

Challenges of Teaching Young Children

English translation:

A: What are the challenges that you have faced in your teaching career, as you teach young children?

B: Teaching children how to read. This is because reading is the foundation. A child who cannot read does not progress any further. Those are the kind of children, whom if you write sentences on the board that they need to fill out, for instance, Father and mother go to the rural areas by_____, the child writes father and mother go to the rural areas by *brrr drrrr*. The rest of the sentence you can not even understand. The answers will be provided. We put all the answers for all the sentences. We do that because we want to test the reading of that child. You put the incomplete sentences and the words to use to fill out and you will see what the children will write for you.

A: What is the cause, usually, for kids who perform like that?

B: Usually, children who perform like that could not read when they were in grade one. Reading is mainly in grade one and two. Once the child is in grade three, that one is a bridging class. You can not teach the child more reading because this is the point when you begin to teach the child concepts for junior level. In grade one and two you will be playing around with the children but then you emphasize reading. There are so many periods of reading in grade one and two, so a child should come from grade one and two with the ability to read. Because starting from grade three to four and five, there are now many things involved. It is hard for a teacher in grade three to find time for reading. So the only thing needed is for teachers to teach children to read but now teachers of today no longer care about the knowledge of a child. I am not sure why it is like that but maybe it is because of the salaries. They now progress with those that progress—that's their new proverb. The few who are intelligent are the ones who get attention and those who do not do well in class, are left like that. They are left on their group making noise. But I have noticed the importance of reading because if I am given a child who cannot read, the child ends up being able to read.

A: What do you do with such a child so that he/she ends up being able to read?

B: I start teaching the child from the past syllabus. I start with sounds in English and in Shona I start with the vowels, that is 'A E I O U'. Even if the child is now in grade seven, we start from there because the foundation will not be good.

A: You once talked about the teachers of today, that they no longer love their profession. Can you tell me more about this issue?

B: The reason why teachers no longer teach well is because of the salaries. The salaries that they are getting are very low. So they would realize that old teachers are still doing their jobs but the young teachers you would hear them saying that, "Oh mothers you are the ones that are letting us down." You do not want money. They do not care because they do not have children at heart. What they want is money, yet teaching is a calling. It is like a pastor's profession. Eh your job is to help the child because the child who you are giving a punishment of not teaching is not the government that gives you money. So that child will suffer for nothing. This is what happened in 2008. The whole year we had elections and teachers will be at voters' education. All the teachers will elect officers. The whole year ended with children walking in the streets. Students did not learn that year.

A: Okay

About CultureTalk: CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use every day. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.