The Contextual Variety existing between English primary school Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) within the East-Midlands Region.

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DEDICATION

To my late Father, Norman, I can finally say, *'I've done it Dad…it's all finished.'* I know that would mean a lot to him….and to Sarah, my wife, ' *Thank you for being so patient…now I can do my share of the washing up, nappy changing, ironing…I might even get around to the dusting and putting up that curtain rail!'*

ABSTRACT

Special Educational Needs Cooroordinators (SENCOs) should have the key role in managing and leading the day-to-day provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in their schools.   This study was designed to explore how this role was practised by SENCOs from a selection of primary schools in eleven local authorities in the East Midlands, comparing their professional practice and experiences with the requirements of national legislation and statutory guidance relating to SEND. This study was based on the premise that the Contextual Variety across individual schools created a tension between what a SENCO was expected to do as a school leader according to legislation (their Legal Contract) and how it was done in practice; this tension being facilitated by the culture within each school being influenced by the standards based, high-stakes assessment driven performativity-culture dominating the English Education system.

This issue was explored through a process of practitioner-research, underpinned by '*Living Theory',* using an interpretative paradigm which gathered data from three distinct sample groups of SENCOs at three points in their careers: SENCOs at the start of their *National Award for SEN Coordination*, those who had been trained and had been in post for a minimum of one year and a small group of trained SENCOs with at least four years' experience in post. Factors relating to SENCO conditions of service, resources, work-load, well-being and professional development were investigated through the analysis of SENCOs' concept maps/supporting narratives, a questionnaire and a diary which detailed a typical working day for a SENCO. Although not designed as a purely narrative study, this study drew heavily on the SENCOs' own stories. Particular emphasis was placed on investigating the extent to which SENCOs were empowered with the status to become transformational leaders and change-makers in their schools.

The findings indicated that all SENCOs understood and accepted their legal responsibilities as stated in the DfE/DH (2015) and previous *Codes of Practice* together with the usefulness of their compulsory *National Award for SEN Coordination* training in preparing/supporting them in meeting these responsibilities. Although the role of the SENCO nationally has had an enhanced profile since 2009, a mis-match between this status and the Legal Contract for SENCOs was identified as a significant number of them felt pressurised due to

their individual school priorities for SEND provision providing them with a limited allocation of time, funding and resources. Fewer than 50% of SENCOs were members of their schools' senior leadership teams or received any additional payment/allowance. All of the SENCOs recognised their positive contribution in supporting the needs of vulnerable pupils and in supporting the professional development of their colleagues (teachers and teaching assistants) in matters relating to SEND but they also commentated negatively on their work-life balance due to having an excessive workload created through the demands of increasing administration and the multi-role of balancing being a SENCO with class teaching or other whole-school responsibilities.

The implications of the findings from this study and its contribution to knowledge was significant in three key areas: The first was the seemingly lack of progress in SENCO conditions of service since the first DfE (1994) *Code of Practice* defined the role of SENCO; the second was the continuing process where local circumstances and individual school head-teachers and leadership teams always influenced how provision for SEND was managed (the Contextual Variety creating a wide range of SENCO experiences across all of the schools in this study) and the third being the SENCOs' own practices in trying to 'make a difference' for pupils with SEND in their schools through giving additional time in order to 'do the right thing' as a teacher (the Psychological Contract expressed as 'Emotional Labour'). Overall, it was discovered that the roles and experiences of the SENCOs in this study were on 'shifting sands' ranging from those who found difficulty in managing their role due to holding the full responsibility for SEN-focused administrative tasks in addition to full-time class-teaching and/or other whole-school duties to those SENCOs who had the least difficulty in meeting the requirements of the Code. These SENCOs being recognised by their head-teachers and colleagues as members of their schools' senior leadership teams with support through adequate resourcing, protected time for SENCO work, additional/enhanced pay and having opportunities to work with colleagues in their classrooms and to liaise with external agencies.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoP	Code of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DH	Department for Health
ECM	Every Child Matters
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LA	Local Authority
(n = x)	Number (raw figure)
NAHT	National Association of Head-teachers
NASEN	National Association of Special Educational Needs
NGA	National Governors Association
NC	National Curriculum
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
RBA	Removing Barriers to Achievement
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMT	Senior Management Team
TA	Teaching Assistant
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
TDA	Training and Development Agency
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

1.1   Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the working lives of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in a selection of primary schools in eleven Local Authorities (LAs) in the East Midlands region at a time of significant legislative and political change where teachers' work and attitudes to work are influenced by a performativity-driven, high-stakes national assessment regime. This study was undertaken primarily in order to inform and improve my own knowledge and understanding as a professional SENCO educator by determining how this change was enacted in the SENCOs' schools in terms of identifying the Contextual Variety which exists when real-life practice is compared to the requirements of the DfE (2009) *Special Educational Needs Coordination Award*, the legislation of the Children and Families Act (2014) and the resulting Department for Education/Department for Health (2015) *Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0 to 25*; from this point onwards to be cited as the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP.*

The main idea which influences this study is an appreciation that differences naturally occur across English primary schools in the way that the SENCO role is implemented. However, in order to be more effective in meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and in supporting teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) in doing this in their own classrooms, the resources and conditions of service for SENCOs only 'suggested' by a succession of Special Educational Needs Codes of Practice (DES 1994, DfES 2001 and DfE/DH 2015) needed to have been firmly in place in order for a SENCO to develop into a reflective practitioner and strategic leader within their primary schools/settings, otherwise a certain level of threat emerges which impacts negatively on the SENCOs' work-life balance and professional identity.

1.2   Context: Position and Challenge

The context for this research had been formed through my professional role engaged in leading SENCO training and development as an experienced senior lecturer in special and inclusive education at the University of Northampton, advising SENCOs and by being a governor at a local primary school with the

responsibility for the special educational needs and disability brief. In this position I naturally worked closely with the school's SENCO. This provided me with a significant, and very personal, insider's insight into the role of the individual SENCO in this large inner-city primary school and the day-to-day pressures she faced when engaged in managing special provision, working with colleagues and successfully liaising with parents and external agencies.

This raft of current experience was coupled with my past experience of being a SENCO working in both upper and primary schools in two Local Authorities within the period 1990 to 2003. This was a time of significant educational change related to SEND in schools including such milestones as the *Education Act* (1993), which underpinned the DfE (1994) Code of Practice on the *Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* - which Cowne et al (2015) called a document which had a status falling between that of a statutory regulation and an advisory 'circular' - the second DfES, (2001) SEN Code of Practice, and the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act* (2001) known as SENDA, which amended part 4 of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (1995). The 2001 revised Code of Practice was itself revised thirteen years later when the DfE/DH (2015) *Code of Practice* (*CoP*) was rolled out across all English schools.

In addition to this professional SENCO work I also operated as the Chairman of a Local Authority's SENCO Group where I had the invaluable experience of working in close liaison with a number of SENCOs from early years' settings through to secondary schools, those both new in role and those long-experienced. It was through this Chairman's position that I began to gain an overview of the range of the SENCO experience created through the Contextual Variety which existed between their schools; this related to variables such as school size, National Curriculum Key Stages taught, levels of funding and the support/resources and status given to SENCOs by their head-teachers and governing bodies. I also appreciated the differing levels of training, qualifications and expertise held by the SENCOs themselves, from those virtually 'marched' into their post by their head-teachers to those who had followed a professional pathway through enhancing their training at master's degree level (National Level 7) in subjects related to SEND and managing school provision.

Although this study had a significant concentration on the SENCOs' pathway from pre-trained to trained SEND practitioners it was also about my own journey -

influenced by my past and present experience - from my biased and somewhat political personal position through to a new understanding and appreciation of SENCOs, their work in schools and the vital relationship between themselves and their professional colleagues, particularly relating to their relationships with their head-teachers.

Due to my personal perspective, for large parts of this thesis I used an autobiographical writing style as my own experiences naturally influenced this study and so it was difficult to mentally step-back from that which had led me to adopt a sometimes negative position; however, this was a position upon which I needed to be challenged through this study. Bold (2012) stated that the traditional definition of objectivity cannot fit the narrative approach but it is essential that the researcher acknowledges their subjective position in order to collect and analyse data with that position accounted for in discussion. Goodley (1996) stated that the particularly intimate experience of obtaining someone's life history elicits numerous issues associated with the researcher's role and that researchers need to confront their own perceptions of,

> '…informants, if unfair, they may hinder the research process. Being sensitive to both our informants and our own feelings, perceptions and speech will make us more able to hear their stories.'
> (p 339)

This approach led me to consider my influence on the research at all stages (Yow, 2006); I did not wish to depersonalise my own experience or the experiences of the participants whose narratives (in various formats) were given to me for exploration and analysis and so I questioned the argument that a personalised approach is not an academic one. I also questioned my motives which drove the research, my feelings about the other participants in the research (the SENCOs at two stages in their professional careers) and my own assumptions about the focus under scrutiny (Bold, 2012).

My defensive position was formed according to an accumulation of factors:
Through professional discussions held with new SENCOs under training and with SENCOs who were recently in post over the past few years (2009 to the present) there were indications that the SENCO role, although defined by the learning outcomes on their compulsory training programme/award, did not provide an equitable experience for all SENCOs. Some SENCOs believed it to be highly

inconsistent being fully reliant on their own school's ethos and, more significantly, the general understanding of special provision/special educational needs held by head-teachers and key leadership staff in their schools. Some SENCO stories and comments shared with me during their training, although anecdotal in nature and not contributing to the data for this study, did include a catalogue of such negative factors as poor communication between head and SENCO, the 'de-skilling' of SENCOs by removing the task of deploying and leading the teaching assistant team from them, of head-teachers not sharing key information relating to funding and not providing additional time or providing resources and administrative support. A disturbing number of SENCOs stated that they did not receive any additional allowances or payment for the role. Some SENCOs complained of excessive micro-management by their head-teachers to such an extent that they felt every aspect of their work to be monitored and assesse, while others spoke of feeling high levels of stress with signs of 'burnout' within the first few months of taking on the role. The general theme emerged that many SENCOs felt themselves to be pushed into the role of subordinate manager but restricted from evolving into leaders within their schools. Some SENCOs actually questioned why they had decided to take on the role in the first place.

This general dissatisfaction appeared to be the perception emerging from this tranche of new primary school SENCOs leading to some confusion as to what the role was in practice, with their actual identity as a SENCO being self-questioned – on one hand university lecturers on their SEN Coordinator's course highlighted what one SENCO called *the perfect SENCO in the perfect SENCO world'* when she compared the course content with the reality of her own experience in her school. This dilemma, and the causes of this dilemma, drove my desire to critically explore the factors which created such a mismatch.

1.3   Context: The Researcher as an 'Insider'

When engaging in this critical exploration of the mismatch between the SENCO model role and reality, I became aware that I was acting as an 'inside researcher' as this study sat firmly within my own work practice. Unluer (2012) stated that although there are many definitions of what constitutes an insider researcher, generally insider-researchers are those who choose to study a group to which they belonged. In my case this links to Bonner and Tolhurst's (2002)

model where they identified three key advantages of being an insider-researcher: Having a good understanding of the culture being studied, not altering the flow of interaction unnaturally and having an established intimacy which promotes the telling and judging of truth. My position as an insider researcher in the role of the professional SENCO trainer and SEN Governor provided me with a working understanding of the formal hierarchies of schools and educational settings (Unluer, 2012) thus I possessed knowledge which would take an 'outsider' a long time to acquire (Adler & Adler, 1994; Smyth & Holian, 2008).

However, this positional stance did involve certain tensions around my role as a researcher as professional educational practice and academic educational research were defined as distinct fields of activity by Brown and Darling (1998) with teaching (experiences on delivering professional training for SENCOs and being an ex-SENCO) and researching (through this study) each operating what Grosvenor and Rose (2001) called respective interrogative gazes through which meaning is given. The need to recognise the distinctive nature of these two fields was important otherwise it could *result in the one being unduly subordinated to the principles of the other'* (Brown and Dowling, 1998. p. 164-165) with this conflict in role duality (Unluer, 2012) creating a struggle to balance the insider role and the researcher role (Del Lyser, 2001; Gerrish, 1997).

1.4   Context: The 'Placing' of this study

In the attempt to understand where the *place* of this research should be – an interface between professional educational practice and academic research – the current Department for Education (2013) *Research Priorities and Questions (Teachers and Teaching)* guidelines provided a useful framework with its positive opening statement that *'Robust evidence needs to inform policy and practice in order to deliver effective education'* (Department for Education, 2013 p3). Although designed to support the government's agenda for the commissioning of research on supporting self-improving school systems, the high level research requirement around the need to understand whether the policy reforms being made are, *'delivering real improvements in practice'* (p6) provided an opportunity to determine how the National Award for SEN Coordination as delivered by the University of Northampton is supporting SENCOs' professional work. This created a focus on how SENCOs have raised their awareness of their

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strategic leadership role, their entitlements as outlined in legislation and their own understanding of what it means to be a SENCO in an increasingly autonomous education system where individual schools are freed from the direction usually given by the Local Authority for special educational needs provision.

Nonetheless, the complex role of the SENCO has been recognised as there is growing interest in researching into the working practices of SENCOs (Cole, 2005; Szwed, 2007b; Rosen-Webb, 2011; Robertson, 2012; Griffiths & Dubsky, 2012; Wedell, 2012; Morewood, 2012; Tissot, 2013; Done, Murphy & Knowler, 2014; Maher & Vickerman, 2017). The research embedded within this study complemented and replicated many of these previous findings and critical judgments on the SENCO role discussed in existing research, but through a study which engaged with professional identity by exploring SENCOs' feelings, thoughts and aspirations pertinent to their current practice alongside the professional relationships they generated with colleagues and their emerging autonomy as managers and leaders.

1.5   Aims and Objectives

I crafted an overall focus for an exploration of the status of the English primary school SENCO in order to determine if their role as a leader was undermined through the Contextual Variety between schools created during a time of political and educational change. One key two-part research question and three interrelated aims shaped the study:

1.5.1 Research Question:

Is there a mismatch between the training and direction provided for SENCOs (through the compulsory National Award for SEN Coordination, current legislation and current statutory guidance which places an emphasis on the SENCO operating as a manager and as a leader) with their experiences and practice in their primary schools? If there is a mismatch, is it created through the contextual differences between schools which provide an inconsistency of SENCO experience?

Although this is a narrow question it was underpinned by a critical interrogation of the complexity of this mismatch through three interrelated aims and three objectives.

1.5.2 Interrelated Aims:

1. To interrogate English primary school SENCOs' perceptions of the scope of their own role and status in their schools.

2. To test and challenge my position - that the central leadership aspect of the SENCO role is under potential threat because of the contextual differences across schools leading to an inconsistency in how the role is realised in practice. This being due, largely, to the demands of a national high-stakes assessment and performativity-driven climate affecting the culture of individual primary schools.

3. To significantly increase my understanding of the SENCO role and of teachers undertaking this role in order to inform and enhance my professional knowledge and skills as a SENCO trainer.

1.5.3 Research Objectives:

a. To use questionnaire data and SENCO accounts in order to discover if any theoretical model of an English (East Midlands) Primary School SENCO can be created in the reality of contextual differences across schools and educational settings.

b. To interrogate questionnaire data and an analysis of SENCO narratives in order to identify factors which have the potential to influence (both positively and negatively) the SENCOs' abilities and competences to act as transformational leaders in their schools.

c. To analyse questionnaire and SENCO narratives to determine what might be identified as a 'threat' to the SENCO function and identity due to a potential mismatch between national policy for SENCOs and how the role is enacted in their own schools/settings.

Aim (3) provided an interesting point of conflict as the purpose of this research was not to follow an action research model leading to change in practice or

policy. However, to ignore key data and findings linked to this would have been self-defeating as the whole idea of this study was to develop and enhance my *own* understanding of the SENCO role, the SENCOs themselves and how the role will be envisaged in the future. As a practitioner working within the field how could I not pass comment on factors related to improving/amending the content and delivery mode of the SENCO programme I taught on as it had a direct relevance and influence on my own professional area of work?

A review of the literature was employed to support a contextual understanding of the dimension of the SENCO role and its long evolution from pre-Warnock Report (1978) times through to the current DfE/DH (2015) *CoP.* This literature review was extended to include themes which included the positive and negative impacts on the SENCO function, professional identity as a teacher, manager and leader and resilience; these concepts being identified as factors in understanding and appraising the nature of the influences and variations in SENCOs' professional lives and work.

1.6   Data Sources from SENCOs

For this study, data was collected and brought together from three sources contributing to two phases (called 'Strands' in this study):

Strand (1) involved collecting data from the first source, a small sample of new-in-post SENCOs (n=10) about to start their course of professional SENCO development training at National Level 7 delivered by the University of Northampton in October 2015 (the history and content of this compulsory programme of study/award is covered in detail in the Literature Chapter). This data was generated and gathered through the creation of personal illustrations/concept maps with supporting annotations. In addition to the SENCO concept maps each SENCO participant gave a reflective narrative which explained how they constructed their concept map, the meaning of their illustrations/annotations and the experiences they had so far as a SENCO which had informed their feelings and perceptions of the role and how they had been performing. The purpose of this was to enable the SENCOs to explore significant factors relating to their identity as a new SENCO at the outset of their professional journey in their schools. From this personal SENCO perspective several key points relating to their professional identity and working conditions

emerged from their stories and concept maps, these points were then used to create coded themes which were used as a form of 'benchmark' for the next strand of data collection from more established-in-post SENCOs.

Strand (2) was generated by research data (both quantitative and qualitative) provided by the second and third sources. The second source was a large (n=40) sample group of established SENCOs working in a range of primary schools from several LAs across the East Midlands. SENCOs in post between one and four years were the *target* demographic for data collection from this second source however it emerged that there were several SENCOs with more than 8 + years of service in post who contributed as members of this particular sample group. This data was collected through the deployment of a substantial questionnaire sent out to all the SENCOs across all Local Authorities who had completed their National Award for SEN Coordination during the academic year September 2014 to June 2015. The questionnaire returns were interrogated and used in an attempt to try and understand what these SENCOs do and how they do it in addition to trying to create an up-to-date, generic model of a contemporary SENCO working in an English primary school. This was a challenging undertaking considering the diversity of SENCO settings and working practices. The findings and main themes from the questionnaire were complemented by the third source of data which took the form of three small case studies using narrative accounts through a process entitled, *'One Day in the Life of a Primary School SENCO'* written by experienced SENCOs (those with 4 + years' worth of service in-post) who maintained a reflective diary over one selected day within an academic school term.

1.7   The 'Critical Lens' Focused on the SENCO

The research drew extensively on evidence directly taken from the SENCOs themselves to discover not only their own perceptions of themselves 'in role' but also to explore the nature of the power relations in their schools and the reaffirming of the authority and status of their role within a construct of SENCO practice set within the field of legislative, political, economic and educational change. The 'voice' of the SENCO was a central focus and so this research was designed to examine those voices at these two points in professional time after the publication of the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP;* this enabled an assumed level of consistency in each primary school's SEND policy after the 2015 Code had

'bedded-down' with any transitions from the 2001 Code and previous practices having been (more or less) completed and assimilated.

This research was designed to critically explore the SENCO experience from one side only – that of the SENCO. It did not aim to create a study with a multiple critical lens which contrasted the SENCOs' perspectives with their head-teachers' perspectives. However, due to this specifically- focused exploration, the question of study justification, methodologically speaking, was an important one to consider because of the difficulty in trying to separate the professional/working relationships between the SENCOs and their head-teachers; this SENCO/head-teacher relationship being something of a hierarchical almost symbiotic relationship which had been highlighted in all of the Codes of Practice since 1994 where head-teachers are deemed responsible for the overall leadership and quality of provision for SEND within their schools whilst SENCOs are tasked as the specialists responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of provision for pupils with SEND. I believe this study was justified as the research was designed to present and reflect on the SENCOs' views with integrity and clarity and, as Goodson (1981) stated, with *'…something as intensely personal as teaching, it is critical that we know about the person'* (p 69).

1.8   Introduction to the Theoretical Model

This study is constructed in two parts (Strands). For the choice of a theoretical model Whitehead's *Living Theory* approach was adapted as it underpinned the process of generating knowledge.   Using this *Living Theory* methodology emphasised the uniqueness of an individual's living educational experience in improving practice and generating knowledge (Whitehead, 1994).   This Living Theory process helped and supported the focus on three key ideas; the first being the nature of '*I'* in questions relating to practical education, *'How do I improve my practice?'* (p 3) and the questions on the contradictions we have in terms of our actions and our knowledge, beliefs & understanding emphasising, *'…that our experience of 'I' as a living contradiction can be located within ourselves, our institutions and our societies'* (Whitehead, 1998, p 3). The second idea relates to the '*I'* as a living contradiction being used in order to drive an educational inquiry forward using a reflective process which was designed to identify concerns where the researcher's personal values are not lived fully in their practice, creating the design of an action plan for improvement with action

upon it being followed by the evaluation of these actions in relation to their values, understanding and skills with an evaluation and modification of those concerns, ideas and actions. The third idea is the ability of each researcher to construct their own, unique living educational theories as,

> 'descriptions and explanations for our own educational development as we move our educational enquiries forward on the basis of experiencing ourselves as living contradictions…'
> Whitehead
> (1994. p 4)

 In short, Whitehead's adapted *Living Theory* is a reconstituted meaning of theory in that there is no single theoretical framework used in this study. In this case I created my own living theory in my explanations for my professional learning in my educational enquiry. Whitehead (2008) stated that *Living Theory* has been defined as an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own and the learning of others; in addition, *Living Theory* also influences the learning of the social formation in which the researcher lives and/or works. This was particularly pertinent in that my previous working life as an experienced SENCO in two schools and my current professional life as an experienced teacher and advisor of/for SENCOs was set out in this study as a significant factor which powerfully influenced my position and mind-set to the issues pertaining to SENCOs functioning in post, their professional development, their quality of work-life balance and my interpretation and responses to the contributions made by the participants in this study. Whitehead (2008) called this personal tranche of experience 'values' and 'personal knowledge' and thus they held a high level of importance in the research process. Although Whitehead's *Living Theory* is, in the main, inter-related with an action research strategy, the flexibility of this approach allowed me to realise my own desire to improve my *professional knowledge* in relation to understanding the evolution and identity of the SENCO from a new to an established status as it had such a profound importance in terms of improving my *practice* as a teacher of SENCOs.   It is from this position of a teacher of SENCOs that I researched and critically reflected on my findings. The diagram at Fig (1:1) presents the factors which combined to influence the underpinning characteristics of this study.

Fig (1:1) *Influences on the researcher underpinning the characteristics of this study*

My Personal experiences as a former SENCO in two schools within the period 1990 to 2003

My inside researcher perspective as a SENCO 'educator' and advisor (current professional role)

Phd Study

The changing role of the SENCO (legislation & Contextual Variety forced by a 'performativity' -led environment)

Whitehead's *'Living Theory'* embedding personal experience with the need to develop knowledge leading to enhanced performance

Although *Living Theory* provided the underpinning for this research and set it within the part-field of being an inside-researcher, there was a need to produce a working research framework. Thus, in a similar way to the influences that played on the researcher in developing the characteristics of this study, the framework adopted for the critical exploration of the evolution of the SENCO and their engagement at work in their schools as a leader and manager was constructed from three broad areas of influence which impacted on SENCOs' abilities to undertake their duties and responsibilities. A useful model was to investigate the two hemispheres of the SENCO role - what a SENCO is legally required to do in their school (the Legal Contract) and the additional

understanding and activities a SENCO brings to their role in the light of their own understanding, ethical ethos and vision (the Psychological Contract). However, there was a third component to the model; although the Legal Contract was set by Governmental legislation and statutory guidelines and the Psychological Contract was created through SENCOs' professional understanding of what is the 'right' thing to do as a teacher and as a manager/leader, they are both affected by the powerful Contextual Variety across all primary schools which had their own school cultures created through a complex inter-relation of tradition, ethos, values and priorities where the head-teacher exerts a generally (but not always exclusively) steady hand in order to steer the organisational ship through the ocean of performativity. It was at the intersection of these three powerful influences where the SENCO had to function. This relationship is illustrated in Fig (1:2).

Fig (1:2) *The Key Influences on SENCO Performance*
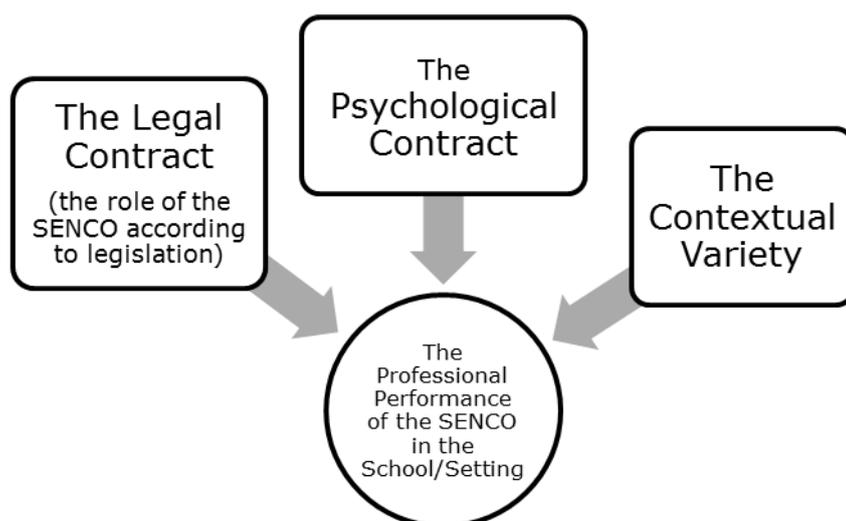
These three factors - legal, psychological and contextual – create a rich professional mix combining what *had* to be done with *how* it was done in the school, together with a combination of accredited training designed for the SENCO to be able to meet the legislative requirements of the role set within their own identity as a teacher and the intrinsic duties and responsibilities to the children and their school/setting that this holds. This 'rich mix' should have provided, in theory, some level of professional role consistency across all schools/settings. The inconsistency happened when the third factor, the Contextual Variety, was added to the mixture. This is where the SENCO role

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became fractured according to school and local interpretation; this interpretation being created through issues relating to factors such as funding, knowledge of SEND held by teachers/teaching assistants and the vision for the school and the priority for SEND development held by the head-teacher and senior leadership team.

These influences on the SENCO role are explored in Chapter Three (Literature 2) along with a presentation on the nature of the SENCO role in managing the day-to-day special educational needs provision within a typical English primary school. This model also provided the framework for the interpretation of themes emerging from the SENCO participants in this study.

1.9   The Structure of this Study

This Phd thesis consists of eight chapters:

Chapter one provides an overview of the study and the particular relationship between myself acting as the inside researcher, the research field and the sample group/participants. A justification for the study is provided along with an introduction to the context. The aims and objectives are stated here along with an introduction to the underpinning '*Living Theory'* and the *'Influences on the SENCO (Legal/Psychological and Contextual)'* Models.

Chapter two critically explores a range of literature/sources and is constructed using a two-themed model which presents the context and terminology of the study with a definition of Special Educational Needs, the English primary school, the SENCO role and how the historical perspective informs the current context.

Chapter three is a continuation of the exploration of the literature with a key focus into the influences on the Special Educational Needs Coordinator's professional role in their primary school according to their Legal Contract, Psychological Contract and the place of 'performativity' impacting on that range of influences, with the SENCO acting in a multi-role capacity as an administrator, manager and leader and how this key aspect of their role is affected by the Contextual Variety between schools.

Chapter four introduces the conceptual underpinning for the study's methodology. In this chapter the qualitative/interpretative paradigm supporting my adaptation of '*Living Theory'* led to the creation of a '*bricolage'* as a research model. The *bricolage* is described and justified in relation to my position as an inside researcher/*bricoleur* and the identified (and inter-related) field of the SENCO as leader-and-manager and the demands of performativity influencing the climate in schools.

Chapter five describes and explains the methods employed supporting the interpretive paradigm and contributing to the *bricolage* and the two-strand data gathering approach. The process of careful triangulation underpinning the choice of three distinct sample groups with common characteristics forming the two strands of the research is explained along with the justification for the use of a simple thematic analysis approach with coding leading to broad and then main themes.

Chapter six presents the data and findings relating to Strand (1) of the study: the concept maps/narratives created by SENCOs beginning their formal training through the *National Award for SEN Coordination*. The broad and main themes generated through the thematic analysis process provide the grounding for chapter seven where these themes are inter-related with data emerging from the Strand (2) process provided by SENCOs who had previously completed their formal *SEN Award* training and who had been in post for a minimum of two years, with the diaries providing a rich narrative source of SENCOs 'at work'. Chapters six and seven include significant contributions by SENCOs through their comments and stories, either written (through the open-ended questions on the questionnaire and the '*Day-in-the-life-of'* diaries) or verbal and transcribed.

