

> Review of Specialist Classroom Teachers Pilot

Summary Report prepared for:

Ministry of Education

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May 2007

ISBN: 978-0-478-13700-2

ISBN (Web): 978-0-478-13701-9

RMR-848

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> **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to summarise the emergent themes from the review of the pilot of the Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT) role, which was implemented in secondary schools across New Zealand in 2006. It discusses the success of the SCT pilot and those factors which have contributed to that success in schools. It also summarises the diversity of implementation found during the review. A critique is offered of the way in which the pilot was implemented in some schools and the extent to which there were some unintended consequences of the initial focus, in the guidelines, on mentoring beginning teachers and teachers who self-refer. The limitations of self-referral and the related concern around confidentiality issues are discussed. Finally, a question is raised regarding the extent to which the role is a career pathway and whether it is not better described as a career opportunity.

This report is a summary of the full report, which is available from the Ministry of Education website. The full report provides, amongst other things, a detailed analysis and discussion of the data collected during the review. It also contains detailed descriptions of the implementation of the SCT role in three schools as exemplars of practice.

> **The SCT role**

The SCT role was part of the 2004 Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement and was seen as providing for professional support and learning in schools. In addition, the role allowed for the initial exploration of the use of different career opportunities to retain teachers in the classroom through the provision of an alternative career path to the more traditional management one. The time allowance allocated to the SCT role was four hours non-contact regardless of school size. SCTs were also paid an allowance of \$6500. They were required to put any management units on hold in order to focus on the SCT role. All appointments were for one year only.

Changes for 2007

During 2006, the period of the review, a number of changes were made to the guidelines surrounding the SCT role for 2007. These changes related to the eligibility criteria for selection of an SCT and the recommended focus areas of the SCT role. Further details surrounding the current guidelines for the role can be obtained from the Ministry of Education and are outlined in greater detail in the full report.

> **The review**

Four key areas were considered in the review and the review questions were based on these:

- School planning and implementation processes
- The efficacy and validity of the approach by schools and overall
- The characteristics of SCTs
- The impact of the SCT position

In order to consider each of these areas in detail four distinct sets of data were collected, analysed and reported on across the three separate phases of the review. These phases were establishment, implementation and impact. Data were gathered through surveys at each phase and case studies which included interviews, focus groups and document analysis during the implementation phase.

> **The success of the SCT role**

The emergent themes discussed throughout the full report, and summarised here, arise from a theoretical¹ and national policy framework which sees the SCT role as one of teacher leadership focussed on enhancing professional practice, in order to ultimately raise student achievement. The role is also seen as allowing for the provision of focussed professional learning both for the SCTs themselves and the teachers they are working with. Within this context, success could be seen as evidence of enhanced professional practice and/or improved student engagement and achievement.

In addition, a key purpose of the SCT role is to retain teachers in the classroom providing them with alternative career opportunities. In this it has clearly been successful with the overall consensus from participant SCTs and their managers being that the role is an excellent one. SCTs spoke frequently of the opportunities they had been afforded. The role was described as one that allowed them to enjoy a leadership role, to share their expertise and knowledge and yet remain in the classroom.

The extent to which the role has enhanced professional practice across schools or impacted on student achievement is more difficult to ascertain, and it was not the purpose of this review to summatively judge its impact. What the review has shown is that in some schools the SCT role, in 2006, was hugely successful in focussing on professional practice, in others this focus was emergent and in some the focus

¹ This theoretical framework is summarised in the full report.

appeared to be more on individual teachers and their personal needs. The culture of the individual schools, the priorities of the school leadership and the personal qualities and characteristics of individual SCTs all impacted on the implementation of the role. In addition, the SCTs themselves have benefited hugely in terms of their professional growth as have a large number of teachers who have worked with them.

What can be stated, with some certainty, is that the pilot of the SCT role has been successful in a number of ways and to varying extents. Firstly, much was learnt from its implementation as evidenced in the changes made for 2007. Secondly, the review has enabled the ongoing discussion of a number of key themes which have implications for the long term work programme and the development of other career pathways or opportunities.

