

## **Interview with Ms. F**

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### **Partner introduction:**

**I had a plan to interview one or two principals of schools located in rural areas. As a member of a Public Council at the Ministry of Education, I was invited to visit one of the branches of the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, located in a rural area.**

**I used this opportunity to implement my plan. We had a Q & A session with the local education community. There were many school principals attending. I asked a head of local education department for permission to interview a newly appointed rural school principal. When the meeting was over, I saw two or three school principals waiting for me. They all were ready to give interview. One of them was young female principal. She looked excited, probably because she was interested in giving the interview. Since I only had an hour before my departure for Baku, I thanked them and informed that I only can interview one school principal. She stayed, while others left. Below you find transcript of interview with her.**

### **Transcription of the interview**

Respondent: **Ms. F**

*A Principal the General Secondary School in a village located in a remote rural area in the north of country*

Interviewer: **Ms. Ulviyya (UM)**

*Assistant Professor, ADA University*

Date: **Jan 24, 2020**

Duration: **42 minutes**

**UM: Please introduce yourself. What is your name?**

MS. F: Ms. F

**UM: Ms. F, how many years have you been working as a school principal? What is your educational background? What is your specialty? How did you come to education?**

Ms. F: I graduated from the Baku State University, Faculty of Mathematics. I have a Master's degree in Mathematics. I am a Doctorate student now, though I haven't finished my research work yet. In 2019, I succeeded to be appointed as a school principal based on a principal recruitment competition held by the Ministry of Education. Actually, not everyone accepted this easily; some said do not do this, you will not succeed, you have already a good workplace, do not apply. But I didn't have anything to lose- I was a school teacher that time and I had a work, so nothing could be lost if I participate in that competition.

**UM: Are you a principal in a rayon center (rayon is administrative unit)?**

Ms. F: I'm in a rural school. I was working in a technical school in a rayon center (before the recruitment). And I was assigned to a full secondary school in the village of B (after recruitment). I was told, for example, that you are going to work in a village school after leaving a job of a teacher in a college, it will be tough. It's true that sometimes it's really difficult to leave a town to work in a village.

**UM: Yes**

Ms. F: But there is something that does not seem to be a problem when a person succeeds. I participated in a competition having a clear understanding what I am going to face. I would have always been aware of difficulties, and that every day I will be commuting to work a long way.

**UM: is that village B. located far from here?**

Ms. F: It's not too far. It's true that in cities it's not a problem to have an hour long drive, but it's a habit in the rayon center (small town) to have a school next to our home in a two-minute walk distance, but I come here (a village school) every morning.

**UM: Is there a bus going to?**

Ms. F: No, my Dad takes me there

**UM: Well, how nice**

Ms. F: My father also brings me home from the work

**UM: How do you generally remember your school years? Did you love school? What was your favorite activity at school? In general, how do you remember school as a whole?**

Ms. F: I liked the school, but I liked the university more

**UM: Really? (surprising)**

Ms. F: I don't know why, but I loved university more than school. Maybe, we have been together for 11 years already. I have had enough of those kids and we had been quite a lot time with those kids at school and in the neighborhood-everywhere. But at the university I had met new people, I became a part of these new people. At university we passed through an adaptation process as well. I was an excellent quiet student at school who had never had a problem (laughs).

**UM: And how do you remember your school teachers and your school principal?**

Ms. F: In my school a principal was changed two-three times during the time I was there. And when I was appointed a principal, these feelings "came to my eyes"- how the school reacts to the new school principal when he/she arrives (laughs). So, it reminded me how a school team behaves towards a school principal they know and how it meets a principal whom they did not completely get to know before.

**UM: Yes**

Ms. F: Maybe if I were to become a leader in the school I work for, everything would be different. I was the only one who went to a different place among the newly appointed school principals. All of the other successful candidates were appointed to schools where they were working before. Everybody was waiting to see how I would react to that. It's obvious that in the new school they were not expecting me to be appointed, as everyone expected their own previous principal to be appointed. But it's the decision of the Ministry and no one can change it.