Chapter eight provides the conclusion where the new findings from this study are critically discussed in relation to the Contextual Variety experienced by SENCOs inter-relating with their emotional caring identity as teachers and projections about the future of SENCOs as leaders. The chapter includes an attempt at constructing a 'Composite SENCO' model (which cannot be used to make generalisations about the role of a primary school SENCO), a consideration of how this research and its methodology contributes new knowledge in the field and finishes with an evaluation of the study's limitations and potential areas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE

Theme 1:

The Context for SEN, the English Primary School and the Evolution of the SENCO

2.1   Introduction

The following two literature chapters locate the SENCO in the context of their emerging and evolving role from the early status of Remedial Teacher to the current SENCO as manager and potential leader within their school/setting. This evolution is explored through the theoretical lens provided by the research field located within this study at the intersection of leadership and management and the teacher (myself) as an 'inside' practitioner-researcher due to my own professional experiences and current role as a SENCO trainer/tutor creating a particular position to the study of the literature. This field identifies the SENCO as manager, an administrator and a teacher who has the potential to be an agent for strategic change by acting as a transformational leader within their school; this potential either being empowered or restricted by specialist subject (SEND) knowledge, personal SENCO attitude and vision, the context/setting, the leadership and amount of delegation provided by their head-teachers and the requirements of a national high stakes assessment and inspection regime. In addition the linked factors of history, politics, professionalism and teacher 'well-being' are embedded within the literature.

The type of literature chosen ranges from a selection of the more practitioner-focused texts designed for providing a SENCO with key information on how to manage the role in practice (e.g. Shuttleworth, 2000; Griffiths and Haines, 2006; Soan et al, 2010; Sydney, 2010 ; Edwards, 2016) through to texts exploring the nature of the SENCO role in relation to the management and leadership function, conditions of service and experiences (Burnett, 2005; Cowne, 2005; Kearns, 2005; Layton, 2005; Pearson & Ralph, 2007; Mackenzie, 2007; Pearson, 2008; Gunter, 2010; Ekins, 2012; Morewood, 2012; Robertson, 2012; Grant, 2014; Quireshi, 2014; Done, Murhy and Knowler, 2014; and Maher and Vickerman, 2017). This range is underpinned by an exploration of a range of legislation and statutory guidance relating to special educational needs and disability and their coordination in schools since 1981.

The field of special education is a wide and fluid one in that it is constantly being re-assessed, re-structured and re-imagined through waves of legislation, guidance, media commentary and academic discussion, as a result of this a range of literature with a focus on legislation and statutory guidance is explored in these two chapters. Although the first DfE (1994) SEN Code of Practice was instrumental in formalising/structuring the core role of SENCO as we know it now there is a requirement to identify earlier literature which provided the steps to this formalisation , hence the importance of Warnock (1979) as the 'seed' from which the mature SENCO 'tree' grew.

This evolving SENCO role is explored under two themes within this literature review: Theme One provides a definition as to what is meant by the terms 'Special Educational Needs', 'English Primary School', the SENCO role and job and an historical perspective where the role of the SENCO is presented and critically annotated from the pre-Warnock Report/1981 Education Act through to its current format as structured by the TDA endorsed (2009) *National Award for SEN Coordination* learning outcomes and the statutory guidance of the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP.* The justification for this was to illustrate how the role has changed according to externally applied educational and political legislation supplemented by both statutory and non-statutory guidance. Theme one also includes an introduction to the SENCO's multi-positional role as teacher, employee, manager and leader. The SENCO acting in this multi-positional manner is threaded through both themes in both Literature chapters, the analysis of data and the critical discussion relating to the research aims.

Theme One is extended through this exploration of the content which makes up the SENCO role and job, this provides a firm base for the second Literature chapter (Chapter Three) which presents Theme Two with its exploration of the opportunities for SENCOs to act with autonomy which enhances their status as professionals who are able to understand, influence and lead change and provision development within their schools. This exploration is complemented by an identification of significant influences on the SENCO working within a performativity/quasi-market driven educational climate and the emergence of a 'SENCO identity' formed through this multi-layered role as teacher, administrator, manager and leader all of which were key factors introduced in Theme One when exploring the question 'what is a SENCO?'

Theme Two includes a focus on the influence of the head-teacher in determining the scope and status of the SENCO role in their schools although, in this context, it is clearly understood that there are other factors which can significantly influence how things are undertaken in a school. In connection with this, Ekins (2012), Norwich (2010) and Petersen (2010) recognised that this is where a degree of uncertainty develops around the SENCO role due to it being open to such variation and interpretation. Hallett and Hallett (2010) supported this view of uncertainty and stated:

> 'Reviews of practice conducted in the past five years have, somewhat unsurprisingly, reported that the reality of the role is clearly varied...and very much dependent on context and interpretation of sometimes contradictory legislation.'
> (p 51)

The differences created by influences other than the statutory National Award for SEN Coordination requirements and learning outcomes all provided the individual contexts within which each SENCO worked (Ekins, 2012) and it was this variability which created something of a dilemma as it encompassed both a degree of uncertainty felt by the SENCOs themselves—over their role status, complicated by the significant uniqueness in how the role was defined and practised in each individual primary school/setting.

The writing style adopted for these two Literature chapters has been influenced by my previously mentioned insider professional experiences.   Due to this significant factor, my voice as a teacher intrudes throughout as the exploration of the content of texts and sources is inter-related with my own reflective practitioner commentary creating a somewhat 'didactic flavour' at times but with the hopeful intent of a teacher (myself) researching and writing about his professional work with fellow SENCOs in an attempt to understand the many facets of 'what is a SENCO and what do they do?' In addition to this there are several references to older texts/sources and literature which significantly pre-date the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* and other more contemporary texts.   The justification for this is straightforward as many of the emerging issues facing a high number of the SENCOs contributing to this study had been previously identified and presented many years before by a variety of authors, commentators and researchers, thus the current issues facing these current

SENCOs in the sample were, in the main, not unique but were a continuation of the old.

2.2 Defining the Context and the Historical Perspective

This section provides an outline of the nature of the Special Educational Need Coordination role. The SENCO has his/her main body of work in the specialised field of special educational needs, but this is not exclusively so as a SENCO can also have a significant role across the whole curriculum, particularly in terms of developing a school's drive to become an inclusive learning community. In this context it is important to first define what is meant by an English mainstream primary school because it is in this professional workplace where the SENCO roles explored in this study exist. It is also important to define what is meant, for the purposes of this study, by the phrase 'special educational needs' as this area provided the professional, vocational, pedagogical and theoretical field in which the SENCOs operated as specialists and practitioners.

2.2.1 The English Primary School

It is commonly accepted that a mainstream primary school is the first stage of formal education in England. Children are usually admitted from the ages of five years old through to eleven with some schools being divided into infant and junior levels (Gov.uk, 2016). The infant age range is from age five to seven and equates to Key Stage One of the National Curriculum for England and Wales, whilst the junior age range equates to Key Stage 2 of the National Curriculum; it is at the end of Key Stage 2 when the pupils are in Year 6 that National Curriculum Standardised Assessment Tests (SATS) are taken. *The Education Act* (1996) stated that primary education means:

(a)   Full-time or part-time education suitable to the requirements of children who have attained the age of two but are under compulsory school age.

(b)   Full-time education suitable to the requirements of junior pupils of compulsory school age who have not attained the age of 10 years and six months; and

(c)   Full-time education suitable to the requirements of junior pupils who have attained the age of 10 years and six months and whom it is expedient to educate together with junior pupils within paragraph (b)
(Chapter 56. Part 1. Section 2. p 2)

The Education Act (1996) included pre-school age children in its overall definition of primary education, children whose education is usually met in pre-school or

Foundation settings. For the purpose of this research the focus is on the SENCO role as it is performed in a traditional primary school setting with pupils aged from five to eleven (National Curriculum Key Stages 1 and 2), excluding the pre-school/Foundation stage from the data collection process.

Clarification of the English Education system is best provided through the table below (Table 2:1). In this table the Primary focus used for this study is shown emboldened with 'NC KS' used to represent the National Curriculum Key Stage. The age ranges of the pupils shown do, in reality, have a cross-over into the next Key Stage in that there are pupils at the beginning of KS 2 who will still be 7 years of age and 11 years of age at the beginning of KS 3 and 14 years of age at the beginning of KS 4, this being due to where their date of birth falls during the traditional academic year which the majority of schools adopt according to past history, the timings of national assessments, intakes and transitions.

Table (2:1) *The English State Education System*

NC KS 1 (Pupils aged between 5 and 7 years old)			NC KS 2 (Pupils aged between 8 and 11 years old)				NC KS 3 (Pupils aged between 12 and 14 years old)			NC KS 4 (Pupils aged between 15 and 16 years old)		NC KS 5 (Pupils aged between 17-18)	
Foundation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13
PRIMARY SCHOOL							SECONDARY SCHOOL						
Infant			**Junior**									6th Form	
					MIDDLE SCHOOL		MIDDLE SCHOOL						
ALL -THROUGH SCHOOLS (there is a growing trend for some Academies to adopt an 'all-age' profile and intake – from Foundation through to the end of compulsory education at KS 5)													

As Table (2:1) illustrates, the area where this study is situated is Key Stages 1 and 2 for pupils aged between 5 and 11 years of age (the Primary School Infant/Junior sector). There were no Middle Schools represented in the sample groups of this study.

2.2.2 The Complexity of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Special Educational Needs in English schools has had a long and complicated history and evolution. The Education Act 1944 originally established that

children's education should be based on their age and ability with eleven categories of 'handicap' being used to label the needs of children with perceived barriers to their learning. These categories included, for example, 'educationally sub-normal, 'delicate', 'blind', 'maladjusted' and 'educationally sub-normal' (Ministry of Education, 1944). The term 'Special Educational Needs' was introduced in the Warnock Report (DES 1978) in order to move away from this medical classification of pupils and their needs and the use of terminology/categorisation as originally used in the 1944 Act.

Warnock considered the complex meaning of 'handicap' in an educational context in her report and stated that:

> '…we called attention to a wide range of things which a child needs to learn as part of his education. Besides his academic studies he must learn, for example, how to accommodate himself to other people. He must also learn what will be expected of him as an adult. Any child whose disabilities or difficulties prevent him from learning these things may be regarded as educationally handicapped…There is no agreed cut and dried distinction between the concept of handicap and other related concepts such as disability, incapacity and disadvantage. Neither is there a simple relationship between handicap in educational terms and the severity of a disability in medical or a disadvantage in social terms….It is thus impossible to establish precise criteria for defining what constitutes handicap. Yet the idea is deeply in educational thinking that there are two types of children, the handicapped and the non-handicapped. Traditionally the former have generally been thought to require special education, and the latter ordinary education. But the complexities of individual needs are far greater than this dichotomy implies….We wish to see a more positive approach, and we have adopted the concept of SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED, seen not in terms of a particular disability which a child may be judged to have, but in relation to everything about him, his abilities as well as his disabilities – indeed all the factors which have a bearing on his educational progress.'
> (p 36)

There was a clear message that all pupils needed to be viewed holistically and not by any labelled condition and that they could have their needs met within the mainstream school. The 1978 Warnock Report clearly acknowledged the complexity of defining what is a *'handicap'* and proved to be a milestone in the history of education in that it influenced thinking, guidance and legislation through all the years since it was published, particularly in regards to the creation and development of school provision for pupils with SEN and the contemporary SENCO role in its embryonic form.

The Warnock Report (DES 1978), in full the *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* had its genesis in

Education Secretary Margaret Thatcher's November 1973 announcement in Edward's Heath's Conservative government for a proposed committee of enquiry (with Mary Warnock as chair) to review educational provision in England, Scotland and Wales for children and young people with disabilities.   The committee with its wide-ranging remit held its first meeting in September 1974 and by early 1975 sub-committees were formed to deal with the needs of (using the nomenclature of the mid-1970s) handicapped children under five, the education of handicapped children in ordinary schools, day special schools and boarding provision and the educational and other needs of handicapped school leavers.   These sub-committees completed their work in May 1977 and their findings formed the basis for the Report.   By the time the Report was completed (in March 1978) a Labour Government was in power.   Warnock, in her letter to the Secretaries of State for Education wrote:

> 'Our review has been a wide-ranging one, extending well beyond the education service. Our terms of reference required us to take account of the medical aspects of the needs of handicapped children and young people, together with arrangements to prepare them for entry into employment. We have also had regard to the social aspects of their needs, to the relations between the different professionals engaged in meeting their needs, to the contribution of their parents and the parents' own needs for support and to the requirements for research and development'.
> (Gillard, 2012)

A year after the Report's publication, a Conservative government returned to power, with Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister. Two years later, the Warnock Committee's recommendations formed the basis of the 1981 Education Act which gave parents new rights in relation to special needs, urged the integration of children with special needs in mainstream classes and introduced the concept of 'statementing' for children with special needs in order to give them entitlement to support and funding. Although this original idea was exceptionally radical for the time and far-reaching in terms of generating positive change for pupils with special educational needs, in May 2008 Warnock described the system she had been instrumental in creating as being *needlessly bureaucratic'* and called for the establishment of a new enquiry (Times Educational Supplement, 2008).

Although the Warnock Report did have such a fundamental impact, later opinion arose (ironically led by Warnock herself) as to the very limiting nature of grouping all pupils into a single, named category – SEN – regardless of the nature of their individual need or area of difficulty. Warnock stated that:

'One of the major disasters of the original report was that we introduced the concept of special educational needs to try and show that disabled children were not a race apart and many of them should be educated in the mainstream…the unforeseen consequence is that SEN has come to be the name of a single category, and the government uses it as if it is the same problem to include a child in a wheelchair and a child with Asperger's, and that is conspicuously untrue.'
(House of Commons, 2006. p 16)

This idea that SEN is a single category creating a range of problems associated with conceptualising the continuum of need without a more explicit understanding (Ekins, 2012) had been further complicated by the varied use of the terminology across the range of services engaging with pupils and families with the 'language of special needs' becoming over-complicated and thus, in many respects, exclusive, creating significant consequences around communication between services and general understanding of pupil need:

'The language of special educational needs has become highly contentious and confusing for both parents and professionals. Health services refer to 'disabled' children; social care services to 'children in need'; education to 'special educational needs', or, after the age of 16, to 'learning difficulties and/or disabilities.' The children and young people may find themselves belonging to more than one of these groups but the terms do not mean the same thing and they have different consequences in terms of the support that the young person will receive.'
(OFSTED, 2010. p 8)

OFSTED noted that the legislation around SEND was far reaching with a, *'tendency to add to rather than replace what is already there'* (OFSTED, 2010 p 59). In *The Lamb Inquiry into Special Educational Needs and Parental Confidence* (DCFS, 2009), established as a response to the October 2007 *House of Commons Education & Skills Committees' report on Special Educational Needs: Assessment and Funding*, Brian Lamb (the chair of the *Special Educational Needs Consortium)* critically reviewing and exploring a range of approaches where parental confidence in the SEN assessment process could be enhanced*.* Lamb commented on the inconsistency of SEN practice:

'Throughout the Inquiry one of the most striking features of the SEN system has been the variation that we have seen. We have seen widely varying levels of parental confidence and there is variation at local authority level in the wide range of different indicators: from overall levels of SEN and the SEN-non-SEN attainment gap, to levels off exclusions, the number of statements issued and the time in which they are issued.'
(p 52)

OFSTED (2010) also stated that the term SEN had been over-used and was too often applied to pupils who did not have a special educational need at all, while Florian (2010) thought that,

> 'When students who encounter difficulties in learning are identified as having 'special educational needs', an intractable cycle is formed – students are assigned membership of the group because they are judged to possess the attributes of group membership, and they are believed to have the attributes of the group because they are members of it.'
> (p 65)

There had been increases in the numbers of pupils identified with SEN, from 10% of all pupils in 1995 to 18.2% of all pupils in 2010 (DfE, 2011) along with changes in the nature and range of the areas of need. The DfE (2011) identified that the term 'SEN' was associated with pupils falling behind rather than with having a specific educational need resulting in groups within the overall school population being over-represented, such as pupils with SEN being more than twice as likely to be eligible for free-school meals; Looked-After-Children being three-and-a-half times more likely to have SEN compared to other children and summer-born children who had been assessed as having a 60% greater chance of being identified as having SEN than those children born in September of the same intake year.

Ekins (2012) believed that the frequent identification of such flaws in the SEN system *'calls for radical reform of the system'* (p 32). Such clarion calls for reform had come from people and organisations before who had all noted a significant need for improvement and change (Warnock, 2005; the House of Commons, 2006; Lamb, 2009; OFSTED, 2010; DCSF, 2010). However, the DfE (2011) used this variability in practice to plan for a series of reforms and so they aimed to create a

> 'radically different system to support better life outcomes for young people; give parents confidence by giving them more control; and transfer power to professionals on the front line and to local communities'
> (p 4)

This commitment eventually led to the publication of the DfE/DH (2015) *Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice for 0 to 25 years*. This new Code built on the earlier definition of SEN presented in the *Education Act* (1996)

and DfES (2001) Code and stated that children had special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

'Children have a learning difficulty if they:
a) Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or
b) Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority
c) Are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them.

Children must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught.'
(DfES,2001. p 6)

The definition of special educational provision, from the *Education Act* (1996), the DfES (2001) Code of Practice and its reiteration in the *Children and Families Act* (2014), was any provision which is additional to, or different from, general educational provision made available for children in the school with the DfE/DH 2015 *CoP* including an additional statement which recognised the broad definition covering young people from 0-25 years of age and that where a child/young person has a disability or health condition which requires special educational provision to be made, they will be covered by the SEN definition with the Code clearly referencing the legal obligations that schools and local authorities have towards children and young people who are disabled under the *Equality Act* (2010).

It is within this field of complex and detailed debate around the medical, social, psychological, economic, ideological and political nature of special educational needs that the SENCO has to operate, with questions on what is a learning difficulty and how does it result in a special educational need (Edwards, 2016) being at the core of a SENCO's understanding. The next section of this chapter focuses on the evolution of the SENCO role in the context of this complexity, the challenges of defining special educational needs and the lack of clarity around the work of the SENCO.

2.2.3   Defining the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

The DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* states that in an English school the SENCO has the day-to-day responsibility for the operation of SEN policy and coordination of specific provision made to support individual pupils with SEN. In this role, the SENCO acts as the agent for their head-teacher and board of governors who hold the responsibility for the overall management and quality of that provision within their school. The SENCO is also engaged with the head-teacher and governing body in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in the school. The *CoP* makes it clear that, *'They will be most effective in that role if they are part of the school leadership team'* (p 97).

Governing bodies of maintained mainstream schools and the proprietors of mainstream academy schools (including free schools) *'**must** ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as SENCO for the school'* (DfE/DH, 2015. p 97) It is interesting to see the emphasis (as indicated through their use of bold text) that the Department for Education and Department for Health place on the SENCO being a qualified teacher. A direction is also made that if the appointed SENCO in the school has not previously been the SENCO at that or any other school for a total period of more than twelve months they '***must'*** achieve a National Award in Special Educational Needs Coordination within three years of appointment. National standard-based training was not new as the Teacher Training Agency published a set of National Standards for the teaching profession in 1998 which were then used by a variety of providers to create the learning outcomes for specific courses targeted at SENCO professional development. These National Standards for SENCOs (TTA, 1998) listed the following areas of SEN coordination:

- The strategic direction and development for the provision to support pupils with special educational needs within the school
- Leading and managing staff
- The effective development and deployment of staff and resources and
- Teaching and learning

As National Standards for SENCOs were not new, neither was the requirement for schools to appoint a SENCO to coordinate provision for pupils with SEN as this had existed since the adoption by all state funded schools of the DfEE (1994)

Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs. In their position within the school, the SENCO became central to the provision, procedures, funding and practices related to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN. The current DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* has built upon this range of responsibilities in the light of significant change by stating that all schools must ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as SENCO and also ensure that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out their role.

All government maintained schools, academies and free schools accept that they have responsibilities for special needs and that someone has to be named as their SENCO (Cowne et al, 2015). However, primary school SENCOs were already, before the introduction of the 2015 Code, full or part-time practitioners and these SEN coordination responsibilities were additional to their normal work-load, including class teaching (Wall, 2006; Rose, & Howley, 2007) creating a multi-faceted role which usually resulted in a busy SENCO trying to balance all of their varying responsibilities. This dual identity in a school as teacher and SENCO is difficult to define as the SENCO job and role are both embedded within the identity of the SENCO as first and foremost a teacher, albeit a teacher having a specialist remit within the school with its linked wide-ranging portfolio of responsibilities in regard to the day-to-day management of provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. However, this is not just specific to SENCOs as other teachers in primary schools combine a range of duties such as subject coordinators with their whole-class teaching commitments.

The terms 'job' and 'role' are often used interchangeably but there are arguments defining their difference: Armstrong (1997) defined a job as consisting of a group of finite tasks to be performed and duties to be fulfilled in order to achieve an end result, whereas a role described the part played by people in meeting their objectives by working effectively within the context of the organisation's objectives, structures and processes. Thus the concept of a role is much wider as it is people and behaviour-orientated and is concerned with what people do (beyond the group of finite tasks allocated to them) and how they do it rather than concentrating narrowly on the job content. Hogg and Vaughn (2008) expanded this idea further by stating that roles represented a division of labour, furnished clear-cut expectations, provided information on how people within an organisation related to one another and furnished those in a

'role' with self-definition and a place within that organisation. In this way, Armstrong (1997) stated that people at work were 'enacting' a role and, through their own interpretation and perceptions of how to behave within their work context, performed effectively within their situation. The SENCO role can, therefore, be defined through its inter-relation with being both a teacher and through being a school leader, someone who is both line-managed and who manages others.

For SENCOs there is a potential conflict within this multi-role as a teacher and a leader and this conflict sits at the heart of this study. Boddy (2011) defined management as the activity/process of getting things done with the aid of people and resources, with a role in this case becoming the sum of the expectations that other people have of a person occupying a position. The role contains the specific responsibilities and requirements of the job and what somebody holding it should or should not do; 'other people' in the SENCO case being fellow teachers, school managers, the pupils themselves, parents and external services/professionals. However, the 'job' of the SENCO is not defined only by others in this context, as the attitude of the SENCO to their job (as a whole and in parts) is a key factor as, according to Curtis and Curtis (1995), attitudes help to shape a person's behaviour at work providing a basis for expressing their values and helping them to adapt to their work environment. Davis (1989) stated that there is a need to understand this kind of *multiple positioning that any one person takes up in their day to day life'* (p 8) in an attempt to conceptualise the relation between each individual's day-to-day existence and social structures. In effect the *role* of the SENCO is determined by the key managerial and administrative duties and responsibilities outlined in the succession of Codes of Practice (DES 1996, DfES 2001 and DfE/DH 2015) and then finely tuned through the adoption of the learning outcomes and criteria as set out in the compulsory TTA (2009) National Award for SEN Coordination then further interpreted through the perceptions and expectations of other people (colleagues, parents, pupils, external services etc.). The *job* of the SENCO is determined by their different school contexts and direction from head-teachers and line-managers set above the SENCO in the hierarchy of the school with the SENCO acting as teacher, administrator, manager and managed with both role and job changing according to the fluidity of special educational needs in relation to changing legislation and their schools' needs. This situation, to some extent, reflects the attitudes and beliefs of the society of that era (Soan,

2005) with the SENCO's attitude being affected by factors such as the nature of the work, their own individual needs and the school culture relating to the way things are done, the organisational structure/hierarchy and their own place within it (Curtis and Curtis, 1995).

Farrell (2001) questioned the role of the SENCO as The National Standards for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (TTA, 1998) presented principles of good teaching which applied to all teachers and pupils. Beyond the core purpose of the SENCO and the outcomes of SEN co-ordination and the *professional knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes* (Farrell, 2001, p75) there were statements in the TTA 1998 Standards which Soan (2005) identified as being relevant for every teacher but with the role and responsibilities of the SENCO changing in many schools in order to complement the developing inclusion agenda. Soan further stated that,

> 'The core purpose remains the same in essence, but the practical aspects of the role are altering in line with developing teacher expertise and individual children's needs. SENCOs have during the last decade been the conduits of knowledge and support in the field of SEN, helping individual pupils with SEN and staff in mainstream environments adjust to the changes demanded, first from integration and now inclusion policies. Bureaucracy and workload pressures undoubtedly have also influenced the rethinking of the responsibilities of a SENCO.'
> (p 31)

Interestingly, Soan concludes her discussion with a key question:

> 'Is this role becoming a 'dinosaur', outstaying its usefulness, or is it going to survive as long as inclusive practice fails to be fully implemented?'
> (p 31)

Garner (2009) strengthened the concept of the evolving and developing SENCO when he made the point that in many (but certainly not all) schools, the SENCO was a member of the school's senior leadership team and was in a position to influence strategic planning and policy decisions. It is this aspect of the SENCO role which has created a significant move away from the coordination function to a more leadership-orientated one.

> 'This change is a hallmark of the increasing level of sophistication in the way that SENCOs now operate.'
> Garner (2009. p 64)

However, twenty years ago Crowther (1997) identified the range of the SENCOs' work and the different conditions they had in their varied schools before Garner noted the movement from coordination to leadership. Although the generic role title was the same, Crowther noted that the responsibilities of their role and the resources individual SENCOs had at their disposal to effectively realise this role were very different:

> 'SENCOs work in a very wide range of contexts. Some have no dedicated time for their work and manage few resources; others are full-time SENCOs managing large teams of teachers and assistants and have a responsibility for a significant budget.'
> (p 1)

Although 'historical', the resonance of this statement still reverberates and, from my conversations with contemporary SENCOs, still applies to the current situation for a significant number of them in their schools and settings; this current situation provided one of the main factors which stimulated this study as there appeared to have been very little, if any, change over twenty years.

Where significant change did occur was in the requirement for SENCOs to successfully complete a programme of National training at Master's Degree (Level 7) as for the first time it was, in 2011, a Central Government requirement for new SENCOs to participate in compulsory training based upon a series of SEN Coordination criteria in order to be confirmed in their status. This created a new group of professionals as the 'traditional' educational landscape related to inclusive theory and practice changed along with the orientation of their management/leadership role. However, the nature of this type of change was not new as Shuttleworth (2000) observed that the SENCO role encompassed more than being good at the job and that:

> '...it is a matter of joining the ranks of an army of dedicated professionals who have left the minimal Code of Practice definition far behind and who are now exercising real influence over the curriculum...'
> (p 2)

During the lifetime of this research educational change and a degree of uncertainty in legislation, policy and practice continued as the previous Coalition Government followed by the current Conservative Government presented their philosophy based on 'rolling back' Local Authority influence, putting greater autonomy on to individual Head-teachers and the forced growth of Academies

and Free Schools as outlined in the DfE (2010) *'The Importance of Teaching' The Schools White Paper* and DfE (2011) *'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability': A consultation.* This continuing change and uncertainty contributed to the reforms in the SENCO role which have occurred since the DfES (2001) *Code of Practice* culminating in the recent requirements for SENCOs to have accredited status, although the central core of the SENCOs' responsibilities remained the same. With the emphasis on head-teachers determining the ethos/philosophy of their schools, the SENCO role, no matter how well defined through new legislation and national policy, was ultimately dictated by the views, priorities and knowledge of their head-teachers and school governing bodies.

In spite of this complexity of role definition in practice created through contextual differences, the management of the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* graduated approach to special educational needs created the core of a SENCO's 'Legal Contract' , this being the key elements of the Code which SENCOs had to address according to legislative and statutory guidelines. This consists of a process of identifying, assessing and analysing pupil needs; SENCOs (and teachers) working in partnership with parents planning adjustments and interventions/provision to be put in place; delivering these interventions with the teacher remaining responsible for working with the pupil(s) on a daily basis but with the SENCO supporting the class teacher and advising on the successful implementation of the support and the review of the effectiveness of the support and interventions, with pupils holding an Education and Healthcare Plan (EHC) having it formally reviewed as a minimum every twelve months. The graduated approach created the stages that pupils may progress through on the way to having their personal needs fully met and so created the core of the SENCO's duties, along with the planning and preparation for the transition plans for pupils with SEND. The 2015 *CoP* stated that SENCOs should be aware of the local offer for the provision of pupils with special educational needs as provided by the Local Authority and school and to work with other professionals, supporting families and making sure that pupils with special needs received support and high-quality teaching (DfE, 2015. 6.89). The key components of effective communication and successful liaison/partnership working had been previously identified nearly twenty years ago by Cowne (1998) who stated that SENCOs needed to develop excellent listening skills in order to participate in productive dialogues. To be able to listen and to participate in these dialogues the Teacher Training Agency stated that in

order to do this a SENCO required the attributes of confidence, enthusiasm, reliability, flexibility and good communication skills (TTA, 1998).

