

# Perspectives of Administrators, Middle Managers and Classroom Teachers of Competency-based Leadership Training Initiatives on Self-efficacy

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## Abstract

*The primary aim of this study is to determine whether or not middle managers' self-efficacy levels impact their leadership effectiveness and to also determine to what extent competency-based training needs exist among middle managers. Additionally, the study seeks to ascertain whether a compulsory competency-based approach to middle managers training can be taken to resolve training needs. Studies have shown that self-efficacy, the extent to which an individual believes tasks can be accomplished, is a fairly new concept, worth researching, as it adds much value to the areas of education and psychology. Effective leadership at all educational organizations is paramount to guarantee greater success in Jamaican schools. Middle managers in primary and secondary schools in Jamaica are senior teachers, with Posts of Special Responsibilities (POSR); these leaders hold strategic leadership posts and execute multiple job functions. The overall purpose of this research is to encourage research and bring about greater awareness to the area of middle managers' self-efficacy, leadership and competency-based training in public schools in Jamaica. Exploring this concept, the research will seek to address areas of concern, provide much-needed information and support structures aimed at exploring the areas of concern, address training needs, and serve as a pointer for further research. The researcher seeks to collect the viewpoints of administrators, middle managers and classroom teachers in Jamaican public schools; using a structured and quantitative research approach, specifically employing a survey method.*

**Keywords:** *Competency-based Training, Jamaican Public Schools, Leadership, Middle Managers, Post of Special Responsibilities, Self-efficacy*

## Introduction

The research sought to investigate to determine whether or not the self-efficacy levels of middle managers impact their leadership effectiveness and to determine as well the extent to which competency-based training needs exist among middle managers; based on the perspectives of administrators, middle managers and classroom teachers. Self-efficacy has an impact on a person's reactions and thought patterns as it relates to the extent to which an individual believes a task can be accomplished [8]. An individual's belief to perform tasks and achieve goals, the perception of one's competence and effectiveness is the

main focus of self-efficacy [2]. This study sought to explore more about the concept of self-efficacy in relation to middle managers' leadership and competency training.

Self-efficacy is a relatively new theory that has proven insightful in exploring how individuals perceive and approach challenges, tasks and goals. Self-efficacy is considered a new concept and was originally purported by Albert Bandura in his Social Cognitive Theory in the late 20th century [1]. Self-efficacy is used to predict behavioural outcomes, especially in the areas of Psychology and Education. The concept of self-efficacy is considered to be a good measurement as well as an effective way

to predict behavioural outcomes when compared to other motivational constructs [3]. Self-efficacy has been credited as a useful concept in assessing how one is likely to perform in key areas. Self-efficacy has a role as a causal variable in performance and achievement [1]. It is proposed that high self-efficacy is the belief that one can perform well at a task, and the same is often realized. If one thinks contrary to such beliefs, having doubts in their capabilities, that person may be considered to have low self-efficacy; which can have a negative impact on task completion and accomplishment.

Success across various domains and life in general can be attributed to an individual's self-efficacy level. Research has shown that 28% of an employee's improvements in performance could be attributed to their self-efficacy [20]. Leadership and leadership development can benefit largely from the exploration of self-efficacy as there are benefits to be achieved. Self-efficacy is listed as an essential characteristic of effective leadership in many studies [1]). Self-efficacy is helpful in leader selection in many organizations, as it is a good indicator. Individuals often behave according to their mental assets-that are their skills, intelligence, emotions, beliefs, values, attitudes and knowledge [23]. It is important for the concept of mental assets to be explored, in relation to leaders and their effectiveness in organizations and the results utilised to effect change.

This study also sought to examine the theoretical frameworks relating to self-efficacy, leadership and organizational theories; which are important for providing a solid theoretical background for the research. The research explores the intertwining of the theories and related concepts to gain valuable insights. Uncovering meaningful connections, the research can be utilized to enact meaningful change to enhance middle managers' leadership and overall effectiveness in schools.

