

# **The Problem with Success: Perspectives of the Specialist Classroom Teacher Role in New Zealand Secondary Schools**

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## DEDICATION

*For  
Jasumati Ranchhod*

*This journey began when yours had ended.  
Yet, you have walked alongside me through every step of this journey,  
May you always be my guiding light,  
Your love, faith, and strength endure.  
I love you, Mum!*

## ABSTRACT

An on-going challenge for teachers and leaders is addressing the diverse needs of students in order to raise student achievement. Quality teaching is regarded as an important influence on outcomes for students. The key drivers towards this aim are a focus on effective teaching by accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers in the profession, developing career pathways for effective teachers, providing opportunities to collaborate and developing best practice and providing collegial support.

This study sought to examine the perspectives of leadership by Specialist Classroom Teachers and senior leaders within New Zealand secondary schools on the role of Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT). The questions that sought to guide the research were: What are the understandings of leadership as perceived by SCTs and school leaders? What is the role of a SCT in a secondary school as perceived by SCTs and school leaders? What do SCTs and school leaders perceive to be their collective actions that influence staff to develop teaching pedagogy to improve outcomes for students? With this research focus, a small-scale, qualitative study was conducted with data gathered from five participants, three SCTs and two senior leaders, using semi-structured interviews. The key themes, which emerged, were identified and categorised to show the juxtaposition of the perceptions of the SCTs' and senior leaders on the SCT role.

The study reveals in its findings that the SCT role is a successful leadership role for the enhancement of pedagogy and teacher development in New Zealand secondary schools. Some of the success factors include: firstly, a mentoring focus for deeper reflection of teacher practice, evolution of the SCT role to include greater leadership of teaching and learning and secondly, working within collaborative cultures towards a shared collective efficacy. The complexity of the role is also recognised by the tensions and influences experienced by the participants in terms of their interpersonal relationships.

A key finding of this study is that the aggregation effect of the success SCTs experience in the role has highlighted an emerging overload of the SCT role, which makes the role unsustainable for just one individual in the role. This study recommends that the SCT model be expanded to include more SCTs per school. Another recommendation arising from this research is the importance of sustaining the SCT model within and across schools.

The findings from this study will also contribute to the literature on middle leadership and it will inform the practice of SCTs' and leaders who are responsible for the professional learning of other educators.

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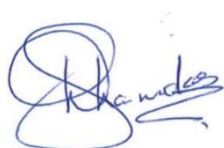
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## ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

*I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Shamdass', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**D Shamdass**

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## **CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION**

This small-scale, qualitative study explores the perceptions of Specialist Classroom Teachers of New Zealand secondary schools on the role of the Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT) in enhancing professional practice of teachers and promoting pedagogical change within their secondary schools. It also examines the perceptions of Senior Leaders who work closely with SCTs to find congruence, clarity, as well as variance in the perceptions of the role. The study will also highlight the enablers and barriers that SCTs' experience in their roles.

The study will aim to contribute to knowledge about the evolving role of the SCT in response to the changing demands of teaching and learning. In particular, it will offer a senior leader perspective of the SCT role as well as how they work with the SCT towards improved student outcomes. The research will have both an inward and outward focus for an SCT by helping them to identify both individual and school-wide issues related to the role.

This chapter presents the context of the study and a research rationale together with research aims, which underpin the questions of the research. A brief explanation of the research methodology and data collection is also provided.

### **Context of the Study**

Around the world, educational leaders mainly have one aim, which is to raise achievement of all students, particularly focusing on under achieving students. The challenge for teachers and leaders is addressing the diverse needs of students. An important systems influence on outcomes for diverse students is quality teaching (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008).

The key drivers towards this aim are a focus on effective teaching by accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers in the profession, developing career pathways for effective teachers, providing opportunities to collaborate and developing best practice and providing collegial support.

For instance, in the late 1990s, the United Kingdom established the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) and Excellent Teacher schemes where teachers are expected to support their teaching colleagues, either in their own or other schools and to develop best practice and undertake professional learning. They are also expected to demonstrate a high level of teaching experience and expertise (Muijs & Harris, 2006).

In 2003, the state of Victoria in Australia established an extensive mentoring scheme in all schools to focus on supporting beginning teachers and recognising and utilising the expertise of the many experienced teachers currently teaching (Devos, 2010). In the USA, Consulting Teacher (CT) roles are given to teachers who are highly skilled and experienced. They serve three-year terms as peer coaches for all beginning teachers and underperforming veteran teachers in various schools (Fiarman, 2009). Primary schools in New Zealand have the Advanced Classroom Expertise Teacher (ACET) recognition and post-primary schools, namely area schools as well as middle and secondary schools, have a Specialist Classroom Teacher role (Ministry of Education, 2016).

### **The SCT Role in New Zealand Secondary Schools**

The following abbreviations are used throughout this research when examining the four key document sources, which are referred to extensively for this study in Table 1.1.

Table 1. 1 The four key document sources used in this study.

<b><i>Document</i></b>	<b><i>Abbreviation</i></b>
<i>Guidelines for the appointment of Specialist Classroom Teachers (SCT) in Secondary Schools</i> (NZSTA, 2015; PPTA, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2016).	SCT Guidelines (see Appendix A)
<i>Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers</i> (Education Council New Zealand, 2015).	Mentoring Guidelines
<i>Review of the Specialist Classroom Teacher Pilot full report</i> (2006): Executive summary and introduction to the report (Ward, 2007).	SCT Pilot Review
<i>Specialist Classroom Teacher Handbook</i> (Virtual Learning Network, 2008)	SCT Handbook

The Specialist Classroom Teacher role was established following the 2004 settlement of the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement with consensus from three key stakeholders, the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA), and the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA). Also contributing were the Education Council, previously called the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC), and Ward (2007) who completed a review of the SCT position, prepared for the Ministry of Education.

In 2006, the role of Specialist Classroom Teacher was created to support other teachers in teaching and learning in New Zealand secondary schools. The SCT position was established as a one-year pilot scheme in secondary and area schools in New Zealand. It continues under agreement of the MOE, the PPTA, and the NZSTA. The position was created to retain teachers in the profession by offering a pathway opportunity for career and professional growth. This was an alternate pathway from the traditional paths of curriculum or pastoral management.

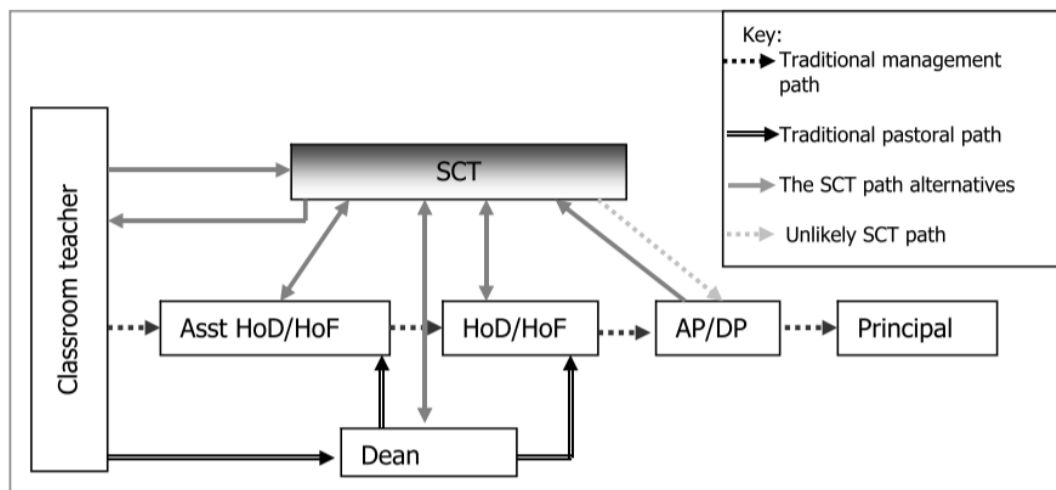


Figure 1. 1 The expected career pathway for SCT position Ward (2007).

The establishment of the SCT position is distinctive as it pertains to the classroom practice of teachers with a focus on the development of professional learning of teachers. While other senior positions such as assistant principal or deputy principal roles have tended towards managerial functions rather than classroom practice, the SCT position represents a career

pathway to assist in “the retention of experienced teachers who wish to focus on professional teaching practice” (MOE et al., 2007, p. 2). This indicates the value placed on improving teaching and learning in secondary schools by all stakeholders.

According to the Secondary Teachers’ Collective Agreement 2015-2018, the eligibility criteria for SCTs include a high level of classroom experience and expertise along with three successful attestations against the experienced teacher standards or overseas equivalent and a minimum of six years total teaching experience (PPTA, 2015). The position is valued as illustrated by a proviso in the SCT Guidelines. It states that schools should aim to minimise other responsibilities of the SCT in order for them to focus on the SCT role. The appointee must relinquish other salary units that carry responsibility (MOE et al., 2007). This also has the effect of removing the SCT from the school hierarchy, which was criticised in the SCT Pilot Review. Ward found that there was “little formal recognition of the importance of the role or of its place in the school hierarchy” and further “there were issues surrounding the status - or lack of in many instances - accorded the SCT role” (Ward, 2007, p. 2). This creates ambiguity as a lack of hierarchical position, firstly, locates the SCT alongside teachers to facilitate a more collaborative relationship over a hierarchical relationship. As a catalyst for change, collaborative relationships enhance the development of collaborative work cultures and improve systems thinking to further develop organisational structures (Kochan & Trimble, 2000). However, the SCT Pilot Review also recognizes a clear need for both status and recognition of the role which may give SCT credibility by formal recognition of the expertise and skill required for the role (Ward, 2007). Forms of recognition that was shown by the government for the role were the resources available for the SCT position such as time allowance and funding.

There was provision made for funding of the SCT position to be made available for every state and integrated secondary school to make an internal appointment of a staff member to the role of Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT), for a fixed term for the school year. The position is resourced with a

time allowance<sup>1</sup>. This is usually four hours per week in addition to the non-contact time allowance given to all teachers following the Secondary Teachers Collective Agreement (SCTA). A remuneration entitlement equivalent to two management units per annum is available along with reimbursement of up to \$1000 for study fees at post graduate level, all funded by the Ministry of Education.

This substantial investment of time and funding further emphasises the value placed on the position of the SCT. The time allowance, in particular, is critical to the effectiveness and success the SCT role and it is mainly used by SCTs to observe the practice of teachers, particularly beginning teachers, in the classroom. Observation of the teaching practice of beginning teachers is an essential function of the mentoring process (Mentoring Guidelines).

The responsibility for the support of new and beginning teachers, through the development of induction and mentoring programmes, within most secondary schools in New Zealand fits neatly into the role of the SCT although there may also be school leaders such as Deputy Principals or Principals who are responsible for the overall programme. Mentoring is an important and specialized function of the SCT role as outlined in the SCT Guidelines but it also acknowledges that mentoring represents but one function amongst others of the SCT role. SCTs are not limited to how they may provide support for the professional learning of teachers and some of the ways in which they go about their roles in increasingly complex school contexts include, but is not limited to, leading professional learning groups, providing professional reading and leading discussion groups, developing reflective practice, developing classroom management strategies, leading professional learning programmes in the school, facilitating and supporting professional learning communities. Along with pre-observation meetings, post-observation meetings with each teacher they are mentoring as well as other functions of the role, the SCT time allowance that may seem generous can become easily depleted when taking into account the usual teaching responsibilities of the SCT.

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<sup>1</sup> Time allowance of up to 0.32 full-time teacher equivalent in secondary schools with rolls of 1200 students or more, or 0.16 in schools with smaller rolls.

The interpersonal relationships of a SCT should be one that is “high-trust and confidential” (MOE et al., 2007, p. 3). According to the SCT Guidelines (2007), SCTs should not be responsible for formally assessing the beginning teacher for requirements of full certification. Mentoring relationships need to be kept separated from formal accountability mechanisms as they may exert some level of control over the behaviours of people (Ammeter, Douglas, Ferris, & Goka, 2004). The formation of trust in the professional relationships of the SCT in order to enact the role successfully is discussed further in the literature review in Chapter 2.

In my practice and experience in the role of SCT, I have found that the role is adapted in different school contexts to fulfil the aims of the role. Of interest to me were how SCTs practice leadership and how their interpersonal relationships can positively or negatively affect outcomes for the aim of the role and ultimately affect progress for student outcomes. Therefore, this study takes a closer look at the complex, evolving role of SCTs’ in New Zealand schools and how they may effect change in this role.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the research:

- A. What are the understandings of leadership as perceived by SCTs and school leaders?
- B. What is the role of a SCT in a secondary school as perceived by SCTs and school leaders?
- C. What do SCTs and school leaders perceive to be their collective actions that influence staff to develop teaching pedagogy to improve outcomes for students?

### **Dissertation Outline**

The dissertation includes five chapters, consisting of an introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The first chapter includes the background study about this research as well as the research design that is used and an overview of chapters included in this research.



Chapter Two includes the literature review and this chapter will cover a number of important factors about this research including the formal role of teacher leaders, mentoring as an aspect of the SCT role and educational leadership for improved outcomes.

Chapter 3 presents and discusses the methodology used in the research and gives more in-depth information about the research design (as mentioned above). Semi-structured interviews were adopted for data collection and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the collected data. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews from three SCT participants and two Senior Leader participants from New Zealand secondary schools. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data and key themes emerged from their perceptions and experiences of the Specialist Classroom Teacher role.

Chapter Five, the concluding chapter, discusses and explains the findings with the help of the theoretical frameworks described in Chapter 2. This final chapter concludes with a short summary, including the significance of the study and its limitations and recommendations for future.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the literature review that forms the basis for the research into how SCTs and senior leaders understand the role of the Specialist Classroom Teacher in New Zealand secondary schools. In the first section, the formal roles of teacher leaders, similar to the SCT role, are examined in a broader international context to locate the SCT role in a New Zealand secondary school context. In the next section, a synthesis of literature on mentoring will be presented, as it is a key aspect of the SCT role. Mentoring is underpinned by literature on adult learning theories within a “dominant conceptual framework” (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2003) as it guides SCT-mentors to support their PCT-mentee and experienced teacher-mentees towards improved teacher pedagogy. In the final section of this chapter, links between theory and practice are made by exploring the concept of educational leadership and its various derivatives. This will illustrate how school leaders and teacher leaders such as SCTs interact and relate with each other to influence the development of quality teacher pedagogy for quality student outcomes for all students.

### **Locating the SCT Role within a broader context**

The SCT role, and similar roles abroad, has been structured to accommodate the shifting educational landscape towards increased accountability and performance management systems (Wylie, 1999). A set of professional standards were introduced and integrated into these performance management systems for teachers and principals in schools (Ministry of Education, 1999). The standards included specific criteria for effective teaching in New Zealand schools. This triggered tension as schools were simultaneously faced with the dual challenge of bureaucratic accountability and recognition of the developmental aspects of teacher appraisal (Gunter, 2002) and this led to the forms of distributed leadership in the mid-1990s.

Support was increased for greater teacher professionalism (Whitty, 2000) and “a moral obligation to promote and sustain a professional conception and culture of teaching that is perceived, enacted and appraised as thoughtful, reflective practice” (Fitzgerald, Youngs, & Grootenboer, 2003, p. 95). Moral purpose or “to make a difference in the lives of students” is implicit within this view of teacher professionalism (Fullan, 1993, p. 1). It is encouraging noting that a revised set of professional standards and a code of ethics were released in July 2017 which has been shaped by teachers, leaders and teaching experts to articulate the high standards and aspirations of the teaching profession which keeps the learning needs of students as a guiding principle (Education Council New Zealand, 2017).

