

Recorded: on 7 Feb 2014

School: Sári Gusztáv Primary and Elementary Art School

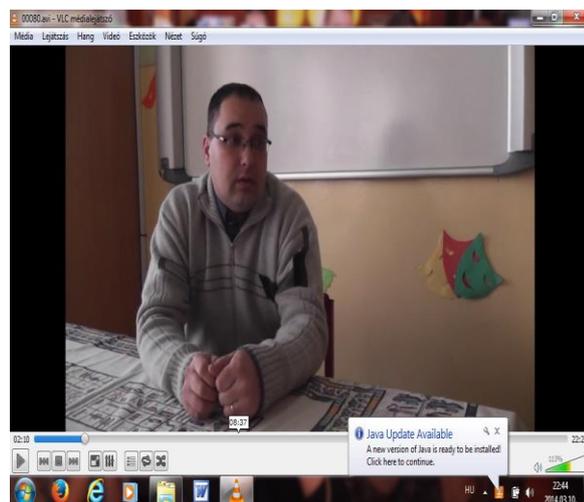
Interviewee (teacher): János Németh

Interviewers: Fanni Tanka, Edit Bereczki

Length: 25 min

Q: How long have you been working with children?

A: Since 2001, when as a beginner teacher I started to teach history.



Q: What are your students' backgrounds like?

A: As it is a rural school, we have children whose parents are poor, or even unemployed, or didn't complete primary education, but we also have students with rich white-collar parents.

Q: Do you think it's important to motivate children?

A: Yes, it's pretty important. It's much easier to teach a motivated student than an unmotivated one.

Q: Do you consider the lack of motivation a typical problem among children?

A: To be honest, yes, there are students, who are not interested in books and learning.



Q: What do you think of your students' motivation?

A: In my opinion, most of them are motivated. There are students, who have intrinsic motivation, want to learn, and are interested. There are also children whose parents are the motivational factors for them. These children want to meet their parents' expectations. But on the other hand, there are pupils who are motivated by the negative consequences. I mean, if they get a bad mark, they can't use the computer.

Q: What is the strongest motivational factor?

A: Maybe it's the parents. If children get a good mark, they'll get the latest smart phone, or even money, but if they get a bad mark, they can't watch television, or use the computer.

Q: What is your opinion of negative motivation?

A: Well, any motivation which improves a child is good, but it's definitely better, when intrinsic motivation is more important. If the student has to study under pressure, it's not sure that this knowledge is a long-term one, but if they study a subject that they're interested in, it results in more reliable knowledge.

Q: How do the grades motivate children?

A: It helps them to know how they managed to learn what they need to. It's feedback for them. It also motivates them that they don't want to fail and repeat class, it's important for even the worst and weakest student, because they don't want to leave their class they belong to.

Q: How does the teacher's personality affect the students?

A: Actually, everything depends on the teacher. We can use different aids like the interactive board, computers, up-to-date and modern school books, but if the teacher's personality is not right, it isn't worth anything.

Q: What personality trait does a good teacher need to have?

A: The most important is that we like and accept children. If we don't accept them the way they are, we won't be able to motivate them.

Q: What motivational methods do you use in your lessons?

A: It's a modern world. We have mentioned computers several times. Children really like them. In my opinion, today's children are very strongly visually focused. I always use a lot of projected, colorful pictures, and film details, so I can show them the characteristics of the given historical era. We should not forget that kids like playing, so our lessons have to be playful and varied, and we need to avoid monotony.

Q: Can you mention a child, who is difficult or impossible to motivate?

A: There is one or two in each year. You cannot do anything about them. Being unmotivated comes from their temperament and their parental background. Almost in all cases we speak about parents who live under the poverty line and didn't finish primary school. In that case, the child isn't interested in what happens at school, and to be honest, the parents are not interested either in what happened at school that day or what grade their child got. That's why these children lack parental expectations. There are not many students like these, 1 or 2 per year, and they are more likely into the higher classes; in the lower classes it is not yet typical.

Q: Can we solve these problems by keeping contact with the parents?

A: In better cases the parents listen to the problems but unfortunately they actually do nothing. I have been promised many things, like the child will change, s/he will pay attention, often the child also promises to do so, but nothing happens, they just say what we want to hear.

Q: What if the child refuses to cooperate or to complete the task?

A: It depends on the student. I need to know him/her and I have to know why s/he refuses working. The methods can be different, there are students who can be asked nicely, but others need to be forced to achieve some improvement. However, sometimes we cannot use power because s/he will refuse to cooperate. We need to know what we can use with particular students and we need to know our reasons as well. One reason can be that something happened to him/her during the break and that's why s/he doesn't feel like working in the lesson. We need to find it out, because there could be serious problems and if I hurt him deeply, it won't result in him working. I should rather leave him alone in that

lesson. He will remember that I was understanding, thus s/he will be active in the next lesson.

Q: What problems can low motivation cause in students' studies after primary school and in their personality development?

A: It will soon become obvious if the student is unconcerned, because s/he will get bad grades. It will lead to a situation when the student cannot continue his/her studies at the chosen secondary school because of his/her bad grades. As an adult, it will become even harder to make ends meet because s/he won't get a good job. S/he will remain unmotivated and will become disinterested at work as well. It's like a vicious circle; s/he won't be able to break out similarly to his/her parents. That's why the disadvantaged student is in the worst situation.