Leadership is an area of concern in educational institutions in Jamaica and needs direct focus. School leadership is deemed to be weak in schools in Jamaica and this problem could be lessened if the best persons were selected to become leaders and the required training provided [13]. There is a great need to strengthen leadership at the middle management level as middle leaders have yet to receive such concentrated efforts to improve their leadership skill sets. There is much importance in employing strategies to enhance the self-efficacy of middle managers as this is beneficial to their performance and has an important ancillary benefit of improving the organization [22].

Leadership happens at all levels of society, organization and culture and has a fundamental impact on all areas and sectors. Leadership is multifaceted and is considered to be the most complex phenomenon in which much research has been conducted and applied over the years. Yet the concept of leadership remains a relatively new phenomenon [6]. One of the popular definitions of leadership defines leadership as being influence; the impact one person has over another. Another definition of leadership as purported by Maxwell is simply influence, nothing more and nothing less [16]. Influence, as it relates to leadership in organizations, is a true driving force of exerting energy through focused and deliberate efforts to bring about impact. Leadership is described as an evolutionary phenomenon, a construct that has moved in stages; from being hierarchical, power-based and productivity-driven; to incorporating features of transformation, service, collaboration, relationships and ethics [14]. The concept of leadership is not considered to be static as it continues to evolve and the various meanings and viewpoints are extensive.

Not so long ago, leaders largely could have done their jobs effectively while ignoring the world around them. Today's leaders have many different roles and are now required to

understand the broader context within which schools operate [19]. We now exist in a complex world, a VUCA environment; a time of much volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Leadership has changed to become more complex, volatile and unpredictable [13]. Some leaders find such situations threatening and have led many middle managers to question the validity or need for emerging trends and demands. Such diversity makes new demands not only on the school system but also on leadership [10]. Leadership is complex and ever-changing. As we proceed into the future and are faced with more uncertainty and ambiguity, there are extended issues to be faced with leadership. Leaders require extreme character and training [7]. Leadership development has to be well-structured and purposeful. Understanding more of the developmental concept of VUCA is an essential aspect of living and leading in the future [7]. Educational leaders must be able to navigate successfully through chaos and challenges and cope with stress to lead in times of rapid change and turmoil.

The need for leadership education is based on the increased call and need for greater leadership in schools. Leadership education has become the educational reform strategy of the 21st century [17]. This is an important subject and requires deliberate attention to bring about the desired outcomes. Middle managers are crucial to the effective functioning of organizations and their importance cannot be overemphasized [22]. It is with this understanding that structured training opportunities should be presented to enhance their leadership skill sets. A horizontal approach is used largely to assist in the development of leaders and is not sufficient to address the issue of leadership development; there needs to be “more focus and vertical development” [13]. Vertical development takes a more developmental approach, which goes through different stages and is powered by one’s interest, determination and confidence.

Nothing can stop a person with the required knowledge, skill sets, desire and self-efficacy from becoming an adroit and astute leader. The need for effective leadership is underscored as a real need in organizations; everything rises and falls on leadership [12]. The needs of the times call for excellent leadership. Effective leadership is recognized as key to the success of an organization [18]. How will this be achieved? To facilitate the development of leaders, various researchers have stated the need for developmental programs [11]. Developmental programmes seek to chart the desired outcomes by presenting the avenues through which new ideas can be transferred, new behaviour can be learnt and emotional growth can occur.

Education needs to come into alignment with the wider world. Leader preparatory programs are more than urgent; their demand is at an all-time high in today’s superficially connected but highly fragmented educational world [11]. Leadership levels need to be raised in organizations. It is imperative to raise leadership levels abilities to increase levels of leadership in organizations [16] Educators must have a clear knowledge of their roles as well as the commitment to execute as excellent educators are greatly needed in schools today [15]. Leaders being well equipped will, in turn, be able to increase the level of resilience of not only themselves but of those around them [9]. We are now at a time where we need better leaders; better leaders will assist greatly in bringing about better results.