The role of the New Zealand SCT aims to provide support for the professional growth of teachers. The empirical research on the SCT role is limited with the focus on the successful pilot review of the SCT role in 2007 by Lorrae Ward in which she notes the importance of a professional learning culture in schools. The SCT was seen as a valuable resource in schools where there was a strategic focus on professional learning (Ward, 2007). The SCT position also offered an alternate career pathway for teachers who did not want to leave the classroom or to move on to a traditional management role (SCT Guidelines). To locate this position in a broader context similar formal teacher leader positions, which had been initiated earlier in other countries around the world, are also examined. The role of a Consulting Teacher was formed in the United States in 1981 within a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programme which releases an excellent teacher from full-time teaching for a period of two to three years to mentor new teachers to the profession and provide supportive intervention to identified veteran teachers (Johnson & Fiarman, 2012). In the United Kingdom, the role of Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) was introduced in 1998 as a means to recognise and reward teaching expertise and was framed as a way of also raising the status of the teaching profession (Fuller, Goodwyn, & Francis-Brophy, 2013). Similarly, the Scottish model of professional recognition is represented by a Chartered Teacher scheme which emerged in 2001 where teachers gain professional recognition with standards-based professional learning and are rewarded with a

substantial salary increase (Christie, 2006). A unique feature of the scheme is that it is operated by an independent, national professional body with a rigorous certification system and has a high level of credibility with teachers (Ingvarson, 2009).

A review of literature of critique for teacher leadership models shows a few flaws in some of the models, which had been adapted over time. Some of these models include evaluation of teacher practice. In the US and UK, this initially proved to be fraught with difficulty as teachers were responsible for evaluating other teachers for the first time, which countered the traditional teaching norms of autonomy and egalitarianism (Fiarman, 2009; Fuller et al., 2013). In the US, the Consulting Teacher role also isolated principals from decisions and was later revised to include a more collaborative approach with Consulting Teachers and the principals (Goldstein, 2003).

While expert teachers should be well remunerated, teacher leader models that focus on financial incentives alone are not enough to attract and retain good teachers (Berry, 2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). In a study by Connelly and McMahon (2007), Chartered Teacher participants pointed out positive professional and personal benefits resulting from their participation in the programme. However, the main concern about the programme was feelings of semi-detachment by the Chartered Teachers from the development of the school as a learning community. For this reason, Ingvarson (2009) recommended further integration of the Chartered Teacher Scheme with changing conceptions of effective school leadership.

Lovett and Cameron (2011) compared the SCT role of New Zealand and the Consulting Teacher role of Maryland, USA and highlighted the success of these formal teacher leader roles as they offer ongoing teacher professional development to teachers, which encourages confidence, engagement, and retention in the profession. A case study of Ruby, a New Zealand SCT, was presented to reveal the success factors of the role in relation to literature on teacher leadership and the connection of leadership and learning. There was an emphasis on reciprocal learning with colleagues and shared accountability

for student learning and achievement which added to the school culture of an ongoing collegial environment.

In 2014, the New Zealand government announced a flagship policy for education, *Investing in Educational Success* (IES), with significant remuneration with the purpose of improving student achievement for all students (Ministry of Education, 2017). This eventuated in the formation of Communities of Learning (CoL) or groups of schools to represent a pathway for students from primary to secondary school. This collaborative model of schools working together with a common goal has formed new career pathways for teachers with three new teacher leader roles. The PPTA recommends one of the roles called within-school leader to complement the SCT role (PPTA, 2014). This CoL model is still in development, has potential to be successful, and will need to be evaluated and adapted to suit the needs of students' outcomes as the model proceeds.

This brief review of literature on models of teacher leadership roles contextualizes the SCT role in New Zealand secondary schools and highlights the shifts in teacher development. All of these models have potential to make gains for student outcomes and to improve teacher professionalism. They also draw attention to a redistribution of power within schools where realignment of leadership structures in school organisations needs to be contextualised. The concept of educational leadership and notions of teacher leadership and distributed leadership, which were alluded to earlier, will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **Mentoring**

An SCT is usually expected to take on the role of a mentor to Provisionally Certified Teachers (PCTs) who are expected to meet all of the Practising Teacher Criteria to gain full certification. To move to the full certificate PCTs would also need to complete at least two years of teaching and be part of an induction and mentoring programme where they would have the guidance of a mentor teacher such as the SCT as well as mentors within their specific curriculum area. The role of the SCT is therefore inextricably linked to that of a mentor and the two can be almost mutually interchangeable.

The term ‘Mentor’ comes from a character in the epic *Odyssey* by Homer, who was chosen to educate and support Telemachus while his father was fighting in the Trojan War (Villani, 2002). According to Schein in Gehrke and Kay (1984), there are various roles that mentors can enact such as teacher/coach, positive role model, developer of talent, opener of doors, protector, sponsor and successful leader. These roles may be adopted by SCTs in their practice and the well-regarded research of Little (1990) supports this position.

The literature on the concept of mentoring, specifically for beginning teacher education, is extensive and has multiple and competing perspectives and definitions (Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Healy & Welchert, 1990; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). A distinct, comprehensive definition of mentoring is difficult and unwise to stipulate as it attempts to force its many nuances into a single statement. Historically, mentoring has been viewed as an apprenticeship model where the beginning teachers emulate the actions and beliefs of the expert teacher in order to demonstrate best practice (Vonk, 1993). However, this view is challenged by the concept of reciprocity in mentoring. Knowledge and skills of existing ‘craft’ are not transferred to a novice but instead beginning teachers are developing teaching pedagogy by learning alongside their mentor and using self-reflection to gain insights into student learning processes (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Fletcher & Barrett, 2004). This process has been identified as mutually beneficial for both PCT-mentee and SCT-mentor. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the definition from Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) is espoused as it conceptualizes mentoring within three broad components of a mentoring relationship - relationship, process and content.

Mentoring is a non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationship between mentors and mentees who work towards specific professional and personal outcomes for the mentee. The relationship usually follows a developmental pattern within a specified timeframe and roles are defined, expectations are outlined and a purpose is (ideally) clearly delineated (p. 52).

## **Mentoring Attributes**

In considering the variation in definitions, Roberts (2000) argues that 'if we do not agree on what mentoring is, how do we know if we are talking about the same thing?'. For this reason, he posits that mentoring appears to have eight essential attributes that conceptualize teacher mentoring including informal and formal processes of support, teaching and learning, reflection and career development, a supportive relationship and a role constructed by or for a mentor. Further to this, Feiman-Nemser (1990) offers five orientations or paradigms of teacher learning - academic, practical, technical, personal and critical/social.

The literature on mentoring emphasises the most important attribute for successful mentoring is a supportive relationship between mentor and mentee (Barnett, 1995; Bradbury, 2010; Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Harrison, Dymoke, & Pell, 2006; Jacobi, 1991). The Specialist Classroom Teacher Handbook (2008) suggests that SCTs need not be more experienced than other teachers are, but rather be:

... a well-regarded professional with a passion for teaching and to possess the qualities which will enable them to engage with integrity in a generous, trusting relationship which is committed to the great adventure of shared personal and professional development (p.9).

This notion is confirmed by Tovey as cited in Hansford, Ehrich, and Tennent (2003), that having relevant expertise in a field is not in itself sufficient qualification for the role of mentor. Some studies also found that beginning teachers were given heavy workloads by their associate mentors (Beck & Kosnik, 2000) which generated a considerable amount of anxiety and in another study a substantial number of secondary school beginning teachers in England reported feeling bullied by their school based mentors (Maguire, 2001).

A number of characteristics for successful mentors must be considered including the ability to build and manage relationships, willingness to share knowledge, organisational knowledge, expertise in the field, a commitment to the facilitation of learning, and a willingness to commit the time and effort

required (Hansford et al., 2003). The set of skills, knowledge and attributes for mentor teachers identified in the *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (2015) focuses on abilities such as providing critical, evidence-based feedback to beginning teachers, rather than enculturation to the particular workplace or ‘handy tips’ based on the preferred practices of the mentor teacher. In order to be effective as a mentor, SCT’s require an entirely new skill set, along with time to practice the skills and ongoing training to develop mentoring skills.

### **Professional Learning of Mentors**

Mentors require support for professional learning around the approaches they could use in their mentoring relationships. Different mentoring situations require unique approaches and mentors need to be patient, flexible continuously practice their development of possible new approaches and the practical applications of mentoring. Cheliotis and Reilly (2010) developed a leadership practices continuum depicting zones of supervising, mentoring, and coaching for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. They distinguish the supervision zone as teachers giving advice and ‘the answer’ to teachers; the mentoring zone as offering solutions to problems; and a coaching zone as co-creating the relationship through a goal-setting, monitoring process. Further to this, Glickman (2002) suggests four approaches through which mentors support the development of mentees, including a directive-control approach; a directive-informational approach; a collaborative approach and a non-directive approach (p. 44). He attaches a set of behaviours which the mentor must develop in order to suit the mentor’s approach such as behaviours of listening, clarifying, presenting, problem-solving and negotiating for a ‘collaborative approach’. He suggests that different approaches are necessary for different mentees and encourages mentors to move towards collaborative and non-directive approaches in order for mentees to become competent and autonomous. These different practices and approaches to mentee development are useful for understanding how SCT-mentors understand their role as teacher developers and will be useful for organizing the discussion of the findings for this study.



SCTs also consult the *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (2015) by the Education Council of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This document highlights ‘educative mentoring’, coined by Feiman-Nemser (1998), which focuses on high quality mentoring which occurs when “an experienced colleague provides dedicated time to a PCT” (p. 11). She goes on to offer three perspectives of mentors: mentors as local guides who help beginning teachers to ease into school; mentors as educational companions who inquire into teaching; and mentors as agents of change who foster norms of collaboration and inquiry through conversations and observations. Although she adds that in her study, mentors did not view themselves as agents of change, they could be regarded as such because they engage in all the activities for change agents and activities that extended beyond the norms of isolation and involve teacher collaboration. In an empirical study Cochran-Smith and Paris (1995) also share their vision of mentors as agents of change and suggest that mentoring challenges the isolationist culture of teaching. The Guidelines (2015) intend to shift mentoring practices rather than embed existing practice and they should be transformative in nature and should benefit the full range of learners in New Zealand schools. Villani (2005) describes mentors as “teacher leaders whose service to new teachers can affect the entire school community” (p. 171). The role of SCT is valued if SCT are viewed as change agents. Successful change involves ensuring leadership capacity to adapt to and work effectively and efficiently during mentoring occurrences.

### **Mentoring to support a professional learning culture**

The school context within which SCTs practice and interact is a consideration for this research study. In their perspective of mentoring, Fairbanks, Freedman, and Kahn (2000) add mentoring is made up of “complex social interactions that mentor teachers and student teachers’ construct and negotiate for a variety of professional purposes and in response to the contextual factors they encounter” (p.103). Further to this, Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) have the perspective that mentoring “becomes not just a way of supporting individual teachers but also a device to help build strong

professional cultures of teaching in our schools, dedicated to improving teaching, learning, and caring” (p. 54). It is clear therefore that mentoring is not merely a tool but a continuous development whereby professional practice can be enhanced to promote pedagogical change throughout a school. This research concurs with one of Little’s conclusions in the study by Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, and Niles (1992) which argues the context of mentoring within schools and school bureaucracies are difficult contexts in which to stimulate, support and celebrate mentoring.

The development of within-school induction and teacher mentoring programmes is where the SCT role fits neatly into place. Induction is a term that collectively covers support, guidance, and orientation programmes for beginning teachers. A critical review of 15 empirical studies conducted by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), found that support and assistance for beginning teachers have a positive effect on three sets of outcomes: teacher commitment and retention, teacher classroom instructional practices and student achievement. In contrast to this, in a review by Long et al. (2012) mentoring and induction programmes were criticised as a solution to the problem of early career retention and attrition as there were concerns raised about the diversity in the programmes that were offered as well as the length of time for which they are offered. The research also questioned how mentors and mentees were matched for programmes and whether the mentors had received training for the role. Further to this, Hobson et al. (2009) added that if mentors were not adequately supported or prepared then there was a potential for more harm than good.

This leads to questions about whether it is possible to structure induction programs that will “solve the problem” of beginning teacher attrition. Cameron (2007) argued that in order for induction and mentoring programmes to be valuable, the programmes must be integrated into successful school structures and culture, consequently embedding the notion that induction is an introduction to continuous professional learning and development to strengthen teaching and student learning. Mentoring by SCTs and teacher mentors with the right qualities can cause re-culturing not only for individuals but also whole organisations with the help of senior leaders who have a clear

overview of induction and mentoring programme. The opportunity of mentoring as leadership activity offered to SCTs shifts them as leaders beyond self to a bigger, more critical perspective on the own practice and educational leadership (Webber & Robertson, 1998).

## **Adult Learning Principles**

### *Andragogy*

The concept of mentoring in education is constructed socially and culturally and is based on principles of adult educator learning or andragogy which is “an organised and sustained effort to assist adults to learn in a way that enhances their capability to function as self-directed learners” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 21). In current literature, three key approaches are recognised that support the adult learning principles. These principles are related to teacher learning and development of their pedagogy. Collaborative learning of teachers, their collective actions, and critical reflection have been recognised to be significant influences in schools experiencing improvements in student outcomes (Chong & Kong, 2012; Howard, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009; Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000).

An important assumption in this study is the belief that learning occurs through interactions over time. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) acknowledge that “teacher learning is more constructivist than transmission oriented” (p.258) and that teacher learning takes place over time rather than in isolated moments. In a meta-analysis study, Timperley and her colleagues (2008) state the importance of learning processes that create changes in teacher practice and found that substantive change in teacher practice which affect student outcomes was difficult to establish. Effective professional learning occurred when teachers can ground their learning in the “immediate problems of practice” and deepen “relevant pedagogical content” by engaging in “existing theories of practice” in an “on-going inquiry process” (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2008) (p.xli). The leadership dimensions of Robinson’s (2009) Best Evidence Synthesis further validates that leadership that is closely associated with teacher professional learning had greater effects on student

outcomes (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). Robinson and her colleagues add that as school leaders uncover the beliefs and assumptions of teacher practice they are better placed to challenge them to improve.

### *Self-efficacy*

Self-efficacy is related to self-belief in an individual and Bandura (1977) offers four principal sources of information to improve expectations in personal efficacy. They include performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and physiological states and he adds that experiential sources have the greatest effects in perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Further to this, Gibbs (2002) explained self-efficacy is a powerful predictor of a teacher's actions and effectiveness. He offers a model to explain the relationship between teacher outcome expectations, self-efficacy as a teacher and teacher action.

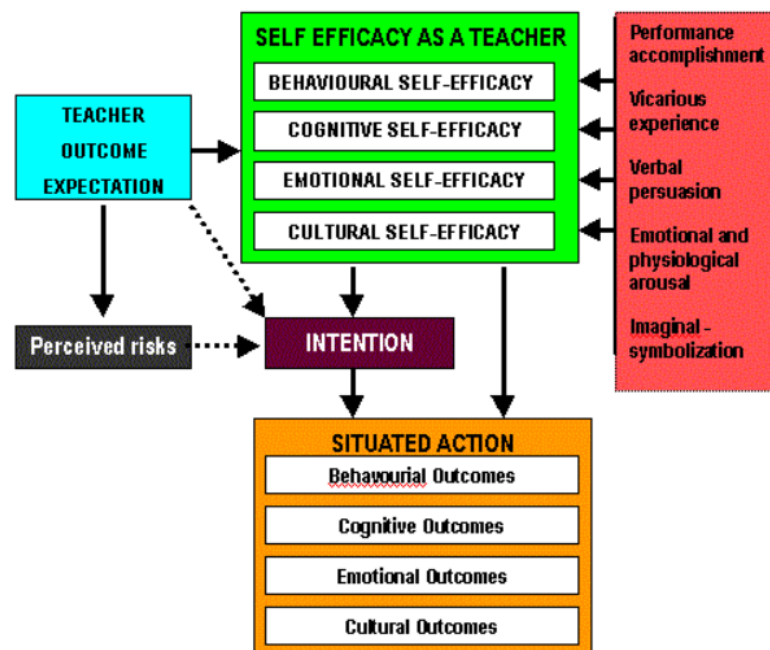


Figure 2. 1 The relationship between teacher outcome expectations, self-efficacy as a teacher and teacher action Gibb (2000).