So, currently, what is a SENCO? The 2015 Code lists the key responsibilities of the SENCO as follows:

- 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 head-teacher 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/DH, 2015, p 97-98)

In the light of this range of responsibilities Edwards stated that, '*The SENCO role is huge!* (Edwards, 2015. p28). Any reflection on this huge role cannot be properly made without some exploration of how this list of contractual duties which forms the core of a SENCO's professional work which evolved over time moulds, to a significant degree, their identity. Using key legislation relating to SEN and the SENCO role and statutory/non-statutory guidance as a framework, the role of SENCO is critically dissected and described in the following sections.

2.3 Historical Perspectives on the SENCO Role:

Evolution and challenge during the first 20 years; Warnock (1978) to The National Standards for Special Educational Needs Coordinators (1998)

According to Edwards (2016), education is constantly on the move as a field as a whole, in particular schools are faced with changes in policies and practices for learners with SEN and disabilities. SENCOs need to keep thoroughly up-to-date with all of these changes in terms of helping them to respond pro-actively when

managing whole-school and individual provision for pupils with SEND. As the SENCO role has become such a pivotal one in schools the role itself has evolved and altered in line with changing legislation, policies and practices. This section maps these changes through using items of significant legislative or policy/practice-based direction for SEND from 1978 to 1998.

The role of the SENCO has been under frequent review and evolution since the Education Act (1981) adopted the outcomes of the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) which presented a wide-ranging and influential review of provision for children and young people with special educational needs. However, the role of a teacher in a school being responsible for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) prior to Warnock was not a new one as many schools ran a form of specialist provision. A common term to describe such provision was Educationally Sub-Normal (ESN) or 'Remedial' classes/departments with 'Remedial Teachers' in charge of them. Shuttleworth (2000) makes the key observation that this more specialist teacher-role existed, in some form or another (in the main determined by the school) a long time before the 1981 Education Act, with its key concept promoting the education of all pupils in mainstream schools, began the process of formalising the role.

Glazzard *et al* (2010) stated that the 1981 Act introduced a financial safety net to support the most vulnerable children in mainstream provision through the five-stage and statementing process. However, the Act made no provision for any additional funding allocated to local education authorities (LEAs) for the new procedures although LEAs were required to identify and assess pupils and then decide on the best provision for them. The role of the 'SENCO' was not formalised as the responsibility for special needs provision was often taken by either a member of the school's leadership team or a designated 'remedial' teacher (Cowne *et al,* 2015) and, until the introduction of the first *Code of Practice* in 1994, there were many examples of schools which did not have a formal policy for SEN or *'which concentrate responsibility for this type of work in one department or individual. There are also examples of other schools who subsume SEN policy within an overarching policy concerning equality of opportunity'* (Garner, 1995. p4).   Bines (1989) stated that the absence of whole-school policy created a range of problems for schools and that *'it cannot be assumed…that there will be consensus on values or ethos, or even on major issues such as integration'* (p80).   Butt (1986) identified the lack of time

available for teachers to debate, formulate and implement policy had been a familiar source of unease. In relation to the flexibility in how individual schools enacted the requirements of the 1981 Act, Campbell (1985) warned that it was difficult for schools (and teachers responsible for pupils with SEN) to change the working practices of teachers who previously may have viewed special educational needs as having a minor importance in their teaching and general classroom activities. Although this level of concern was raised, Cowne *et al* (2015) reported that the 1981 Act did embody much of the best practice which had been developing, with training for special educational needs in ordinary schools (SENIOS) funded through training grants (DES Circulars 3/83-86 (DES 1983, 1984, 1985)).

The recommendations of the DfE's (1994) *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* provided an attempt to clarify the SENCO role by creating a clear system designed to dismantle and then re-build the previous isolated/separate SEN model in schools. This previous model mainly consisted of the SENCO (or equivalent) withdrawing pupils with special educational needs from class in order to deliver small group or individual interventions (e.g. spelling, reading, handwriting, mental maths etc.). SENCOs also supported children in their classes, with the class or subject teacher setting the activity and the SENCO trying to make the best job out of differentiating the learning activity/resources for the individual pupil, sometimes by adopting the role of an 'optional extra' in the school (Peacey, 2000). Thus, the 1994 Code introduced new approaches to enabling schools to work towards creating what subsequently became known as inclusive learning environments and communities; these new approaches were accompanied by the introduction of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), target setting and a five-stage model for a special educational needs continuum with the SENCO identified as being the key person in the school with the responsibility for the organisation, management and coordination of day-to-day special needs provision advising class and subject teachers, taking the lead in managing provision for pupils, particularly at stages 2 and 3, updating and allowing for the keeping of records for all pupils with special educational needs , liaising with parents and with external agencies. Friel (1997) doubted that these tasks were adequately addressed in some schools and that the Code required a substantial change in practice in many areas of SEN provision. This significant initiative formalised the coordination of special educational needs provision in schools by having a statutory duty established

which identified this key person together with their responsibilities set against the five-stage SEN model as illustrated in Table (2:2).

Table (2:2) *The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (DfE, 1994): Five-stage model for the SEN continuum.*

Stage	Responsibilities
1	The class (or subject teacher) will identify or register a pupil's special educational needs and after consulting with the SENCO, take the first 'actions' in providing support.
2	The SENCO takes the lead responsibility for gathering data and, working in partnership with the pupil's teacher(s), coordinates provision.
3	The SENCO and the pupil's teacher(s) work with external specialists
4	The Local Education Authority is approached (by the school or by the parent) for a statutory assessment and a multi-disciplinary assessment is made.
5	The Local Education Authority considers the needs for a statement of special educational needs for the pupil. If this is agreed as appropriate, a statement is written followed by the arrangement, monitoring and reviewing of provision (through the use of an Annual Review).

(Friel, 1997. p 40)

There were no formal qualifications for becoming a SENCO other than those required to be a qualified teacher. Garner (2009) stated that, since 1994, the SENCO role became established as the 'point of reference' for all matters relating to the day-to-day operation of the requirements set out in the 1994 Code of Practice. The status of the 1994 *CoP* was confusing as it appeared to fall between being a piece of statutory regulation and an advisory circular. Schools and LEAs were required to 'have regard to' the requirements of the *CoP* to make provision for pupils with SEN. Friel (1997) questioned this ambiguity by stating

> 'What, in fact, do the words 'have regard to' mean in practice? There was some important debate in the House of Lords in Committee and in the Lords, where consideration took place of the amendments on the legal effects of the requirements of the word *have regard to* in relation to the Code. An amendment to change this wording so that the Code would be binding in law eventually failed in Parliament. Clearly, it is not therefore to be applied as a rigid set of legal rules'
> (p 36)

However, Baroness Blatch clarified the then Conservative Government's position (Hansard, 1994) by referring to the Foreword to the CoP and stated

> 'the effect of having regard to the Code may vary according to the circumstances and over time. Clearly one cannot expect all schools and LEAs to have undertaken a comprehensive study of the Code and to have changed their procedures accordingly in September 1994. But it is reasonable to

expect them to have regard to the Code from that point and to plan future action in the light of the Code'
(para 14.3 and 14.7)

Blatch continued by stating that an SEN Tribunal (if called for) would not exercise a general oversight of an LEA's adherence to the CoP but would expect LEAs to be able to justify any departure from the CoP where it was relevant to any decision made. Friel (1997) commented that LEAs could *'ignore the code and be right'* and that *'the Code recognises that efficient variations can be adopted'* (p37).

The statutory provisions of the first *CoP* did not make it mandatory. At the time the 1993 Education Act was passed there were no accepted national standards and provision for pupils with SEN varied from LEA to LEA and school to school with some being identified as having very good/effective assessment procedures and others as having virtually non-existent provision. What the *CoP* did do was to create an increasing awareness of the need for the early identification and effective interventions for children with SEN and to make, for the first time, the role of the SENCO mandatory.

Although the *CoP* made it a requirement for all schools to have a named coordinator for SEN and prescribed a considerable range of duties and duties, described as *'onerous'* (Loxley and Bines 1995, p185) and *'breathtakingly broad'* (Gaines 1994. p102). Derrington (1997) stated that the early indications suggested that the *'perceived proceduralism concomitant with the implementation of the Code would weigh heavily on the shoulders of the SENCO'* (p111). Research findings conducted during the first year of the *CoP*'s implementation supported these early indications as well as confirming that the *CoP* itself was generally welcomed but that the *'professional enthusiasm was tempered by concerns associated with the new administrative demands and the amount of bureaucracy that the Code had generated for SENCOs'* (Derrington, 1997. p111). A national survey by Lewis *et al* (1995) identified a lack of status and a lack of time and resources as creating barriers to the successful enactment of the SENCO role. Evans et al (1995) discussed the issue of SENCOs potentially having reduced opportunities for working directly with pupils with barriers to their learning and their fellow teachers as a result of the significantly increased procedural and administrative requirements of the *CoP*. This overloading of the SENCO role was identified by Male (1996) and Garner (1996) as a serious issue

with SENCOs as it created a high level of additional stress for them. Dyson and Gains (1995) stated that the *CoP*, whatever its benefits for children with SEN was

> 'felt to impose an enormous – perhaps overwhelming – burden on co-ordinators, threatening to reduce…coordinators to bureaucratic administrators and to require primary coordinators to carry out duties for which they have neither the time nor resources.'
> (p 50)

The 1994 Code was given 'notice for review' through the then Labour Government's October 1997 Green Paper *'Excellence for all children: Meeting Special Educational Needs'* (DfEE, 1997) which set out a programme for early action for achievement by 2002 and raised questions about the ways in which schools carried out their statutory duties and responsibilities for all children, with a particular emphasis on those with special educational needs and disabilities SEND, and how schools are structured to meet the needs of the diversity of pupils in them.

A key highlight was recognition that schools found it difficult to manage the implementation of the 1994 Code due to the high level of bureaucracy, the demands of managing the Individual Education Plan (IEP) processes and the requirements of the annual reviews of statements. This led to many schools stating that the whole process forced the focus of the provision away from the individual child and into a target-driven 'paper-chase' where the outcome was a neat series of records without any consideration of the impact of the provision on meeting the needs of the child. *Excellence for all children* and its linked consultation started the route to the 1994 Code's revision and the development of the DfEE (2001) *Revised Code of Practice*.

'Excellence for all children' recognised the role of parents in partnership with the school, the importance of multi-agency links and services, the role of the local education authority and the importance of inclusive education; Inclusion being driven by the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Salamanca World Statement on Special Needs Education (1994) which called on governments to adopt the principle of inclusive education. *'Excellence for all children'* did contain some key statements about the nature of the SENCO role as there was a re-visiting of the relationship between head-teacher and SENCO, stating that head-teachers of mainstream schools usually delegated responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy to the

SENCO. Although the word 'usually' leaves this aspect of the SENCO's role unspecified there was a very clear statement in regard to the SENCO coordinating the work of teaching assistants and responsibilities for staff professional development:

> 'The SENCO oversees the school's provision for SEN, including the work of learning support assistants (LSAs), advises and supports fellow teachers, and liaises with parents. The SENCO also contributes to the in-service training of school staff.'
> (DfEE. 1997. p 61)

There was also a very clear statement about support for SENCOs from the rest of the school staff through the adoption of a 'whole-school approach' with all staff having regard for the key principles of the Code of Practice, the school having a clear policy on special educational needs which is communicated to all staff and that '...it is important for the school's senior management team and governors to work with and support the SENCO' (DfEE, 1997. p62).

'Excellence for all children' did raise the question, should the Teacher Training Agency's work on national standards be taken forward as the basis for a qualification for SEN co-ordinators? This preceded the later TDA (2009) endorsed National Award for SEN Coordination but there was an indication in this question where the seed was sown for potential future SENCO qualification(s) in time in order to recognise teachers who acquire the professional skills to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and to promote high standards of provision for children with complex SEN. In addition to considering the professional training needs of SENCOs 'Excellence for all children' also considered the potential for national standards and/or a qualification for other SEN specialists, particularly teaching assistants (called Learning Support Assistants in the Paper). The New Labour Government had set out their targets that by 2002 there would be structured professional development in SEN for teachers, strengthened SEN training in initial teacher education and improved training for head-teachers and SENCOs as well as a national framework for training teaching assistants. 'Excellence for all children' and the subsequent Programme of Action published in October 1998 appears to have accomplished more than just sowing seeds in the field of special educational needs and inclusion as there was the indication of a whole tranche of educational reform to come headed by the revision of the 1994 Code of Practice through the development and deployment of the 2001 Revised Code, the 2001 SEN and Disability Act and the later

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) *Inclusion Development Programme* which sat within the construct of the National Strategies.

A key programme of professional study for SENCOs arising out of '*Excellence for all*' was the introduction of the Teacher Training Agency's *National Standards for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators* (TTA, 1998), which detailed the knowledge, understanding, skills, attributes and expertise required by those co-ordinating SEN provision. This initiative committed all schools to audit their provision and SENCO skill set for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (Morewood, 2012). These 1998 'SENCO Standards' provided a useful opportunity and framework for the development of targeted professional training in relation to both the SENCO's own professional development and in their managing of SEN provision by defining the context for the effective co-ordination of SEN provision within a school and the additional knowledge, understanding, skills, attributes and expertise required by those coordinating SEN provision in the school.

The TTA (1998) *National Standards for Special Educational Needs Coordinators* presented a clear message to schools that the role of SENCO and provision for pupils with special educational needs was not to be viewed as a separate entity to whole school teaching and learning. Key recommendations were made in relation to the first Code of Practice (1994) as this was identified as failing to provide enough guidance in how Governors, Head-teachers and SENCOs were to manage the SENCO strategic role across the school but, as previously stated, there was still some degree of ambiguity, particularly around the role and responsibilities:

> 'Although the most common practice is to delegate the day-to-day operation of the SEN policy to an individual members of staff, in many schools a number of staff share the various aspects of the role. There is no requirement for the school to designate one person to carry out all the functions of the role...However the role is designated, the head-teacher and governing body must make explicit their expectations of the postholder in terms of the level of responsibility, the time available to undertake the duties and the extent of resources attached to this area of work.'
> (TTA, 1998: 3)

Although these were fairly ambiguous guidelines on the role of SENCO, the 1998 National Standards were very direct and concise concerning the role of head-

teachers and governors when they cemented the standards for meeting the needs of pupils with SEN as the same as the standards for the school as a whole,

> '...and, therefore, the management and organisation of SEN provision is ultimately the responsibility of the head-teacher and the governing body.'
> (TTA, 1998: 3).

2.4 Historical Perspectives on the SENCO Role:
Evolution and challenge over the next 15 years; the wider implications of Inclusion and the DfES (2001) Code of Practice to the present.

The concept of 'inclusion' replaced earlier ideas on the integration of children with special educational needs in the mainstream school as first introduced by the Warnock Report (1978) and the 1981 Education Act. Integration was later seen as limited in scope as it meant that a child had to,*'…become like the majority; conceal your difficulties; learn to fit in'* Corbett (1996 p2). Due to the limitations of integration, the adoption of inclusive practices in schools became a key factor in governmental guidance and legislation, particularly after the principles of the *Salamanca Statement* (UNESCO, 1994) provided an international model which called upon all governments to adopt as a matter of law or policy the principles of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there were compelling reasons for doing otherwise.

Early school engagement with inclusive practices led OFSTED to describe an educationally inclusive school as one in which *'the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of every young person matter'* (OFSTED 2000 p4). This commitment was further developed through the DfES (2001) Code of Practice and supported by the DfES (2001) statutory guidance entitled *Inclusive Schooling, Children with Special Educational Needs* which gave direction on the practical operation of the (then) new statutory framework for inclusion supporting the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) in order to strengthen the *'right to a mainstream education for children with special educational needs'* (p1). This statutory guidance provided a set of key principles of an inclusive education service, developing an inclusive ethos, disability equality, the voice of pupils, working in partnership with parents, pupil

safeguarding, inter-agency working and examples on providing 'reasonable steps'. The guidance also provided examples of instances when it may not be possible to include specific children in the mainstream school and the recognition of special schools, independent schools and the appropriate use of dual placements where a child attends more than one school/setting. The guidance also made direct links to the *Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education's Index for Inclusion* (Booth *et al*. 2000), a copy of which was sent to all schools. Booth maintained that the process of inclusion for schools needed to have been seen as a pathway rather than a finite destination,

> '…inclusion is a never-ending process. It is relevant to any school however inclusive or exclusive its current cultures, policies and practices. It requires schools to engage in a critical examination of what can be done to increase the learning and participation of the diversity of students within the school and its locality.'
> (p 12)

Many schools adopted *The Index for Inclusion* as a tool to measure their progress to becoming an inclusive learning community, alongside other similar tools such as Coles and Hancock's (2002) *Inclusion Quality Mark* (IQM) which provided a self-review system for schools set against ten elements within an assessment framework. Thus the idea of inclusion became a key factor in school policies, practices and national debates which included strategies for removing barriers for pupils with SEN, this action and inclusive strategy development being further strengthened by the DfES (2004a) in *'Removing Barriers to Achievement'* (from this point onwards, *RBA*). Here the government's strategy was to focus on the areas of early intervention, removing barriers to learning by embedding inclusive practice in every school and early years setting, raising the expectations and achievement by developing teachers' skills and strategies for meeting the needs of children with SEN and delivering improvements in partnership. This governmental strategy was supported by the DfES (2004b) complementary document *Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Schools* (from this point onwards *ECM)* which identified that pupil performance and well-being are interlinked and that effective joined-up children's services from education, health and social care need to provide 'wraparound' care in and on the site of schools (Cheminais, 2006). The link with inclusion was specific as *ECM* presented a key message:

> 'Raising standards in schools and inclusion go hand in hand. In particular schools have a critical role in raising the educational achievement of children in care, and other groups that have consistently underachieved.'
> (DfES, 2004b: p 4.6)

To do this the government stated, in *RBA* that:

> 'We want to see all teachers having the skills and confidence – and access to specialist advice where necessary – to help children with SEN to reach their potential…Every teacher should expect to teach children with SEN….ensure the approach to the training and development of teachers on SEN issues takes account of the wider reform strategy for the children's workforce to be developed following Every Child Matters'.
> (DfES 2004b. p 3.9)

The key concept of *all* teachers being responsible for the inclusion and education of children with special needs was stated here, a key concept which resonated through the inclusion statement in the National Curriculum (QCA, 1999) the previous two Codes of Practice (1994 and 2001) and the repetition in the 2015 Code; this message that teachers are responsible for *teaching* pupils with SEN with the SENCO role being a *coordinating* one was oft-repeated and clear with SENCOs being *'catalysts, facilitators and managers and not…remedial teachers'* (Mittler, 2000; p4). However, in connection with all of the strategies provided in *RBA,* it was indicated that:

> 'Effective inclusion relies on more than specialist skills and resources, it requires positive attitudes towards children who have difficulties in a school, a greater responsiveness to individual needs and critically, a willingness among all staff to play their part.'
> (DfES, 2004b. p 2.7)

OFSTED (2004) recognised that SENCOs identified the perception of staff as a major barrier to effective inclusion while in *RBA* it was recognised that one of the root causes of children having barriers to learning stemmed from being in an unsuitable school environment with *'inappropriate grouping of pupils, inflexible teaching styles, or inaccessible curriculum materials.'* (DfES, 2004a. p 2.1).

Cheminais (2006) stated that these barriers were largely the result of school organisational and management issues that required good leadership from the head-teacher, inclusion coordinator and SENCO to address, with an increased role for the class teacher and SENCO in supporting pupils with more complex SEN in emotionally coping with the range of potential interventions being given

by different external professionals and services. *RBA* and *ECM* both included the expectation that the SENCO needed to have a key role in supporting, advising and guiding all teachers and TAs - including initial teacher trainees (ITT) and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) – in all matters relating to SEN and disability and their implications for classroom practice, pupil target setting, differentiation/personalised learning and quality first teaching (QFT) with personalised learning encouraging learning to take place in holidays and outside of school hours.

Although the intricate and positive strategies, guidance and aspirations of *RBA* and *ECM* were consumed and amended/re-modelled within the radical reform of the system culminating in the DfE's (2011) consultation paper *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability,* the place of the SENCO in supporting and advising teachers in their promotion of inclusive learning strategies was still secure in terms of the Code and the *National Award for SEN Coordination*.

The DfES (2001) revised *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice* became the legislative framework in delivering the Government's education policy in relation to covering the special educational needs provisions of the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act* 2001. This revised code did provide guidance to SENCOs in terms of the range of their role and suggestions as to the resources and status which should be accorded them. However, the 2001 Code did not seem to provide enough of a formal definition of the role of the SENCO. In many respects this created the critical discussions around the nature of this key post and exactly who should hold it in a school –discussions which became acute after the workforce agreement on raising standards and teaching workload after the publication of the DfES (2002) *Time for Standards: Reform to School Workforce* and the DfES (2005) *Children's Workforce Strategy* when a significant number of schools began to appoint teaching assistants as SENCOs. The 2001 Code's description of the SENCO appeared in a glossary:

> 'SEN coordinator (SENCO): member of staff of a school or early education setting who has responsibility for coordinating SEN provision within that school. In a small school the head-teacher or deputy may take on this role. In larger schools there may be an SEN coordinating team'
> (p 206)

There was ambiguity around the term '*member of staff'*. As a result some schools used this ambiguity to appoint non-teachers into this position, particularly skilled teaching assistants who had a significantly high level of knowledge of special educational needs and of supporting pupils with barriers to their learning.

The 2001 Code of Practice did make it very clear that governing bodies and head-teachers need to give careful thought to the SENCO's timetable along with the provision of suitable resources such as the use of a telephone and administrative support but only in the context of the resources available to the school to carry out their role; neither the amount of time or the level of resourcing and administrative support were specified; it was also unclear as to the leadership aspects of the SENCO role, although the DfEE (2001) Code did state that,

> 'The SEN Coordinator in collaboration with the head teacher and governing body, plays a key role in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in the school in order to raise the achievement of children with SEN.'
> (p 50, para 5.30 [primary])

As a result of this imprecise information the status of the SENCO as a member of the senior leadership team varied from school-to-school as the DfEE took the view that head-teachers and governing bodies were to decide the status of the SENCO together with their non-contact time for the role and their level of resources. The DfES (2004) in *RBA* supported the earlier DfEE view that SENCOs should be on their school leadership teams, but again there was no directive supported by legislation for the status of the SENCO and no indication that the SENCO *must* be a qualified teacher.

The *SEN House of Commons Education and Skills Committee* (2006) report noted concerns about the support actually being given to SENCOs and made recommendations for improvements. Using a range of evidence gathered from SENCOs, the committee identified a significant gap in policy and practice with SENCOs being given a large range of responsibilities but sometimes without any adequate training to be able to take on these responsibilities. It was stated that,

> 'Despite the recommendations in the Code of Practice that SENCOs should be part of a Senior Management Team this is often not the case...'
> (Education and Skills Committee,2006. p 73, para 319).

The Report also made use of Baroness Warnock's evidence to underline this:

> 'They [SENCOs] were at the beginning senior teachers, but {...} there is now a very large number of schools where the SENCO is actually a teaching assistant and not a teacher at all, with no experience and they are no longer a member of the senior management team but someone with peripheral duties to see how many children there are in the school who are getting this, that and the other.'
> (Education and Skills Committee, 2006. p 74, para 319)

The new belief was that the vital strategic leadership role of the SENCO had been marginalised and had been further eroded by the impact of the Workforce Reforms relating to planning and preparation, teaching & learning responsibilities (TLRs) and the large growth in the employment and deployment of teaching assistants – particularly those with the newly established status of a Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) who had been awarded the remit to teach whole classes and to take over what were considered to be the more administrative duties of teachers.

Concerns from SENCOs over their own status and conditions of service were recorded in research undertaken by Devi and Smith (2010) which compared the working lives of 60 SENCOs who were qualified teachers (both primary and secondary phases) from 2005 to 2010, particularly exploring how SENCOs understood and perceived their professional role and the 'balancing' of their teaching with their SENCO management duties. The concerns of the Education and Skills Committee in 2006 were echoed in Devi and Smith's research when the interrogation of their 2005 data stream showed that only 50% of the SENCOs reported that they were on their school's senior leadership team and that 84% of them held other whole-school duties in addition to their SENCO role or any class/subject teaching duties. It was further discovered that 90% of this SENCO respondent group had less than 6 hours per week dedicated to their SENCO duties; 50% of SENCOs also reported that their dedicated hours for SENCO work were 'not protected' on their timetables.

Issues arising from Devi & Smith's research were SENCOs having difficulties balancing the demands of whole-class teaching with their SENCO management role and the expanding range of whole-school duties expected of the SENCO (most of the additional duties being without financial reward). It was also discovered that there was a significant number of primary school SENCOs

interpreting their professional role in the limited terms of 'administration' only (record keeping and individual education plan (IEP) management) and not in a wider strategic sense with most of the primary school SENCOs having little, if any, input into managing the SEN finances in their schools. A high proportion of all SENCOs stated that they were frustrated by the attitude of their colleagues in their schools who did not take the responsibility for the learning experiences of pupils with SEND in their classes, instead passing this off to teaching assistants and/or to the SENCO; this last point was a key factor underpinning the issues relating to weaknesses in Quality First Teaching in mainstream school classrooms as identified by Ofsted (2010). Shuttleworth (2000) identified this frisson between the SENCO's strategic management function and the bureaucracy inherent in the role and stated that many SENCOs claimed that their job was virtually impossible to carry out effectively; he also stated that the work of the SENCO is at the extreme edge of teaching skill as it requires a far greater depth of knowledge of the physical and psychological bases of learning than any other area of education.

These findings were not new in the sense that similar issues for SENCOs and their professional role had been identified by Pearson (2008) through her survey into the recruitment, induction and retention of SENCOs. Commissioned by NASEN, Pearson selected a large sample (n = 500) of SENCOs from a single local authority working across all forms of educational provision and from a range of NASEN members; there was an overall 54% return rate (n= 266). Of the questionnaire returns more than half of the SENCOs stated that they were not a part of their schools' senior leadership teams with those who were receiving higher pay and time allowances. A range of staff members (from head-teacher to deputies and assistant heads) were named as the SENCO line-manager, although this is not uncommon as a line-management strategy in some schools and does not imply that the SENCO was denied the opportunity to be a senior leader. The majority of the SENCOs stated that they held responsibilities other than that of managing the day-to-day SEN provision; although it was highlighted that analysis of this part of the data was complicated due to the varied structures and terminologies used in schools and by the participants, firm evidence emerged of SENCOs holding multiple and demanding responsibilities alongside those of being a SENCO. From the data and from respondent written comments many of the SENCOs recognised the nature of their key role but making the point that it did not make for a universally attractive one.

The problems raised in 2008 by Pearson and in 2010 by Devi and Smith indicated a substantial lack of clarity about the SENCO's role. The *SEN House of Commons Education and Skills Committee* (2006) Report made several recommendations about the role of the SENCO and that they should in all cases be qualified teachers; SENCOs should be in a management position in their school/setting as recommended in the 2001 SEN Code of Practice and that the role and position of the SENCO must reflect the central priority that SEN should hold within schools (Recommendation 84). They also recommended firmer guidelines from the Government in directing schools to meet the needs of the SEN Code of Practice rather than simply asking schools to have regard' to the SEN Code of Practice. There was recognition that SENCOs should be given training to enable them to keep their professional knowledge up-to-date and that non-teaching time should be given – enough to reflect the number of pupils with SEND in their schools/settings. Schools were also made aware that they had a duty to ensure that all SENCOs are monitored and supported in their role.

In response to this Report, the New Labour Government in their *Government Response to the Select Committee Report on Special Educational Needs*. Oct 2006. p24, para 21 stated that the person taking the lead responsibility for the coordination of SEN should be a teacher and a member of the senior leadership team in the school. In addition, the Government also commissioned the TDA to develop an accreditation system for SENCOs with an agreed curriculum; all new SENCOs being required to undertake this nationally accredited training. Although this accreditation provided a list of recommendations which, in essence, differed little from the original recommendations around the SENCO role in the DES (2001) Code of Practice even the newer stipulation of the SENCO having to be a qualified teacher remained open to interpretation due to the frequent changes in the following Coalition Government's view on the status of teachers' professional qualifications and training in Free Schools and Academies.

