaboration with the Christelijke Hogeschool Ede. The CHE is a vocational university located in the mid-eastern part of the Netherlands and specialises in teacher training. Dr Susan van der Ree (CHE) initiated the online project in 2019 leading to the first group of NMU students interacting and sharing ideas and experiences about education with their counterparts in the Netherlands during the end of September 2020. CHE students are expected to complete a module in which they have to research education systems from countries all over the world. 31 students chose South Africa for their research project. During the online sessions Dutch students were paired with two NMU students per group and engaged on a wide variety of issues concerning education in South Africa. NMU students who participated include: (IP): Georgey Rex, Kayleigh Erasmus, Runique Pedro, Veronica de Lange, Elsa Ellis, Megan Coetzee, Dorian Miles, Claudine de Wet, Diego Kock and Carlo Jonck. (SP& FET): Lynn Miles and Fransciska Slabbert. NMU's participants enjoyed the interaction and even learnt a few Dutch words. All the participants were extremely excited about this online exchange initiative which will continue in 2021 and hopefully include more participants from NMU's Education Faculty. **Four students shared their experiences:**



NMU and CHE students share teaching experiences

Veronica de Lange
Claudine de Wet
Megan Coetzee and
Georgey Rex

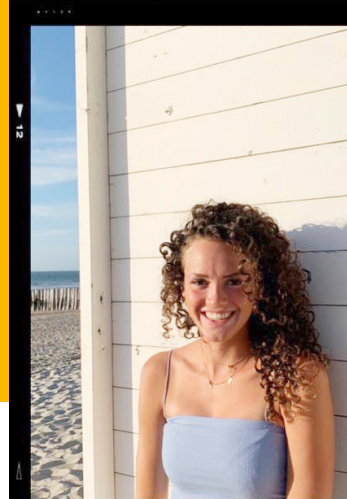
The ins and outs of Netherlands education system: Your school year starts when you are 5 years old. The curriculum consists of various subjects such as Digital literacy, English, Dutch, Mathematics, Citizenship, Exercise and sports, Arts and culture and Society. In the Netherlands, primary school finishes after year 8 (Grade 8); thereafter you must go to a secondary school based on the educational stream you chose. In secondary school they have different levels, and those levels determine the next educational stream you will take. Until you are 18 years old, it is compulsory for you to go to school. Once you have completed secondary school you can either study or attempt to find a position in a workplace. However, all pupils are encouraged to obtain at least a diploma. Through WhatsApp only we have learnt many valuable facts about the Netherlands. They wear peculiar costumes once a year which represents a day called "fishing day" and the beach is shallow for about 12 meters before you get to the point where the waves break. The beautiful views of South Africa have secured their place in top countries on their bucket list that these students would love to visit.

Veronica de Lange (IP 1st Year) and Claudine de Wet (IP 2nd Year)

We were granted a great opportunity to engage with student teachers from the Christelijke Hogeschool Ede, a vocational university in the Netherlands. We were able to share information about our different education systems and we came across the following interesting facts: They are working according to different levels in their schooling system. They get ranked on their intelligence quotient and that is how classes are grouped. Their abilities also play a major role. Learners who show more interest in physical activities such as crafting and building are taught practical skills. This means there are space for all learners with different interests in their schooling system. Each school has their own vision and policy on how they teach their pupils. But they do have one collective vision which is positivity amongst all learners regardless of their level of schooling. It is mandatory for teachers to always engage with learners in a positive tone. It is likely for a teacher who does not do so to get dismissed or marked as incompetent. For example: "Sven, Mark and Lisa. Sit down now!" Instead you will say: "Wow, look at Sven, Mark and Lisa. They look like active listeners."