Self-efficacy is contrasted with collective teacher efficacy which is seen as a group attribute and can be regarded as the property of the school as it can influence the culture of a school (Goddard & Goddard, 2001). Even though individual and collective efficacies are different constructs, they nevertheless

influence each other in reciprocal ways. Staff with a high level of collective efficacy will have high levels of beliefs that students can learn and be motivated to achieve more (Goddard & Goddard, 2001). In a collaborative climate, teachers no longer work in isolation and the success of student outcomes depends on the collective beliefs of all teachers and leaders (Ross & Gray, 2007). The challenge for SCTs and leaders is to instil these beliefs by allowing them to feel safe to share their strengths and expose their frailties.

### *Critical reflection*

A fundamental practice of mentoring is critical reflection and several researchers (Smyth, 1992; Watson & Wilcox, 2000) acknowledge its importance. Watson and Wilcox (2000) state that critical reflection is valued because of “its potential to change learning while we are in the midst of professional practice” (p. 57). Smyth (1989) offers four phases, or sequential stages, describing, informing, confronting and understanding, which accompany a series of questions for teachers to examine their own practice. In order to understand reflection further Argyris and Schön in Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, and Valentine (1999) offer a comprehensive explanation of how reflection works. They distinguish between single loop and double loop learning. Single loop learning occurs when knowledge is not contested but is regarded as information to be acted upon to solve a problem. Double loop learning examines problems, invokes possible responses and solutions, and examines the assumptions that underpin them. Within a school learning community where teachers can articulate discrepancies, dissonance and critique in ways that can contribute to the double loop learning the organisation would be far more effective (Scribner et al., 1999). For this reason, collaborative, professional learning communities are powerful ways of drawing on the expertise of each other to create new knowledge and to contest old ways of knowing. SCTs, mentees, and their senior leaders work together as learners in learning relationships increasingly became aware of their collective potential, and acted collectively in their knowledge contributions.

## Educational Leadership

### *The concept of educational leadership*

To support this research on SCTs as teacher leaders, the literature on educational leadership serves as a foundation for this study. The literature on educational leadership is significant and still growing. Effective educational leadership has been identified as a key factor in lifting student achievement (Bush, 2010; Robinson et al., 2009).

While there is no single definition of educational leadership, many researchers agree that educational leadership is what results in individuals whose actions are expected to improve educational outcomes for students (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009). The Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand in their *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (2015) contend that effective mentors have a “significant educative leadership role, dedicated to growing the professional capability of the colleagues they support” (p. 16). For senior leaders and SCTs, this leadership involves a collective and shared responsibility to support the teachers they work with in order to improve outcomes for students.

### *Leadership responsibilities and practices*

In a meta-analysis of 70 studies on educational leadership, researchers identified 66 leadership practices embedding in 21 leadership responsibilities with statistically significantly relationships to higher levels of student achievement (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). One of the leadership responsibilities with a high effect size is ‘intellectual stimulation’ which is to ensure faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices. This makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture. The combined leadership responsibilities emphasise the need for leaders to consider the development of their human capital, the teachers, and their knowledge and skills towards a collective, distributed style of leadership.

Marzano et al. (2005) also explain there are two variables that determine whether leadership will have a positive or negative impact on achievement. Firstly, leaders need to identify the correct focus of change that will improve practices to influence student outcomes. Secondly, they need to understand the magnitude or “order” of change and be able to adjust their leadership practices accordingly. First order changes are described as incremental, usually an extension of the past and occur within existing paradigms. They are consistent with prevailing values and norms and are usually implemented by experts. Second order changes are complex and occur outside of existing paradigms. They break away from the past to conflict with prevailing values and norms and is considered to be more authentic as it is implemented by the stakeholders of the change process (Marzano et al., 2005).

The term collective leadership indicates a focus on the combined effects of senior leader and SCT leadership and the possible differences in the contribution. In a study by Voelkel and Chrispeels (2017) it was found that the two key practices of professional learning communities were setting collective goals and analysing data to find strengths and weaknesses in practices to develop interventions, yielded significant collective competency.

One form of distributed leadership is defined as a social distribution that is “stretched over” two or more leaders in their interactions with followers in particular situations (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Harris (2003) notes that distributed leadership requires that those in formal leadership positions are required to relinquish power to others and this can place leaders in a vulnerable position as they may perceive that they lack control over certain activities. She adds the ‘top-down’ approaches to leadership and internal school structures offer can impede development of distributed leadership (Harris, 2004). The notions of distributed, shared and collective leadership was termed by Youngs (2017) as a distributed ‘turn’ where he challenges leaders and teachers to broaden their view of leadership beyond an individualistic sense and to see leadership as practice-based rather than role-based. SCTs as middle leaders are

Researchers (Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009) strongly advocate a return to the core business of schools; with the focus of leadership on pedagogy. The Best Evidence Synthesis outlines five dimensions of instructional leadership; establishing goals and expectations, promoting and participating in teacher learning, planning, co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, ensuring an orderly and supportive environment and resourcing strategically (Robinson et al., 2009). In one of the dimensions, promoting and participating in teacher learning, 'participating' is highlighted as it implies that leaders need to also be continuously learning and inquiry into their leadership practices. Sergiovanni (1998) advocates for pedagogical leadership, which invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital for students, and intellectual and professional capital for teachers. Pedagogical leadership is a construct where the role of leader is concerned with a focus on the teaching and learning that is occurring within the organisation (Sergiovanni, 1998).

The *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* document challenges school leaders "to distribute pedagogical leadership capacity and capability through every level of the school to improve student social and educational outcomes and reduce within school variance" (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 11) and that "educational leaders lead learning to...develop others as leaders" (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 12). This highlights the responsibility for leadership development of the SCT role by school leaders, which in turn will support professional growth of other teachers by continuously developing high quality teacher practice.

### **Relational Trust**

Bryk and Schneider (2003) maintain relational trust involves "an interrelated set of mutual dependencies are embedded within the social exchanges of any school community" (p.41). These exchanges occur between teachers and leaders including relational trust that is grounded in respect. Respectful exchanges between senior leaders and teachers are marked by genuine listening and considering their views in subsequent actions. Cardno (2012) states that "High trust enables learning and risk taking to occur at both the individual and the organisational level" (p. 55). Trust between SCT and those



they mentor is important if growth and change is to occur, and a lack of trust will potentially result in resistance. The capacity to adapt to change can shrink if people misunderstand or resist the change, causing barriers and on-going issues. Mentees capacity to change can be influenced by how change is presented to them and the SCT as a leader needs to have micro-political understanding in order to be aware of the power dynamics in relationships (Smeed, Kimber, Millwater, & Ehrich, 2009). The rationale is that if people focus on the benefits of change despite micro-political issues, they are more likely to participate sincerely in the mentoring process and see that it is successfully carried out, which in turn can lead to widespread participation in the change process. SCT's that are able to achieve these successes will also in turn experience increased confidence in their leadership capacity which would allow them to have a greater impact not only on the teachers they are mentoring but also on the culture of the school.

SCTs within their middle leadership role are usually placed between senior leaders and teachers and this can cause tensions when senior leaders do not understand issues of their practice. Gurr, Jacobson, and Drysdale (2013) conclude in a study that while secondary school middle leadership has potential to make a significant impact on school and student improvement, more often there is a lack of understanding and organisational support by senior leaders. This leads to an underdeveloped professional knowledge and leadership development of middle leaders and a missed opportunity to make a difference in schools. For this reason, the development and support of SCTs by senior leaders is critical to build school capacity by advancing professional knowledge and practice in teaching, curriculum, assessment, and student learning.

### **Summary**

In summary, this chapter has synthesised and reviewed relevant literature to provide insights and links to the role of Specialist Classroom Teacher. Several national and international models of teacher leader roles have been examined along with the concept of mentoring, educational leadership and self and collective efficacy of teachers and leaders within a social constructivist lens.

This chapter has provided us a theoretical understanding into the perspectives on the SCT role by SCTs and senior leaders of New Zealand secondary schools and this establishes a foundation for future research.

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This study adopts a qualitative methodology to examine the perceptions of SCTs and senior leaders on the role of Specialist Classroom Teachers. The following questions guide the research:

- A. What are the understandings of leadership as perceived by SCTs and school leaders?
- B. What is the role of a SCT in a secondary school as perceived by SCTs and school leaders?
- C. What do SCTs and school leaders perceive to be their collective actions that influence staff to develop teaching pedagogy to improve outcomes for students?

This chapter will outline the justification for the qualitative methodology used to examine the perspectives of the SCTs and senior leaders. The process of participant selection, data gathering and data analysis will be outlined in this chapter to maintain validity. The ethical considerations are also explored in order to confirm a quality research design.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” and explains it as consisting “of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). This places the researcher in the same setting in which the participants operate, and affords greater opportunity to recognise and explore individual understandings. As a researcher, I assume that the world I am investigating is a world where people have their own thoughts, interpretations and meanings.

The epistemological framework used in this study was interpretivism, which is opposed to a positivist position, which is a scientific, objective approach. Interpretivism or post-positivism works within an epistemological framework. It acknowledges the view of researchers seeking to “understand the

subjective world of human experience ... efforts are made to get inside the person and understand from within” (Morrison, Cohen, & Manion, 2007, p. 21). Bryman (2008), who recognizes the role that society and its individuals have in helping to shape the world that they live in, also supports this view. By using an interpretive epistemology, the research problem was viewed from a variety of perspectives and was able to lend itself to a pragmatic paradigm in which there was scope to provide answers through addressing and resolving the problem (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2002).

It was decided to adopt a case study methodology as this aligns with an interpretivist paradigm and because as beginner researcher I felt more confident with this methodology. Case study methodology allows us to come to an understanding of a complex issue and can add strength to what is already known through previous research. It also emphasises detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships (Dooley, 2002).

### **Sampling Frame**

For this study, a purposive sampling method was utilised. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to select participants who are “relevant to the research questions being posed” (Bryman, 2008, p. 415). The samples were drawn from two sources. The first source was from SCTs and the second was from senior leaders who work directly with SCTs. Gaining SCT perspectives was a key aim for the study but obtaining senior leaders’ perspectives on the role was also considered vital as it addressed the second research question. It is widely recognised that senior leader influence in schools is significant for sustainable change in schools (Fullan, 2006). In this respect, it was appropriate to start with SCTs and their senior leaders they directly work with as they held the relevant information in relation to the research questions.

Only a small sample was required to provide valid, qualitative data and it was decided to interview three SCT participants and three senior leaders. An invitation was sent to SCT participants on an online closed group forum on the

Schoology site (see Appendix B). This is a site where SCTs interact and share relevant SCT-related information and resources. A participant information sheet (Appendix C) was attached to this invitation. In order to participate, participants were contacted by the researcher by email and a consent form was sent to them to complete (Appendix D). Only signed and returned consent forms were considered. Because of geographical limitations, only participants from the Auckland area were invited to participate. There were five immediate responses from potential participants indicating interest in participating. One respondent did not complete and return the consent form, which was taken to be withdrawal of interest in participating. Another respondent was deemed unsuitable because she was a newly appointed SCT and it was decided that she might not have sufficient information to share for the study. This eventuated in three SCT participants who were interviewed for this study.

Potential senior leader participants were invited through an email invitation with a participant information sheet and consent form, which was sent to all Auckland schools. Only one response was received and confirmed with a signed consent form. In order to gain a more balanced perspective of senior leaders it was hoped to get at least three positive responses in total. Moreover, it was decided to send a second follow-up email invitation to all schools again which resulted in one more senior leader participant agreeing to participate. It was hoped an equal representation of SCTs to senior leaders would be possible. This, however, did not occur.

### **Data Collection**

Initially it was decided to use two tools to gather the qualitative data, semi-structured interviews and reflective journals of SCT participants. They were asked to add entries over a two-week period to reflect on their day-to-day experiences. Not all the SCT participants opted to keep reflective journals because they cited the issue of time to complete entries. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were deemed the most efficient collection method as they enable rich data to be collected in a short amount of time, approximately one hour.

The use of interviews in qualitative research offers great flexibility and adaptability in data collection methods (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). There are four broad types of interviews including structured, semi-structured, unstructured and group interviews. Semi-structured interviews were given preference for three reasons. Firstly, while a set of questions is included in the interview guide, this style of interviewing allows for ad lib conversation and the opportunity for the researcher to ask clarifying and additional questions in response to particular replies (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Secondly, semi-structured interviews can be used as a more informal, conversational approach that allows the participant to feel comfortable and more willing to engage and disclose in-depth insights. In addition, the third reason for conducting one-to-one, semi-structured interviews was to allow confidentiality for participants to speak openly and honestly and to avoid the potential to suppress or falsify data, which can occur in group interview sessions (Corbin, Strauss, & Strauss, 2014).

Two interview guides were designed; one targeted at SCTs (Appendix E) and the other at senior leaders (Appendix E), with 13 questions drafted to provide a structure for the interview process. The interview questions were broken down into separate sections for each research question and were framed around the fundamental aspects of the SCT role and expectations, any SCT leadership experiences and the relationships between SCTs and senior leaders that influence outcomes.

## **Data Analysis**

For analysis of the data for this research study involving SCTs and senior leaders from different secondary schools a range of factors were taken into account including: length of SCT experience, their personal beliefs and perceptions about their role, the culture of their school environment, and their relationships with their senior leaders. It was important to know how these factors affect the participants' perceptions and can make the data complex. For this reason, it is important to know how to approach the data

analysis. I used the approach Miles and Huberman (1994) outlined which is a three-step process to analyse each transcribed interview which consists of data reduction, data display and the drawing of conclusions. The first phase of data reduction from interview transcripts attempted to simplify and organise the data into more easily manageable components. The process of simplifying the data involved the use of different levels of coding. Data from the interviews were tabulated for interpretive analysis using a table with columns for each participant with a pseudonym to avoid identification. This was a lengthy process as I searched for similar conceptual categories and identified the key themes emerging from each interview. The table on the following page reflects a portion of this process.

This process was lengthy and difficult as I had to be aware of the notion of reflexivity (Roulston, 2001), which is ensuring that I suspended my assumptions about the SCT role from what I have learnt and experienced in this position at my own school. In attempting to do this, I was able to let the themes emerge from the data rather than actively looking for them. However, I do acknowledge that total objectivity is impossible in this process and the process of constructing a research study is usually open to personal bias.

There were key themes emerging and these were tentatively compared and linked to the research questions. The themes were structured in terms of importance and this allowed for a structured summary of findings to be compiled. The process involved several iterations of reading and rereading the data to check understandings and to ensure that the key themes established were accurate and a true reflection of what the data contained.