It is important to have leaders learning about how to best perform their various tasks through being immersed in real life experiences and situations. Middle managers can learn much through observational learning which can increase their levels of self-efficacy. Middle managers stand a greater chance of being able to complete tasks when given the opportunity to observe, in comparison to having no observation experience of said tasks. Observational learning occurs when individuals

display new behaviours; that they had no possibility of doing previously but did as a result of observation [5]. An individual's past experiences, viewed as successful, serve to increase the self-efficacy of the individual and the opposite is also true. It would therefore mean that a middle manager with more successful experiences will have a greater level of self-efficacy [4]. It is important to note that for middle managers to develop self-efficacy to a desired level, then their frequency of successful experiences must increase.

Education needs more leaders who are evolutionary. Studies have revealed that while organizations expect new leadership capabilities, they are still largely promoting traditional models and mindsets [12]. The knowledge, skill sets, aptitudes and competencies required for middle manager positions, should be based on key competencies structures that are established and used across the sector. One way to achieve greater coherence in school leadership is through purposeful action and interaction; working on capacity, clarity, precision of practice, transparency, monitoring of progress, and continuous correction [21]. The mindset should be to be more and do more. Transformation requires knowledge, the necessary skill sets, competencies and mindset renewal [1]. We are then left to not only ask but also to find out; can structured competency-based approaches assist in developing more capable and effective middle leaders in Jamaica?

## **Materials and Methods**

The data was garnered from administrators, middle managers and classroom teachers of Jamaican public schools using the survey approach. The instrument utilized to gather the data was an online questionnaire. The researcher sought to use the stratified sampling technique using a randomized approach. Administrators, middle managers and classroom teachers included in the study are employed in their respective roles with the

Ministry of Education for at least one (1) year. The researcher sought to ensure that the participants represented all seven regions within the Ministry of Education. The sample size consisted of twenty-three (23) educators from each grouping (administrators, middle managers and classroom teachers). Participants who did not match the requirements were excluded from the study. The SPSS as a statistical analysis and data management tool was used to analyze the data. The research utilized descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode) and inferential statistics to interpret the findings.

## **Results**

The research sought to examine the participants' perspectives on three core questions. The strongly agree and agree responses were combined to form an overall agreement statement. This proved helpful in understanding the general sentiment among the responders, analyzing the data sets and identifying possible trends and patterns. The analysis of survey responses highlighted variations in the participants' perceptions across different questions.

### **Question # 1**

“Structured competency-based leadership programmes are needed in education to ensure teachers are adequately prepared to operate in leadership” The data garnered shows that all categories of the participants believe that competency-based leadership programmes are needed. 90.0% of principals gave their perspectives as strongly agree and agree (63.3% and 26.7% respectively). 85.8% of middle managers gave their perspectives as strongly agree and agree (54.5% and 31.3% respectively). 63.7% of class teachers gave their perspectives as strongly agree and agree (27.3% and 36.4% respectively) See Table 1 and Figure 1.

Question 1 had the lowest mean score of 79.83%, suggesting that respondents rated it

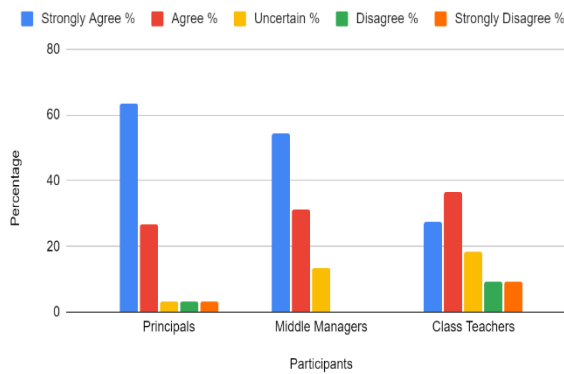
less favourably when compared to the other questions. It had the highest standard deviation of 11.53%, indicating greater variability in the responses compared to the other research questions. While Question 1 received a lower mean score, its higher standard deviation indicates that the responses of the participants

varied widely. This suggests that there may be differing opinions or experiences related to this question that warrant further investigation or targeted interventions. This is seen more so at the classroom teacher level. This may be a result of limited interaction with the concept at their level.