This is not to deny that, as with all new initiatives, there have been “teething” problems and this was to be expected. It may take time for some of these to be “ironed out” and for the role to become firmly established within schools. However, its enthusiastic reception in schools and the willingness of the long term work programme partners to learn from its implementation and to reflect and adapt the role suggest that over time the SCT role will become an integral and important factor in the enhancement of professional practice.

The right person in the role

One of the key factors to the successful implementation of the SCT role in schools seems to have been appointing the right person to the role. This was a constantly recurring theme across the data collection. It emerged in not only the implementation surveys but also in the case studies and in interviews with the advisors. It also emerged in the interviews with non-participant schools where the inability to appoint the right person was often given as the reason for not participating in 2006.

Being the “right person” appears to have included a mix of interpersonal skills with personal qualities such as honesty and reliability and the knowledge and skills related to professional credibility. The complete picture that emerges from this complex jigsaw of skills, personal attributes and knowledge is one of a professional teacher with a strong classroom background and a high profile in the school who is approachable and empathetic. Perhaps this can best be described as professionalism; an umbrella term for high standards both professionally and personally.

Professional support for SCTs

A second factor, which also appears to have attributed to the success of the pilot, was the professional development opportunities afforded the SCTs. The national SCT Hui (April 26-28 2006), the induction training day (December 2005), provision of a handbook and the work of the SCT advisors were valued and seen as necessary. There was a clear recognition that the SCT role required additional skills and expertise to those required of an exemplary classroom teacher and that many of these requirements had already been met through the support and professional development provided. The SCTs spoke of how much they had learned professionally while their managers also spoke of the positive impact of the role in terms of the professional learning of the SCTs.

However, also rising from the review was the recognition of further areas for professional learning and support. These included developing a range of strategies to engage colleagues in critical dialogue and learning conversations around professional practice. In this way SCTs may become more confident in approaching colleagues they believe they can support but who may be unwilling to 'self-refer'.

Another key area was related to the monitoring and evaluation of the role. Many of the SCTs, in the case studies, seemed uncertain of the impact they were having. These SCTs, highly professional and committed teachers, expressed feelings of guilt around whether they were 'earning' the time and monetary allowance they had been given. This may have been exacerbated, in some instances, by concerns over the reactions from some of their colleagues (either actual or assumed). An appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategy, based on realistic goals, might have alleviated some of these concerns.

It must be noted, however, that the idea of measuring, or even monitoring, the impact of the SCTs appears to have been problematic from the outset and remained an issue throughout the review. The questions surrounding impact in the initial survey caused some dismay and this was also apparent when the impact surveys were distributed. The low response rate to these and the tenor of some of the phone calls from a few SCTs (only three or four), regarding the surveys, suggests there was still some resistance to the idea of measuring impact.

This concern seems to be related to the culture of the school. In a professional learning culture where student outcomes are openly discussed, where teachers are comfortable discussing their practice, one might assume such concerns would be minimised. What seems to be required is professional development and learning for the SCTs and their senior managers that provides expertise and knowledge around

practitioner research and evaluation and how to determine the most effective and valid evidence base, be that observation of practice or student achievement data.

Finally, the reluctance and discomfort some SCTs expressed in the case study interviews about leading school wide professional development suggests a need to provide facilitation and leadership training. There is often an expectation that a 'good' classroom teacher will also be a 'good' facilitator of adult learning. This is not necessarily the case. Not only are there perceived differences in adult and child learning requirements there is also a consideration of the need for teachers to feel confident and comfortable being in front of their peers and assuming a position of leadership or expertise. The non-critical norms of professional collegiality amongst peers can act against teacher leaders assuming any position of perceived superiority or leadership.

Providing the role with status, recognition and value

Also needed for success are status, recognition and value for the role of SCT. These three criteria are closely intertwined in that while the first two are inseparable they are also apparently precursors for the third.

The need for status and recognition was a consistently recurring theme in this review. Both SCTs and senior management often alluded to a perceived lack of status. Some felt this was due to insufficient financial reward, often cited as a 'lack of management units'. Others felt it was due to the way the job was defined.

