

The role of special educational needs coordinators in implementing the 2014 special educational needs and disability legislation: a juggling act

Keith Tysoe

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This research was conducted in collaboration with special educational needs coordinators from several London boroughs

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Dedication

In loving memory of my parents, John and Ann Tysoe,
who taught me everything I really needed to know.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the role of special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and discover how the new Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years (DfE 2015) was being enacted in schools. The main argument presented through this thesis is that the SENCO role is currently overly focused on carrying out bureaucratic tasks rather than supporting inclusive classroom practice.

The literature review situates the research within its historical and cultural context by considering the development of special educational needs and disability (SEND) provision, including the role of the SENCO. A conceptual framework for the SENCO role and identity is advanced which adds to our understanding of the SENCO role.

This applied social research adopted a phenomenological methodology where the self-reported experience of individuals is the source of data (Creswell 2007; Husserl 1970). The field work for the research involved two sets of interviews, separated by an interval of 12 months, with seven SENCOs from across several London boroughs.

The qualitative data gathered was analysed using categorisation and coding, a method drawn from grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967). A rating scale and analysis of threats, opportunities, weaknesses and strengths (TOWS) was also used to gauge the confidence and attitudes of SENCOs towards aspects of the new SEND legislation (Children and Families Act 2014).

The research contributes to our evidence base on how the SEND reforms are being implemented in schools. The findings demonstrate that SENCOs broadly welcome the principles underpinning the new SEND Code of Practice (*ibid*). However, SENCOs find that some of the procedures associated with the Code of Practice (*ibid*) are proving problematic. The thesis concludes by asserting that, if these issues are not addressed, then the aspirations of the new SEND legislation will not be fully realised and SENCOs

will be yet further removed from their work in supporting colleagues in developing inclusive practice.

The thesis makes a number of recommendations at school, local and national level to support further the implementation of the SEND reforms. It also identifies areas for future research including: investigating the SEND reforms from the perspective of children, their parents or carers and young people; and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the SENCO role.

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'The common fund of experience is very deep.'

Virginia Woolf
The Waves (1931)

Preface

I began my training as a teacher in the late 1970s just after the Warnock Report (1978) had been published. I was greatly excited, at the time, as the report paved a new way forward to meeting the special educational needs (SEN) of children and young people. My own professional identity has been shaped and guided by many of the principles underpinning the report's 225 recommendations. One of the main principles was equal access to education for all children and young people regardless of ability or need.

My own teaching career in mainstream schools has involved implementing a number of the recommendations flowing from the Warnock report enshrined within the 1981 Education Act, and previous versions of the SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2001; DfE 1994). I have also worked in an advisory capacity with schools and have supported schools in implementing government policy in regard to inclusive education. I have an ambition to see mainstream schools successfully meeting a wide range of children's additional needs.

I have conducted my research and written this thesis to investigate the development of special educational provision and to evaluate where we are today. I am passionate about the importance of meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN as I sincerely believe that by addressing the needs of individuals we can improve the educational outcomes for all. My thesis is written in the third person, which given my passion for this subject may seem unusual. However, it is because of my enthusiasm and involvement in this area of education that I have decided to write in the third person giving myself some distance from the phenomenon under investigation, which is also in keeping with the phenomenological nature of the study. However, I have included a first person preface and footnote to recognise my presence in this research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

‘I think it is important that SENCOs do something with children. One strength of being a SENCO is that you have knowledge of the children with greatest needs. That’s what concerns me, because if it shifts to more of a paper-based role rather than acting within the school, it will be a very sad day.’ (Primary school SENCO)

This chapter outlines the educational context of the research and highlights its particular relevance to current professional practice. It begins with a summary of the key arguments and aims of the research, and continues by introducing the reader to the methodology and methods adopted. The chapter closes with a description of the overall structure of the thesis.

Research argument

The role of a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) in schools is a demanding one that involves working closely with pupils, parents and other professionals in meeting a wide range of special educational needs (SEN). The SENCO role is complex and multi-faceted (Mackenzie 2007), and although the role is clearly defined within the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE 2015), the way the role is carried out varies from school to school (Cole 2005; Layton 2005). The work can be emotionally demanding, as it frequently involves working with parents and staff who are often concerned about a particular child’s education and wellbeing, one who may be experiencing difficulties in school (Tysoe 2015). The main argument pursued through this thesis is that the role of SENCO is moving further away from a focus on pedagogy to become even more driven by bureaucracy.

This thesis illustrates that, despite the need for SENCOs to be influencing classroom practice, a great deal of SENCOs’ time is being devoted to administration and managerial tasks and this is being further compounded by the demands of new SEND legislation (Children and Families Act 2014). The proposition is that if SENCOs are to bring about a transformation (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid and McKinney 2007; Kennedy 2005) in the way schools work with children and young people and to realise the

ambitions of the new SEND legislation (DCSF 2009b; DfE 2015), SENCOs need to be released from much of the bureaucracy surrounding SEND statutory processes and concentrate more on guiding staff, supporting parents and working with pupils. This will require revised ways of working for SENCOs and a cultural shift in the way schools operate in relation to pupils with SEND.

Research aim

The aim of the research is to understand in greater depth the role of the SENCO in schools and how this role, and their professional identity, is being shaped by changes to SEND legislation. This thesis draws together research, conducted over a period of five years, into the working practices of SENCOs. The thesis also draws upon the work and research of others, as well as the researcher's own extensive professional experience and expertise in the field of SEND.

Research context

The research is set against the backdrop of what have been heralded by the Government of the day as some of most significant changes to SEND legislation in over 30 years (DfE 2011a). The guiding principles of the new legislation are set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice ((DfE 2015) elaborates on this. This thesis considers the significance of the changes to SEND legislation in 2014 and discusses what influence and impact these are having for SENCOs in schools.

The SENCOs involved in this research work in London boroughs and were selected from a larger group that responded to an earlier survey (Tysoe 2015). London has a very particular context in terms of the demographic of the pupil population and the performance of schools (*vide* Appendices 6, 7, 8 and 9). Also in any one school, pupils can be drawn from a number of different boroughs and as a result the SENCO can be liaising with several boroughs over SEND arrangements. Procedures vary between boroughs, particularly in terms of the paperwork required for education, health and care (EHC) needs assessments and plans (DfE 2015). The findings of this research,

therefore, not only reflects the working practices of the boroughs in which the SENCOs work, but also the other boroughs they work with.

The researcher, as an educational adviser with a particular focus on SEND, holds a privileged position of having readily available access to his field of research and has conducted the interviews with SENCOs as part of his working routine. However, conducting research as part your own working practice has particular challenges to ensure impartiality (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs 2010). The research needs to be considered in this context and the reader will want to be confident that the researcher has taken steps to mitigate any potential bias (Scott and Morrison 2006). Husserl adopted the concept of 'bracketing' (Moran 2000) to describe how the observer needs to put aside any preconceived ideas about the phenomenon under investigation if they are to view matters objectively. The particular challenges and ethical issues that practitioner research presents are discussed further in Chapter 3 on methodology.

The researcher previously worked for a number of years as a teacher, SENCO and senior leader in schools, and is currently working closely with schools as an educational adviser. He also worked in Malaysia for four years establishing and running a centre for children and young people with SEND. He has previously conducted research for his Master of Arts degree into the value of peer tutoring for promoting self-esteem (Tysoe 2000). He holds a Bachelor of Education degree and has also completed training as an art therapist. He therefore brings a range of experiences and a particular perspective to bear on this area of research.

The research documented within this thesis builds upon, and makes reference to, the findings of two previous programmes of research carried out for Document 3 (Tysoe 2014) and Document 4 (Tysoe 2015). Document 3 investigated how SENCOs fulfil their duties in monitoring and developing SEND provision. Document 4 reported on a survey of SENCOs across several London boroughs. The survey gathered quantitative data about the working practices of SENCOs as well as helping to identify their support and training needs in relation to the new SEND legislation.

Methodology adopted

The research conducted for this thesis took a phenomenological approach to constructing knowledge by recording the subjective experiences of SENCOs. Phenomenological methodology is inductive in nature and relies on the interpretation of the data gathered (Gray 2009). The research followed a descriptive multiple case study method (Yin 2003) where the findings and insight arise out of the data analysis (Cresswell 2007; Denscombe 2014; Scott and Morrison 2006). The interview comments are quoted verbatim as a way of capturing the 'lived experience' of the phenomenon under investigation (Cresswell 2007: 57).

The research involved interviews with seven SENCOs, following a survey conducted with a wider group of SENCOs (Tysoe 2015). The research was completed over a two year period, so the data was gathered contemporaneously to the introduction and implementation of the new 2014 SEND legislation. The data was gathered through interviews with SENCOs in keeping with the qualitative methodology of the research. Coding was used to sort the interview responses and increase the reliability of the data analysis. Quotes from the interviewees have been reported verbatim to support the findings and add further validity to the research. In addition, a rating scale and an analysis of threats, opportunities, weaknesses and strengths (TOWS) was completed as part of the interview process; reference has also been made to statistical data collected in a previous SENCO survey (Tysoe 2015).

Thesis structure

Chapter 1 forms the introduction to this research thesis. Chapter 2 is a review of literature pertinent to an investigation into the role and professional identity of the SENCO, and locates the role within its historical and cultural context, explaining how the role has developed, and is still developing, over time. Chapter 3 considers the phenomenological approach taken by the researcher, outlining its benefits and limitations. The chapter continues by explaining how the research was conducted, justifying the methods and tools used. Chapter 4 looks at the data gathered and the

key themes are identified. The thesis closes with Chapters 5 and 6 which discusses the findings and their implications for future policy and practice.

Throughout this thesis, children and young people are usually referred to as 'pupils' to reflect that the research was conducted with SENCOs in schools. In this research, no distinction is made between maintained schools and academies as the current SEND legislation applies equally to both types of school. The SEND legislation is laid down in the Children and Families Act 2014 and is referred to as the 'new' SEND legislation. Guidance on how schools should be implementing the new SEND legislation is contained within the Special Educational Needs and Disability: Code of Practice 0 to 25 Years (DfE 2015). Throughout the text this is referred to by date and described as the 'new' SEND Code of Practice. The two previous versions of this Code of Practice are referred to by date and described as the 'original' Code of Practice (DfE 1994) and the 'revised' Code of Practice (DfES 2001).

Both the terms special educational needs (SEN) and special educational needs and disability (SEND) are used within this thesis. SEND is the most frequently used term and usually refers to the new legislation, the group of pupils being discussed and the provision made for them. SEN, when used, usually refers back to previous legislation or describes the pupil's educational need. The differences between these two terms are explored further through the literature review in Chapter 2. The words 'inclusion' and 'outcomes' are terms that have a particular meanings within the context of SEND provision, and this again is discussed in Chapter 2. These and other terms used within the thesis are further explained in the glossary of terms.

This thesis presents information gathered from interviews with seven SENCOs and synthesises this into a coherent work that adds to our understanding and knowledge of the SENCO role. The research casts light on the work of the SENCO and in doing so suggests possible ways forward for schools, local authorities and the government.

Chapter 1 has provided an overview of the research. The next chapter considers the literature relevant to research in the field of SEND and provides support to the arguments presented within this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter begins with a brief synopsis of the historical context of SEND provision in England, including the introduction and development of the SENCO role. The SENCO role is viewed in relation to the inclusion debate and developments in SEND practice.

Historical perspective on SEND provision

The Report of the Committee of the Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (Warnock 1978) provides a valuable historical account of special education up until the 1970s. Others (Gibson and Blandford 2005; Cole 1989; Hart 1988) have also provided useful commentaries; all of which this section has drawn upon for its information. This section has also drawn upon the researcher's own wide experience as a teacher and knowledge of SEND spanning over 30 years. Taking this historical perspective on SEND provision helps situate and contextualise the research within this dimension of human life.

Special education provision has a long history in England dating back to the 1700s. The history of SEND provision can be broken into four distinct historical periods.

1. The late modern period and the first special schools (from the 1700s).
2. The 1944 Education Act and the post-war period (1944 to 1970s).
3. Warnock and the post-modern period (1976 to 2014).
4. The contemporary era (the present).

This thesis has a particular focus on the development of SEND provision over the post-modern period and sets out an explanation of why we might now be entering a new contemporary era of provision based on equality of outcomes (Phillips 2004).

1. The late modern period and the first special schools (from the 1700s)

The first school in England for blind children was established in Liverpool in 1791. This was shortly followed by the establishment of a school for deaf children in London in

1792 (this school having originally been established in Edinburgh in 1760). The first educational provision for 'mentally defective' adults and children, as was the term then, opened in London in 1847. This was followed by a separate school for children with physical disabilities in 1851. These, and subsequent early provisions, offered training in manual skills rather than an academic education (Warnock 1978). The balance between academic, vocational and functional elements of the curriculum is an ongoing debate within special education which is echoed elsewhere in this thesis.

The Foster Act of 1870 established school boards to provide elementary education. However, within the legislation, there was no specific provision for children with disabilities. The Foster Act and subsequent acts, as outlined below, established the basis on which SEND provision developed until the beginning of the post-war period (1944). These are also the foundations on which today's SEND provision and attitudes towards children and young people with SEND have been formed.

The Royal Commission on the Blind and Deaf of 1886 led to the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893. The act required school authorities to provide elementary education for blind and deaf children. The act did not make provision for children with learning disabilities. However, the Commission's report categorised these children with learning disabilities into three groups 'idiots', 'imbeciles' and 'feeble-minded' and suggested the type of educational provision that would be necessary. Idiots were considered as having the lowest intellectual capacity and not seen as educable (it is worth noting that the term 'educationally subnormal' was a category of need up until the 1970s). Imbeciles were seen as requiring provision focused on physical and sensory needs. The feeble minded were to be educated separately from other children in 'auxiliary' schools. The reader can begin to see how, from these early days, the foundations of a segregated education system for children and young people with SEND was established.

Cole (1989) regarded a segregated education system as a form of social control. Cole suggests that the Victorians were often motivated by humanitarian values, although he considers that a desire to reduce costs to society by providing for the poor and

destitute was a strong motivator. Access and entitlement to mainstream education for all pupils remains a recurring theme throughout the development of SEND provision.

The Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic) Act 1914 and the Education Act 1918 made it compulsory for local education authorities (established by the Education Act 1902) to provide for the needs of 'defective' (mentally and physically) and 'epileptic' children. It was during this period, 1902 to 1944, that there was a development of child guidance clinics for 'maladjusted' children, possibly reflecting a growing interest in analytical psychotherapy as developed by Freud (1856 to 1939). These categories of need reflect a medical model of disability which dominated the provision of SEND within this and the post-war period.

2. The 1944 Education Act and the post-war period (1944 to 1970s)

The post-war period dates from the 1944 Education Act. The act ushered in a new era by introducing a single education framework for all. As part of this, the act required local education authorities to make suitable educational provision for 'handicapped' children in both special schools and classes within ordinary schools. The act covered a wider range of disabilities. This shows recognition that a wider group of pupils might have SEND and introduced the idea of these needs being met within 'ordinary' schools. However, there was still a group of children regarded as 'uneducable' and their needs were provided for under the Mental Deficiency Act 1913. It was not until the Education (Handicapped Children) Act of 1970 when the educational needs of every child with SEND became the responsibility of education services, rather than the health authorities, that educational provision was made available to all children.

The 1944 Education Act emphasised the requirement on 'ordinary' schools to meet the needs of the vast majority of children's needs including children with SEND. However, this vision was never fully realised, partly as there were issues over the requirement for a medical examination to assign children to a statutory category. There was also a shortage of resources following the Second World War. At this time a large number of large country houses were vacant and local authorities saw this as a relatively cheap way of providing residential care for children with SEND (Cole 1989). This has left a

particular legacy, with much of this residential provision now being owned by the independent sector with local authorities preferring to make provision available more locally.

The 1960s saw significant social and cultural shifts, with demands within society and education for greater equality of opportunities. This resulted in the progressive ending of selective education and a broadening of educational provision within mainstream schools. More units and classes were established within mainstream schools for children with SEND (Hart 1988).

3. Warnock and the post-modern period (1976 to 2014)

Following the Education Act of 1976, the Secretary of State for Education and Science established a committee of enquiry into the education of handicapped children and young people, chaired by Warnock. The report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (Warnock 1978) was presented to parliament in May 1978. The report, often simply referred to as the 'Warnock Report' was a comprehensive review of SEND provision. The report represented a seismic paradigm shift in SEND provision and introduced many of the concepts on which future provision has subsequently been built.

The report puts a particular emphasis on education rather than care. The report introduced the concept of 'special educational need' and established new ways of identifying and assessing children and young people's needs. The report suggested that as many as 20 percent of the school population may have SEN at some point during their education. The report introduced a five stage approach to assessment and provision (this concept of a staged approach of need and provision was later adopted in the original SEN Codes of Practice (DfE 1994) and has been a feature of subsequent versions (DfE 2015; DfES 2001)). The report introduced statements of special educational need involving multi-professional assessments and annual reviews for children of statutory school age with severe and complex needs. The report encouraged greater parental participation at all stages in the process of assessment and provision. Special schools were seen as forming part of a continuum of provision

to include mainstream placements, specialist units and co-located mainstream and special schools. Not all of the report's 225 recommendations were fully implemented. However, the report fundamentally changed people's thinking about SEND provision and laid the foundations of a new system and approach to meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.

The Education Act of 1981 prompted the recommendations of the Warnock Report (1978) to be implemented. This included a policy of 'integration' of SEND pupils into mainstream schools. The term 'integration' has now been replaced by 'inclusion'. The differences between these two concepts and the impact this might be having on schools are discussed later in this chapter. In 1994, the original Special Educational Code of Practice (DfE) was published providing schools with guidance on the assessment and provision for SEND. It also established the role of the SENCO in schools. The 2001 Education Act further strengthened access to mainstream education for all children. The issuing of the revised Code of Practice in 2001 (DfES) aimed to reflect changes in practice since the introduction of the original Code of Practice (DfE 1994). Throughout this modern period, an emphasis was placed on greater access for pupils with SEND to mainstream education.

4. The contemporary era (the present)

This research is set in the wake of the 2014 Children and Families Act, which was heralded by the coalition government (DfE 2011a) as bringing about some of the most significant changes to SEND legislation in over 30 years. This new legislation reflects changing attitudes towards SEND. The legislation puts a particular emphasis on integrated working between education, health and social care and working more collaboratively with parents. The views and wishes of the child or young person are given particular prominence.

The changes set in motion by the 2014 Children and Families Act have been codified for schools through the publication by the Department of Education and the Department of Health of the SEND: Code of Practice, 0 to 25 Years (DfE 2015). This new guidance sets out what schools 'must' and 'should' do in regard to SEND. The

underpinning principles of the new Code of Practice (*ibid*) are clearly set out at the very beginning of the document (*vide* Appendix 1) which focuses on an outcome-based system centred around the participation of the child or young person, and parents in decision making.

A Wordle search of the document shows that the top three words are 'young', 'local' and 'EHC' (*vide* Figure 1). 'Local' and 'EHC' are in the context of integrated services, and 'young' relates to young people. This highlights the emphasis the new Code of Practice (*ibid*) puts on the involvement of children and young people in decision making, and greater collaboration between education, health and social care.

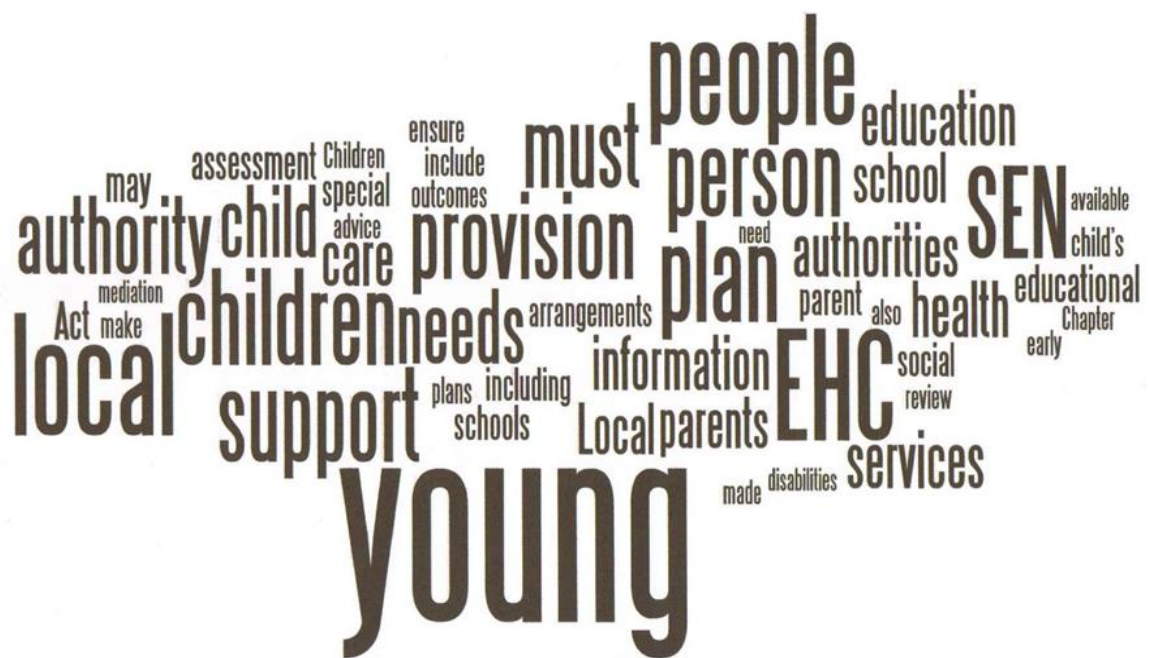


Figure 1: Wordle search of SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015)

The new Code of Practice (*ibid*) puts a particular focus on 'outcomes' (DfE 2015: 14 *et passim*) for children and young people. Outcomes are the 'benefit or difference' (DfE *ibid*: 46, para 3.31) an individual receives as a result of the SEND provision made.

Ideally outcomes are drawn up in agreement with the child or young person, along with their parents or carers, and should contribute towards preparation for adult life. In the context of school outcomes 'will usually set out what needs to be achieved by the end of a phase or stage of education in order to enable the child or young person

to progress successfully to the next phase or stage.’ (DfE *ibid*: 163, para 9.68). The new SEN ode makes a very clear distinction between the SEND provision made, such as the programme followed or the level of support given, and the resulting outcomes. The agreed outcomes should determine the type and level of provision, and not the other way round.

This section has provided the long-view on the provision of SEND. The account has highlighted a number of themes throughout history that continue to influence SEND provision today:

- early establishment of a segregated education system;
- classification of children and young people into separate categories of need;
- recognition that pupils in mainstream schools have SEN and the development of inclusion;
- establishment of the SENCO role;
- recent changes to SEND legislation and guidance for schools.

It is therefore within this historical context that this research into the role and professional identity of the SENCO was conducted.

The identification of SEND

It is evident from the account above that SEND provision has changed and developed over time, from limited and mainly segregated provision to a continuum of provision with much greater access for pupils with SEND to mainstream schooling. This change is a reflection of shifting attitudes towards children and young people with SEND, their identification and provision to meet their needs.

The term SEN was first used in the Warnock Report to describe the ‘up to one in five’ (Warnock 1978: 41) that would require special educational provision at some point in their school career. In 1880, Crichton-Browne concluded that 20% of London school

children were 'backward' (Cole 1989). The Ministry of Education Pamphlet No 5: Special Educational Treatment issued in 1946 estimated that between 14% and 17% of children would require special educational provision. In January 2010, 21.1% of pupils were identified as having SEN (DfE 2016b). A figure of around 20% has therefore remained the benchmark for levels of SEN over a long period of time.

Since 2010, the percentage of pupils identified with SEN has declined. Currently, the national percentage is 14.4% (DfE *ibid*). An Ofsted report in 2010 on the over identification of need may have been the catalyst for this; although the greatest annual reduction (1.5%) was following the introduction of the new Code of Practice (DfE 2015). This decline in numbers is accounted for by a drop in pupils identified at SEN support rather than a reduction in pupils with a statement of SEN or an EHC plan. It suggests that since the introduction of the new Code of Practice (*ibid*), schools have reviewed the identification of pupils previously identified at School Action or School Action Plus (DfES 2001).

The way pupils with SEND are categorised reflects shifts in attitudes. It has already been noted that the Royal Commission of 1886 acknowledged 'deaf' and 'blind' children, and that children with learning disabilities were assigned to one of three categories as either 'idiots', 'imbeciles' or the 'feeble-minded'. At the time of the 1944 Education Act, four broad categories of need were recognised: the 'blind', the 'deaf', the 'defective' (mentally and physically) and the 'epileptic'. The 1945 Handicapped Pupils and School Health Service Regulations broke this down further into a total of 11 sub-categories: 'blind', 'partially sighted', 'deaf', 'partially deaf', 'delicate', 'diabetic', 'educationally sub-normal', 'epileptic', 'maladjusted', 'physically handicapped' and 'speech defects'.

Categories of SEND remained largely the same until the Warnock Report proposed a different way of conceptualising need.

'Our view of special education is much broader and more positive than that contained in any of these definitions. It encompasses the whole range and

variety of additional help, wherever it is provided and whether on a full or part-time basis, by which children may be helped to overcome educational difficulties, however they are caused.’ (Warnock 1978: 46)

The new SEND Code of Practice (*ibid*) sets out four broad areas of need:

- communication and interaction;
- cognition and learning;
- social, emotional and mental health difficulties;
- sensory and/or physical.

These areas of need are similar to those introduced by the original Code of Practice (DfE 1994). However the DfE, for the purpose of the annual school census return (DfE 2016b), continues to require schools to categorise pupils differently according to 13 categories of need (*vide* Appendix 2).

Over time, the language used to describe SEND has come to cover a wider range of needs, and attitudes have seemingly become more positive (Warnock 1978). This is also reflected in the move towards greater inclusion. However, this belies a number of underlying tensions with the categorisation of need. The identification of SEN is often presented as if there is clear distinction between the child with and without special educational needs. However, where the line between the two is drawn is not definitive (Frederickson and Cline 2015).

The new SEND Code of Practice defines SEN as:

‘A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or

- has a disability which prevents him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for other of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.’ (DfE 2015: 15)

This definition is a re-working of the original definition of SEN as stated in the 1996 Education Act. The definition is imprecise and the opening sentence itself reads as something of a tautology. It therefore remains a relative definition and it is difficult to quantify exactly. However, the Code of Practice (*ibid*) does outline in broad terms the processes and provision required to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. Due to the imprecise nature of the definition of SEN, it has been interpreted and applied by schools in different ways (Ellis 2012). An Ofsted report (2010) indicates that the identification of SEN in mainstream schools varies from below 5% to over 70%. This clearly cannot be accounted for only by differences in the communities the schools serve.

Discussions around SEND are often framed within critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, Mulderrig and Wodak 2011) as a method of investigating social structures and power relationships. Who decides on whether someone has SEN raises issues over the locus of power. From a Foucauldian (Foucault 1991) perspective, this desire to classify children into different groups might be seen as the ‘normalisation’ (*ibid*: 20) process in action, whereby deviant groups are identified and difference can be measured. Grouping children and young people in this manner could be seen as a way of subjugating the individual to make them more ‘docile’ (*ibid*: 135). Classifying individuals on the basis of just one aspect of their lives would seem to deny them their true identity as human beings (Bourke 2013). Also, in this context it is interesting to note that the term ‘normalisation’ has been used to describe the integration of pupils with SEND into mainstream settings.

In schools, the classifying of pupils according to their needs has been shown to result in a self-fulfilling prophecy (Cooper 2011; Vroom 1994; Schunk and Meece 1992). Pupils tend to do as well as their teachers expect them to, although, it has also been shown that the clear identification of needs can lead to better provision (Goldenberg 1992;

Cooper 1979). This is possibly a false dichotomy where both remain true at the same time depending on the actions taken by schools and individual teachers.

The terms SEN and SEND are often used interchangeably, to mean the same thing. However, there is a complex interface between the two terms. The definition of SEN, as noted above, is imprecise and contextual. Disability, as defined under the Equality Act 2010, is an impairment that has a 'substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities' (Part 2, para 6.1). Given this, it is very likely that a child or young person with a disability will have greater difficulty in accessing the curriculum and this would be recognised as SEN. However, for a smaller percentage of children and young people with a disability, this may not be the case. Equally SEN is not necessarily 'substantial and long-term' so a child or young person with SEN may have a 'learning difficulty' rather than a disability. It is important to recognise that there is a strong correlation between SEN and disability, but they are not necessarily the same. It is also recognised that there is a link between deprivation and SEND (House of Commons 2006).

Conceptual models of SEND

Special education is often presented as a series of seemingly dichotomous dilemmas such as 'mainstream' versus 'special' provision, 'vocational' education versus 'academic', the 'medical' model of disability versus the 'social' model, 'able' versus 'disabled'. In this section, an argument is presented as to why we should be considering a more dynamic model of SEN that avoids the potential problems of adopting a system based on dualistic positions.

Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) have identified the three prevailing paradigms within SEN as the psycho-medical model, the social model and the rights-based model of disability, suggesting that these three models sit on a continuum with the psycho-medical model at one end, the rights-based model at the other end and the social model in-between.

The psycho-medical model focuses attention on the individual and the treatment of any symptoms. In some circumstances, the over reliance on treatments such as the use of drugs in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) results in less attention being given to environmental factors that might contribute to any difficulties (Lloyd, Stead and Cohen 2006). The psycho-medical model tends to put an emphasis on discrete treatments and segregated provision. This was a particular feature of the SEND provision before the 1970s, as previously discussed. In an educational context this might be seen as the application of specific programmes to remediate learning difficulties. This is particularly apparent in the current interest in 'evidence-based' practice (DfE 2015: 25 *et passim*).

In contrast, the social model believes that societal attitudes towards disability form obstacles to access and participation for people with a disability. In the context of schools, this would mean removing any barriers that hinder access to education. Closely linked to this model is the rights-based model (UNESCO 1994, CSIE 2013) that is built on the concept of equality and social justice. Both the social model and the rights-based model promote greater access to and inclusion in mainstream provision. However, an over emphasis on these models can result in biological factors of SEN being overlooked (Shakespeare 2006) and pupils, perhaps, being placed in surroundings unsuitable to meeting their needs. For example, it would be difficult, and inappropriate for the majority of pupils, to replicate a reduced sensory environment necessary for some pupils with autism within a mainstream classroom (Farrell 2009). The social model links with Warnock's (Warnock 1978) conceptualisation of special educational needs and integration. The rights-based model attunes more with the inclusion agenda and more recent educational legislation.

There is a complex relationship between these three models which is recognised in the bio-psycho-social model (Ellis 2012; Blamires 2002) where the different elements interrelate. Ellis (*ibid*) has argued eloquently that SEN is a social construct. If we follow Ellis's argument, then it is clear that the identification of individuals with SEN will vary according to the context. This echoes the definition of SEN, within the new Code of Practice (DfE 2015), as discussed above. Taking into account a more dynamic model of

SEN it is possible to re-imagine Hodkinson and Vickerman's (2009) continuum as a diamond where the different elements of the models of SEN hold equal status and interact as shown in the model below.