Megan Coetzee (IP 2nd Year) and Georgey Rex (IP 1st Year)

Elise
Burggraaf



Carlijn van
Bemmel



Tirza
Gundelach

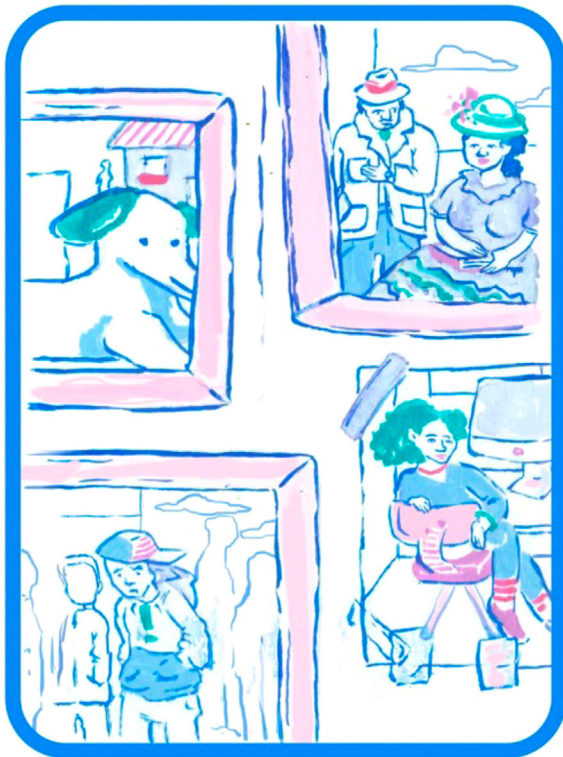


Arno
Blok

SURVIVAL OF COMMUNITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

1ST LEARNER

I am **Onako**, a girl living in 5 Ways Port Elizabeth with my big sister and her 1-year-old baby. My big sister is an Intern at a Bookkeeping company that is BBEE owned. Our parents are both in a small rural village in Sterkspruit. My big sister is the breadwinner, she fends for us in Port Elizabeth, our parents in Sterkspruit, as well as our drug addict brother who is currently living with our parents.



Towards the end of February, I was on a platform just browsing and having a good laugh at the memes and people were posting, until a video popped up on my timeline on how people overseas were dying of a Respiratory illness. I then watched it and in panic mode I showed my big sister, who just laughed and joked about how it would not reach South Africa. ...



As days turned into weeks, more and more information popped up about the illness, and I picked up two words 'COVID-19' and 'Coronavirus' these seemed to have been the names of the illness – I do not know. I did try looking it up and GOSH! It was just ...

wear masks and gloves? Do they also have to have their tiny hands sanitised? Confused was my middle name ...



///// DATA LOADING /////



///// VIDEO BUFFERING /////

...

1G costs R125 on the cell phone networks we both use. **STRESS!** Food in stores is now ridiculously expensive; R20 for a head of cabbage, R35 for a 2.5kg bag of Maize Meal. A pack of nappies costs R229, a tin of Formula costs R175 – cheapest, and now we must have data for my Zoom lessons. I do 7 subjects at school each teacher wants +60minutes for a lesson. All this and yet the government said, “We are ready and prepared for this Pandemic”. Again, a new word:

PANDEMIC! ...



35 min.later...

YOUR 1 DAY DATA HAS RUN OUT .

2ND LEARNER

whenever someone coughed or sneezed, but we did not think to protect ourselves. A couple of days after schools had officially closed, I am not really sure of when exactly, the President announced a National Lockdown, . . .



As in the case of my friend, whose family is suffering. We were told that our families must register for Food Parcels by the Councillor's office, but I know of no-one that has received those parcels in our community – none of our neighbours got them.

