

Tuesday, March 28th

10:22 am

Interview length: 16:18

Tamariskia Primary School - Esperanza Diergaardt

Peter: Okay so, you know we are university students doing project work here. Do you want to tell us your name your role and what you do here at the school

Esperanza: okay so my name is Esperanza Diergaardt, sometimes a difficult surname for people to pronounce but it is fine. I have been teaching for 17 years now and I haven't been too long in the coast, I have been here for 5 years. I am an English teacher, qualified for high school but the workload was too much so I thought I would try primary school and I am happy, I love what I do and I teach grade 7 English.

Peter: and how open are they to learn?

Esperanza: very much, very, they are. It is just the problem, they do not get enough exposure. They do not get enough people to come on board and tell them, expose them to the world out there. So that's actually why when Mrs. smitt phoned me, I was immediately open to it. In fact to sensitize them, they are relying on us for information because of the fact that they don't really read a lot. They have the social media thing, they have media, the tv radio but that's it. When we have people like you come on board, it makes it more real. More accessible. So it is actually a good thing.

Peter: and how much are sports valued here at this School, in the curriculum here?

Esperanza: well I don't really know how to answer that, it probably depends on person to person. It is whether you are into it or not. And I don't really blame them because of the fact that they are not really being introduced. You do have people, you do have committees, you have that, but not a lot. Okay, but that's me from my point of view.

Peter: is PE the only time they have to do sports here?

Esperanza: sadly yes. PE is basically the only time they really get exposed to it. They get to go out and do their thing, but that is part of the problem. When they go out and do their thing they play soccer. But there's not a lot being done about it, you need to talk to them about the complete body mind, and soul the whole thing, with the result is when they hear the word physical education they hear the word soccer, there is no talk about nutrition or healthy habits or a healthy

mind. And if it doesn't come from us and if it doesn't come from the parent's side that's all they are ever going to know. They go to school, do work, play soccer, watch TV, then go to bed.

Other subjects may touch on it, the body, healthy eating, there's also athletics that's another time they may talk about it

But

Other than in the curriculum and teaching itself, no. everyone is so focused on the academic side, but we forget about the other side which is full body development.

Peter: touching on the resources, how, and what resources are available or lacking at the Primary Schools. What comes to mind is

Nutrition nourishment, hydration. Are they eating two meals a day? What's your situation like that? Making physical activity sustainable.

Esperanza: currently we do have a school feeding program-

Peter: for primary school?

Esperanza: for primary, yes, so what's happening right now is they go to the soup kitchen and they get their porage, a maize blend. And some kids, rely on that. When they go home some of them don't really eat. and we do not know the circumstances of everyone at home. So when they come many a time they just come to get something to eat. So we have that. But one thing I must add is that only having one thing is not good, it is not a balanced diet. It is just the porage they get and that is that. Sometimes you will find a volunteer coming on doing something extra, can I give them this? Can I get them that? Which is good but most of the time it is just the porage.

Peter: are there any other challenges they face or circumstances they face in the area?

Esperanza: There are many many challenges. The school counselor will have a lot to say about that, they are swamped with cases every single day. You'd be teaching a child sitting in front of you not knowing what was happening at home. Its different backgrounds its different upbringing, but everyone sitting in front of me is facing something. There are so many challenges but the reality is, it's not like they will come up to you and say, "My mom is beating my dad" or "I didn't have something to eat last night" Or "I didn't sleep in a warm bed last night". 3/4 of the students being here are facing severe challenges, especially financial challenges. But it is what it is, we try to make up for it, to provide a space where they can just be themselves. Many times we don't understand why a child is acting out, or why they get mad or frustrated. But if you have that mindset in the background of, you don't know what happened last

night or where they were, if they even have parents, how involved are the parents? That is another problem they are struggling with.

Maddy: do you think a lot of the teachers at the school here have that mindset?