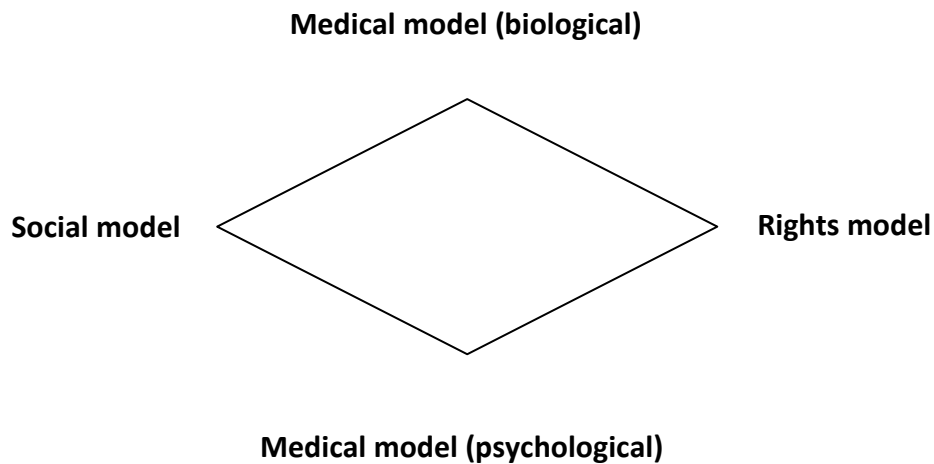


Figure 2: Conceptual model for SEND

Discussions on inclusion often centre on 'mainstream' provision versus 'special' provision (Hornby, Atkinson and Howard 1997). In broad terms, the social and rights-based models could be seen as supporting access to mainstream provision and the medical model to special (or specialist) provision. However, in the same way that there is an argument for a more dynamic model of SEN, then this could equally be applied to the concept of inclusion. The next section explains how the concept of inclusion has changed over time and how it might be more useful to conceive inclusion, in the context of schools, as access and engagement with the curriculum and participation in school life (Booth 1996).

Changing concepts of inclusion

During the early history of SEND provision, special provision was mainly seen as being separate and removed from 'ordinary' schools. It seems quite feasible that some pupils with SEND were educated within ordinary classes, although it seems unlikely that these pupils' needs would have been formally recognised by schools. The Elementary Education Act 1880 insisted on compulsory attendance between the ages of 5 and 10

years. However, enforcement at this time was weak and it is equally possible that children with SEND did not attend school (Cole 1989).

Any concept of inclusion appears to date from the Wood Committee findings in 1928. The concept of inclusion becomes more apparent at the beginning of the post-war period following the 1944 Education Act when there was an emphasis on ordinary schools meeting the needs of the vast majority of pupils requiring 'special treatment'. Inclusion at this time appears limited and based on access to a particular type of education within a tripartite system, consisting of grammar schools, secondary modern schools and secondary technical schools. It should be remembered, from the earlier section on the history of special education, that the needs of a significant number of children and young people during this period were being provided for by health rather than education.

Inclusion in the post-modern period can be characterised by a move towards equality of access and the greater inclusion of pupils with SEND into mainstream schools. The Warnock report (1978) uses the term 'integration' to describe the inclusion of pupils into 'ordinary' schools. Both the 1981 Education Act and the 2001 Education Act strengthened inclusion and the entitlement for pupils with SEND to a mainstream placement. This right has been further enhanced by the 2014 Children and Families Act.

Inclusion is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon (Hodkinson and Vickermann 2009; Clark, Dyson, Millward and Robinson 1999). It has been, and will remain, a particularly contentious issue with compelling arguments for and against inclusion. Cole (1989), although strongly in favour of 'integration', cautioned against seeing integration as purely a moral issue to be pursued at all costs, as this could be counterproductive in a move towards greater integration. Others (Hornby 2002; Vaughn and Schumn 1995) have argued for the concept of 'responsible' inclusion where the capacity of the school to meet the needs is considered and the needs of the pupil are given precedence. Farrell (2005) argues for 'optimal' inclusion where placements, whether in mainstream or special provision, must result in better achievements for

children and young people. Corbett (1999) would consider both these approaches as being 'conditional' and not really tackling the issues surrounding inclusion. Barton (1998) and Rustemeir (2002) see inclusion in schools as not the goal in itself, but a move towards building a more inclusive society.

This section has demonstrated that inclusion has had a number of different labels and meanings overtime. In the post-war period, inclusion could be seen as being all about access to an 'appropriate' type of education. In the post-modern period, inclusion has frequently been about mainstream placement, levels of provision and equality of access. In the contemporary era, inclusion is being presented as the active participation of pupils and parents in decision making and greater equality of outcomes (DfE 2015). Booth (1996) has argued that inclusion should be regarded as a process, rather than a state, by which schools support the participation of pupils. This thesis has adopted a similar view, seeing inclusion as a dynamic activity that is principally about pupils' access to and engagement with the curriculum and active participation as a member of the school community whether this is in a mainstream or special setting.

The moral and ethical dimension to SEND

The medical model and the social or rights-based model of SEN are often, as discussed earlier, seen as being in opposition to each other. The medical model would tend to support the argument for specialist provision, whereas the social or rights-based model would tend to support the case for inclusion in mainstream schools. There are arguments made for and against both positions (Shakespeare 2006; Rustemeir 2002) and the evidence supporting the benefits of inclusion are inconclusive (Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou 2010; O'Brien 2002).

The social or rights-based model of SEN is sometimes portrayed as being a more morally defensible position as it purports to promote freedom and individual choice. Certainly denying a child or young person access to mainstream provision is difficult to defend. However, Farrell (2010) has strongly argued that the freedom to choose is

often restricted by the available options. If there is no range of SEND provision available locally, then what choice can be made? The two extremes on the Hodkinson and Vickerman's continuum of SEN (*vide*: 31) clearly represent two different ontological positions. To argue that one position is better or morally superior to the other is perhaps difficult to justify. It comes down to a matter of belief (MacIntyre 1985) on what constitutes a benefit to the individual or group.

From the perspective of ethical practice, it could be argued that there should be a net benefit for the individual from whatever SEND provision is made. This aligns with the concept of 'responsible' (Hornby 2002) and 'optimal' inclusion (Farrell 2005). This thesis argues that the provision made needs to benefit the individual and that this can only be judged on an individual basis. There appears to be a dilemma for schools in upholding the entitlement of all pupils to have access to mainstream education (DfE 2015) and meeting their needs, whilst balancing this against the needs of the pupil group as a whole. Reaching agreement on what constitutes a beneficial outcome requires a collaborative approach between professionals, parents and the children and young people themselves.

The role of the SENCO

The development of the SENCO role can be seen as mirroring the move towards greater inclusion of pupils with SEND into mainstream schools. The role was established by the original SEN Code of Practice (DfE 1994) by formally outlining the role and responsibilities of the SENCO for the first time. The nature of this role remains broadly the same today, although, the role has moved away from that of coordination of provision to a more strategic leadership role within school (Cheminas 2015; Ekins 2015; Packer 2014). This change in the SENCO role away from managing to leading reflects a more general movement, since the 1990s, for teachers in schools to adopt a whole school view on managing their area of responsibility (Bennett 1995; Brown, Rutherford and Boyle. 2000). The SENCO role has been regarded as 'pivotal' (DfE 2011a: 63, para 3.24) in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND.

The new Code of Practice (DfE 2015) conceives the SENCO role as a leadership position. However, the SENCO role shares many of the features of middle leadership which tends to be more operational than strategic (Layton 2005; Cole 2005). Middle leaders are seen as playing a role in driving forward the work of the school (Bush 2002). This middle leadership position brings with it a number of challenges. They are often in the unenviable position of acting as a ‘buffer’ between the senior leaders in the school and the classroom teachers, which can feel like being a channel for conveying senior leadership decisions (Turner and Bolam 1998: 381). Middle leaders are regularly burdened with additional tasks and given limited non-contact time to carry out their duties (Brown *et al.* 2000; Wise and Bush 1999). They are frequently required to monitor and evaluate the work of others as part of their role (Wise 2001; Adey 2000). These activities put middle leaders in the position of making judgements on the work of other colleagues, which can appear daunting for both (Glover, Gleeson, Gough and Johnson 1998).

The new Code of Practice (*ibid*) has strengthened the position and status of the SENCO. The suggestion by some (Ekins 2015; Ainscow 1999; Dyson 1990; Ainscow and Muncey 1989) that the term SEN may eventually become redundant and the role of the SENCO might diminish in a truly inclusive system has not yet come to pass. The new Code of Practice (*ibid*) conceives the SENCO role as being divided between operational and strategic responsibilities.

‘The SENCO has an important role to play with the headteacher and governing body, in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in the school. They will be most effective in that role if they are part of the school leadership team.’ (DfE 2015: 108, para 6.87)

Given this, there is a strong argument that the SENCO should be part of the senior leadership team and have influence over whole school development.

The new Code of Practice (*ibid*) specifies the particular duties of the SENCO (*vide* Appendix 3) and makes clear the requirement for SENCOs to be appropriately trained and qualified in SEN coordination. All SENCOs working in state-funded schools are

required to be a qualified teacher working at the school. The new Code of Practice (DfE 2015) also reiterates the obligation, established in September 2008 that SENCOs who have not been in a substantive position as SENCO for more than 12 months prior to September 2008, are required to gain the National Award in SEN Coordination within three years of being appointed (NCTL 2014). There are also a number of useful handbooks available to SENCOs giving them sound practical advice on how to carry out their duties in relation to the new SEND legislation (Cheminais 2015; Cowne, Frankl and Gerschel 2015; Ekins 2015; Packer 2014). However, there appears to be less evidence of books of a more narrative approach or reflexive nature by SENCOs themselves.

In relation to training and qualifications, the only other group of teachers that are required to hold an additional qualification to teach children with SEND are teachers of pupils with hearing impairment and/or visual impairment. Since 1907, teachers of 'deaf' and 'blind' pupils have been required to obtain an additional qualification to teach this group of children and young people. There is no requirement for other teachers, including those working in special schools, to gain additional qualifications to teach pupils with SEND. There was a recommendation in 1954, and again in 1962, by the National Advisory Council on the Training and Supply of Teachers that all teachers of 'handicapped' children or young people should obtain an additional qualification, but this has never been implemented. This difference in the qualification required to teach certain groups of pupils demonstrates the influence that history has on current practice. This also illustrates the 'special' status that some pupils' needs have in respect of attention and provision.

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL 2014) sets out on its website learning objectives that give a clear indication of the knowledge, skills and qualities that a SENCO needs to possess to fulfil the role (*vide* Appendix 4). Tysoe (2014; 2015) has previously argued that a SENCO's duties and responsibilities fall into three broad areas which can be represented by the schema below.

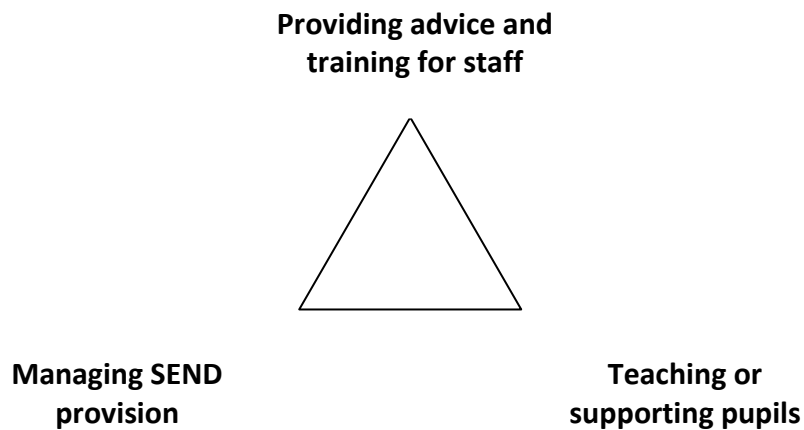


Figure 3: Schema of SENCO duties and responsibilities

This schema has been particularly important in informing the focus of the research questions and how the data gathered has been interpreted and presented.

Since its inception, the SENCO role has been a focus of research. Mackenzie (2007) reviewed previous research into the SENCO role to identify reoccurring themes. The review concluded that in conducting their role, SENCOs are often under considerable pressure due to a lack of time and workloads. SENCOs frequently do not have the support of the senior leadership of the school and have a limited understanding of the funding arrangements. The literature on SENCO leadership suggests that SENCOs are at their most effective when they are part of the senior leadership team (Szwed 2007; Cole 2005; Gerschel 2005; Layton 2005). Another aspect Mackenzie’s review highlighted was the lack of training for teaching assistants.

There have also been surveys conducted by the National Union of Teachers (NUT 2012) and the National Association for SEN (Pearson 2008). It is interesting to note that both surveys highlighted similar findings to Mackenzie’s review in 2007, particularly in regard to a lack of influence at senior leadership level, especially for SENCOs in secondary schools, and the issues of time and workloads. Although much of the research provides insight into the work of the SENCO, it does not evaluate the effectiveness of the role (Mackenzie 2007). There has been limited investigation into the effectiveness of the SENCO role and this remains a gap in research.

More recent research into the SENCO role (Qureshi 2014; Rosen-Webb 2011; Tissot 2013) has been conducted against the backdrop of the revised SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2001). Most of the research reaches similar conclusions that the SENCO role is complex and that there is great variation between schools as to how the role is enacted. The research also demonstrates that there are competing demands made on SENCOs' time and expertise. Rosen-Webb (*ibid*) focused on the professional identity of SENCOs and concluded that there is still a lack of clarity around the SENCO role. Qureshi (*ibid*) conducted research into the effectiveness of the SENCO role in developing teachers' classroom practice and concluded that this depends on the SENCO's position to influence change. Tissot's article suggests that classroom practice remains slow in responding to change.

'After 20 years, this research concludes that day-to-day practice in individual schools needs to move closer to the ideological view that government guidance supports.' (Tissot *ibid*: 39)

Through his research with SENCOs, Kearns (2005) identified five SENCO types.

1. SENCO as arbiter: the SENCO is focused on negotiation and managing resources.
2. SENCO as rescuer: the SENCO perceives their role as directly supporting pupils with learning difficulties.
3. SENCO as auditor: the SENCO places particular importance on servicing SEND processes and procedures.
4. SENCO as collaborator: the SENCO works in a collaborative way with others encouraging the development and sharing of good practice.
5. SENCO as expert: the SENCO holds specialist qualifications and knowledge.

Kearns does not suggest that these are distinct types, but sees them as being qualities shared by SENCOs. This model remains relevant (Qureshi 2014; Tissot 2013; Rosen-Webb 2011) and is consistent with earlier descriptions of the SENCO role (Bines 1992).

Kearns' model provides a useful conceptual framework on which to consider different aspects of the professional role and identity of the SENCO.

Currently, there is limited published research about the SENCO role in regard to the new SEND legislation (Curran, Mortimore and Riddell 2017; Lamb, Browning, Imich and Harrison 2016). This, therefore, represents a new area for research and knowledge generation.

In October 2014, the Driver Youth Trust issued a report providing their evaluation of the new SEND reforms. Despite its rather premature publication, the reforms having only come into force a month earlier, it did raise concerns about a fractured system due mainly to the wide range of governance and funding arrangements for schools. In respect to the SENCO role, it made several recommendations which in summary suggested:

- the provision for pupils with SEND should be a shared responsibility across the school and training in SEND more widely available to all teaching staff and not just specialist;
- the effectiveness of SEND provision should be subject to greater scrutiny from governors and external agencies, including Ofsted;
- that training for SENCOs should focus on identification and administrative elements of SEND provision and working in partnership with parents.

A more recent survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (2016) of its members has revealed some of their concerns about the new SEND legislation. Their members, while welcoming the introduction of EHC plans and a more integrated approach, remain concerned about levels of bureaucracy, lack of support and delays in identification. Research by Curran *et al.* (*ibid*) within six months of the SEND reforms being introduced, indicated that schools were focused on managing procedural, rather than cultural changes. Although they did report that some SENCOs were seeing some teachers taking on a greater responsibility for meeting the needs of pupils which was

resulting in improving relationships between teachers and parents. However, other early research (CQC and Ofsted 2017; LKMco 2015; NAS 2015; NDCS 2015) suggests that the impact of the reforms for children and families is mixed.

A policy paper issued (at a time when this research was being concluded) by the SEN Policy Research Forum (Lamb *et al. ibid*) considered how the SEND reforms were being embedded in practice after the first two years. The paper recognised that the reforms involve a process of change and that this is challenging during a period of government austerity. The paper noted the need to bring about greater cultural change if the aspirations of the new legislation are to be realised. In relation to the role of the SENCO and the impact on practice in schools, Browning in the policy paper highlights a number of themes as follows:

- demanding SENCO workloads and the challenge of implementing the SEND reforms;
- benefit of the SENCO accreditation in supporting SENCOs in their role;
- variability in SEN identification;
- lack of integrated working between education, health and social care;
- importance of first quality teaching in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN;
- many EHC plans not being issued within the 20 week timetable;
- difficulties with setting outcomes in EHC plans;
- significant reductions in budgets and resources.

These themes are reflected elsewhere in this literature review and also echo a number of the research findings presented in this thesis.

Professional knowledge and identity

The professional role and duties of the SENCO has been clearly articulated through the three editions of the Code of Practice (DfE 2015; DfES 2001; DfE 1994) with little change over time. The learning objectives for the National Award in Special

Educational Needs Coordination (NCTL 2014) adds further detail to fulfilling the requirements of the role. The SENCO role is one of just two roles in school (the other being the headteacher) that have been determined by statute (Packer 2014). However, it is clear from previous research that the way this role is enacted in schools varies (Tysoe 2015; Tissot 2013; NUT 2012; Pearson 2008; Mackenzie 2007).

A number of authors have proposed general models of professional identity and expertise (Wenger 1998; Schön 1983; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1980; Argyris and Schön 1974), while others have presented models specific to teachers and teaching (Forde, McMahon, McPhee and Patrick 2006; Beynon, Ilieva and Dichupa 2001; Coldron and Smith 1999; Dewey 1929).

The Dreyfus Brothers' model (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1980) of skill acquisition provides a five point scale, from novice through to expert, that indicates the levels of competency reached in acquiring new skills. This model provides a 'logically distinct process of acquiring information' (Eraut 1994: 128) although it does not provide a holistic model of professional identity. Eraut, taking a positivist stance, argues that the model does not take into account expert fallibility and emphasises intuition over reasoning as he sees reasoning as a major component of developing expert competency. In relation to the SENCO role, it is clear that there are a wide range of knowledge and skills that a SENCO must have to carry out their role (DfE 2015; NCTL 2014) and this model could well be applied to the acquisition of those skills. The researcher's own knowledge and experience of the SENCO role confirms that it relies on logic and intuition, both of which rely on understanding commensurate with an expert level of competence.

Argyris and Schön (Schön 1983; Argyris and Schön 1974) present a model of professional knowledge based on artistry rather than positivist epistemology. They refer to two processes in professional practice 'reflection' and 'reflexivity'. In relation to professional practice, the term reflection means the ability to think about your practice and make appropriate adjustments. Argyris and Schön (*ibid*) refer to this as 'single loop' learning. Reflexivity implies an action on oneself. In the context of professional practice, this would be the ability to reflect on the process of reflection,

and Argyris and Schön refer to this as ‘double loop’ learning. These two processes are closely aligned and the terms reflection and reflexivity are frequently used interchangeably. Eraut (*ibid*) is particularly critical of Argyris and Schön’s model regarding it as a theory of meta-cognition rather than a theory of professional knowledge.

The ability to reflect on practice is considered as a professional responsibility of teachers (DfE 2011b). The term ‘reflective practitioner’ is often referred to within the field of education. This term, used by Schön (1983), can be understood as ‘reflection-in-action’ and it echoes Dewey’s approaches to teaching and teacher education (Dewey 1904). Being a reflective practitioner also touches on the concept of ‘agency’ which is expanded upon later in this section. In the conclusions to this research, it will be interesting to consider to what extent the professional identity of the SENCO might be shaped by the processes of reflection and reflexivity.

Wenger sees professional practice as being synonymous with our everyday existence. ‘Practice is, first and foremost, a process by which we can experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful’ (Wenger 1998: 51). He believes that through the development of ‘communities of practice’ (*ibid*) professional practice is established and thereby replicated. In schools, this is shown through the working relationships between staff and also the links between schools. The desire for SENCOs to meet and exchange ideas is evidenced in their frequent attendance at SENCO network meetings (Tysoe 2014).

Beynon *et al.* (2001) suggest a departure from professional identity that is grounded in professional practice to one that is constructed through personal values, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and understandings. It is using this suggestion that a model of professional identity as part of self-identity is proposed. Drawing on pictorial representations of Vygotsky’s theory on the zone of proximal development (1978), a theoretical model for professional identity is proposed. Figure 4 (*vide infra*) shows professional identity as being an integral part of the self. In this theoretical model, the professional role or identity is represented by the smaller circle that fits within the

individual's concept of self-identity. It is also possible to imagine circumstances where the demands of the professional role are not fully in line with one's own values, beliefs or competences (Richards 2010; Bhopal 2001). MacIntyre (1985) has argued that the true self is more than the various roles we are required to play. This possible tension between self-identity and the demands of the professional role or identity are represented by the various positions of the smaller circles.

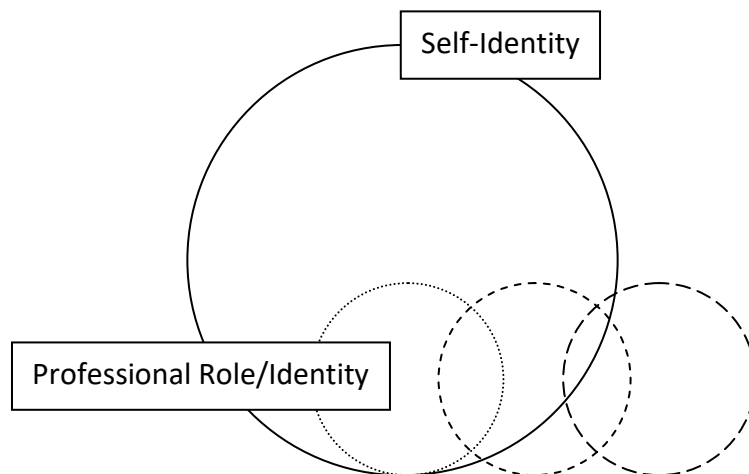


Figure 4: Proposed theoretical model of SENCO professional identity

Festinger (1957) has argued that where our beliefs do not align with the current situation, we experience 'cognitive dissonance'. However, Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance suggests that rather than rejecting the situation, we accommodate it by changing our behaviour or views. It is interesting to postulate on how much SENCOs might accommodate any changes in the new SEND legislation or reject them. Part of the research seeks to explore the potential relationship between the SENCOs' work and their own attitudes and values.

Forde *et al.* (2006) have written extensively on the theme of teachers' professional identity in relation to their professional development. They discussed this in relation to the concepts of agency and autonomy particularly. They see teachers currently working within a culture of conformity and compliance.

‘Government policies (in both England and Scotland) retain the rhetoric of professionalism, but nevertheless have served to constrain teachers’ professional agency.’ (Forde *et al. ibid*: 3)

The argument of Forde *et al.* is based on critical discourse theory where the phenomenon is considered within its historical and social context. They argue that teachers need to be more confident in their professional identity so they can adopt a clear stance in relation to professional policy and practice.

Armstrong (2005) has commented that schools are currently operating within a school effectiveness paradigm which is dominated by a discourse of transforming schools by raising pupils’ educational achievements. Locke, Vulliamy, Webb and Hill (2005) have noted in their comparative study between the English and New Zealand education systems that in both countries, there has been a move away from teacher professionalism founded on ‘professional-contextualism’ to one based on ‘technocratic-reductionism’. They argue that teachers have become the deliverers of the curriculum rather than designers, and the demands for greater accountability have taken away teachers’ professional autonomy.

Day and Sachs (2004) have described two types of teacher professionalism: managerial professionalism with a strong emphasis on servicing systems and delivering central policy and democratic professionalism as characterised by professional regulation and collegiate decision making. Under a school effectiveness paradigm managerial professionalism predominates. The argument presented suggests that teachers’ professional autonomy is being reduced and their agency is being slowly eroded. Giddens and Sutton (2013) also recognise this tension between social structures and human agency. The tension in the current debate around teacher professionalism has been succinctly expressed by Kennedy.

‘Essentially, what can be seen in the debate over contemporary notions of professionalism, is the struggle evident in social policy-making in general between the desire to promote education as a means of increasing productivity in the global economic arena, on the one hand, and concerns over promoting social justice and welfare on the other.’ (2007: 14)

Given the demands of legislation (1981 Education Act; 2001 Education Act; 2014 Children and Families Act) it is perhaps not surprising that SENCOs feel caught in this tension between managerial professionalism and democratic professionalism (Tysoe 2015). There is certainly a lack of clarity and sense of confusion for SENCOs about their role and identity (Rosen-Webb 2011).

In regard to school effectiveness, it is possible that there is some movement in a different direction. More recently, there appears to be greater emphasis on school autonomy as driving forward change. This is reflected in some of the changes made to the Ofsted inspection framework (Ofsted 2015) where schools judged as 'Outstanding' are no longer subject to regular inspection and a new one day inspection has been introduced for 'Good' schools where the focus of the inspection is the school's own self-evaluation. Also, since the removal of the National Curriculum levels (STA 2016; DfE/STA 2015) there has been a requirement for every school to put in place their own curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Teodorović (2009) in her literature review of school effectiveness, challenges the reliability of the school effectiveness research. However, from her systematic review she concludes that in industrialised countries student background is a strong factor in academic achievement. Instructional effectiveness can have a positive impact on students but the impact of effective-school factors is more contestable. Teodorović suggests that practitioners and policymakers should focus more on improving instructional effectiveness if they wish to bring about improved outcomes for students. This aligns with Gunter's view (2005) that to bring about school improvement there needs to be a greater focus on developing classroom practice.

Wrigley challenges both the school effectiveness (SE) paradigm and the school improvement (SI) paradigm in their entirety and regards both as synonymous.

'Nevertheless it is appropriate to speak of the hegemony of SE and SI, given the degree of official support, and saturation of practice, which gives the

impression that they are the 'only show in town', the only way of conceptualising school evaluation and change.' (2012: 32)

Wrigley criticises both paradigms as essentially being studies of management processes that fail to take into account both the political and ethical dimensions that schools operate within. School effectiveness relies on the comparison of schools and the identification of effectiveness factors, which Theodorović (*ibid*) has suggested are problematic, rather than the issues of 'power, social justice or citizenship' (Wrigley *ibid*: 41).

Others have argued that the school effectiveness agenda has resulted in some positive outcomes for inclusion by raising aspirations for all pupils (Ainscow 1999), and that raising pupil achievement of itself is not incompatible with inclusive approaches (Florian, Black-Hawkins and Rouse 2017). In his book 'Education Under Siege' Mortimore (2013) outlines a move away from an education system driven by the marketisation of schools and central control, to one based on local democratic accountability. Certainly, if schools are to be encouraged to be more inclusive then the way school performance is measured needs to broaden. An education system judged predominantly on test results, which does not take into account other educational outcomes and issues of social justice, would seem contrary to the principles that the new SEND legislation purports to uphold.

This section has presented a number of different possible models of how professional identity is formed. It concludes by proposing that professional identity should be seen as an element of self-identity and that the two are interrelated. The potential tensions that exist for SENCOs within the school effectiveness paradigm that currently drives the education system have been considered. Also, some of the characteristics required of SENCOs have been highlighted.

The research is set in the context of recent reforms to the SEND legislation. It seems therefore particularly relevant to explore the role of the SENCO in relation to these

changes. In this context, and in response to the arguments presented through the literature review, a set of research questions were postulated:

1. What is the purpose of the SENCO role in schools? To what extent is the SENCO role changing in response to the new SEND Code of Practice?
2. How is the new SEND legislation being enacted by SENCOs in schools? What are the opportunities and challenges that the new SEND legislation presents to schools?
3. How do SENCOs bring about changes to practice in schools? To what degree is the work of the SENCO influenced by their attitudes and values?

The research aimed to address these three questions and the next chapter provides an overview of the methodological approach adopted by the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods

This chapter offers an overview of the conceptual framework (*vide* Appendix 5) that has guided the research methodology and methods. The chapter opens with a discussion of phenomenology as the overarching methodological framing for the research. The section on research methods considers the use of interviews and rating scales as the principle tools for gathering data. Particular reference is made to grounded theory research methods as the method used for coding and analysing interview data. The chapter concludes by drawing together the theoretical underpinning of the research.

Phenomenological methodology

This is a small scale professional research project within the field of education. The research seeks to further our understanding of the professional role and identity of SENCOs, particularly in relation to the recent changes to SEND legislation.

Phenomenology is a valid approach when exploring the everyday experiences of individuals (Rogers 2004). The research is action based (Denscombe 2014; Fullan 2007) in that it was conducted in order to understand how the new legislation has been enacted within schools; to provide feedback to local authorities and schools on pertinent issues and to offer suggestions on possible ways forward.

Phenomenology is based on the philosophical writings of Husserl (1859 -1938) and has been further developed by other philosophers such as Heidegger, Bourdieu, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. It is the writing of Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) that provided a particular inspiration for this thesis. It is Merleau-Ponty's integrated approach to perception that is particularly relevant to the work of schools. The research takes a stance that teaching is never purely an intellectual pursuit; it involves mind, body and spirit. Teachers rely on building positive relationships with pupils, parents and other professionals. Merleau-Ponty (2004:82) has expressed this poetically as 'those rare and precious moments at which human beings come to recognise, to find one another.' Research into the work of the SENCO needs to go beyond the operational aspects of the job to include the qualities and attributes required to fulfil the role.

Additionally, adopting a humanistic approach means that the research has focused beyond simply recording and analysing what is said and begins to explore intentionality and this allows space for interpretation. Rogers (2003: 494) in writing about phenomenology within the context of humanistic psychology suggests 'the best vantage point for understanding behaviour is from the internal frame of reference of the individual himself.'

A phenomenological approach to research draws upon the experiences of individuals in the 'life-world' (Husserl 1970) and relies primarily on their reported experiences as its research evidence. Research seeks to validate its findings by presenting the authentic voice of the individual. From a constructivist stance this raises issues as to whether the evidence is being reported 'as is' or from the particular view point of the researcher (Scott and Morrison 2006). This is an issue that will be addressed later in this chapter but also within the research findings themselves. Creswell (2007: 57) maintains that 'whereas a narrative study reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon'. This research methodology therefore brings together individual contributions and relies on an interpretation by the researcher to create meaning. However, by using a phenomenological approach any interpretation of data should 'always be embedded in the concrete, not detached from it' (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000: 37).

