

Guides / 29 Jun 2015

# How To Motivate Students As A Volunteer Teacher Abroad

*by* Laura

**Away from traditional teaching to critical thinking. Intelligence is not always about the ability to remember and repeat facts, but to understand how to apply skills to real life situation. Read how Helping Overcome Obstacles Peru (HOOP) supports education and critical thinking.**

**I**n the fight against poverty, education is arguably one of the most useful tools. It's a way to help people find their best possible path in life – so getting it right is important. But what's the most effective way to teach? Misha Zala from Helping Overcome Obstacles Peru discusses how education is not about [teaching](#) kids *what* to think – it's about teaching them *how* to think for themselves.

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# Traditional Teaching

Your teacher writes notes on the board, and you have to copy them into your book. How does this sound for a lesson plan?

It's a teaching style that isn't going to strain your brain cells too much – and will most likely have you counting down the seconds until break time. Yet, for millions of students here in [Peru](#) and around the world, this is exactly how many school classes are taught. So why would we teach children like this? There are many possible reasons – pressure to get students through standardized tests, a reliance on prescriptive books, or a lack of training in creative teaching.

## Teach critical thinking

But wouldn't it be better if we helped students become more self-aware, and gave them the chance to think for themselves? Do we want our children to accept everything they're told, or to think critically and challenge opinions?

When I first arrived to work as an English teacher at HOOP, I was ready to teach the same way I do back in the UK. I realized things weren't going to be that simple when I rubbed most of the notes off the board and announced that we were going to use the vocabulary we had just learned. Without the reassurance of the answers being on display, my class was visibly shocked and confused. After all, to them, school is all about memorizing facts. So when I asked them to apply their knowledge to other tasks, we were breaking into uncharted territory.

“ The problem with spoon-feeding information to children is that once they get used to it, it can be hard to shake the habit. ”

When I asked my class to write thank-you cards, my example on the board was, 'Thank you from... (Piero).' So that was exactly what some of them wrote! My response had to be "Is your name Piero?!" When we made Mothers' Day cards, I left a blank space for their names and ended up with approximately ten anonymous cards!

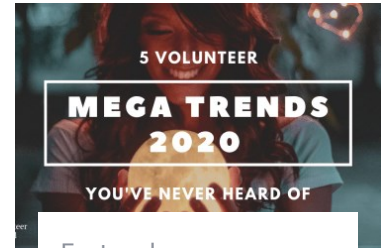
With young children, who don't understand everything you say, modelling is paramount. In other words; 'show them, don't tell them'. Using lots of examples and encouraging children to make up their own response is a good way to get them to use their imagination.

At HOOP, we try to make learning fun, and we 'trick' our children into using English as much as possible. For example, all our classes sing a song in English for our Performance of the Month.

“ As teachers, we need to encourage our students to solve problems independently, and improve their

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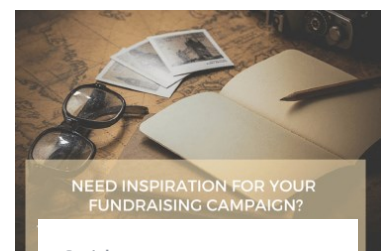
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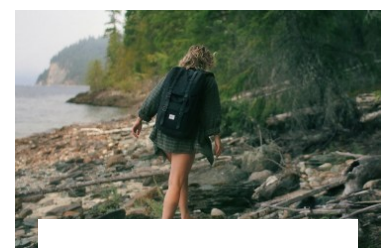
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creative and critical thinking skills. ”

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Intelligence is not always about the ability to remember and repeat facts, but to understand how to apply skills to real life situations. It's not our job to tell kids what to think, but to find the genius within each child and encourage it to come to the surface.

Helping Overcome Obstacles Peru (HOOP) is a registered Non-Governmental Organization located in Arequipa, Peru. HOOP is not affiliated to any religious or political ideals. They work with the impoverished people in the Flora Tristan community. Flora Tristan is a shanty town located on the outskirts of Arequipa composed of haphazardly constructed shacks with a lack of basic services, such as electricity or running water. If you're interested in volunteering with HOOP in Arequipa, Peru, just get in touch and apply here!

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Written By  
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