<p><b>Emerging Themes</b></p> <p>Role of the SCT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mentoring/inquiry</li> <li>-PL delivery</li> <li>-intensification</li> <li>-expansion</li> <li>-autonomy</li> <li>-confidentiality of the role</li> <li>Leadership</li> <li>-aligned to vision and goals of school</li> <li>-distributed, adaptable, participative leadership</li> <li>-influence</li> <li>-decision-making</li> <li>-collaborative</li> <li>-understanding</li> <li>-focused on student outcomes</li> <li>-influence student and staff learning</li> <li>Dispositions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role model</li> <li>Supportive</li> <li>Critical friend</li> <li>Still learning</li> </ul> </li> <li>Factors affecting role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>trust, time,</li> <li>Relationships</li> <li>communication</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>SCT1</b></p> <p>SCT time reduced- based on beginning teacher numbers</p> <p>Extra staffing and time given to support teaching and learning</p> <p>Leadership focused on student outcomes</p> <p>Role-modelling, not authoritative</p> <p>SCT role</p> <p>Leadership Influence</p> <p>Mentoring focus at the school</p> <p>Oversee a change initiative</p> <p>SCT role – trouble shooting classes, learning dynamics/environment/behaviour</p> <p>Role intensification</p> <p>Works closely with SL but has autonomy to make decisions</p> <p>Practicing teacher criteria actually lived not just evidenced for documentation - tokenism</p> <p>Developing reflective ability</p> <p>Gathering student voice and teacher voice data</p> <p>Continuously adapting the programme to suit the needs of both students and teachers</p> <p>relationships- age</p> <p>Further education/reflection</p> <p>Open to learning conversations</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Safe sharing - relationships</p> <p>Resources/support for the role</p>	<p><b>SCT2</b></p> <p>Leadership understanding</p> <p>Role succession</p> <p>BT specifically chose the school because it had an excellent reputation for supporting BTs' well!</p> <p>Training 4<sup>th</sup>-year mentor teachers as well as HoDs to mentor</p> <p>Staff-wide PD</p> <p>Troubleshoot dysfunctional classes</p> <p>Role autonomy</p> <p>Trust between senior leader and SCT</p> <p>Trust relationship</p> <p>New principal may have different priorities, goals etc</p> <p>Role expansion</p> <p>Impact of the SCT role</p> <p>Time for the role, given more time</p> <p>It takes time to improve pedagogy one-on-one.</p> <p>Coaching/mentoring</p> <p>Given more time than provided for the role.</p> <p>Decision making – does not feel he has a say</p> <p>Hands off – trusting relationship with SL</p> <p>Formal report to principal and board and changes,</p>	<p><b>SCT3</b></p> <p>Curriculum review aligned to vision, goals,</p> <p>One AP in charge of teaching and learning</p> <p>SCT role redefined as a teaching and learning leader role</p> <p>More time given to the role</p> <p>Job description clear</p> <p>Not only to support PCTs but working with HoFs</p> <p>evolving role of SCT with more responsibilities and within the hierarchy</p> <p>working alongside senior leaders to develop middle leaders.</p> <p>Working in collaboration with others across several programmes.</p> <p>The SCT role was further developed as the responsibilities of the AP increased and a focus was needed on teaching and learning rather than</p>	<p><b>SL1</b></p> <p>Distributed leadership</p> <p>Developing middle leaders</p> <p>Building capacity of leadership</p> <p>Challenging conversations</p> <p>Being visible and transparent</p> <p>Building relationship with SCT</p> <p>SCT using inquiry model to engage teachers</p> <p>SCT role is of a critical friend</p> <p>Attending dept and curriculum meetings with a lens on Professional Inquiry</p> <p>Teachers refer themselves – one-on-one</p> <p>Comfortable</p> <p>Symposium of SCTs – collaboration</p> <p>Different roles in different schools</p> <p>SCT leadership role-viewed and functions as a leader</p> <p>Communication- Regular meeting with senior leader</p> <p>accountability</p> <p>Collaborative relationship</p>	<p><b>SL2</b></p> <p>Understanding of leadership - Hierarchical</p> <p>Distributed leadership between SLI only.</p> <p>SCT role</p> <p>Role load, sitting on committee</p> <p>Communication - No set meeting time</p> <p>SCT is autonomous</p> <p>Trusting relationship</p> <p>Teachers who struggle Structure of the role frustrates her</p> <p>Complexities of school</p> <p>Discrete, trusting relationship</p> <p>Described as a mum and professional friend, critical friend</p> <p>Role Expansion, "Clone her"</p> <p>Initiates improvements/ideas</p> <p>more SCTs needed! Time – been given extra time!</p>
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Table 3.1 Portion of initial coding process



## **Validity of Data**

Validity is often associated with qualitative research methods because it is essential for the data to be validated. This adds rigour to the research (Bryman, 2008; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Validity refers to honesty, accuracy and integrity when research is carried out (Bryman, 2008). Honesty, accuracy and integrity are necessary for interpretation and described by Maxwell (1992) as central to comprehending the experiences from the participants' perspective, which is what this research strives to represent.

For this study, validity was established by ensuring that multiple perspectives were gathered from both SCT and senior leaders on the same questions. This allowed for triangulation of the data, which shows validity according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007). In terms of the external validity of the study, it would be difficult to suggest that the findings from this study can be generalised to other SCTs and senior leaders in other secondary schools in New Zealand. However, the findings presented in Chapter 4 can be a catalyst for future research across a wider population of SCTs and senior leaders using the same research approach.

It was important to recognise the notion of reflexivity in my approach to research as a limitation in terms of validity. Reflexivity, Finlay and Gough (2008) argue, is not only a 'way to come clean' about the influence of subjectivity on qualitative research but also acts as an instrument to improve the quality of the research (p. 41). My interest in the research topic was largely because of my experience as a SCT and for this reason, I had to guard against bias and subjectivity and adopt an unbiased approach to the research. I did this by ensuring that I followed the University's process for conducting research. The questions for the interviews were fashioned in an open-ended manner to collect as much data as possible. Detailed notes and records of all research were kept to incorporate it into the findings. Also, during interviews with participants, I maintained a neutral stance on the subject matter to allow participants to share their views freely.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Research is considered ethical when all ethical issues have been considered and approved by the research ethics board that is attached to the institution where research is being conducted (Bryman, 2008). This was done by obtaining ethical approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) prior to the involvement of others as participants in this research. As a researcher, I have conformed to AUTEC requirements that follow the key principles:

- Informed and voluntary consent
- Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality
- Minimisation of risk
- Truthfulness, including limitation of deception
- Social and cultural sensitivity, including commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi
- Research adequacy
- Avoidance of conflict of interest

A key ethical consideration was to recognise human rights and autonomy of participants in this research with the intent that it will benefit people and society and that the knowledge gained is worthwhile (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). The principal of beneficence directs the researcher to keep participants safe from harm or exploitation and to also maximise the benefits to the participants and to society at large (Punch, 2013). Research takes time and effort and some of this effort belongs to the participants, as they were the vital for the advancement of knowledge on the SCT role. For this reason, I ensured that I planned each interview for no more than an hour in order to recognise the very busy schedules the participants have.

It was important to exercise a high level of cultural sensitivity when designing and implementing the research. One of the key principles that encompass many other ethical issues that can affect the validity of the research would be the second point of respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality. Respect is viewed broadly by Wilkinson (2001) as “People have rights and that there is a lack of respect for their personhood or their separateness if one violates

these rights” (p. 15). For this study, three key aspects of respect were considered: recognition of participant autonomy and confidentiality, full disclosure of the nature of the research and participant involvement and safeguards for the trustworthiness of the data.

A key ethical issue for this study was to ensure participant autonomy was not compromised during this study. It was important that participant pairs consisting of a SCT and a senior leader from the same school were not selected, as this would have had implications for potential power imbalance. For this reason, two separate invitations were sent through different avenues, one on Schoology, and one via email. There was no conflict of interest with the schools participating in the study, as I had no links with the selected schools beyond a professional association.

Full disclosure of the research study and participant involvement was imparted to participants before research began and this could be done in two ways. Firstly, an information sheet containing key points of the research study must be presented to potential participants ensuring that they are aware that it is voluntary and at no risk if they refuse. Secondly, contact details of the researcher or the research supervisor were supplied in order to address any concerns that may arise. As I was to be interviewing each participant in person for an hour-long interview and meeting them in person prior to this, I had to ensure that I had on-going consent through regular emails to confirm their consent. One potential participant stopped responding to emails after an initial indication to participate. I understood this as a sign of no longer wanting to participate and did not pursue further contact.

Confidentiality for all SCT’s, senior leaders and their various schools were assured by the use of pseudonyms for SCTs and senior leaders.

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

This chapter reviews the findings from data collected from the study. The findings from semi-structured interviews of three SCTs and two senior leaders are summarised. The findings are divided into four sections including a brief introduction to the participants, the understandings of leadership, the SCT role expectations, and factors affecting the role of the SCT. The findings of this study are presented with both the SCT perspectives and the senior leader perspectives on their understanding of leadership and the SCT role. The chapter summary presents the findings in tabulated form.

### The Participants

The participants are made up of three SCTs' and two senior leaders who will be known as SCT1 (Specialist Classroom Teacher 1) and SL2 (Senior Leader 2) and so on.

- SCT1 was involved in the pilot programme for Specialist Classroom Teachers and has 36 years of teaching experience. She has been practicing as SCT for seven years across two different schools.
- SCT2 was involved in the pilot programme for Specialist Classroom Teachers and has 37 years of teaching experience. He has been practicing as SCT for 12 years.
- SCT3 has been teaching for 25 years and has been a Specialist Classroom Teacher for a year now. She is also looking to apply for a more senior leadership role.
- SL1 has started her first year as a senior leader and has 15 years of teaching experience. Prior to this role, she was the SCT at the school and she now works closely with the newly appointed SCT.

- SL2 has been a teacher for 17 years and has been a senior leader for 11 years and works with an experienced SCT who was also part of the pilot programme for Specialist Classroom Teachers.

## Understanding of Leadership

A key question asked of all the participants in their interview was, “What is your understanding of leadership? What does it mean to you?”

Most participants had obviously reflected on their understanding of leadership and some had even developed their understanding further by undertaking professional development in the area. Participants readily spoke about their understanding of leadership and in context of their roles and school settings.

### *SCT Perspective*

The SCTs’ all had definite and distinct understandings of leadership. SCT1 states that leadership within schools has taken a swift turn; it has become increasingly focused on student learning. She also adds that her own understanding of leadership is as follows:

*SCT1: It’s increasingly leadership has been for the sake of the students learning, a real swift turn towards that. It’s about a way of being rather than a way of telling. And it’s knowing your limitations and being ready to draw on the strengths of others and saying I can’t handle that part, that I don’t have a lot of details person or I don’t have the whatever to cope with that dimension. And so the team dimension of leadership and the consultation with others and the listening deeply to others to inform my own understanding that has become an important part of my understanding of leadership.*

SCT2 stated that he did not personally like to call himself a leader and talked about leadership as empowering others to do their best.

*SCT2: My personal take on it is I like the word empowering. I think that my job here as perhaps a leader of and I don’t really like that term, of beginning teachers is to empower them to do the job to the best of their ability plus 10% as I call it.*

SCT3 shared her reasons behind why she chose teaching as a profession and how this motivates her in her challenging role.

*SCT3: I believe that people come into teaching because they want to make a difference to children, to students. That is what needs to be kept at the forefront and be inspired and inspiring. So, being a leader in this school is challenging. It is also interesting because it is challenging and I have to be fair and say that I am given a lot more responsibility than I suspect, I don't know, a SCT would be done normally.*

She adds that she has also been abroad to research leadership in teaching and learning. At the time of the interview with SCT3, she had been considering an application for a senior leader role and had been thinking a lot about what she understood by leadership.

### *Senior Leader Perspective*

The senior leader participants shared their views of leadership based on their experiences within their schools. Both participants stated that there is a “distributed kind of leadership” within their schools with senior leaders, including the principal, and while they each have different portfolio that do “mix and match” at times they work in collaboration with each other.

SL1 states that they exercise their leadership by intentionally working with their middle leaders to grow their capacity as leaders. The middle leaders in turn pass the capacity on to their faculty teachers in order to improve their teaching practice in curriculum-specific areas. The SCT at her school has a significant role in this development.

She added that they do this by engaging in recurring conversations around how middle leaders learn and reflect on their own practice as leaders by asking questions.

*SL1: So it is all about engaging in those conversations that matter around their learning and how they, so they try to be very succinct in admin and, you know, focused on what does it mean to be an effective leader, how do we engage with challenging conversations with the people that we work with. How do we keep that vision of our school as being a new school all of the time?*

The SCT role at this school is considered a formal leadership role with a focus on professional inquiry.

*SL1: The SCT attends the senior leadership meetings on a regular basis. So she would come in when it is pertinent where decisions are not around so much systems, but the learning of the staff. A lot of our leadership meetings are around new learning for our teachers. So it involves that professional inquiry cycle and because the SCT is so involved with that inquiry she'll often make, you know, make calls on what is important to spend time on.*

SL1 emphasised the importance of a focus on professional inquiry and teacher learning as a collective leadership activity with the SCT noticeably leading in that field.

SL2 did not discuss leadership comprehensively and did not link the SCT role with her school to a leadership role. SL2 shared her understanding of leadership in terms of the hierarchical structure of the school, which is governed by a Board of Trustees that empowers the principal and the senior leadership team to facilitate management of the school. SL1 views the leadership within the senior leadership team to be distributed and sometimes overlapping across various portfolios such as teaching and learning, student support and operations.

## **Summary**

The leadership development of SCTs is reflected by their understandings of the term leadership. The perceptions of both SCTs and senior leaders included an intrapersonal view and an external view of others. Combining their views, leadership is both individual and collective with a focus on goals such as improved student outcomes. For example, as an individual construct, leadership is a way of being and is challenging due to added responsibilities. It is also connected with certain behaviours such as consulting, listening, and empowering others to do their best. From here, we see there is no one shared understanding of leadership.

## **The Role of the SCT**

### *Expectations of the role*

All participants described key areas of the role of the SCT in their school context in some detail. While all SCTs have a common aim, to support the

development of effective teaching practice of staff in their schools, they all fulfil this role in a variety of different ways based on their strengths and experience.

### *SCT Perspective*

SCT1 states that the key area of her role includes working collaboratively with the senior leader who is her direct manager and with curriculum mentors in a team to support beginning teachers. The school places value in developing the practice of beginning teachers by assigning curriculum mentors to each beginning teacher and allocating them with some time. A portion of the SCT time allowance is used for this purpose.

She is also part of the Professional Learning Committee and regularly delivers professional learning (PL) sessions to all staff. Upon her appointment as SCT to the current school, she teaches in, delivery of professional learning to all staff was particularly highlighted in SCT1's job description when negotiated. This increased focus on certain aspects of the role would have to be developed in the same time apportioned for SCTs.

SCT2 was involved in the pilot programme for the Specialist Classroom Teachers and passionately talks about his initial involvement in establishing the role at his school. SCT2 had been given considerable autonomy by his senior leaders to develop the role as he preferred and over the years, he has focused on creating an extensive mentoring programme to support beginning teachers.

The programme has been developed by SCT2 to include not only the support of beginning teachers but also involves the training of mentor teachers, who act as mentors to beginning teachers. These mentor teachers are fourth or fifth year teachers who had also been mentored as beginning teachers and are 'shoulder-tapped' by SCT2 to become mentor teachers.

Heads of Departments are assisted to mentor their beginning teachers within the school and are provided with reading and research material from SCTs.



This provides beginning teachers with mentoring support from multiple sources within the organisation.

He also oversees and organises practicums for student teachers. He may at times be called upon to deliver staff-wide professional learning or to trouble shoot certain issues that arise with classrooms to support teachers with strategies and that could take time by positioning himself in the classroom alongside the teacher. He adds the SCT role is “... *a role that changes in demand from year to year because I never know what is going to happen.*”

SCT2, within his role of SCT, has a wide influence on teacher practice. He has developed an extensive programme of mentoring which has spread and gained momentum. The positive influence spreads over not only to beginning teachers but also to their mentor teachers as well as their HODs.

SCT3 is from a large secondary school in Auckland where the SCT role was revised when she was appointed from purely a teacher support role to a teaching and learning leader role. She works closely with an associate principal who is her lead role manager and is in charge of teaching and learning. The beginning teachers of SCT3's school are supported mainly by a deputy principal. The role still includes supporting teachers but also involves working with heads of faculty around teaching and learning within curriculum areas. This includes development and extension programmes and use of literacy data to assess the needs of Year 9 and 10. SCT3 is also very actively involved in the professional learning of staff through delivery of professional learning and facilitating professional learning groups.

### *Senior Leader Perspective*

Both Senior Leader participants had contrasting perspectives of the role of the SCT in their schools. SL1 having already experienced being SCT in the past has a unique perspective of the role in terms of knowing the motivators and the challenges of the role. She says that the role of the SCT is unique to her school and has been adapted to the needs of the teachers at her school. The role is based around professional inquiry, which is a school-wide focus and the SCT works with teachers engaging in the inquiry process. The SCT is viewed in a critical friend role by the staff to support their teaching and learning.