The publication of the Department for Education's response to the SEN Green Paper: *'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability': A consultation.* DfE (2011) was published in May 2012. This response, entitled, *'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability': Progress and next steps*. (DfE (2012) presented a number of changes in the management and provision for special

educational needs in schools, changes which had a direct impact on the SENCOs' role. Perhaps the greatest challenge was the fundamental change in how provision for SEN was to be funded and structured with the new assessment process being introduced in place of the previous SEN graduated response through School Action, School Action Plus and the statementing process which had been in use since the DfES (2001) Code of Practice refined the earlier 1994 Code. The new assessment process required the collaboration of professionals from education, health and care services on assessments which led to the creation of individual education, health and care plans (EHCPs). Unlike statements of special educational needs, these EHCPs extended the legal protection from birth up to the age of 25 rather than finishing at age 16 with additional assessments and funding being required after the end of their compulsory schooling. In many respects this new EHCP could have been viewed as a re-imaging of the Common Assessment Framework (*CAF*) which formed a part of the DfES (2004) *ECM* agenda. Cheminais, (2006) stated that the *CAF* process supported earlier intervention with improved multi-agency working helping to identify the broader needs of a child through adopting a national common approach to needs assessment and quick referrals between agencies thus reducing the number of separate assessments for a child.

At present, within the partnership set up between the University of Northampton and several Local Authorities, nationally accredited training has been put into place with Local Authority cohorts operating since January 2010. During the course of this training, anecdotal evidence began to emerge that little change had occurred in the working/professional lives of Primary School SENCOs. There was also a growing degree of uncertainty felt by a number of SENCOs over the security of their roles and position if their schools voluntarily took on Academy status (or if forced into Academy status); they feared a lessening of their new status as strategic managers. Wedell, (2012) made the point that the SENCOs' own positions within their schools determined how far they could actually facilitate effective inclusion or *'whether a SENCO's role is reduced to fending off a school's rigidities from impacting on individual pupils' needs.'* (p 69). This policy of 'Academisation' was also complemented by the Government's withdrawal of TDA funding for any new masters-level qualifications through post-graduate professional development activity, this left SENCOs feeling confused as to the completion of their 'M' level programmes of study and Head teachers, National Award for SEN Coordination deliverers and Local Authorities confused as to the

future of the newly established TDA accredited compulsory National Award for SEN Coordination. This led to a growing anxiety amongst SENCOs that their re-established status was, again, under threat. This perceived threat to the SENCOs' status needs to be viewed alongside the varied influences which impact upon the SENCO and how their role is actually performed and understood in their schools and settings; in short, the way in which the SENCOs' own professional identities are interpreted within the professional identity of being a teacher and how they manage the pathway from being a teacher to a SENCO, the continuum of being a 'novice' to experienced and the exact nature of what we mean by the 'SENCO expert'.

2.5   Summary

The last third of the twentieth century and the first seventeen years of the twenty-first witnessed a significant level of change and new legislation for SEND. Soan (2010) acknowledged that the movement towards integration, separate structures for SEN and the role of the SENCO were vital during the 1980s and 1990s. The evolution of the Social Model of Disability underpinned by inclusion in the new century enabled further transformation to take place with statutory guidance provided by three successive *Codes of Practice* (DfE, 1994; DfES, 2001; and DfE/DH, 2015) safeguarding pupils with the most severe special educational needs, making all teachers responsible for children with SEND and defining the role of the SENCO. In addition to this the HMSO (2009) *The Education (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) (England) (Amendment) Regulations* legislated for and strengthened the SENCO as a professional by recognising their role in leading and supporting staff, challenging and supporting school leadership, managing and developing effective and timely provision for SEND across the school, engaging systems of early intervention and the efficient tracking of the progress of pupils with SEND.

Table (2:3), presents a comparative summary of the three successive Codes of Practice which forms the Legal Contract for SENCOs.

Table (2:3)   *The SENCOs' Legal Contract: The Codes of Practice 1994, 2001 and 2015.*

The Codes of Practice DfE (1994),DfES (2001) and DfE/DH (2015)			
Code of Practice	**Department for Education DfE (1994) The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs** (134 pages long with an additional 32 pages for The Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations 1994)	**Department for Education and Skills DfES (2001) Special Educational Needs Code of Practice** (209 pages long)	**Department for Education and Department of Health DfE/DH (2015) Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years. Statutory guidance for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.** (270 pages long)
Government	**Conservative** PM John Major (1990-1997). Secretary of State for Education John Patten (10.08.92 to 20.07.94) and then Gillian Shepherd (20.07.94 to 05.07.95)	**New Labour** PM Tony Blair(1997-2005) Secretary of State for Education David Blunkett (29.05.97 to 08.06.2001) and then Estelle Morris (08.06.01 to 24.10.02) **Note:** Morris was the only Secretary to write a preface to any *CoP*	**Conservative Coalition** PM David Cameron (2010-2015). Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove (11.05.10 to 15.07.14) and then Nicky Morgan (15.07.14 to 14.07.16
Contents (section titles)	**Foreword** (not part of the CoP) 1. Introduction: Principles and procedures 2. School-based stages of assessment and provision 3. Statutory assessment of special educational needs 4. Statement of Special Educational Needs 5. Assessments and statements for under fives 6. Annual review **Appendix**: Transitional	**Preface** **Foreword** 1. Principles and policies 2. Working in partnership with parents 3. Pupil participation 4. Identification, assessment and provision in early education settings 5. Identification, assessment and provision in the primary phase 6. Identification, assessment and provision	**Introduction** 1. Principles 2. Impartial information, advice and support 3. Working together across education, health and care for joint outcomes 4. The Local Offer 5. Early years providers 6. Schools 7. Further education 8. Preparing for adulthood from the earliest years 9. Education,

		in the secondary sector 7. Statutory assessment of special educational needs 8. Statements of special educational needs 9. Annual review 10. Working in partnership with other agencies **Annex** :The Education (SEN) (England) Regulations 2001 and **Glossary**	health and care needs assessments and plans 10. Children and young people in specific circumstances 11. Resolving disagreements **Annex 1:** Mental capacity **Annex. 2**: Improving practice and staff training in education settings. **Glossary** of terms **References**
Special Educational Needs	Defined on (p5) and referenced to the Education Act (1993) Section 156	Defined on (p6) – no change from the 1994 *CoP* but with additional definitions relating to Disability from Section 17 (11) of the *Children Act* (1989) and Section 1(1) of the *Disability Discrimination Act* 1995.	Defined on (p4) - use of the term 'learning difficulty or disability' replaces 'special educational needs' in the definition. Post-16 included. Referenced to Section 20 of the *Children and Families Act* 2014. The term SEN is used throughout the *Code*
Procedures	**Five Stage Model** 1. **Stage 1** Classteacher identifies a pupil's SEN **consults with the SENCO.** Teacher provides classroom support. 2. **Stage 2** Teacher informs SENCO after Stage 1 review. **SENCO takes the lead responsibility** for data gathering and partnership working with teacher(s) & coordinates provision. 3. **Stage 3** After Stage 2 review **the SENCO and the pupil's teacher(s) work**	**Three Stage Model** (graduated approach) 1. **School Action** *Classteacher or SENCO* identifies a child wih SEN. Classteacher provides interventions *additional to or different from* the usual differentiated curriculum offer & strategies. 2. **School Action Plus** Trigger for SA+ Teacher's or others' concerns (evidenced) if the child *makes little or no progress* (p52). Classteacher (in consultation with parents) **seeks the support of the**	**Four Step Cycle** (graduated approach) 1. **Assess** *Classteacher* (**with the SENCO)** carries out analysis of pupil's needs (views of parents/carers; the pupil's own view & advice from external services sought). 2. **Plan** *Classteacher and SENCO* informs and consults with parents/pupil & agrees the adjustments, interventions and support to be employed (with the expected impact on progress, and date for review). Teachers and TAs made aware of pupil's

with external specialists in developing provision. 4. **Stage 4** Local Education Authority (LEA) approached by the school or by the parents/carers for a statutory assessment (a multi-disciplinary assessment is made) **5. Stage 5** LEA considers the needs for a statement of special educational needs for the pupil. If agreed, statement is written with the arrangements for monitoring and the annual review. ***SENCO has the responsibility*** for managing the pupil statement.	**SENCO. The SENCO** (after consultation with external professionals who may be involved) ***takes the lead*** in further assessment, planning future support & provision and monitoring. Additional support and advice sought from external services and specialists. ***Classteacher maintains responsibility for working with the child in the classroom.*** Parents informed and consulted Individual Education Plans (IEPs) used to record strategies which are additional to or different from the differentiated curriculum (3 to 4 individual targets related to key areas of: communication literacy, mathematics and behaviour & social skills. IEPs are reviewed 2 x a year 3. **Request for a statutory assessment** made by the school to the LEA if the child demonstrates significant cause for concern after the school has employed strategies for a reasonable period of time without success. The school provides evidence to support their request. If the LEA approves the request (through the LEA working co-operatively with parents, the school and other agencies) a Statement of Special	needs, the outcomes sought, the support provided and teaching strategies (recorded on the school information system). Support & Interventions are designed to meet identified outcomes for the pupil. 3. **Do** ***Classteacher is responsible*** for working with the pupil on a daily basis. With interventions where the pupil is away from the classroom, ***the classteacher retains responsibility*** (working in partnership with TAs or specialist staff to plan and assess the impact of the support & interventions – linking them to classroom teaching). ***The SENCO supports the classteacher*** in further assessment of the pupil's needs and in advising on support. 4. **Review** In line with the agreed date the effectiveness of the support on pupil progress is reviewed. Support/interventions are evaluated. Views of parents and the pupil are sought and fed back into the evaluation and analysis of pupil needs. Classteacher (***with the SENCO)*** revises the support according to pupil progress and development. Changes are decided (to support and outcomes) in consultation with

		Educational Needs is issued (during the process the child is to continue at SA+). ***SENCO has the responsibility*** for managing the pupil statement	parents and pupil. If a school has taken relevant and purposeful action to meet the needs of a pupil and expected progress has not been made, the school and/or parents can request an **Education, Health and Care needs assessment** from the Local Authority who needs to see evidence of action taken by the school as part of SEN support before they make their assessment for the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – this Plan replaces the previous Statement of Special Educational Needs
Areas of Need in each Code of Practice	• Learning difficulties • Specific learning difficulties • Emotional and behavioural difficulties • Physical disabilities • Sensory impairments (hearing and visual) • Speech and Language difficulties • Medical conditions (8 areas of need- with hearing & visual as separate. Code states that these are not '*hard and fast categories'* and that each child is '*unique'* DfE, 1994. p54)	• Communication and interaction • Cognition and learning • Behaviour, emotional and social development • Sensory and/or physical (4 areas of need with a statement made that each child is unique and may have a variety of needs)	• Communication and interaction • Cognition and learning • Social, emotional and mental health difficulties • Sensory and/or physical needs (4 areas of need. Children's needs fall across areas and change with time so the purpose is to identify action and not label children within a category)
Timetable	From considering whether a statutory assessment is necessary to finalising the statement (4 steps) was set at **26 weeks**	Parents must normally receive written notification of the outcome of a statutory assessment **within 12 weeks** of the start of	The whole process of EHC needs assessment and EHC plan development must take no longer than **20 weeks**

	(*although, in practice, this timetable was frequently exceeded*)	the statutory assessment process	
Role of the Primary School SENCO	**Para 2.14.** The SEN coordinator (designated teacher) should be responsible for: • The day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy • Liaising with and advising fellow teachers • Coordinating provision for children with SEN • Maintaining the school's SEN register & overseeing the records on all pupils with SEN • Liaising with parents of children with SEN • Contributing to staff INSET • Liaising with external agencies (7 key responsibilities)	**Para 5.30 to 5.32** Key responsibilities of SENCO may include: • Overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy • Coordinating provision for children with SEN • Liaising with and advising fellow teachers • Managing learning support assistants • Overseeing the records of all children with SEN • Liaising with parents of children with SEN • Contributing to the in-service training of staff • Liaising with external agencies (8 key responsibilities)	**Para 6.84 to 6.94** The key responsibilities of the SENCO may include: • 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 • 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 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
			(11 key responsibilities)

There are significant inferences for the SENCO role across all three of these Codes of Practice. The DfE (1994) *CoP* noted that the role of the SENCO and the time and attention which SENCOs were able to devote to their responsibilities depended upon the circumstances of individual schools.

> 'Governing bodies and head teachers may need to give careful thought to the SENCO's timetable in the light of this Code and in the context of resources available to the school'.
> (p 10)

In the 1994 Code there was little direction for schools apart from this advice and the list of SENCO responsibilities in paragraph 2.14. The DfES (2001) *CoP* provided greater clarity on the status of the SENCO by stating that a SENCO (in collaboration with the headteacher and governing body) plays a key role in

determining the strategic development of SEN policy & provision in order to raise the achievement of children with SEN and that,

> 'Governing bodies and headteachers will need to give careful thought to the SENCO's timetable in the light of the Code and the context of the resources available to the school'.
> (p 29)

In this *CoP* the language remains rather vague over the amount of time which a school should give the SENCO to engage with their formidable range of duties and responsibilities, however these basic requirements/resources are listed:

> 'Experience shows that SENCOs require time for: planning and coordination away from the classroom; maintaining appropriate individual and whole school records of children at School Action and School Action Plus and those with statements; teaching pupils with SEN; observing pupils in class without a teaching commitment; managing, supporting and training learning support assistants; liaising with colleagues and with early education settings and secondary schools. Access to a telephone and an interview room is also desirable where possible. In many schools the governing body has been able to allocate some administrative staff time to help the SENCO, thus releasing the SENCO to use their expertise more effectively.'
> (p 29)

In the 2001 *CoP* the SENCO role was identified as being the equivalent of a curriculum, literacy or numeracy coordinator with the role being further identified as *'time consuming and therefore it is usually inappropriate for the SENCO to have other school-wide responsibilities'* (Para 5:35. p30). However, the Code's advice that many schools find it effective for the SENCO to be a member of the senior leadership team still did not provide a clear directive to school leaders that the SENCO must be on this school policy-forming group.

It was not until the DfE /DH (2015) *CoP* that the assumption of the SENCO being a qualified teacher was reinforced with a clear direction that,

> 'Governing bodies of maintained mainstream schools and the proprietors of mainstream academy schools (including free schools) **must** ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as SENCO for the school'
> (p 97)

Apart from this new directive and an emphasis on the word **'must'** in the context of the SENCO being a qualified teacher, there was a return to the language of the 2001 Code when describing the status of the SENCO,

'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.'
(p 97)

'The school should ensure that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out these functions. This should include providing the SENCO with sufficient administrative support and time away from teaching to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in a similar way to other important strategic roles within a school.'
(Para 6.91. p 98)

The importance of the SENCO and their range of widespread responsibilities is evident in the 2015 CoP, however the use of imprecise language and direction to schools remained an issue. In the DfE (1994) *CoP*, '*Should*' was used in listing the key responsibilities of the SENCO with these responsibilities being mainly located in managing and administering provision for SEN with no indication of the SENCO's strategic role or regard to liaison (with colleagues, parents and external services). There was some awareness of the SENCO's needs in terms of having time and resources to do the job – but these were not detailed as the headteacher and governors were only expected to give '*careful thought*' to SENCO time and resourcing ('*Should*' was thus not interpreted as a '*Must*' in this context). There was an indication of the SENCO being a designated teacher (the phrase '*qualified teacher*' was not used in this *CoP*) but there was no mention of the practice of Inclusion or of the SENCO's role in developing the school as an inclusive learning community.

The DfES (2001) *CoP* in its attempt to refine the 1994 Code used '*May*' in listing the key responsibilities with the key responsibilities closely matching those from the first *CoP* but with a clear indication of the SENCO managing the TA team. There was advice to headteachers and governing bodies on providing adequate resources, remission from teaching, administrative support and ICT management support for SENCOs but, again (as in 1994) the language used in the 2001 CoP such as, '*should, may and usually inappropriate*' did not equate to '*must*'. The indication that the SENCO is a designated teacher was no longer clear in this *CoP* and so this might have been the start of the slow eroding of the status of the SENCo from qualified teacher to a 'designated' but unqualified teacher/teaching assistant. Again, there was no mention of the *practical* application of 'Inclusion' – however, the DfES (2001) *CoP* was published alongside, and related to, the

statutory guidance from the DfES (2001) on *Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs.*

The DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* maintains the use of 'may' in listing the key responsibilities which are significantly extended along with the increased length/size of the whole document but, for the first time, the SENCO advising on the school's delegated budget to meet pupils' needs is listed. In comparison with the increased complexity of language and range of SENCO responsibilities the '*Assess, Plan, Do, Review*' is the least prescriptive of the staged processes when compared the other two Codes. As previously stated in this sub-section, the SENCO is now firmly recognised as a qualified teacher along with a clear directive being given on the requirement for a new SENCO to attend a postgraduate course accredited by an HE provider *(SEN Coordination Award)*. However, this Code is the most procedural of them all as it contains a number of new processes and schedules which are to be complied with by SENCOs, schools and the Local Authority. These are presented using an overly technical vocabulary, however there are no examples or advice given on *how* to comply thus this helps to support the Contextual Variety between individual schools and LAs.

After 20+ years since the UNESCO (1994) *Salamanca Statement* made a clear commitment to understanding that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs and that education systems should be designed and implemented to take this wide range of needs into account, such a significant piece of statutory guidance as the 2015 *CoP* still does not provide any commentary on the practical aspects of inclusion.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE
Theme (2): Influences on the SENCO function

3.1   Introduction

The previous chapter provided a critical description of the context for the SENCO role (definitions of special educational needs and the English primary school) and a dissection of the role itself in terms of what a SENCO does in regard to their Legal Contract as set out by legislation and statutory/non-statutory guidelines. This attempt at a definition of the SENCO role was complemented by a description of the historical evolution of the role and the embedding of whole-school inclusion as a key factor of the SENCO's job. This chapter is designed to use this context as a stepping-off point in order to focus on the varied factors which enable the SENCO to actively manage provision in their school so as to lead to an understanding of the nature of the SENCO at work, the influences on their performance over time, the source of these different influencing factors and how they affect SENCO behaviour. This is interrelated with the nature of their employment relationships affecting motivation and commitment as the SENCO acts and performs their role within the complex organisational system and culture of their school and the marketization of education creating a performativity-rich climate.

An understanding of the processes and patterns of organisational behaviour is important for the SENCO; Fidler (1998) stated that each person needs to know their own task within an organisation and that of others with whom they come into contact. Nadler and Tushman (1980) stated that:

> 'The manager needs to be able to understand the patterns of behaviour that are observed to predict in what direction behaviour will move (particularly in the light of managerial action), and to use this knowledge to control behaviour over the course of time. Effective managerial action requires that the manager be able to diagnose the system he or she is working in.'
> (p 67)

In this context there are ways in an organisation of controlling and coordinating the activities of different individuals and dealing with events, this provides the basis for developing an organisational structure which is generally, in the case of

a school, very explicit. However, an organisational model in a school is no longer created along an older, traditional hierarchical structure. Flatter systems of organisation where responsibility is more widely shared have been emerging (Harris, Bennet and Preedy, 1998) with an implication that 'management' duties are undertaken and executed by a wide range of school staff in a variety of situations. This is arguably due to the sustained pressure upon schools to improve pupil performance against national targets and to become more financially sustainable in a climate where Education has become a 'quasi-marketplace' with a greater decentralisation of powers to schools and increasing emphasis on standards, accountability and competition. Scott (1998) stated in the language of a pure market-led organisation,

> 'The effectiveness of market-controlled organizations is directly determined by their customers: if their interests are satisfied, then they will continue to supply the inputs required by the organization; if not, then they can withhold their contributions, causing the organization to suffer and perhaps ultimately to fail.'
> (p 99)

With schools in the quasi-marketplace the customers referred to by Scott equate to parents with schools being in competition with other schools for these customers. Bush and Bell (2006) have stated that the expectation imposed upon schools to act in this competitive, market-driven manner has increasingly created school leaders who have to meet narrowly imposed targets and face penalties, *including dismissal, if they do not succeed'* (p13) with head-teachers and senior educational managers being particularly vulnerable to such negative effects thus resulting in a need to,

> 'construct and sustain working frameworks and processes that recognise that leadership and management skills are needed at many points in the organisation. Promoting team work helps in developing such capabilities and also provides the potential for supportive networks for all managers, teachers, staff and students. '
> (p 13)

This need to promote supportive networks for leadership and management in schools contributes to both the school's formal organisational structure and the more informal culture of the school which focuses on the values, beliefs and norms of those working within the school and how these, *'...define that social and phenomenological uniqueness of a particular organisational community.'* (Beare et al., 1989. p173). This, in turn, underpins the behaviour and attitudes

of individuals within the school which forms the context in which school leadership is exercised creating a considerable influence on how school leaders think and act (Dimmock and Walker, 2006). The SENCO role has been interpreted as a 'leadership' role in every Code of Practice since 1994, thus the emergence of the SENCO as manager and strategic leader is significantly influenced by both the informal culture of their individual school and their school as an organisation moulded by the market-led forces within a globalised system of performativity-led education. It is in this context of the school in the marketplace that the SENCO role is next explored.

3.2 The 'Quasi-Marketization' of Schools and its influence on shaping both the school as an organisation and the SENCO role

Although this study is not focused on the changing nature of the English school system, it is important to briefly explore the increasing marketization of schools as this phenomenon underpins performativity and holds together the varied facets and influences impacting on the SENCO and how he/she does their job. This marketization stemmed, in the main, from the 1988 Education Reform Act which became legislation under the Thatcher Conservative Government. This act created the local management of schools (LMS), schools with Grant Maintained Status (GMS), per capita funding and league tables of standard assessment tests (SATs) results, alongside greater parental choice and a rolling-back of Local Authority control and support as schools were encouraged to opt-out of Local Authority control due to being given considerable financial incentives (revenue and capita) if they adopted full Grant Maintained status (West and Pennell, 2002). West and Pennell also made the point that the Conservative reforms were designed to bring market forces into the school-based education system to make it more consumer-orientated with the emphasis on consumer choice anchored in an overarching belief in *the superiority of market forces as a means of organising education and society generally'* (p 3)

Although Grant Maintained status was abolished by the 1998 School Standards Framework Act the financial situation of those schools was protected by what became known as 'transitional funding' and the growth, under New Labour's Technology Colleges Programme introduced in 1993, of a range of specialist schools with enhanced funding leading to the setting up of City Academies as publically-funded independent schools with substantial private and voluntary

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sector sponsorship having to be in place and management where the aim was to replace schools that were failing or schools that needed 'an extra boost' (Times Educational Supplement, 2000). These significant changes in schooling underpinned the current, political, drive for increased academisation, the setting up of Free-Schools and arguments around the potential of re-introducing grammar schools.

In the light of this growth, Rikowski (2007) referred to the concept of marketization as being the economic, political, social and educational processes whereby the market is '*becoming*' (p1) and in a stage of emergence and development. Rikowski (1996) had also previously posed questions in regard to the efficacy of such school markets and their consequences for social justice, equality, effects on standards, community cohesion and inter-school collaboration, while Ball (2006) argued that:

> 'I would suggest that any comprehensive attempt to review and describe the use of the market form in English education needs to address: competition, supply and demand, producer and consumer behaviour, privatisation and commodification, values and ethics and distributional outcomes.'
> (p 116)

Outside of the private/independent sector there are no direct official fees paid by parents for school places and so parents are not engaged in a commodities market as such but instead there is what has been called a 'quasi-market' (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993) where there was the potential to lead to 'popular' and 'unpopular' schools, over-subscription on pupil places and even discrimination against children with special educational needs and those from low-income or non-traditional family structures. Riddell (2005) identified how some middle-class parents would move house and/or hire private tutors to get their child into what was perceived as a good school through their interrogation of published league table results. Riddell made the point that these tactics widened the class divide as poorer and working-class parents could not afford to play the market in schools in these ways to the same extent. Browne (2007) noted that:

> 'A recent survey suggested that most parents are prepared to move house to get the catchment area of a good school. Many of those are prepared to pay higher house prices to do so, effectively buying a better state education.'
> (p 11)

The idea for new schools fuelled the Conservative Party's drive for sanctioning Free Schools set up by groups of parents, education charities, philanthropists and trusts (Murphy, 2007) and the deepening of the quasi-marketization of the school system by the *'creation of more schools with low or zero accountability'* to the Local Authority (Rikowski, 2007 p3). However, the impact of the quasi-marketplace in schools was not simply related to parental choice and the growth of school leadership into a business-orientated function, the schools market shaped job roles through the underpinning requirements of staff payment linked to pupil performance, frequent monitoring by both internal (school) processes and formal Ofsted inspection and public/media exposure through the publication of pupil performance results which parents compared -and -contrasted. Garner, Hinchcliffe and Sandor (1995) made the key point that compulsory education since the Education Reform Act (1988) had been re-orientated *'...along instrumental, market-governed lines'* and that,

> 'This scrutiny has been underpinned by an apparent wish, on the part of central government, to reduce teacher autonomy and power. This is particularly apparent with respect to the taught curriculum which has become the property of successive Conservative governments. In the period after 1988, control and criticism of teachers were combined. Legislation was introduced to govern their training and work-practices, and it occurred alongside a systematic, orchestrated criticism of the profession, in which teachers' voices have been largely neglected, their opinions overridden, and their concerns dismissed.'
> (p x)

According to this particular twenty-year old view, schools and teachers had to comply with the legislation and systems set for them. Only recently have schools been allowed more freedom from direct Government control but only by being a part of an academy trust, a free school or their equivalent.

The loss of opportunity for the 'teacher-voice' to be heard together with, in the main, a still remaining central government control of the content of the curriculum, the high-stakes assessment regime and, to some extent, how the curriculum was actually taught in the classroom created a level of performativity where teachers believed that they had to comply with these externally imposed structures. Garner, Hinchcliffe and Sandor (1995) continued their theme by stating that teachers had not been given the opportunity to think about their work or were enabled to deliver teaching and learning activities in an alternative way to the expectations set by national strategies and the directives set by their

head-teachers due to a fear of being identified as not complying with the government's accepted modus operandi and thus open to censure and disciplinary action.

This fear identified by Garner *et al*, when writing under a Conservative government over twenty years ago, was also identified by Thring (1998) who, writing and researching under the New Labour government of Tony Blair, stated that,

> 'Staffrooms now ring to the zombie reiteration of mantras issuing from our new directors of orthodoxy concerning standards, training and 'improvement', and a sinking sensation that whatever cannot be measured we should not be doing…Teachers have always been fundamentally social creatures, seeking consort with colleagues and harmony with their classes, but the recent policy of vilification by results is crushing teachers' individual vitality. Change in education is now propelled by abhorrence rather than compassion.'
> (p 4)

This is certainly emotive thinking and writing, particularly when it followed Thring's view that,

> 'Teachers' authority over curriculum and its management has been shamefully usurped, and in consequence we suffer a neutered powerlessness to effect change or have any influence over how it is imposed.'
> (p 3)

Garner, Hinchcliffe and Sandor (1995) noted that this level of conformity and direction had to be acted upon and absorbed by *all* teachers, however those teachers working in the field of special education (particularly SENCOs) had to act upon/absorb all the general education directives in addition to those specifically targeted on and around pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. As a result teachers (and SENCOs) still had to perform and were assessed according to criteria into which they had little direct input apart from small-time frames where Green Papers were made available by central government for comment/response and where any real dialogue between the profession and central government did not exist and was not encouraged as any one (or group) identified as questioning government policy and practice was identified as '*the new enemies of promise*' (Gove, M. 2013) – in this context, Thring's description of teachers suffering a '*neutered powerlessness*' had a particular resonance.

In the case of market-orientated, government-imposed systems shaping job-roles it is useful to explore how the concept of performativity complements this system. The concept of performativity has been briefly mentioned earlier when setting the literature into a theoretical context; the following section re-visits the emphasis on school regimes, how it influences the SENCO in terms of what they are allowed to do and factors around the SENCO emerging as a strategic leader.