Esperanza: um, that's a difficult question (laughing), I can be honest but it is also very dangerous to answer, um yah. I think we have the mindset but we choose not to get involved. It's a choice. Unfortunately when you make that choice you know. It's difficult

Kate: there are a lot of students:

Esperanza: everyone is coming to school with their own problems. It's not like I am going to come in and give more than what is happening on my plate and more I have to deal with. So- I am going to stay neutral I am going to come to be unbothered, my work, get paid and then I'm going to go home. I am not going to lie about that. So unfortunately it is like that. You get the ones who go the extra mile and the ones who love. But that is with every job

Peter: do you find training to be an issue?

Esperanza: training in terms of? Like sports education?

Peter: yes sports education. Are you required to wear many hats in the school environment? And you don't find there are resources to support you in those endeavors.

Esperanza: uh yah, since I have only been here for 5 years, I have come and I have not seen a lot of things yet. Unfortunately and then you have to make do with what you have you have to improvise. Sometimes you can go to the office with a problem but they will also ask you, what you are doing to solve the problem. But sometimes we don't have the solution to that problem. That's another problem the kind of mindset thing of, "Oh that's not my problem so I am just going to let it go". Apart from being the English teacher here, I am also doing the PE thing, and when I came here I heard that PE was just running around. Playing soccer. Sometimes during PE, the teacher will let the child go out on their own and that is a problem because anything can happen out there and then who is to blame then? I mean you are supposed to be the adult. Hardly any equipment, I haven't seen any. That is my store room, when I came here I found a few weights for shot-put, a single javelin, I found two volleyball nets there. But unfortunately, due to the fact that they keep on breaking in here, specifically into my class, that's why it looks like this, they break into the store room the windows don't work. What it is they take in there I don't really know.

Maddy: The students?

Esperanza: Uh no no no we have no idea who it is but they continuously break into my class. Windows don't work, furniture gets broken. Things get vandalized. They go into the store room, they steal, they take. One time I had curtains here, you name it. As a result, you become like your environment. And that's the sad part you just don't bother anymore. You know we could go out and buy things but we are sitting in a culture where people simply don't care. Compared to the one or two that actually care, but the vast majority it's just sad that society has become like this. And children pick up on that. There is a ripple effect. And they become like us, we are supposed to be the ones guiding them, it's bad.

Maddy: so would you consider that they're being lack of a role model for them?

Esperanza: Oh yes! Definitely. Everyone is coming in here with different personalities and characters and if you don't have something important to give back to the community and the children. **I mean these kids are supposed to be our future. But basically what's happening right now is that these are the exact same children that we are sending to the streets.** Education is lost. Most of the time I don't teach subject content. I teach things about life, and I talk to them more about life out there and what it is all about. Cause many a time they do not get this at their housing. But every child sitting in front of me has something massive that they are dealing with. So they come here for the one person who can hear them.

Peter: Do you have any after-school programs?

Esperanza: After school? No. Me personally?

Peter: The school system?

Esperanza: Other than the athletics no. we are supposed to have learning support. To help children that struggle. That isn't happening with the exception of one to two teachers. But I think they have the wrong conception of what learning support is all about. Learning support is reaching that one or two (kids) you couldn't reach in class. The ones that are here but they're also not here. But what people do for learning support here is because of the fact that our classes are overcrowded, we sit with 40 plus children in a class, you can't reach everyone. So what they do is they have the afternoon session and they come in and reteach the content which was done during the day, which is not what we are supposed to do. That is not learning support. So also because the fact that it was never explained to us what learning support was so each teacher does what they think will allow that child to pass.

Peter: We appreciate you providing your insight and we don't want to be these people who come in a try to solve problems but I hope coming in today could provide some of that insight you were looking for.

Kate: I really enjoyed getting to know them, they're so funny.

Esperanza: no but it was really good. Thank you, to you guys as well. We Need more of this, just to see that they can learn in a fun way.

Maddy: and just teaching them that they can learn and do things through sports, like a few kids were asking me about my college experience. Like I ended up getting more money to go to college because I am a swimmer. It's great to inspire kids that that is a possibility for them.

Esperanza: definitely I can guarantee, tomorrow some of the children will come in saying, oh "did you hear what that auntie said? So let's do this let's try that!" I mean their minds are like sponges, they just absorb, and just ignite that fire, gets them asking questions, that's precisely just what we need. Just plant the seed and it grows from there. To you and the committee as well really appreciate it. I hope this will not be the last.