**UM: Is it a big school or a small one?**

Ms. F: it has 300 students, which is good for a rural school

**UM: it's great**

Ms. F: Although the school repair is not so good, our students are good

**UM: The school principal is now considered as a school leader. What was the path that led you to this leadership? What brought you up as a leader? What was your family experience? What was family influence on your growth? How did all these influences shape you?**

Ms. F: I understand that sometimes a parent is told to force a child at some point. When I enter the classrooms to give advice to students, though I'm not so old but I am still a little older now, I think sometimes here this child should be forced to do that in some situations. For example, when this child needs to be compelled to think that the child will not understand now. What's it like, for example, today's young people who are 24-25-23 years old come to the teacher and says I want a diploma certificate since 6th grade I left a school and sit at home.

**UM: Ay-ay (sorry)**

Ms. F: Now he/(she (he/she added by interviewer since in Azerbaijani language gender is not recognized while speaking in third person) is 23, he/she realizes he/she needs a diploma. Here we have to keep the boy/the girl who wants to run away from the 6th grade so he/she doesn't come to the door again when he/she is 23 years old.

I am a school principal now for almost 11 months. Since I was appointed, at least 50 students have come to me and said I want to take the exam and I want to get a (graduation) certificate.

He/she hasn't thought about this before, in time. For example, I grew up in an "intelligencia" family, my grandparents were teachers, and my grandmother was a doctor and they all were well-educated people. I didn't have another choice but studying (laughs): I must study. I mean, my mother was a mathematician, I must know math, and that was easy for me. But actually, I wanted to be a doctor.

**UM: I see**

Ms. F: I never thought I would be a teacher (laughing) or a mathematician. But my sister became a doctor. She suffered a lot when she was studying. Because of this, they often told me not study too much because you will have poor eyes, and so on. I always remembered when I was preparing for the university, my parents did not hire a tutor for me, as our house was being repaired. And we had a workman, he was actually the first one to congratulate me. He would pick up my belongings and take them out of the house to my grandma's, and then back. Poor man, he was carrying books for me (laughs) saying that this kid should enter the university, how hard she is studying! Anyways, they didn't hire a tutor for me.

Approximately 2-3 months near to the end I prepared with teachers who were relatives.

They always said you know it you know everything why do you study at all? Your mother is a teacher, your aunts are teachers, and so on. Anyway, I entered the university finally.

**UM: Pedagogical University?**

Ms. F: No, I was admitted to Baku State University

**UM: Yes**

Ms. F: That is why sometimes I say, for example in our family I could never even think that I will not study. Or, even the thought itself about what would happen if I don't study seemed to me so horrible.

That's why I say, and in the family, maybe as a kid since I have opened my eyes I saw everyone has been studying and working, and, I didn't even think about not studying in our family. It was not possible.

**UM: You might just be a teacher, but why management?**

Ms. F: I graduated from the university and my family did not let me enter Master studies. I submitted my documents for a master degree and passed the examination secretly.

**UM: Really? (Laughs)**

Ms. F: All my work has been done like this in a secret (laughs) I stayed in my aunt's apartment, in Baku, I submitted my documents, I came to her place, sat, and my aunt asked are you okay? You don't look well. After sitting for some time I said I have taken an exam and it seems I did well. She asked will you be accepted? I said most probably yes. My family will kill me (laughs)

I was accepted. I returned to my home town. When the results came, I opened the computer and saw that I was accepted, and I was offered a free of charge education (because of a high score). How to tell that to my family now? (laughs)

Anyways, I called my mom and explained her everything. That I was accepted to the university and so on. She complained that we told you that you do not need it, you had workplace, you could work, you could go for Master studies next year. I said OK. I decided that I won't study. My cousin called me, he was a lawyer. He said what you're talking about? Why not study? He said he couldn't be accepted for 5 years and now you have succeeded, and you even got an opportunity to study free of charge option. What are doing? I always say he influenced me to do my Master studies.