3.3   'Performativity' and the SENCO

The term *'performativity'* was created by Lyotard in his thesis entitled *'The Postmodern Condition'* (Lyotard, 1984) in reference to the emphasis placed on the use of outcome-related performance indicators. In the context of the SENCO role the focus on the requirement to monitor pupil performance and achievements is a key part of the teaching process, however when this data collection becomes the self-fulfilling prophecy of the teaching process as defined by a regime of high-stakes, narrowly focused quantitative assessment which is then made public through the use of league tables and inspection reports this, according to Glazzard (2014), marginalises pupils who have barriers to their learning/participation.   Ball (2003) stated that a high level of negative performativity emerged as a

> '...technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change.'
> (p 216)

This performativity culture and mode of regulation created what Perryman (2006) called the process of *'performing the normal within a particular discourse'* (p 150); within the context of school inspection and staff-performance this could be interpreted as lessons being taught in a particular/prescribed manner and school policies and documentation reflecting the expected discourse which is strongly influenced and formed by the emphasis on meeting pupil performance targets within prescribed financial constraints. Jeffrey (2002) particularly noted the link between this sort of performativity and the school as an organisation in the quasi-marketplace:

> 'A performativity discourse currently pervades teachers' work.   It is a discourse that relies on teachers and schools instituting self-disciplinary

measures to satisfy newly transparent public accountability and it operates alongside a market discourse.'
(p 1)

This adherence to rigid criteria is in direct opposition to the ideas of diversity rather than conformity and has a particularly detrimental impact on the work of those teachers and educators who would serve their pupils less well if they are forced into, what Firth (1998) calls, a preconceived 'mould'; the mould in this case relating to set ways of working, teaching, communicating, structuring lessons and reporting of pupil performance data. This performance-obsessed regime created the environment where schools or teachers/SENCOs not meeting the rigid set of criteria pertaining to pupil progress and levels of attainment were automatically considered to be non-effective and if improvement was to occur it must be aimed at replicating the prescribed effectiveness factors in the school (Perryman, 2006).   This had its links with normalization where any behaviour which is judged as normal becomes the only acceptable behaviour with anything deviating from this norm being assessed and then judged as deviant and/or unwanted. Hamilton (1997) made this link to education:

'There is, it appears, a plague on all our schools. Teachers have been infected, school organisation has been contaminated and classroom practices have become degenerative and dysfunctional. In short, schools have become sick institutions. They are a threat to the health of the economic order. Their decline must be countered with potent remedies. Emergency and invasive treatments are called for. Schools need shock therapy administered by outside agencies. Terminal cases merit organ transplants (viz. New heads or governing bodies)...senior management teams deserve booster steroids to strengthen their macho leadership, while their rank and file colleagues receive regular appraisal administered HRT (human resource technology) to attenuate their classroom excesses.'
(p 126)

The idea of the '*sick school'* which can only be cured by external and invasive treatment as presented by Hamilton in the above quote fits in with Foucault's (1977) concept of power, where he stated:

'Like surveillance, and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power.'
(p 184)

Foucault made the link between the establishment of rules, judgments and assessments around the concept of the norm and, in this way, without forcing *subjects* to follow the rules, regulations, policies and practices which make up

this norm, the institution itself is assessed and judged as being successful in terms of how effective they are in training subjects to obey the regime.

In the context of schools, Perryman (2006) linked this to assessment, appraisal, performance review and evaluation as teachers became agents and subjects of measurements. However this was not only recognised in terms of school-based assessments only; Smith (2016) made a link to a *global* phenomenon which he believed was invasive in all areas of international education. Smith insisted that for over the past thirty years there had been a rapid expansion of embedded standardised testing linked to high-stakes outcomes with the use of assessment as a policy-tool being legitimised in order to measure education quality worldwide. Smith names this as a global testing culture which permeated all aspects of education from financing, parental involvement to pupil and teacher beliefs and practices where the reinforcing nature of this global testing culture led to a climate where standardised testing became synonymous with accountability which, in turn, was synonymous with education quality.

This highly pressurised culture has been identified with a significant level of teacher/SENCO stress. Pearson (2012) related a SENCO's comments on *'people leaving/feeling like they are not equipped to do the job'*; this resonates with something that psychologists have identified as *'imposter syndrome'.* Chittock (2013) identified this to be a temporary loss of confidence about a person's own ability to fulfil a role, although it is recognised that it is a temporary phase that often passes with the right kind of support from managers and colleagues. A study by MacBride (1983) explored the misconceptions of job burnout, a term describing a condition in which a person changes in his/her work situation from a state of high motivation and efficiency to apathy, inefficiency and may even demonstrate mild or severed psychological disturbance; these misconceptions included the belief that it was a sudden and dramatic happening which was inevitable in certain high-pressured professions. More gradual burnout was thought to be indicated by certain signals such as loss of job satisfaction, frequent sickness and minor medical ailments, interference with job performance and morale, gradual loss of confidence and deteriorating productivity accompanied by depression. Brill (1984) suggested that stress could lead to burnout but not all who were stressed became victim; a burnout victim being someone who had functioned adequately for a time in their job/ but who would not recover to previous levels of high performance without outside help or

environmental rearrangement. MacBride's list of burnout symptoms are supported by Lowenstein's (1991) symptoms of teacher burnout which included such feelings as physical, emotional and attitudinal exhaustion, leading to irritability:

> 'Others include feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, disenfranchisement as well as somatic states of physical exhaustion including proneness to accidents and increased susceptibility to illness. To these may be added a sense of guilt, depression, a feeling of disorganisation, shock, volatile emotion and loneliness.'
> (p 12-13)

Some of the commentaries made by SENCOs in other research echo this picture of a teacher under considerable stress: Beeby (2013) collected the narratives of SENCOs who reported on the sheer scope and scale of their work with rising pupil numbers on their schools' SEN lists, particularly those with speech, language and communication and emotional/social needs and the demands of liaising with external agencies and with parents/carers all exacerbated by their increasing administrative load and the amount of support they give to fellow teachers and to teaching assistants. Beeby said, of her own experience as a SENCO and the pressures of working in partnership with parents and with her colleagues in her school, that

> 'Every parent can only see their own child's needs; each colleague is focussed on the pupils currently in his/her class and every outside agency is pushing its own agenda...We have responsibilities to all our pupils and sometimes the demands made by parents and others involved with a particular child becomes impractical or even unreasonable – it actually feels as though there are aspects of their responsibility that they would rather we take on.
> (p 9)

This is a SENCO's 'voice' which gives weight to Drifte's (2005) earlier observation that many SENCOs feel that they've, '...*drawn the short straw, have been pushed in at the deep end and are totally overwhelmed by the enormity of their responsibilities'* (p xiii). These demands could also be viewed as fuelling the pressure of a performativity-driven ethos with the potential to stifle imaginative approaches and risk-taking when leading special educational needs provision in their schools.

Goddard, *et al* (2006) made the key point that a great deal of the past research into 'burnout' has concentrated on populations of established workers and not into 'entry-level' populations. Although having a level of teacher experience,

newly appointed SENCOs can be interpreted as being classified as entry-level into this new and complex post. Fimian and Blanton (1987) compared burnout in less experienced teachers with groups of more experienced teachers and found the burnout rates to be almost identical; this type of finding challenges the normally perceived wisdom that burnout takes a degree of time to develop and that it is unlikely that it will happen at the beginning (or close to the beginning) of a teacher's career, in this case a significant number of established teachers taking up new positions as SENCOs may enter this role already feeling some of the effects of teacher burnout.

Sayer (1998) believed that head-teachers needed to have thought through the implications of staff relationships and of power in order to enable a community of learning in their schools so that risks could be taken and that all members of staff (regardless of status) worked in a collaborative and supportive relationship with each other; however, Lees (2014) highlighted the situation in modern work cultures which

> '...value toughness, but the downside is isolation and believing that asking for help makes you look weak. Too thin-skinned and you'll find robust feedback grinds you down, but if you convey zero vulnerability you'll easily convey the idea that you care little about how other people see you or how they feel.'
> (p 4)

This is a heady mix of factors all relating to effective leadership; Lees continued by saying that leaders who revealed a little vulnerability were often the most respected. Leadership is a difficult challenge for SENCOs, particularly if they are new, or fairly new, in post. They may understand the requirements of the 2015 *Code of Practice*, how to develop and manage effective provision for pupils with barriers to their learning and engage with external professionals – in other words, the *management* function which is defined by performativity, but the skills required for leading learning and teaching, innovating and feeling confident to take risks may fall outside of their experience and may be looked upon in their school as undesirable factors as they may tend to make professionals question and challenge the established norms. A SENCO who does this may be identified as a member of '*the blob'*, a phrase coined by Woodhead (2002) and further developed by Michael Gove, the former Coalition Government Secretary of State for Education who applied it to what he termed 'the educational establishment' who opposed his ideas and policies (Robinson, 2014). This is leadership in

relation to 'what matters' and requires the SENCO to consider their performance and influence not only in terms of the old educational establishment (as vilified by those such as Woodhead and Gove) but particularly against the challenges they set themselves in relation to innovation and the critical interrogation of the market-driven educational establishment in order to develop special educational needs provision in their schools, to enhance their status and define their identity as strategic leaders able to influence others.

This created performativity is threaded through how SENCOs view their specialist role and their professional identity within that role; it can also be interpreted as one of the threats which impact on SENCO autonomy, status and scope. However, there is an important counter-argument which needs to be recognised; this counter-argument accuses teachers themselves of not actively engaging with government guidance, policy and legislation during any consultation stage where their voice and views were being honestly sought, leaving it to their head-teachers and governors to do this whilst their teaching staff took up a far more passive role.

This concept of teachers adopting a passive role and not 'stepping up' and actively engaging and/or innovating beyond the minimum requirements of their job is explored through the framework adopted for this study; here the SENCO role is described through literature relating to the two hemispheres of their role, their Legal Contract (the basic requirement of their specialist responsibilities), and the Psychological Contract where SENCOs feel that they have to enhance and provide 'added value' to their duties as specified through legislation.

3.4   The Legal Contract

In its basic form, the current Legal Contract for a SENCO was outlined in the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP.* Sections 6.84 to 6.90. These were all focused on managing provision and were further qualified by the mandatory learning outcomes set out in the DCSF (2009) National Award for SEN Coordination. This Award combined the administrative, managerial and leadership functions within the SENCO role, making specific mention of the SENCO requiring to act as a strategic leader. In addition, the DCSF National Award for SEN Coordination was previously underpinned by the Children Act 2004 , '*Every Child Matters*' and '*Every Child Matters: next steps 2*' including the improvement and integration of universal

services; early intervention; the reconfiguration of services around the child and family in one place/location and the bringing together of multi-disciplinary teams leading to the development of a shared sense of responsibility across agencies for safeguarding children and listening to children, young people and their families when assessing and planning service provision, as well as in face-to-face delivery. The DfE/DH (2015) *CoP*p complemented by the outcomes of the DCSF (2009) National Award for SEN Coordination thus provided SENCOs, aspiring SENCOs and their head-teachers with a defined field of work which created the Legal Contract.

The DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* made it very clear that where the narrative used the word *'must'* it referred to a statutory requirement under primary legislation, regular or case law (Friswell, 2015). The Code also made it clear that the overall responsibility for SEND provision was with the leadership of the school but the implications for the SENCO were significant, particularly in the expectation that SENCOs needed to pay particular attention to the outcomes for the following groups of children: Disabled children and learners and those who have special educational needs; those in specialist provision; the highest and lowest attaining children and learners; children and learners for whom English is an additional language; those from minority ethnic groups (including Gypsy, Roma and Travellers); those attending alternative provision; those with medical conditions; disadvantaged children; looked-after children and other vulnerable groups (Friswell, 2015).

The 2015 *CoP* implied that it was not reasonable to expect that the SENCO would have the responsibility for all of the identified vulnerable groups above but Friswell (2015) suggested that the reality for some SENCOs was different and that SENCOs needed to ensure that their specific remit for SEND was clearly understood at a strategic level in their schools in order to avoid,

> 'the dilution of their role in respect of the diverse range of groups the school identifies. What is important here is that the school response and structure for leadership across the range of vulnerable groups of pupils identified is well managed, well led, and collaboratively shared across the whole school. '
> (p 44-45)

The new Code stated, in paragraphs 6.87 to 6.89, that the SENCO had an important role to play with the head-teacher and governing body in determining the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision in the school as well

as having the day-to-day responsibility for the operation of this policy and the coordination of specific provision made to support individual children with special educational needs and those who have Education and Health Care Plans (EHC). The SENCO was also expected to provide professional guidance to colleagues and to work closely with staff, parents/carers and with other agencies; the SENCO should also be aware of the services provided under the local offer and be able to work with professionals providing independent support to families of children with SEND. However, once again, this was phrased as a *'should'* rather than a *'must'* seemingly replicating the level of local interpretation which existed through all previous legislation and guidance relating to the SENCO role.

The approach being was predicated by an understanding that SENCO training is best summarised by an incremental, career-long pathway which contributes by *informing* (SENCO Early Career Teacher) and *challenging* (Continuing Professional Development) in order to make SENCOs more proficient and effective at improving the learning and attainment of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities and the their school's provision made for them.

3.5   The Psychological Contract

The Psychological Contract is the main driving force behind any teacher who sees beyond his/her own job description and, according to O' Donohue (2014), provides the lens and a well-established construct for *'better understanding the exchange that characterises the worker-organisation relationship'* (p 131) and the individual's subjective understanding of *'obligation-based exchanges with the organisation'* (p131). The SENCO provides a significant cross-organisation/school function and their work is threaded through the successful application of a wide range of school policies beyond the remit of the policy for special educational needs and disability; the underpinning rationale for a SENCO to fully engage their Psychological Contract requires some exploration.

Curtis and Curtis (1995) and York (1995) argued that human behaviour is based on needs, drives and aspirations and behaviour is caused by, and causes, these needs, drives and aspirations – that people do things because they need to (from necessity), feel driven towards them (pushed/urged in a certain direction) and aspire to a certain status (the desire). These are all concerned with motivation; for SENCOs this motivation could be designed to achieve necessities such as

responsibility, recognition, higher pay and job satisfaction, although these motivational factors are common to many professions and areas of work and are not confined to SENCOs alone.

Thody (2004) argued that the characteristics, attitudes, features, dispositions and qualities which define a 'good' teacher such as enthusiasm, enjoyment, imagination and commitment are freely given by the vast majority of teachers and help create the 'buzz' perceived in the classroom and around the school community as a whole. These factors did not form a part of the Legal Contract for which a teacher was paid thus they formed the basis of the Psychological Contract. However, for SENCOs (and for all teachers), the delineation between Legal and Psychological Contracts is not clear-cut as the continuing ambiguity of the new DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* around the SENCOs' duties, responsibilities and field of influence blurred the difference and created either an inter-relation of the Legal and Psychological Contracts or confusion leading to some SENCOs feeling exploited, over-worked and/or misinformed by the senior leadership within their schools. For example, a SENCO reported:

> 'The real issue for me is time! I need time to: support parents, hold reviews; liaise with staff; liaise with learning support staff; liaise with occupational therapists and physiotherapists; ring parents to ask them to arrange an appointment; arrange special language assessments; speak to the educational psychologists; see the English as a second language staff; help write IEPs and so on. I have had Friday afternoons since September as non-contact time to try and fulfil this role as long as the head-teacher is available to have my class. All this will lead to overload. I feel there is a mistake just waiting to happen. Something waiting to be forgotten. It is difficult to fulfil all my roles within the school well.'
> (Wolfendale, 1997, p 22-23)

This was a SENCO speaking twenty years ago, however is this story an example of the SENCO being unable to balance her teaching duties and SENCO responsibilities rather than a simplistic analysis of bad management by her school leaders? To automatically assume that all SENCOs are completely effective/efficient with any limitations imposed on them always being created by their senior leadership team/head-teachers would be an incorrect and sweeping assumption to make. However, as the data from each phase of this current study illustrated, the negative factors experienced by this SENCO in 1997 are still pertinent to today's primary school SENCO.

In the light of this relationship between the SENCO (employee) and the head-teacher/governors (employers) the Psychological Contract expresses the idea that each side has expectations of the other. According to Boddy and Paton (2011) this is *'the set of understandings people have regarding the commitments made between themselves and their organisation'* (p454) and that both parties modify these expectations as the relationship develops, reflecting the influence of changing organisational (school) contexts or individual circumstances. Rousseau and Schalk (2000) agreed with this definition and referred to Psychological Contracts as *'the belief systems of individual workers and their employers regarding mutual obligations'* (p1).   However, these Psychological Contracts are fragile and vulnerable, Boddy and Paton stressed the constant risk factor that a contract which satisfied both parties at one time may case to do so thus having consequences in terms of attitudes and behaviours. Guest (2004) researched into the effect of rapid economic change and its effect on employee perceptions of the state of the Psychological Contract with their employer as competitive business conditions led them to make changes which the employees saw as breaking the Contract. Deery *et al* (2006) completed further research in the field and studied employees who perceived their employer had breached their Psychological Contract which led employees to have lower trust in management, to experience less co-operative employment relations, and to have higher rates of absence. Boddy and Paton (2011) make the link with rapid change in the business world where,

> 'previously stable Psychological Contracts are easily broken. Technological changes and increased competition lead senior management to change employment policies and working conditions, or put staff under great pressure to meet demanding performance targets.'
> (p 456)

Rapid change in the world of business has been equalled by rapid change in the world of Education particularly related to the political and ideological imposition of the quasi-marketplace where business-orientated methods and ethics and the standards-agenda became inter-related with the 'duty-of-care' traditionally embedded within the philosophy of teaching as teachers still strived to provide the best learning and socially inclusive environment they could for the pupils in their classes but set within a school culture highly influenced by competition, changing employment policies and working conditions which were no longer stable.

3.6　The Contextual Variety

In very simple terms, the Contextual Variety can be defined as the eclectic definition of the SENCO role as understood by school governors and head-teachers and how they realised this role through 'job descriptions' stating key responsibilities around managing the day-to-day provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and their support of the SENCO in their school.

Ekins (2012) believed that the variability in the SENCO role was due to contextual differences and so there was a need to explore these unique contexts. These unique contexts could have been created by not having any common (or generic) working practices apart from that presented in the Legal Contract, and even then the Legal Contract was an interpretation of the national legislation, guidance and OFSTED inspection regime by each individual head-teacher who then worked with their staff to establish the organisational ethos/climate in which the SENCO had to perform.　Ekins (2012) listed contextual differences such as the size and location of the SENCO's school and the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities on the SEN list:

> 'A SENCO working in a large inner city school with high levels of pupils identified as having SEN and/or disabilities may therefore have a quite different role to a SENCO working in a small rural school with low numbers of pupils identified as having SEN and/or disabilities. The positioning and status of the role and overall approach to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities will also impact on how the role is perceived and developed.'
> (p 71)

In addition to the significant differences identified above there has been the on-going debate around the status of the SENCO's role and the management of SEN provision in the school with their responsibility for meeting the needs of individual pupils with SEND. The 2001 Code of Practice suggested that the direct line manager for the SENCO should be the head-teacher as the SENCO was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the SEN policy whilst the head-teacher was responsible for the day-to-day management of the SEN policy. However, a variation was noticed across schools in relation to the status of the SENCO as a senior/strategic leader with additional responsibilities; in connection with this variation, Ekins (2012) stated that,

'For many SENCOs, the role has therefore become all encompassing, moving from a Special Educational Needs Coordinator to Inclusion Coordinator, with responsibility for monitoring the progress and provision for a widening number of 'vulnerable groups' within the school context'
(p 71)

Contextual differences are further complicated by this expansion of the SENCO role (SENCO to INCO) in some schools and the interplay in how teachers, teaching assistants, other professionals, parents and pupils define how a SENCO should operate and perform. A final complication is how the SENCOs themselves understand and define their own duties and responsibilities and how this changes over time.   Although the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* defined the responsibilities for SENCOs and the National Award for SEN Coordination clearly presented specific learning outcomes for mandatory training, each school and SENCO naturally interpreted and enacted the role in their own way according to school/organisational need. Rosen-Webb (2011) indicated that*, 'The SENCO role is unclear in both policy contexts and in the research literature'* (p159) and Pearson and Ralph (2007) explored this idea of lack of clarity on the role and stating that *'there is a high degree of local interpretation at school level.'* (p38)*.* This degree of local interpretation had also been identified much earlier, Richmond (1996), when justifying the additional responsibilities of the SENCO under the 1994 Code of Practice, used the innocuous sentence,

'The particular responsibilities of the SENCO may be wider than those recommended by the Code of Practice and will vary according to school needs'
(p 369)

This high degree of interpretation was particularly highlighted in the National Union of Teachers' Survey of SENCOs in April 2012 where many SENCOs pointed to a variety of practice between schools and suggested that the SEN Code of Practice was being applied inconsistently. This identification of inconsistency was also set against a significant backdrop of decreasing external support to their schools for pupils with SEN through the reduction of Local Authority services and this, in turn, was demonstrated through their pessimistic view of the future with 67% of SENCO participants predicting that the amount of external support available will decrease further. The survey also asked about predicted levels of support for pupils with SEN from within the school. One third (33%) of SENCOs

felt that in-school support would decrease because of funding issues and reductions in staffing, particularly reductions in posts for teaching assistants.

All legislation and statutory guidance relating to SEND to date has emphasised the importance of the strategic role of the SENCO across the whole school in making sure that there was quality provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. However, as Tissot (2013) stated, this government guidance, further enhanced by the framework provided by the learning outcomes of the TDA (2008), *Special Educational Needs Co-ordination (England) Regulations*, provided a 'global scope' with little focussed detail on how the SENCO needed to function or how to implement the regulations in their individual primary school. Rosen-Webb (2001) commented on the DfES 2001 Code that it, '*...managed to contribute both to clarifying and to muddying the role of SENCO.'* (p60). Tissot (2013) called this a '*light touch'* and posed the question of whether it created the opportunity for schools to personalise the role to meet their demands or whether it created a '*pick-and-mix'* approach that provided SENCOs with very little in terms of a structure in which to provide quality provision for pupils with SEND.

Perhaps one of the most obvious contrasts across schools is the difference in status the SENCO holds as a strategic leader. All of the previously outlined legislation and guidance alluded to the SENCO in their leadership role; research supported the need for the SENCO to operate in this leadership capacity but highlighted that considerable variation existed in practice (Szwed, 2007; Mackenzie, 2007). The recommendation for leadership to be a requirement of the role was presented by the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee (2006) and although supported in the SEN Co-ordination Award (TDA, 2009) and its revision in the National Award for SEN Co-ordination (National College for Teaching & Leadership, 2014) it was not made concrete in legislation. Tissot (2013) stated that this led to deviation in practice which enhanced the tension between the theoretical status of SENCOs as senior leaders and the day-to-day coordination work which supported the school's SEN policy with the making of decisions which formed part of this. Previous to this, Layton (2005) illustrated some of the difficulties that arose where there was no clear expectation of SENCOs as leaders with some SENCOs believing that key people and agencies did not see them in a leadership role. Cole (2005) warned that the SENCO role was becoming perceived as low status as it was seen as an

operational one rather than a senior and strategic leadership/managerial position. Kearns (2005) supported the idea of SENCOs feeling limited and stated that:

> 'SENCOs have come to view their leadership as confined within a discrete area of professional practice and do not feel empowered to develop the role or express their vision of teaching in any broader sense.'
> (p 146)

This lack of empowerment was earlier highlighted by Cowne (2000) who argued that many SENCOs did not feel empowered to become involved in wider policy and resourcing issues in their schools as they may not have been given access to information or felt that they could ask, as a result any strategic coordination for special needs provision remained in the remit of the head-teacher and governors. This lack of understanding of the SENCO function by head-teachers and governors was previously identified by Wolfendale (1997) after the implementation of the 1994 Code of Practice when she reported the views of a parent at a Council for Disabled Children workshop:

> 'What the Code did was to provide a universal framework which has highlighted the gaps, as well as emphasising the positive. Teachers and SENCOs do need time to make the system work. But isn't that where school SEN policies should work? I don't believe that sufficient governors really understand the importance of both non-teaching time and the calibre of person appointed to be the SENCO. I know a school where the main qualification was a licence to drive the school minibus!'
> (p 74)

This astute parental view of the lack of understanding by governors about the importance of the SENCO role complemented the findings of Lewis et al (1997), in a report on a national survey of perceptions of SENCOs carried out on behalf of the National Union of Teachers (NUT); this report emphasised the challenges of implementing the SENCO role effectively. Lewis commented that:

> 'The gulf between perceived expectations of the SENCO role in the light of the Code of Practice and the resources available to fill those expectations is likely to lead to increasing dissatisfaction from teachers, education managers, parents and school governors.'
> (p 6)

In this NUT report, a primary cause for concern was the very limited non-contact/non-teaching time for SENCOs, the non-standardised processes and

procedures across schools and the overly bureaucratic dimensions of making the Code of Practice work without additional resources or funding.

The SENCO might be a catalyst for change and development in their school but without being empowered and fully supported by their head-teachers and governing bodies any change cannot be expected or, at best, be limited in scope and impact. However, within the Legal/Psychological and Contextual Variety model there are further influences on the SENCO function which are created through external pressures such as the current school inspection regime, 'high-stakes' assessment, the publication of school data in the media, the rate of legislative and government/politically directed change and the perception of what constitutes the SENCO role by those who are not SENCOs (not counting the head-teacher in this context as his/her influence is critically discussed elsewhere in this thesis). Due to this varied interpretation of the SENCO function, further clarification of the influences on the role are presented in Fig (3:1).

Fig (3:1).   Further influences on the SENCO role
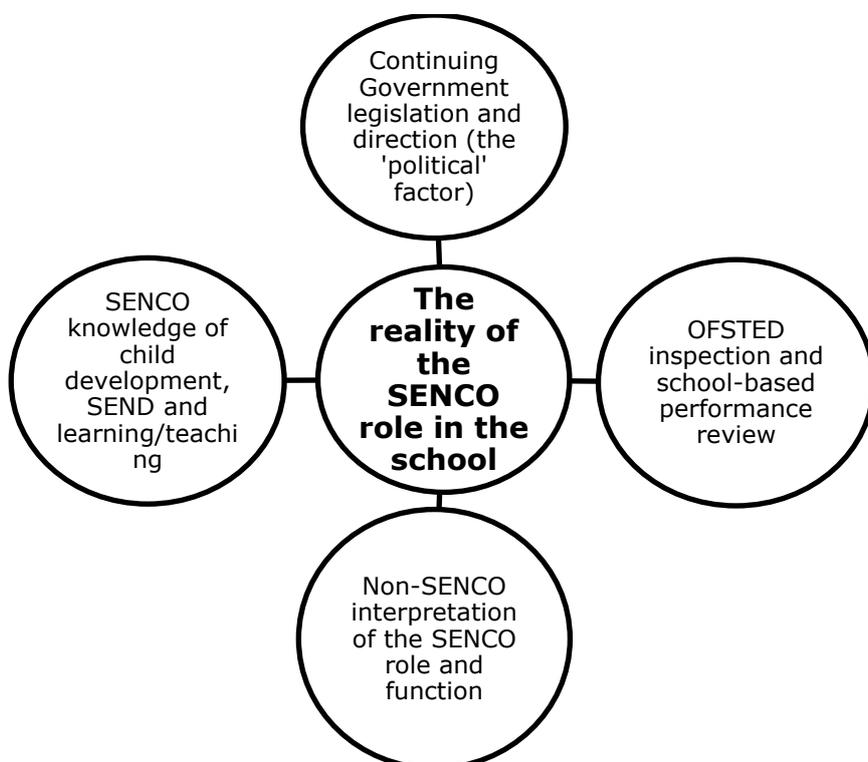
Although the influences illustrated in the Fig (3:1) are specific to the SENCO role, national influences on schools significantly influenced SENCOs in relation to how

their school was managed throughout the continuing cycle of Ofsted inspection, the creation of clear audit trails and the exposure of school data in published league tables as a key indicator of the effectiveness of the school. Stobart (2008) suggested that the main use of National Curriculum test results was for accountability where poor results meant both bad publicity and further, far more intrusive, inspections by Ofsted.