SL2 talked about the SCT at her school who runs the pre-certified teachers programme and helps teachers with strategies in the classroom. She adds that she is a teacher mentor for Teach First NZ, which is a mentoring scholarship programme run by the University of Auckland for beginning teachers. The SCT also helps with the assessing of Year 9 students as they transition into school.

The participants all understood the purpose of the role of the SCT and spoke at length about key aspects of the role, which included developing mentoring programmes for beginning teachers. The mentoring focus was emphasised by most participants to be vital as the SCTs' focused on gaining deeper and more quality reflections with teachers from data in order for them to adapt their teaching programmes to suit the needs of students. This mentoring focus involved working in collaboration within the school with mentor coaches, HODs or, in some cases, working with external parties such as Teach First NZ.

All participants, except one, mentioned a significant point regarding the adaptation or evolving of the role. The role in most of the participants' schools has been adapted to suit the overall vision and goals of the schools which has been re-aligned to focus on advancing teaching pedagogy for all teachers in the school, not only the beginning teachers. This also draws attention to the increasing workload for SCTs' in the role.

#### *Mentoring focus of the role*

The qualitative aspect of this research study highlights the evolution of the SCT role in providing greater support for teachers' professional practice and thus improving student outcomes. Both SCT and senior leader participants describe how beginning teachers are supported. They also add the support offered to other teachers in their schools through either professional development or individual assistance. Their mentoring practice is focused on support that involves deep reflection and inquiry models.

### *SCT Perspective*

SCT1 gave a lengthy example of how beginning teachers were assisted with deeper reflection of lessons by submitting a video reflection every term by gathering student and teacher voice.

*SCT1: So they [beginning teachers] have to do a video reflection every term. Then they have to do a deeper reflection because I felt some of the stuff they were writing was quite superficial and on the fly.*

By working together with the senior leader, this sharing of good practice was then magnified by sharing with the rest of the staff.

*SCT1: So some of the way that was implemented, it was my practical in the classroom experience that then became the norm for how we would do it. But then the DP {Deputy Principal} took it to another level and she made student voice videos. Yeah, she would take it that next step. So, I was good at on the ground getting into people's classrooms and how we make that work and then she could take it to the next step so it was a bigger picture of learning for all of us [staff] in the school about some of the stuff that was coming through.*

SCT2's perspective on mentoring is that it has evolved to become more "complicated" and "hands-on". He gives the explanation that students are increasingly experiencing diverse and complicated pastoral issues that teachers have difficulty in resolving.

*SCT2: And so the role of the teacher has become way, way more complicated and therefore the mentoring and support of those teachers is huge.*

He adds that the mentoring programme at his school is considered to be robust by others and beginning teachers have specifically chosen to work at this school based on its strong mentoring programme and the support it offers them.

SCT3 used an inquiry model to gather data on a target group of students to then share and co-construct with staff differentiated strategies to improve teaching and learning at her school.

*SCT3: So I think the biggest thing probably I have influenced people this year is through the differentiation PD because that was a really big thing. So the first thing I did was I followed students round for three or four days. I followed students in every level of Year 9 every*

*academic level and I followed all subjects and I followed students who were dyslexic and Maori students and I watched and I observed and I looked at what their learning experiences were like for a day.*

*So what would a day look like in their eyes?*

*I then interviewed the students and that was recorded and then we took everything out of that to create professional development for those staff, which was this big PD afternoon. Then what I did was follow up work with staff on what ways, you know, that they have now changed their practice and now ...we are going to start with staff sharing some of the things that they've done.*

By gaining student voice data, SCT3 has highlighted the need for more inclusive teaching practices using a range of differentiated strategies.

#### *Senior Leader Perspective*

SL1's view on the mentoring focus of the SCT role supported an inclusive view of combined efforts of all staff as well as the SCT's influence on teacher development to support student learning. SL1 detailed how the SCT of her school focuses on developing greater depth with teacher pedagogy through lesson observations and development of the observation templates to identify areas of practice that can be further improved. The SCT at this school does not just have the support of senior leaders but they all demonstrate a high level of involvement themselves as senior leaders in assisting staff to improve their practice.

*SL1: So that evolved this year, the SCT has looked at possible templates of observation and how they might work with the teacher involved. So as a result of that now, we have a pre-observation which we had before but it was just about it was much more superficial. We'd come in, what do you think I should look at. Now it's actually identifying four or five things that need to be looked at within the lens of inquiry.*

While SL2 was aware of overall aspects of the SCT's role including mentoring the beginning teachers, providing PL around inquiry to the staff and offering support to individual teachers, she did not provide detailed examples of how the SCT works with the mentoring aspect of the role.

*SL2: So she runs that programme for us and she also does a lot of observations for us and a lot of teacher support. So helping teachers with strategies in the classroom and things like that.*

### *Time allowance for the role*

All the participants stated that time was the most critical factor that limited their opportunities to address increasing needs and issues of practice. They were clearly frustrated with the limitations of the SCT time allowance given to each school.

### *SCT Perspective*

SCT1 shared two reasons for her dissatisfaction with the lack of time. Firstly, a portion of her SCT allotment is shared with coaches who mentor the beginning teachers in terms of their curriculum area. While she views this positively, as there is more wrap-around support for the beginning teachers by working in a team to collaborate with others, SCT1 still feels that allotting the SCT time allowance to the coaches has diminished her time to work more comprehensively in key areas of her role.

*SCT1: So when stuff comes up with an individual class and people say well [name] can do that because she's SCT, it is really hard to get into those classes.*

SCT1 also shared a second reason for her dissatisfaction with the time allowance. She is only allowed to count contact hours for her role, not the administration part of her role, for example:

*SCT1: But I did have to account for the use of my time and I was only allowed to count contact hours. So writing up observations, preparing resources for people, no, because that's like when you're a teacher you've got prep and marking time. So it was only contact time.*

*So it's like the job has got bigger but the time allowance has got smaller and that is a major issue for me, and I'm a bit twitchy about that. And I'm not quite sure because my direct manager [DP's name] is with me on that and the boss is just no.*

This shows that despite senior leaders seeing value in providing more time and support for the role, there are major barriers encountered where the resource of time allotted to schools for the SCT role is simply not enough. The reason for this may be the success experienced by the SCTs in the role has created a

greater need for more time for the role as well more expertise to be able to meet the demands of the role.

Some of the SCT participants appreciated how extra time was provided for the SCT role by senior leaders on top of the SCT time allowance, which is allocated by the Ministry of Education.

*SCT2: They [PCTs'] often say that every school should have [name withheld]. I wish they didn't because we don't want clones, but I know what they are saying and the difference is I've got the time and other schools don't. I mean if everyone had the time that I've got, they could do a lot of the things I do if they chose to. So time is critical that is what I asked for first and that is what I got.*

SCT3 explained the reason extra time was provided was a show of faith by senior leaders towards the SCT to fulfil their role towards the school's goals.

*SCT3: Okay, well on the positive side, as I said, I am given more time than I think usually is given to SCTs. I know it is still a huge role, but I have also been given a lot of trust and a lot of leeway to fulfil my role in any way I see fit.*

#### *Senior Leader Perspective*

Both senior leaders discussed how their SCT has been given their SCT time allowance for their role as well as extra provision was made for added responsibilities.

*SL1: There is also release time available. So if the SCT would like to observe or talk to a teacher and they don't match in terms of non-contact then that is available. So, I would step in take her class for half an hour and she is able to do that.*

SL2 also stated not just needing more of her SCT's time but also talked about cloning her, which may suggest the need for more individuals with SCT skills and experience.

*SL2: As I say I just want to clone her ... I could always use more of her time.*

Both SCTs and senior leaders clearly expressed their frustration and need for more time. In some schools, despite attempts by senior leaders to provide extra time on top of the SCT time allowance, there still seems to be a greater

need, not just for time but for the expertise of more SCTs to work with individual and groups of teachers to improve their practice.

In the initial design for the research method of this study, SCT participants were asked in the participant information sheet to create reflective journals over two weeks when participating for this research. The results of this optional aspect of gathering further data was unsurprising in that none of the SCTs' volunteered to do this as lack of time was a huge detractor. This aspect of the study, while minor, conveyed the limited amount of time the SCT participants have and how when prioritising urgent responsibilities other low-priority, but nevertheless important tasks, fall behind. This focus on short-term responses rather than long-term strategy may be the cause of the frustration that the SCTs' have expressed.

### **Summary of the expectations of the SCT role**

The perspectives of the participants show the expansive and variable expectations of the role of the SCT based on each school's context and needs. Development of teacher pedagogy is emphasised by most participants through several different avenues such as mentoring programmes or initiatives where data and inquiry are used to stretch and grow the quality of teachers' practice. Deeper reflection in teachers' practice is encouraged by SCTs through the use of student voice, use of technology to record lessons, inquiry focused questioning through the development of intensive mentoring programmes and staff-wide professional learning and practice. These results show how the expectations of the SCT role set out in the SCT Guidelines which were developed a decade ago has since evolved from only supporting beginning teachers and teachers who self-referred to SCT models where the development and practice of all staff is targeted using a variety of methods.

The perspectives of most of the participants indicate that the SCT role, when aligned to clear vision and goals focused on student outcomes and allowing for individual agency of the SCT, is a role of strength and leadership. By making changes at meso-level, senior leaders together with SCTs can adapt the role

of SCT to make shifts for continuously developing and improving teacher practice for enhanced student outcomes. The role in some schools has been carefully considered and restructured to adapt to the vision and goals of the schools, as mentioned by SCT3 and SL1.

The role emphasised professional development of the SCT themselves. SCTs use a great deal of self-reflection in their role, both to develop themselves as well as the teachers they work with. For example, SCT2 developed the extensive mentoring programme by researching further into the area. SCT1 spoke about the unexpected growth of her own teaching practice because of being an SCT.

*SCT1: ...I mean it's also unexpected. I'm in other people's classrooms so much. So the big spin off for me is thinking pedagogically and so constantly pushing my own teaching practice.*

The participants also shared how they are using their strengths in specific areas to support the school-wide emphasis on improving student outcomes, such as supporting staff with literacy strategies because they were English teachers (SCT3). Where they saw areas of need in their practice, all SCT participants had individually undertaken professional learning in those areas to improve their professional development via readings or courses through university, which in turn improved their leadership development.

One of the constructs include being able to practice the SCT role with a degree of autonomy. SCTs at all five of the schools are able to practice the role with degrees of autonomy. Senior leaders of the participants' schools have entrusted SCTs to develop their role with varying degrees of autonomy and in most schools, they are highly involved in the development of teaching and learning. Most SCTs are able to help influence major decisions that are positive and focused on quality, enduring outcomes for teachers and learning at their schools.

A further consideration highlighted by SCT2 to stress the need for evaluation and review of the SCT role to consider the need for succession planning and the sustainability of the SCT model.



## Factors that affect the SCT Role

The barriers and enablers of that affect SCTs in their role were discussed with both SCT and Senior Leader participants to look for overlap and difference of perceptions.

### *Collaborative Culture*

Within the interpersonal relationships of SCTs, collaboration plays an increasingly important part in their interactions with others.

### *SCT Perspective*

SCT1 took a global view of collaboration in terms of teacher practice.

*SCT1: ...I think in a world that is moving towards collaboration in a teaching world that is moving towards greater transparency and deprivatisation.*

She adds that while SCTs must maintain confidentiality of teachers' individual practice, she adds that it is also important to challenge their thinking and improve their pedagogy. For this reason, collaboration provides the way forward for SCTs to give suggestions for improvement.

*SCT1: So too, as an SCT, I know there is some stuff that is confidential ... but deprivatising it and putting it before a team or a group and explaining and justifying it and picking up the bits that other people come up with it. So I'm not seeking to be because I think it is richer if there's that collaboration. I don't feel hampered and I don't hesitate to suggest things.*

While SCT2 did not mention the word 'collaboration' specifically he shared how collaboration is practiced in his school and how the school culture has been shaped because of it. He spoke of their mentoring programme where teachers in the fifth year of teaching are asked to mentor beginning teachers. These mentors are coached by the SCT in an after-school slot and are not provided with any time allowance for training or to mentor beginning teachers.

Upon further questioning from the researcher as to why SCT2 thinks the mentor teachers take on the role despite lack of time or remuneration, he explained:

*SCT2: They do it, I think, because of the culture. Collectively it's not about me, it's collectively the groups, the cohorts [beginning teachers], year by year have built up within the school.*

Within her large secondary school, SCT3 has a huge role working in collaboration with various middle leaders and senior leaders across several programmes. Some of the ways in which she collaborates with others include supporting teaching and learning within and across curriculum areas, utilising student data to improve teaching and learning, driving the literacy and the language of learning initiatives in the school and supporting professional learning groups to develop teaching inquiry.

*SCT3: I understand why the associate principal had pushed for the [SCT] role to be developed because he is really busy and there is only him really and so a lot of leadership in our school is around sport, and around operational, procedural and big picture stuff. But there hasn't been a lot of leadership in between the heads of faculty and senior leadership team around teaching and learning. So, I totally understand why this is important and for me it's a fantastic opportunity to lead at a level.*

#### *Senior Leader Perspective*

SL1 highlighted the importance of regular communication and collaboration with the SCT:

*SL1: I meet with the SCT once a week. So it is quite intense. We talk, so we keep it as a narrative of what has been happening where her needs are as well as, you know, for her role as SCT and at the end of the meeting we have got an action plan for that. So there is always a bit of accountability.*

*One of the things that we did this year is actually go to, there was a SCT conference symposium back in April which we both went and it was absolutely amazing. So we presented it. It is really important to work, you know, in collaboration and you can't have that collaboration unless you talk.*

SL2 also talked about the collaborative nature of the SCT's role at her school.

*SL2: So she is really collaborative. She also, because she has so many years' experience and knows her subjects and been in Team Solutions and things like that, she just brings a different set of eyes. Or she'll be an advocate for me but will then also go and support teachers in*

*their practice and teaching as inquiry which is where we are on a journey with but we're not there yet and she has a really good appreciation of that.*

She adds that the SCT sits on the curriculum committee and working groups that target a particular year level to improve outcomes of students by coming up with ideas and interventions. She also adds:

*SL2: So she runs that programme [Mentoring] for us and she also does a lot of observations for us and a lot of teacher support. So helping teachers with strategies in the classroom and things like that. She also has a dual role, she is also our, we are a Teach First New Zealand school, so she is our teacher mentor.*

However, SL2 seemed unsure in viewing the SCT at her school as a decision-maker and said she was “not involved in decision-making”.

This incongruous view of the SCT by SL2 alludes to the structure of leadership at the school, which may be more traditional and hierarchical. Decision-making, by those not in formal leadership roles, that ultimately influence student learning is nevertheless leadership of learning.

These statements on collaboration indicate agreement from both SCTs and senior leaders on the increasing importance placed on educators collaborating in teams in order to increase transparency by deprivatising teaching practice. Collaboration, not just cooperation, is required in a non-judgemental culture where individuals feel free to make suggestions and engage in professional critical dialogue. This would require the school to develop a culture of openness, trust, and honest communication within their social exchanges in order to make improvements.

#### *Relationships - SCT and Senior Leader Relationship*

Another key question asked of all participants was how they related professionally with their SCT or Senior Leader. Most participants talked tentatively about issues around the interpersonal relationship and communications while others did not directly address relational issues.

### *SCT Perspective*

SCT1 talked frankly about her initial awkwardness around the new Deputy Principal who was to be overseeing her SCT role. The relationship improved over time and the incident that was a turning point for her was an assignment for which she was studying where she was assigned to have an open-to-learning conversation regarding an issue around her role:

*SCT1: Often with those open to learning it is a top down and this was a bottom up, but we had that sort of relationship by then where I felt she respected me and I think we got a great mutual respect. I felt it safe to share with her my critique of what we're doing knowing that she's very good at not taking it personally and so, you know, and being able to look at stuff objectively. I think we do make a good team and so a real trust has built up over the time.*

SCT2 states that he had been given “a huge amount of independence and autonomy” for his role as SCT. He cites the reason for this was based on a “trust model” since he had been at the school for a good length of time and was regarded as having a “spread” across the school and thought that the previous principal thought of him as sufficiently trustworthy. Trust along with a common vision between SCT2 and his senior leaders led to the development of the extensive mentoring programme at this school. SCT2 highlights the necessity for communication and common vision.