**Table 1.** Need for Structured Training Programmes

Participant Group	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)
Principals	63.3	26.7	90
Middle Managers	54.5	31.3	85.8
Classroom Teachers	27.3	36.4	63.70

Structured competency-based leadership programmes are needed in education to ensure teachers are adequately prepared to operate in leadership



**Figure 1.** Need for Structured Training Programmes

## Question # 2

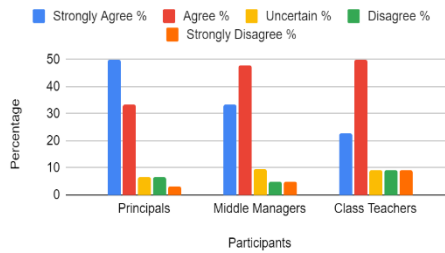
“Middle Managers should be chosen for leadership positions based on their levels of self-efficacy” The data garnered shows that all categories of the participants agree with this statement. The data reveal that 90.3% of principals gave their perspectives as strongly

agree and agree (54.8% and 35.5% respectively). 86.4% of middle managers gave their perspectives as strongly agree and agree (45.5% and 40.9% respectively). 72.8% of classroom teachers gave their perspectives as strongly agree and agree (27.3% and 45.5% respectively). See Table 2 and Figure 2.

**Table 2.** Provision of Compulsory Programmes

Participant Group	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)
Principals	50.0	33.3	83.30
Middle Managers	33.3	47.6	80.90
Classroom Teachers	22.7	50.0	72.70

Middle Managers' self-efficacy is likely to increase from the provision of a compulsory competency-based leadership programme by the Ministry of Education or its affiliated agency



**Figure 2.** Provision of Compulsory Programmes

Question 2 received the highest mean score of 83.17%, indicating that respondents rated it most positively on average. It had a moderate standard deviation of 7.50%, suggesting that some amount of variability exists in the responses. However, the variability is less than Question 1. The higher mean score for Question 2 indicates that the question resonated more positively with respondents. The respondents collectively responded that middle leaders should be selected for leadership based on their self-efficacy levels. Further exploration of the factors contributing to this positive perception could inform future initiatives or strategies.

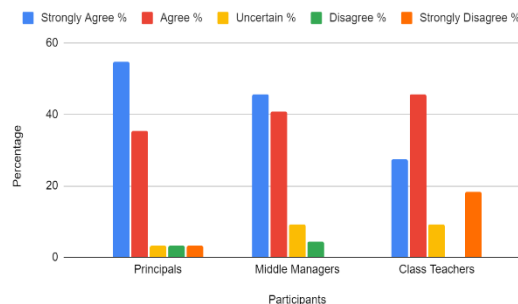
### Question # 3

“Middle Managers' self-efficacy is likely to increase from the provision of a compulsory competency-based leadership programme by the Ministry of Education or its affiliated agency/ies” The data gathered revealed that 83.3% of principals gave their perspectives as strongly agree and agree (50% and 33.3% respectively). 80.9% of middle managers gave their perspectives as strongly agree and agree (33.3% and 47.6% respectively). 72.7% of classroom teachers gave their perspectives as strongly agree and agree (22.7% and 50% respectively). See Table 3 and Figure 3.

**Table 3.** Leadership Based on Self-Efficacy Levels

Participant Group	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)
Principals	54.80	35.50	90.30
Middle Managers	45.50	40.90	86.40
Classroom Teachers	27.30	45.50	72.80

Middle Managers should be chosen for leadership positions based on their levels of self efficacy



**Figure 3.** Leadership Based on Self-Efficacy Levels

Question 3 fell between the other questions in terms of mean score, the mean score is 79.30%. It had the lowest standard deviation of 4.55%, indicating the least variability in responses among the three questions. Question 3, despite having a lower mean score, had the least variability in responses, indicating more consistent perceptions among the three respondents.