In addition, any authority or recognition, in most schools, appears to have been the result of the personal and/or professional authority of the SCT rather than formal role recognition. This is perhaps not surprising given the newness of the role. It should be considered in the light of what it implies is the value placed on internally facilitated professional learning and support and on the way in which the role has been defined and implemented in schools.

One of the key issues for the role appears to be that it sits outside the traditional school hierarchy. It does not have management units, a traditional source of status. Nor does it, yet, have an easily definable place or set of tasks in many of the schools. Whether it should have these is a different question, that it does not appear to have created some difficulties for the SCTs in 2006.

Having said that, some schools did provide the role with real status and saw it as a very valuable resource in implementing their strategic goals around professional practice. How this was done and the focus on professional practice, on proactively

moving all teachers forward is worth noting and perhaps emulating more broadly. It may be that the role can be imbued with a status that sits outside the normal definition (i.e. it is not related to how many management units are allocated to it or its place in the hierarchy). This status would need to sit alongside a high value on professional learning.

The importance of a professional learning culture in schools

One of the key themes to emerge from the review related to the importance of a professional learning culture in schools. Given the widely accepted difficulty in changing secondary school culture it is unlikely the SCT role alone will ever be sufficient to change teacher practice across a school. The case studies in this report, however, suggest the role can serve as a catalyst and a valuable resource for supporting the development and continued growth of a professional learning culture in schools.

In the schools where there was a strategic focus on professional learning, whether in practice or emerging, the SCT was seen as just such a valuable resource. It was not the only resource but was seen as a critical initiative to overcoming some of the barriers to implementation. SCTs in these schools had a clear focus and often a more visible role than in other schools. They also seemed better able to work with a range of teachers. This included facilitating and co-ordinating whole school professional development and working with groups of experienced teachers. The role in these schools appears to have had more status and greater recognition than in some others.

This was possibly due to the more proactive model in those schools where there was a school-wide focus on enriching professional practice through enhanced pedagogies. In other schools there was often the sense of a reactive model where the SCT was seen as someone who worked with teachers who *needed* help, either because they were beginning teachers or because they had problems with a class or a colleague. This is not to undermine or devalue the work of these SCTs but to highlight the potential for a greater focus on professional practice.

This idea of 'needing help' is not always viewed positively in secondary school cultures where professional autonomy is valued. For many teachers their sense of professional self-efficacy is based on being in control, being the expert, and to ask for *help* potentially undermines this. The real issue, of course, lies deeper. All teachers should be constantly seeking ways to enhance their professional practice in a learning environment. It was this culture shift that was most apparent in those case study schools where there was a school wide focus on some aspect of pedagogy such as

differentiated learning or cooperative learning groups. Even where the shift was only in its infancy there was a sense of a greater focus and a wider value being placed on the SCT role.

> **The diversity of implementation**

The extent to which New Zealand schools are self-governing allows for a level of interpretation and individuality that is not common in other jurisdictions. As a result school culture and school leadership have an impact on how any initiative is implemented and the SCT pilot was no exception. What became clear throughout the review, and particularly in the case studies, was the diversity of implementation models to be found in 2006.

This diversity was evidenced in the way in which the SCT role was played out across a number of continua. These are discussed below and are also alluded to in many of the other sections of this summary report.

Continuum of practice: Guidance counsellor to professional mentor

The SCT role was often described as being about relationships. It is the nature of those relationships which this continuum describes. This is an important continuum to consider as it sits at the heart of the purpose of the SCT role and its goal of enriching professional practice. It is also closely connected with the critique that is raised subsequently, related to the twin concerns of self-referral and confidentiality, and their relationship to the issue of privatised practice. It also explains much of the diversity found.

At the 'guidance counsellor' end of the continuum, SCTs supported teachers who were struggling personally and were often seen as a shoulder to cry on. At the other end the 'professional mentor and coach' worked with teachers to improve their practice, providing professional guidance and support. While there were some SCTs who were clearly one or the other many moved along this continuum depending largely on the needs of teachers they were working with.