In the mornings I taught at school in my home town. This opportunity was given by my University (job allocation used to be given by Universities for the best students), and it was a last year when job allocations were provided by universities. I was assigned to a technical high school. I had my morning lessons here, then my father brought me to University, I had my master's classes in the afternoon and then was coming back home. I can always say that my father, my family had a great role in my principal position right now. Their role is enormous in my today's work. Being a school principal is not an easy one.

**UM: So where did you study Master's? In Baku?**

Ms. F: No, in the Sumgait State University (about 150 km from her home town).

**UM: Sumgait State. So, it means you were studying here**

Ms. F: In the morning I was teaching, in the afternoon I was going to university.

**UM: Your father is a hero**

Ms. F: Everybody there knew him. I am still going to university- Sumgait State- I am now a doctorate student there. All the gatekeepers/guards know my father. He was waiting for me at the door. I was the only Master student, and for 90-minute lesson I was sitting with no other person (laughs). Anyway, slowly we came to that stage, so I passed that stage and I went to the doctorate studies with the advice of my grandmother (laughs). My grandmother forced me a little saying that you have already studied once study it as well. She passed away. May God bless my grandmother. I always tell oh grandmother I can't finish it. I am 33 years old and I have been working as a teacher since I was 20 years old. Imagine if I add school years as well, I have been studying for a long time until this age. I sometimes think of the need for a home but when a person is in trouble, education comes to the aid of a person.

**UM: Are you doing your PhD in Pedagogy?**

Ms. F: No, in Math. Differential equations.

**UM: How were your parents in your family life when you were a child? What were the parents' parenting skills? What were their attitude, values? Have these influenced you think your childhood?**

Ms. F: most probably yes. It would be impossible not to have it. So, if the role of a man in a family is usually to make money, while my mother's role.... If not her, I would probably not study. Because my father thought I didn't need it, others, for instance, my sibling –they study so much, suffer-why do you need that? But my mother was saying: if she knows, if she can, why not to do it. For example, my mother had a lot of support for us, and when we were studying at the university, and in order to meet our financial needs, they were getting more and more stressed for us to get something. They had 3 children. They had to rent an apartment in Baku. They controlled their needs to provide money for our education.

**UM: it is important. Was education is generally valued in your family?**

Ms. F: Of course.

**UM: Who has played the biggest role in your growth as a whole?**

Ms. F: My mom I would say, moms always play a big role. Right, we have a support from father, but moms play a great role.

**UM: Does your mother have an education?**

Ms. F: She is a mathematician as well

**UM: What do you think about your leadership skills?**

Ms. F: I still don't think of myself as the leader I want to be. I'm still not there.

**UM: What is the desired level?**

Ms. F: I would like to see more of that ...as a leader. When one gets a leadership position, he/she learns a lot, as he works, over time ...he/she is losing certain things; he/she is gaining some things. While thinking of a future, it seems to me that it is possible to go even further when I think of further steps.

**UM: For example, where would you like to go further?**

Ms. F: The higher I can get, I'll try.

**UM: How successful are you generally communicating as a school principal? Are you successful with this?**

Ms. F: I consider myself successful.

**UM: Can you explain why? Can you describe? Give an example, please**

Ms. F: For example, when I came to the school where I was appointed, no one in the team accepted me.

**UM: do you mean the school in a village B?**

Ms. F: Yes, B. (Laughter) So, as a principal, they had their own principal ... I accept this normally. Obviously, It was normal that they did not know the external person coming from outside, and they reacted negatively. We want the old principal- they were saying which looked a bit childish (Laughs). Now we are sitting and discussing amongst ourselves, and I say you looked funny. You wanted your former principal (laughs). OK. I do not object that. It was a competition; he also could participate. Let your principal openly compete with me. Let's face it, there is a struggle in this field. I didn't come and force him to leave that position. But many did not accept this correctly. The villagers did not accept this correctly. They were telling me-you came here through forcing him to leave this position, you came here instead of our school principal.

I said: I did not force your principal to leave the position. For example, I was trying to explain them that the process is over, there were 9 months of a struggle, I was competing for 9 months, and I won, and that's why I work here. Maybe your principal was sitting quietly in his office, signed and sent something out, but that doesn't mean he is a principal. He could openly participate in the competition. However, that principal had problems related to his documents and was not considered eligible for the competition because of it.