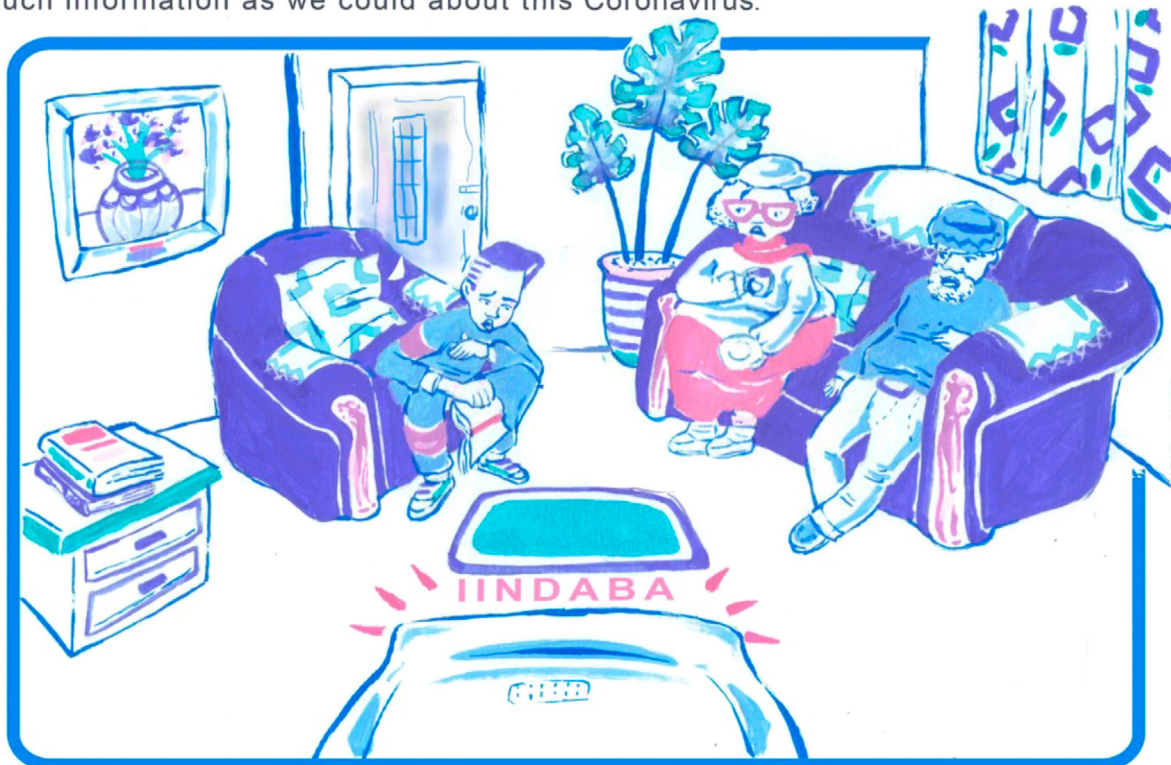
. . .

There is so much uncertainty as to what the future holds and more and more people are getting infected.



3RD LEARNER

so we made sure to watch the news daily just so that we could absorb as much information as we could about this Coronavirus.