By following a phenomenological methodology the research records the experiences of SENCOs 'from the subjective or first person point of view' (Stanford 2013). In order to collect and interpret the data certain devices have been deployed (coding interviews, rating scale, TOWS analysis). This could be seen as using a mixed methods design. However, these devices have been deployed as a method for exploring a social phenomenon from a phenomenological perspective. This is in keeping with Husserl's original concept of phenomenology that integrates a form of psychology with a form of logic (Husserl 2001).

In the case of this research, a phenomenological approach involves the interpretation of accounts from seven SENCOs. This process of interpretation has not only been influenced by the particular methodological framework adopted, but by the researcher's own standpoint. On the point of subjectivity, Kumar (2011) draws a clear distinction between subjectivity and bias. Subjectivity is what we bring to the research and this needs acknowledging and recognising, whereas bias is when we deliberately set out to conceal or highlight something within the research with an ulterior motive in mind. 'For each of us when we first see the world in a meaningful fashion, we are inevitably viewing it through lenses bestowed upon us by our culture' (Crotty 2003: 54). To resolve this dilemma that exists between the subject (researcher) and the object (phenomenon) Husserl adopted the concept of 'epoche' (bracketing) (Moran 2000) as a way of the researcher putting aside any preconceived ideas so the phenomenon can be viewed anew.

The researcher has been alert to the concept of bracketing and this is implicit in the use of the third person in writing this thesis to illustrate and give emphasis to the distance being maintained. The researcher is also acutely aware of his own vested interests and involvement in the area under investigation and has therefore taken steps to remain as 'objective' as possible and to avoid the introduction of bias. This objectivity has been achieved through:

- following 'tried and tested' research methods and procedures;
- sharing and discussing research with colleagues;
- transcribing and coding interviews accurately;
- reporting the research findings honestly;
- adopting a reflective approach throughout the research process.

A particular feature of Husserl's phenomenology is the concept of 'intentionality' (Speigelberg 1971). This describes the position an individual takes in relation to the phenomenon being observed. In respect of this research it relates to the values, attitudes and beliefs that both the SENCO and the researcher bring to bear on the

situation. For Crotty ‘the image [of intentionality] evoked is that of humans engaging with their human world. It is in and out of this interplay that meaning is born’ (2003: 45) and in this way, our understanding of reality is ultimately constructed.

The accounts from each SENCO form individual case studies. Yin (2003) provides us with a useful framework for considering case study enquiry. He suggests that case studies fall into three categories.

1. The exploratory case study designed to propose hypotheses or questions for further enquiry.
2. The descriptive case study to describe the features of a particular phenomenon.
3. The explanatory case study to demonstrate a cause and effect relationship.

These can be applied to either single or multiply case studies, so making a total of six categories. This particular research broadly follows a descriptive case study approach. The research is made up of seven individual case studies and as such can be labelled as a ‘descriptive multiple case study’.

The case study approach is well suited to small scale applied social research. The approach has been defined by Denscombe as a way to ‘understand the complex relationships between factors as they operate within a particular social setting’ (2014: 4) which is particularly pertinent to this research. Denscombe suggests that the benefits of the case study approach for research of this nature are:

- it allows the phenomenon to be studied in situ resulting in a more naturalistic account;
- the area of focus is bounded and does not require research on a wide scale;
- it provides a more in depth look at a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon.

Although this does highlight some of the potential limitations of the case study approach:

- case studies are unique to a particular set of circumstances so generalisation can be risky (Lincoln and Guba 1979);
- behaviour can alter due to the 'observer effect' where the presence of a researcher affects the normal behaviour of the participants (Denscombe *ibid*);
- case studies often rely on self-reported evidence which has the potential to be an unreliable source of evidence (Creswell 2007);
- case studies generate large amounts of data that can be difficult to collate (Cohen 2007).

Yin has suggested that the case study is regarded by some as being 'sloppy' (2003: 6). Stake (1978) argues eloquently that the case study approach is valid as it has meaning and worth to fellow practitioners, while Lincoln and Guba (*ibid*) see case study as particularly valid for highlighting aspects of working practices rather than establishing theory. This adds credence to the approach being taken by this research.

This research is conducted within a constructivist paradigm where knowledge of the world is considered a human and social construct (Crotty 2003). However, this is not a nihilistic view of the world as there is an acknowledgement that an independent 'reality' does exist beyond that constructed by individual human minds. The research follows a view on reality where 'the world as we experience it is the real world' (Dewey 1929: 25) and the accounts of individuals are regarded as authentic and valid.

This section has considered the methodological framing of this research and how this and the ontological and epistemological viewpoints have shaped the research methods. The next section discusses the ethical considerations in relation to this applied social research.

Ethical considerations

Ethical practice has been a fundamental consideration in the research design. In the context of this research the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA 2011)

has been of particular relevance. Proposals for this research have been scrutinised by Nottingham Trent University Ethics Committee and approval to conduct the research granted.

The research does not directly involve vulnerable groups, for example children, or deal with particularly sensitive issues. However, this research was conducted as part of the researcher's advisory work with schools and so the possible tension between the role of practitioner and researcher comes into play. This has been described as 'demand-pull' (Yin 2003: 21). This relationship between researcher and practitioner raises issues around 'ownership', 'agency' and 'power' and these are discussed below in relation to ethical practice. These three concepts are also revisited in different ways throughout the research.

Denscombe (2014) has suggested that there are four key principles underlying research ethics that have their origins in medical research codes established following the Second World War in the Nuremberg Code (1947-49) and then later in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. Denscombe (*ibid*) lays out four broad principles that research should adhere to:

- protects the individuals involved;
- ensures that involvement is consensual;
- conducted with integrity;
- operates within the law.

The purpose of protecting the individuals involved in the research is to ensure that they are not harmed or suffer negative repercussions as a result of participating. Research should always seek to minimise any possibility of harm (Bell 2005). This includes both physical and psychological harm. One of main ways of reducing the potential of harm is confidentiality. In this research, confidentiality of the SENCOS involved has been secured by referring to the schools using letters and the SENCOS by numbers. **The SENCOS are numbered in the order they were interviewed initially. It**

should also be noted that as the sample of SENCOs was drawn from a number of local authorities, and there are numerous establishments across this area, it would not be possible to identify individual schools or SENCOs by school type.

The research draws upon the comments of the participants and this raises the aspect of 'ownership'. However, the researcher has taken the comments and generated meaning from them and through this process the research has become the work and property of the researcher. The research was not commissioned by the local authorities, so it does not belong to them. However, it is beholden on the researcher to act with integrity (Bell 2005) and therefore the researcher has put certain restrictions on how the research is stored, distributed and used. The data on participants and schools has been stored and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The research findings have been shared with the participants and the local authorities to support the development of practice. Findings will not be used to evaluate performance of individuals or schools. The researcher has been attentive to the belief that research should always be conducted with professionalism, not just for the benefit of current research, but for the benefit of future research too (Bell *ibid*).

The researcher works with the authorities in which the schools are located. Given this particular arrangement, the findings are potentially attributable to the local authorities involved. A new joint inspection framework by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (Ofsted 2016b), to evaluate the effectiveness of local areas in embedding the new SEND legislation, has now been established. It is highly likely that the local authorities concerned would want to be seen as being successful in implementing government policy and there is a potential tension over 'ownership' of the research and its dissemination. This research is conducted in the spirit of discovering how recent changes to SEND legislation are being enacted within schools and in the process, highlighting the successes in achieving this goal whilst identifying potential difficulties and suggesting areas for development. It is therefore not intended to be critical of the local authorities or schools involved, but adds to an understanding of how the new SEND legislation is being embedded in practice.

It is important to ensure that the participants are comfortable with the research arrangements and that they participate voluntarily (Cresswell 2007). The researcher needs to respect the dignity and privacy of the individuals involved.

Therefore, before commencing the interviews, the nature and scope of the research was explained to the SENCOs verbally and in writing. All SENCOs gave signed consent to use the content of the interviews verbatim and in summary (*vide* Appendix 10). This highlights an aspect of 'agency'. In the context of phenomenological research methodology, the agency of the individual is paramount and given particular emphasis. The research needs to capture the voice of the individuals to inform the research findings and conclusions.

Bassey (1999) alerts us to the need to be truthful to people's accounts and respectful of their views. He also asserts that the counterpoint to democratic freedoms is responsibility which means that the researcher needs to be honest in all aspects of the research. Researchers need to ensure that the views of research participants are reported honestly and are not unduly influenced by their own views (Scott and Morrison 2006). A way of remaining truthful and avoiding any potential bias is to rely on the SENCOs' accounts using their own words (Creswell 2007). This has also been addressed by sharing interview transcripts with participants so they have control over what is reported (Burton and Bartlett 2009) and by deploying a system of coding, drawn from grounded theory practice (Charmaz 2006), to ensure the transcripts are analysed systematically (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011).

The experience and knowledge of the researcher makes him well positioned to conduct research in this area of education. His job as an adviser associated with local authorities in which the participating SENCOs work, is particularly pertinent as this places him as an 'insider' (Burton and Bartlett *ibid*) but this also raises some particular issues about 'power'. In this research, the power relationship between the researcher and the participants is significant. The researcher holds a certain position of power within the local authorities concerned. This has benefits for the research as the researcher has readily available access to the field of research and can influence any changes required resulting from the research findings. However, in this position there

is a responsibility to protect participants from negative consequences from participating in the research. In fact, participants should feel that by participating they or others are likely to benefit from any future improvements arising out of the research (Denscombe 2014). Participants may feel that the findings of the research could be used to judge the quality of their work. It is therefore important that their identity remains confidential and that the data collected is not used for other purposes.

Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony (1992) suggests that subordinate people take an active role in the operation of power often maintaining and supporting those in power. Therefore, participants may provide those in power with what they want to hear. The SENCOs may feel that they need 'to provide socially acceptable answers or something to please the researcher (Suter 2012: 116). This has echoes of Foucault's concept of power (1991) where power operates in particular ways to maintain systems or social norms. In this case, the researcher also needs to consider if any person might be pursuing a particular agenda or wishing to unduly influence the research findings whether from a school or a local authority.

The next sections cover the research method adopted and the two principal tools used to gather the research data: one-to-one interviews and a Likert style rating scale (1932).

Research method

This research seeks to develop a greater understanding of the work of the SENCO in schools. It uses methods from grounded theory research (Charmaz 2006) as a basis for gathering information and generating understanding. Grounded theory is an approach that is based on empirical fieldwork and the gradual development of a general theory that emerges from the data. It is a method well suited to small-scale qualitative research particularly in an area of human activity. Grounded theory provides a recognised and tested research framework. In the context of this research it is being used as a method to interpret the data and develop an understanding of the phenomenon. The coding of

data is a key feature of grounded theory which provides an accepted and rigorous method for interpreting of data (Cohen *et al.* 2011; Charmaz *ibid*).

This research has drawn upon grounded theory selectively rather than adopting the method *per se*. The research therefore incorporates features of grounded theory, particularly in respect of its exploratory nature and pragmatic approach towards the generation of knowledge. However, the research diverges from grounded theory approaches in two very particular respects. The first, that the purpose of the research was clearly identified through the initial research questions (*vide* 49) rather than arising through the research process itself. Secondly, the sites (schools) and sample (SENCOs) for the research were selected in advance, although it should be noted that, and in similarity to grounded theory, this selection arose from previous research in the field (Tysoe 2015). It might be argued that adapting grounded theory for the purposes of this research is not a legitimate approach. However, grounded theory takes various forms and has been adapted since its inception for different purposes (Denscombe 2014; Bryant and Charmaz 2007). Grounded theory is being used as an adjunct to a phenomenological methodology and within this context recognises the position the researcher holds in interpreting data and constructing meaning (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

The research used semi-structured interviews as the principle method of gathering data (*vide* Appendices 11 and 15). This was supplemented by data from a rating scale (*vide* Appendix 12) to gauge participants' confidence around key aspects of the new SEND legislation. These tools are not entirely consistent with a grounded theory approach, as a more open approach to data collection would be taken and the tools used would be informed by the developing investigation. However, the return interview schedule and the use of a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis was developed in response to the analysis of the data from the initial interviews which follows a grounded theory approach. Also, the coding of interview responses and the identification of emerging themes follows the grounded theory method for data analysis and interpretation.

The field work for the research was conducted through two sets of interviews with SENCOs separated by a period of twelve months. However, the design, analysis and the writing up of the research was over 18 months (*vide* Appendix 13). The table suggests that activities followed each other in a logical sequence, however, the process of research is never quite that tidy - frequently activities were happening concurrently and these activities were often re-visited or revised over time.

Interviews

The main source of data for this research was collected through individual interviews. In total, seven SENCOs were interviewed at the beginning of the research, and five of these SENCOs were interviewed again a year later to see if things had changed over that period of time. It was only possible to re-interview five of the original seven as two of the SENCOs had left their posts. The purpose of the interviews was to gather the views from a representative group of SENCOs and to also feed information back to local authorities and schools. The SENCOs were drawn from a larger group of SENCOs from across London local authority areas that had responded to a previous SENCO survey (Tysoe 2015) and registered an interest in being interviewed. The group of SENCOs was selected to represent a balance of different school types. The selection of seven SENCOs, including one SENCO from a nursery school, three from primary schools, two from secondary and one from a special school, provides a representative sample according to school type, and broadly reflects the ratio of these different school types across the area being sampled (Tysoe 2015).

The interview method was chosen as an appropriate method to suit applied social research (Cresswell 2007) and as a follow up to a previous SENCO survey (*ibid*). Meta-analysis of previous research into SEN and inclusion (Avramdis and Norwich 2002) suggests that drawing on personal accounts is a richer and more reliable source of evidence than surveys or questionnaires as interviews allow the researcher the opportunity to explore issues to a greater depth (Gillham 2005). In keeping with the research methodology, it was considered more appropriate to conduct face-to-face interviews where a more personal relationship could be established rather than using the more remote method of phone or on-line interviews. Also, given the researcher's

work across local authorities and the limited geographical area covered, face-to-face interviews were viable in terms of cost and time.

The interviews followed a series of questions (*vide* Appendices 11 and 15) informed by the original research questions (*vide* 49). A semi-structured interview format was adopted to provide a framework for the interviews whilst allowing for further exploration and development of topics as they emerged during the conversation (Gillham *ibid*). One-to-one interviews are simpler to manage and record as there is only one interviewee. The researcher did give consideration as to whether he should conduct group interviews. This links with a 'participatory inquiry paradigm' (Heron and Reason 1997) where the participants are the drivers of the research rather than the researcher. Group interviews may have led to a much greater level of participation and discussion resulting in a consensus view. However, the researcher was concerned that this may have left some individual voices 'unheard' or a consensus view overriding individual perceptions. The research aim was to investigate the individual thoughts and feelings of SENCOs in relation to the new SEND legislation. Therefore individual interviews were the most appropriate way of seeking this information.

Interviews rely on self-reporting which is consistent with a phenomenological research methodology (Cresswell 2007), where individual perceptions are regarded as paramount. Humans are 'evaluative beings' (Sayer 2011; 1 *et passim*) and so understanding SENCOs' experiences of the new SEND legislation is crucial to understanding what difference the legislation is having for schools and their pupils. Self-reporting is frequently problematic in terms of factual accuracy (Denscombe 2014) as the data collected is frequently subjective in nature and not necessarily verifiable. However, by taking into account the views of several SENCOs a more balanced view is achieved.

Interviews are a particular type of interaction and rely on an implicit understanding of how interviews are generally conducted. There is an accepted protocol that the interviewer will lead the interview and is therefore in control of the agenda through a series of questions that the interviewee is then 'expected' to answer. This creates a

power relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee which needs managing sensitively if trust and rapport (Denscombe 2014) are to be established. In this case, the researcher works as an adviser to several of the local authorities involved, which adds another power dimension to this relationship. By participating in an interview, the interviewee is giving their consent for transcripts of their words to be used as data. In addition to following these generally accepted conventions, written consent was given at the beginning of the initial interviews and confirmed verbally in the return interviews (*vide* Appendix 10).

The manner and purpose of the interview was also discussed as well as how the transcripts would be used. The interviewees were given the choice of where to be interviewed and they all chose to be interviewed at their own school. The first set of interviews ranged in length from 36 minutes to 70 minutes, and the return interviews from 28 minutes to 51 minutes. Furthermore, the transcripts were shared with the interviewees so they could make comments on or request for their words to be omitted from the research. However, none of the SENCOs asked for changes or withdrew their permission to use the data.

One of the issues that the researcher needs to be mindful of is the 'interviewer effect'. Dencombe (*ibid*:189) explains this, 'people respond differently depending on how they perceive the person asking the questions.' In the context of this research, the researcher is a local authority adviser and participants might feel there is a need to provide answers that meet the researcher's needs or reflect local policy. Equally, the researcher may feel a certain 'demand-pull' (Yin 2003: 21) when reporting evidence to the local authority. However, the participants may regard this as a valuable opportunity for their 'voice' to be heard and to influence local authority policy. On one level, the power position of a local authority adviser and that of the SENCOs may not be seen as equal. However, they both probably share similar experiences and knowledge about the area of this research, so in this sense their relationship could be seen as set on a similar footing and forms the basis for a professional dialogue.

Interviews require a high level of focus and concentration both from the interviewees and the interviewer. It was agreed at the beginning of each interview to record them which ensured that all information was captured for transcription. Recording interviews can initially make people feel self-conscious, but we live in a digital world where recording has come to feel less intrusive (Arksey and Knight 1999), so this initial apprehension disappeared almost immediately the interviewee started talking. Recording allowed the interviewer to listen carefully to what was being said, but not worrying about capturing every word in field notes as the recording would be transcribed at a later time.

The field notes were useful as they provided a 'back-up' to the recordings. Also, making notes gave the interviewer a task to do, so the focus on the interviewee was less intense and taking notes demonstrate that the interviewer was actively listening to what was being said. To reduce the intensity of focus on the interviewee, the researcher's chair was placed at a right angle to the interviewee rather than facing them directly, so giving the feeling of working in partnership rather than it being seen as a formal interview. One of the issues with interviews is the reliability and validity of data collected, by transcribing interviews it is possible to report the words of the participants verbatim which adds to the credibility (Denzin and Lincoln 2017) of the research and allows themes across several interviews to be triangulated reliably, which provides further validity to the findings.

Developing and testing the initial interview questions

The development of the questions took a neo-positivist approach (Roulston 2010) in the belief that a series of 'good' question will elicit 'valid' answers that captures the views and experiences of the interviewee. The research questions informed the development of the 11 interview questions (*vide* Appendix 11). Initially, the questions were shared with supervisors to discuss their merits in exploring the focus of the research. Following this, minor changes were made to extend some of the questions to ensure a fuller response and to avoid possible repetition. One of the main changes was the removal of the opening question 'Talk me through a typical day in your working week.' This was replaced with 'Describe the school you work in.' This was more

focused as an opening question and less likely to result in people providing an overly descriptive or anecdotal account of their work.

The question 'What motivated you to become a SENCO?' was removed initially, but subsequently added back into the final selection. However, the question 'What continues to sustain you in your role as SENCO?' was removed as this linked closely with the question on motivation, and the question on likes and dislikes of the role, which may have resulted in a repetition of answers. Two further questions 'What noun or metaphor would best describe your role?' and 'What skills and qualities do you need to possess as a SENCO?' were also added. Both these questions provided an opportunity for the interviewees to provide an overall summary of the characteristics of the SENCO role.

The questions followed a standard structure in a logical sequence (Kumar 2011) by asking a straightforward question at the beginning to put the interviewees at ease and initiate a conversation (Punch 2014; Burton and Bartlett 2009), more probing questions in the middle that follow a conversational style, finishing with a more light-hearted, but never the less revealing, question on a metaphor to best describe their role. The idea of using a metaphor was borrowed from previous research into the role of the SENCO (Ekins 2015) and proved to a very effective way of understanding how the SENCOs saw their role.

The questions were first tested on a SENCO from another area, involved in earlier research (Tysoe 2014), to see if they elicited the anticipated responses. Following this, the questions were further revised. These were minor changes to wording rather than the content of the question. A subsidiary question 'How would you describe the ethos of the school?' was added to follow the question 'Describe for me the school you work in?' to tease out this particular aspect of school life. The word 'purpose' was added into the question 'What do you see as the purpose of the SENCO role in your school?' as this provided a response closer to the one aimed for.

Also the subsidiary question 'To what extent has the role changed over time?' was replaced with 'How do you see the role changing in response to the new SEND Code of Practice?' to encourage a more specific response in relation to the new legislation. Finally, in the question 'What changes has the school made in response to the new SEND Code of Practice? Tell me about any particular successes or difficulties you have had.' the element asking about successes was removed to avoid repetition as on trialling, this was addressed by the first part of the question on changes made.

As part of the interview process, participants were invited to complete a confidence scale (*vide* Appendix 12) for various aspects relating to the new SEND legislative framework and the learning outcomes for the National Award in Special Educational Needs Coordination as set out by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL 2014) (*vide* Appendix 4). The rating scale followed a standard Likert Scale (1932). This is an ordinal scale (Stevens 1946) that follows a ranking to express the SENCO's confidence in various areas. Responses were rated on a scale of 1 to 10 ranging from low to high with a column for comments.

The rating scale was also used as a focus for the return interviews as a way of tracking any changes in confidence or attitudes. The scale was used in initial interviews and the return interviews to create averages for the purposes of comparison. However, as the numbers are small and, as the scale is relative for each of the SENCOs, caution needs to be taken as to the statistical significance of any changes as a change for any one individual could have a significant impact on the overall averages (Gillham 2008). The research considered any changes to ratings within these acknowledged constraints.

Analysing the initial interview responses

The categories and codes were developed through an inductive process (*vide* Appendix 14). Each interview was recorded and field notes were made during the interview to help the researcher focus on what was being said and as a back-up in case of any technical problems with the recordings. Following each interview, the researcher noted his immediate thoughts and reactions to the interview. Both of these sets of notes were referred to when listening back to the recording to gain a fuller sense of

meaning. The recordings were professionally transcribed both for accuracy and speed. The transcripts were then coded to identify the emerging themes (*vide* Appendices 16 and 17).

The method adopted for analysing the data was categorisation and coding. Sorting interview responses thematically through coding is a standard approach for systematically analysing transcripts (Denscombe 2014; Punch 2014; Layder 2013). Initially, each transcript was read through to identify units of meaning. Through this process, and by re-reading, the transcript’s categories and sub-categories became apparent. These categories and subcategories were then given codes (*vide* Table 1). Following this, the units of meaning were coded to indicate the category and subcategory they belonged to (*vide* Appendices 16 and 17).

Category	Code	Subcategory	Code
Eg, SEND Code of Practice	4	Eg, Keyworkers	4.7

Table 1: Categorisation and codes

The categories data fell into were, to a certain extent, predetermined by the interview questions. However, the subcategories emerged to a much greater extent from the responses given and how different pieces of the data interrelated. This *in vivo* coding derived directly from the words and phrases used by the participants (Roulson 2010). Coding went through a process of editing and refinement from broad ‘open’ codes to the identification of the key ‘axial’ elements and through this iterative process codes were amended and reapplied. This process was fundamental to the research in generating concepts about the phenomenon. By scrutinizing the data in this way, the emerging concepts brought about an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon, but kept the research findings firmly ‘embedded in the concrete’ (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000: 37).

Coding is not analytically neutral (Mason 2002) and the researcher was alert to this potential for bias. Mason advocates that analysis can take place at three levels:

- literal reading: where meaning is taken at face value;
- interpretative approach: where meaning is read into the data;
- reflective approach: where the researcher considers their position in relation to the data.

Although the data was considered at these different levels, the comments of the SENCOS were taken at 'face value' in the sense that they were regarded as a genuine reflection of their thoughts and feelings. This links with the stance taken by the research on reality (*vide* 54).

For the purposes of analysing, the significance of the comments was calculated from the product of the number of SENCOS and the frequency of responses (*vide* Appendix 18). Using the product gives weight to both the number of SENCOS mentioning that aspect, as well as the frequency of those responses. A product greater than 49, the equivalent of each of the seven SENCOS mentioning the aspect once ($7 \times 7 = 49$), was used as a marker of significance. Although the data has been analysed in this way to give significance to the responses, the researcher was alert to the fact that least mentioned aspects might be noteworthy (King and Horrocks 2010) so these are also recorded within the findings. Also, consideration was given to any aspect not mentioned by SENCOS, across both sets of interviews, from one or more of the school types (nursery, primary, secondary, special) to see if any patterns emerged. This analysis is reported in the overall summary of the research findings (*vide* 103). The rating scale scores are given as a combined average score on a scale of 0 to 10 for all of the SENCOS, with 0 indicating that SENCOS are not confident in that aspect and 10 that they are completely confident.

Analysing the return interviews responses

A series of interviews were conducted 12 months after the initial interviews to see if any matters discussed had changed or moved on. The questions for these interviews (*vide* Appendix 15) were developed after the initial interviews had been analysed so they built on the responses given. The data collected was handled in a similar way to

the initial interviews, with the second interviews being transcribed and responses coded to identify themes; with the additional use of a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. The content of the interviews was similar, so it was possible to use the same coding system as the initial interviews. During the process of analysis, some new subcategories emerged, although it was possible to incorporate these new codes under the existing five thematic areas. The original rating scale was scored again by SENCOs to identify any changes.

There were fewer questions (six in total). The first question followed up with the participants points raised in their first interviews. The final question asked if the participants had anything they would like to add. Questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 focused specifically on the implementation of the new SEND legislation. These were based on an adapted form of the SWOT analysis technique. SWOT analysis is usually conducted in a group setting with the facilitator recording responses on a quadrant grid for everyone to refer to. In the situation of one-to-one interviews, the SWOT analysis format was converted into four questions and the words adapted to suit the context. The SWOT order was reversed forming a TOWS analysis as the researcher decided it would enable participants to provide a more balanced response if the negative elements had been covered first.

The four questions were:

- Have there been any challenges with introducing the new SEND legislation?
(Threats)
- Have any benefits resulted from the introduction of the new legislation?
(Opportunities)
- Are there any flaws with the new legislation? And why? (Weaknesses)
- Are there any merits? And why? (Strengths).

SWOT analysis is frequently used by organisations as a strategic planning tool. Panagiotou (2003) suggests that the technique was developed at the Harvard Business School in the 1950s and its application was in the field of organisational strategy. Since the 1950s, the technique has been developed and applied to different situations and for various purposes. Panagiotou's article (*ibid*) proposes his own version of SWOT analysis, termed Telescopic Observation strategic framework, where each of the letters represents a different aspect of business practice (for example, T equals technological advancements). Panagiotou also provides other variations on the SWOT format.

SWOT has been used widely in different organisational settings and contexts, including education. Helms and Nixon (2010) provide a thorough meta-analysis of the SWOT methodology. Helms and Nixon explored the evidence for and against the use of SWOT analysis in various contexts. They concluded that overall 'research supports SWOT analysis as a tool for planning purposes' (*ibid*: 215). However, their study also evaluated the usefulness of SWOT analysis for research purposes. In this respect, they concluded that SWOT was a valid research tool, but commented that 'many researchers suggest the need to use additional tools and analysis instead of SWOT or in concert with SWOT' (*ibid*: 238). For this reason SWOT is being used here in an adapted form alongside the other research tools, semi-structured interview questions and a rating scale.

The data gathered from the return interviews was handled in two different ways. Firstly, the responses were counted and ranked according to the product of the number and frequency, as with the initial interviews. In the analysis of the return interviews, a product of 25 was used as a marker for significance as there were only five SENCOS interviewed – five SENCOS mentioning an aspect at least once is the equivalent of a product of 25 ($5 \times 5 = 25$). Through this analysis, it is possible to see that the aspects discussed remain similar to those in the initial interviews. This will partly be due to the nature of question one as this followed up on previous areas discussed, but also because many of the matters of importance to SENCOS remained broadly the same (*vide* Appendices 18 and 20).

Questions two to five were additionally analysed using a TOWS approach to tease out what the SENCOs thought about the new SEND legislation. The responses to each of the questions were interrogated to determine whether the comment confirmed a challenge (T), benefit (O), flaw (W) or merit (S) of the legislation (*vide* Appendix 21). The comments were coded and then ranked according to the number of SENCOs mentioning that aspect rather than the product of the number and frequency. This approach was adopted as a number of the comments in response to the questions related to the SENCO role more generally, rather than specifically to the new SEND legislation. Also, the response was a binary one, the aspect being either positive or negative. It was therefore more logical to treat the data in this simpler manner. In handling the data slightly differently, it was also possible to triangulate the data. It can be seen that similar themes emerged adding further weight to the reliability of the findings.

The prime method used for collecting the data in this research was through two sets of interviews conducted 12 months apart. The interviews included the use of a rating scale to assist the researcher in quantifying any changes in SENCO confidence in the first two years of new SEND legislation being introduced. The rating scale tool (*vide* Appendix 12) aimed to assist SENCOs in focusing their thoughts in advance of the interviews. It was also being piloted for its potential use as an efficient way of gathering information from the wider SENCO workforce to evaluate the impact of any training or support being provided to SENCOs going forward as using this tool with a greater number of SENCOs would build on this research. The return interview data was also interrogated through a TOWS analysis. Both the rating scale and the TOWS analysis allowed the interview data to then be triangulated adding both depth and weight to the findings.

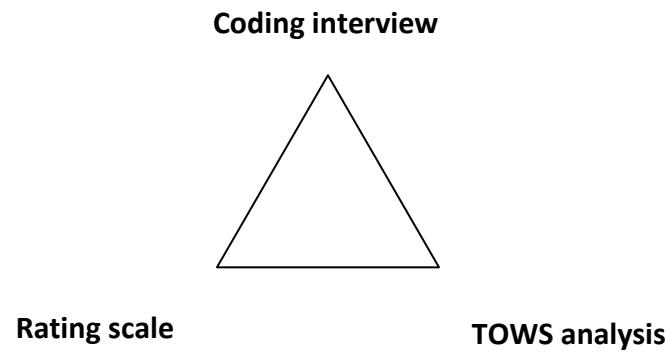


Figure 5: Triangulation of the interview data

This chapter has considered the methodology and methods adopted by the researcher. The case study approach presents particular issues around validity and generalisation. However, through this chapter, it has been argued and evidenced that the researcher selected a valid methodology using well-tested research methods to add reliability and validity to the research. The findings from the research are reported in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Research findings

This chapter explains the themes emerging from the initial and return interviews, and reports on the scores from the rating scale and a TOWS analysis. To assist clarity, the qualitative data from the interviews has been arranged into thematic areas mirroring the coding categories and subcategories that emerged from the data.

Reporting the initial interview data

The themes emerging from the interviews fell into five areas relating to different aspects of the SENCO role. The research findings have therefore been reported back under these five thematic areas.

