

## Activity 1: Your professional development as a leader



**Figure 1** Considering your professional development as a leader.

1. Using your Learning Diary, write down five words that you would say characterises you as a leader.
2. How do you think your teachers view you as their leader? Do they like you? Do they respect your knowledge and skills, not just your position? Why do you think this is the case? How do you demonstrate to your teachers that you are developing as a professional? For example, would they see you as someone who is willing to try new ideas and reflect on their impact?
3. Reflecting on your answers to Questions 1 and 2, what do you see as obstacles to your own professional development as a leader?

### Discussion

Your responses will be personal to you and your context. However, considering three different types of leader might help you to reflect further on the challenges that you may face:

- The first type may be someone with many years' experience of leading a school, who feels confident doing so but finds it difficult to show other members of staff that they are still learning and changing their own practice. This may be because they want to appear confident and in charge, and therefore keep professional development as something private and hidden.
- The second type of leader may be someone who is younger and concerned about losing authority if they are seen to have areas for personal development. They may be aware that they have less expertise in the classroom than some of their more senior teachers, but they have a lot to give in a model of leadership that combines enthusiasm, with vision and an understanding of the latest ideas, which at the same time respects the expertise of other teachers.
- Finally, there may be a group of leaders who – despite being willing to develop their practice, and doing so in a transparent way to others – never have the time to devote to such activities. These are leaders who, subconsciously, are modelling an attitude to professional development that may undermine efforts to bring about change in their schools.

The qualities of a good leader are well documented. Table 1 has some suggestions about how these apply to the Indian context. You will return to this analysis in Activity 3.

**Table 1** *Qualities of a good leader (adapted from Gardner, 1997).*

Qualities of a good leader	What these might mean in your context
Readiness to confront authority	You will need to work with your district education office and other related structures such as the cluster resource centres (CRCs), block resource centres (BRCs), local panchayat and school management committees (SMCs). These provide valuable resources and in many parts of the country still take responsibility for recruiting and deploying teachers. It is important that you manage your relationship with all these institutions and functionaries carefully and sensitively. Confrontation might not be the best approach, but don't be afraid to take the initiative or do things differently from how they have been done in the past if you think it will help your school.
Being prepared to take risks	Culturally this is difficult, because India's hierarchical structures mean that people feel they need to seek approval for any initiative from a more senior person. However, as long as you are aware of district priorities and the school development plan (SDP), and you have well thought out reasons about why you are making a particular change, you should be able to take risks in your school in order to achieve the improvements you want.
Resilience in the face of failure	In many cultures, admitting you have made a mistake or that things are less than perfect is difficult. Managing change is demanding and will not necessarily go smoothly. Every time something does not go exactly as planned, you should regard this as a learning opportunity. Make sure you reflect on and identify the reasons why things have not gone as planned, but don't be afraid of admitting that you could have done something differently.
Confidence in instinct and intuition	You will probably have experience of working as a teacher in different schools. You will be able to use and build on this experience in your role as a school leader. The new aspiration for autonomous schools means that you will have more freedom to be creative and try out new things.
Ability to keep in mind the bigger picture	This applies to all leaders. Your role is to establish and communicate a clear vision for your school. All actions and initiatives should be linked to this vision. There is a School Leadership OER that provides practical advice about how to work with others to build a vision for your school. This will help you in formulating the SDP with the SMC members.
Moral commitment	The values and beliefs that underpin the NCF 2005, the NCFTE 2009 and the RtE 2009 challenge some traditionally held beliefs. In order to meet the aspirations set out by the government in these documents, you will need to understand the underlying values of these policies and model these in your school and the local community around your school.
A sense of timing and the ability to sit back and learn from experience	As you start to evaluate your school, it is possible that you will identify a number of changes that you wish to make. It is important not to try and change too much, too soon. You will need to prioritise and move slowly, taking all the teachers with you.

## Activity 2: Identifying leadership qualities

Reread Table 1, which lists the qualities of a good leader.

With a friend or colleague, analyse Case Study 1 and identify examples of the qualities that Mr Nagaraju displayed. Write these in your Learning Diary, or use a highlighter pen or a pencil to underline key phrases.

### Discussion

Mr Nagaraju watched what was going on and listened to his teachers rather than rushing to solve a problem. He recognised the difficulty in changing people but was determined to find a solution. He took a risk by encouraging his teachers to use the textbook more imaginatively and not necessarily use all of every chapter, but he had good reasons for doing so. He believes that all students can learn, regardless of their backgrounds, and he worked within existing systems – for example, cancelling assembly in order to create time rather than ask teachers to stay behind after school.

Table 1 suggests that a school leader needs not only personal qualities to be effective but also a range of competencies (see Resource 2). It is unlikely that you will be equally talented or accomplished in all areas. It is also important to remember that, like your teachers and students, your knowledge and skills are evolving and developing over time to meet new challenges and become more expert.

# Resource 2: Leadership competencies audit

Table R2.1 Leadership competencies audit (adapted from MacBeath and Myers, 1999).

Leadership competencies		How do you rate yourself? (Tick one column)			In what situation did you last do this?
		Highly competent	Adequately competent	Barely competent	
Working with others	Supporting others				
	Recognising individual efforts				
	Promoting other people's self-esteem				
	Developing others by providing opportunities for development and reflection				
	Minimising anxiety				
Being a reflective and empathetic listener	Seeking to understand before making judgements				
	Listening to individual ideas and problems				
	Actively encouraging feedback				

Leadership competencies		How do you rate yourself? (Tick one column)			In what situation did you last do this?
		Highly competent	Adequately competent	Barely competent	
Empowering others	Empowering others to make decisions and take responsibility				
Modelling behaviour	Demonstrating personal integrity				
	Modelling the attitudes and values that you wish to promote				
	Showing enthusiasm				
Being proactive in making decisions	Providing direction and a clear vision				
	Making decisions				
	Promoting understanding of key issues				

Leadership competencies		How do you rate yourself? (Tick one column)			In what situation did you last do this?
		Highly competent	Adequately competent	Barely competent	
Managing change	Encouraging new ways of doing things				
	Anticipating possible future challenges				
	Treating mistakes as learning opportunities				
Encouraging teamwork	Encouraging and promoting teamwork by involving all				

### Activity 3: Conducting a needs analysis

Complete the table in Resource 2 in order to identify the aspects of the school leader role that you feel you do well and those that you need to develop – the areas you might learn more about.

First, rate yourself as ‘highly competent’, ‘adequately competent’ or ‘barely competent’. You undoubtedly have a lot of knowledge already, but you can always expand or refine your skills and abilities in the spirit of lifelong learning. Completing this table will help you to analyse your needs and development priorities to become a more effective and enabling leader.

You might want to share this process with a colleague to discuss which needs you are prioritising and discuss their needs with them. A school leader can be quite isolated, so developing a peer-mentoring relationship can be mutually beneficial. Read Case Study 2 to see how two school leaders helped each other to look at their needs.