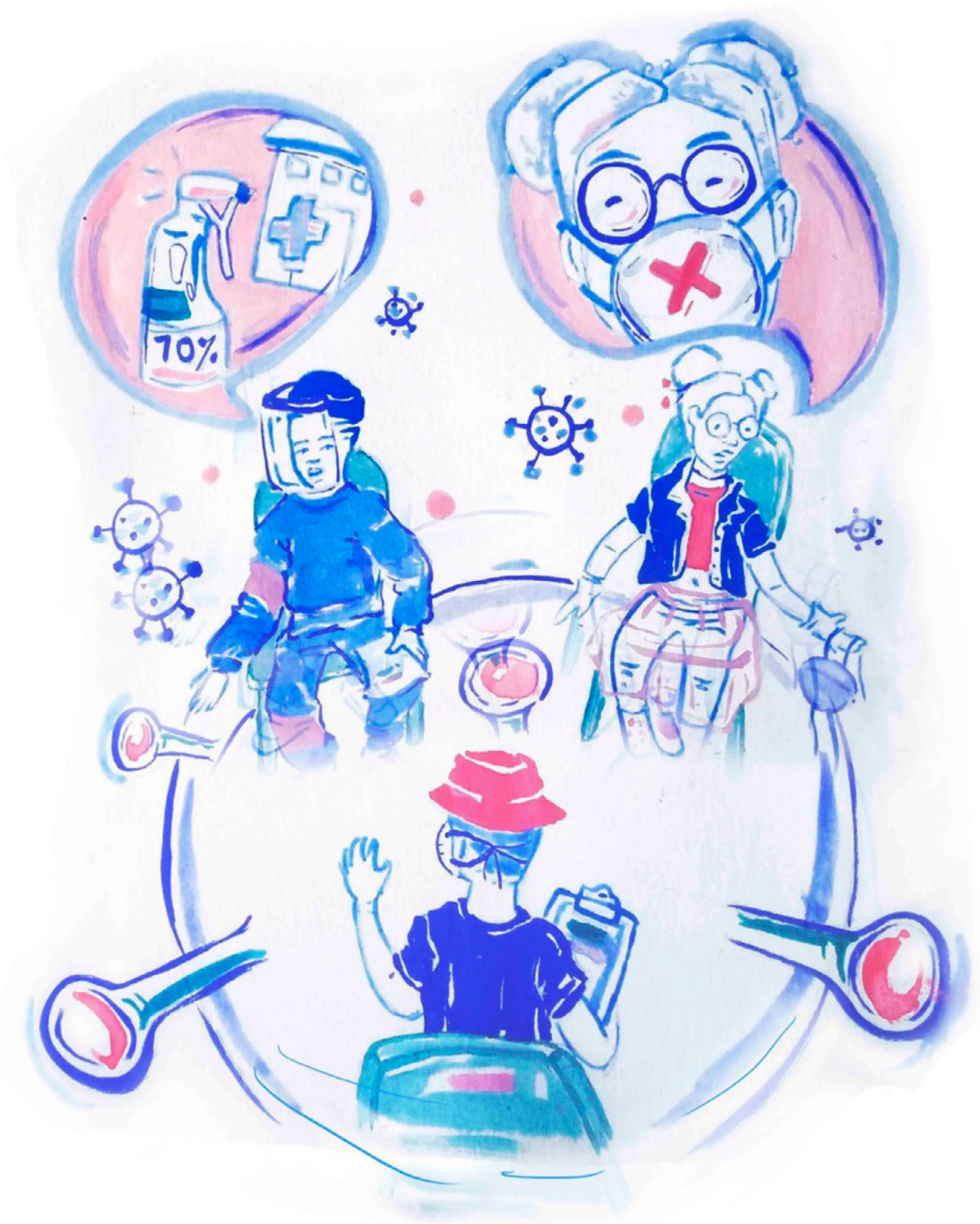


...
Back in Ngqushwa, we have lots of Old people who do not understand this virus. ...

In terms of the cancellations of all Traditional ceremonies – sinamatyala



3RD LEARNER



N. Gedze, N. Mntwini, T. Chizu are part of an organisation called **Intsika Yokwabelana Ngolwazi**, aimed at Restoring the FUN in Learning.

These are stories collected by three community members, on how our communities are surviving inspite of the challenges presented by their socio-economic context and the pandemic. 3 high school learners meet up at a Study camp and are grouped together for the camp's activities, one of them being about the Covid-19 Pandemic. From their discussions they pick up a lot about the *Contextual differences* as well as how *people in their communities* are *not well informed* about it.

Engaging with the New Normal: Providing Emotional Support to Learners

Intermediate Phase (IP) students had the opportunity to complete a task that interrogated the emotional support they could offer school learners. This assignment was intended to further develop the visual literacy competence of students as pre-service teachers. Students were encouraged to either draw or collage, to express an aspect of providing emotional care to children in grades 4, 5 and 6. In addition to creating an image, students had to write a 100 – 200 word accompanying text in order to assist viewers to interpret their image.

In building understandings of a changing schooling context, students are encouraged to consult in-service teachers and to share their emerging insights with peers. This collegial interaction could have the effect of building collective understanding of the *new normal* in schooling contexts. PIEA100, PIEA200, PIEL203 and PIME403 participants (first, second and third year IP students) are encouraged to draw on the “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) they possess and that of their actual and virtual communities. They

gather, reshape and share what they are gleaned about living, language and literacy. Mutual and critical, meaning making seems to be an essential preparation for work in schools in the future (Scarino, 2014).

Next year, IP students will be expected to participate in school based learning (SBL) opportunities. This work integrated learning may take place early in 2021. Awareness of support practices could be an important preparation for engaging with school learners.

Dr Margie Childs

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In 2020

The abnormal is normal
Our schedules were suddenly open, yet unavailable
We work together to stay far apart
Away from people and places
We protect each other by protecting ourselves.
We begin to university without leaving home
We study together from a distance
Through it all we learn to appreciate things we've taken for granted
Although this year has felt like a couple of months
2020 will stay with us for a lifetime
Elluwese Carvalho, 2020

Providing emotional support for learners.

Through these tough times of Covid19, a teacher's support to their learner could bring an abundance of positive change. It is important that teachers become confidants to their students so that students can ventilate. It should bring learners enough hope and confidence that they do not see giving up as an option.

Learners often get tired of repeating the same routine every day, therefore teachers must on some days give them time for extramural activities such as sport. Sport is great for relieving stress and that must be discussed by the school so that each grade participates. There should be a great teacher and parent relationship that allows them to communicate about a learners freely.

Thandeka Segodi.



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