1. Leading and managing SEND provision.
2. Professional development of staff.
3. Supporting teaching and learning.
4. The new SEND Code of Practice.
5. Ethos, values and attitudes towards SEND.

Comments made by individual SENCOs are reported verbatim and attributed using a code in brackets after the comment. For example, (S2/P) means SENCO 2 working in a primary (P) school. The other codes used for schools are N for nursery, S for secondary, Sp for special. The frequency and number of SENCOs mentioning certain aspects of practice are reported in brackets after each aspect. For example, managing staff (26/5) would mean that there were in total 26 comments made about this aspect with five SENCOs mentioning it. This is to make it easier for the reader to gauge the significance of each aspect mentioned.

Reporting of the return interview data

The return interviews were structured differently to the initial interviews and used a different set of six questions (*vide* Appendix 15). For this reason, it is not possible to directly compare the quantitative data from the two sets of interviews. However, a comparison of the emerging themes is appropriate to the research methodology and design. This comparison between the two sets of interviews are highlighted through the research findings and explored further through the discussions in Chapter 5. The numbers used to identify the SENCOS remained the same, making it simpler to follow any comparisons made between the two sets of interviews. Table 2 provides a key showing how the data analysis has been reported.

Item	Detail	Abbreviation
SENCOS	SENCOS 1/Nursery	S1/N
	SENCOS 2/Primary	S2/P
	SENCOS 3/Primary	S3/P
	SENCOS 4/Secondary	S4/S
	SENCOS 5/Primary	S5/P
	SENCOS 6/Special	S6/Sp
	SENCOS 7/Secondary	S7/S
Frequency/number	26 comments in total from 5 SENCOS	26/5
Rating scale score	Average rating of all the SENCOS	7.7
TOWS analysis	Challenges (threats)	T
	Benefits (opportunities)	O
	Flaws (weaknesses)	W
	Merits (strengths)	S

Table 2: Key to data reporting

The next sections explore the data from the interviews under the five thematic areas. Under each of the five areas, the findings from the initial interviews are reported first

followed by the return interview so that a comparison between the content of the two sets of interviews is easier.

Leading and managing SEND provision – initial interviews

The SENCO role is clearly articulated in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015) and a significant part of the SENCO role is leading and managing SEND provision within school. All the SENCOs interviewed talked about their duties and responsibilities in relation to this area of their work. The most mentioned aspect and one of the most frequently mentioned throughout the interviews, was working with parents and carers (38/7). It is interesting to note the attention given to this by SENCOs, particularly as the new SEND legislation places a heavy emphasis on working collaboratively with parents and carers. Other aspects arising under the area of leading and managing were: completing administration tasks (24/7), managing staff (26/5), the time required to complete their duties (24/5) and communications (18/5). The least mentioned aspects were: Ofsted (1/1), safeguarding (1/1), accountability (3/1) and resignation (3/1). Other aspects mentioned were: data (9/5) finances (7/4) SEND provision (8/4) and resources (5/4).

The rating scale results would indicate that the SENCOs interviewed are most confident in working with parents and carers (9.6). They are also confident about leading on the development of SEND provision within their school (8.2). Overall, they also felt that they had sufficient influence to fulfil their strategic role (7.7). However, the secondary SENCOs did not feel so confident in meeting their strategic role - SENCO 4 scored this as only three and SENCO 7 as four. This contrasts significantly with an average combined score for the primary and nursery SENCOs of 9.4. SENCOs felt that they were unclear about SEND funding arrangements (5.7) and lacked time and support to carry out their duties (5.2). The pressure and lack of time is echoed in the comments made during the interviews.

Under working with parents and carers (38/7), SENCO 3 saw the parents and carers as having much greater control and described this as 'the power that parents have' (S3/P). The increased collaboration with parents is reflected in the comments made by

SENCO 7 in relation to the new SEND legislation 'I think again the idea that the parents have a lot more involvement' (S7/S). The work with parents and carers is often emotionally charged as well illustrated by comments from a number of the SENCOs including:

'I have learnt that you have to keep a passive face as people will tell you the most awful things and they may be looking for a reaction, but it is best just to listen and try to be as calm as possible.' (S2/P)

However, as a result, this area of work was perceived by several of the SENCOs as being particularly rewarding.

'It feels like I can use all my years of teaching experience and working with families and can bring it all to bear to help the families and help the children. And when you do help families and do make a difference it's hugely rewarding.' (S1/N)

An aspect of SENCO work that was seen as particularly burdensome and time consuming was completing administration tasks (24/7), particularly paperwork associated with statutory processes, and this was reflected in the comments from the SENCOs.

'I think the paperwork that is involved in the EHCPs (education, health and care plans) that has been generated by the LA (local authority) is really quite onerous.' (S1/N)

It was clear that the SENCOs thought that the new SEND legislation had brought about an increase in paperwork. This is shown in SENCO 3's comment 'But in terms of the amount of admin work there is to do, that, at this point in time, has increased' (S3/P). SENCO 6 was clear that without administrative support, the school would not have managed the requirements of the new statutory processes.

The management of staff (26/5), particularly support staff, was considered by five of the SENCOs as requiring a considerable amount of time and effort. SENCO 4 expressed

this as 'I have quite a few staff and quite a lot of it is managing them' (S4/S). For SENCO 1 managing lunchtime staff was seen as a 'much bigger piece of work' (S1/N) in order to bring about greater consistency in approaches in supporting children with complex needs.

The time (24/5) and resources to do their job was an issue for a number of the SENCOs. This was expressed by SENCO 5:

'The job never ends. It really never does and I work three days a week, but I think I am pretty sure I work a full-time job really. I work three days a week here and one in [school], but I would say I take work home every single night and I do something at home.' (S5/P)

SENCO 4 expressed it more directly 'You never have enough time, never have enough staff, never got enough anything' (S4/S).

Communications (18/5), particularly with local authorities, was another issue the interviews highlighted. This is best summarised in comments from SENCO 1:

'Only in terms of how we work with the local authority, there hasn't been clear lines of communication, there have been difficulties in implementing changes. There have been changes of staff, it's been problematic.' (S1/N)

Some of the comments related more to internal communications, particularly with a lack of understanding of senior leaders in the two secondary schools. This aspect is addressed further under ethos, values and attitudes (*vide* 95).

It is interesting to note that the SENCOs interviewed did not make a great deal of reference to concerns about finance (10/4). Concern over local authority funding arrangements was something that had come through strongly from previous research (Tysoe 2015) and this was reflected in the confidence rating scale which suggested that SENCOs lacked confidence in understanding funding arrangements (5.7). However, interview comments from the SENCOs suggested that financial matters were not a significant concern so there is variability in these views.

‘The funding is much easier to understand now as well. It seems to be more difficult to obtain funding, but in terms of what we have got, it seems much clearer and more transparent.’ (S3/P)

The themes arising under the area of ‘leading and managing’ confirm a finding that SENCOs spend a good deal of their time managing staff and dealing with administrative tasks. There were clearly some frustrations with the lack of time and poor communications, particularly with local authorities. However, the significant part of their role in this area involves working with parents and carers. The management of resources or provision did not register as being of any particular concern, although the diminution of external support did arise in the return interviews.

Leading and managing SEND provision – return interviews

Themes arising from the return interviews reflected those of the initial interviews. Communications (33/5), Parents/carers (32/5), administration tasks/paperwork (27/5) and time/workload (18/4) remained as top ranking aspects of discussion. SEND provision (26/4), finances (19/5) and timescales (13/4) had moved up. The only one that moved down was staff management (1/1). Other aspects mentioned were data (5/3), reviews (1/1), Ofsted (1/1) and accountability (1/1).

The rating scale indicates that SENCOs remained confident in working with parents (9.2), although this is a slight decrease of 0.2 points on the initial ratings. SENCOs also remained confident in their ability to lead on the development of SEND provision within the school (8.4) which is an increase of 0.4 points on the initial ratings. What the rating scale reinforces is the perception of secondary SENCOs that they do not have sufficient influence to fulfil their strategic role (average 5.0 for the two secondary SENCOs as compared with 8.5 for the nursery and primary SENCOs). However, this masks an increase (+3.0) for one of the secondary SENCOs and a decrease (-3.0) for the nursery SENCO. Although SENCOs understanding of funding arrangements (6.6) remains low it has increased by 1.8 points. This is also true of the

time and support available to carry out their duties (6.0) which is an increase of 1.7 points.

Throughout the interviews issues around communications (33/5), particularly with the local authority, were mentioned a great deal. This is also borne out in the TOWS analysis which shows that four of the SENCOs saw this as a challenge (T) or flaw (W) of the new SEND legislation. There is frustration that the statutory assessment processes are not always clear and that 'it is just a disaster because every single borough does it differently' (S7/S).

SENCO 4 felt that communications had deteriorated over the year.

'Last year, when they had the communication lead, we seemed to be getting things, but this year it has been ridiculous. We have had to push and push and push to get things out of the borough before anything has actually happened.' (S4/S)

SENCO 7 also described difficulties in dealing with some local authorities.

'I think it is taking more than 20 weeks, and some boroughs have had the meetings and then you hear nothing back and I got told off for trying to phone up and chase on the parents' request.' (S7/S)

SENCO 1 was the only SENCO who thought communications had improved. 'I know the person that I can talk to and I nearly always get a response, so I am not left hanging and thinking what is going on here so it is a lot better' (S1/N).

Working with parents and carers (32/5) is seen as an important part of the SENCO's work. SENCO 1 regarded building good relationships with parents and carers as being a particularly good investment of time.

'I think, because we have quite frank and open conversations right from the word go, that I have already got the trust of the parents before the

children even start, so that has been a lot of work, but that has been much easier for me to manage.' (S1/N)

SENCO 5 illustrates how parents are more involved in setting targets.

'...for example, I have got some parents of a Year 6 child when we reviewed his IEP (individual education plan), they wanted a couple of targets added, which we of course did because they were making good suggestions...'
(S5/P)

However, SENCO 5 indicated that parents find it difficult to 'think on their feet' (S5/P). SENCO 6 described how they agreed outcomes with parents within the meeting, but worked on refining the language afterwards.

'...if we feel that an outcome is not sufficiently refined, instead of sending it off, then the agreement with the parent is that we will put it into the right language, but they are happy with the content.' (S6/Sp)

Administration and paperwork (27/5) and time or workload (18/4) are aspects of the role that SENCOs still find vexing. Timescales (13/4), specifically in relation to responses back from local authorities and transfer reviews, was mentioned by four of the SENCOs. SENCO 6 described the education, health and care procedures as being 'a lot more onerous' (S6/Sp). SENCO 1 commented how the forms used by local authority make it difficult to move information from one form to another, and therefore this is time consuming.

SENCO 4 echoed the previous comment by SENCO 7 about each local authority doing things differently.

'...and the fact that each borough does something different. If you want consistency, if you want a child's transfer from here to there, it is worth having in some ways the same paperwork or the same elements of paperwork.' (S4/S)

Due to a change in responsibilities, SENCO 1 has found being more office based helpful in managing workloads. SENCO 7 described how the employment of an administrator is hopefully going to make dealing with paperwork more manageable.

SEND provision (26/4) was particularly commented on by SENCOs 1 and 3 in their descriptions of the provision made by their schools for pupils with SEND. Both SENCOs 1 and 5 felt the new Code of Practice (DfE 2015) reflected their current good practice in school. SENCO 7 (secondary) expressed her concern that the proposed model is more suited to primary schools.

‘...it feels like the practicalities of it are directed to primary school where you have had time to get to know the student and things, and I don’t necessarily think they translate to a secondary school environment.’ (S7/S)

Finances (19/5) remain at the forefront of SENCOs’ minds particularly in regard to securing funding to make provision to meet pupils’ needs. SENCO 6 had an impression that local authority funding was being used to meet legal costs ‘...when you have got that amount of money going to a contract with lawyers, then it seems to be nothing has really changed’ (S6/Sp).

The SENCOs all described how they work with parents and carers, and how that is beneficial, but requires time and effort. The most significant concern to SENCOs is the lack of communication from local authorities and the amount of paperwork the new system has created, and in particular, the different requirements of different local authorities.

Professional development for staff – initial interviews

One of the most discussed aspects throughout all the interviews was the continuing professional development and training of staff (43/7). Little reference was made to either SENCO networking (6/3) or the sharing of good practice between schools (2/2). A number of references were made to the SENCO accreditation award (10/5).

The initial rating scale shows that SENCOs felt they had the skills and knowledge to carry out their responsibilities (8.4). The ratings would also suggest that overall the SENCOs are reasonably satisfied with networking opportunities available locally (8.0), although in the return interviews, SENCOs indicated that networking opportunities were diminishing.

Under this area, SENCO 1 talked about advice and training for staff with particular reference to lunchtime supervisors and the impact it has had on their practice. SENCO 4 made reference to continuing professional development, often referring to the opportunities that day-to-day practice provides for continuing professional development. SENCO 5 referred to professional development in the context of providing teaching assistants with support and guidance on meeting the needs of pupils with statements of SEN. SENCO 4 offers all staff opportunities to attend training session, but indicating that attendance was low.

‘We offer lots and lots of different training and when I get whole staff meeting time it is very useful, but we offer an awful lot of training and nobody ever shows up and it really, if it is in lunchtimes or after school, my department are there but nobody else shows up and it is just like, you know there is only so many times I can tell you I have got some training on and please come it is really going to be useful.’ (S4/S)

SENCO 6 discussed the training opportunities they provide for staff, particularly support assistants from other schools to visit their school and sit in on lessons. This forms part of the outreach service provided by the special school to mainstream settings.

‘We arrange good practice observations and they can come and sit in the classroom and they pick up ideas to take back with them. And again, we would be happy to do it more often, but unfortunately the schools can’t always release them because they need them, but we would be happy to do much more of that.’ (S6/S)

SENCO 3 talked about how good practice was shared among staff particularly when someone had been out on a training course. This SENCO also mentioned the variability in the opportunities to learn about SEND within initial teacher training.

‘I think part of it is to do with the training that people receive as teachers, depending on which course you have done. If you have done a PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education), SEN is something in some places, certainly for me it was barely touched on, and so you come into a school not having any experience of working with children who have reading difficulties, spelling difficulties, certainly not having any experience of autistic children.’ (S3/P)

SENCOs acknowledged the need for their own professional development and valued the national SENCO accreditation (10/5) course. SENCO 1 recognised how the course had impacted on school practice.

‘Yes, that’s one of the things that was the reflective practitioner written piece of work we submitted. It was a substantial piece of work and they advised us to do it. It was action research. We did it on something we were actually trying to implement in our schools to change our school. We were looking at inclusive practice, [headteacher] and I were very much looking at inclusive practice and we work very closely together and we identified that was an area that really needed development, so it was a contained piece of work.’ (S1/N)

SENCO 3 felt that a new SENCO would really need to gain the award to fulfil the role.

‘And next year, the role of SENCO here is going to be a one afternoon a week job on top of being a full-time class teacher. So I can foresee that person will need a lot of support, because they also won’t have the SEN, the SENCO award, the national award for SENCO. They won’t have that and I do have that.’

It is clear that SENCOs see the provision of professional development opportunities for staff as a part of their role in school. This can be in the form of formal training sessions, but equally as on-going guidance and support. The distinction between the day-to-day support of staff in completing their work and continuing professional development is

not always clear. Staff development through support in the classroom is also an aspect of the SENCO role covered in the section on teaching and learning (*vide infra*).

Professional development for staff – return interviews

In comparison with the initial interviews, this was an area that received less attention in the return interviews. Staff training (12/4) was mentioned. SENCO 1 described the positive impact resulting from training provided by the SENCO for lunchtime supervisors ‘...you see that has moved on and they are brilliant and, in fact, one of our lunchtime staff is now a learning support assistant so she works all day’ (S1/N). SENCO 4 described the useful training she had attended provided by the local authority, but felt that further training opportunities were required.

The rating scale indicates that SENCOs overall are confident about having the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their responsibilities (8.0), although this is a slight decrease of 0.2 points on the initial rating. The rating scale item linked to this area, opportunities for networking (6.0), showed a significant decrease in SENCO confidence with the average rating dropping by 2.0 points. This was the largest points decrease of all the rating items. The notes and comments made by SENCOs reflect this, for example: ‘these [networking opportunities] seem to have decreased this year, have to make our own’ (S4/S) and ‘lack of networking locally to share good practice’ (S4/P).

Supporting teaching and learning – initial interviews

Throughout the interviews, reference was made by the SENCOs to the work they do to support learning. Working with individual pupils was often the most prominent element of this work (37/7). Mention was also made of whole class teaching and support (20/6). The least mentioned aspects were group work (4/3) and behaviour management (3/1).

SENCO 1 described how the focus in their nursery was very much on the needs and progress of the individual child as compared with focusing on the group as a whole.

‘Also, I strongly believe in children being treated as individuals and I felt that I could do that much more in a nursery rather than a primary school where the progress is much more on attainment results and where I felt I was compromising some of my beliefs...’ (S1/N)

This focus on individual needs was also echoed in comments by the other SENCOs. SENCO 5 talked about meeting the needs of individuals in a primary school.

‘Some of our children have quite profound difficulties and actually, for some children, being in a mainstream classroom is too challenging and therefore you need to put the support in place so that they can access all that, be it break out zones or whatever the structures and every child is different, so you need to change it constantly depending on the child and their needs.’ (S5/P)

SENCO 6 explained the approach of their special school as being ‘completely child centred’ with the aim of developing individual pupils ‘as far as they can possibly go’ (S6/Sp).

Both SENCO 2 and 3 talked about the groups they teach. However, this was not an aspect of work mentioned by others. All the SENCOs talked about supporting whole class teaching - this was often in the context of supporting colleagues in meeting the needs of individuals within whole class sessions. For SENCO 3 whole class support involves working and meeting with teachers on a regular basis.

‘I work with teachers. I work closely with teachers. We have had opportunities for me to be planning with them so that the differentiation, especially with NQTs, has been a focus to make sure that they know how to approach certain things...I have regular meetings with teachers to talk about the children in their class too.’ (S3/P)

However, for SENCO 2 there was a certain frustration with teachers not carrying forward suggestions.

‘Where teachers don’t understand, where they have difficulties with differentiation, it can be very frustrating because I have spent time with

these teachers and I have prepared all the lower group teaching and they don't carry it on themselves.' (S2/P)

SENCO 7 talked about 'quality first teaching' and the need for subject teachers to take on greater responsibilities in meeting the needs of all students in their classes. This suggests the need for a cultural shift within the school. SENCO 5 believes that support to colleagues should principally involve the modelling of good teaching. For SENCO 6 classroom practice is best supported and developed through the use of peer coaching where staff are given time to observe each other teach and reflect on their own practice.

This area has shown that SENCOs support teaching and learning at the three different levels: individual pupils, group and whole class. The majority of this work involves providing academic and pastoral support to individual pupils. Surprisingly, little mention was made of group work as, based on the researcher's own experience, this has often been seen as part of the SENCO role, particularly in primary schools. At the whole class level the SENCO works in a support role or an advisory capacity. It is clear that SENCOs perceive providing advice to colleagues as an important element of their work.

Supporting teaching and learning – return interviews

This remained an area of focus for all the SENCOs who see advising on teaching as an important part of their role. Whole class teaching (15/4) and individual pupils (11/4) were mentioned in this area of practice. However, these aspects of teaching and learning ranked low in interviews when compared with aspects of leadership and management, although SENCO 7 suggested that an increased teaching commitment might offer greater scope for influencing classroom practice.

'I will have an increased teaching load, and hopefully, we will have more scope to work with teachers in the classroom, so more modelling, advising and doing preparation for having less LSAs (learning support assistants) in the future, shifting to that kind of work.' (S7/S)

SENCO 4 described the range of pupils' needs that teachers are working with.

'...and I think, also, people are realising that actually SEN isn't just about those kids that aren't very bright. SENCO is about medical needs, mental health and I am juggling many balls not just the children that can't add up or the children who can't write.' (S4/S)

The new SEND Code of Practice – initial interviews

A number of aspects of the new SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015) were referred to throughout the interviews. The aspects most frequently mentioned were the new EHC plans (34/7) and integrated working (22/7). Other commonly mentioned aspects were the identification of SEND (16/7), pupil profiles (17/6), and outcomes (18/4). The least mentioned were tribunals (3/1), personal budgets (3/3), SEN information report (3/3), SEND legislation (6/2), keyworkers (6/4), and person centred reviews (10/3).

The rating scale indicates the SENCOs' understanding of the requirements of the new SEND legislation is high (8.4), that they are relatively confident in setting outcomes and monitoring progress (7.7), they know what services and resources are available through the Local Offer (7.6), have access to a sufficient level of support from external agencies (7.5) and believe themselves to be skilled in person-centred approaches (7.4).

All the SENCOs made particular comment on the procedures for the new EHC assessment and plans (34/7) which under the new SEND legislation replace statements of SEN. EHC plans outline the education, health and care support to be provided to a child or young person with SEND to meet their needs and achieve the agreed outcomes (DfE 2015). SENCO 1 expressed a particular frustration with the amount of paperwork involved with these new statutory arrangements saying 'It is extremely time consuming. Then once it has been accepted, you seem to be going over the same thing again, but writing it in a different box' (S1/N). This links to the findings above on the amount of administration tasks SENCOs undertake. SENCO 2 felt that the criteria for issuing an EHC plan had changed from the previous statementing process.

'I've had to say to parents that your child may have got a statement under the old system but under the new system, it's not possible. I didn't make the decision, but I'm the person who has to front the situation.' (S2/P)

SENCO 4 and 5 expressed similar views.

'I am just thinking about all our statement students, yes they have severe complexity of needs, but if you look at the thresholds for an EHC plan, they wouldn't get one.' (S4/S)

'I understand that education, health and care plans are not going to be available for students with complex needs from the age of 19. That worries me immensely.' (S6/Sp)

Although SENCO 3 thought the system was now more transparent.

'So the process of especially going through EHC plans is much more transparent to us than it used to be. It used to be a case of we will send off the stuff and then, it was kind of like a black box, not really knowing what was going on at the other end, but now we have a much clearer picture of what is going on at the other end.' (S3/P)

SENCO 4 felt the new EHC plans focus on pupils' strengths meant the plan was less informative about the pupils' needs.

'When at [school] we get sent an EHC plan, it is then very difficult to judge whether you can meet that child's needs because it doesn't really tell you an awful lot about the child.' (S4/P)

SENCO 6 works within the context of a special school where all their pupils have a statement of SEN or an EHC plan. SENCO 6 was particularly concerned about the level of work and time required to transfer all statements over to plans. This was also a concern for SENCO 7, 'I am just really, really worried about this idea of transferring students across to EHC plans' (S7/S). SENCO 6 also voiced a concern that the new procedures had not resulted in a more integrated approach to agency working.

‘What I am finding immensely frustrating is that it is not bringing services together in a way that we had hoped...where are all these services that are supposed to be coming together, and they are not, and that is frustrating because it is not doing what it is supposed to do.’ (S6/Sp)

Integrated working (22/7) was mentioned by the other SENCOs too. This was in the context of liaising with other professionals and working as part of a team to meet pupils’ needs. With reference to EHC plans, SENCO 4 talked about the challenge of getting all professionals ‘working together to create one document rather than having to have assessment, after assessment, after assessment’ (S4/S). SENCOs 6 and 7 enjoyed the multi-disciplinary nature of the work, although SENCO 7 found that when working with such a wide range of people ‘it is difficult to try and get everything arranged and everyone to turn up for meetings and things like that’ (S7/S). SENCO 5 expressed frustrations with the frequent turnover of therapy staff from health. This is in contrast with the initial rating score where SENCOs indicated that they had access to sufficient levels of support from external agencies (6.8).

Identification of SEND (16/7) and pupil profiles (17/6) was frequently referred to (in this context, a pupil profile provides a summary of the pupil’s needs and provision in school). There was an emphasis on the role the SENCO plays in identifying needs and the importance of early identification for making appropriate provision. The challenge of meeting the needs of pupils with SEND within the mainstream was commented on. SENCO 7 mentioned how staff hold differing views about what qualifies as SEND. These comments link to others around inclusion outlined under ethos, values and attitudes (*vide* 95). All but one of the SENCOs talked about one-page pupil profiles (17/6) and how these were being used. It was clear that staff had recently received training on producing pupil profiles and this was being implemented in school.

SENCOs 4 and 5 talked a great deal about outcomes (18/4) particularly in relation to the value of measuring the impact of interventions to show the progress being made by pupils. A focus on securing better outcomes for pupils is an emphasis of the new

Code of Practice (*ibid*) as opposed to just quantifying levels of provision. SENCOs 4 and 5 also made reference to the importance of academic attainment on life chances. SENCO 6 highlighted the difficulty in setting outcomes for pupils and the lack of understanding about the difference between an outcome and provision.

‘Trying to get an outcome that matches an aspiration, and that is not purely for people to see the difference between the outcome and the provision and the resource. That has been a real struggle. It has been a real struggle in meetings.’ (S6/Sp)

SENCO 7 described how helping pupils achieve their aims can be a very rewarding part of the SENCO role.

‘You build that relationship and it is like if you can help them solve the problem or you can help them access a course or put another element in place, if they are really enjoying and really succeeding, then it is such a rewarding thing.’ (S7/S)

As noted above the most frequently mentioned aspects in relation to the new Code of Practice (*ibid*) were EHC plans (34/7) and integrated working (22/7). There are clearly frustrations for SENCOs with the EHC assessment process and this links to poor communications from local authorities. It is also worth noting the aspects that did not receive a great deal of attention in the interviews. Key working (6/4) was only mentioned by four of the SENCOs and their experience was less than positive. Approaches to key working are outlined in the Code of Practice (*ibid*: 35, para 2.21). Under the new SEND legislation key workers have replaced caseworkers. It is interesting to note that some of the SENCOs are still referring to key workers as caseworkers so this new role is not yet fully embedded in their thinking. Key workers should have an active role in coordinating the statutory assessment process and facilitating the production of the EHC plan than caseworkers previously had.

‘...what if you are one of the schools where the caseworker has not taken up role yet? Paperwork has been lost, they are not helpful. Caseworkers ask us to do a lot of work, but it is not reciprocated.’ (S2/P)

However, there was recognition that local authority officers are were under a lot of pressure and this may explain why experiences are so negative.

‘...if there is enough key workers to deal with the demand, and I do obviously feel sorry for them because we are bombarding them, and everybody else, and you don’t always get a response when you want one but then you are trying to think about what their workload...’ (S7/S)

Person-centred reviews (10/3) did not get a mention by many of the SENCOs possibly as they are confident and enthusiastic about this aspect as expressed by three of the SENCOs and reflected in the rating scale (7.4). Person-centred reviews are meetings held by schools to review a pupil’s provision and progress. These meetings should actively involve the child or young person and their parents in decision-making (DfE 2015). SENCO 4 saw this as a positive development ‘...because we have had a couple of person-centred approach transitions and things like that, I do love it, it is so much nicer than annual reviews...’ (S4/S).

Personal budgets (3/3) were hardly mentioned either and this is most likely due to a limited uptake to date. ‘A personal budget is an amount of money identified by the local authority to deliver provision set out in an EHC plan where the parent or young person is involved in securing that provision’ (DfE 2015: 284). This budget can be held directly by the parent or young person or can be managed on their behalf by others including the school. All three of the SENCOs were rather doubtful as to whether personal budgets could actually work in practice.

‘...I think maybe parents aren’t quite aware of that, they think it is great to have a personal budget, but the practicality of obtaining it I don’t think that has been fully realised by them sometimes.’ (S7/S)

It is perhaps surprising that so few SENCOs mentioned the SEN information report (3/3), as this is a key component of the new Code of Practice (the SEN information report is a statutory requirement on schools to publish information about their SEND

provision (DfE 2015: 106, para 6.79)). The rating scale indicated that SENCOs were familiar and confident with the Local Offer (7.6) that links with the SEN information report (the Local Offer is a requirement on local authorities to publish information on the SEND provision available locally (DfE 2015: 66, para 4.30-4.31)). The actual SEND legislation (6/2) was only referred to briefly by two of the SENCOs. Tribunals (3/1) did not feature high on the SENCOs' list of concerns, with only one SENCO making reference to this as she had recently had to represent the school at a tribunal recently.

The new SEND Code of Practice – return interviews

The SENCOs again mentioned several aspects relating to the new SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015). EHC plans (25/5), integrated working (27/4), outcomes or targets (24/4) and identification (9/3) remained high on the agenda for discussion. Profiles (2/1) dropped down the ranking whilst key working (8/4) and personal budgets (10/3) rose. The other aspect mentioned was person-centred reviews (5/2).

The rating scale results support a conclusion that SENCOs feel confident about the requirements of the new SEND legislation (8.8) which is a 0.4 point increase on the initial rating. It also supports a conclusion that SENCOs feel confident in a number of other aspects of the new ways of working under the new legislation. Person-centred approaches (8.0) show a 1.0 points increase, setting suitable outcomes for pupils with SEND and monitoring their progress (8.0) shows a 0.2 points increase, knowledge of the Local Offer (7.6) has increased by 0.4 points. It is particularly interesting to note the SENCOs' rating on the level of support from external agencies (5.6) shows a 1.2 points decrease from the initial rating score. This change is also evidenced through the interviews.

EHC plans (25/5) were again often discussed in relation to poor communications (17/4) with local authorities.

‘One of our students that we did an education, health and care plan for last year, because there wasn’t very good communication between us and our key worker, who was very poor, he didn’t get one...’ (S4/S)

SENCO 1 felt it was a challenge to secure an EHC plan in the early years as they require professional reports when children aged 2 did not ‘necessarily have all that stuff’. SENCO 7 commented that a number of students were not securing an EHC plan on transfer.

‘I didn’t expect to get it and they haven’t done, and then another student has been awarded it I think, so she is the first one that managed to get through but hers are physical and medical difficulties.’ (S7/S)

In relation to transferring statements to EHC plans, SENCO 5 indicated that it was taking time to complete transfers.

‘I should be going through the process of converting a statement to an EHC plan, but for some reason it is not happening and I have chased and I have asked why this process is not beginning and apparently the work load of the SEN case officers.’ (S5/P)

SENCO 6 suggested that in the context of a special school, it would be helpful if the person completing the transfers was on site where ‘all the information is at your fingertips’ (S6/Sp).

There remain difficulties in setting outcomes or targets (24/4) despite the rating scale indicating that SENCOs are confident in setting suitable outcomes and monitoring progress (8.0).

‘...and I am writing outcomes for an education, health and care plan, and I am going, I have sent [staff] on the outcomes training, but she came away going ‘I am still not sure how to fill these in’...’ (S4/S)

‘There have been a lot of long meetings which don’t necessarily result in outcomes that you can incorporate into education and yet we are the ones responsible for holding the meetings.’ (S6/Sp)

The terms ‘outcomes’ and ‘targets’ are seemingly being used interchangeably by SENCOs to describe what they see as the same process. The relation between outcomes and targets is expressed in the comment from SENCO 1.