> 'Failure to improve bad results puts the school 'at risk'. Inspection teams can impose 'special measures', which directly impact on teaching. Failure to come out of special measures successfully will lead to the school being closed or reorganised.'
> (p 121)

This had both financial and managerial consequences for schools, consequences from which the SENCO was not immune. In addition to the pressures of accountability through pupil assessment data wider factors of influence were identified by Durbin and Nelson (2014) who presented the forces directly impacting on the whole-school through the use of a diagram:

Fig (3:2)   National Influence on Schools (adapted from Durbin & Nelson, 2014, p2)

TEACHERS

Head-teachers, Governors, Senior and Middle Managers

LEADERSHIP: Academy Chains, ASCL & NAHT (Association of School & College Leaders & , National Association of Head-teachers)LAs,(Local Authorities)NGA (National Governors Associations), Subject Associations, Unions, Teaching Schools.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT: CPD Providers, NCTL, (National College of Teaching and Leadership) ITT (Initial Teacher Training) Providers

ACCOUNTABILITY & STANDARDS: Ofsted, DfE

Here Durbin and Nelson represented the whole school with the teachers being at the core. However, with the decreasing system-wide initiatives within education in England and with increased emphasis on school-level leadership, decisions and actions within individual and networks of schools, Campbell (2016) stated that the existing national, regional and local organisations were all important in developing an *'evidence-informed system'* (p. 9) in schools to support the overall teaching profession and teachers individually and collectively. This provided a positive model for the SENCO who was working at both the core teacher function and in the surrounding circle linked in with head-teachers, governors and other members of the senior leadership team. Lieberman et al (2016) stated that this evidence-informed practice involved teachers developing, sharing and reflecting on their knowledge through engaging in collaborative professional learning to challenge, change and improve knowledge and practices. This ability to articulate and critique the evidence they used to support pupil learning contributed to professional networks to further expand their knowledge and access to/engagement in a range of evidence and practices.

This idea of evidence-informed practice, supported by the external factors and influences related to leadership, career development and accountability form a fundamental part of the SENCOs' functioning as it is , *'about integrating professional evidence from research to improve the quality of practice'* (Campbell, 2016, p.9). This process is empirical, experimental and experiential and not, according to Campbell (2015), about being driven by data.

The complex web related to school culture, roles, identity and accountability through performativity and the public reporting of data although embraced by the previous New Labour, Coalition and the current Conservative government was not new; eighteen years ago, Firth (1998) argued that the assessed quality of a school depended not only upon judging the performance of the head-teacher, the staff and the progress/achievement of the pupils but also upon the expectations of the 'judges' themselves and whatever they said were the key determining factors for success. Firth went further and stated that '*Education is interference'*:

> It is a deliberate attempt to influence the minds of the young, to persuade them to learn things which adults believe to be to the advantage both of the young people themselves and of society at large. But what will those things be? And how far will the young people themselves, their parents, their

potential employers, the government and other powerful elements in society agree?'
(p 2)

Thus, a school which was identified as being 'outstanding' or 'good' had been on the receiving end of a complex combination of sometimes competing factors and a convergence of external influences with the voice of its teachers generated through evidence-informed practices and collaboration. Often this teacher-voice was not heard or was only given a minor importance in the light of an imposed National Curriculum and assessment reporting system complete with benchmarking, progress and achievement data based on selected criteria and comparison. This process culminated in published league tables setting, albeit not in a formal way, school against school in the public arena where parents judged whether the school was good or not based on assessment achievement only. It was within this culture that the SENCO had to operate with external perceptions of the quality of teaching and the overall quality of the school altering instantly when league tables were published. Garner (1999) stated that schools became,

'suffocated by an exclusive and competitive model of raising standards and victims of a dog-eat-dog survival culture between local schools, inclusive philosophy and practice are abandoned.'
(p 47)

This placing of schools into competition within the marketplace provides the *foundation* for the Contextual Variety between schools and how the role of the SENCO is enacted within each one, however the reasons for contextual differences are more complex than this simple model suggests. Mullins (2005) stated that an underlying feature of the *'people-organisation relationship is management control and power'* (p831) and that control systems exist in all spheres of the operations of the organisation and are a necessary part of the process of management. Tannenbaum (1968) saw control as an inherent characteristic of organisations:

'Organization implies control. A social organization is an ordered arrangement of individual human interactions. Control processes help circumscribe idiosyncratic behaviours and keep them conformant to the rational plan of the organization. Organizations require a certain amount of conformity as well as the integration of diverse activities. It is the function of control to bring about conformance to organizational requirements and achievement of the ultimate purposes of the organization.'
(p 3)

Thus control becomes an integral part of the process of management which distinguishes one organisation from another in terms of both conformity and diversity. *Berry et al* (1995) took this to mean that management control was a process both for motivating and inspiring people to perform organisation activities that furthered the organization's goals and for detecting and correcting '*unintentional performance errors and intentional irregularities'* (p18). Supporting this idea, and linking to the connection between control and delegation, Payne and Payne (1994) defined control as '*monitoring the performance of the delegated task so that the expected results are successfully achieved'* (p161) without the implication that control is a senior management function only as the person delegated the task also identifies and operates control in a day-to-day manner – which is very close to the leadership/management relationship between a head-teacher and his/her SENCO.

Mullins (2005) stated that control can stand for reliability, order and stability with staff wanting to know what is expected of them and how well they are performing as '*control is a basis for training needs, the motivation to achieve standards and for the development of individuals'* (p 832) Tulgan (2001) stated ' *It is critical to make very clear to individual contributors exactly what performance – what results, within what guidelines, parameters and deadlines – the organization needs, and will therefore reward'* (p 351). However, Wilson (1999) argued that individuals are not passive objects of control as '*They may accept, deny, react, reshape, rethink, acquiesce, rebel, or conform and create themselves within constraints imposed on them'* (p 103) . Mullen (2005) argued that most people show ambivalence towards control systems, not wishing to have them applied by others to their own performance they do recognise the usefulness and need for them in terms of the planning and organisation of work functions and by guiding and regulating staff activities. Mullen further stated that a '*Lack of adequate supervision and control, or of an effective risk-management system, are a major feature of poor organisational performance and can even lead to the collapse of a company'* (p 883).

Although the literature relating to 'control' is from the field of management and organisational behaviour it does translate directly to an educational context – for 'organisation' read 'school'. The multi-factors involved in the organisation/school

goals and objectives are moulded by such diverse organisational variables as school size, location, history, funding levels, staff expertise/knowledge of pupils with SEND, the last OFSTED Report, the level and nature of flexible organisational control and delegation, and the vision and drive of the head-teacher endorsed by the governing body and parents. These individual school variables are firmly underpinned by the national standards culture related to high stakes assessment and accountability,   the SENCOs' Legal Contract as defined by the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* and the SENCOs' own level of professional training, knowledge, experience coupled with their vision for improving provision for pupils with SEND in their schools – together all of these factors combine to create a rich Contextual Variety.

3.7   The Inter-relation of the SENCO as an Administrator, Teacher, Manager and Leader: Creating a Multi—faceted Professional Identity.

The previous definition of the Contextual Variety and the place of organisational control having a key place in creating it links to the nature of schools being, in the main, hierarchical structures, but they are also systems of social relationships, status and power. Mullins (2005) defined 'power' at a broad level and stated that *'power can be interpreted in terms of control or influence over the behaviour of other people with or without their consent'* (p 843). Foucault (1988) previously quoted in this study in relation to 'power', stated that,

> 'we must distinguish the relationships of power as strategic games between liberties- strategic games that result in the fact that some people try to determine the conduct of others – and the states of domination, which are what we ordinarily call power. And, between the two, between the games of power and the states of domination, you have governmental technologies.'
> (p 19)

He saw the concept of *governmentality* as a pathway for the analysis he gave to his study of these technologies and forms of power in contexts much wider than the political sphere implying that government was not limited to the state but can be exercised through all levels of society (Foucault, 1982). He identified the core of the problem of government being,

> '…how to govern oneself, how to be governed, by whom should we accept to be governed, how to be the best possible governor?'
> (Foucault in Senellant, 2007. p 58)

Foucault focused on how government happens and how the concept is analysed and perceived. Fabioni (2002) reported that Foucault argued that government designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed so that it is employed to control the actions of others. Although this is only a brief, and simple, interpretation of Foucault's *governmentality,* the key concept of how governing self and others leads to effective leadership (without what Lemke (2000) termed as the hierarchical, fixed and difficult to reverse power-relationship that is *domination*) forms the basis of effective leadership in a school. Foucault (1988) stated that domination is *'what we ordinarily call power'* (p 19) where the subordinated persons are restricted because their *'margin of liberty is extremely limited'* (p 12). This differentiation between domination and strong leadership which is motivational and empowering rather than restrictive sits at the heart of what it means to be an effective strategic leader, a key component of both a head-teacher's and a SENCO's role in the school.

In much of the research and literature relating to management and leadership it has been identified that strong leaders are those individuals who have the ability to direct, influence and motivate others, communicate effectively and work in collaboration to achieve an organisation's goals (Owen, 2009; Northouse, 2013; Mullins, 2005; Kotter, 1998). However, before an appraisal of the SENCO in this context as a leader, there is the need to briefly explore the identity of the SENCO as a teacher as this forms the basis of their professionalism and the underpinnings of the SENCO role:

Wilding (1997) explored teacher professionalism through the idea that all teachers have deeply held values which shaped how they performed their varied roles and that, due to the deeply personal nature of teaching, professional reflection can be emotively interrelated with the teacher's individual persona. Sammons et al (2007) presented the view that identity should not be confused with role as it is how teachers self-define and define themselves to others, however Mayson (2014) stated that identity and career are often intrinsically intertwined with the job feeling like an integral part of who a person is and how they define *'self'*. Sikes (1985), Ball & Goodson (1985) and Huberman (1993) all agreed that this structure of identity evolved and changed over time and over the duration of a teacher's career in unpredictable ways as various factors, incidents and happenings impacted upon it. This view of teacher-identity applied

to SENCOs where the main emphasis was in terms of expertise in specialist areas of knowledge and practice; these areas of expertise being formally presented in the Teaching Agency's (2009) National Award for SEN Coordination learning outcomes which shaped and underpinned the Legal Contract for the role with a required understanding of theory and how it related to practice in both managing and strategically leading SEN provision.

Training, delivered by approved accredited organisations, using the National Award for SEN Coordination learning outcomes was (and still is) the main vehicle/mode where new SENCOs were introduced to the frameworks which forged their professional role. The aim was for the SENCO to carry these frameworks forward, to explore them and then develop them in their own practice. This compulsory training also encouraged SENCOs to adopt strategic leadership approaches to be accomplished in their schools. However, it was understood that the vision of each individual head-teacher and the organisational culture of the school combined with each SENCOs' own experience and ability to act with some degree of autonomy and act with influence as a policy-maker did generate the potential fear that some SENCOs would only be able to engage in a veneer of the role, operating on the periphery if their vision does not match the head's priorities for SEN and vision for the whole school. This situation had the potential to undermine the professional identity of the SENCO as their personal interpretation of 'self-in-role' becomes determined by others who occupied power-positions within the school. Williams (2002) makes the point that,

> 'the notion of top-down decision-making processes – autocratic – is mainly reserved for labour-intensive industries. In schools the notion of the leader as sole decision maker should now be virtually obsolete. Even in the case of head-teachers who appear to make only autocratic decisions, it is immediately the result of multiple input from senior and middle management layers.'
> (p 26)

However, the experiences of many SENCOs who do not have the status as members of the senior or middle management layer in their schools are determined by this imbalance of power.

The vision of what constituted a 'good' teacher and of a 'vision' for teaching was significantly influenced by governmental influence and direction. The Department for Education, while extolling a new autonomy within the education system, still maintained a strong monitoring role in regard to research in education as they

stated, *'We need to know how well the profession is adapting to the challenges of a changing education system.'* (p 8). This was a laudable statement but it must be viewed alongside statements such as those made by Her Majesty's former Chief Inspector for Education, Chris Woodhead who wrote in his annual Ofsted (2000) report for 1998/99:

> 'We know what constitutes good teaching and we know what needs to be done to tackle weaknesses...Why then is so much time and energy wasted in research that complicates what ought be straightforward...If standards are to continue to rise we need decisive management action, locally and nationally, that concentrates attention on the two imperatives that really matter; the drive to improve teaching and strengthen leadership...The challenge now is to expose the emptiness of education theorising that obfuscates the classroom realities that really matter.'
> (p 21)

It seemed that Woodhead attempted to control any dissent, particularly through his use of emotive and negative language. Educational research and theorising were targeted as being a restrictor rather than a facilitator unless it was purely focused on what he considered to be the only things which mattered.   This attack on *'educational theorising'* was significantly adopted by the former Education Secretary Michael Gove in his blanket attack upon university departments of education and the academic staff who worked within them, calling them guilty and responsible for the failure of poor educational performance in children over the years (Gove, 2013). Those who expected a new official view emerging since Woodhead's 1999 attack on educational theorising were disappointed, particularly as Michael Gove virtually restated Woodhead's stance in his speech at the London Academy of Excellence on the 3rd of February 2014:

> 'School Direct also allows schools to shop around between universities for the best support for trainee teachers. That means universities have to shape their education departments to the practical needs of schools instead of the whims of ideologues. It also means that universities have to think hard about where they direct their research in education departments. Savvy schools are using School Direct to increasingly demand that universities conduct research which supports teachers' professional development rather than satisfying academics' pet passions.'
> Gove, (2014)

This view of educational research was biased towards a more professionally-based approach and was firmly bound up within a greater package of policies and practices systematically pursued by the Government which were the product of a

well-developed, Right-Wing, market-led ideological position (Bartlett and Burton, 2010). However, the research priorities listed by the Department for Education in 2013 included key questions relating to leadership – one of the underpinning factors contributing to the field for this study:

- *What are the most effective models of leadership in the schools system?*
- *How are those models of system leadership delivering improvements to the quality of teachers and teaching?*
- *How do different models of leadership succeed?*
- *Is there sufficient supply of school leaders? How effective are the mechanisms which support supply?*
- *How are school leaders using their freedoms to employ and deploy teachers differently, and what is the impact of doing so?'*

(p 10)

Although seemingly focused on school leadership and the role of the head-teacher, these questions are adaptable in order to interrogate the role of the SENCO and, although not the research questions within this study, they were, in part, subsumed within this research thus there is a level of validity for this critical analysis of the SENCO role and identity in terms of the Department for Education's research priorities.   However, this approach appeared to limit educational research only to those areas deemed suitable by central government. This sat at the heart of the discussion around the dominance of a performativity-enabled education system which was imposed upon schools and teachers.

3.8   The Identity of the SENCO as Leader and Manager: Theorising Leadership and Management in the school

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) stated that most theories of leadership suggest that leadership cannot be separated from the context in which it is exerted with leadership being contingent on the setting, the nature of the organisation, the goals being pursued, the individuals involved, the resources and the timeframe with almost all of the definitions of leadership having the underpinning concept of *'future direction and moving the organisation forward.'* Strategic leadership was seen as being *'a process and a perspective as much as being about a plan and outcomes'* (p9). In this context, leaders are often seen as those who inspire and motivate and managers as those who implement and oversee the tasks and duties imposed by the executive function.   Davies (2009) recognised this in the

field of education when he stated that, in distinguishing leadership from management:

> 'Leadership is about direction-setting and inspiring others to make the journey to a new and improved state for the school. Management is concerned with efficiently operating in the current set of circumstances and planning in the shorter term for the school.'
> (p 2)

Davies expanded this idea further by identifying, like Leithwood and Riehl, that leadership was not set in isolation but was set in the context of the whole school, it not being just the provenance of one individual but of a group of people who provided leadership, support and inspiration to others in order to achieve the best for the children in their care. This view provides support for the *relational* view of leadership which has an impact on the Contextual Variety. Leadership in this context is to do with relationships with leadership viewed as a communal process. Wheatley (1992) stated that, *'Leadership is always dependent on the context, but the context is established by the relationships we value'* (p 144) with a Relational Leadership Model focusing on creating a process informed by inclusion, empowerment and purpose but undertaken in an ethical manner. Shaw and Barry (1989) define ethics as, *'the social rules that govern and limit our conduct, especially the ultimate rules concerning right and wrong.'* (p 2-3)

This could create a potential tension or mismatch if a SENCO with their own set of ethical factors driving their Psychological Contract contrasts with the organisational school culture as determined by the head-teacher and governors, although this culture will have an influence on how the SENCO acts. This could lead to a working atmosphere in a school which damages professional relationships as considerable difficulties might emerge in that the intellectual capital of its staff could narrow so much that the school would not be able to adapt effectively. Winch and Gingell (2009) posed the question whether or not authority for educational leadership should be collective or individual and if it could actually allow for any 'charismatic leadership'.

This question if collegiate leadership, which is frequently interpreted as a process/model where a team works, plans and delivers together in a supportive relationship with a set of shared values towards a shared vision, can be inter-related with a charismatic form of leadership was explored by Mortimore et al. (1988) and White and Barber (1997). Winch and Gingell (2009) argued that

school leadership required someone who *'embodies a certain amount of charisma and that collegiate governance is ill-suited to the emergence of such a person'* (p 114)

Such a model of charismatic leadership has been teamed with the theory of transformational leadership which, in the main, developed in the 1980s (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Hunt, 1999; Conger, 1999) where followers are influenced and motivated by the leader making events meaningful through the use of praise and rewards in order to create an environment where people make self-sacrifices, commit to difficult objectives and achieve more than was initially expected. Bass (1985, 1988) and Bass and Avolio (1993) stated that transformational leadership contains four components: Charisma or idealised influence (the setting of high ethical/moral standards); inspirational motivation (providing challenges and meaning for engaging in shared goals and undertakings); intellectual stimulation (a dynamic process of vision formation, implementation and evaluation); and individualised consideration (where the leader treats each person as an individual and provides coaching, mentoring and opportunities for development). By adopting these four components people identified with charismatic leaders' aspirations and wanted to follow them. If the leadership is transformational, where leaders and followers do not follow their own self-interests, high standards are set together with a strong ethical and moral underpinning (Kanungo and Mendonca, 1996). Donalson and Dunfee (1994) saw the core of the moral legitimacy of transformationall/charismatic leadership depending on the granting of the same freedoms and opportunities to others that the leader claims for his/her self, on having integrity, on keeping promises, distributing what is due and employing valid and appropriate incentives or sanctions in a transparent and honest manner. Howell and Avolio (1992) stated that leaders, no matter how 'charismatic' they were, could not be true transformational leaders if they were only concerned about themselves; if this was the case such manipulative or deceptive behaviours created what Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) called *'pseudo-transformational leaders'* (p 186) resulting in destructive outcomes and an abuse of power in organisations. Howell and Avolio (1992) stated that authentic transformational leaders needed to be committed to a code of ethical conduct supporting an organisational culture with high ethical standards .

So, how does this impact on the SENCO particularly when the current compulsory SENCO training is geared towards moving the SENCO from a teaching role into a strategic, transformational leadership role? Perhaps this strategic leadership role and how it relates to the management function inherent with the SENCO range of responsibilities does need 'unpacking' in this context. A clarification between management as an established discipline with a separate body of functions as distinct from the application of the principles of leadership is important to explore as the comparison between leadership and management forms a significant and on-going discussion amongst those researching and writing in the field (Northouse, 2004; Kotter, 2011; Kotterman, 2006). There has always been a difference of opinion, for example Mintzberger (1990) defined a manager and a leader as one and the same whilst Bass (1990) provided a more nuanced relationship,

> 'Leaders manage and managers lead, but the two activities are not synonymous…management functions can potentially provide leadership; leadership activities can contribute to managing. Nevertheless, some managers do not lead, and some leaders do not manage.'
> (p 383)

Northouse (2007) described the process of management as a function which was primarily designed to produce order and consistency in an organisation. He further sub-divided management into planning and finance/budgeting with setting timetables and allocating resources, organising and staffing relating to deployment/placing of staff, providing structure/establishing protocols and problem-solving through generating incentives,/creative solutions and taking action.

Leadership and management seem to have a significant overlap as they both involve influencing and working with others with effective goal management and planning as key factors, so how are the two distinguished. Northouse (2013) presented a comparison of management and leadership competences in the form of a table:

Table (3:1) *A Comparison of Management and Leadership Competences*

Management Produces Order & Consistency	Leadership Produces Change & Movement
Planning and budgeting	Establishing direction
Establishing agendas	Creating a vision
Setting timetables	Clarifying the big picture
Allocating resources	Setting strategies
Organising and staffing	Aligning people
Provide structure	Communicating goals
Making job placements	Seeking commitment
Establishing rules and procedures	Building teams and coalitions
Controlling and problem solving	Motivating and inspiring
Developing incentives	Inspiring and energize
Generating creative solutions	Empowering subordinates
Taking corrective action	Satisfying unmet needs

Northouse (2013. p 10)

In Northouse's model there is a clear difference between management and leadership but the overlap is equally clear particularly where managers are engaged in influencing individuals and groups to meet specific goals; motivating being perceived as being a function within the 'leadership strand'. Similarly, when leaders are engaged in planning, organising and controlling they perform functions within the 'management strand'. Both involve influencing and motivating people. All of these functions are theoretically embedded within every management role within a school and sometimes appear as key responsibilities within SENCO job descriptions thus forming a part of their Legal Contract and are all essential factors in getting things done effectively and efficiently.

In a wider school context, Hardy (1984) stated that there is one view which believed that there are general principles of management which can be applied to all organisational settings. This is particularly apt in the current educational climate which has been developing since the re-emergence of the capitalist market in English education from the 1980s (Gunter, 2001) with head-teachers now being responsible and accountable for resourcing, attracting income streams, attracting 'customers' (i.e. pupils) and for establishing a distinctive presence, even 'brand' , in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Gunter (1997) presented the view that it was private sector management in education

which determined to shift the identities and behaviours which underpinned the growth of leadership in educational settings and which led to the enhancement of performance leadership

This shift from educational to performance leadership did have a significant impact on the SENCO's realisation of the management function inherent within their role set within the concept of performativity as presented by Marshall, (1999); Perryman, (2006); Ball, (2000); Ball, (2003); Ball, (2010) and Murray, (2012).   The daily behaviour of the SENCO based on the social norms and habits within the space (the school) where their work takes place involves management as a practical activity as it is an integral part the successful operation of a school. It is also about operationalizing strategy at different levels of behaviour from classroom, to middle to senior management, and it is at all of these levels that the SENCO has to work. Mullins (2005) called management the cornerstone of organisational effectiveness as it is concerned with arrangements for '*the carrying out of organisational processes and the execution of work'* (p 34). For a SENCO this would mean planning, provision management, managing people (e.g. teaching assistants), constructing in-house training, overseeing administrative and tracking operations, manipulating budgets, resource procurement, monitoring teaching and establishing/maintaining relationships with external agencies and with parents and evaluating practice. These are all activities and factors for action and Bell (1999) thus identified that these management actions needed to be underpinned by educational values which provide a set of guidelines about how to behave as leaders and managers with the values being linked to principles and theories of management.

This is further complicated by the subjectivity of each SENCO's perceptions about his/her professional role which influence the levels of autonomy and power available to each SENCO, the ways in which they responded (Vincent & Warren, 1997) and how the SENCO role as realised in an individual school influenced who the SENCO actually was, their identity and concept of self (Haslam & Reicher, 2005). However, this is not the sole causal link between individual perception and autonomy as this was only one aspect of what allowed for autonomy, the key aspect being how the school was led by the governors, head-teacher and senior leadership team.

Perhaps another difficulty in enabling the SENCO to create an identity as a specialist and a school leader with a level of autonomous freedom was through the profusion of texts and literature/sources designed to help the new SENCO; the differences between job and role and then manager and leader are blurred: Edwards (2016) mentioned SENCOs as *'whole-school movers and shakers'* (p 84) but then wrote about them as '*managers* of relationships' (p 85) and *managing* the training and deployment of additional adults. Sydney (2010) provided a SENCO competency checklist which contained a suggested audit for things such as reflecting on practice or as a basis for a performance management conversation, the list provided a useful collection of administrative and management tasks/duties but nothing relating to specifically *leading* SEN provision within the school. Cowne (2015) provided a wealth of useful information for SENCOs, particularly relating to supporting teaching colleagues and running the Teaching Assistant team, some mention was made of leadership but this was consumed within an overriding accent on management. Shuttleworth (2000) meshes management and leadership together but only presents and discusses the management functions of the SENCO role. Ekins (2012) helpfully draws attention to the learning outcomes of the National Award for SEN Coordination but does not expand on the sub-section relating to '*Leading, developing and supporting colleagues'* (p 189-190) and NASEN's (2015) SEND handbook provided in-depth guidance linking the SENCO function and the positive actions of the school to comply with the legislative requirements of the 2015 Code of Practice with no mention of the SENCO as a leader.

If the relationship between management and leadership within the SENCO role presents some confusion for a SENCO perhaps this multi-identity is further complicated by adding a third factor, the SENCO as an administrator creating an inter-relation of leadership, management and administration within the wider field of being a teacher. Green (2000), when referring to whole school leadership by the head-teacher, stated that these three parts are inter-linked and inter-woven and cannot be separated but with the understanding that at different times one factor may have more relevance than another; although related to headship. The implication for the SENCO is that they engage in all three functions as they are permanently inter-related and executed at the same time. This inter-linked model provides a good example of the SENCO role with the 'administrative' nature of the third sector (when done efficiently) providing a

significantly positive effect on morale and attitudes within the school, Green stated:

> 'Being a good administrator is not quite such a prerequisite to be a good SENCO as are management skills and leadership ability…but the capacity to know what good administration is and the ability to ensure that the right staff and systems are in place are essential. The SENCO needs to have had significant experience in dealing with the administrative function … Administration is about the practical ways of turning leadership and management plans into reality'
> (p 16)

Now that this third factor is introduced, the role of the SENCO can be summarised in the form of a diagram.

Fig (3:3)   *The inter-relation of Leadership, Management and Administration: Illustrating the SENCO role*
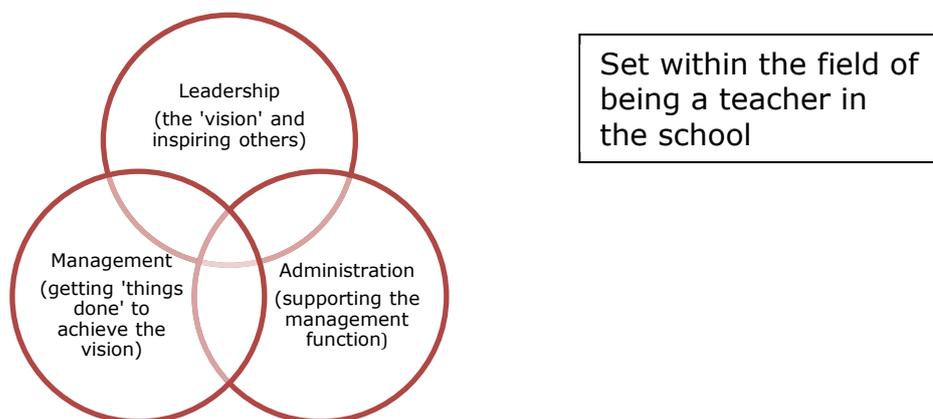
At its most strategic level the SENCO leadership function involves forming a vision for special educational needs provision within the overall vision for the school based on values relating to the aims and purposes of education and then transforming all of this into significant and effective action. Bell (1999) advocated that leadership involves the articulation of this vision and its communication to others and argues that the prevailing dichotomy between leadership and management is inappropriate in education because they are fundamentally linked together in schools where school leaders have to balance their being assessed on their compliance with central government requirements with their emergence as transformational change-makers. If this is perceived to be done effectively, leadership across the school at all levels can be then

associated with those who can bring about this change; Sergiovanni (2001) stated that.

> 'Equating leadership with change is an idea that finds its way deep into the educational literature. In today's world it is the leader as change agent who gets the glory and the praise. But leadership should be regarded as a force that not only changes, but protects and intensifies a school's present idea structure in a way that enhances meaning and significance for students, parents, teachers, and other locals in the school community. This enhancement provides a sense of purpose, builds a culture, and provides the community connections necessary for one to know who she or he is, to relate to others, and to belong. Think of leadership force as the strength or energy brought to bear on a situation to start or stop motion or change. Leadership forces are the means available not only to bring about changes needed to improve schools, but to protect and preserve things that are valued. Good heads, for example, are just as willing to stand firm and to resist change as they are to move forward and to embrace change.'
> (p 44-45)

Here, Sergiovanni presents a positive model for inspirational leadership in schools rather than the model where head-teachers are viewed as transforming the school through employing approved and measurable outcomes which are legitimised through official documentation and legislation. This narrow 'performativity-driven' leadership model creating a political goal where the power lies in the hands of a leadership elite rather than in a collegiate sharing of leadership structures and goals which sit at the heart of a transformational leadership model supporting and protecting a valued school culture even if it means the head-teacher resisting change. If leadership at the strategic level involves the movement of the school's vision into aims and long-term plans it is at the organisational level that the strategic view is translated and modified into medium-term objectives with a delegation of responsibility for decision-making, implementation, review and evaluation. This, in turn, drives activities at the managerial/operational level where resources are deployed and used, tasks are completed and activities are coordinated and monitored. Bell (1999) stated that these three levels of management: strategic, organisational and operational must work in harmony towards a common purpose which can only happen if the values and vision are shared by all members of the school community.