**UM: Didn't he participate in the competition?**

Ms. F: No, there was a problem with his university diploma. It was the Turkish University diploma (probably, his diploma was not formally recognized by MoE Azerbaijan which is a required procedure-UM). That is, maybe he could pass. It was probably my luck.

**UM: Was he from that village?**

Ms. F: Right now, he works in that school. We work in a very charming collective where he also a team member. I did not have a problem with him. What was the problem? I had three previous principals at my school, and I was able to communicate with them. I did it quite well. I think (laughs).

**UM: What is the culture of the school you lead now? How would you generally describe the new school environment you are assigned to?**

Ms. F: The current one or the one that I left?

**UM: The current one –when you started and now**

Ms. F: If to describe the moment I came there, nothing good would be described. I was not well received. I even approached them and said that I was told that this school staff is very cultural and intelligent, I was expecting something more, but they were doing childish things. Some stopped coming to class to teach. And when I intervened, one of students entered my office and told-you also do not teach. What do you

want me to do if you don't teach, why do you hurt the student? I am the principal, you will do it in 1 day and in 3 days, and if not, you will finally be reprimanded, and you will go to class to teach the lesson. Maybe you cannot accept me, but what is a child guilty of? Let's not reveal this in front of children, why a child should be negatively affected? In that case, the child's psychology is impaired, the children are badly affected. They thought a new principal came in and were very scared of me. I even reflected on myself- maybe I look as such a scared man... I did it because of poor children... The kids were not aware about the process. They observed that the new principal came and everyone's faces were negative and everyone became so aggressive. Show this aggression to me, not to children. Let them not to see your aggression. If you have a problem with me, write a complaint to the education department. If you have an aggression, oppose me, not the child.

Now they tell me-we are afraid that you will leave us one day. I say, there was a time when you were telling me to go away. Even the kids were coming to my office and were crying; they were saying: please go away, we want our old teacher. The girls of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade were coming and crying.... (laughs).

**UM: Really?**

Ms. F: at the last school day 2019-the graduates came and said goodbye to me; said we love you so much. You see: I told them-, you reacted this way knowing me, I may understand that. If I had accepted that reaction and leave the school, it would have been bad for me. I actually knew that I may face such a reaction.

**UM: You knew?**

Ms. F: I knew it and more precisely, I could imagine it. I used to be in my own school as well when I was in the 1<sup>th</sup> grade and the principal was replaced. We had the same reaction but nothing changed, because the principal was already leaving because of his retirement age. They (probably, she means students-UM) could be aggressive. I was consciously ready to face that. And maybe I won.

**UM: Excellent, hmm. For example, you are a principal now, and as a principal you have an authority, a power, you can give orders. And people you are in relationships with recognize this. How do you perceive your power, how do you perceive the power relations, and your responsibility? How do you accept all this?**

Ms. F: While I am in a position of a school principal, and even if I am a little younger than others, I am in a senior position, and my word is the final word. There should be a difference if they respect me as a principal only, and if they respect me as a principal and as a personality; these are different things. Yes, there are some people who respect me for being a principal only. But there are some people who treat me as they treated the previous principal. If people say bad things about the previous principal, it is clear, they will be doing the same about me, after I leave. That is, it is not hard to see the people who are like this.

**UM: How much do you think during these 11 months, even 11 months is not long period. Are you a successful principal in general?**

Ms. F: I would not say I am successful enough. Now I'm trying to strengthen my practice.