The determination of where they sat also appears to have depended on their personality and the role they had previously held in the staffroom and school generally. For example, were they the person other teachers had always come to with personal concerns, whether home or school based, or were they the respected expert teacher who had often supplied resources or ideas and been available to discuss teaching practice previously?

The issues surrounding confidentiality, and the perceived need for confidentiality, discussed subsequently, appear to have been greater when the model was closest to 'Guidance Counsellor'. This is understandable if teachers are discussing personal issues with the SCT. The question to be considered though is the extent to which an SCT should be dealing with personal issues and the point at which they have a professional, if not moral, obligation to inform senior management of issues impacting on a colleague's professional capacity. That is, how quickly should they move from guidance counsellor to professional mentor/coach.

Continuum of delivery: Individual teacher to whole school

The majority of SCTs reported working largely with individual teachers. Some spoke of undertaking whole school professional development but this appears to have been somewhat of an exception. Indeed, many seemed uncomfortable with the idea. More common was for SCTs to work with small groups of teachers such as those teaching a particular class or year level, those from a specific department or interest group, or those involved in activities such as professional reading groups.

Continuum of formality: Informal and non-structured support through to structured whole school professional development

Most of the SCTs appear to have worked with teachers in a largely unstructured manner. In some instances this was reported as creating difficulties for the SCTs whose roles appear to have been somewhat nebulous and difficult to define or monitor as a result. For highly organised and efficient teachers a lack of structure can be uncomfortable to work within.

This lack of structure appears to have been related to the extent to which their role was reactive, responding to the immediate and self-identified needs of individual teachers. It also appears to have been related to the perceived need to wait for self-referral rather than implement a structured programme of professional enhancement. Whether this is an issue, or not, depends on the desired outcomes of the SCT role.

However, as the exemplars and other case studies show, it is possible for the SCT role to also have a highly structured focus and clearly defined role. In some schools the SCT was focussed on key strategic goals related to pedagogy, in others they were working with clearly defined groups of teachers. In these schools the SCTs appeared more relaxed about their role and more certain of what they had achieved.

Continuum of content: Classroom management to developing innovative teaching practice

While the majority of the SCTs appeared to focus on generic classroom management others were focussed on introducing the staff at their school to new pedagogies and ideas. The latter were most common in those schools which already had a strong professional learning culture and where there was a clearly defined strategic goal related to staff professional development and teaching practice.

The focus on generic classroom management appears to arise from the traditional siloing of subject areas in secondary schools and the role of the HoD as the provider of subject specific expertise related to content and its delivery. While this is understandable it should also be noted that certain pedagogies such as differentiated learning are not subject specific.

It could also arise from a common perception that new teachers need to focus on classroom management and that maintaining “control” in a classroom is related to management rather than student motivation and involvement. It would be interesting to consider whether a focus on professional practice and pedagogy would also lead to an improvement in perceptible classroom management.

Continuum of response: Reactive to proactive

The last point in the paragraph above is directly related to this continuum which moves from a reactive model of implementation through to a proactive one. SCTs at the reactive end can be seen as responding directly to perceived problems or concerns; they are the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. At the proactive end SCTs, rather than responding to issues per se, work on enhancing teacher practice as a whole; that is they work at the top of the cliff to prevent accidents rather than waiting to pick up the pieces.

Again the question is whether a focus on classroom management is appropriate or whether the focus should be on implementing professional practice that removes the need for obvious classroom management.

> **A potentially limited model of implementation**

While, as already discussed, the pilot has been undeniably successful, there is one area of concern that needs to be discussed. A key theme to emerge throughout the review was the impact of an emphasis on self-referral and confidentiality which seems to have limited the implementation of the model in many schools. Exactly where these emphases came from or why they were given so much credence is difficult to ascertain. It may be the translation into practice of some of the suggestions in the handbook, it may have arisen in cluster meetings, or during workshops at the hui. It may be a combination of a range of sources. What is important is that the constraints of confidentiality and self-referral assumed strong importance for some SCTs in 2006.