This model of leadership/management relationship between the head-teacher and the SENCO was set out in both the DfE (1994) and DfES (2001) Codes of Practice with authors such as Griffiths (2001) and Jones, Jones and Szwed (2001) picking out the management nature of most of the SENCO's

responsibilities. Cowne (2000) stated that the SENCO may be a catalyst for change but change cannot be expected without the full support of the head-teacher as:

> '...experience shows that many SENCOs do not feel empowered to become involved in policy and resourcing issues. They may not have access to information or feel they can ask. In these cases the strategic SEN coordination is in the hands of the head and governors.'
> (p 15)

However, this comment was made seventeen years ago so, again, a key question arises if this is still the case in the present time; a significant number of SENCOs contributing data/narratives for this study still report that this situation is still prevalent in their schools.

3.9   The Identity of the SENCO as Leader and Manager: The Practice of Leadership and Management in the School

In their role, many SENCOs support other members of staff in their continuing professional development (CPD) but Garner (2001) identified that the amount of administrative duties required to be undertaken by many SENCOs prevented them from engaging with such a leadership role even with the 2001 Code highlighting the leadership function of the SENCO and identified their status as being members of the senior leadership teams within their schools, a positive factor which was not always realised in practice:

> 'In terms of responsibility the SENCO role is at least equivalent to that of curriculum, literacy or numeracy coordinator. Many schools find it effective for the SENCO to be a member of the senior leadership team.'
> (DfES, 2001: p 51)

The SENCO has to work within the restrictions set by the school/academy and thus becomes aeffected by them particularly when those constraints are formed through such things as only focusing on the next OFSTED inspection, pupil performance data driving learning and teaching in the classroom and preparation and drilling for the Key Stage 2 SATS assessment at the expense of everything else, thus creating a specific culture within their school. Can the SENCO work outside of these constraints? This raises questions around what kind of SENCO and what kind of management of SEND provision in the school society do we

want and in determining the role of SENCO how much freedom to act independently should they have? An independent SENCO being a professional who can work within a national strategy/climate but with a powerful 'SENCO voice' in the realisation of their role in the school as against a SENCO who still works within the national strategy but is significantly restricted by the control of a dominant school leadership which is not willing to share power collegially. However, this might be far too 'binary' an interpretation as there is, of course, a spectrum between the two extremes of being a 'free' or 'captive' SENCO.

Ekins (2012) expressed a particularly positive message around the need for innovative change with all staff working together and being part of the whole-school development process with any implementation of change to be successfully embedded within whole-school practice requiring sharing and understanding by all staff.

> 'High levels of reflective dialogue and collaboration between staff members are therefore required in order to effect meaningful whole-school change and development. Staff need to be provided with an environment and culture where reflective questioning of existing practice is encouraged, where there are opportunities for different staff members to put forward new and innovative ideas about ways to develop and improve practice, and where outdated practices that are not impacting directly on practice and improved outcomes for pupils are identified and re-examined.'
> (p 9)

Ekins argued that the principles around collaboration and innovation within a culture which embraces improving practice fitted within a theory of 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1998) where teachers take part in the decision making process in their schools and engage in a shared sense of purpose through collaboration. This is particularly evidenced for some SENCOs who work closely with other mainstream, special schools and with external agencies to ensure a holistic model of support for children with increasingly complex needs (Petersen, 2012).

This collaborative, collegiate decision-making process which encompasses both the shared implementation and leadership for change presents an ideal environment for a SENCO to flourish. However, this could be said to be at odds with the increasingly 'dominant organisational culture' model which did not call for a collaborative input from staff unless it aligned closely with the particular beliefs and stance of the senior leadership team and with the revised September

2013 Ofsted framework for school inspection where the SENCO was expected to have evidence to support the four key areas of inspection (the achievement of pupils at the school, the quality of teaching in the school, the quality of leadership in, and management of, the school and the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school). Nearly thirty years ago, Sutton (1988) emotively stated that head-teachers, in general, had a, *'fatal desire to be in touch with everything that goes on in their schools'* (p 64); the use of the adverb *'fatal'* was an illuminating factor pertinent to performativity particularly around the impossibility of this close monitoring and micro-managing in larger schools; however, Sutton's comment on *'being in touch'* did not necessarily mean micro-management but he further stated that this did not stop head-teachers trying with the warning that this could have had dangerous consequences for themselves (the head-teachers), if not the schools they managed. Sutton did advocate that the antidote to this level of control by head-teachers could only be provided through effective delegation because there was no other way in which the head-teacher could free him/herself to look at the general condition of the school and its long-term objectives; in short, this meant that the head-teacher should have more to do with *'looking, talking and thinking than with doing'* (p 64) and that much of this 'doing' must be delegated to others in order to create the time for these vital functions to be carried out. This delegation of time and 'doing' should be in areas of responsibility rather than tasks with the head-teacher letting go of that area of responsibility. Sutton (1988) further (1988) stated that this should mean the head monitoring the execution of that responsibility not by the constant checking of petty details but through regular discussion and reporting and by the provision of support when needed and that,

> 'It means accepting that somebody else will do the job in a different way from oneself and, so long as it works, allowing that to happen. It means giving up tasks which one enjoys doing oneself and letting someone else do them without interference. It means having confidence in the ability of others to carry out tasks for which one is oneself ultimately accountable....it also means structure and system. Responsibilities and tasks should be clearly set out on paper and understood on both sides as well as by others within the organisation.'
> (p 65)

This could mean that SENCOs, with their delegated management functions, need to have their responsibilities fully set out in their job descriptions which may be modified from time-to-time in the light of new legislation and/or the school's

changing needs. These responsibilities, once delegated should stay with the SENCO.

SENCOs do not exclusively report negatively on their professional role;, Pearson (2013) identified this when presenting the commentaries from SENCOs engaging in NASEN's 2012 autumn survey which collected data on their SENCOs' recruitment, induction, professional development and future aspirations. – SENCO commentaries included such statements as:

> *'I am happy with my role as my school places a high value on the role of SENCO and is always willing to put into place measures that support me' to 'Being valued would be nice'. A theme in some of the responses was the sense of isolation that some SENCOs continue to experience. 'This is a very lonely job. I have set up informal networks in my area to support this but you are mostly on your own doing it, which I think is a big factor for people leaving/feeling like they are not equipped to do the job.'*
> (p 25)

Here, Pearson captured the views of SENCOs who did have a significant level of job satisfaction, particularly around being valued and having support mechanisms put into place for them. However, the theme of SENCO 'isolation' was an important one as it impacted directly on their well-being and ability to feel able to do the job. Hargreaves (2003) explored the idea of professional learning communities with teachers working together focused on improving teaching and learning and using evidence and data as a underpinning for informing improvements in learning and teaching and in whole-school development. In addition to the creation of professional learning communities, Hargreaves and Sachs (2003) also agreed that teachers needed to 'take risks' in order to develop their professionalism:

> 'There is no creativity without risk – the risk of trying a new idea, experimenting with an unfamiliar practice, being prepared to fail or look silly when trying something new, not taking setbacks to heart, being responsive rather than overly sensitive to critical feedback, working with and seeking advice from colleagues who are different as well as colleagues who share one's own convictions.'
> (P 19)

The question is posed, how does this very positive action sit within the constraints of a performativity-influenced school where the SENCO who takes this kind of risk can be viewed as a 'maverick' who operates outside of the accepted behaviours set by the head-teacher? Haggarty and Postlethwaite

(2003) identified this form of constraint as an important factor contributing to teachers' perceptions and their belief that the circumstances under which they worked together with forms of control such as Ofsted inspection and the demands to conform to centrally defined government regulations made such risk taking exceptionally difficult. These forces do shape the perceptions and professional scope of SENCOs as strategic leaders in their schools as they are restrained within the walls of the 'performativity compound'. Bottery and Wright (2000) stated that the demand on teachers was primarily on devising strategies for the implementation of policy created elsewhere and not on any wider commitment to education. Mentier *et al* (1997) referred to this teacher as the entrepreneurial professional, while Haggarty (2004) described them as someone who,

> 'will identify with the efficient, responsible and accountable version of service that is currently being promulgated by the state.'
> (p 599)

Casey (1995) called such teachers 'designer teachers' who demonstrated their compliancy to someone else's (e.g. governmental) policy and operated at a high level of effectiveness focusing on the efficient delivery of this policy and any linked strategies without considering what Haggarty (2004) called the '*struggles and disagreements of a healthy learning community'* (p 599). The struggles and disagreements of a '*healthy learning community'* required, according to Nixon et al (1997), a new professionalism which orientated teachers and schools towards an increased community involvement and power-sharing and not what they identified as the professional identity of teachers which were fractured around competing notions of what constituted professional authority and the right exercise of professional judgement. In terms of a SENCO as a strategic leader being able to exercise their own professional judgement, the distinction between leadership and management is not clear cut particularly as the terms seem to be used to mean the same thing when explaining the SENCO role in addition, this combination of the SENCO as leader, manager, administrator and teacher presents a complex professional role which is difficult to critically unpick as it is inextricably linked to the Legal/Psychological/ Contextual Model.

3.10 Conclusion

A range of lLiterature dating back over thirty-eight years provides a consistent critical interrogation of the evolution of both special educational needs teaching

in English primary schools and the professional evolution of the SENCO. However, it is impossible to view the teaching of pupils with SEN and the evolution of the SENCO role in isolation as they form a key part of the change in schools fuelled by the performativity-rich climate in Education since the introduction of the National Curriculum, the creation of OFSTED, the introduction of SATS tasks and tests leading to performance league tables placed schools firmly in the 'quasi-marketplace'. Zucker and Parker (1999) writing at the end of this first period of significant change identified that the overwhelming majority of teachers whilst questioning the validity of some of the *more spurious facets of new policies'* (p183) and how *'the collective psyche of teachers up and down the land has been bruised by the onslaught'* also stated that in the face of this imposed change teachers continued to teach and put the policies in place, persisting in exceptionally difficult circumstances. This is what SENCOs 'do' - they persist in exceptionally difficult circumstances; this was identified twenty years ago by Crowther et al (1997) when evaluating the SENCO role stated that:

> 'SENCOs work in a very wide range of contexts. Some have no dedicated time for their work and manage few resources; others are 'full-time' SENCOs managing teams of teachers and assistants and have a responsibility for a significant budget.'
> (p 1)

OFSTED (1996) reported that many SENCOs had an over-demanding workload which was compounded by the way in which many schools allocated time for SEN provision and required the SENCOs to take on other whole-school duties. In relation to allocating time for the SENCO, the DfEE (1998) in *'Meeting Special Educational Needs: a programme for action'* recognised that many SENCOs needed more release time from their classrooms in order to carry out their SENCO duties efficiently. Garner (2001) added to the SENCO requiring time to do their work by focusing on the amount of administrative work that SENCOs had to undertake , when reviewing a series of SENCOs' commentaries on their work Garner stated that,

> 'Plans to lighten the burden of administrative work were seen by all of the SENCOs as one of the most valuable ways of releasing time in order for them to function effectively'.
> (p 126)

Four years after their initial survey of SENCOs in 1997, Crowther, Dyson and Millward (2001) reviewed the SENCO situation again and noted that:

> 'For many SENCOs, the amount of time available to undertake the role remains as the most pressing problem they face, and establishing the appropriate amount of time available to undertake the role of the SENCO has proved problematic for policy-makers, head-teachers and practitioners. Currently, there is no stipulated time for the SENCO role…in the previous survey, we reported that over 40 per cent of SENCOs in primary schools indicated that they had no timetabled time allocated for SEN work and a further 27 per cent that they had a half-day or less. This amounts to over 70 per cent of primary SENCOs who reported that they had a half-day or less for their SEN role. What is significant in the current survey is the extent to which this position has apparently deteriorated. Some 65 per cent of SENCOs reported that they had no timetabled time for their role and a further 17.7 per cent that they had a half-day or less for the role.'
> (p 137)

Wedell (2004) commented on SENCO workload and identified that they had a *'tremendous commitment to their work and that, in some instances, this led them to accept very unreasonable workloads.'* (p105). A common theme running through the literature is this identification of an extensive workload for SENCOs along with them not being given sufficient 'investment' by their schools. Layton (2005) commented on school leaders who were

> 'ten years after the 1994 Code of Practice, still failing to invest appropriately in their SENCOs. This was evident wherever SENCOs did not have control of budgets, where they had limited authority in relation to school policies and where they felt isolated because their purpose was either erroneously or wilfully misunderstood. Most especially, however, the greatest barrier to achieving their moral purpose as SENCOs was identified as not being a member of the senior leadership team.'
> (p 59)

Mackenzie (2007) noted that in the period after the 1994 Code the role of the SENCO had widened with a frequently unmanageable workload and that *'given the current focus upon measureable pupil outcomes, SENCOs often feel undervalued and unappreciated because the difference they make is not visible or capable of being measured.'* (p 217)

Moving into the second decade of the century Ekins (2012) highlighted the tensions in the SENCO role and said that,

> '…it is widely accepted that, to be effective, the SENCO needs to be a strategic leader…the reality in practice is that many SENCOs are still not senior leaders within their schools, and that in some schools there is a continuing situation where the Senior Leadership Team within the school actually undervalues and limits the SENCOs opportunities to effect real change and development within the school.'
> (p 77)

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) in their 2012 survey of SENCos ' *There is Always More to Do'* reported in their key findings that,

> 'SENCOs identified excessive paperwork as a cause of SENCO workload and a barrier to meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN.'
> (p 1)

> 'SENCOs describe their workload, and the expectations on them, as excessive. Special educational needs co-ordinators display a deeply professional commitment to the pupils in the school with SEN. SENCOs work countless hours of unpaid overtime to ensure students' needs are met…over half of respondents identified that a lack of financial resources is the greatest obstacle to providing them with sufficient non-contact time….The other consistent barrier identified was 'other teaching commitments'. This was the greatest barrier for 45% of the SENCOs.'
> (p 3)

In their 2012 survey conclusion, the NUT stated that,

> 'Special educational needs co-ordinators can only be effective if they are valued and empowered in what is a vital and complex role. Many SENCOs were worried about proposals from government which could undermine their status as professionals'
> (p 11)

SENCOs themselves discussed their conditions of service openly on the 'SENCO Forum' Senco-forum@lists.education.gov.uk and voiced their concerns; 'M' (a SENCO) stated on the 22nd of March 2016 that,

> 'Given the amount of additional training and qualifications we possess it's a real shame it's not reflected in our pay. I worked out recently I'd completed an additional 10 years of SEN part-time study. I'm sure you have done similar. Many SENCOs will be the most highly qualified members of staff, having both qualifications and experience to perform the role well. I'd like SENCOS to receive both TLRs and SEN points…'
> (Vol 61. Issue 23. Message 3.)

A response to SENCO 'M' on the same Forum page directed subscribers to section 6.91 of the DfE/DH *CoP* (2015),

> 6.91 The school should ensure that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out these functions. This should include providing the SENCO with sufficient administrative support and time away from teaching to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in a similar way to other important strategic roles within a school.
> DfE/DH (2015)

It is here, in the latest Government directive relating to statutory guidance for special educational needs that resources, administrative support and time away

from teaching is once more linked to the major limiting factor of the word *'should'* (my italics). This has already been highlighted as not only as a significant factor for tension and concern but also where a significant threat appears for SENCOs as it is directly related to their conditions of service as crafted by their individual head-teachers in accordance with the contextual differences across schools. *'Should'* is not *'must'* and so it can be interpreted in a variety of ways with the results for primary school SENCOs either being one of the very few experiencing the support of the school culture in order to be a well-resourced, high status SENCO with opportunities to lead or the opposite with the SENCO acting as an administrator with little/no time, resources or additional allowances/payment for the role. Both of these are opposite poles with a continuum of SENCO experience between them which are influenced by such factors as the size of the school, the number of pupils on the SEN list or register and the priority the head-teacher, SLT and governors place on SEND.

Perhaps the most significant mis-match leading to a real threat for the SENCO concerns the idea of the SENCO as a 'leader'. Liasidou and Svensson (2014) stated that SENCOs are positioned as having a strategic role in leading and coordinating SEN provision across schools and that they have been ,

> 'increasingly seen as the 'enforcers' of transforming change, and they are expected to lead a whole school process of development and change with a view to responding to the needs of students designated as having SEN/D in inclusive mainstream settings.'
> (p 2)

This concept of the SENCO being expected to be a strategic lead for a whole-school process of development and change was also mentioned by Cole (2005), Layton (2005) and Swzed (2007). However, the variation in practice between being *'seen'* to actually being empowered to *'be'* transformational/strategic leaders is very clear. This was highlighted by Tissot (2013) who believed that the lack of SENCOs on school leadership teams,

> 'is stifling the vision of the role as well as its implementation in practice. This constrains the good work that SENCOs can do, and instead keeps this group of skill practitioners immersed in paperwork.'
> (p 39)

The SENCO being a strategic leader who has a vision and is empowered to put that vision into operation by inspiring others to put it into practice by 'managing'

the process is the basic model of a SENCO as a transformational leader (Bush and Bell, 2002; Day *et al,* 2000). However, Tissot hits on key factors which directly relate to the findings from this study with the 'excessive paperwork and administration' of the job being the *bête noir* of the majority of SENCOs who reported on this across all sample groups in both strands with any protected SENCO time being mainly devoted to the *'SENCO as administrator'* only*.*

When consulting the themes and commentaries present in much of the literature from 1994 to the present it appears that there has been little, if any, change in terms of supporting SENCOs and enhancing their status in over twenty years - a potentially damaging verdict. In contrast to the static nature of SENCO conditions of service and support there has been (and there still is) exceptionally rapid and frequent changes in the nature of statutory guidance and legislation. This change is within the wider climate where the focus of OFSTED inspection, the content of the National Curriculum, the shifting goalposts of formal/summative assessment, how pupil attainment is reported, the move of primary schools from local authority control to academy trusts, the growth of 'Free Schools', and the move of initial teacher training from higher education institutions to schools have all permanently cemented Education into the quasi-market. This can create a significant tension between what a SENCO does, how she does it and how she is supported by her school in order for her to be able to do it.

Over two linked chapters this literature review has described and critically reflected on the evolving role of the SENCO as defined by changing government guidelines according to the evolving interpretation of what is special education and SEND within a primary school context. This evolution has been further defined through an interpretation of the influences on the teacher who holds this role/position in their school, namely the Legal Contract they must engage with. This Legal Contract is comprised of the legislative acts of Parliament and legislative guidance contained within a succession of Codes of Practice, culminating in the latest DfE/DH (2015) *CoP,* and the required outcomes of the compulsory *National Award for SEN Coordination*. This adherence to the Legal Contract is extended by the SENCOs' manufacturing of their own Psychological Contract where they perform in accordance to what they believe is the *right thing to do* as teachers and specialists who are committed to their pupils' learning, engagement, progress, achievement and social development. The Contextual

Variety arises through each individual school's ethos and priorities for SEN, influenced by a national performativity culture which affects the opportunities for SENCOs to grow as transformational leaders. This rich-mixture of the three key factors, Legal, Psychological and Contextual, determines what the SENCO *experience* is like in each individual primary school.

The next two chapters (four and five) are devoted to addressing and justifying the methodological approaches and processes undertaken for this study. The first of the Methodology chapters engages with the 'key concepts' which underpin the methods employed in data collection; there is a re-visiting of the underpinning *'Living Theory'* which drives this study where the *'I'* in reference to the inside-researcher process remains a key factor. The SENCOs, their interpretation of their role and their experiences sit at the core of the study as their narratives and responses provide the essential data to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODOLOGY: KEY CONCEPTS

'Paradigm, Pragmatism and the Field': Creating the '*Bricolage*' Research Model.

4.1   Introduction

This, and the next, chapter presents the context for the methodology adopted for this study and the resulting '*Bricolage*' model incorporating an interpretive paradigm - from the Greek '*paradeigma*' which translates as '*unchanging model*' (Thomas, 2007. p 150-151) –within the interrelated fields of 'teacher as researcher', the SENCO as a manager and leader, the demands of a performativity-driven climate in schools and how this combination supported the structure for this enquiry. The next chapter (Chapter Five) presents the research strategy and the methods employed to collect the data for the study.

In this chapter the reinforcement of my own role as a *bricoleur* engaged in the training of SENCOs, and my need to understand what it means to be a contemporary SENCO through the application of Whitehead's (2008) '*Living Theory*',' formed the justification for my actions as an insider/practitioner researcher. This was accomplished through the adoption of a qualitative/interpretive research paradigm which attempted to understand the SENCOs from their own perspective (Robson, 2002). Recognising my own attitudes, experience, knowledge and values as key parts of the research (Denscombe, 2003 and Tracy, 2013) was essential as qualitative researchers are engaged in understanding the grounds, validity and scope of their knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). This empathetic stance was created by myself having three concurrent and participatory roles; that of an experienced, but past, SENCO having been through the changes in Education from 1977 to 2003; that of a current and experienced SENCO trainer and that of being the SEN Governor in a primary school having experienced the changes in Education from 2003 to the present day. This multi-positioning underpinned my additional role as an insider/practitioner researcher engaging honestly with the SENCOs who freely submitted data.

4.2   Creating the *'Bricolage'* (1): Building the Most Appropriate Research Design.

The French word *'bricoleur'* is used to describe an artisan who uses the tools available/to-hand in order to complete a task/piece of work (Kincheloe, 2001). The terms *bricolage* and *bricoleur* were linked to academic study by Levi-Strauss (1966) who used the concept in his structuralist analysis of myths, portraying the myths as a form of *bricolage* (Hammersley, 2012).

Levi-Strauss used the *bricolage* in a scientific manner modelled on structural linguistics and not in social science-based research.   However, several researchers did recognise that qualitative research can adopt a *bricolage* approach; Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated that qualitative research involves piecing together diverse material into a construction that they describe as:

> ` A complex, dense, reflexive collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis'
> (p 6)

This collage-like creation with juxtaposed materials designed to provoke readers using a form of inquiry involving the flexible use of diverse theoretical and methodological resources (Hammersley, 2008) reflects Levi-Strauss's 'spirit' of *bricolage* as it consists of using multiple approaches and perspectives in research where *bricoleurs,* in short, pick up the pieces…and paste them together as best they can. Kincheloe (2001) when describing *bricolage* wrote that,

> 'bricoleurs recognise the limitations of a single method, the discursive strictures of one disciplinary approach, what is missed by traditional practices of validation, the historicity of certified modes of knowledge production, the inseparability of knower and known, and the complexity and heterogeneity of all human experience.'
> (p 681)

The reasons which made *bricolage* an acceptable format for this study was that it employed myself as the *bricoleur* holding an insider-researcher status. The study also explored and interrogated different sources of diverse data (narrative, pictorial, questionnaire) collected using different methods, employed a range of literature, critically engaging with multiple SENCO perspectives together with the personal researcher perspective framed by a *'Living Theory'* and drew them

together. This drawing together from two research strands (see Chapter One, Section 1.6: *'Data Sources from SENCOs'*) using this collected material formed the tentative representation of a contemporary SENCO in a Midland's Primary School (*tentative* in the sense that the sample group(s) did not represent *all* SENCOs from all primary schools in the Midlands). This approach was designed to produce its own academic rigor in that a diverse range of material was utilised with an attempt at a conscious and articulated organisation of it within the text. Wibberley (2012) addressed the issue of the 'process' of *bricolage* and suggested that the planning of research through the development of *bricolage* has,

> '…less to do with employing a relatively inflexible protocol, template or framework (which then shapes or even determines a specific outcome) and more to do with engaging in a process, out of which numerous outcomes can potentially emerge.'
> (p 7)

The '*numerous outcomes'* stated by Wibberley above were, for this study, my greater understanding of the SENCO role as a manager/leader across a diversity of individual school cultures and an identification of any mismatch with the requirements and learning outcomes of the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* and the compulsory National Award for SEN Coordination.

In effect there was a degree of *pragmatism* which underpinned the *bricolage* as knowledge was sought which combined and integrated different approaches in order to optimise my interrogation of the contextual differences between schools restricting or facilitating the ability of SENCOs to be managers and leaders. Phillips and Carr (2014) stated that 'pragmatists' often propose combining different or even opposite solutions in order to,

> 'use the strength of one approach to mitigate or lessen the weakness of another, and vice versa'. Pragmatists often leave aside the question of "which single approach is best?" in favour of the question, "what works?" '
> (p 18)

'*What works'* in this case being the two research strands which contain three distinct sample groups of SENCOs at different career points. This is enhanced by the researcher as an 'insider' influenced by '*Living Theory'* and the adoption of an interpretive paradigm with the additional use of quantitative data (questionnaire) being used to help support the findings obtained from the interrogation of SENCO concept maps and narratives from Strand (1) and the

SENCO diaries in Strand (2). Pragmatism is associated with combining qualitative with quantitative research in order to create a Mixed Methods 'methodology' having both types of methods within the same study (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009) but in this study there is a combination of qualitative and quantitative *data* rather than a Mixed-Methods methodology with the quantitative data providing valuable context which supports the study*.* Thus, in the spirit of the '*bricolage'* but adopting some of the actions of the pragmatist, I used what worked best (Robson, 2002) employing mainly qualitative but with some quantitative methods of data collection through designing the questionnaire for Strand (2). Wilson (2015) stated that pragmatism does not '*pigeonhole the research method'* (p 158) since, as Biesta and Burbles (2003) stated, '*it is not a recipe for educational research, it does not offer prescriptions'* (p 114) and so, in the very same 'spirit' which drove the *bricolage*, I became my own version of a pragmatist following Wilson and Biesta and Burbles' definitions.

4.3   Creating the '*Bricolage'* (2): The Interpretive Paradigm, '*Living Theory'* and a Qualitative/Quantitative Debate.

4.3.1   The Interpretive Paradigm

According to Hughes (2010) paradigm is a type of framing concept and,
'*a way to 'see' the world and organise it'* (p 35)*.* Thomas (2007) called it an '*academic socialisation of knowledge'* and '*the right ways of doing things'* (p 39) while MacNaughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford (2010) stated that it is '*a specific collection of beliefs about what constitutes knowledge and about our relationships with it, together with practices based upon those beliefs'* (p 367)*.* Kuhn (1970) underlined the idea that working using a specific paradigm with its '*esoteric vocabulary and skills'* (p 64) gave the research legitimacy; but there is no single paradigm for research in the field of Education. Donmoyer (1996) stated that research in Education, '*is a field characterised by paradigm proliferation'* (p 19) while Schostak, (2002) and Thomas (2007) agreed that there was a great variability.

Although Kuhn (1970) was an exponent of using a single or specific paradigm, a variable structure best fitted the *bricolage* model for this enquiry as it addressed complex issues related to the SENCO professional role encompassing identity, status and independence influenced by the stories and commentaries from

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SENCOs drawn from the variety of their everyday lives. This led to the creation of this qualitative enquiry framed by an interpretive paradigm where *'subjective worlds'* were revealed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007. p 21) linked with knowledge as *'relative and socially constructed by individuals in a social context'* (Coolican, 2005. p 196) where the language of SENCOs and their recollections were seen as *'versions of the truth'* (p 209). Cohen and Manion (2010) saw the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm,

> '…to understand the subjective world of human experience. To retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand them from within. The imposition of external form and structure is resisted, since this reflects the viewpoint of the observer as opposed to that of the actor directly involved.'
> (p 21)

This interpretive qualitative paradigm underpinned by *'Living Theory'* – a living theory being an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work (Whitehead, 2008) – supported the need to create an overall framework which attempted to combine this somewhat fractured methodology into a coherent whole, hence the adoption of the *'bricolage'* model.

The interpretive approach began with my attempt to try and understand SENCOs as individuals and to collect and critically reflect on their interpretation of their own professional role in their schools (Cohen and Manion, 2010). The theory which normally links with an interpretive approach is *'grounded'* with the theory emerging from the research and not preceding it (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), but in the case of this study the *Living Theory* in place from the outset was firmly embedded in the insider/practitioner approach in terms of myself (as the insider-researcher) wishing to extend my own knowledge and professional practice. However, a thematic analysis approach was adopted as it was not dependent on specialised theory (Howitt and Cramer, 2011) and it enabled me to identify a number of significant themes relating to workload/conditions of service, opportunities for leadership, relationships with colleagues and SENCO self-questioning on why they chose to do the job and why they still do it which reflected the textual data in Strand (1) obtained from the newly appointed SENCOs' concept maps and supporting narratives and the SENCO diaries in Strand (2), further information on how this was accomplished is in Chapter Five.