**UM: For example?**

Ms. F: There is a great difference between a regular teacher and a school principal. The teacher is responsible for those 45 minutes and this responsibility ends when he/she leaves a class. I always thought being a teacher is the hardest profession. It's not. Being a principal is even more difficult. The principal is even more responsible. Teachers are responsible for 45 minutes and then they leave a class. While a principal is responsible for teachers, pupils, the building, parents, technical staff. Our school is in a village; in the village bonds between people are strong. Five people came in one year, and you immediately recognize who is educated and who is not. You already know that all educated people usually belong to the same family or generation. There are not so many people in the village either. In an

urban area there are many very different people, and the principal's responsibility is also very heavy. It's too heavy. For example, we even don't have time to think about ourselves. Because we must intervene in everything. We have problems with most new appointees (several years ago MoE introduced a school teacher selection process when teachers are appointed to schools by MoE not selected by school principals-UM). For example, freshmen don't want to ask for anything, they follow the option "I know". We also were new, but we were asking 10 times before writing once. No, new appointees say I know so, and I'll do that. While older teachers are listening, and they differentiate between old and new ones. But you look at the young one, he/she doesn't want to listen, he/she doesn't have a one year of teaching experience and doesn't want to listen to.

**UM: What you want to improve in your principalship?**

Ms. F: There are many areas to improve. There are many things: in the classroom, for example, there are no electronic boards. In high schools in the town we had them; teaching and learning process was built better, pupils were more motivated. Rural schools are lacking them, let's say: we have an old building, we hear the school with wooden ovens. The rest are in the process of improvement. Teachers are doing their best. Teachers teach classes, but if we have a new building, we can do even more and better.

**UM: Are you in a big building?**

Ms. F: It is a building for 150 people, but it accommodates 300 people

**UM: How do you show that you are a principal at your school? That your word is a final one?**

Ms. F: It happens, if necessary, sometimes. The problem with teachers sometimes that things should be done like this, but everyone draws their own. In 50% of cases, the biggest problem is that they refer to the previous principal-he said this way, he did that way, and etc. Now is the new book, is a new page. In the majority of cases I face this kind of problem. I accept it as a normal. There was a system, a process that they were accustomed to. Now a new person has come to them, and the old teachers have said something like, "A child comes and rules over us." Now it has declined and is almost gone (laughs).

**UM: As a school principal, in order to encourage parents, motivate children and teachers, improve student achievements, involve parents ... what are you doing for that? Which methods do you use?**

Ms. F: For example, there are students in the classroom, some are studying some not. I pay special attention to out-of-class activities/clubs. Children are very motivated to attend them. Sometimes, people say that out-of-class activities are not conducted, but they are. Song contests are held. Children who are underperforming in formal classes, either they sing or do not sing, are motivated to attend the song contests. For example, an ordinary certificate of achievement can encourage a child, for example, a drawing competition, a traditional January 20 (a day of memory to those who were killed in 1990 by the Soviet Army-UM) drawing contest...  
If children are given certificates, some small gifts, they are happy that director awarded us. Or a child would be glad if the education department will award him/her with a diploma. They become more motivated. For example, they prepare some performance for Khojaly Genocide (Khojaly is a village in Nagorno-Karabakh which population was brutally killed by occupation army of Armenia-UM). Parents are also awarded during the meetings for preparation of decorations. Such things happen.

**UM: How can you motivate your parents?**

Ms. F: Parents are very interested. As a parent said, previously our husbands were coming to school, now we women come. Since a previous principal was a man, more men were coming to school. We hear from a lot of women that I am coming for the first time. Almost 90% of parents visiting school used to be men while now they are women, and one-two men. They told me that.

**UM: Are they active?**

Ms. F: They are more active in rural areas than in urban areas. That is, if previously we were facing difficulties to collect parents, now we face difficulties while asking them to leave the school and go home. We have already set up meeting/appointment time for parents. Otherwise our other work is being delayed. Parents come, ask a lot, we directed them to teachers and teachers respond their questions. That is, parents come very often, maybe because a school is close to the village.

**UM: and how do you motivate teachers?**

Ms. F: Teachers are most motivated by salaries. Salaries are not bad; they are good. By multiplying work load/teaching hours...to compete with each other who will show higher results at teacher diagnostic examinations. Everyone is trying to be good. Then I see the competition. I haven't observed that in urban schools. May be because I wasn't a principal that time, and so didn't see that. But now I see that they are trying to learn whose examination score are higher.