While the guidelines and handbook had been initially developed based on best knowledge of what would work, findings in this review suggest these emphases, along with the suggested foci in the initial documentation, may have limited the potential of the SCT role and reinforced some of the norms of behaviour the role was intended to break down. This was due to a number of valid reasons but may have resulted in some unintended consequences.

Firstly, SCTs reported frustration at waiting for teachers to come to them. This appears to have been due to both a lack of 'clients' and a belief that they were not always reaching the teachers they should be. A number spoke of having to find other ways to work with teachers, to get into classrooms. Many of these ways could be seen as subterfuge, such as ostensibly following a class in order to observe a teacher and be in a position to provide feedback. While in some instances this was successful, it may be that the Puka model (see case studies), where it was openly suggested teachers should work with the SCT, is preferable. Of course, what is more preferable is a culture of self-improvement and ongoing learning where teachers are open to and willingly seek collegial support and guidance. The Puka model does appear to be a midway point.

The expectations of confidentiality also caused difficulty for some SCTs. This included concern about working in a vacuum without access to information that management might have. An example of this would be working with a teacher facing competency review but being unaware of that situation. They also felt, at times, that they should be going to senior management with concerns but were unable to. In this sense confidentiality can be seen as potentially creating a situation for SCTs where their professional accountability is jeopardised. At what point should they say 'I am sorry but this is a management problem and I am going to talk to your HoD or the principal?' Another issue created by the confidentiality requirement was the extent to which the SCT role continued to have low visibility in schools.

These two factors, combined with the focus in the original guidelines on beginning teachers and teachers who sought assistance, seem to have not only meant a reactive model is in place in many schools; they also seem to have supported the traditional secondary school culture with its emphasis on privatised practice and teacher autonomy. If the SCT role is to be effective in enriching professional practice across a school, in order to improve student outcomes, it must break down these norms of behaviour, not reinforce them. It must be part of a school-wide shift to make professional learning, deprivatised practice and the seeking of support to enhance practice commonplace and transparent, not something occurring behind closed doors. The role itself is not at fault. Rather it is the manner in which it has been implemented in some instances.

The model, as it was reported in some schools, has been described as potentially limited because it seems to have been created and implemented in a way that acknowledges weaknesses in the current culture of many secondary schools and yet does not seem willing to confront that culture and change it openly. Rather, it appears to be trying to work from within a flawed culture when judged against what is known about professional learning communities and, therefore, is accepting if not supportive of these limitations. If there is a need to deprivatise practice the SCT role should not be seen as reinforcing privatised practice.

Is the SCT role as an alternative career pathway or a career opportunity?

Finally, there was one question throughout the review which was never fully resolved. This was the extent to which the SCT role is a career pathway. Both the 2006 and 2007 guidelines were clear that the role was initiated as an alternative pathway for classroom teachers who do not want to follow the more traditional management pathway. However, the extent to which the SCT role is a pathway and the nature of that pathway is still not clear. Part of the problem seems to be the linear picture the word pathway draws: pathways go somewhere. In reality a career opportunity may be a more accurate description.

Many senior management participants felt that the role was not a career pathway as such. They did not, with a few exceptions, see it leading onto senior management roles as they felt the SCT would not have sufficient experience in administration or management. This presupposes, of course, that all senior management roles require such experience. A shift in definition of at least one senior management role so that it was a senior professional leadership role with responsibility for professional practice

could alter that perception. It should be noted that the exceptions were schools which placed a highly visible value on professional learning and/or which had a focus on leadership rather than management.

What this review seems to have shown is that currently there are a number of “pathways”:

- The role is a **stepping stone** for some. That is it is one step on their way from the classroom towards senior management and the next stone is likely to be middle management.
- The role is a constructive downsizing, an **alternative career choice** for some. That is they have had middle and senior management roles and have now decided to return to the classroom. In this case the role can be seen as a ‘backward’ step in terms of a traditional career but it does provide senior teachers with an alternative to staying in management; something not available before.
- The role is a **career choice** for others. There are some SCTs who had never wanted a management role, for whom there had previously been no professional leadership position available. The SCT role provides them with an opportunity to utilise their expertise and knowledge while remaining focussed on classroom practice.
- The role is an **interesting interlude** for some. For these teachers the role was a chance to try something different, to be part of a pilot. Many may decide to make it a career choice, others may return to their management or classroom roles.