## Discussion

The results are in keeping with research done in the areas of self-efficacy, leadership and competency-based training with other categories of workers and leaders in organizations and in particular, the educational workspace.

It was found that principals had the highest response rate in the strongly agree and agree categories of supporting the need for structured competency-based training programmes, middle managers being chosen for leadership based on their self-efficacy levels and self-efficacy is likely to increase from the provision of leadership competency-based training programmes. This was followed by middle leaders and then classroom teachers.

This research highlights the value that is placed on the concepts by the different demographic groups. The data revealed that principals' and middle managers' response rates were higher than classroom teachers

The results when compared to the objectives of the research show that there is a need for compulsory competency-based training initiatives for middle managers in Jamaican schools and competency-based training initiatives can make an impact in enhancing middle managers' leadership skills and self-efficacy levels in Jamaica's educational settings.

The result obtained from the research is consistent with other research done within education. Researchers have shared similar thoughts about enhancing leadership and self-

efficacy through the provision of competency-based training initiatives.

Further research may be needed to explore classroom teachers' perspectives in detail to understand more. It is important to ascertain a competency-based training programme model for prospective and in-service middle managers. This can be achieved by analyzing existing models and making the necessary adjustments where necessary. In so doing, a reliable programme will not only be developed but also implemented to realize meaningful change.

## Equations

### Question 1

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\text{Sum of all the values}}{\text{Number of values}}$$

$$\text{Mean} = (90.0\% + 85.80\% + 63.70\%) / 3$$

$$\text{Mean} = 239.5\% / 3$$

$$\text{Mean} \approx 79.83\%$$

### Standard Deviation

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n-1} \sum (xi - \bar{x})^2}$$

$$\text{Where: } s = 11.53\%$$

### Question 2

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\text{Sum of all the values}}{\text{Number of values}}$$

$$\text{Mean} = (90.30\% + 86.40\% + 72.80\%) / 3$$

$$\text{Mean} = 249.5\% / 3$$

$$\text{Mean} \approx 83.17\%$$

### Standard Deviation

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n-1} \sum (xi - \bar{x})^2}$$

$$\text{Where: } s = 7.50\%$$

### Question 3

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\text{Sum of all the values}}{\text{Number of values}}$$

$$\text{Mean} = (83.30\% + 80.90\% + 72.70\%) / 3$$

$$\text{Mean} = 237.90\% / 3$$

$$\text{Mean} \approx 79.30\%$$

## Standard Deviation

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n-1} \sum (xi - \bar{x})^2}$$

Where:  $s = 4.55\%$

## Conclusion

It is important to take into account the practitioners within education perspectives, as it relates to issues that affect them and how they believe those stated issues can be addressed.

This research has proven that there is a real need for leadership development in education in Jamaica public schools as expressed by principals, middle managers and class teachers. It expressed that competency-based leadership training opportunities can assist in addressing the issue.

Diversity in the responses was seen in the dataset, more so at the classroom teacher level. High levels of agreement exist among principals and middle managers, indicating strong support for structured competency-based leadership programmes. However, there was a slightly lower agreement at the class teacher level. These insights can inform decision-making processes, program evaluation, and future research efforts.

The recommendation is for teachers to understand more about the concept of self-

efficacy and its value in developing leadership through competency-based training initiatives. More research is needed to get a better understanding of the concepts. Further exploration of the underlying factors driving these variations is useful for tailoring effective interventions and strategies.

As further research is done in the stated area it is hoped that the issues identified and explored can be lessened. This calls for collaboration so that the desired results of increased self-efficacy and leadership garnered through increased provision of competency-based training can be achieved.

## Acknowledgements

I count it joy for all the favour and assistance I have received in completing this research. I thank all who have supported me in one way or another to allow me to complete this research.

## Conflict of Interest

I, declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. I, the corresponding author on behalf of all contributing authors, hereby declare that the information given in this disclosure is true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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