

Abstract Title

Leading with Confidence: Developing a Principal Self-Efficacy Scale for Equity

Abstract

Effective school leadership is recognised as a powerful influence on student outcomes. Yet the ways in which principals understand, develop, and enact their own capability remain under-researched. Self-efficacy—the belief in one’s capacity to achieve desired outcomes—shapes how leaders set direction, respond to challenges, and persist in the face of adversity. While teacher self-efficacy has been extensively studied, there are few robust or culturally responsive tools for capturing principal self-efficacy in ways that integrate theory and context.

This presentation introduces a new principal self-efficacy scale, developed as part of Aotearoa New Zealand’s *Curriculum Insights and Progress* study, which gathers critical information about student outcomes and the contexts in which they occur. The scale is designed to reflect the challenges of school leadership in diverse settings. It is underpinned by foundational work exploring Māori perspectives on leaders’ capability beliefs, emphasising whakapapa (ancestry), wairua (spirituality), collective responsibility, and relational leadership. These insights were used to critique, complement, and expand Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy. The result is a tool that not only measures key dimensions of principals’ work but also supports self-reflection, professional growth, and system-level planning for targeted support and resource allocation.

Framed within the 2026 convention theme *Purapura Kōrari: Ka Ruia e te Hau*—the seeds of the flax bush dispersed by the winds—our hope is that these locally grounded insights might travel and flourish in global contexts.

For school leaders, this work offers two key contributions:

1. A practical, research-based instrument, potentially adaptable across cultural contexts and education systems.
2. Insights into how principal self-efficacy can be strengthened—highlighting its potential to enhance equity, resilience, wellbeing, and student success.

Participants will gain a deeper understanding of how self-efficacy can be measured for principals, and how findings can inform leadership development, professional learning, and system-wide policy.

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