

## **Seeing, Thinking and Wondering: Considering the NMU Faculty of Education First Year Experience Programme**

**Topics:** Student learning

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of our research is to reflect on our engagement with first-year Bachelor of Education students, in order to surface areas of success and interrogate aspects that need attention and improvement. Our presentation is a work in progress capturing essences of a student support initiative that commenced this year. The programme is known as the First-Year Experience Programme (FYE).

The FYE was launched in the Faculty of Education at the Nelson Mandela University in response to concerns about assisting students new to Higher Education, within a context of online and remote learning. The programme includes areas such as academic and psychosocial support. The process of finding a place and purpose in a higher education environment is mediated by the Co-coordinator of the FYE programme. A team of senior and experienced students helps first-year students transition into a new space and make meaning of institutional practices and expectations.

In our inquiry, we use a humanizing pedagogy as a departure point. This approach frames the view of learning and teaching espoused by our institution. As our reflection lens, we use the Statements of Awareness of a Humanizing Pedagogy. These understandings were developed at our university as part of the practices of a Humanizing Pedagogy hub. Students and staff shared stories of humanizing and dehumanizing experiences in order to distil perceptions and build discernment linked to a humanizing orientation.

Our work is positioned as a self-study of practice. Planning documents, reports, our reflection journals, and interaction as critical friends form the basis for data generation in our research endeavour. As we reflect on the FYE programme and our participation in this initiative we use the See Think, Wonder, and other visual thinking routines to prompt and surface insights. This data is examined in the light of emerging awareness of a humanizing stance. We see that although much has been accomplished, we still have a great deal of work to do. We think that efforts to include student voice could be extended and augmented. We wonder what next year will bring as we enter a hybrid learning space. Mask to mask and continued online engagement will be used to offer the Bachelor of Education next year at our university. As we ponder the complexities and practicalities of hybrid learning and teaching, we hold ourselves to a humanizing ideal and creative interaction with each other and the world.

### Questions for further engagement:

1. What plans could be put in place specifically to meet the needs of first-year students from rural areas?
2. How can online learning be adapted and augmented to realise the ideals of a humanizing approach?

**Keywords:** Student Support, First Year Experience, Humanising Pedagogy