> **The implementation of the SCT model in three schools**

The full report provides three detailed exemplars of the implementation of the SCT role in 2006. These were selected from amongst the case studies to provide schools with a sense of what is possible when the SCT role is focussed on professional practice. They show that the implementation of the role does not need to be reactive, limited by concerns such as confidentiality and self-referral. They also highlight the importance of strong school leadership and a culture which values the enhancement of professional practice and sees this as being driven from within rather than externally.

Karaka

In the first, Karaka², the SCT role was focussed on delivering whole school change through a structured professional learning programme. The SCT was a member of a senior leadership team and had an openly valued role with clear status attached. The school culture appeared to have already been collegial and focussed on teaching and learning as their core work prior to the SCT role being implemented. The SCT did not work with beginning or struggling teachers as a focus; when she did work with these groups it was within the overall school wide approach. There was no suggestion of the 'guidance counsellor' model in this school. Rather, this SCT was solely a professional learning facilitator. She acted as mentor, coach and expert teacher. She also supported and promoted expertise in others. The SCT role was an integral part of the overall school strategy and not seen as an 'add-on' in any way.

The job description for this SCT outlined a number of activities she was expected to undertake. These included:

- Introducing and supporting differentiated learning as a school focus
- Encouraging collaboration and a supportive collegial culture
- Assisting staff in teaching and learning
- Modelling good practice.

One of the key activities of the SCT was to lead staff-wide professional development on differentiated learning in a specifically created time slot. There was also an after-school staff meeting for which she organised a range of activities. In some instances members of the staff presented what they had tried and found successful in their own classrooms. In this way the resources and ideas were modelled in the staffroom. The

² School names have been changed

presenters were all highly enthusiastic staff who had been on courses or come back from tasks they had been given by the SCT and who wanted to share their experiences. One of the SCT's key roles in this school, therefore, appears to have been facilitating the sharing and showcasing of best practice, making sure everyone was aware of what was going on in other classes.

As well as leading whole school professional learning sessions the SCT had a key role in providing teachers with resource material. There was a differentiated learning site on the school intranet which the SCT ensured had a range of material on it for teachers to download and adapt to meet their needs. Teachers were also encouraged to add or contribute to this site. In addition, the SCT often provided staff with material in their pigeonholes such as pointing them to new websites. Another activity was the development of a professional library in the workroom.

While the focus was primarily on whole staff development as a means of shifting teaching practices, the SCT had also worked with two teams of teachers on specific tasks at the time the case studies were undertaken. In the first instance, she worked with two teachers to develop new units of work in their teaching area and then to trial them. These units focussed on differentiated learning. This had worked well and the group were to be pushed to higher levels of independence later in 2006 as she withdrew some support. In this way it was a very scaffolded approach. The initial sessions had involved some team planning with an emphasis on differentiation before a whole day had been spent making resources as a team and creating a unit to be used in the future. This cooperative team learning approach was also successful with another group who were working on integrating Year 9 classes to try and counter the issues of transition from Year 8.

In both instances the focus was on changing teacher practice to better meet the needs of students through the introduction of new strategies and ideas and then reflecting on the extent to which these had been successful. As with the whole school approach this seems to be a very proactive rather than reactive model. That is, it is aimed at moving teachers forward rather than focussing on the negative or on problems as such. This focus on the positive rather than problems was commented on by the SCT as a key principle in both her activities and her success.

Neither confidentiality nor self-referral appears to have been a concern for this SCT. This may have been due to her focus on shifting the professional practice of the whole staff rather than on 'problems'. Where there had been concerns with individual teacher practice she had managed to involve such teachers in learning teams or utilised whole staff situations. She had, therefore, never had to worry about waiting for self-referrals

or working out how to get into classrooms. The result was, that for her there appeared to be none of the issues related to the nebulousness of the role or 'guilt' associated with having 'no clients'. It may be that the whole school focus provided a positive rationale for approaching the SCT. It may also be that it had provided the SCT with the positive profile necessary for other teachers to come to her on individual matters.