SCT3 also stressed communication as being important in her relationship with her senior leader. She explained the reason why this can be difficult at times:

*SCT 3: I don't think he really listens sometimes and he's got very sort of fixed ideas that he's driving. Sometimes it is a struggle for me to communicate. It has taken me a long time to get comfortable, to be honest, or to say things that I want to say because I can already pre-predict what he is going to respond and that is not easy.*

Despite this view, SCT3 shared how she has a huge amount of respect for her Deputy Principal's educational philosophy and how he challenges those around him to always “lift the bar”.

### *Senior Leader Perspective*

Senior Leader SL1 spoke extensively about her interpersonal relationship with the SCT, which she says has not always been “smooth sailing”. She gave an example of the interaction:

*SL1: The SCT and I didn't get along very well last year. Well we were working together and there has been moments when I felt how am I going to manage this relationship and how am I not going to bring in my personal, you know, response. So it was one of those moments where we're open enough and we trust each other enough to be able to talk openly about things that are challenging us or we challenge one another.*

Upon further questioning from the researcher on what factors changed the relationship towards a more positive track, SL1 added:

*SL1: I think it was me that changed and it was through my study. So my last paper was Educational Leadership and there was a focus on open to learning conversations and the students and the leadership. So I had to retrain my way of thinking. So I guess knowing why we are doing what we are doing as well and that it is for our teachers to, you know, to become those adaptive experts that we want them to come and be uncomfortable with risks. It is the reason why we are doing that, but I've really loved working with her this year more so lately rather than earlier on.*

SL2 states that there is discretion in their roles and professional relations with the SCT, they do not have a set meeting or set out guidelines for her role but when there are issues, senior leaders need to be made aware of she will discuss it with them.

*SL2: Yeah, she has got so much experience and knowledge that we trust her and we do operate on that trust model here and that suits us but she will definitely come and check in with us on things that are concerning her.*

From the perspectives on relationships between SCT and senior leaders, the study found that most participants had to “retrain” their thinking with an inward gaze on their professional relationships with a focus on mutual respect, trust and communicating openly and honestly. Despite initial discomfort, they reflected on “Why this is important?” to be able to challenge the ideas and thinking of others.

### *Relationships - SCT and Staff Relationship*

Participants were asked on their perceptions on how they thought staff at their schools related with or viewed the SCT.

#### *SCT Perspective*

SCT1 says she thinks staff views her as someone who “walks the talk”.

When she was appointed, she was asked by the principal to teach more junior classes and for a reason. She was required to be credible with staff when approaching her for teaching support with junior classes who are viewed by teachers as more difficult in terms of classroom management.

SCT2 knows that he is well regarded by other staff by the following statement:

*SCT2: ...but in my case here that has been tremendously empowering because my best allies are 5th, 7th, 8th, 10th year teachers who will say to a beginning teacher go and see [name withheld], tell him what you need to in the knowledge that it won't go out.*

While SCT3 states that she has been given responsibilities to work with others who have subject specific leadership, she adds that she does, at times, “hit roadblocks” because of the perceptions of others on the staff who do not view her role as one of influence.

*SCT3: And I have been given, you know, responsibilities and liaison with heads of faculties to build that idea that SCT at that level, you know, same as them.*

SCT3 also views herself as the “communicator” between the Senior Leader and the staff.

*SCT3: They are nervous of him, they find he puts people down a lot, but I see the other side. So I see how clever he is around education about the things he is thinking, the things he cares about and I see that he lacks people skills. And so that is a really interesting relationship for me because I hear the other stuff. I have to and I do support him and I do support his philosophy and I have to be very careful around the way I communicate that. But also I am that communicator between him and the staff a lot of the time.*

#### *Senior Leader Perspective*

SL1 described how the new SCT to her school had a “rocky road” at the beginning where some teachers saw the SCT role as purely “an advisory role”.

*SL1: So our SCT is not somebody that is lovely and gentle at all. She is lovely but she is not gentle. Her beliefs are incredibly strong and she would make them known. So there were a few barriers to actually being able to engage in that relationship and some relationship breakdowns for her and a few of the staff. But I think that the staff are now learning of what her real role is. And sometimes, what happens is they know it in theory. They know how supportive the SCT is meant to be, but when it comes to the practice of it they just don't align.*

SL2 describes how the SCT forms relationships with beginning teachers.

*SL2: But she actually forms really great relationships and a lot of these people they are young teachers...she has the balance between actually being a sympathetic ear, mum but also the professional friend, you know, critical friend and she can do that and does it in such a nice way.*

SL2 also thinks that some teachers mistrust the role of SCT and do not take advantage of the support that is offered:

*SL2: Some of our more established teachers are, perhaps a handful or two, are probably sceptical about SCT and I can't understand why 'cos we've had her for years...one in particular ... if she realised the level of support available it would have made a huge difference, but she couldn't see that someone who had been in the teaching profession for nearly as long as how could she help her.*

From these perspectives, we see that within the culture of their school context, SCTs are at times viewed positively as teacher support highlighted with confidentiality or negatively viewed by staff that does not align this support with agency to change, which highlights a deficit mode of thinking. When senior leaders and SCTs support each other with a transparent goal of improving teacher pedagogy they are able to overcome challenges of engaging with staff. Culture of the school also determines the realisation of initiatives, a less bureaucratic or hierarchical leadership structure would achieve more success.

#### *Sustaining the SCT model*

SCT2 mentioned that there has been a change in leadership at his school. For this reason, he has concerns about the sustainability of the extensive mentoring programme.

*SCT2: ... if you look behind us and see all the pictures of all the staff and think how many students they are impacting on and it's all to do with the students, then of course, I am having a major impact. And I would have to say that when I got your request for this interview I think it was the following night that I sat bolt upright in bed at about 2 am in the morning and sort of had that oh dot, dot, dot feeling that here I am impacting on so many teachers and yet I don't have a backup. I don't have anyone else working with me, I'm on my own, trusted to do that with a major, major impact.*

This is a significant point regarding the long-term impact of the SCT role on student outcomes and highlights a vital need for succession planning for sustainability of the SCT model at his school.



## Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the research with SCT and senior leader participants through semi-structured interviews. The comparison of the SCT and the senior leader perspectives highlighted the similarities and differences between their perceptions of the leadership role of the SCT. These findings offer SCTs and senior leaders ideas and insights into the role of SCT to develop the SCT role in their own context. The next chapter will offer further discussion and recommendations for this research as well as the limitations of the study.

Below is a summary of the coding categories that emerged from the findings on the SCT Role Expectations and the Understandings of Leadership by the participants. A comparison is made of SCT and senior leader participants' views and the results are summarised in Table 1 and Table 2 below. The number of participants ( $N=$ ) that reported each factor is shown in the second column and third columns.

Table 4. 1 Comparison of perceptions of SCT and senior leader participants on their leadership development including their knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Factors of Leadership Development	<i>SCTs</i>	<i>Senior Leaders</i>
	<i>N = 3</i>	<i>N = 2</i>
Moral purpose with student centred outcomes	3	2
Teacher empowerment goals	3	2
Development of their own professional learning using inquiry and critical reflection	3	2
Intentional leadership practice	3	2
Role model, credible with status within school	3	2
Respectful, trusting reciprocal relationships	3	2
Adaptable, problem-solver	3	2

Table 4. 2 Comparison of perceptions of SCT and senior leader participants on their SCT Role

Factors of the SCT Role Expectations	<i>SCTs</i>	<i>Senior Leaders</i>
	<i>N = 3</i>	<i>N = 2</i>
Development of programmes, mentoring and school-wide to develop quality teacher pedagogy for all teachers	3	2
Having knowledge of adult learning principles and using inquiry and critical reflection as tools to develop quality teacher pedagogy for all staff	3	2
Provision for extra time allowance	2	1
Collaborative practice and distributed styles of leadership	3	1

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The following research questions were posed in this study:

- A. What are the understandings of leadership as perceived by SCTs and school leaders?
- B. What is the role of a SCT in a secondary school as perceived by SCTs and school leaders?
- C. What do SCTs and school leaders perceive to be their collective actions that influence staff to develop teaching pedagogy to improve outcomes for students?

This study sought to examine the perspectives of leadership by SCTs and senior leaders within New Zealand secondary schools on the role of SCT. With this research focus, a small-scale, qualitative study was conducted with an interpretive paradigm. Data were gathered from five participants, three SCTs', and two senior leaders using semi-structured interviews. The key themes, which emerged from the findings, have been identified and categorised under the three research questions of this study.

The interpretive design of this study shows the juxtaposition of the perceptions of the SCTs and senior leaders to consider their views of the SCT role. The study reveals in its findings that the SCT role is a successful leadership role for the enhancement of pedagogy and teacher development in New Zealand secondary schools. The complexity of the role is also recognised by the tensions and influences experienced by the participants in terms of their interpersonal relationships. This chapter synthesises the findings and presents the themes, which emerged from this study. Findings from the study will also contribute to the literature on middle leadership; it will inform the practice of SCTs and other middle leaders who are responsible for the professional learning of other educators.

In Table 5.1 below are the themes, which emerged from the findings in the previous chapter in relation to the research questions.

Table 5. 1 Themes and sub-themes, which emerged from findings

<i><b>Research Questions</b></i>	<i><b>Themes</b></i>	<i><b>Sub-themes</b></i>
A. What are the understandings of leadership as perceived by SCTs and school leaders?	<i>Understandings of Leadership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral purpose with student-centred outcomes</li> <li>• Teacher empowerment goals</li> <li>• Development of their own professional learning using inquiry and critical reflection</li> <li>• Intentional leadership practice</li> </ul>
B. What is the role of a SCT in a secondary school as perceived by SCTs and school leaders?	<i>SCT Role Expectations and Evolution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of programmes, mentoring and school-wide, to develop quality teacher pedagogy for all teachers</li> <li>• Provision for extra time allowance</li> <li>• Collaborative practice and distributed styles of leadership</li> <li>• Growing the SCT model</li> <li>• Career pathways for SCTs</li> </ul>
B. What do SCTs and school leaders perceive to be their collective actions that influence staff to develop teaching pedagogy to improve outcomes for students?	<i>Collaborative Culture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative learning culture</li> <li>• Distributed styles of leadership</li> </ul>
	<i>Relationships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respectful, trusting reciprocal relationships</li> <li>• SCT Leadership Dispositions - <i>role model, credible, status, respectful, trustworthy, relationships-focused, adaptable, problem-solver</i></li> </ul>

The analysis of the data in Chapter 4 is discussed below to offer insights into the research questions raised in this study.

### **Understandings of Leadership**

All of the SCT participants in this study are able to define their role as a successful leadership role conclusively and positively. While each had a unique perception of the term leadership, they each placed student outcomes as the focus of their goals and vision for leadership. Their responses indicated a deep sense of moral purpose and responsibility for teaching students and working with the teachers, they support with teaching pedagogy. This sense

of moral purpose which connects leadership to how students are learning, can be a powerful influence to change priorities and mind-sets and has been echoed by many researchers (Fullan, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992). Their view of teacher leadership merge the views of some of the senior leaders of this study to include formal leadership functions they perform within their schools to offer an empowering supportive influence to others. This collective focus on goals is a significant leadership dimension (Lovett & Andrews, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005; Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009; Timperley et al., 2008).

SCT2 made a meaningful point about not wanting to call himself a leader but rather viewed leadership as empowering others such as the beginning teachers he was mentoring within his role. SCT2 understands his role to be one of influence rather than one of a formal leadership title or a positional, hierarchical status. Leadership that is not dependent on a structural organization or career enhancement implies a social distribution of leadership and an interdependency rather than dependency, embracing how leaders of various kinds and in various roles can share responsibility (Harris, 2003; Spillane et al., 2001). The issues surrounding the perceptions of others on leadership without a formal status will be discussed later in this chapter.

SCT1 and SL2 talked about the intentional and deliberate ways in which the leaders and the SCT at their school work with their middle leaders to grow their capacity as leaders so that they can, in turn, pass this on to their faculty teachers in order to build effective teaching across the entire school organisation. The literature on both leadership and mentoring emphasise deliberate actions (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Lovett & Andrews, 2011).

While there were no direct questions in the interview guide related to the professional learning of SCTs, all SCT participants revealed in their interviews how they undertook further studies or developed themselves further in their role. This commitment to on-going learning is linked to the literature on adult learning principles that support the need for SCTs to hold themselves

accountable for formulating their own learning goals (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

### **SCT Role Expectations and Role Evolution**

A key expectation of the SCT role, according to all the SCT and senior leader participants in the study, is to develop teacher learning and pedagogy in classrooms, mainly by supporting beginning teachers through rigorous, quality mentoring programmes. This serves to improve the professional practice of teachers and to retain teachers in the profession. This finding is supported by extensive research of educational leadership (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009; Ross & Gray, 2007; Sergiovanni, 1998) each emphasising the importance of a clear vision for high quality teaching pedagogy. The SCT role advocates this vision set to high professional standards through strong professional beliefs to advance teaching and learning through role modelling, observations and reports of teaching growth, formal and informal discussions and professional development. SCTs in their role hold strong professional beliefs to advance teaching and learning in their school. This aligns with literature on mentoring to support a professional learning culture (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The role has been re-aligned to focus on advancing teaching pedagogy for all teachers in the school, not only the beginning teachers. This also draws attention to the increasing workload of SCTs and their time allowance for the role.

A critical finding of this research found that the time allowance for SCT1 had been reduced *“So it’s like the job has got bigger but the time allowance has got smaller and that is a major issue for me”*. This indicates a cause for concern as the SCT Guidelines clearly state: *“The time and salary allowances cannot be split” (p.3)*. The time allowance for the SCT role has been divided between SCT1 and a team of mentor teachers. The mentor teachers are paired with beginning teachers from their own curriculum areas to offer support that is more specific. A possible explanation for this may be that as the resource of time in a school is often stretched in order to meet the many demands for improving learning and outcomes, school leaders are pushing boundaries to get more value out of certain educational positions that are able to make more impact on teacher learning and student outcomes. The

literature on leadership caution that successful teacher development requires time which is usually in short supply at schools (Timperley et al., 2008).

### **Collaborative Learning Culture**

Both senior leader participants mentioned the collaborative nature of their SCT in her role. However, SL1 discussed not only the collaborative nature of her SCT but the collaborative culture within which they both work. All three of the SCT participants clearly understood the term collaboration and some shared detailed examples of how they work in collaboration with other teachers and leaders in their schools both formally and informally.

*SCT1: ...I think in a world that is moving towards collaboration in a teaching world that is moving towards greater transparency and privatisation.*

The context in which the SCT role is enacted is a huge factor in the success of the role. The culture of the school must be positive, goal orientated with student outcomes clearly envisioned. The shared values between the diverse members of the school and community that SCTs work with are a critical influence (Ross & Gray, 2007).

The reflective qualities of the SCT means that SCTs are reflecting on how staff in their school's culture teach and learn and how to go about making incremental shifts and changes by creating and adapting resources to suit the context they are in. Reflection or metacognition according to research (Scribner et al., 1999; Watson & Wilcox, 2000) influences teacher pedagogy and the impact of change in schools. The role is a middle leadership role where SCTs can influence outwards from their central position. They are also uniquely placed to gain staff perceptions as well as SL perceptions in order to balance staff concerns with the wider vision of SL and goals of the school.

### **Relationships**

Referral to SCTs is one approach recommended in the SCT guidelines that SCTs can use to support teachers to 'trouble-shoot' class behaviour dynamics as SCT1 mentions.