‘They used to talk about smart targets, but they weren’t really that smart and they were targets, they weren’t outcomes and whereas this, it really makes you think actually what is it that we want for this child and how are we going to achieve it...it is a plan about how you are going to achieve that and who is going to do it and when and how often.’ (S1/N)

SENCO 5 sees the setting of targets as a means to an end. ‘If you don’t support them and help them towards those targets, then it is just a piece of paperwork and meaningless’ (S5/P).

In relation to integrated working (27/4) SENCO 5 and others considered outside input as a diminishing resource and one that will need to be paid for in the future.

‘We are going to buy in an additional EP (educational psychologist) because we are going to be down to one from September. We are going to be down to one EP visit a term which would only be for statemented children so we are buying in.’ (S5/P)

Four SENCOs made comments on key working (8/4). There is a frustration with SENCOs about the responsiveness of key workers. However, there is also a recognition of the difficult job they are tasked with. SENCO 6 suggested that there should be a recognised qualification for key workers in a similar way that there is an accredited qualification for SENCOs.

SENCOs’ comments on personal budgets (10/3) were interesting. SENCO 5 wondered whether parents would be able to manage a personal budget ‘without a great deal of

guidance and support' (S5/P). SENCO 6 felt similarly and believed that the take up of personal budgets was limited as many parents were not fully aware of them.

SENCO 7 had concerns about how a personal budget might be managed within the context of a school.

'I don't think that personal budgets are really going to come into effect in terms of us because I think that we will end up where students who are coming in with a statement are going to need a lot of direct support during their timetable, so I think that a personal budget for IT at home or something is probably quite low on parents' priorities list.' (S7/S)

In relation to identification (9/3) SENCO 1 felt that she needed to spend time with children to understand their needs.

'...to go and spend some time not only talking to their key people, obviously I do that, but there is nothing like observation for yourself to see how things are and spending time with children yourself to get a really thorough understanding of them.' (S1/N)

SENCO 4 commented on the new way of identifying pupils as having either SEN support or an EHC plan (DfE 2015) made things a lot clearer as there was no longer a 'grey area between action and action plus' (S4/S) – the stages of identification under the revised Code of Practice (DfES 2001). SENCO 6 echoed this comment in describing the new SEND legislation as giving them a clearer structure to work to.

It is clear from the return interviews that there are still frustrations for SENCOs around the EHC process and that poor communications from local authorities add to this.

SENCOs' comments indicate that the quality of key working is variable. There are concerns from SENCOs that support from external agencies is diminishing. There is a lack of clarity around the difference between targets and outcomes.

SENCOs have little confidence in the idea of personal budgets and see them as being unworkable in the context of school budgets.

Ethos, values and attitudes towards SEND – initial interviews

Many of the comments made by SENCOs could be interpreted as reflecting ethos, values and attitudes. However, this section reports on comments where this is particularly explicit in what was said. This is an area where the SENCOs talked about some of the ethical and moral dimensions of their work. The most significant aspect discussed were attitudes towards inclusion (38/7). Another high ranking aspect was what motivated SENCOs (21/6) and sustained them in their role. Other aspects covered included working with senior leadership (17/5) and the skills and attributes required for the job (14/6). The least mentioned aspects were: the impact of language on attitudes (1/1), transparency of processes (3/1) and solution-focused thinking (3/1). All the SENCOs provided a metaphor for their role (7/7).

All the SENCOs talked about implementing inclusion (38/7) and recognised the benefits and challenges of developing inclusive practice. In talking to the SENCOs, it was clear that this was a particular aspect that received a great deal of consideration. SENCO 2 described inclusion as:

'We have some very strong beliefs which we put into practice. We have something that we call a 'basics model' that we work on with the children. It's belonging, aspiration, safety, identity, challenge and success. We do a lot of work around that. It's very much ensuring that children belong. All children regardless of their disability have access to all of the subjects.'
(S2/P)

SENCO 5 explained inclusion by contrasting it with the opposite of inclusion.

'...it is not sitting in a corridor doing your own learning. It is being in a classroom with your peers learning from your peers, having good positive role models. It is not having the TA just working with you, it is having equal access to the class teacher. It is being included in all the daily life of a school.'
(S5/P)

SENCOs were often conflicted in their views about inclusion particularly where they felt needs were not being best met within the mainstream environment.

This was very well illustrated in the comments from SENCO 1 who saw inclusion as providing opportunities for many children, but felt that the mainstream environment could present a barrier for some.

'...the barrier is when children's needs are so complex that they are not able to make progress within our setting. So, if you have got a child who is very severely autistic with very limited ability to communicate, with severe language communication impairment, the provision that we have here, which is quite an open plan nursery, indoor-outdoor access, its child-led. The children are very self-directed in their learning that does not suit all children. We can support with visual timetables, but children whose needs are very complex, sometimes, what they need is something we can't offer in this nursery and so it wouldn't be inclusive in this provision.' (S1/N)

This tension between promoting inclusion and meeting pupils' needs was also expressed by SENCO 6

'I think it is every child having access to the learning opportunities that they, as an individual need, whether it is in a school, whether it is college, whether it is a playgroup. But, it is about recognising that individual and meeting their needs, and meeting their needs is not necessarily having to be in a mainstream setting. I think that is something that has been said for a long time, where we have had some criticisms from outside saying all these kids with special needs should be in mainstream, well actually some of our children would fall apart in mainstream because of their sensory needs. They would have sensory overload and it is like some youngest at [school], it is not inclusion for them, it is exclusion. So inclusion is about being in an educational environment where your needs are met.' (S6/Sp)

SENCO 7 saw making adjustments to meet students' needs as a potential difficulty.

'...because again, if you have got parents and students who are wanting certain things, but school rules and procedures don't allow for that, it is trying to be a mediator between the two. In many ways I feel that we should be reducing the barriers, but should that necessarily mean we are positively discriminating a student, so there is that kind of dilemma.' (S7/S)

SENCO 7 also raised the issue of meeting pupils' needs in different learning environments

'...when they come here, they have got 20 different lessons, 20 different teachers as soon as they start here so it is very difficult again to ask the parents to take on board the atmosphere and the challenges...compared to primary school.' (S7/S)

SENCO 4 saw the job of SENCO as needing to change staff attitudes towards particular students. 'It is changing people's mind sets. It is that idea of, 'oh he is not bright', or 'you will never expect him to do that' and it is like 'yes you do' (S4/S). This need to support staff in finding solutions was also echoed in comments by SENCO 3 as '...sometimes solutions can be very simple...to have that person [SENCO] there who can do that, either do it for you or to help you to do it' (S3/P).

SENCO 2 described how different schools have varying attitudes towards pupils with SEND suggesting that some schools are more inclusive than others.

'I find it really quite hard because the ethos of SEN has always been very high in schools such as this. Because of the nature of the parents that we have, we have to have considerable amount of interaction with them, so in many respects we've always done these things and been inclusive. I think that now, some schools offer children a place and some schools don't. Maybe if we are recognised as a school that manages SEND very well, maybe the authority should reward us with more resources and space.'
(S2/P)

Although these SENCOs saw their role as challenging, they also talked about what motivated them in their work (21/6). These sentiments were enthusiastically expressed by SENCO 3.

'...I love my job, absolutely love this job...you have to really want to do it though, you have to really want to be and try to make a difference to those children.' (S3/P)

Secondary SENCOs in particular expressed their concern about senior leadership (17/5) not really understanding what the SENCO role entails.

'I have never had the ear of SLT and this is my frustration with this job because I love doing the work with the kids and the parents and all those sorts of things, but to not have that voice just frustrates me hugely because nobody really understands, unless you have been a SENCO, you don't really understand how much you have to juggle all the time...' (S4/S)

When asked to provide a metaphor to describe the SENCO role it was clear that SENCOs have to work with others and manage competing demands.

'I sometimes feel like I am juggling...I think a juggler is the best or an octopus. If I was an octopus, I'd probably be more efficient.' (S1/N)

'It's about being available to all people at all times.' (S2/P)

'A high brick wall that people can't see over and my role is to stand there and let people stand on my shoulders so they can see over the wall or help them find a way around it.' (S3/P)

'Juggler, because you can never please everybody all of the time and you have to just limit what you do. You try and please most of the people most of the time and you are forever just juggling what you are doing to do that.' (S4/S)

'Maybe I am the glue. Maybe I stick things altogether, bring it altogether. It is not because I fix things, because that is not why I have chosen glue, and that would be wrong to say that I am fixing children, but it is because I am putting the pieces together. Working between all the different, liaising between everybody I suppose.' (S5/P)

'Jack of all trades is what I am because you need to be skilled at a bit of everything or to have enough knowledge to know where to delegate if you can't do it and make sure it is the right person and because you are all things to all people.' (S6/Sp)

'The one I say to everyone is I am juggling on roller skates beneath me because there is just so many things that we are trying to do and we are constantly, just everything is in flux, so you are just trying to stay upright with things and your feet aren't steady and your hands do all these different things, it's just like, aww, you have a little shriek.' (S7/S)

In direct answer to the question 'What are the skills and qualities you need to possess to do your job as SENCO?' a range of qualities and skills were suggested (*vide* Appendix

19) giving a further insight to how SENCOs perceive their professional role or identity.

The attributes required for the job were summarised by SENCO 5.

'I would like to hope that people find me approachable, that they can be open and honest with me and that they can trust me, that I will listen and offer advice, that I would like to think that I was organised, that if I had deadlines to do things by I like to get them done by that time, but I think it is probably the fact that I am quite a good people person I would say.'
(S5/P)

What is particularly noticeable from the interviews is that SENCOs have a very strong commitment to their role. The dilemma that inclusion often presents in meeting pupils' needs is evident from their comments. These comments infer that a cultural shift is required within schools and the education system to meet the challenge of inclusion. SENCOs are clearly required to possess a range of different skills and attributes, and to carry out numerous tasks and duties within their work. This ability to multi-task is reflected in the metaphors chosen by the SENCO to describe their role.

Ethos, values and attitudes towards SEND – return interviews

Values and attitudes (23/5) is an aspect that emerged more clearly in the return interviews but includes comments that were coded in the initial interviews as 'solution focused', 'motivation' and 'language'. The identification of a code for children and young people (21/5) resulted from an emerging theme around listening to pupils and including them more fully in decision making. Senior leadership (17/4), skills and attributes (13/4), and inclusion (11/3) remained significant. Metaphor no longer features as this was not a question posed in the return interviews.

A strong element emerging from values and attitudes (23/5) is the role the SENCO plays in helping to foster positive attitudes towards pupils with SEND and influencing a school's culture. This is illustrated in comments from SENCO 7.

'...and again, it is that constant, the whole staff expectation needs to be coming from the same point. So it is still that case that you have English teachers who tell parents they think their daughter is dyslexic and should

be getting more time. Why don't you go and speak to [SENCO] about it which is completely misunderstanding the whole point of this, so partly it is us because we have not got our message across but I feel again it is that kind of, it shouldn't just have to be me shouting about this stuff.' (S7/S)

However, SENCO 1's comments recognise that particular experiences shape attitudes to meeting pupils' needs.

'It was really, really difficult and he is no longer here, but I know it continues to be a difficult situation so, I think probably, that might have coloured my view a bit.' (S1/N)

SENCO 4 commented on how the new SEND legislation has impacted on the way staff involve students in person centred approaches.

'...and it is the way in which we have asked questions which has meant that teachers understand that education, health, care plans are different to statements.' (S4/S)

The involvement of children and young people (21/5) was a stronger theme in the return interviews. This is well expressed in comments from SENCO 5 and 6.

'... and from Key Stage 2 the pupils are involved too so it is that parent and pupil voice being much more part of the discussion and so everybody is really clear about where they are and their next steps.' (S5/P)

'I think it has spread that approach more. We have always had like a presentation that the child or young person does about their activities and experiences, but I think particularly with the older ones, people are now going away and thinking more about what is it that this young person wants.' (S6/Sp)

SENCO 7 described a situation where students were instrumental in having their statements rescinded.

'One of the other students, we discussed it and she knew that she doesn't need really anything more than some tutorials and things like that but she

will be able to get in college or school anyway, and then the other student was again, I just think she felt she didn't need it so she was fine about it. She was thankful and that we had been a brilliant help to her, but she just felt she didn't need it anymore.' (S7/S)

Secondary SENCOs repeated their frustration with senior leadership (17/4) not always understanding their role in school. 'The senior leadership team have an idea of the role they think I should play and I... [sentence left unfinished]' (S7/S).

Both SENCO 1 and 4 felt that the skills and attributes (13/4) of the SENCO were not always being recognised or fully used. In regard to organising the access arrangements for pupils' public examinations, SENCO 4 commented.

'I am like going, no I am the only person Level 5 qualified, got to be Level 7 qualified by next year, so who's it, 'well so and so', and I'm like going there is nobody who is qualified to do this. If they want to do it fantastic, but they need to be qualified and it is developing that understanding. That oh yeah you can just do that in five minutes and it is like no.' (S4/S)

SENCO 1 feels that the expertise of SENCOs and other professionals is not being drawn upon enough.

'I think the local authority pays quite a lot of money to people like educational psychologists and people like myself and SENCOs that have been trained, and training that has been paid for, and so I find it a bit strange that then we have to go through, jump through all these hoops with children whereas surely we have between us, we have quite a lot of experience. I just feel like there is a bit of, there is a bit of a gap there, and perhaps even a lot of money being wasted.' (S1/N)

Although SENCO 4 feels that more training is required to improve the quality of their contributions, particularly in regard to professional advice for EHC plans.

'...and I am thinking I have had no training on writing this, why has it just literally been taken from my report and dumped in there. It is not that good, but why am I now writing an education, health and care plan I haven't had that training.' (S4/S)

Inclusion featured in the return interviews (11/3) although not nearly as highly as the initial interviews. The comments from SENCOs 1 and 5 were about the ability to meet the needs of children with very particular needs.

‘I think probably if there was a very, very delicate child that might be difficult because of the way that the nursery runs and it is very, you know, we have a lot of children and it is free flow...’ (S1/N)

‘[School] because of the buildings we can’t take children that have mobility issues and then you have to say no to children like that, but in general I would say they are both very inclusive schools...’ (S5/P)

It is clear that the new SEND legislation is having some influence on processes in school, particularly the involvement of children and young people in expressing their views and influencing decisions. The SENCOs see the importance of their role in influencing staff attitudes and promoting inclusion while recognising some of the practical issues in achieving these goals. There is some frustration among the SENCOs interviewed that their expertise is not always being fully recognised within school or by local authorities.

Overall summary of research findings

The findings show that working directly with staff, pupils and their parents or carers is a significant part of the SENCO role, although completing administration tasks and the time needed to meet the competing demands of the role featured greatly in interview responses. All of the SENCOs passed comment on the benefits and challenges of making inclusion work within mainstream settings.

In regard to the new SEND legislation, SENCOs talked a great deal about the statutory assessment process for an EHC plan and the challenges of multi-agency working. Less comment was made on other aspects of the new SEND legislation, such as the Local Offer, personal budget, or tribunals, than might have been expected. The TOWS analysis provided information about the views of the SENCOs interviewed towards the

new SEND legislation. It showed that SENCOs are enthusiastic about the aspirations of the new legislation, but are experiencing difficulties with some of the operational aspects of the statutory procedures.

The scores from the rating scales (*vide* Appendices 22 and 23) indicated that SENCOs are broadly confident in the requirements of the new SEND legislation and Code of Practice (DfE 2015). They feel confident in working with parents or carers and leading on the development of SEND provision within school. The funding arrangements and the time to do the job were the areas of greatest concern in the initial ratings. However, these both showed improvements in the return rating results. Concerns about the lack of networking opportunities and levels of support became more apparent through the return rating results.

The least mentioned aspects have already been noted under each of the themes. However, a further analysis was conducted to see if any aspect, over the two sets of interviews, was not mentioned by any one of the SENCOs from each of the four school types (nursery, primary, secondary, special). The school types where this applies are shown in bold in the tables reporting on the coding of interviews (*vide* Appendices 18 and 20). Frequently it was the nursery or special school that was not represented which is perhaps not surprising given that there were only one of each in the sample. This further analysis did not highlight any particularly prominent themes, except for networking and sharing of good practice.

Under the theme leading and managing, the special school SENCO did not mention staff management directly. Perhaps in the context of a special school, management of staff is seen as part of the whole school management structure, rather than an aspect of the SENCO role *per se*. The nursery SENCO did not mention resources but perhaps this is specific to the setting, as the researcher is aware that in many small settings the lack of resourcing and finance can be particularly acute. Timescales were not mentioned by the nursery SENCO in the return interviews as from her point of view things were improving.

Under the theme of professional development SENCO accreditation was not mentioned by the special school SENCO. This most probably relates to the role of the SENCO within a special school setting and the fact that the SENCO is well experienced. More interestingly, SENCO networking and the sharing of good practice were not mentioned by the nursery, special and secondary SENCOs. This raises the possible question as to whether SENCOs from these establishments are accessing these opportunities, and whether their professional development needs are being addressed.

Under the theme of SEND Code of Practice, the special school SENCO did not mention profiles. However, it is quite possible that these are such an embedded part of special school practice that they did not warrant mention. Primary SENCOs did not specifically mention person centred reviews, although taking a person centred approach was an aspect that came through strongly in interviews. No direct mention was made to the SEND legislation by the nursery and special school SENCOs. Also, the SEN Information Report was not mentioned by the nursery and secondary SENCOs. However, an understanding of SEN procedures linked to the legislation was clearly articulated by SENCOs in interview and this is further substantiated by the rating scale results which indicated that SENCOs feel confident in their understanding of the requirements of the new SEND legislation.

The research findings offer an insight into the working lives of SENCOs and provide us with a greater understanding of the SENCO role in relation to the new SEND legislation. The findings also support the main argument of this thesis that the SENCO role is currently more focused on servicing statutory procedures than developing and supporting classroom practice.

This chapter has collated the findings from the two set of interviews and rating scales offering an insight into the work of SENCOs in schools. The TOWS analysis has provided particular feedback on the SENCOs' views on the new SEND legislation. The next chapter will look at the findings in relation to the aims of the research by returning to the research questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The chapter discusses the interrelationship between the proposed theoretical model of professional identity, the research questions and the data, and through this presents new knowledge about the role and professional lives of SENCOs in school.

Developing substantive theory

Part of the purpose of a professional doctorate is to develop knowledge in relation to an area of professional practice. This ambition aligns the research closely to the spirit of grounded theory methodology.

‘Certainly, this does not mean every grounded theory must have immediate or direct application yet we do have an obligation also toward “society,” at least to those social worlds toward which we have commitments.’ (Strauss and Corbin 1994: 281)

The purpose of this research was to generate further understanding and knowledge about the working practices of SENCOs and how the new SEND reforms are being enacted in schools. Within grounded theory methodology, substantive theory is developed through a constant comparison between data and theory (Strauss and Corbin *ibid*) as in a similar way reflective methodology considers the interplay between the philosophical-theoretical ideas and the empirical-practical elements of the research process (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000). The research aim was to develop theory that has some application within a professional arena so that it can ‘be relevant and possibly influential, either to the ‘understanding’ of policy makers or to their direct action’ (Strauss and Corbin *ibid*: 281). Through the development of substantive theory, this research aims to contribute to that end. The following discussions reflect on the findings by considering the data in relation to each of the research questions. These discussions are pragmatic in nature and relate directly to educational practice (Dewey 1904). References are made to current and previous research to draw comparison and add validity to the research findings. In discussing SENCO identity parallels with Kearns’ (2005) SENCO types are particularly highlighted.

What is the purpose of the SENCO role in schools?

The research findings demonstrate the wide range of work that SENCOs carry out in school. It is clear that the focus is frequently on working on behalf of individual pupils with SEND. It involves working with colleagues in meeting pupils' needs and supporting classroom practice. It also involves a significant amount of liaison with parents or carers and outside agencies or professionals. It is clear that currently, a substantial part of the SENCO role is managing statutory procedures, particularly in relation to the EHC assessments and the transfer of statements of SEN to EHC plans, and that this is an expanding aspect of their work.

Support for pupils tends to be targeted on an individual basis and is focused on the identification of need and the management of provision. This links with Kearns' (2005) type of SENCO as 'Rescuer'. The researcher was interested to see that there was little teaching of pupils through either group work or whole class teaching. Much of the work in this respect is directed through other people and this requires SENCOs to have influence to achieve this which would reflect Kearns' (*ibid*) SENCO type of 'Collaborator' which includes features of middle leadership (Bush 2002). It is clear from the findings that SENCOs find influencing the work of others challenging and frustrating, but this can also be rewarding when successful.

It is apparent that the SENCO role involves working closely with parents and carers. The work with parents can be emotionally demanding and this was reflected in the comments made by the SENCOs. This is an area of work that SENCOs report they are particularly confident in. This confidence may result from a sense of fulfilment in this aspect of their role. It is certainly a demanding aspect of their work but, as the findings demonstrate, it is regarded by SENCOs as an important one.

SENCOs are often required to interpret and convey information to parents and carers about the new SEND legislation, and school or local authority policies and procedures. This area of work requires good communication and interpersonal skills. The need to equip SENCOs for this work is acknowledged in the recommendations from the Driver

Youth Trust report (LMKco 2014) and forms part of the Achievement for All framework (DCSF 2009a) through the 'structured conversation' with parents.

The area where SENCOs feel less certain is 'advising on the deployment of the school's delegated budget and other resources to meet pupils' needs effectively' as specified in the new Code of Practice (DfE 2015: 109, para 6.90). This is partly because they do not feel well informed about finance and budgets. This links with previous research findings (Mackenzie 2007) and indicates that little has changed over time.

The new SEND Code of Practice (*ibid*) conceives the SENCO role as a leadership role. In Chapter 2, it was argued that the SENCO role has much in common with a middle leadership position in driving forward the work of the school (Bush 2002), they often act as a channel for conveying senior leadership decisions (Turner and Bolam 1998), they are required to monitor the work of other colleagues (Wise 2001; Adey 2000; Glover *et al.* 1998). This similarity to middle leadership is borne out by the responses from SENCOs. This conceptualisation of the role links with Kearns' (2005) SENCO type of 'Arbiter'. The new Code of Practice (*ibid*) considers that the SENCO 'will be most effective in that role if they are part of the school leadership team' (DfE *ibid*: 108, para 6.87). This has also been confirmed by previous research (Szwed 2007; Cole 2005; Gerschel 2005; Layton 2005).

The findings of this research confirm that SENCOs rely on working with and through other colleagues. This need to work with and through others links with SENCO as 'Collaborator' (Kearns 2005). Within school, this can be a challenge for SENCOs particularly, where they are not part of the senior leadership team and do not feel they have the necessary influence. This lack of influence was most apparent with the two secondary SENCOs where they often feel that there is a lack of understanding about their role from senior leaders and that SENCOs have insufficient influence over whole school policy and practice.

Previous surveys have found that secondary SENCOs were less likely to be part of the senior leadership of the school as compared with their primary colleagues (Tysoe

2015; NUT 2012; Pearson 2008; Mackenzie 2007) indicating that this situation has changed very little over time. One of the secondary SENCOs indicated in the initial interviews that without being in a better position to influence decisions, the SENCO role was untenable. On return, this situation had been resolved with the SENCO having a stronger link with the senior leadership team through a new line manager. It was clear that the SENCO perceived this lack of influence as compromising her ability to do the job. Not being part of the senior leadership team is hampering some SENCOs in carrying out their strategic role.

The work of the SENCO includes a significant amount of operational tasks. SENCOs are spending greater amounts of time servicing statutory processes and managing paperwork (this mirrors recent findings by Curran *et al.* 2017 on implementation of the new SEND reforms) as opposed to working directly with staff and pupils in the classroom. This places the role of SENCO firmly as that of 'Auditor' (Kearns 2005). The balance between different aspects of the work was captured in a survey of SENCOs (Tysoe 2015). The survey showed that SENCOs spend only 25% of their time teaching or supporting and 21% of their time advising and training staff. The remaining 54% of their time was spent managing SEND provision including administration tasks. Given that many SENCOs are part-time and the average contracted hours are 26 per week it means that the amount of time available to support and develop classroom practice is limited. Other surveys have also identified paperwork as being a barrier to SENCOs meeting pupils' needs directly (ATL 2016; NUT 2012).

The researcher has considered how the findings relate to the model of professional identity proposed in Chapter 2 (*vide* Figure 4). The findings suggest that many aspects of the SENCO role sit comfortably within any individual SENCO's professional identity as defined by their values, knowledge and competencies. However, there are aspects that they either do not feel particularly proficient in, or do not regard as a core purpose, (such as, financial management) and/or are outside their locus of control (such as, leadership decisions) and are therefore inconsistent with the professional self, there is a mismatch. The findings from this research indicate that there can be a tension between the demands of the role and the capacity to meet those demands.

Whether this 'mismatch' is sufficient for a SENCO to relinquish their role would need investigating further and would involve speaking with SENCOs who had given up the post. When speaking with the two SENCOs that had left the SENCO role since the initial interviews, neither suggested that it was due directly to the demands of the job. However, all the SENCOs commented on the challenges of their work and how they have to manage competing demands. It is interesting to note the comment from the nursery SENCO (*vide* 84) that indicates she had moved from a primary school as the approach in nursery fitted more comfortably with her view on child development.

The research highlights the commitment that SENCOs have to their role as it aligns closely with their own personal attitudes and values. The research suggests that cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), a tension between the requirements of the role and personal beliefs, is accommodated by adjusting behaviour and accepting the situation. It is likely that any teacher in their work is required to accept some compromises with their own beliefs (Bhopal 2011). Ultimately SENCOs are pragmatic in their approach and show an ability to work with the system. However, the research indicates that to carry out the SENCO role there needs to be close alignment with the demands of the job and a personal commitment to the role. The theoretical model, as illustrated below (*vide* Figure 6), is a revised version from the one proposed in Chapter 2 (*vide* Figure 4) as it is more in keeping with the research findings. In this enhanced model professional self is conceived as being part of self-identity. The model illustrates the tension that often exists between the professional self and the demands of the role. The model proposes that through this interplay between the self-identity, professional identity and the demands of the role, professional identity is forged. It is clear from the research findings that the SENCO role is a demanding one that presents some particular challenges, such as operating inclusion, working with others, completing administrative tasks and securing resources. It is through a personal and professional commitment to the role that SENCOs manage these demands, and their professional identity is realised.

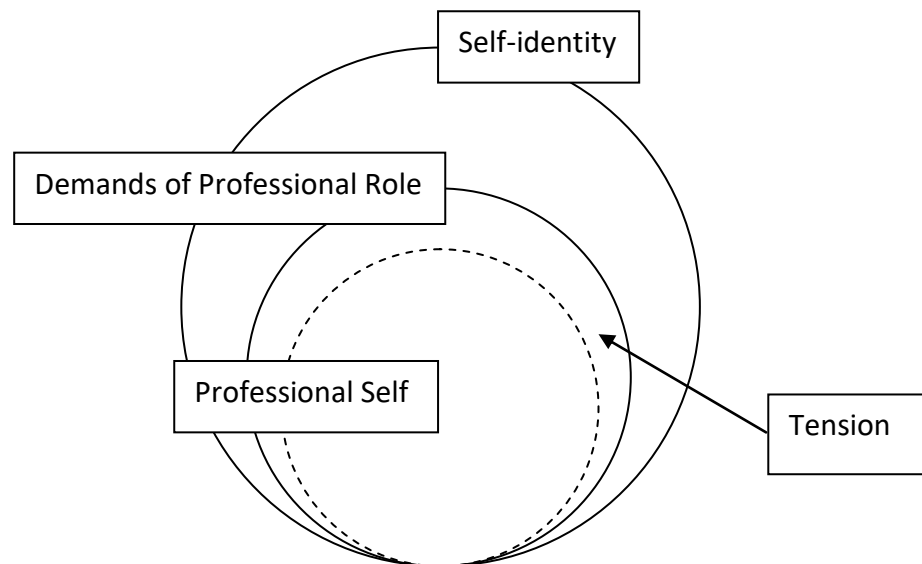


Figure 6: Revised theoretical model of SENCO professional identity

Currently, the new procedures around EHC plans and transfers as set out in the new SEND Code of Practice (*ibid*) are causing the greatest increase in workload for SENCOs. They are finding the paperwork and meetings involved particularly demanding. Also, the failure of local authorities to meet statutory timescales is causing SENCOs difficulties in managing their workloads. In terms of working with outside agencies, there is a sense of frustration as the support available is not always forthcoming or appears to be diminishing.

Overall, the findings support the conclusion that SENCOs perform both a strategic and operational role in leading and coordinating provision for pupils with SEND as outlined in the new Code of Practice (*ibid*). The SENCOs clearly see their role as multi-dimensional, requiring constant juggling of the competing demands of the role. In contrast to primary colleagues, secondary SENCOs are often middle, rather than senior leaders and this presents them with difficulties with influencing whole school policy. SENCOs perform a range of operational tasks, including working with staff and pupils, but this is to be outweighed by significant amounts of time devoted to the management of SEND provision, including the bureaucracy surrounding the SEND legislative processes as opposed to a focus on pedagogy.

To what extent is the SENCO role changing in response to the new SEND Code of Practice?

There was a sense from the SENCOs that their role in school has changed very little under the new SEND legislation and practice remains much the same. When compared with the revised Code of Practice (DfES 2001) the responsibilities of the SENCO remain broadly the same (Tysoe 2015). However, given the significance that SENCOs gave in interview to working with parents and carers, it might suggest that the emphasis of their work is shifting (also apparent in the research of Curran et al 2017) . However, the focus on administration, paperwork and EHC plans would indicate that the attention is currently on servicing statutory processes rather than classroom practice.

In response to the findings of this research, a slightly amended model for the SENCO's role and responsibilities (*vide* Figure 7) is proposed. The most significant change to the previous model is the addition of working with parents and carers. The new model also takes into account the new SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015) definition and the learning outcomes for the National Award for Special Educational Needs Co-ordination (NCTL 2014). The schema below demonstrates how the responsibilities of the SENCO (in bold) interrelate to the knowledge, skills and qualities required to carry out the role. The necessary knowledge, skills and qualities that the SENCO requires to carry out their role relate closely to the SENCO types identified by Kearns (2005) as argued in this thesis. Appendix 19 also provides a summary of the qualities and skills that the SENCOs interviewed for this research regarded as important to possess.