What is important to note here is the extent to which this school was already open to and ready for the long-term goals of the SCT role in terms of increasing professionalism and of developing professional learning cultures aimed at enhancing student achievement. The model implemented was very proactive and had not focussed on fixing problems but rather on moving everyone toward a common goal. What is not clear here is how the school reached this level of willingness or whether an SCT could drive the change earlier in the process.

Kowhai

The second school, Kowhai, also had a strong focus on school-based professional development and as a result a very strong professional learning culture was being developed. The internal professional development programme in place in the school was aimed at quality teaching and learning and provided a school-wide focus on strategies such as co-operative learning. In addition, the school seemed to be already moving towards a deprivatisation of practice, prior to the SCT appointment.

Unlike Karaka, the core facilitation was undertaken by an external consultancy rather than the SCT. The SCT role was, therefore, seen as supporting the professional development focus rather than driving it. There was, however, a suggestion from senior management that in 2007 the role would shift to be more closely aligned to the professional learning facilitator model at Karaka.

To ensure staff were aware of her new role and what she could offer them the SCT created a pamphlet which outlined her role and the types of activities she would be undertaking. Her appointment was also put on the notice board. In addition, she made a presentation to the staff about her role. She also made ongoing announcements in staff meetings inviting staff to talk to her or to visit her class. In these ways the SCT had worked hard to promote her role.

This SCT worked with individual teachers who self-referred, with beginning teachers and facilitated a successful professional reading group. She was very much a 'professional mentor' with little hint of the 'guidance counsellor'. This seems to be attributable both to the qualities she brought to the role but perhaps also to a school culture which was increasingly focussing on professional learning.

The professional reading group met weekly to discuss selected readings. Coffee and biscuits were provided and the meetings appeared to be viewed as an opportunity to meet colleagues on a professional level, which was at the same time social. Much of its success was attributed to the way the SCT had set it up and the nature or culture of the group, which was voluntary and open. While the SCT provided many of the readings, participants were also invited to bring materials, which meant the choice of readings was not driven by the interests of the SCT alone.

There was a strong sense that the role would be redefined in 2007 to reflect both a greater awareness of what could be achieved and also of changing needs within the school. As new staff would be joining the school the SCT role was seen as critical in supporting them to adapt to the culture and to help them put the expected teaching and learning strategies in place. That is, to bring them up to speed with the professional development that had already occurred.

Puka

The third school, Puka, is particularly interesting because of the way in which the teachers who were working with the SCT were selected. Rather than depending on self-referral, the Principal had written to twelve teachers over the summer break inviting them to join a group of teachers who would work with the SCT in 2006. These teachers were those perceived by senior management as those most likely to benefit from focussed professional development. They were not seen as failing teachers as such, but teachers who, with help, could become very good teachers.

Initial selections were made to ensure there were two teachers per subject area so that they could work in pairs. However, it appears that most were working individually and in some instances not even aware of who else was on what was known as 'the team'.

There was initially some trepidation and concern over the letters and one teacher did refuse to participate. The SCT acknowledged she had had to work hard with the others to convince them they were part of a special group of teachers and that their selection was not a negative reflection on how the management team viewed them professionally.

Beyond this atypical selection process the SCT model worked in a way largely similar to many other schools. The SCT worked with the teachers concerned on an individual basis on projects and ideas that they determined. She offered them a range of ideas, and, support in a model that appears to have moved between 'guidance counsellor' and 'professional mentor'.

Each member of the team had one period a week which was untouched by relief or any other activity to use for their SCT programme or project. The SCT supported them by doing classroom observations and modelling lessons. She also team taught with some of the teachers and acted as a sounding board as well as providing tips around teaching and learning. Each of the teachers had a self-assessment checklist.

The principal suggested that given the success of the programme in 2006 they would consider putting a second person in a similar role in 2007. The idea was that there could be two "*rounds*" where teachers worked with different mentors or in different programmes. Another option was a two-year cycle with one person but nothing had been discussed in detail and consideration would be given to a number of options.