**UM: But how should we attract students who have low achievement and not distract them/let them drop out from school?**

Ms. F: We don't drop out at that level. It usually happens in the 11th grade (pupils in the 11<sup>th</sup> grades are usually use services of private tutors and dues to that miss classes in a school-UM). At the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade I convene a parents' conference. I ask them to schedule private tutoring sessions on weekends. These are free of school days. Let them have tutoring in comfortable conditions. We almost have no student absenteeism. They follow the rules. Last year I warned 10th grade students that no classes should be missed in the 11th grade. Of course, it happens, a child feels tired, and asks for permission to leave school. I may understand them. I usually allow students to leave school when they are tired. I often feel sorry for those who are preparing to university admissions examinations, and for the soldiers. I think the biggest burden is on them. I sympathise with them very much (laughing). I do not know why.

**UM: What are your strengths as a school principal?**

Ms. F: The strength-it may seem like I praise myself. The strength is that I work hard to reach my goals and achieve them, and never give up. Sometimes I am told that I overwhelm myself, I work too much. But if I have a goal and I have to reach it, there is no other way.

**UM: What leadership qualities would you like to develop in yourself?**

Ms. F: Just before our interview some teacher shared this as well. I can't speak freely in front of large audience. I would like to learn that. And reading books. I can't find time for reading books. I'm uploading them, but then no time to read them. Especially after I became a school principal there is no time at all. I want to develop that part.

**UM: Are teachers in your school use child-centered teaching methods? To what extent are they student-focused?**

Ms. F: There are teachers who are using them, and there are those who do not use. Those who do not use them are mostly teacher close to retirement age. And because of their age I can't force them by giving orders to them. For example, a deputy school principal-I do not say you are old. I say, Azizaga muallim (a teacher-UM) let's do that this way. Please tell them to do this way. It would be better if you tell that. They are at the same age, and they understand one another better. I have some feature: I never tell these things to a teacher in public. I do not like that. If I have anything to share I'll invite and tell that privately, and with empathy. The same attitude I expect from other toward myself. I do not accept such a behavior towards me. I have a bad character.

**UM: Does it work?**

Ms. F: Let's say this way-in such cases we understand each other better and easier. If I tell anything to a teacher in public, she/he can be frustrated. Teachers are also human beings. We have to put

ourselves in their place (laughing).

**UM: In Baku for newly appointed or being selected principals trainings on school leadership are conducted. I have heard that in your rayon no trainings were held. Do you feel that if you were trained it would be better?**

Ms. F: Right, first we are trained in Baku, and then are appointed as school principals. Then we were trained by the rayon education department here. Thanks to them, they helped us.

**UM: were you provided with a trainer?**

Ms. F: No. We were visiting office by office and were explained what and how we must do. They were providing guidelines to us, instructing us. The Head of the rayon education department asked them to help us: go that room, that officer will explain you that, and etc. Even now we visit rayon education department offices and share. We are mainly supervised by education authorities.

**UM: If there was such a training, what would you like to learn?**

Ms. F: Actually, we already passed that stage and learned in the work process. For example, before we were appointed, a Head of the rayon education department gathered us and explained to us many things-how to make orders, how to document decisions, how to keep books in order. He was explaining that to us word by word.

**UM: Yes, I see. Is your head of rayon education department a local?**

Ms. F: Yes, he is local. Before appointing us, he explained to us everything-how to issue orders, introduced to us an exemplary school charter. He was examining us, we were providing our answers. After we started working, we mainly were following and implementing those guidelines. We were seeing that it was useful and it worked. Probably, if we passed through that process before, the examination period would be easier to us. For example, if we knew what we know during examination time.... However, during the examination we were answering mechanically, by memory, without clear understanding.

**UM: I see.**

Ms. F: Maybe it would be possible to have internship for school principals as teachers have in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of study. At least, for 10 days in schools. Or school principals attend a useful and meaningful training.

**UM: I know, for example, because I did an interview in Baku, school principal candidates have a three-month training at Khazar University (one of private universities assigned by the MoE for provision of school leadership training to school principal candidates-UM).**

Ms. F: Yes, I know. I learned that during the examination time. But in regions we were immediately started school principalship. On the 1<sup>st</sup> order of our appointment was issued, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> we were in schools already.