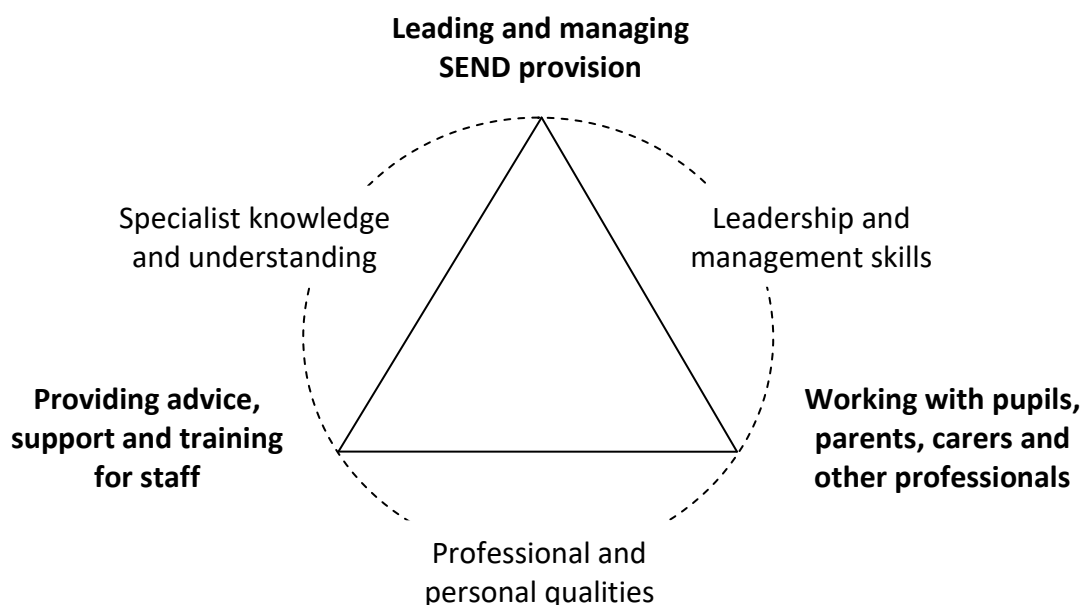


Figure 7: Revised schema to represent the SENCO role

How is the new SEND legislation being enacted by SENCOs in schools?

The initial and return interviews provided an insight into how the new SEND legislation is being enacted in schools. It is clear from the interviews that SENCOs are responding to the legislation in a number of ways. The main areas of change are: working more closely with parents, carers and pupils, facilitating additional training for staff, changing school cultures and a greater focus on the outcomes for pupils following an SEND intervention.

The interviews, TOWS analysis and rating scale all highlight the importance that SENCOs place on working with parents and carers. The interview responses indicate that schools are involving parents in decision making to a greater degree and involving pupils more actively. SENCOs indicated that they have extended and changed the way meetings are conducted so they are more participatory and collaborative. This research focused on collecting the views of SENCOs, and these views have not been triangulated with the views of others. However, the comments from SENCOs indicate that new ways of working are having a beneficial impact for parents, pupils and staff.

Furthermore, new training has been put into place in response to new ways of working particularly on constructing one page profiles and supporting person-centred approaches. SENCOs suggest that this is having a positive impact on how teachers regard pupils and the quality of discussions with parents. Again the research did not verify these views from others, although this is supported by the findings from Curran *et al.* (2017).

The interviews indicated a renewed focus on encouraging colleagues to take greater responsibilities for meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. This is the SENCO operating within 'Collaborator' mode (Kearns 2005). There was a clear sense from SENCOs that the class teacher or subject teacher plays an important part in meeting pupils' needs within the classroom. However, it was recognised that this could be influenced by the teachers' attitudes and values – a key component of successful inclusion as concluded by Monsen and Frederickson (2004). The SENCOs saw changing school cultures as part of their role. The secondary SENCOs reported that a barrier towards bringing about change was a lack of understanding and support from senior leadership.

The SENCOs talked about a greater focus on longer term outcomes for pupils and how this was impacting on their planning to meet needs. One of the particular difficulties in this respect was the engagement of other agencies. They also talked about the need to evaluate the impact of interventions and their cost effectiveness. This was in reference to the need to quantifying the cost of provision when making applications for a statutory assessment and justifying SEND budget spend. This illustrates the challenges of the role of SENCO as 'Arbiter' (Kearns 2005). One area where things have not moved forward is the uptake of personal budgets which the SENCOs felt would be unworkable in the context of a school. This view is supported by other research (NUT 2012; Tysoe 2012).

It is evident, then, that the new SEND legislation is bringing about changes to school practice particularly with regards to ways of working with parents, carers and pupils, and a resulting shift in cultures within schools. Recent research (Curran *et al.* 2017) on the SEND reforms reported improvements in relationships between teachers and

parents. They reported that schools were more focused on procedural changes rather than a cultural shift. However, comparison with these findings, indicate that the shift in culture is moving forward incrementally. This had also been the conclusion of the SEN Policy Research Forum policy paper (Lamb *et al.* 2016)

What are the opportunities and challenges that the new SEND legislation presents to schools?

The TOWS analysis provides information on the SENCOs' perspective on the challenges and opportunities associated with the new SEND legislation. The TOWS analysis identified that the main challenges in regard to implementing the new legislation were: the amount of administration work involved with EHC procedures, poor communication and management of the process from local authorities and a perceived lack of funding and support to meet pupils' needs. The SENCOs considered that flaws in the legislation contributed to this including: no nationally agreed common template for an EHC plan, and too greater a demand on local authorities in terms of timescales and resources. These findings are further substantiated by a recent survey of teachers (ATL 2016).

SENCOs repeatedly emphasised the challenges around the new statutory procedures. They indicated that the time taken to conduct meetings had increased and the amount of paperwork grown. They found this particularly difficult to manage at a time when local authority resources and support were seen as diminishing. It is possible to imagine that some of these difficulties are as a result of establishing and operating a new system. However, it is clear from the SENCOs' comments that the paperwork involved and poor communications from local authorities is not assisting. These are similar themes that run through previous research (Mackenzie 2007) which indicate that issues of time and workload are persistent.

The SENCOs saw the main opportunities resulting from the new legislation as being for children and young people, and their families and also, the greater possibility of integrated working. The TOWS analysis demonstrated that the participation of children

and young people, parents and carers in decision-making, one of the key features of the new legislation (DfE 2015), is regarded by SENCOs as both a benefit and merit. It is clear from the interviews that working with parents and carers forms a significant part of a SENCO's day-to-day work. There is evidence through interviews that the legislation is influencing the way schools are working with parents, carers and pupils. This was most evident in the way meetings are being conducted and the ways in which pupils, parents and carers are being consulted about their views. This again links to the SENCO role as 'Collaborator' (Kearns 2005).

Another key feature of the legislation, the joint working between education, health and social care, was regarded by SENCOs as one of the possible merits of the legislation. However, one of the SENCOs thought that elements of this were not working as there was no statutory obligation for health to be involved in writing of the plan. This is not strictly true as under Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the health care provision specified in the EHC plan must be made available to the child or young person by the clinical commissioning group (CCGs) or where relevant NHS (National Health Service) England. Also, under Section 26 of the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities and CCGs must make arrangements for the joint commissioning of services. However, the new Code of Practice makes it clear that local authorities and CCGs have 'considerable freedom' (DfE 2015: 44, para 3.25) in how they work together in delivering their support. The experience of several of the SENCOs is that health is not providing the required support and that therapy needs are not always being met. The lack of joint working between education, health and social care has been highlighted in a recent Care Quality Commission and Ofsted report (2017) on implementation of the SEND reforms.

A number of the challenges around implementing the new legislation in schools centred on new working practices in regard to EHC plans. There would be a strong argument here for a common nationally agreed format for the plan and much clearer guidance on the EHC assessment process so it becomes more manageable. Better communications from local authorities would assist the situation. Also the potential for joint working between health and education is not being fully realised. This again

illustrates the difficulties SENCOs experience in their role as 'Arbiter' and 'Auditor' (Kearns *ibid*) of SEND provision.

How do SENCOs bring about changes to practice in schools?

In the initial interviews, SENCOs were asked the direct question 'How do you influence and develop practice in your school? Are there any challenges to this?' It is primarily the responses from this question that has informed this part of the research findings. However, through a number of the other questions, it has been apparent how SENCOs influence practice in schools.

SENCOs considered that working alongside colleagues as the most effective way to bring about change, and this links closely with Kearns' (2015) SENCO type of 'Collaborator'. This was best achieved through planning and working together. SENCOs talked about how they used modelling and coaching to good effect. This has been recognised as an effective approach (Ofsted 2006; Boyle, Lamprianou and Boyle 2005) to bring about transformational change (Kennedy 2007). SENCOs also use feedback from observations to support colleagues in developing their classroom practice. Additionally, SENCOs use formal performance management arrangements to develop practice. SENCOs made use of staff meetings to inform staff and share examples of good practice. SENCOs find that formal training sessions for staff are not always effective as there are difficulties securing slots for training or getting staff to attend.

Other challenges for SENCOs included: getting some staff to change their thinking and adopt new ways of working, restraints on budgets not allowing staff to attend training, a lack of support from senior leaders. This lack of support from senior leaders relates to the lack of influence some SENCO feel they have in shaping school practice and cultures as discussed earlier in the chapter. SENCOs thought that more time was necessary to allow changes to happen if they were to become embedded in practice (also reported in the 2016 ATL survey). Previous research (Mackenzie's 2007) would indicate that there remains a gap in our knowledge on how effective the SENCO role is within schools and this would be a valuable area for future research to focus on.

To what degree is the work of the SENCO influenced by attitudes and values?

A number of the interview questions explored the SENCOs' attitudes and values towards SEND. SENCOs are highly motivated by a desire to make a difference to the lives of individual pupils – they have a strong sense of 'moral' purpose (Fullan 2007). It is clear that all the SENCOs held a positive attitude towards SEND and inclusion. However, this is tempered by some of the practical issues in implementing a policy of full inclusion in mainstream schools. This then relates to Hornby's concept of 'responsible' inclusion (2002) where the right to a mainstream placement is balanced against the school's capacity to meet a particular need. SENCOs are often in a dilemma as to what they might consider to be in the best interests of a child and their right to mainstream education. This could be characterised by the difference between the social/rights-based model and the medical model where the social/rights-based model of SEND puts a strong emphasis on equal access and the medical model on appropriate provision to meet specific needs (Hodkinson and Vickerman 2009). This presents as a tension for SENCOs when meeting pupils' needs, and it is within this challenging space that SENCOs operate. The research concludes that SENCOs adopt a pragmatic view and are more concerned about the pupil's ability to benefit from inclusion rather than adopting a particular ideological stance.

One of the barriers the SENCOs come up against in their work is the attitudes of others. SENCOs have reported that attitudes of fellow colleagues and senior leadership can make initiating change more difficult and managing this can be particularly demanding on a SENCO's personal resources. They are also often in the position of having to provide counsel to staff, pupils, parents or carers. SENCOs need to have good interpersonal skills in order to support others, and would benefit from training and supervision to support this aspect of their work.

Another challenge that SENCOs have is their seeming reluctance to want to manage budgets which, for some, is removed from their skill set as a teacher. It is in the area of business administration that SENCOs appear to often lack confidence. If senior

leadership recognised the large amounts of funding that SENCOs are responsible for, they may see the need to provide SENCOs with a greater level of support in this area.

SENCOs described the challenges of their role in real and practical terms. Using Kearns (2005) SENCO types, it is possible to see that SENCOs move between the different modes of operation. SENCOs often describe themselves as operating in the 'Arbiter' and 'Auditor' modes (Kearns *ibid*) with a focus on servicing SEND processes and procedures. This aligns them with a 'managerial' professionalism as described by Day and Sachs (2004). SENCOs frequently described the need to operate in the 'Collaborator' and 'Rescue' mode which aligns with 'democratic' professionalism (Day and Sachs *ibid*) and a reliance on professional dialogue and collaboration working. The SENCOs mention the 'Expert' mode in the context of a lack of advice from outside the school. However, several of the SENCOs mentioned their frustration with their knowledge and expertise not being fully recognised or capitalised upon. In conclusion, it is the researcher's view that unless there is a shift away from 'managerial' professionalism with its focus on servicing statutory procedures, towards a greater focus on 'democratic' professionalism and the development of classroom practice then the experiences and educational outcomes for pupils will not be improved (Gunter 2005).

Further reflections on the SENCO role and SEND legislation

From the interviews with the SENCOs involved in this research, it is clear that they are reflective about their working practices. In this respect, they welcome the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues through professional networks (Fullan 2007; Wenger 1998). They can often feel frustrated by the requirements of government policy and local authority procedures. SENCOs can also sense a lack of power and influence to bring about changes. However, they are ultimately pragmatic in their approach and operate within these constraints.

The processes in the new Code of Practice (DfE 2015) and the role of the SENCO are not radically different from those conceived in the original Code (DfE 1994). The new

SEND legislation, although hailed by the government of the day as the most significant changes to SEND legislation in 30 years (DfE 2011), is an evolution of the principles set out in the Warnock Report rather than any radical departure from the past. Tissot (2013) suggests that practice in schools has changed very little over time and does not reflect fully the Government's current ideological stance on inclusion. Many of the themes of segregation and exclusion, as reflected in the history of SEND provision, remain. While separate arrangements are in place to meet the needs of pupils with SEND then practices cannot be seen as truly inclusive (Ainscow 1999).

The conceptual model of inclusion has frequently been presented as a binary concept (Hornby *et al.* 1997) where you are seen as either 'apart or a part' (Cole 1989). This research has discussed the difficulty of holding dualistic positions (Dewey 1904) in regard to SEND and argued for a more dynamic model (Ellis 2012; Blamires 2002) (*vide* Figure 2) that conceptualises inclusion as participation in the curriculum and life of the school. For as long as a dualistic view of SEND is maintained, SEND provision will be seen as being separate and different from the mainstream and inclusion will not operate dynamically in meeting pupils' needs. This aligns with Booth's concept of inclusion that views inclusion as a dynamic process rather than as an end point of itself. Currently, inclusion is operating in a similar mode to integration (Warnock 1978). If we did reach a point where teachers had confidence in meeting the needs of all pupils, then the term SEN might become redundant and the SENCO role may no longer be required (Ekins 2015; Ainscow 1999; Ainscow and Muncey 1989). This research indicates that the new SEND legislation is resulting in greater collaboration with parents and pupils which is a further step towards developing a more inclusive system.

Currently, schools operate within a school effectiveness paradigm (Armstrong 2005) where the measurement of a school's performance against others is paramount. Therefore schools are often unwilling to take pupils with SEND in fear that they cannot meet their needs and that they will have a negative impact on their results and budgets. For schools to become more inclusive in their intake, the way school performance is evaluated will need to change to give greater credit to schools that are inclusive in their practice. If schools are to be more confident and successful in

meeting a wide range of pupils' needs then the SENCO's work will need to focus on pedagogy and classroom practice (Gunter 2005) rather than servicing statutory processes.

The theoretical model of SENCO professional identity (*vide* Figure 6) proposed in this thesis incorporates the challenges present in the education system and these are represented by the 'tension' that can exist between professional identity and the demands of the role. Some of these challenges are personal to individual SENCOs, although many are shared. The issues that SENCO find challenging under the present system are:

- equating inclusion with mainstream placement for all pupils, regardless of need;
- quantifying progress and justifying provision through cost effectiveness;
- managing the bureaucratic requirements of the new SEND procedures;
- reduction of external support available to meet pupil's needs;
- poor communication systems with the local authority;
- lack of influence over whole school systems, particularly in secondary schools.

This chapter has brought together the findings of the research providing answers to the original research questions and, in doing so, has raised some issues that need tackling. The next, and final chapter, will consider the conclusions drawn from these discussions and make recommendations of possible ways forward for professional practice and future research.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 6, the final chapter, concludes the research and makes recommendations on actions to be taken at school, local and national levels. The chapter also considers the significance of the research for professional practice as well as highlighting some of the possible limitations of the research methodology and findings. It also points towards possible areas for future research to explore.

Overall, the findings support a conclusion that SENCOs perform both a strategic and operational role in the provision for pupils with SEND (DfE 2015). In contrast to their primary colleagues, secondary SENCOs are often middle leaders rather than part of the senior leadership of the school, which is directly impacting on their ability to carry out their strategic duties. Operational tasks involve working closely with staff, pupils, parents and carers in meeting pupils' needs. However, this is currently being outweighed by the significant amount of time devoted to the management of SEND provision, including the bureaucracy involved in servicing the SEND statutory processes as opposed to supporting classroom practice.

It is recognised that the SENCO plays an important role in driving forward SEND policy in schools (DfE 2015) and for this reason it is important for local authorities to engage proactively with SENCOs if they are going to fulfil their duties - it is through SENCOs that policy will be put into practice. A SENCO's responsibilities are wide ranging and involve working with and through others. It is vital that SENCOs are provided with the resources and support to carry out their duties.

It is evident from this research that the new SEND legislation is bringing about some changes to school practice particularly with regards to ways of working with parents, carers and pupils resulting in a cultural shift within some schools. In response to the findings of this research, an amended schema for the SENCO's role and responsibilities has been proposed (*vide* Figure 7). The most significant change to the previous model is the addition of working with parents and carers, as well as the introduction of the knowledge, skills and qualities required to perform the role. A number of the

challenges around implementing the new legislation for schools centre on the new working practices with regard to EHC plans. The research proposes that a common nationally agreed format for EHC plans and better communications within local authority areas would help SENCOs in responding to some of these challenges.

There follow nine recommendations at school, local or national level arising directly from the findings and conclusions of this research that would support SENCOs in putting policy into practice.

School level

1. Provide administration and business support for SENCOs

This research has clearly shown that there is a significant amount of bureaucracy associated with SEND statutory procedures. Also SENCOs are not trained in financial management and yet are expected to manage sizeable budgets. If personal budgets are to become a reality, then financial management will become even more important. To relieve SENCOs of much of the administrative tasks associated with statutory procedures this research asserts that SENCOs would be better supported if they had dedicated administration support allowing SENCOs to concentrate to a greater extent on their role in leading teaching and learning. This would make better use of their skills and knowledge as a teacher. A SENCO's time could be better spent having oversight of statutory process rather than arranging meetings and compiling paperwork.

Administration support is less expensive than SENCO time and it is therefore more cost efficient. Financial advice and support would be better provided by the school's business manager or bursar.

2. Increase focus on supporting and developing classroom practice

If SENCOs were released from some of the administrative tasks associated with SEND statutory processes, they would have greater time to work with staff, pupils and parents and carers. Rather than spending their time collating and filing paperwork, arranging meetings, filling out forms and copying reports, SENCOs might spend more time on activities such as advising and guiding colleagues, monitoring pupils' progress,

helping to plan and deliver lessons, working proactively with parents and other professionals.

3. Introduce professional supervision for SENCOs

The research has highlighted the significant emotional component to the SENCO role. Given that SENCOs need to manage this and require resilience to do so, it is recommended that SENCOs are offered professional supervision. Professional supervision is not a familiar feature of teachers' practice. Teachers are often provided with performance management arrangements to improve classroom practice and raise academic standards. However, professional supervision (Morrison 1993) is more aligned to coaching where a supervisor and supervisee talk through a particular case or problem in order to help the supervisee reflect on the situation and develop their practice. It is not about judging a practitioner's performance but supporting them professionally and ensuring safe working practices. The type of supervision required could be provided to schools by an educational psychologist or other suitably trained colleague.

Local level

1. Improve communications with SENCOs

It is evident from this research that communication between SENCOs and local authorities needs to improve, particularly in regard to statutory processes for EHC assessments. The local authorities need to be more timely in their responses to SENCOs so they can manage their workloads more effectively. Also, key workers need to keep SENCOs more informed as the process advances. Local authorities need to look at ways they can communicate more effectively with SENCOs.

2. Increase training and networking opportunities

SENCOs expressed concerns about the opportunities available to them for training and networking. The SENCOs interviewed indicated that these opportunities have declined recently, but welcomed the opportunity to meet with others. Previous research (Tysoe 2015) suggests that SENCOs make use of networking opportunities when available.

Local authorities may benefit from surveying SENCOs in the local area to identify clearly their support and training needs. Support and training should be tailored more precisely to the SENCOs' perceived needs. This research indicates that they have some particular aspects of statutory procedures and financial management that need addressing.

3. Deploy support to schools more efficiently and effectively

SENCOs reported that they did not always receive support from external agencies to meet pupils' needs. Key workers are not always providing the support that SENCOs feel they require. In this research, SENCOs regarded the input of health and social care in meeting pupils' needs as limited. Health has a particularly poor reputation with SENCOs in providing the therapy support outlined on statements of SEN or EHC plans. Currently, schools are buying in additional services to address this gap. This often presents them with particular challenges in coordinating support for pupils. Local authorities and the health services need to ensure that support to schools is allocated in the most efficient and effective way so that pupils' needs are met in a timely manner. This might be more successfully achieved if there was a greater alignment of working practices and a pooling of SEND budgets.

National level

1. Develop a common EHC plan format and procedures

SENCOs are finding, and particularly so in London where schools receive pupils from a number of different local authorities, that the demands of managing different EHC plan formats and procedures very challenging. Some local authorities appear to be following the spirit of the new SEND legislation while others are issuing EHC plans that are essentially statements of SEN by another name.

It would support SENCOs in managing EHC plans if there was a nationally or regionally agreed EHC plan format and procedures which made expectations clear to everyone and made moving plans from one area to another more straightforward. In this process, the format and processes for EHC plans could be streamlined and further

improved based on examples of best practice. This greater clarity would be of benefit to schools, families and services alike.

2. Review the learning outcomes for SENCO accreditation

The learning outcomes for the National Award for SEN Co-ordination (NCTL 2014) have been reviewed to align with the new SEND legislation. However, the findings from this research and others (Curran *et al.* 2017; LKMCO 2015; Tysoe 2015), suggests that certain aspects of the content need strengthening to cover the practical demands of the role, such as financial management and working with parents and carers. There needs to be greater consistency in the quality of the courses offered from the different providers. It is worth noting that not many SENCOs are using this qualification as a route to a higher level degree (Tysoe 2015). Currently the accreditation is equivalent to 60 credits at masters level. Possibly, if the course was offered at a post-graduate diploma level (120 credits) then more SENCOs might be encouraged to complete a masters level qualification (180 credits).

3. Set minimum standards of training and support for staff

SENCOs indicated that the level of understanding among teachers varies quite considerably depending upon a teacher's training and experience. This is particularly so for newly qualified teachers who now enter the profession through a number of different route. SENCOs report that there is a lack of consistency in the SEND offer within initial teacher training. Also, greater thought needs to be given to the continuing professional development available to teachers throughout their careers in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND.

A more formal system of continuing professional development credits might ensure that teachers receive a higher quality of training in specific areas of professional practice tailored to their individual training needs, as compared with the current requirement of training days which tend to focus on whole school issues rather than individual needs. A system of credits would allow staff to receive a minimum amount of professional development that could be recognised and linked with performance management support.

There is also recognition among SENCOs that the quality of additional adult support provided to meet pupils' needs is variable. The government should consider introducing a minimum qualification for additional adults working in schools to improve the quality of support for pupils with SEND.

Contribution to new knowledge

This research was conducted following the introduction of new SEND legislation in 2014 and builds on previous research by the author about the role of the SENCO (Tysoe 2014; Tysoe 2015). There is limited published research on the impact of the SEND reforms (Curran *et al.* 2017) so this research contributes further to our understanding on how these reforms are being enacted in schools.

The findings of this research confirm and add to our current knowledge of the SENCO role:

- the work of the SENCO is demanding and multi-dimensional;
- SENCOs find financial management a real challenge;
- SENCOs work through others to bring about change and their ability to achieve this varies according to their influence within the school;
- the time required by SENCOs to complete paperwork is significant;
- there is a strong match between the personal values and attitudes of SENCOs and their professional role.

In addition, and specifically in relation to the new SEND legislation:

- integrated working and communication between services is poor;
- personal budgets are seen by schools as unworkable;
- the new legislation has brought about increased levels of bureaucracy;

- reductions in support services are impacting directly on schools' ability to meet needs;
- greater emphasis is now being given to working with parents and carers;
- pupils have been more actively involved in decision making.

This research identifies that the new SEND reforms have yet to deliver fully on the principles they were designed to support (*vide* Appendix 1), in particular the collaboration between education, health and social care services and the focus on developing inclusive practice. The greater involvement of children, their parents or carers and young people in decision making has moved forward. Whether this has been sufficient to increase parental confidence in the system as the Lamb Inquiry (DCSF 2009) suggested was required is beyond the scope of this research and would need further investigation.

Through this research a conceptual framework for the SENCO identity and role has been formulated and this adds new knowledge. The theoretical model of professional identity (*vide* Figure 6) has been conceived as a dynamic one, locating the professional self as an element of self-identity and seeing professional identity as being forged through the interplay between the self and the demands of the professional role. The tension that exist between professional self and the demands of the role often relate to administrative elements of the role, working with parents and carers, the challenges of mainstream inclusion, and the lack of influence over whole school policy.

The schema of the SENCO role (*vide* Figure 7) combines both the duties of the SENCO with the professional skills and attributes needed to fulfil the role. This schema recognises the increasing need to work collaboratively with parents and carers. However, the schema emphasises working with staff and pupils in order to improve inclusive classroom practice. This schema broadens the one originally proposed (*vide* Figure 3). The new conceptualisation has significance for the emphasis that should be placed on the different aspects of the role.

This research also makes a contribution to methodological practice by demonstrating that SWOT analysis, in combination with other research tools, is a valid research method (Helms and Nixon 2010). The research supports the potential for using the product of both the number of respondents and the frequency of the response as a way of demarcating the significance of different aspects of the data. The rating scale developed as a research tool also provides an efficient and effective way of gathering and measuring SENCO confidence in implementing the new SEND reforms.

Significance for professional practice

This research has highlighted some of practical arrangements necessary for inclusion to work successfully within mainstream schools, such as the need for greater levels of support and training to be made available to classroom practitioners. The research indicates the need for a mixed economy of provision if pupils' individual needs are to be met effectively. It also confirms the importance of 'responsible inclusion' (Hornby 2002; Vaugh and Schumn 1995) and that the debate about inclusion should be focused on engagement and participation rather than just placement (Farrell 2005).

The findings have confirmed the importance of the SENCO role in bringing about change in schools and it is therefore crucial that local authorities engage with SENCOs more effectively. The conceptual framework for the SENCO role and identity advanced by this thesis has particular relevance for informing future training and support needs for SENCOs. There is clearly a need to reduce the bureaucratic load on SENCOs so they can focus on supporting classroom practice and improving the lived experience of pupils with SEND. In direct response to the findings of this research, the local authorities involved have increased the networking opportunities available to SENCOs and involved SENCOs to a much greater extent in developing resources and in sharing good practice. In addition, the findings are influencing the training being commissioned from service providers.

Next steps

This research focused on the leadership and management of SEND from the SENCOs' perspective. The research is based on the accounts of seven SENCOs which means that any statistical analysis needs to be considered with caution and generalisation to the whole SENCO workforce is neither possible nor warranted (Mason 2002). However, through this close focus, a deeper knowledge and understanding of the SENCO role in schools has emerged and particular themes in relation to the new SEND legislation have become apparent. The findings will be shared with the SENCOs and local authorities involved to inform policy and practice (Strauss and Corbin 1994).

The SENCO plays an 'important role' (DfE 2015: 108, para 6.87), along with the headteacher and governors, in the strategic development of SEN policy and provision ensuring that the new SEND legislation becomes embedded in practice. The findings demonstrate that changes have been made, but there are still aspects of provision that need improving. The researcher has argued strongly that the work of the SENCO should be more focused on teaching and learning to bring about these improvements (Theodorović 2009; Gunter 2005). However, further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the SENCO role (Mackenzie 2007) and the impact that SENCOs have on classroom practice (Qureshi 2014) and outcomes for pupils.

The views of the local authority and other professionals involved in delivering services were not explored through this research. Neither were the views of staff, pupils, parents and carers gathered. This is a particular limitation of the research and would provide an area for future investigation, particularly in determining whether the intended benefits for children, young people and their parents have materialised. The views of the SENCOs in this research would indicate that there is more to be achieved in this area as the reforms have yet to bring about the required cultural shift (Curran *et al.* 2017; Lamb *et al.* 2016) that the Lamb Inquiry (DCSF 2009b) intended. It is therefore too early to determine whether a new era based on equality of outcomes (Phillips 2004) has been ushered in as further research is required.

The research used interviews and coding as the main method for collecting and analysing the data. In addition two specific research tools were deployed - a rating scale and TOWS analysis. Both proved useful as tools for collecting data and provided a way of quantifying SENCOs' views on aspects of the SEND reforms. However, as noted previously, the statistical analysis of this data should be considered with caution due to the small numbers involved. The rating scale was being piloted for its potential use as a way of gathering views from the wider SENCO workforce. One of the outcomes of this research will be the use of the rating scale to evaluate the impact of future training and support.

By disseminating the findings from this research the researcher aims to contribute to discussions around the impact of the new SEND reforms. The researcher was a contributor to the Driver Youth Trust report 'Joining the Dots: Have Recent Reforms Worked for Those with SEND?' (LKMCO 2015) and is currently preparing a paper for publication on the findings of this research. One of the main aspirations of the SEND reforms is to improve the educational experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. It is the researcher's conviction that only by responding to the findings of this research and acting upon the nine recommendations set out in this chapter can schools and SENCOs be supported in achieving the aspirations of the SEND legislation and improving the lives of children and young people.

Footnote

I initially interviewed SENCOs in July 2015 and then interviewed them again in June 2016. Events have moved on since then, and the transition deadline (1 April 2018) set by the government (DfE 2016a) for implementing all aspects of the 2014 SEND legislation has been reached. Speaking informally with SENCOs and local authority colleagues it would appear that there have been some significant improvements in the timeliness of issuing EHC plans. Also, SENCOs are reporting improved communications with the local authority and better networking opportunities. This would suggest that some of the procedural aspects of the legislation and support for SENCOs are now more embedded in practice. Implementing the new SEND legislation is a process of change, and my thesis documents part of this change process from the perspective of the SENCO in schools.

I started my thesis by saying how the Warnock Report had inspired me and supported my teaching career. As I reach the later part of my career and I look back, it is clear that much has improved with schools meeting a much greater range of special educational needs. Currently, the available research on the implementation of the 2014 special educational needs legislation is limited. That which is available suggests that there is more to be done particularly in regard to greater collaboration between professionals and families, to bring about a genuine culture of inclusion. I regard the development of an inclusive culture as a journey rather than a destination, and therefore we need to continue this journey together.

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Appendix 1: Principles of the new Code of Practice

'Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 makes clear that local authorities, in carrying out their functions under the Act in relation to disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN), must have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents
- the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions
- the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood.

These principles are designed to support:

- the participation of children, their parents and young people in decision-making
- the early identification of children and young people's needs and early intervention to support them
- greater choice and control for young people and parents over support
- collaboration between education, health and social care services to provide support
- high quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN
- a focus on inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning
- successful preparation for adulthood, including independent living and employment.'