*SCT1: So when stuff comes up with an individual class and people say well [name] can do that because she's SCT, it is really hard to get into those classes.*

In raising this issue SCT1 spoke about her time allowance for her role, which was reduced, and it can difficult to add on more work to an already heavy workload faced by most SCTs, which was discussed earlier. However, in this case, SCT1 is positioned as having considerable relational trust within her school in order for her to be referred. Forms of social capital within a school community must be regarded to have considerable worth as teachers within these roles through their words and actions can “enhance collective capacities for complex subsequent actions” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 43). Consequently, relational trust in a school can only be achieved through the day-to-day dialogue with others. As SCT1 stated that the relationship with her senior leader gradually led to where she was able to openly share and air issues, “I felt it safe to share with her my critique of what we’re doing knowing that she’s very good at not taking it personally and so, you know, and being able to look at stuff objectively.”

By engaging in difficult dialogue, school leaders can move from a reactive model to a proactive model of leadership by consciously challenging status quo practices and adjusting their leadership practices accordingly. Teachers and leaders who, individually and collectively, move from first order changes that are an extension of the past to second order changes where there is a complete break with the past are able to have greater influence on student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005).

The research revealed that the SCT participants displayed and revealed leadership dispositions that are set out in the SCT Guidelines. This is an indication of SCTs clearly interpreting the expectations of their role in their actions, values, and practices. These dispositions are echoed in the Best Evidence Synthesis which include, ensuring administrative decisions are informed by knowledge about effective pedagogy, analysing and solving complex problems, building relational trust and engaging in open-to-learning conversations (Robinson et al., 2009). The SCTs showed self-awareness of



their leadership identity in facing adaptive challenges. All of the SCT participants developed and facilitated programmes of professional learning to face the challenges of their school's needs, some worked closely with their senior leader and some worked in teams to research students' needs to develop a programme to target relevant issues. It is crucial for SCTs, as teacher leaders, to view themselves as change agents as they are situated between senior leadership and teachers where they can influence both upwards and downwards. The change process is viewed by SCTs from this unique perspective to problem-solve and offer strategies to ease tensions that may occur. Research by Youngs (2007) suggests that a secure leader recognises the need for interdependent relationships, trusting communities and transparent communication. Secure leaders in their role of SCT or senior leaders will engage in professional learning and collaborate with others to influence change.

SCTs focus on pedagogy as the driver of quality teaching and learning. They bridge the gap between senior leaders by working in collaboration to create a collective vision and sharing of knowledge and new innovations for improved student outcomes (Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). The relationship between the SCT and senior leaders can be powerful in promoting transformation in teaching and learning for improved student outcomes.

There are two key tensions related to the structure of the role of SCT, they are set apart from their colleagues in relation to those above them and those below them. Within this hierarchical framework, there is another tension where they need to lead learning from this position. Complexity theory shows that high stress environments, conflicting strategies and communication breakdown can lead to tension in the role of SCT as indicated by SCT1, SCT3 and SL1 (Morrison et al., 2007). Leaders need to be aware of formal and informal power structures in the organisation as in the case of SCT3 who acts as a communicator between the senior leader and the staff.

Leadership roles at any level must be informed by cross-cultural competence, which helps us to understand what it takes to work across and beyond

traditional boundaries or cultures (Ting-Toomey, 2012). It focuses us on the need to unlearn before we can learn a new culture and it allows us to have more 'respectful curiosity', empathy, behavioural flexibility and sensitivity to others (Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2005). This was indicated by SL1 in her experience with the new SCT, which was difficult at first.

*SL1: The SCT and I didn't get along very well last year. Well we were working together and there has been moments when I felt how am I going to manage this relationship and how am I not going to bring in my personal, you know, response. So it was one of those moments where we're open enough and we trust each other enough to be able to talk openly about things that are challenging us or we challenge one another.*

SL1 had to unlearn her opinions or beliefs in order to find a way forward towards a positive, professional relationship.

At the core of SCTs' experience and leadership practices to effect change in teaching pedagogy in others is relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). By supporting teachers in their practice, SCTs sometimes maintain conflicting stances in terms of confidentiality where they primarily invite openness and trust to develop teachers learning in a safe, trusting relationship. In contrast, this very same confidentiality may obstruct the efforts of SCTs to grow teaching quality with resistant teachers.

### **Implications for Future Practice**

The *Review of the Specialist Classroom Teacher Pilot* (Ward, 2007) had concerns of how the success of SCTs were measured in schools. This concern was because in the initial stages the pilot focused on providing support to teachers' emotional needs rather than directly on professional practice and student learning. This concern was the result of working within a deficit theory model where difficulties around professional practice were not openly shared. SCTs and other leaders in schools, now and in the future, must place a greater emphasis on engaging with open-to-learning conversations. By placing each conversation at the heart of their professional relationships, they will be able to achieve transformational leadership, individually and collectively.

This research shows how SCTs, through their practice and professional development in the SCT role, have developed an awareness of their own leadership influences and the impact of them on student outcomes; which is a clear measurement of success. The SCT participants all agree that the role is hugely satisfying and they work with confidence as they are continuously learning and developing professional relationships with their colleagues and senior leaders. This leads them to accepting more tasks than can sometimes be reasonably managed. The increased relational trust between staff leads to more self-referrals from teachers to access SCT support and this actually creates more work, which leads to the aggregation effect of previous success. Accumulation of capital where capital has developed creates a problem of overload. Time allowance for the role is a finite resource and the success experienced by SCTs clashes with that which actually leads to under-resourcing. For this reason, a key recommendation from this study is to advocate for more SCTs in schools and to stretch leadership across the various areas of a school.

The career pathway Ward (2007) set out in the SCT pilot review has been challenged by the findings of this study where for example, one of the senior leader participants indicated that she had progressed in her role as SCT to her current role as assistant principal within a short time. A SCT participant pointed out that she too was using the role of SCT as a stepping-stone to aspire to a more senior role. These effects clearly illustrate the SCT position, in 10 years since its implementation, has now established strength and gained influence to allow SCTs career progression into more senior roles if they wish. In the current environment, either schools across New Zealand are already in Communities of Learning or establishing a CoL, school leaders need to re-examine the role and expectations of the SCT. Successful SCTs could be considered valuable human capital in the form of knowledge, skills, and experience that is required in establishing new teacher leadership roles. School leaders need to be future oriented to address concerns of succession planning (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004).

### **Limitations of the Research**

A limitation of this research is the size of this study. To get a meaningful comparison between the SCT and senior leader participants, a larger sample size would be required. Another limitation would be that the perceptions of the participants are only limited to their own experiences and they cannot be generalised for all SCTs and senior leaders of New Zealand secondary schools.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Further research into the good problem of success breeding more work leading to under-resourcing for the SCT role and other similar roles may be considered. Even the most proficient SCT cannot be the solitary solution to providing high quality teaching in schools where students have diverse and high learning needs. Policy makers need to be aware that increased salary incentives for teachers in these teacher leadership roles are not sufficient to focus the growth of teaching quality in schools that are high needs. A strong recommendation from this conclusion is for government to provide more resources of finances and time for professional development of SCTs and other leadership roles including school leaders.

The perspectives of teachers on the SCT role is another research gap that needs to be addressed. Future research into how the SCT leadership role is implemented in schools of varying organisational cultures would be important as well as how the role interrelates with the within-schools and across-school leadership roles in CoLs. This could lead to greater understanding of the complexities of practice for SCTs in order to serve the learning needs for students in diverse contexts.

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## APPENDIX A - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION GUIDELINES FOR APPOINTING SCT



*Last updated 21/11/2007)*

### **Guidelines for the appointment of Specialist Classroom Teachers (SCT)<sup>2</sup> in Secondary Schools**

These guidelines provide advice to employers appointing a teacher to the Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT) role. A notification and time allowance application form is attached.

The establishment of the SCT role in secondary schools was part of the 2004 Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement and was seen as providing support for professional learning in schools. In addition, the role allowed for the development of a different career opportunity to retain teachers in the classroom through the provision of an alternative career path to the more traditional management one.

The SCT role offers a career opportunity for secondary teachers to develop and demonstrate their professional learning leadership skills. This is an on-going and evolving role and will be further developed over time, informed by the findings of the Review of the 2006 SCT Pilot.

The 2007-2010 Secondary Teachers Collective Agreement provides the on-going terms and conditions of the SCT role in secondary schools with the following changes:

- The time allowance is increased to 8 hours in schools of roll size of 1201 and above, from 28 January 2008.
- The salary allowance is increased to the value of two units, from 28 January 2008. Please note that the allowance, although set at the *value* of two units, is not the *equivalent* of units.
- Each SCT shall have an entitlement of up to two reimbursements of study fees towards postgraduate qualifications, which are relevant to the role. Each reimbursement shall be a maximum of \$1000. Only one reimbursement shall be paid in any one year. Only one entitlement per teacher in an SCT role will be available.

As the pilot/trial phase has now been completed schools are expected to comply with the eligibility requirements and the terms and conditions of appointment.

These guidelines, which include the changes, have been agreed by the Ministry of Education, PPTA and NZSTA. Employers must ensure that appointments to the SCT role are consistent with the guidelines.

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<sup>2</sup> Schools may have a different title for this role eg –Professional Support Teacher, Teaching support, Professional Learning Leader.



## Aims and Objectives of the SCT Role

The PPTA, NZSTA and the Ministry of Education agree that a fundamental goal of education policy is to contribute to high education outcomes for all students. There is also recognition of a range of characteristics of quality teaching that are effective in producing improved learning outcomes for all students, especially those most at risk of underachievement.

The aim of the SCT role is to contribute to the enhancement of such quality teaching practices in all schools by providing support for the professional growth of other teachers in the school. This could be through:

- Supporting and assisting beginning teachers to develop and demonstrate effective teaching practices;
- Supporting and assisting beginning teachers to maintain a purposeful learning environment that engages students;
- Supporting and assisting other teachers in the school with effective teaching practices and maintaining a purposeful learning environment that engages students;
- Supporting and assisting teachers to expand their knowledge, skills and attributes to increase teaching effectiveness;
- Encouraging collaborative, reflective and shared practice
- Providing leadership in school wide professional learning and development.

Implementation of the SCT role in schools over the last two years has seen a wide range of support provided to teachers: coaching, mentoring, leading mentoring programmes, leading professional learning groups, providing professional reading and leading discussion groups, developing reflective practice, classroom observations/support, supporting beginning teachers, developing classroom management strategies, leading professional learning programmes in the school, facilitating and supporting professional learning communities.

### ***Background***

As part of the 2004 settlement of the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement (STCA), the parties agreed to establish a new role in secondary schools - referenced as Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT) in the Agreement.

The establishment of this role came from a recommendation made by the Ministerial Taskforce on Secondary Remuneration (2003) that a broader range of career pathways be developed to offer more attractive career prospects to teachers. Having a wider range of career opportunities available is expected to aid in the recruitment of graduates and assist in the retention of experienced teachers who wish to focus on professional teaching practice. The SCT role was identified as one from which all schools could benefit.

The review of the SCT pilot year has been completed. A copy of the summary version of the review was sent to all schools in mid 2007. All reports from the review (the full report, the summary report and the case studies report) are available from <http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/index.html> (use the search function using 'Specialist Classroom Teacher review'). Findings and recommendations from the review will inform the evolving shape, conditions and extent of the SCT role.

### ***SCT Role Description***

Implementation during 2006 and 2007 has seen SCTs providing a wide range of varying support to teachers. Teachers appointed to the SCT role or continuing in the

role are encouraged to continue the broad exploration of the possibilities this teacher support role offers.

It is not proposed that this role should necessarily replace any existing arrangements schools have for the induction and support for beginning teachers or teachers new to the school, or to replace any other professional development programme in the school, for example it is not intended to replace the PRT Co-ordinators. However, it may well complement existing support or be incorporated into it.

It is important that this role is kept separate from any appraisal, performance management or competency judgements. The SCT should always be seen in a support and guidance role, in order to operate with their teacher colleagues in a high-trust and confidential relationship.

Some schools have extended the duties and functions of their SCT by providing further time or recognition, or by providing additional resourcing and recognition to enable another teacher to work in a teacher support role. To remain eligible for the additional resourcing associated with the STCA provisions any teacher who operates in an extended role must continue to be a practising classroom teacher, and is expected to be teaching, as a guide, a minimum of 12 hours per week in order to maintain credibility as an effective classroom teacher.

Employers will need to develop their own role description for the SCT in their school, outlining the specific roles the SCT will perform. Regional Advisors from NZSTA or Leadership Advisors from School Support Services may be able to give further advice and guidance on developing job descriptions.

### ***Resourcing for Appointments to the SCT role from 2008 (Salary and Time Allowances)***

The STCA provides that each secondary school board is entitled to appoint one teacher to the SCT role and will, on notification of an appointment, receive an additional 4 hours staffing per week to resource it. Schools of roll size of 1201 and above will receive 8 hours staffing, from 28 January 2008. This time allowance must be dedicated to the person in the SCT role to fulfil their SCT duties and is in addition to their 5 non-contact hour entitlement (which applies to all full-time permanent and long-term relieving secondary teachers).

Teachers appointed to the SCT role will receive an allowance per annum which, from January 2008, will be equivalent to the value of two units.

The time and salary allowances cannot be split.

Please note that the allowance, although set at the *value* of two units, is not the *equivalent* of units. This allowance does not enable an SCT to progress through their qualifications maximum. Employers and SCTs should be aware of this when making/accepting appointments to the SCT role.

### ***Eligibility for Appointment to the Role***

These eligibility requirements have been set as a guide to schools to appoint an experienced, well established teacher, with demonstrated knowledge about and expertise in teaching, to a professional learning leadership role in the school. This level of experience and expertise has been shown to be essential to the success of the role in a school.



The eligibility requirements were adjusted as a result of experiences and findings in the implementation phase. Schools must comply with these eligibility requirements.

In order to be eligible for the SCT role, a teacher must: (refer STCA 2007-2010 3.8B.4)

- Be a permanently appointed registered teacher, and
- Have at least six years total<sup>3</sup> teaching experience (either in NZ or overseas), and
- Have had three successive successful attestations against the experienced teacher standards in the STCA, or overseas equivalent<sup>4</sup>, and
- Be a full time teacher, or a part time teacher with a significant classroom teaching load (as a guide of at least 12 hours per week) at time of application, and
- Meet other criteria in the agreed guidelines.

### ***Terms and Conditions of Appointment to the SCT role***

The SCT role offers an alternative career pathway for those teachers who want to remain centred in teaching practice through supporting and encouraging effective teaching, rather than following a management and administration pathway. As such, schools are asked to minimise other responsibilities of SCTs in order to allow them to focus on this important professional support role (eg it is not expected that SCTs will also hold senior or middle management roles).

Schools must comply with these terms and conditions, and will need to ensure that the focus of the role is on teacher professional learning.

SCTs may need to make choices about roles they wish to hold, which to forego, and career opportunities they wish to take.

Appointment to the SCT role:

- Appointees to permanent SCT roles *must* relinquish all salary units\* but may hold *one* fixed term unit where the school requires continuation of a specific responsibility, or chooses to extend the purpose and functions of the SCT role and provide further recognition;
- Appointees to fixed-term SCT roles *must* relinquish, for the term of the appointment, all salary units\* but may hold *one* fixed term unit where the school requires continuation of a specific responsibility, or chooses to extend the role and functions of the SCT position and provide further recognition;
- Appointees to fixed term SCT roles are entitled to protection of their current position subject to any existing agreement for that position.

\*Note: This does not restrict employers from allocating MMAs and 3R payments in the normal way.

### ***Support for the Role***

Where possible, schools should consider providing the following support for SCTs:

- A confidential but accessible office space away from the management/administration area of the school.

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<sup>3</sup> This may be a combination of periods, eg with breaks out of teaching.

<sup>4</sup> If the appointee has overseas experience and attestation, evidence should be supplied with the application form.

- Access to the network of others who have some aspect of professional oversight of teachers such as professional learning coordinator, HoDs, and possibly guidance counsellors.
- Professional learning opportunities that will support the work of the SCT.
- Relief cover to attend local SCT cluster or regional meetings.
- Resourcing for materials such as internet access, printing, photo copying, professional reading, etc.

