

Activity 3: Identifying the challenges and opportunities

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Consider the following two scenarios and note down your responses to the questions in your Learning Diary.

- Imagine you have just taken over as the leader of a newly established school that has only been open for a year. You will need to find out about your new school before you can make a plan about how to make improvements. What challenges do you think you will face and what opportunities does a review present?
- Imagine you have been the school leader for ten years in the same school. The District Education Officer has called a meeting of all the local school leaders to explain that they want you to carry out a review of your school and report back in six months' time, along with an action plan. What challenges do you think you will face and what opportunities does the review present?

Discussion

As a new school leader, teachers will be anxious to impress you, so collecting accurate data might be difficult. Some teachers might be suspicious of your motives; some will be worried that you are going to blame them for things that are wrong with the school. It will be important to make sure that you start by focusing on something that you think the school does well.

As an established school leader, any new behaviour on your part might be treated suspiciously. You will need to emphasise that this will be a team effort and that you need their help. Make sure that you start by collecting data on something that is going well. The public celebration of success will give people confidence and make it easier for you to tackle issues that are problematic.

The process of self-review needs to be managed well, so that stakeholders are clear about the process and the purpose. They are then more likely to contribute to the process in a considered and constructive way. The process needs to be positive and open – it is not about finding out what is wrong and attaching blame. The process should also be realistic and focused in terms of what is reviewed and how much time is spent gathering information that will make a difference to outcomes for students.