(DfE 2015: 19, para 1.1-1.2)

Appendix 2: Categories of need

- Specific learning difficulties (SpLD)
- Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
- Severe learning difficulties (SLD)
- Profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)
- Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)
- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
- Hearing impairment (HI)
- Visual impairment (VI)
- Multi-sensory impairment (MSI)
- Physical disability (PD)
- Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Other difficulty or disorder (OTH)
- SEN support, but no specialist assessment of type of need (NSA)

(DfE 2017b: 150)

Appendix 3: SENCO role

- 'Overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy
- Co-ordinating provision for children with SEN
- Liaising with the relevant designated teacher where a looked after pupil has SEN
- Advising on the graduated approach to providing SEN support
- Advising on the deployment of the school's delegated budget and other resources to meet pupils' needs effectively
- Liaising with parents of pupils with SEN
- Liaising with early years providers, other schools, educational psychologists, health and social care professionals, and independent or voluntary bodies
- Being a key point of contact with external agencies, especially the local authority and its support services
- Liaising with potential next providers of education to ensure a pupil and their parents are informed about options and a smooth transition is planned
- Working with the headteacher and school governors to ensure that the school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) with regard to reasonable adjustments and access arrangements
- Ensuring that the school keeps the records of all pupils with SEN up-to-date.'

(DfE 2015: 108, para 6.90)

Appendix 4: SENCO accreditation learning objectives

Part A: The professional knowledge and understanding that SENCOs need of the legislative context for SEN and theoretical concepts that underpin effective leadership and practice.

- The statutory and regulatory context for SEN and disability equality and the implications for practice in their school or work setting.
- The principles and practice of leadership in different contexts.
- How SEN and disabilities affect pupils' participation and learning.
- Strategies for improving outcomes for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

Part B: The expertise and capabilities that SENCOs need to lead and coordinate provision effectively.

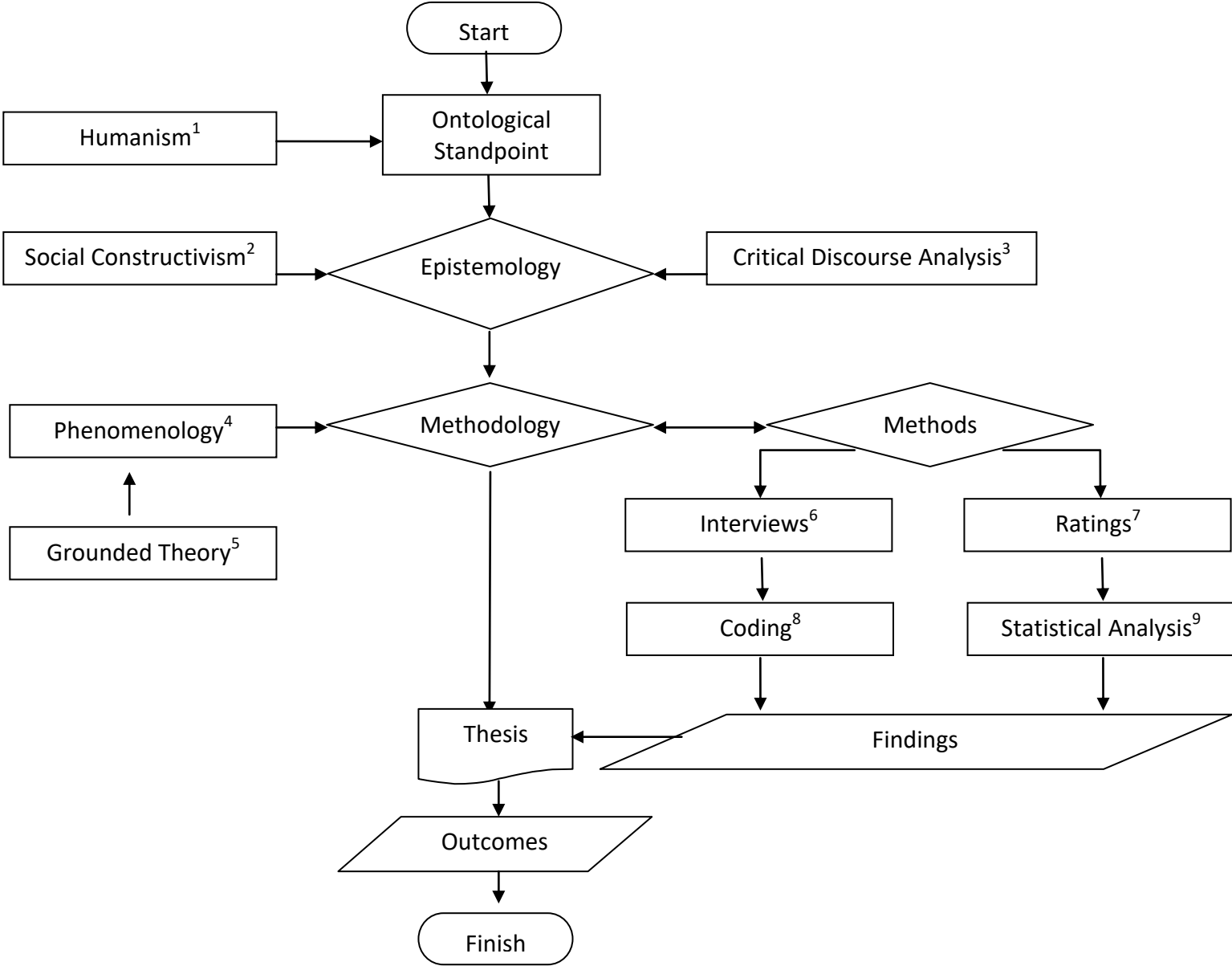
- Work strategically with senior colleagues and governors.
- Lead, develop and, where necessary, challenge senior leaders, colleagues and governors.
- Critically evaluate evidence about learning, teaching and assessment in relation to pupils with SEN to inform practice and enable senior leaders and teachers.
- Draw on external sources of support and expertise.
- Develop, implement, monitor and evaluate systems.

Part C: The personal and professional qualities that SENCOs need to make a positive impact on the ethos and culture in schools and other settings.

- The award should enable SENCOs to develop and demonstrate the personal and professional qualities and leadership they need to shape an ethos and culture based upon person-centred, inclusive, practice in which the interests and needs of children and young people pupils with SEN and/or disabilities are at the heart of all that takes place.'

(NCTL 2014)

Appendix 5: Conceptual framework for research



Key References

1. Rogers 2003
2. Dewey 1929
3. Foucault 1984
4. Merleau-Ponty 2004
5. Strauss and Corbin 1994
6. Creswell 2007
7. Sapsford 2007
8. Punch 2014
9. Gillham 2007

Appendix 6: Contextual data for London schools – pupil characteristics

Percentage of pupils by characteristics (January 2016)					
Characteristic	School	England	London	Inner London	Outer London
Entitled to free school meals	Primary/Nursery	14.5	16.8	22.4	13.8
	Secondary	13.2	18.1	27.2	13.6
	Special	36.5	41.1	49.4	36.6
First language other than English	Primary/Nursery	20.1	49.1	55.5	45.7
	Secondary	15.7	41.2	49.6	37.0
	Special	14.6	38.8	40.7	37.8
Special educational need	Primary/Nursery	13.4	13.8	15.3	13.0
	Secondary	12.7	13.7	16.6	12.3
	Special	99.0	97.7	93.6	100.0

Source: DfE 2017a data collection and statistical returns

Appendix 7: Contextual data for London schools – assessment all pupils

Percentage of all pupils achieving expected standard/average progress scores (2015/2016)					
Key Stage	Measure	England	London	Inner London	Outer London
EYFS ¹	Good level of development	67	70	69	70
Key Stage 1	Phonics expected standard (Year 1)	81	83	84	83
	Reading expected standard	74	77	78	77
	Writing expected standard	66	70	73	69
	Maths expected standard	73	77	77	76
Key Stage 2	Reading, writing, maths expected standard	54	59	60	59
	Reading progress (Key Stage 1-2)	0.0	0.9	1.4	0.7
	Writing progress (Key Stage1-2)	0.0	1.1	2.1	0.7
	Maths progress (Key Stage1-2)	0.0	1.5	1.9	1.4
Key Stage 4	GCSE A*-C with English and maths	63	66	65	67
	English Baccalaureate	25	32	31	33
	Attainment 8	50	52	51	52
	Progress 8 (Key Stage 2-4)	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2

¹Early Years Foundation Stage

Source: DfE 2017a data collection and statistical returns

Appendix 8: Contextual data for London schools – assessment SEN pupils

Percentage of SEN pupils achieving expected standard/average progress scores (2015 -2016)									
Key Stage	Measure	England		London		Inner London		Outer London	
		SEN Support	EHC plan or SEN statement	SEN Support	EHC plan or SEN statement	SEN Support	EHC plan or SEN statement	SEN Support	EHC plan or SEN statement
EYFS ¹	Good level of development	25	4	29	4	28	5	29	4
Key Stage 1	Phonics expected standard (Year 1)	46	18	57	23	58	26	56	21
	Reading expected standard	32	14	42	16	44	20	40	14
	Writing expected standard	22	9	32	12	35	16	30	10
	Maths expected standard	33	14	43	17	45	21	41	15
Key Stage 2	Reading, writing, maths expected standard	16	7	24	9	28	10	21	9
Key Stage 4	GCSE A*- C with English and maths	29	11	36	13	38	12	43	14
	English Baccalaureate	6	2	9	3	10	3	9	3
	Attainment 8	36	17	40	19	40	18	39	19
	Progress 8 (KS2 – KS4)	- 0.4	- 1.0	- 0.2	- 0.9	- 0.2	- 0.9	- 0.2	- 0.9

¹Early Years Foundation Stage

Source: DfE 2017a data collection and statistical returns

Appendix 9: Contextual data for London schools – Ofsted grades

Percentage of schools achieving Ofsted grade (August 2016)		
Grade	England	London
Inadequate	2	1
Requires improvement	10	7
Good	68	62
Outstanding	21	30

Source: Ofsted data view 2016

Appendix 10: Interview consent letter

[SENCO]

[AUTHORITY/SCHOOL]

Dear [PARTICIPANT]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research which forms part of my professional doctorate.

The research involves an investigation into the role and professional identity of SENCOs. The research seeks to address the following questions.

1. What is the purpose of the SENCO role in schools? To what extent is this role changing in response to the new SEND Code of Practice?
2. How is the new SEND legislation being enacted by SENCOs in schools? What are the opportunities and challenges that the new SEND legislation presents?
3. How do SENCOs bring about changes to practice in schools? To what degree is this influenced by attitudes and values?

By participating in this research, you are agreeing to your answers to the interview questions being used verbatim, and your views being represented in summary within my research thesis. Individuals will not be named, but their role will be identified. Confidentiality will be maintained unless the information is required to be disclosed subject to the requirements of law. Any data collected will be held in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and not made available to any third party. Data, including recording of the interviews, will be destroyed following the research, and not stored for a period of more than six years. Participants are offered the opportunity to withdraw from the research and to have their data destroyed at any reasonable time prior to the submission of my research thesis.

The findings of this research will be made available to the three local authorities involved for the purposes of further developing support to schools. A summary of findings will be made available to participants upon request.

Your assistance in this research is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Keith Tysoe

Doctoral Researcher

I am freely consenting to participation in this research project on the conditions as outlined above.

Name of participant:

Signature of participant:

Date:

Appendix 11: Initial interview schedule

- Sign agreement letter
- Collect rating scale

Interview questions

1. Describe for me the school you work in. How would you describe the ethos of the school? (RQ3)
 2. What is the purpose of the SENCO role in your school? How do you see the role changing in response to the new SEND Code of Practice? (RQ1)
 3. What are the skills and qualities you need to possess to do your job as SENCO? (RQ3)
 4. What do you enjoy about the SENCO role? What do you dislike about the role? (RQ1)
 5. What do you see as the most important elements of the new SEND legislation for schools? (RQ2)
 6. What is your understanding of the term inclusion? What are the barriers to achieving this? (RQ2)
 7. What changes has the school made in response to the new SEND legislation? Have you experienced any difficulties with implementing these changes? (RQ2)
 8. How do you influence and develop practice in your school? Are there any challenges to this? (RQ3)
 9. What is your motivation for being a SENCO? (RQ3)
 10. What noun or metaphor would best describe your role? (RQ1)
 11. Is there anything you would like to add?
- Thank you
 - Follow-up interview

Appendix 12: Interview rating scale

Implementing the new SEND Code of Practice

Name:
School:
Date:

For each item identified below, underline the number to the right that best describes your level of confidence in each of the areas. Use the rating scale to select the relevant number where 1 is low and 10 is high.

Survey Item	Scale										Any Comments
	Low to High										
1. I understand the requirements on schools of the new SEND legislation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
2. I am clear on how to set suitable outcomes for pupils with SEND and monitor their progress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
3. I am confident in leading the development of SEND provision within school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
4. I have sufficient networking opportunities available locally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
5. I am clear about the SEND funding arrangements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
6. I am confident in working with parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
7. I have sufficient influence to fulfil my strategic role.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
8. I know what services and resources are available through the Local Offer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
9. I am skilled in person-centred approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

10. I have enough time and support to carry out my SENCO duties.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
11. I have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out my responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
12. I have access to a sufficient level of support from external agencies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Appendix 13: Research Timeline

Date	Activity
May 2014	Discussed and agreed focus for research with supervisors
May 2014	Sought approval from ethics committee for research
May 2014	Added to previous literature review as an ongoing process
May 2015	Research design started
June 2015	Research questions set and agreed with supervisors
June 2015	Developed and tested interview questions
July 2015	SENCOs interviewed individually
October 2015	Started writing up research thesis
November 2015	Interviews transcribed
December 2015	Transcripts analysed
January 2016	Writing up of research continued
June 2016	SENCOs interviewed individually for a second time
August 2016	Transcripts analysed
September 2016	Research findings drawn together
October 2016	Writing up of research thesis completed
December 2016	Proof reading and editing of research thesis
February 2017	Research thesis completed ready for submission to supervisors
April 2017	Further amendments and revisions to thesis
November 2017	Thesis ready for submission

Appendix 14: Analysis and coding of transcripts

Step	Action
1	Recorded interviews and made field notes
2	Further notes made immediately after each interview
3	Listened to recording to identify broad themes
4	Transcripts of recordings made
5	Read through transcripts marking text into units of meaning
6	Read through transcripts to identify broad categories and sub-categories
7	Created a set of codes for categories and sub-categories
8	Read through the transcripts applying category and sub-category codes
9	Made amendments to codes
10	Read through transcripts adjusting category and sub-category coding

Appendix 15: Return interview schedule

- Collect rating scale

Interview questions

1. Have there been any developments to your work since we last met? (RQ1)
Pick up on specific points mentioned in first interview
2. Have there been any challenges with introducing the new SEND legislation? (RQ2)
3. Have any benefits resulted from the introduction of the new legislation? (RQ2)
4. Are there any flaws with the new legislation? And why? (RQ3)
5. Are there any merits? And why? (RQ3)
6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

- Thank you

Appendix 16: Sample coding schedule

Code	Category/Sub-category	Count	Comments
1	Leading and managing		
1.1	Staff management	2	
1.2	Resources	1	
1.3	SEND provision	0	
1.4	Parents/carers	7	Providing support
1.5	Administration tasks	1	
1.6	Data	0	
1.7	Time	2	Workload
1.8	Finances	4	Financial constraints
1.9	Communications	0	
2	Professional development		
2.1	Staff training	3	Supporting in class
2.2	SENCO accreditation	3	Two years ago
2.3	SENCO networking	1	
2.4	Sharing good practice	1	
3	Teaching and learning		
3.1	Individual pupils	4	Through teaching assistants
3.2	Group work	1	
3.3	Whole class	4	Modelling teaching
4	SEND Code of Practice		
4.1	Identification	1	
4.2	Profiles	2	
4.3	EHC plan	7	Not completed one yet
4.4	Personal budgets	0	
4.5	Person centred reviews	0	
4.6	Outcomes	5	Life chances
4.7	Keyworkers	1	
4.8	Integrated working	6	Changing personnel

5	Ethos, values and attitudes		
5.1	Inclusion	4	Strong emphasis
5.2	Skills and attributes	2	
5.3	Metaphor	1	Glue
5.4	Motivation	7	Positive outcomes
5.5	Senior Leadership	1	
6	Further sub-categories		
6.0	Accountability	3	'Weighing the pig'
6.0	SEND legislation	5	Code of Practice
6.0	SEN Information Report	1	
Additional comments			
Stresses the importance of modelling good teaching and inclusive practice			
Defines role as 'bringing everyone altogether'			
Legislation is trying to catch up with good practice			
Frustration with lack of therapy support available			

Appendix 17: Sample transcript

KT	Can you describe to me the school you work in and describe something about its ethos?	Q1
SENCO	/ [School] in [area], it is in a socially deprived area. We have a high level of children with pupil premium, we have a high percentage above national average percentage of EAL (English as an additional language) children, our SEN (special educational needs) profile is just above national average, we are working about 17/18%. It varies between 18 to 20% our SEN, we have got six children with a statement, seven because one has just come through.	
KT	Are any of those education, health and care plans?	
SENCO	/No, the one that just came through came through as a statement. I have been through the process of converting one EHC (education, health and care) plan, but that was through [neighbouring borough] and it didn't feel any different to a normal annual review to me.	4.3
KT	That is interesting	
SENCO	/Our ethos, I would say that we are a very inclusive school, we, I think, take everyone that we are asked to. However I know we have recently said no to one pupil which we are currently in the process of, /but in general we have children with Downs Syndrome, we have children with ASD (autistic spectrum disorder), we have children with pragmatic language disorders, with initial inability to walk, /and so I think we are a very inclusive school.	5.1 4.1 5.1
KT	That would be my experience of this school as well.	

KT	Thinking about your role in the school, what is the purpose of the SENCO (special educational needs coordinator) role in your school?	Q2a
SENCO	/It is, I think that what I do is liaise between everybody really. I help to liaise between parents, /between agencies, /between teachers, TAs (teaching assistants), support teachers with ensuring that they can particularly support the children with statements /because I think our teachers are pretty good at quality first teaching, so we do put a lot of support, because we have so many of our more experienced teachers out of class we are able to have extra teacher support, so modelling of lessons, modelling of strategies of how to support different groups. So, I think teachers are pretty good at that quality first teach, /but sometimes the bit where they find it more difficult, more challenging, is to maybe plan for the children that we have with more severe difficulties, so the gap between our little girl with Downs Syndrome in Year 6 and her peers is vast and it is just making sure that she can be planned and supported for, as well as all the other children that have got to get through their SATs (standard assessment tests). So I suppose I am the link person.	1.4 4.8, 1.1 3.3 3.1
KT	The link	
SENCO	/Bringing everyone altogether really.	1.1

KT	How do you see the role changing in response to the new SEND Code of Practice?	Q2b
SENCO	<p>/If I am absolutely honest, I haven't. For me, it hasn't changed my role significantly yet I don't think, but maybe that is because we have lots of good practice already in place, /because we do consult parents. /We do try to make sure that pupil voice is heard. /The other thing about it, that our parents are very much, if we can get them through the door, are very much in agreement with what we suggest, so they are not the sort of parents that would say I want this, I want that I am entitled to this, why aren't I getting that, they do sort of. So if we suggest an area for development, they don't necessarily see that for themselves and are grateful for our input in that way, but I do know that if I was in [another school], it is a little different because the parents are that much more savvy to the system I suppose and therefore pushy and yes. Whereas our parents here are a little bit different in that respect.</p>	<p>5.4 1.4 3.1 1.4</p>
KT SENCO	<p>Does that extend then to the support they give, are they supportive in what you are trying to achieve or are they just..?</p> <p>/Yes, there are parents that are supportive. They don't know always how best to support, so they won't necessarily do the reading even if you say, please read every day, it doesn't necessarily happen. Their lives are so complicated that they just find it difficult to prioritise the really important things and sometimes their own life experiences haven't been particularly positive and so it is trying to break that cycle and trying to. Sometimes I feel like I am giving very small advice, well it would be really good if you could get them to bed at 8 o'clock on time and it is almost like an alien idea and like 'wow' that is a really good idea, ok we will try. So it is sometimes I feel like I am parenting them as much as anything, but in general I would say</p>	<p>1.4</p>

<p>KT</p> <p>SENCO</p>	<p>our parents are very supportive and they just don't know necessarily know how to support their children in the best way.</p> <p>Can I just ask you to reflect on the point you were saying that it hasn't changed a lot for you and how you think this reflects the practices of the school. Do you think that the new legislation is driving forward change or trying to catch up with the change that has already happened?</p> <p>/Possibly trying to catch up with. /I think I do agree that pupils' voice, /and parents, is very important. I agree with that, /but for me, because I haven't done a new EHC plan, because I haven't done a conversion through [borough], I have yet to have that experience. So for me, there hasn't been a big significant change that I felt or am aware of currently. /I think probably, maybe, trying to catch up with some of the good practice that is out there.</p>	<p>6.0, 3.1 1.4, 4.3</p> <p>2.4</p>
<p>KT</p>	<p>What are the skills and qualities you need to possess to do your job?</p>	<p>Q3</p>
<p>SENCO</p> <p>KT</p> <p>SENCO</p>	<p>/I would like to hope that people find me approachable, that they can be open and honest with me and that they can trust me, that I will listen and offer advice, that I would like to think that I was organised, that if I had deadlines to do things by I like to get them done by that time, but I think it is probably the fact that I am quite a good people person I would say.</p> <p>So what other qualities do you think you have, you mentioned quite a lot but are there any others?</p> <p>/Obviously you need to be a good teacher to model good teaching. That is my primary role and then the rest comes afterwards.</p>	<p>5.2</p> <p>3.3</p>

KT	What do you enjoy about the role?	Q4a
SENCO	/It is very rewarding. The role of teaching, full stop, is a very rewarding job. You would not do this job if it didn't have its rewards because the pay is certainly not the reward. /So I think making that difference, even if it is a small difference, to see that you have had some sort of positive effect on a young person's life, is incredibly rewarding. And, the fact that you are hoping that you have broken that cycle and that change can happen for them and something positive will result. And, I do strongly believe that the earlier we put the intervention and support in the better the life chances for many of our young people.	5.4 4.6
KT	What do you think those differences are? What is important then in making a difference?	
SENCO	/For them to realise that they can, that there are opportunities and things beyond and there is life outside the vicinity. The fact that they feel positive and happy in themselves, that their resilient in life, that they can take knock backs and keep going, that 'can do' attitude and just preparing them for life outside of [school]. /Because I think that we are a small one form primary school and it is a very nurturing atmosphere, small, everybody knows everybody, positive atmosphere, but when you go to secondary school it is a big scary place and then you go to work afterwards or hopefully university so it is just preparing.	4.6 5.1
KT	What do you dislike about the role?	Q4b
SENCO	/The paperwork.	1.5
KT	That is a common theme.	
SENCO	/Constant accountabilities and measuring the pig constantly, fattening the pig, measuring the pig.	6.0

	<p>/I know interventions work, but having to be really constantly saying right, well we did that and was that value for money, I am not an accountant and that aspect of it all quite scares me to be honest, and if I am honest I haven't got to grips with all that really. [headteacher] is very good at the money aspect and we don't have a costed provision map. We have a provision map, but it is not costed and if I needed to cost it I could but, I don't think it would make much difference to me, unless making an EHC request.</p>	4.3
<p>KT SENCO</p>	<p>Right, because you see it used for that purpose?</p> <p>/Well, that is because that is what the borough are suggesting I do, to show that we have spent over that £6,000 and I suppose it is all about accountability in that case isn't it, but I am a teacher and not an accountant.</p>	6.0
<p>KT SENCO</p>	<p>Any other aspects of the job that you dislike?</p> <p>/The job never ends, it really never does and I work three days a week. But I think, I am pretty sure, I work a full time job really. I work three days a week here and one in [another school], but I would say, I take work home every single night and I do something at home. So it is that, there isn't, you don't walk out. It is not like an office job where you walk out at 5 o'clock and that is it. There is always something else, something that you can do, so perhaps it is that, but I don't begrudge that because I know that if I am going to do a job I like to do it properly, so it is a choice I make and I make that choice to take it home with me.</p>	1.7

KT	What do you see as the most important elements of the new SEND legislation?	Q5
SENCO	<p>/I think probably that pupil and parent voice, making sure that they are, that the joint decision making the joint ownership of the goals. I think it is a good starting point to come from strength initially, /although I have to say to come from strengths is a much more positive way of looking at a child rather than to look from their weaknesses. Having said that, when at [another school] we got sent an EHC plan, it is then very difficult to judge whether you can meet that child's needs because it doesn't really tell you an awful lot about the child.</p>	1.4 4.3
KT SENCO	<p>Is that one EHC?</p> <p>/Yes, I have only seen one. Actually, I have seen one for here, the one for the child that we said we can't meet his needs here. So I think it is great that it has that positive, you know that inspirational long term goals as well as the short term aspect of it and I think it is right to go from the strengths, although there does need to be something in a little bit more to help me better understand that child I think, something, I haven't quite worked out what it is that I want, but there is something else missing, I think.</p>	4.3
KT SENCO	<p>These elements that you say in the new legislation, are they different from the previous legislation?</p> <p>/I hadn't read the original one because since I have done my role, I have only really read this new legislation, but like I said before, I don't think it has significantly changed the way that I am doing things. I hadn't previously. I have a copy of the new legislation whereas they never printed the old legislation off because I did my qualification when the new legislation was coming out.</p>	6.0

KT	When did you start as SENCO then?	
SENCO	/I have been doing it, it all merges into one, when I came here I was an intervention teacher and [deputy headteacher] was the SENCO and then gradually over time more and more came. /And then I thought right I need to do the actual qualification, so I did the qualification two years ago now, but started it two years ago. I think I started it in sort of. It is a whole year since I got my qualification so probably two years since I started it.	5.4 2.2
KT	So yes it would be very much under the new legislation anticipating the new legislation.	
SENCO	/Yes it was all in draft at that point so.	6.0
KT	What is your understanding of the term inclusion?	Q6a
SENCO	/That all children, no matter what their challenges or disabilities are, are included within a school and that their needs are met, that they are not. I suppose it is easier to describe what it is not. It is not sitting in a corridor doing your own learning. It is being in a classroom with your peers learning from your peers, having good positive role models. It is not having the TA just working with you. It is having equal access to the class teacher. It is being included in all the daily life of a school.	5.1
KT	What do you think the barriers are to achieving that goal?	Q6b
SENCO	/Some of our children have quite profound difficulties and actually for some children being in a mainstream classroom is too challenging. /And, therefore, you need to put the support in place so that they can access all that, be it break out zones or whatever the structures. And every child is different, so you need to change it constantly depending on the child and their needs.	5.1 3.1

KT	<p>Thinking about the new legislation and, perhaps we have covered some of this, but have there been changes at this school made in relation to the new legislation?</p>	Q7
SENCO	<p>/Well, we have a school offer on the website. I haven't actually updated the SEN policy yet. I need to do that, but I don't think it will need a lot changing. I have read through it, so I don't think it needs a huge amount of updating. /The only thing that we are trying to do more is trying to make sure that we are having actual structured meetings with our parents of our statemented children. So before, when we would have done an IEP (individual education plan), I would have either just sent it home or they would have talked about it during parents' evening. That is the ideal. That is the time it is supposed to be talked about at during parents' evening, but that is a 10 minute slot. It is quite brief if you have lots of other things to talk about, so it is actually building in time to actually have a 30 minute conversation every term, review, set new targets with the parents and the class teacher and myself and the TA. So making sure that that happens is I suppose the change that I have made in that way.</p>	6.0 4.2
KT	<p>Are you experiencing any difficulties or are you anticipating any difficulties in implementing any elements of the new legislation?</p>	6.0 4.3
SENCO	<p>/ I don't know. Unless I am completely blind to something that I haven't seen coming my way, then no, but the costed bit is the bit that, it is my understanding that it doesn't have to be costed. I don't have to cost out our provision, we have a provision map. We have who is having interventions, from who, at what time and for how long for and things that I don't, it is not costed. /But like I say, I think some of this is slightly difficult for me because I haven't gone through the progress of an EHC conversion or</p>	

KT	What motivated you to become a SENCO?	Q9
SENCO	<p>/It is interesting. I hadn't gone on that career path. When I left [another borough] I had a young family and I was on the senior leadership team and the school required improvement and I was killing myself because I like to do a job properly. [Headteacher] said I have got a job for you, you can come and be my intervention teacher and because I moved from Outer London to Inner London, I could lose all my responsibility and be on the same wage. So I came as an intervention teacher just doing groups and one-to-ones really, but obviously with time, things get added to your job description and actually, in fact, that is the great thing always about teaching that you do something new and get new responsibilities and learn something new.</p> <p>I have forgotten the original question, how did I come to be the SENCO?</p>	5.4
KT SENCO	<p>What motivated you to become?</p> <p>/Because I suppose I was then an intervention teacher, then I saw the impact, the positive impact that support can have on children and it slowly came upon me. /I didn't just suddenly decide that that was what I wanted to do. I got more involved in the process /and then I thought actually I should just get the qualification. /It wasn't a sudden dawning and actually, it does fit rather well with a part time job, for somebody who has a life, small young children at home. Actually, it fits rather well in that respect. Being a job share in a class is difficult because I have done that too. So I am out of class and I have my responsibilities, some of the work I can do from home because it is paperwork and so it does fit in that way with the part-time aspect of my. That is what I have chosen to do currently so it works.</p>	4.6 5.4 2.2 5.4

KT	If you had to choose a noun or metaphor that best described your role, what would it be and why?	Q10
SENCO	/Maybe I am the glue.	5.3
KT	And why would you say that?	
SENCO	Maybe I stick things altogether, bring it altogether. It is not because I fix things because that is not why I have chosen glue and that would be wrong to say that I am fixing children, but it is because I am putting the pieces together. Working between all the different, liaising between everybody I suppose.	
KT	It is quite a skilled job.	
SENCO	Umm.	
KT	That is the end of my questions, is there anything you wanted to tell me or like me to hear, perhaps there are things I haven't asked you that you were anticipating I might ask? Is there anything you would like to add?	Q11
SENCO	/I suppose maybe I should look at explaining why I have circled some of these. So I think, I hope that I understand the new legislation and I hope I am not missing too much out, but obviously there is always something new to learn. There is always better ways to do things, so I would rather never put myself as a 10 unless /I am 100% sure. I am clear on how to set suitable outcomes. That is interesting, this suitable outcomes. /I haven't had the experience of doing it through an EHC plan /but we do outcomes all the time as short goal outcomes in our ISPs (individual support plans) so I can do that and monitor the progress of that without any difficulty. Confident leading it, I hope so.	6.0
		4.6
		4.3
		4.6
	/Networking opportunities, so there has been the [borough] one and I am lucky because it is only there, but sadly the [borough]	2.3

