

Vignette: Hallo, kom in!¹

Outside it is a cold winter morning, the type where small misty clouds form with each exhaled breath. In the lecture hall, Doc utters the purpose of this module: “Creating safe and effective classrooms”. Before formally starting, Doc swiftly outlines the expectations for class and the semester, preparing the students for what lies ahead. Doc sets the stage with a captivating statement: “Onderrig vind nie plaas as jy nie veilig en gemaklik in jou klas voel nie ... jou leerders leer nie as hulle nie gemaklik en veilig voel nie²”. She teaches from behind the podium, stepping out when listening to student responses. She acknowledges students’ raised hands and calls them by their names when it is their turn to engage. The first student responds, Doc moves out from behind the podium and moves closer to the students, listening with slightly raised eyebrows. The students’ responses are humorous and engaging, and Doc responds enthusiastically: “Lisa, jou staatmaker!³” Doc has taken off her soft blue- and brown-striped scarf and grey coat. Her cheeks are flushed red, her hands gesticulate, her voice projects with energy and self-possession, and her neck muscles pull like taut strings on a cello with each uttered word. At times, when the lecture hall echoes in silence, Doc diffuses with wit: “Ek hoop julle weet wat die grondwet is⁴”. Doc now sips from her pink translucent water bottle. A student arrives late, and Doc responds: “Hallo, kom in!” and continues with the lesson unperturbed.

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¹ Translation from Afrikaans: “Hello, come in!”

² Translation from Afrikaans: “Teaching does not take place if you do not feel safe and comfortable in your class ... your learners do not learn if they do not feel comfortable and safe”

³ Translation from Afrikaans: “Lisa, you are dependable!”

⁴ Translation from Afrikaans: “I hope you know what the constitution is”

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