**UM: For example, it was a new process you passed through and were appointed as a school principal. What would you suggest to improve this process?**

Ms. F: If transparency remains as it is now, it is enough. But if school principals are not assigned to their duties immediately in rural area, but given time to experience this work, develop habits of doing it. Have a meaningful one, not a formal one. For example, as sometimes we are just taught mechanical things like how to write orders. Yes, guidelines are written correctly, but we learn them as a set of words. Sometimes it happens when we see a book of orders we realize that we read about that book in the guidelines. However, if we applied those things, it would be easier. Actually the implementation process is not very difficult, 10-day training would be sufficient, but it is better to have it before our appointment.

**UM: You have set personal goals, such as your professional growth or promotion, present**

**or future development goals. Would you like to share them?**

Ms. F: Yes, I have.

**UM: Don't share if you don't want to do it**

Ms. F: There is actually a plan of growth I want to achieve. They are long-term goals, but slowly – slowly – probably in a few years I'll achieve them.

**UM: Please tell me the following. For example, we have traditionally been accepting a school principal as an administrator. However, now it is expected that school principals follow teaching and learning process. Are you involved in this process? How do you monitor its quality? How do you guide teachers?**

Ms. F: There are classroom observations held. According to my observations, there are teachers who are conducting classes as usual, while some feel lost. For example, during classroom observations many things become clear/obvious. May be they feel lost because of lack of experience. In classes of old teachers this has never been observed. Usually teachers at younger and mid age experience that. For example, I have observed that some teachers even can't do anything and just stop teaching. I leave the class when this happens because I see that the teacher can't do anything. Otherwise I am asking the teacher-please continue, but the teachers just stopped teaching. The kids are looking at me, at the teacher. Class is stopped, a lesson is frozen as when something frightening occurs. When teachers do not feel lost, class is going normally, pupils feel comfortable. There are teachers who recognize that problem, while there are some who do not accept that, become nervous. Initially I did not know that, now I already know personal features of everyone. It helps me. Deputy principals also help; they do classroom observations. They do more observations than I do. They report back, for example, this and that were not good, and then we openly discuss these issues in the pedagogical council. Teachers face these kind of problems, how we can support them. Experienced old teachers do not like when their classes are observed. I personally faced that, in spite I have 12 years of teaching experience. My most favorite thing is to do classroom observations. You immediately see what is not good at your own teaching, can see how teachers solve difficult situations. It is easier if some outsider observes you externally.

**UM: For example, you have been running this school for 11 months. Maybe a rotation happens, and you will move to another school in 5 years. How would you like to see this school, and what changes would you like to make in this school?**

Ms. F: For example, I'm working this year to improve the learning achievements of 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> graders. Our school used to be somewhere in the middle of the rayon schools. I want to improve them at the rayon level. I want to pay more attention to the primary classes. All the further problems start in a primary school. The stronger primary school teachers are, the fewer problems we'll face later. If a teacher has problems, pupils in her class reveal more problems with performance. Usually primary school teachers have problems with teaching math. Yes, they usually do not want to admit them. But as a math teacher, I see them while doing classroom observations, and notice that they try to change a lesson flow. If problems in a primary school teaching are fixed, then in upper grades we'll face fewer problems. For example, we conduct master classes; open classroom observations. The teachers themselves evaluate their own teaching. This will help teachers understand-I was doing that not so well, and the next year teachers will not repeat that anymore. For example, when a school deputy visits classroom, he asks-last time you faced that problem-has been that problem solved? That makes it interesting. Or how did you solve that problem? That way a process is being built.

**UM: In general, I asked all my questions. Maybe there are some questions you would like me to ask, but I did not do that.**

Ms. F: You asked enough.

**UM: Please inform me then your phone number. I'll write down what you said. According to research ethics, I'll send you the transcript of this interview by email. After you confirm it is correct, I'll upload it to the project site. Are you Ok with this?**

Ms. F: Yes

**UM: Thank you.**

Ms. F: Thank you too.