	<p>one hasn't really happened as regularly as it could have done. It has gone again this term, so I actually do think a time to get together and talk to each other, you do share an awful lot of good practice. /That was one of the bonuses of my course actually because it was two terms, the first term we had a fantastic tutor. The second term, well I could have read off a PowerPoint. It wasn't even her own, so what she provided wasn't necessarily anything I couldn't have read in a book, but it was that opportunity to meet with other people and share ideas that is really helpful.</p>	2.2
<p>KT</p>	<p>Where did you do that?</p>	
<p>SENCO</p>	<p>At the [university]. The second tutor, well yes. /I am clear about the SEND (special educational needs and disability) funding arrangements, so that is the thing that, maybe I have buried my head in the sand a little bit about it and I have just thought, you know what I must be good at that sort of thing when I need to actually put those figures on there, I will.</p>	1.8
	<p>/I am fine with parents, no problem.</p>	
	<p>/Yes I think I have enough influence.</p>	1.4
	<p>/No, the services and resources, I do know what is out there in general, but obviously there is always, always room to know and find out new things.</p>	5.5
	<p>/This person centred approach, so I did do that course but I haven't had a go at doing a One Page Profile fully yet so maybe having that experience. I have done elements of it, but I have yet to put a whole one together. I have done pupil view, but I haven't then got parent help to add and develop it further yet so that is something that I probably need to work on a bit more next year.</p>	1.2
	<p>I can see the positives from it. It is just the time that it takes and that is why it has slipped down and I haven't had to do one. /I</p>	4.2

	<p>have done other things that had to be done. Enough time, well there is never enough time.</p> <p>/Have the necessary skills – I hope so.</p> <p>/This is the bit that is tricky because I think, sadly the speech and language is being reduced all the time to now only statement only. It is the nature of cut backs. I understand it but it is frustrating. OTs (occupational therapists) are constantly changing because they go back to Australia. Very lovely when they come, but obviously they don't hit the ground running because they haven't been here for a very long time so they have to. It is just constantly reviewing the whole time. /The SEN caseworker, mine is on long term sick, so it is very difficult to get that sort of contact. /CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services), we do refer to CAMHS. We used to have a fantastic family support worker and that again is another thing that has sort of disappeared. It is the nature of the cut backs and I understand all that but it is also frustrating that some of that level of support has gone and I think what happens is that schools begin to buy their own. I went to a Gold Club meeting the other week and this school, it was a [another borough] school and was talking about they have hired their own speech therapist. They had hired and employed their own SEN caseworker, so someone who clearly worked for [another borough] now worked for them. They had got their own family support worker. He had got basically a mini what the borough can offer, /but in-house because he had enough money. It was a big four form entry primary school in an under privileged area, so they had the money to be able to do that, /but even listening yesterday, because I went to the healthy schools meeting about wellbeing and mental health yesterday, and even listening to [colleague], she was saying we have employed our own school nurse. Because again, that is the other</p>	<p>1.4</p> <p>5.5</p> <p>1.2</p> <p>1.7</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>4.8</p> <p>1.7</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>4.8</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.8</p>
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	<p>thing, our school nurse changes every five seconds. I have no idea who our school nurse is. So they have employed their own school nurse, they have employed their own counsellor, they have employed their own one other thing she said that was gold dust, which I have forgotten now. But, more and more schools are having to do that because it isn't out there, and the speech and language is particularly frustrating I find. Because more of our children are having difficulties with speech and language, it is more and more prevalent all the time and now we have got no support unless you have a statement and we have a huge caseload of children who could do with extra speech and language and previously they would have been seen. So I am going to go hopefully next term and go and get some training. Then I will be able to do that level of support, but then that means I am not in the classroom. If we put that intervention in early, and if it works hopefully, they can access their learning in a classroom better anyway, but it is just, it is frustrating that the level of support from external agencies isn't consistent. I think, that is the bit I find frustrating.</p>	<p>1.8</p> <p>4.8</p> <p>1.8</p> <p>4.8</p>
KT	<p>What I do know is that the authorities are issuing some guidance to schools on how they engage with other professionals if that is the route they chose to take, because I think there are issues around that about the contracts and so on and so forth so there is going to be guidance for you on that because that is the route that some schools are taking.</p>	
SENCO	<p>/Well we did look to see if we have enough money to budget for buying in extra speech therapist and at one point [headteacher] said yes but, /we don't get to choose our own so we get given and that could change every five seconds. /So [headteacher] was like if we are going to invest we might as well invest in you getting the training so that you can do it and you can disseminate</p>	<p>1.8</p>

	it, /rather than that person changing every five minutes and we can't choose that person. So they might be good they might not be, but we don't have any choice on that, so in the end we decided that actually that wasn't the route forward and /that there is better ways of the spending the money /so doing it in house really. I suppose that is the bit that is frustrating.	4.8 2.1 4.8
KT	That is good to hear, that is interesting to hear.	
SENCO	Thank you.	1.8
KT	That is wonderful, thank you.	2.1

Appendix 18: Coding summary initial interviews

Co.	Category/Sub-category	SENCO							Nu.	Av.	Pr.	Ra.
		1/N	2/P	3/P	4/S	5/P	6/Sp	7/S				
1	Leading and managing											
1.4	Parents or carers	7	5	4	6	7	7	2	38/7	5.4	266	2=
1.5	Administration tasks	7	3	5	6	1	1	1	24/7	3.4	168	5
1.1	Staff management	4	6	5	9	2	Sp		26/5	5.2	130	7
1.7	Time			11	3	1	4	5	24/5	4.8	120	9=
1.9	Communications	1	5	2	3			7	18/5	3.6	90	12
1.6	Data		4	1	1		2	1	9/5	1.8	45	18
1.3	SEND Provision		5	1	1		1		8/4	2.0	32	19
1.8	Finances	1	1	4		1			7/4	1.8	28	21
1.2	Resources	N			2	1	1	1	5/4	1.3	20	23
6.0	Resignation			3					3/1	3.0	3	28=
6.0	Accountability					3			3/1	3.0	3	28=
6.0	Safeguarding		1						1/1	1.0	1	29=
6.0	Ofsted				1				1/1	1.0	1	29=
	Sub-totals	20	30	36	32	16	16	17	167			
2	Professional development											
2.1	Staff training	5	8	5	12	3	6	4	43/7	6.1	301	1
2.2	SENCO accreditation	2		2	2	3	Sp	1	10/5	2.0	50	16
2.3	SENCO networking	N		4	1	1	Sp		6/3	2.0	18	24
2.4	Sharing good practice	1			S	1	Sp	S	2/2	1.0	4	27
	Sub-totals	8	8	11	15	8	6	5	61			
3	Teaching and learning											
3.1	Individual pupils	7	4	1	12	4	3	6	37/7	5.3	259	3
3.3	Whole class		1	3	7	4	1	4	20/6	3.3	120	9=
3.2	Group work		2	1		1			4/3	1.3	12	25=
6.0	Behaviour management						3		3/1	3.0	3	28=
	Sub-totals	7	7	5	19	9	7	10	64			
4	SEND Code of Practice											
4.3	EHC plan	3	1	4	1	7	15	3	34/7	4.9	238	4
4.8	Integrated working	2	1	2	1	6	6	4	22/7	3.1	154	6
4.1	Identification	4	4	2	1	1	2	2	16/7	2.3	112	10
4.2	Profiles	4	1	3	4	2	Sp	3	17/6	2.8	102	11
4.6	Outcomes				6	5	5	2	18/4	4.5	72	15

4.5	Person centred reviews	1	P	P	5	P	4		10/3	3.3	30	20
4.7	Key working		2	1		1	2		6/4	1.5	24	22
6.0	SEND legislation	N				5	Sp	1	6/2	3.0	12	25=
6.0	SEN Information Report	N		1	S	1	1	S	3/3	1.0	9	26=
4.4	Personal budgets	1			1			1	3/3	1.0	9	26=
6.0	Tribunals				3				3/1	3.0	3	28=
	Sub-totals	15	9	13	22	28	35	16	138			
5	Ethos, values and attitudes											
5.1	Inclusion	7	6	5	4	4	5	7	38/7	5.4	266	2=
5.4	Motivation	1		3	5	7	4	1	21/6	3.5	126	8
5.5	Senior Leadership			2	11	1	2	1	17/5	3.4	85	13
5.2	Skills and attributes	2	1	3		2	3	3	14/6	2.3	84	14
5.3	Metaphor	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7/7	1	49	17
6.0	Solution focused	3							3/1	3	3	28=
6.0	Transparency			3					3/1	3	3	28=
6.0	Language	1							1/1	1	1	29=
	Sub-totals	15	8	17	21	15	15	13	104			
	Totals	65	62	82	109	76	79	61	534			

Appendix 19: Professional qualities and skills

SENCO	Skills and qualities mentioned
S1/N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you need to be organised • very good understanding of children and child development
S2/P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very good interpersonal skills • a degree of confidence • be able to manage people • have a sympathetic approach
S3/P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highly organised for one to keep on top of everything • somebody with a lot of energy • emotionally stable • speak differently to different people
S4/S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an ability to juggle everything at once
S5/P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a good teacher to model good teaching
S6/Sp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • patience • understanding parents different needs • you need to be empathetic and to be able to listen • you need to be organised • you need to be skilled at a bit of everything • have enough knowledge to know where to delegate
S7/S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a lot of patience • finishing things and the attention to detail • good communication skills

Appendix 20: Coding summary return interviews

Co.	Category/Sub-category	SENCO					Nu.	Av.	Pr.	Ra.
1	Leading and managing	1/N	4/S	5/P	6/Sp	7/S				
1.9	Communications	3	14	2	7	7	33/5	6.6	165	1
1.4	Parents or carers	8	7	11	4	2	32/5	6.4	160	2
1.5	Admin tasks or paperwork	7	1	6	4	9	27/5	5.4	135	3
1.3	SEND provision	14		1	3	8	26/4	6.5	104	8
1.8	Finances	3	5	1	6	4	19/5	3.8	95	10
1.7	Time or workload	5		3	8	2	18/4	4.5	72	11
6.2	Timescales	N	2	3	6	2	13/4	3.3	52	14=
1.6	Data	1		3	1		5/3	1.7	15	21
1.1	Staff management					1	1/1	1.0	1	25=
6.4	Review					1	1/1	1.0	1	25=
6.0	Ofsted		1				1/1	1.0	1	25=
6.0	Accountability					1	1/1	1.0	1	25=
1.2	Resources									
6.0	Resignation									
6.0	Safeguarding									
	Sub-totals	41	30	30	39	37	177			
2	Professional development									
2.1	Staff training	2	4		2	4	12/4	3.0	48	15
2.2	SENCO accreditation									
2.3	SENCO networking									
2.4	Sharing good practice									
	Sub-totals	2	4		2	4	12			
3	Teaching and learning									
3.3	Whole class	5		3	1	6	15/4	3.8	60	13
3.1	Individual pupils	1	2	1		7	11/4	2.8	44	16
3.2	Group work									
6.0	Behaviour management									
	Sub-totals	6	2	4	1	13	26			

4	SEND Code of Practice									
4.3	EHC plan	3	4	4	10	4	25/5	5.0	125	4
4.8	Integrated working	1		6	16	4	27/4	6.8	108	6
4.6	Outcomes or targets	5	2	8	9		24/4	6.0	96	9
4.7	Key working	1	2	1	4		8/4	2.0	32	18
4.4	Personal budgets			2	6	2	10/3	3.3	30	19
4.1	Identification	7	1			1	9/3	3.0	27	20
4.5	Person centred reviews		2		3		5/2	2.5	10	22
4.2	Profiles	2					2/1	2.0	2	24
6.0	SEND legislation									
6.0	SEN Information Report									
6.0	Tribunals									
	Sub-totals	19	11	21	48	11	110			
5	Ethos, values and attitudes									
6.1	Values and attitudes	1	5	2	4	11	23/5	4.6	115	5
6.3	Children and young people	1	5	6	5	4	21/5	4.2	105	7
5.5	Senior leadership	2	6		1	8	17/4	4.3	68	12
5.2	Skills and attributes	8	2	2	1		13/4	3.3	52	14=
5.1	Inclusion	8		1		2	11/3	3.7	33	17
5.4	Motivation	1			1		2/2	1.0	4	23
5.3	Metaphor									
6.0	Solution focused									
6.0	Transparency									
6.0	Language									
	Sub-totals	21	18	11	12	25	87			
	Totals	89	65	66	102	90	412			

Appendix 21: Coding summary TOWS analysis

Co.	Category/Sub-category	SENCO					Nu.
		1/N	4/S	5/P	6/Sp	7/S	
	Challenges (T)						
1.5	Admin tasks or paperwork	X		X	X	X	4
1.3	SEND provision			X	X	X	3
1.9	Communications		X	X	X		3
6.1	Values and attitudes				X	X	2
1.7	Time or workload	X					1
1.8	Finances					X	1
4.6	Outcomes or targets				X		1
4.8	Integrated working				X		1
5.2	Skills and attributes	X					1
6.2	Timescales				X		1
	Flaws (W)						
1.3	SEND provision				X	X	2
1.8	Finances		X		X		2
1.9	Communications	X			X		2
4.3	EHC plan			X	X		2
4.4	Personal budgets			X	X		2
6.2	Timescales		X	X			2
1.5	Admin tasks or paperwork		X				1
1.7	Time or workload				X		1
4.8	Integrated working				X		1
	Negative aspects (T+W)						
1.5	Admin tasks or paperwork	X	X	X	X	X	5
1.9	Communications	X	X	X	X		4
1.3	SEND provision			X	X	X	3
1.8	Finances		X		X	X	3
6.2	Timescales		X	X	X		3
1.7	Time or workload	X			X		2
4.3	EHC plan			X	X		2
4.4	Personal budgets			X	X		2

6.1	Values and attitudes				X	X	2
4.6	Outcomes or targets				X		1
4.8	Integrated working				X		1
5.2	Skills and attributes	X					1
	Benefits (O)						
6.3	Children and young people		X	X	X	X	4
1.4	Parents or carers		X	X		X	3
4.5	Person centred reviews		X		X		2
2.1	Staff training				X		1
3.3	Whole class	X					1
4.1	Identification		X				1
4.6	Outcomes or targets	X					1
5.1	Inclusion					X	1
6.1	Values and attitudes					X	1
	Merits (S)						
1.4	Parents or carers	X	X	X	X		4
4.8	Integrated working			X	X	X	3
6.3	Children and young people	X	X	X			3
4.6	Outcomes or targets	X	X				2
6.1	Values and attitudes					X	1
6.0	Accountability					X	1
	Positive aspects (O+S)						
6.3	Children and young people	X	X	X	X	X	5
1.4	Parents or carers	X	X	X	X	X	5
4.8	Integrated working			X	X	X	3
4.6	Outcomes or targets	X	X				2
4.5	Person centred reviews		X		X		2
6.0	Accountability					X	1
4.1	Identification		X				1
5.1	Inclusion					X	1
2.1	Staff training				X		1
6.1	Values and attitudes					X	1
3.3	Whole class	X					1

Appendix 22: Initial rating results

Rating Item	SENCO			Total			Av.		
	1/N	2/P	3/P	4/S	5/P	6/Sp	7/S		
I am confident in working with parents.	(10)	10	10	(9)	(10)	(10)	(8)	67/7 (47/5)	9.6 (9.4)
SENCOS' notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hasn't been easy to explain process to them though. (S6/Sp) SENCO's comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I am fine with parents, no problem.' (S5/P) 									

I understand the requirements on schools of the new SEND legislation.	(9)	8	9	(8)	(8)	(8)	(9)	59/7 (42/5)	8.4 (8.4)
SENCOS' notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I completed the SENCO Accreditation Course at [university] last year. (S1/N) • It took a very long time to get info and correct paperwork. (S2/P) SENCO's comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'There is always something new to learn.' (S5/P) 									

I have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out my responsibilities.	(10)	10	8	(8)	(8)	(8)	(7)	59/7 (41/5)	8.4 (8.2)
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SENCOs' notes:

- Very old with a fair bit of experience. (S2/P)
- Have the skills, but not always secure in knowledge. (S6/Sp)

SENCO's comments:

- '...I hope so.' (S5/P)

I am confident in leading the development of SEND provision within school.	(9)	8	9	(9)	(8)		(6)	49/6 (32/4)	8.2 (8.0)
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SENCOs' notes:

- Would be a 10 if had support from SLT (senior leadership team). (S4/S)
- Very much a collaborative approach. (S6/Sp)

SENCO's comments:

- 'Confident leading it.' (S5/P)

I have sufficient networking opportunities available locally.	(7)	8	8	(9)	(7)		(9)	48/6 (32/4)	8.0 (8.0)
<p>SENCOs' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, but can it be somewhere other than [school] sometimes. (S4/S) • Would be nice to see how other special schools are finding process. (S6/Sp) <p>SENCO's comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • '...one hasn't really happened as regularly as it could have done...' '...my course...was that opportunity to meet with other people share ideas that is really helpful.' (S5/P) 									

I am clear on how to set suitable outcomes for pupils with SEND and monitor their progress.	(8)	6	9	(6)	(8)	(10)	(7)	54/7 (39/5)	7.7 (7.8)
<p>SENCOs' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very dependent on the training that you go on. (S4/S) <p>SENCO's comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • '...we do outcomes all the time...I can do that and monitor the progress of that without any difficulty.' (S5/P) 									

I have sufficient influence to fulfil my strategic role.	(10)	10	8	(3)	(10)	(9)	(4)	54/7 (36/5)	7.7 (7.2)
<p>SENCOs' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLT and governors. (S2/P) • Real struggle to get SEN on the big picture thinking here. (S4/S) • Generally, but overall decisions will be made by H/T (headteacher). (S6/Sp) <p>SENCO's comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Yes, I think I have enough influence.' (S5/P) 									

I know what services and resources are available through the Local Offer.	(9)	8	9	(6)	(8)	(6)	(7)	53/7 (36/5)	7.6 (7.2)
<p>SENCOs' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More knowledge of what's available for our families, but not necessarily how to access. (S6/Sp) <p>SENCO's comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • '...I do know what is out there in general...' (S5/P) 									

I have access to a sufficient level of support from external agencies.	(9)	10	8	(6)	(5)		(7)	45/6 (27/4)	7.5 (6.8)
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SENCOs' notes:

- Access I have is good the communication from them is very variable. (S4/S)
- Social service input is v (very) limited, apart from particular individuals. Excellent support from school's EP (educational psychologist) and our OT (occupational therapist). (S6/Sp)

SENCO's comments:

- 'what happens is that schools begin to buy their own.' '...it is frustrating that the level of support from external agencies isn't consistent...' (S5/P)

I am skilled in person-centred approaches.	(8)	9	8	(6)	(7)	(7)	(7)	52/7 (35/5)	7.4 (7.0)
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SENCOs' notes:

- Done some training upskilled member of team who is training me too. (S4/S)
- Participated in many, but not facilitated so far. (S6/Sp)

SENCO's comments:

- '...so I did do that course but I haven't had a go at doing a one page profile fully yet...' 'I can see the positives from it. It is just the time that it takes...' (S5/P)

I am clear about the SEND funding arrangements.	(1)	8	8	(6)	(6)	(5)	(6)	40/7 (24/5)	5.7 (4.8)
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SENCOs' notes:

- Again this was a process of trial and error. (S2/P)
- Not sure the borough is completely clear. (S4/S)
- Not in relation to mainstream and personal budgets. (S6/Sp)

SENCO's comments:

- '...so that is the thing that maybe I have buried my head in the sand a little bit about...when I actually need to put those figures on there I will.' (S5/P)

I have enough time and support to carry out my SENCO duties.	(3)	7	7	(3)	(8)		(3)	31/6 (17/4)	5.2 (4.3)
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SENCOs' notes:

- There are not enough hours in the day most days! (S4/S)
- Would not have been feasible without p/t (part-time) SAO (school administration officer). (S6/Sp)

SENCO's comments:

- '...well there is never enough time.' (S5/P)

Averages	93/12	102/12	101/12	79/12	93/12	63/8	80/12		7.7
	(7.8)	8.5	8.4	(6.6)	(7.8)	(7.9)	(6.7)		(7.4)

Appendix 23: Return rating results

Rating item	Scores			Total			Av.		
	1/N	2/P	3/P	4/S	5/P	6/Sp	7/S		
I am confident in working with parents.	10			8	10	10	8	46/5	9.2 (-0.2)
SENCOS' notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With working with parents I share the knowledge I have which may be out of date. (S4/S) • Lack of clarity/response from local authority has caused difficulties with some parents – they hold us responsible. (S6/Sp) 									
I understand the requirements on schools of the new SEND legislation.	10			7	8	10	9	44/5	8.8 (+0.4)
SENCOS' notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand the requirements from the law but I am at a loss when it comes to what I am needed to do with respect to the borough. (S4/S) • Not sure how tenable they are. Local authorities also making demands on schools. (S6/Sp) 									

I am confident in leading the development of SEND provision within school.	10			6	9	10	7	42/5	8.4 (+0.4)
<p>SENCOs' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, but without understanding what the borough expects of me/the school in this area, it is difficult to lead in this. (S4/S) • Collaborative approach. (S6/Sp) <p>Researcher's contemporaneous notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication, significantly worse. (S4/S) • Another year in the job. (S5/P) 									

I am skilled in person-centred approaches.	9			7	7	9	8	40/5	8.0 (+1.0)
<p>SENCOs' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have had facilitator training for person centred reviews. Person centred approach integrated throughout [school]. (S6/Sp) 									

I am clear on how to set suitable outcomes for pupils with SEND and monitor their progress.	10			4	8	10	8	40/5	8.0 (+0.2)
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SENCOS' notes:

- Outcomes are very difficult to write in the way that the borough expects with little help for this. (S4/S)
- Problems when we set outcomes at transition meetings and then don't get anything back from local authority. Should we monitor the outcomes or statement? (S6/Sp)

I have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out my responsibilities.	9			4	8	10	9	40/5	8.0 (-0.2)
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SENCOS' notes:

- No I do not feel empowered to do this as the system has changed since I did the training. (S4/S)
- Don't always have authority. Lack of local authority support causes problems. (S6/Sp)

Researcher's contemporaneous notes:

- More confident . (S7/S)

I know what services and resources are available through the Local Offer.	9			6	8	7	8	38/5	7.6 (+0.4)
<p>SENCOS' notes/comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not really sure on this. (S4/S) • Majority of parents are not aware. How will proposed cuts affect Local Offer? (S6/Sp) <p>Researcher's contemporaneous notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of generic services.(S5/P) 									

I have sufficient influence to fulfil my strategic role.	7			6	10	8	4	35/5	7.0 (-0.2)
<p>SENCOS' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure what direction I am expected to go in with respect to the borough so being very child/needs centred. (S4/S) • All decisions ultimately [headteacher]. (S6/Sp) <p>Researcher's contemporaneous notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of influence on local authority EHC plan process. (S1/N) • Not sure of local authority expectations. (S4/S) 									

I am clear about the SEND funding arrangements.	6			4	7	8	8	33/5	6.6 (+1.8)
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SENCOs' notes:

- Not really as the system has changed without clear processes/channels to gain knowledge in this. (S4/S)
- Clearer than last year about what should happen. Concerned about what actually happens. (S6/Sp)

Researcher's contemporaneous notes:

- More involved – local authority clearer about sources of funding. (S1/N)
- Clearer. (S7/S)

I have enough time and support to carry out my SENCO duties.	7			4	8		5	24/4	6.0 (+1.7)
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SENCOs' notes:

- Never enough time. (S4/S)
- Cut back in speech and language therapy. Reduction in educational psychology time – now buying in. (S5/P)
- Duties different from most SENCOs. Lot more onerous since EHC plans. Would be impossible with full-time class. (S6/Sp)

Researcher's contemporaneous notes:

- No longer has a teaching role. (S1/N)
- Seemed less stressed. (S7/S)

I have sufficient networking opportunities available locally.	6			4	7		7	24/4	6.0 (-2.0)
<p>SENCOS' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These seem to have decreased this year, have to make our own. (S4/S) • [borough] SENCO forum no longer held.(S5/P) • Networking has been around other areas, not SEND Code of Practice. (S6/Sp) <p>Researcher's contemporaneous notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of clarity. (S4/S) • Lack of networking locally to share good practice. (S4/P) • No longer going to SENCO forum. (S7/S) 									

I have access to a sufficient level of support from external agencies.	7			4	4	4	9	28/5	5.6 (-1.2)
<p>SENCOS' notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, unless I get very assertive on behalf of our students. (S4/S) • Speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy at [school] excellent. Educational psychologist too. No medical input and social services minimal. Recent child and adolescent mental health service project very helpful. (S6/Sp) <p>Researcher's contemporaneous notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to know people. (S7/S) 									

Averages	100/ 12			64/1 2	94/1 2	86/1 0	90/1 2		7.5 (+0.1)
	8.3 (+0.5)			5.3 (-1.3)	7.8 (0.0)	8.6 (+0.7)	7.5 (+0.8)		

Glossary of terms

Child: A person below the end of the statutory school age of 16.

Education, health and care plan (EHC Plan): An education, health and care plan provides details of the educational, health and social care provision that is required to meet the needs of a child or young person with SEN and/or a disability. The local authority draws up the plan following a statutory assessment of need. The requirements of the EHC Plan are specified in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015). However, each local authority has developed its own template. Plans cover the ages 0 to 25 and replace both statements of SEN and learning difficulty assessments. Plans identify the needs of a child or young person and usually provide additional funds and resources to a setting to meet those needs.

Inclusion: The process by which children and young people are given access to, and participate in, the activities normally available to others of the same age.

Integrated working: An approach where professionals working in a more joined up manner. It is a requirement under the new SEND legislation for health, education and social care professionals to work collaboratively in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Key stage (KS): The educational phases in state schools.

Key Stage	School years	Ages	Assessment
EYFS ¹	Nursery, Reception	3 - 5	Early Learning Goals
KS1	Years 1, 2	6 - 7	Phonics, KS1 SATs ²
KS2	Years 3, 4, 5, 6	8 - 11	KS2 SATs ²
KS3	Years 7, 8, 9	12 - 14	-
KS4	Years 10, 11	15 - 16	GCSE ³
KS5	Years 12, 13	17 - 18	AS-Level ⁴ , A-Levels ⁵ , NVQs ⁶ , Diplomas

¹Early Years Foundation Stage

²Standard Assessment Tests

³General Certificate of Education

⁴Advanced Subsidiary Level

⁵Advanced Level

⁶National Vocational Qualification

Key worker: The key worker is a person, usually employed by the local authority, who coordinates the EHC assessment and draws up of the EHC plan. This responsibility is assumed by the SENCO in some situations.

Learning difficulty assessment (LDAs): Learning difficulty assessments were undertaken for young people under 25 with a learning disability who were about to enter post-16 education and were likely to need additional support as part of their further education. Under the current SEND legislation these have been replaced by EHC plans.

Local Offer: The provision made available locally across education, health and social care for children and young people with special educational needs. Local authorities in England are required to publish this offer.

Mainstream: The curriculum or provision that the vast majority of pupils have access to within ordinary schools.

Nursery school: A school where children below statutory school age attend. It covers part of the educational stage Early Years Foundation Stage.

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills): A non-ministerial government department established under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 that inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

Outcome: An outcome is the 'benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention' (DfE 2015: 163, para 9.66). In respect of schools, this could range from achieving academic success to accessing the social activities offered by the school.

Personal budget: A personal budget is an identified amount of money to deliver the provision set out in an EHC plan where the parent or young person is involved in securing that provision. The money can be held directly by the parent or young person, or by the local authority or setting on their behalf.

Person centred review: A person centred review is a review that involves the child or young person, their parents and relevant professionals to monitor progress against the EHC plan. During the review the views of the child or young person are given particular prominence.

Primary school: A school that most children of statutory school age attend from the ages of 5 to 11. The school covers the key stages Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The school may also include nursery provision.

Pupil: Used to describe a child or young person attending school, often referred to as a student in secondary schools.

Pupil profile: A written description of a pupil outlining their strengths and particular needs.

Quality first teaching: This refers to high quality teaching provided to all pupils by the class or subject teacher. The learning objectives and activities will be suitably differentiated to meet a range of needs and abilities. It should enable the vast majority of pupils to progress in their learning without the need for additional provision.

Secondary school: A school that most children of compulsory school age attend from the ages of 11 to 16. The school covers the key stages Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The school may also include sixth form provision.

Setting: An establishment where children and/or young people are educated or cared for.

Special educational needs (SEN): The SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015) sets out the definition of special educational needs. A child or young person is identified as having a special educational need when they have greater difficulties with learning than the majority of their peers. Approximately 14% of the school pupil population is currently identified with SEN (DfE 2017a).

Special educational needs and disability (SEND): This definition includes all children and young with SEN as well as those with a disability. A child or young person with a disability may have greater difficulties with learning due to a learning difficulty or a disability that hinders their access to educational facilities.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Code (SEND) of Practice: The new SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015) sets out the requirements of education, health and social care providers in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. This is a new version of the Code of Practice that introduces some significant changes in how pupils are identified and assessed. There is a particular focus on partnership work between agencies and with parents and carers in meeting needs, and with children and young people themselves. There is a greater emphasis on positive outcomes for children and young people, and preparation for adulthood. The original SEN Code of Practice was published in 1994 (DfE) and a revised version in 2001 (DfES).

Special educational needs and disability (SEND) legislation: Refers to Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 that sets out the principles underpinning the new SEND legislation and the guidance in the new SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015).

Special educational needs coordinator (SENCO): A qualified teacher working at the school that holds the responsibility of coordinating the SEND provision. Since September 2008, it has been a requirement for all new SENCOs to gain the National Award in SEN coordination within three years of being appointed

Special educational needs information report: The new SEND legislation requires all schools to publish an SEN Information Report which outlines the provision that the school offers to pupils with SEND. The Code of Practice (DfE 2015) outlines the requirements of the report. Schools are required to publish this on their website.

Special educational needs provision: The support or resources made available to a child or young person to meet their special educational needs. This provision is 'additional to or different from' (DfE 2015: 25, para 1.24) that normally made available to others of the same age.

Special school: A school that is specifically organised to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Currently approximately 1% of the total pupil population attends a special school (DfE 2017a).

Statement of special educational needs: A statement is a document that sets out a child's special educational needs and specifies the support the child requires to meet their needs. Under the new SEND legislation, statements have been replaced by EHC plans. Local authorities are still in the process of transferring statements of SEN to EHC plans and so currently both types of documents are in use. All SEN statements are required to be transferred to EHC plans by 1st April 2018.

Statutory school age: The age children are required to attend school from the term after which they become 5, up until the end of the academic year in which they reach 16.

Threats, opportunities, weaknesses, strengths (SWOT) analysis: a technique, often used as a management tool, to discuss an issue and seek possible solutions. Used in this research to explore attitudes towards the recent changes to SEND legislation.

Tribunals: Tribunals hear appeals against decisions made by local authorities in England relating to EHC assessments and EHC Plans. The Tribunal process is overseen by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service.

Young person: A person above statutory school age of 16.