### ***Professional Development Support for SCTs***

SCTs are encouraged to participate in training days, network/cluster groups, and relevant professional learning opportunities offered by School Support Services in their region.

It is not intended to review and redistribute the *SCT Handbook 2007*. For most experienced SCTs that material has probably been superseded by other reference material, books or teacher professional learning websites. Copies of the *SCT Handbook 2007* are available from the Ministry of Education or regional School Support Services.

The *Teachers Talk Teaching* web site which has operated from LeadSpace over the pilot period will be discontinued as of December 2007. However, a new teacher professional learning web space is planned for operation on TKI from early 2008. It will provide the sort of information, references and material that have been provided through *Teachers Talk Teaching*. A specific section for SCTs, similar to *Teachers Talk Teaching*, is being considered as part of the new web space to provide an opportunity to network directly with other SCTs.

### **Entitlement for fees reimbursement as study support**

The STCA (2007) provides for professional development support for SCTs with an entitlement to a reimbursement of fees for study towards relevant post graduate qualifications up to a maximum of \$1000 a year for each of two years.

The study undertaken should be agreed in discussion between the principal and the Specialist Classroom Teacher. The study should take into account the relevance to the role, the professional development needs of the SCT, and the professional learning support needs in the school. There is no need to seek approval for course(s) prior to commencing study.

The purpose of the SCT role is seen as: supporting other teachers to improve and develop practice; leading professional learning in the school; developing teacher practice for improved student outcomes.

Examples of areas for the post-graduate qualifications that SCTs may wish to consider could include: adult education, mentoring/coaching, teacher professional learning.

Application forms, to apply for reimbursement, will be available from mid 2008 on the Ministry of Education website.

### ***Advertising, Selection and Appointment Process***

For the pilot phase all appointments to the SCT role were required to be internal. The expectation is that this will continue to be the case, as the trust and confidence of the staff in the person appointed is crucial to the success of this role. However, in certain circumstances, where schools have been unable to appoint internally and

have an actual teaching vacancy, they may advertise externally in the Education Gazette and other media usually used.

The advertising, selection and appointment process should be as follows:

1. The employer must ensure that there is an **open and transparent** internal process of advertising, selection and appointment to the role;
  - All teachers in the school must be notified of the eligibility requirements, role description and the selection process
  - Experience from the pilot indicated that it was useful to include staff consultation and involvement in the selection process, in order to secure staff awareness of and confidence in the role.
  - It is the responsibility of the employer and principal to ensure that the most suitable applicant, according to the criteria, is selected for appointment to the SCT role.
2. Options for appointment:
  - Where the employer is confident that an applicant will clearly meet eligibility requirements, role description and criteria, it will be able to offer a permanent appointment to the SCT role.
  - Where a permanent appointment is not made, the employer may:
    1. Offer a fixed-term appointment <sup>5</sup>; or
    2. Advertise externally if the school has an actual teaching vacancy; or
    3. Make no appointment.

### ***Criteria for Appointment to the SCT Role***

The first two years of implementation indicate that certain knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities make for an effective SCT who is able to fulfil the aims and objectives of the role.

Applicants will need to demonstrate expertise in a number of the following areas.

#### ***Knowledge/Skills***

The SCT is a highly effective classroom teacher who consistently demonstrates exemplary practice by:

In own teaching:

- Demonstrating expertise and refined strategies in the practice of teaching, including:
  - high and clear expectations of all learners' abilities to achieve
  - ability to respond flexibly and appropriately to the needs of diverse learners
  - use of evidence to guide teaching and learning
  - use of reflective inquiry in their own teaching practice
  - purposeful relationships with learners, families, communities and colleagues
- Demonstrating a sound knowledge of the theory and practical application of curriculum, learning and assessment
- Being conversant with current educational research, best practice and current issues and initiatives in education to inform teaching practice

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<sup>5</sup> NOTE: a fixed-term appointment is not to be made in order to establish the suitability of an employee for permanent appointment.

Transfer of knowledge:

- Understanding how adults learn and having knowledge of effective professional learning strategies for teachers
- Effectively communicating sound knowledge and practice of teaching and learning to other teachers across subject, class and school contexts
- Assisting colleagues to apply reflective practice in working to address problems, improve student engagement and raise student achievement
- Creating opportunities to share current educational research, best practice and current issues and initiatives in education with colleagues
- Being a highly skilled observer and providing timely and sufficient feed-back and feed-forward to colleagues

### *Experience*

Relevant experience for an appointee to the SCT role could include:

- Extensive teaching experience<sup>6</sup>
- Successful collaboration with other teachers to improve teaching practice
- Successful experience in mentoring beginning teachers
- Successful experience in mentoring/coaching other teachers
- Leading or facilitating the professional learning of other teachers

### *Attributes/Dispositions*

In their professional practice, the applicant:

Self

- Demonstrates a strong commitment to being a highly effective classroom teacher and improving student learning
- Is seen by teaching staff as being a highly effective and credible secondary school teacher
- Demonstrates a commitment to ongoing professional learning
- Is seen as approachable by teachers in the school
- Demonstrates leadership and innovation in working to resolve problems and improve student achievement

Others

- Has the trust, respect and confidence of teaching staff and personal status within the school
- Develops effective and supportive working relationships with colleagues to other teachers and builds teachers' self-esteem and motivation
- Shows respect for diversity and appreciation of differences eg culture, gender, ethnicity, in both students and colleagues

### ***Process for Resourcing the Role - Making an Application***

Principals should apply to the Ministry of Education for the SCT time allowance by filling out a *Specialist Classroom Teacher Time Allowance Application Form*. An application form is enclosed with this advice and is available on the Ministry website: [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz) use the search function using 'Specialist Classroom Teacher Application', go to [www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/employmentagreements](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/employmentagreements), or go to the Schools/Governance and Management/Collective Agreements section.

It is preferable that schools make appointments to the SCT role as early as possible in Term 4 of the year prior to a new appointment to facilitate the timely application of allowances and so that new appointees to the SCT role can begin preparation for the following year. While there is no absolute "cut-off point" after which appointments

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<sup>6</sup> Minimum of six years for eligibility to apply for the SCT role

to the role cannot be made, wherever possible the process should be completed, and the Ministry Resourcing section notified by the end of Term 4 in the year prior to taking up the role.

The application form will serve as notification to Payroll, who will then process the salary allowance along with the SCT's base salary and adjustment of any other applicable salary allowances.

The staffing allowance will be added to the school's staffing notices on receipt and approval of your application.

Principals will need to notify their payroll service if a fixed term unit is to be applied, in accordance with these guidelines.

Principals will need to notify their payroll service of any relinquished units which have been reallocated.

If the SCT has been appointed permanently to the role (eg in 2007) or to a fixed term role for more than one year, there is no need to reapply for the time allowance in subsequent years. But where a new appointment to the role (permanent or fixed term) needs to be made, the Principal should submit a *Specialist Classroom Teacher Time Allowance Application Form*.

For SCTs appointed permanently to the role, the allowances will continue until the appointee resigns from the role. The ministry must be notified if the appointee resigns, or of any replacement.

For fixed term appointments to the role, the allowance approval is valid until the end of the term of appointment. Schools will need to submit a *Specialist Classroom Teacher Time Allowance Application Form* for any new fixed term appointment.

## APPENDIX B- INVITATION TO RECRUIT SCT PARTICIPANTS AND SENIOR LEADERS

An Invitation to recruit SCT participants will go on this site below: The invitation will also be emailed to schools to invite Senior Leaders. It will read:

A research study will be conducted to explore the leadership role of Specialist Classroom Teachers (SCT) in secondary schools, specifically in Auckland, as agents of pedagogical change alongside their senior leaders. The research will aim to investigate SCT's and senior leaders' experiences and perceptions of the role of Specialist Classroom Teacher in enhancing professional practice of teachers and promoting pedagogical change within their secondary schools. The sample of the SCT and the sample of the Senior Leaders will be selected in such a way so that no SCT and Senior Leader from the same school are invited to participate.

Please find attached an information sheet with further details.

If you are interested in participating please contact Misha Shamdass at (email) before (insert date here - 3 weeks to consider)

Please note that participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection which is August 2016.

The screenshot shows a web browser with multiple tabs open, including 'Sign in - Google Accounts', 'Intranet.sehc', 'Oliver System', and 'NZSCT Association - | Sch'. The address bar shows the URL 'https://app.schoolology.com/group/176974695'. The page header features the 'schoolology' logo, a 'Basic' tab, and navigation links for 'Home', 'Courses', 'Groups', and 'Resources'. On the right, there is a user profile for 'Misha Shamdass' and a 'Notifications' button. The main content area displays the 'NZSCT Association' group page for 'Howick College'. It includes a group logo on the left, a rich text editor in the center, and a right-hand sidebar. The sidebar contains an 'Upcoming' section for Tuesday, May 31, 2016, listing a 'South Auckland Cluster Meeting' at 5:00 pm, and a '223 Members' section with profile icons. A 'Post' button is located at the bottom right of the text editor.

## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

## Information Sheet for Specialist Classroom Teachers and their Senior Leaders

29 May 2016

**Project Title: Perceptions of Specialist Classroom Teachers and Senior Leaders to enhance professional practice and promote pedagogical change.**

My name is Misha Shamdass and I am conducting research towards a Master of Educational Leadership as a student of Auckland University of Technology. The focus of my research study will be to explore the leadership role of Specialist Classroom Teachers (SCT) in secondary schools, specifically in Auckland, as agents of pedagogical change alongside their senior leaders. The research will aim to investigate SCT's and their senior leaders' experiences and perceptions of the role of Specialist Classroom Teacher in enhancing professional practice of teachers and promoting pedagogical change within their secondary schools. This proposed study will also highlight the enablers and barriers that SCT's experience in their roles in their individual schools.

Please note that participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection which is August 2016.

### *What is the purpose of this research?*

The study will aim to help contribute to knowledge about the leadership role of the SCT and the support needed from senior leaders to SCT's in order to fulfil their role. In particular, it will aim to offer useful advice for SCT's in order to support professional growth of other teachers including new and beginning teachers. The research will have both an inward and outward focus for an SCT by helping them to identify individual issues related to the role as well as school-wide issues.

### *How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?*

An invitation was posted on the Schoology online forum where New Zealand Specialist Classroom Teachers Association connect, inviting potential SCT participants and their senior leaders (participant pairs) in the Auckland area to participate in the study. You are receiving this invitation as I was contacted by email indicating your interest in participating in this research. Also the following criteria were met:

- You have SCT experience of at least three years.
- You are located at a secondary school in Auckland.
- You and your senior leader have both agreed to participate in this research study.

If more than three SCT's and their senior leaders agree to participate than a random selection will be conducted to ensure only three pairs of SCT's and senior leaders participate.

### *What will happen in this research?*

An in-depth, semi-structured interview will be conducted for an hour first with you and then your senior leader to enable me to seek an understanding of your perspectives and experiences.

You will be also asked to maintain a reflective journal to account for approximately five days spread throughout a two-week period. The reflective journals will provide a source of information that will be discussed during the interviews. With your consent, these journals will be collected as a further source of data or you would also have the option of self-selecting excerpts from the journal to share in the in-depth interview. The use of reflective journals will seek to generate data in order to inform the proposed study's guiding questions.

If you agree, I will schedule the interviews and ask you where we can hold the session. I will tape record the sessions and type them up later. I am not looking for right or wrong answers, only for what everyone really thinks.

#### *What are the discomforts and risks?*

The interviews should not cause any harm or risks. Some people may feel upset when talking about some topics. If they want to stop talking, we will stop. If you have any problems with the project, please let me know. You may also ask me any questions you may have at any time.

#### *How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?*

Some people may feel upset when talking about some topics. If they want to stop talking, we will stop. If you have any problems with the project, please let me know. You may also ask me any questions you may have anytime.

#### *What are the benefits?*

Please read the guidelines for this exemplar before answering. If the research may assist you in obtaining a qualification, this is a good place to advise potential participants about this.

#### *How will my privacy be protected?*

Confidentiality will be ensured for all participant SCT's, senior leaders and your respective schools. Pseudonyms will be used in the summary of findings and all reports in order to protect their identities.

#### *What are the costs of participating in this research?*

There are no costs to participate in this research. The time cost for participating involves the following:

- One hour-long interview
- Maintaining a reflective journal to account for approximately five days spread throughout a two-week period which should take no longer than an hour in total to complete over the period.

If interviews cannot take place at your school then you may need to travel to AUT, South Campus. For this reason, you may claim a contribution of \$15 toward travel expenses.

#### *What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?*

You will have three (3) weeks to consider this invitation.

#### *How do I agree to participate in this research?*

In order to agree to participate in this research, you and your senior leader will need to complete a Consent Form which will be emailed to you once I receive an email from you indicating interest in participating in this research study.

#### *Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?*

You will receive feedback through individual transcripts will be provided to and checked by the participants. This will ensure accuracy of data and give you an opportunity for either agreement on interpretations of primary data or for explanations of differences that existed. You will also receive a short report on the research results by November 2016.

#### *What do I do if I have concerns about this research?*

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Howard Youngs, [howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz](mailto:howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz) 921 9999 ext 8633

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) , 921 9999 ext 6038.

#### *Whom do I contact for further information about this research?*

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:



***Researcher Contact Details:***

Misha Shamdass  
Email:

***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Howard Youngs  
Email: howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz  
Phone: 921 9999 ext 8633

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 6 July 2016, AUTECH Reference number 16/222.

## APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

*Project title:*

**Perceptions of Specialist Classroom Teachers and Senior Leaders to enhance professional practice and promote pedagogical change.**

*Project Supervisor:* **Howard Youngs**

*Researcher:* **Misha Shamdass**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 29 May 2016.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one):  
Yes ☐ No ☐

*Participant's signature:*

.....  
.....

*Participant's name:*

.....  
.....

*Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):*

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

*Date:*

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on  
16 June 2016 AUTEK Reference number 16/222***

***Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.***

## APPENDIX E - INTERVIEW WITH SCT

1. How many years have you been teaching?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years have you been teaching at this school?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been a Specialist Classroom Teacher?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Indicative Questions to Guide the Interview

4. What is your understanding of leadership? What does it mean to you?  
How is leadership exercised in your school?
5. Describe the main aspects of your role as SCT.
6. How are decisions or changes made in your school? Do you have any involvement in those decisions or changes? Describe a particular situation where you contributed to the decision-making in your school?
7. What are the conditions in your school that enable you to fulfil your SCT role?
8. What are the conditions in your school that deter you from fulfilling the role of SCT?
9. Describe your relationship with your Senior Leader. How does your Senior Leader work with you? How are you supported by your Senior Leader in order to fulfil your role as SCT?
10. Describe your relationship with other teachers in your school?
11. What autonomy do you have as a SCT to initiate improvements in your school?
12. Can you describe a situation where you were able to influence others in your school? What were the factors that allowed you to influence others in the given situation?
13. Is there any other relevant information you would like to add to the information you have already provided?

## APPENDIX F - INTERVIEW WITH SENIOR LEADER

1. How many years have you been teaching?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years have you been teaching at this school?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been a Senior Leader?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Indicative Questions to Guide the Interview

4. What is your understanding of leadership in a school setting? How is leadership exercised in your school?
5. Describe the main aspects of the role of Specialist Classroom Teacher.
6. How are decisions or changes made in your school? Does the SCT have any involvement in those decisions or changes? Describe a particular situation where the SCT contributed to the decision-making in your school?
7. What are the conditions in your school that enable the SCT to fulfil their role?
8. What are the conditions in your school that deter the SCT from fulfilling their role?
9. Describe your relationship with the SCT. How does your SCT work with you? How do you support by your SCT to fulfil your role as SCT?
10. Describe the relationship between the SCT and other teachers in your school?
11. What autonomy does the SCT have to initiate improvements in your school?
12. Can you describe a situation where the SCT was able to influence others in your school? What were the factors that allowed the SCT to influence others in the given situation?
13. Is there any other relevant information you would like to add to the information you have already provided?