4.3.2 The Relationship between Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology in the Context of this Study

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claimed that there were five features which distinguished qualitative from quantitative research styles; these features are important to this study as they formed the structure for the *bricolage* which was adopted to make sense of its pragmatic approach*.* The first feature is based on *positivism* which, according to Howitt and Cramer (2011), dominated the quantitative-qualitative debate with positivism being concerned with the methodology of knowledge and its validation. They also stated that positivism applied equally to quantitative methods and to qualitative research methods with the collection of information but, *'the real complaint about positivism is that it operates as if there were permanent, unchanging truths to be found'* (p 299) with knowledge being viewed as *'hard, objective and tangible …with an allegiance to the methods of natural science'* with the researcher as detached observer and recorder (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2010. p 7). As a result of this, qualitative researchers can take on a post-positivist or *anti-positivist* position understanding that knowledge of whatever is studied can only be approximate and never exact and not always possible to be generalised as knowledge is *'personal, subjective and unique which imposes on researchers an involvement with their subjects and a rejection of the ways of the natural scientist'* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2010. p 7).

 Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) second feature related to qualitative researchers accepting other features of the *postmodern sensibility* meaning studying things which are real with an ethic of caring as well as political action and dialogue with those participating in the research with the researcher feeling personally responsible for what they do, how they manage the research process and how they engage with their participants. Punch (2009) stated that a dominant feature of present day qualitative research is its diversity as a complex, fluid and contested field with multiple methodologies and research practices creating *'not a single entity, but an umbrella term that encompasses enormous variety.'* (p 115). This variety was linked with a corresponding variety of tensions, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) identified this within the field of qualitative research:

'It did not take us long to discover that the 'field' of qualitative research is far from a unified set of principles promulgated by networked groups of scholars. In fact, we have discovered that the field of qualitative research is defined primarily by a series of essential tensions, contradictions and hesitations. These tensions work back and forth among competing definitions and conceptions of the field.'
(p ix)

The third of Denzin and Lincoln's features distinguishing quantitative from qualitative researchers was that qualitative researchers captured the individual's point of view/voice through the use of approaches such as in-depth observations and interviews believing that, *the remoteness of the research from its subject matter (people) as found in some quantitative research may be overcome'* (Howitt and Cramer, 2011. p 303).   This leads to the fourth feature which is where the qualitative researcher is seen to appreciate and value rich description in contrast to the quantitative researcher who may find the level of detail present in such a a 'rich picture ' makes generalisation exceptionally difficult or impossible to achieve.   The final feature of differentiation is that qualitative researchers examine the constraints of everyday life and are *'wedded in society through their style of research'* and *'tend to have their feet on the ground more'* (Howitt and Cramer, 2011. p 303).

Although some of the differences between qualitative and quantitative methodology are outlined above, Punch (2009) makes the point that the fundamental rationale behind mixed methods research is that more can be learnt about the research study if the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research can be combined whilst compensating for the weaknesses within both. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) called this the, *'fundamental principle of mixed methods research'* (p 18) and that such a mixed methods approach (Robson, 2002; Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) has been realised as a workable middle solution for many research problems of interest as *'Today, the primary philosophy of mixed research is that of pragmatism'* (Burke-Johnson et al, 2007. p 113).

The rationale for this study's interpretation and use of a pragmatic approach is presented in Section (4:2) within this chapter; a mark of this pragmatism was the need to consider the multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions and standpoints which emerged from the collected SENCO narratives and questionnaire responses with myself (the inside researcher/*bricoleur*) as the

primary instrument of data collection and qualitative analysis (Johnson, et al. 2007) having the opportunity to study the SENCO participants' thoughts and feelings about their professional work and conditions of service in their natural context (Silverman, 2011). This enabled me to develop a level of understanding why they (the SENCOs) behaved as they did together with some understanding of their specialist knowledge and attitudes, beliefs and fears related to their professional identity (Tracy, 2013). In turn this provided an opportunity to study a number of cases (SENCO narratives and concept maps and SENCo narrative diaries) in some depth (Burke-Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) and a wider number of cases (SENCO questionnaire returns) in order to provide the context for the role.

4.4   Creating the '*Bricolage'* (3): Tensions within the Role of the Researcher as an 'Insider'.

 There was a significant tension which existed throughout this study relating to the attempt to create a SENCO 'exemplar', a generalised model emerging from the data. Although this did not fit in neatly with the nature of an interpretive approach, the quantitative data generated through the Strand (2) questionnaire was used to form the core of the resulting 'Composite Model' (see Chapter 8, Section 8:4 and Fig (8:1)).

It was discovered that it was impossible that the English primary school SENCOs in this sample fitted exactly into an exemplar as the SENCO role was far too complex, multi-dimensional and affected by the Contextual Variety and culture of schools with SENCOs having a unique perspective on their schools and their place within them; thus these factors could not be captured through any generalisation, although the Learning Outcomes within the TDA *National Award for SEN Coordination* still presented a form of general framework for the SENCO function which they all had to achieve and work within. I certainly did not devise a general *theory* of SENCO behaviour or try to validate it through an abstract methodology to create any comprehensive SENCO model by working within a *'normative paradigm'* (Cohen and Manion, 2010) but I did attempt to see if any rational model of a SENCO did emerge naturally from the data. However the struggle to maintain the integrity of the phenomena being explored together with the need to understand the SENCOs *'from within'* (Cohen and Manion, 2010 p 21) resisted the imposition of the view of the observer in trying to create a

preconceived SENCO model opposed to the diverse experiences of the SENCOs in the sample groups.

This difficulty was a key factor which required careful monitoring throughout the study. Punch (2009) recognised that all researchers are influenced by their past experiences while Hammersley (2000) identified the problem of the researcher aligning themselves to a particular group's interest thus creating a level of invalidity within the study but Lumsden (2013) stated that it was impossible to be free of all values. As a professional actively engaged in SENCO training with a particular position in terms of what I consider to be negative factors affecting primary school SENCOs from developing into effective transitional leaders I certainly have a personal and professional interest in their working lives; the place where a degree of non-neutrality surfaces is within the Literature chapters where the general tone of writing displays a level of subjectivity. To balance this subjectivity in the critical exploration of the literature in this study and in order to be as neutral as possible in my interpretation of data, I only focus on what the SENCOs said and recorded as this had to be interpreted in context (Best *et al,* 1994).

This raised a problem for me in my attempt to understand what the role of SENCO *meant* in terms of how *they* perceived it and the interactions that take place within it. By asking SENCOs what they do and why they do it, it was hoped that the account would have provided a very personal justification/motive for their actions. Presented with such data I had to make an interpretation of the reliability of each unique account to be able, as Polkinghorne (1988) stated, to uncover some common themes and plots. The subjective factor in this, particularly relating to the construction of the Strand (1) SENCO concept maps and narratives, became clear and was addressed through each SENCO spending time linking and interacting with myself creating an atmosphere of honesty and trustworthiness where they felt safe to present their feelings and not a professional facade, where criticism could have been voiced in a socially acceptable way (Elbaz, 1990). For Strand (1) this was accomplished through direct face-to-face contact as all the SENCOs contributing were known to me in a professional capacity; but I was also identified as a fellow professional who understood the demanding experience of being a SENCO, who was empathetic and who, although still an 'insider' in terms of experience and knowledge, still had enough of the 'outsider' about me to be viewed as a safe listener enhancing

a positive atmosphere which enabled the SENCOs to feel able to talk about their own feelings, attitudes and perceptions. It was understood that this methodological approach through narratives generated large amounts of rich data and that it was impossible to use every part of the data generated in the research; as a result I had to make the subjective choice on what was significant – another impossible task as all of the data was relevant as it was the unique SENCO perspective. This created the need to have my own 'narrative' which was embedded within the SENCO narratives. This 'researcher narrative' was also identified as a reflective strand throughout the study from introduction to conclusion presenting a commentary, but hopefully not a dominant voice, developing from my own subjective position as an experienced SENCO and SENCO trainer.

4.5   Creating the '*Bricolage'* (4): Engagement with the SENCO Role through Narrative Accounts

SENCOs' stories and narratives feature heavily in this study. Work by Glazzard (2014) around using a SENCO's verbal account of her typical day at school and my interest in short articles in specialist journals and magazines which provided '*bite-sized'* accounts of a working-week or '*day-in-the-life'* type commentaries were strong influences. Such narratives provided a lucid account of the writer's role, the range of activities in which they engaged, some of the issues they had to face and how these were resolved (or not). In a way, these simple diaries provided a variety of biographical writing (Creswell, 1998) as they described special events during the writer's day and were described and reflected on in a self-story style (Bearison, 1991). This type of narrative influenced my limited use of the '*Day in the Life of…'* diaries supporting Strand (2) of the research and the larger collection of SENCO narratives from Strand (1).

This type of storytelling was not a new phenomenon as it formed a part of our oral tradition but, according to Smith (2004), it had gradually lost its premier place in our system of global communication. Norris-Nicholson (1994) stated that many examples of this oral tradition still survived but it was threatened by the changing pattern of family and community life; but, with the growth of social media, the oral tradition of storytelling appears to be evolving into a narrative *written* form with people increasingly willing to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings through both photography and text colonising cyber-space. In

short, human beings remain story tellers in a world of narrative makers, only the 'vehicle' for the story has changed. According to narrative researchers such as Webster and Mertova (2007), narrative making is at the core of how we think and how we make sense of reality with the narrative capturing and analysing 'life stories' and critical life events in detail. Narrativist thinkers such as Bruner (1990) believe that narrative making is at the core of how we think and how we make sense of reality; that creating stories is a human and natural response for making meaning or comprehending events in our lives. This idea of making sense of our lives and understanding 'our stories' anew is also explored by Conle (2003) who stated that the self-telling of a person's own story is important in that there will emerge a new self-understanding of that story through this re-telling .

This research was partially designed to exploit this natural story-telling ability in order to explore key issues around professional identity, particularly focusing around the important role that reflection can play in helping a SENCO to frame and then reinterpret and reframe their thinking from a different perspective in order to enhance and improve their professional knowledge, expertise and performance. Zeichner and Liston (1996) believed that reflection of this nature was an essential component for understanding the complexity of classrooms. In addition, this research is influenced by the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1994) who show how reading and writing one's own narrative of practice helps a 'diarist' to arrive at a deeper understanding of themselves and of their practice.

The rise in narrative research is not new as researchers such as Nias (1989), who investigated primary teachers' life histories and careers through narratives, and Connelly and Clandinin (1990), who surveyed forms of narrative inquiry in educational studies, were amongst the first to explore this design of research in education. This narrative approach has status in the work of Day and Quing (2010) in their study entitled '*The New Lives of Teachers'* while Sammons *et al* (2007) discovered that teachers' sense of professional and personal identity was a major factor in their accounts of their motivation, job satisfaction, commitment and self-efficacy; this was, in turn, affected by the extent of the teachers' individual need for a related level of autonomy and competence (Day *et al*, 2006), autonomy and the recognition of competence by head-teachers being a pertinent issue for SENCOs and their perceptions of their status (Tissot, 2013; Rosen-Webb, 2011; Szwed, 2007; Mackenzie, 2007; Kearns, 2005).

However, although SENCO narratives did provide a significant and useful contribution it is stressed that this process *did not* make this research a 'narrative study' as approximately half of the complete data came from the questionnaire/survey, although there were opportunities presented to SENCOs in this survey to write at length about their experiences, conditions of service, future aspirations and ideas for improving/developing their role in their schools.

4.6   Creating the '*Bricolage'* (5): The Research 'Field'

This study was situated at the intersection of three factors: the researcher (myself) as insider/*bricoleur*, the study of SENCOs as autonomous managers/leader and their professional work within a performativity and market driven climate in schools.   A specific 'field' is created here at the bringing together of these three factors:

Fig (4:1):   *The intersection of t   he researcher   as an 'insider', the SENCO as leader and manager and the demands of performativity: Creating the 'Field' for the Study*
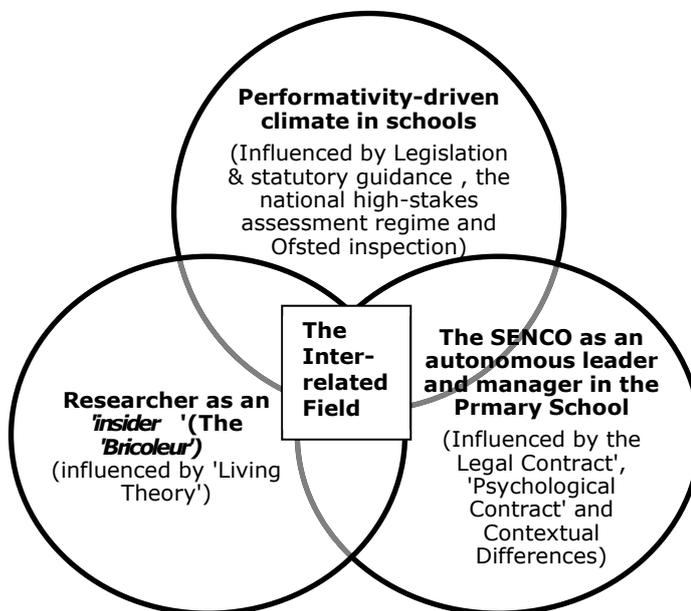
Taking the concept of a field as a metaphor it becomes an area with boundaries in which structured and defined activities happen.   In this context the SENCO

role (identity as autonomous manager and leader influenced by the Contractual Model: Legal, Psychological and Contextual) is a field of study and practice (Bush, 1995). Two parts of this field in the SENCO case provide a professional space where a SENCO can dominate and be dominated (SENCO as Leader/Manager and the Performativity-influenced climate within their individual schools) thus the structured space has a significant impact on empowerment and vice-versa. By engaging in this field a SENCO becomes situated in a social structure which determines how they see their professional world in their schools and where they can hold multiple roles. Tranter (2000) stated that, *'this makes school management complex – people are both managers and managed – leaders and led'* (p 139).

Taking this view of the SENCO being both *'managers and managed…leaders and led'* and then defining it by adopting a simple framework for the inter-related tensions inherent within the nature of SENCO identity as a strategic leader and manager within their schools, enabled a model to be constructed which illustrates the position of a SENCO and how they sit on 'shifting sands'. The shifting-sands metaphor is used to describe the lack of consistency nationally around the SENCO role, status and influence in managing and leading in terms of being a specialist and a 'change-maker'– factors which *should* establish the SENCO as having a significant impact across the whole school and its wider community. This view of the SENCO being an agent for strategic change within the school either being empowered or restricted by context, setting, senior school leadership and the requirements of a national high stakes assessment and inspection regime, locates this study at the intersection of practitioner/insider research and research into SENCO leadership and management.

In Fig (4:2), the SENCO role described at each end of the 'shifting-sands spectrum' represent the experiences of SENCOs from the sample for this study. Some have a great deal of autonomy and influence in their schools to manage and lead SEN development with a significant amount of time, funding and resourcing and a focus on working closely with their fellow teachers, advising and supporting their developing knowledge and practice in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND in their mainstream classrooms. Some have no (or very little) dedicated time for their SENCO work, having to hold down a full-time teaching commitment whilst attempting to meet their 'Legal Contract' with no additional funding or resourcing.

Fig. (4:2) *The 'Shifting-Sands' Model of the SENCO Role in relation to status as a Leader and Manager*

The SENCO as leader and manager		
SENCO as a Senior Manager/Strategic Leader with generous time, payment and resources.	*The 'shifting sands' of SENCO role, status, influence and identity within English mainstream primary schools.*	SENCO as class-teacher taking small groups and managing SEN administration with no additional time or payment and with few resources
Range of the SENCO Status in a Primary School		
From here ....to here		
Influenced by the Contextual Variety		

Other SENCOs from the sample were on a continuum between these two extreme points.

4.7   Summary

This chapter focuses on the formation of the *bricolage* through an adapted pragmatic approach which linked the qualitative methods used with the generation and analysis of some quantitative data set within an interpretive paradigm. Data were collected from three distinct SENCO sample groups set within two research strands.   How the interpretive paradigm related to the methods is summarised in table (4:1) below:

Table (4:1) *Summary Table: Research Concepts*

Paradigm and Description	Methods
Interpretive	Creating the **'Bricolage'** with the Researcher as the **'Bricoleur'** with a pragmatic foundation. The inter-related Field. Through collecting individual perspectives of SENCOs and their personal constructs and by exploring SENCO definitions of situations and experiences.
The individual SENCOs making sense of their everyday world – how they interact, make assumptions and use conventions in the	**Data collected from 3 x sample groups within 2 x defined 'strands':** Strand (1) SENCO Concept Maps & Narratives (Sample Group 1)

practice they adopt. How the SENCOs negotiate and make sense of (and order) their environment and the social and professional contexts in which they find themselves.	Strand (2) SENCO Questionnaire Data (Sample Group 2) Strand (2) SENCO '*Day-in-the-life-of…*' diaries (Sample Group 3)
Small-scale research	**Scope** Study only relating to SENCOs from the Local Authorities in partnership with the University of Northampton for the National Award for SEN Coordination.
Mainly Non-statistical	Qualitative research with *some* statistical collection/presentation of questionnaire data & interpretation of same in order to provide a valuable 'context'.
'Subjectivity' & the personal involvement of the researcher through an underpinning '*Living Theory*'	The *Bricoleur* as an **inside/practitioner researcher** – the subjective approach is a recognised factor in the study: The researcher as a professional SENCO trainer for the National Award for SEN Coordination and a previous SENCO in two large schools. *Bricoleur* using a **'Living Theory'** in order to develop knowledge of the field in order to enhance, develop and improve professional practice as a SENCO trainer.
Interpreting the specific	Through SENCO Concept Maps and Diaries – using the **Legal Contract, Psychological Contract, Contextual Variety Model** to support the coding and interpretation of data (**thematic analysis**)
Of practical interest	The study/research based entirely within a practical context relating to the work of SENCOs and the work of the *bricoleur* – critical exploration of the first informing and enhancing the second.

In the summary table above and as illustrated in Fig (4:3), the *bricolage* is used to structure and contain the collection, interpretation and analysis of data in order to identify areas of mismatch in SENCO work. My own experience and present status were key factors relating to my personal view on the evolution of the SENCO role, the interplay between political change and managing/leading in primary schools, empathy with SENCOs and in collecting and analysing data from SENCO concept maps, narratives, questionnaire returns. The next chapter (five) presents the data collection methods, strategies employed, the characteristics of the three sample/participant groups and the study's ethical protocols.

(1)   The Core RESEARCH FOCUS
Investigating the potential mismatch between compulsory SENCO training and legislation & statutory guidance for SEND which emphasises the role of the SENCO as leader /manager with their experiences in their primary schools. If a mismatch does occur, is it due to the Contextual Variety between schools creating an inconsistency?

(3) All set within The FIELD
- The Inside Researcher (influenced by '*Living Theory'*).
- The SENCO as a Leader/Manager.
- The Performativity-driven school climate (and the *Contextual Variety*).

(2) Explored through the PARADIGM, METHODOLOGY & METHODS
- Interpretive Paradigm.
- Some quantitative methods & data used to provide the context for the wider SENCO role (adopting a 'pragmatic' approach).
- 2 x Strand research design with 3 x sample groups of SENCOS at 3 x different points in their professional SENCO careers.
- Using concept maps, & narratives (Strand 1), questionnaire and narrative diaries (Strand 2)

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY: METHODS, DATA COLLECTION and STRATEGY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the framework for the methodology chosen for all strands of the research in addition to presenting a rationale for the process of data gathering through the '*bricolage'* which was designed to validate this approach from an academic perspective.

It is useful, at this point in the study, to restate the original dual research question which drove the investigation:

> *Is there a mismatch between the training and direction provided for SENCOs (through the compulsory National Award for SEN Coordination, current legislation and current statutory guidance which places an emphasis on the SENCO operating as a manager and as a leader) with their experiences and practice in their primary schools? If there is a mismatch, is it created through the contextual variety between schools which provide an inconsistency of SENCO experience?*

This seemingly simple question contains a complexity related to SENCO identity as teacher/manager and leader, school culture and my own professional understanding and practice. This complexity led to this study/research taking on many of the elements of being a form of development study in that it focused on change which was assumed to have occurred over time as a consequence of factors such as education/training, time in post and opportunities for developing management and leadership capacity leading to developing experience. Typically, according to Alison, (1993) the two main kinds of developmental studies are longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. However, maintaining the concept of the '*bricolage*' this study was designed to integrate these approaches in order to better address the central research question.

5.2 The Theoretical SENCO 'Journey' and its place within the Research Design

In terms of this study being an integration of the 'longitudinal' and 'cross-sectional' the same phenomena was explored - the journey of the SENCO from novice to experienced - but not over a long period of time as it was compressed into one time-frame using three distinct sample groups of SENCOs at three

stages in their professional development. As a result the research took on far more of a cross-sectional approach with the sample groups all extracted from the same population - SENCOs *in* training and those *previously* trained all through the University of Northampton's National Award for SEN Coordination since 2012, all with qualified teacher status and all working in English primary schools in the South-East Midlands. This sample represented different stages of their professional development presented in one 'snap-shot' rather than following one group over time through the three evolutions. As such it is a mix creating an overall methodology which makes use of a range of research methods, in this case – questionnaire, reflective narrative diaries, illustrations/'concept maps' (Garner, Hinchcliffe, and Sandow, 1995) and the use of a thematic analysis process (Howitt and Cramer, 2011; Bold, 2012).

This combined approach is best explained by a more detailed description of the two strands:

Strand (1) comprises the thoughts and feelings of the first sample group who are newly appointed SENCOs before their engagement with any compulsory training for the role – this data was collected through the use of (n=10) SENCO illustrations/concept maps and supporting narratives.

Strand (2) comprises the thoughts, feelings and role descriptions of more experienced SENCOs. The second sample group consisted of are those who were at the end of their compulsory SEN coordination training with at least one academic year of being in-post (n=40). ; Tthis data was obtained through the use of a questionnaire. The third sample group in Strand (2) are experienced SENCOs (n=3) who had completed their compulsory SEN coordination training pre-2013 and who have been working in this role for at least four years; this small sample group produced personal narrative diaries of their 'typical working day' as a SENCO. Table (5:1) provides an overview of the research design:

Table (5:1) *Research Design Overview*

Research Strand	Participants		Participants in each sample	Data collection methods
Strand (1)	New SENCOs	**Sample Group (1)**: Newly appointed SENCOs at the start of their compulsory SEN Coordination Award training.	10	Concept maps and supporting narrative account
Strand (2)	Experienced SENCOs	**Sample Group (2)** SENCOs who have completed their SEN Coordination Award training and who have been at least one academic year 'in post' as a primary school SENCO.	40	Questionnaire
		Sample Group (3) SENCOs who have completed their SEN Coordination Award training with at least 4 academic years 'in post' as a primary school SENCO.	3	Narrative diary *('A Day in the Life of...')*

However, it is acknowledged that this journey from new to experienced SENCO had not been made by the same people/sample group as is usually the case in a longitudinal study which follows a single population over a period of time. This created a particular tension in the argument for the focus on the individual identity of each SENCO and treating them as having the same shared characteristics but contrasting contexts. Perhaps, in hindsight and allowing for the time-scale of the research, the use of a single population sharing the same characteristics would have resulted in a more straightforward and methodologically secure longitudinal study; this would have been the preferred route however the simple issue of SENCO availability made this impossible – in short, there were exceptionally limited windows of opportunity for data gathering and face-to-face communication during the life-cycle of this research and so, in the spirit of the *bricolage*, this 'compressed' study was adopted in response to the available resources and time.

This cross-sectional research approach is shown in the following illustration which represents the theoretical SENCO journey from 'new' (Strand 1) through 'intermediate' to 'experienced' (Strand 2).

Fig (5:1) *The Theoretical SENCO Journey from Novice to Experience*
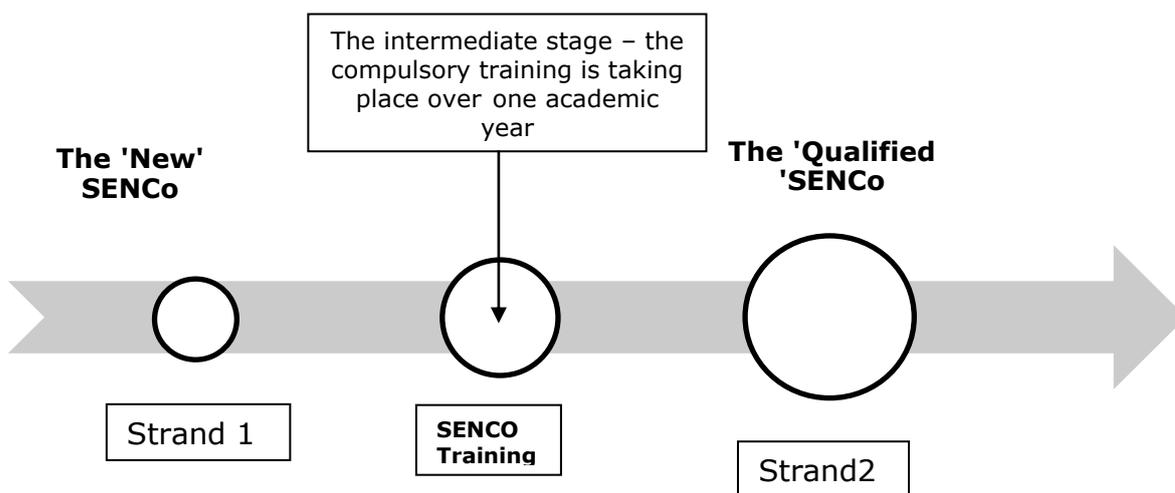
In the diagram above the broad arrow running from left to right represents the pathway of the journey from a new to an established/qualified SENCO. The increasing area of the circles represents the development in SENCO responsibilities, growth in understanding/knowledge and engagement in opportunities for strategic leadership and management which extends beyond their administrative duties. However, the adoption of the title 'The *Theoretical SENCO Journey*' means just that as questions arose around how much did the Contextual Variety across the SENCO population might distort or disrupt this simple progressive model and did increased time-in-post and the completion of their National Award for SEN Coordination automatically mean that the SENCO became more experienced and/or knowledgeable as a result?. Did this increasing 'experience' create assumptions automatically mean that a SENCO became more effective in managing provision for pupils with SEN with and was more power delegated to them by their head-teachers in terms of them being able to make strategic decisions in relation to leading and managing this provision in their schools? This complexity provided a platform for further research in the field which was beyond the scope of this study, but the concept of the theoretical SENCO journey, the effect of Contextual Variety and the assumption that increasing time-in-post and attending a compulsory accredited SENCO training programme of study makes a more effective SENCO in terms of expertise, experience and effectiveness did provide a justification for the choice of the sample group for this study in order to critically explore the key research question with validity.

5.3   Sample Description and Justification

This research interrogated data collected from a population consisting of primary school SENCOs within the South-East Midlands Region who were from the universal group of primary school SENCOs (or equivalent role) in England. From this population, three sample groups were selected according to the criteria presented within the theoretical concept of '*The SENCO Journey'* providing the identification of contextual differences in their professional roles.

For Strand (1) of this study, in October 2015 all (n= 52) of the new SENCOs from across three partner Local Authority cohort groups on the first day of their compulsory *National Award for SEN Coordination* training were invited to participate in this study. The three LAs were chosen according to the following criteria: My limited availability according to time and my other professional responsibilities/duties; the timing of the first taught day of the SENCOs' training course and the locality/venue of the training. (n=10) SENCOs from across these three cohort groups accepted by completing 'concept maps' in the form of annotated drawings based on their reflective thoughts on their new roles – particularly any thoughts relating to what they were looking forward to and any worries which they had.

In many respects, this sample group (I) was comprised of '*blank-sheet-SENCOs'* in that they were at the very beginning of their *National Award for SEN Coordination* training and no 'influence' or direction had yet been given to them by their course tutors or mentors. However the phrase '*blank sheet'* was not an entirely apt one as although these SENCOs were new in post and new to compulsory training they would have been subject to other sources of influence such as local authority input, personal reading, opportunities for professional development, the direction of their head-teachers/senior leadership teams, the general 'culture' of their schools and their existing experience as teachers. My position as their course tutor *and* the inside researcher was also considered in terms of influencing the SENCOs in order that their responses (in the form of the concept map and linked narrative) were not directed by having their tutor as their primary 'audience' for their personal thoughts, feelings, ideas and expressions about their work and professional identity even though their tutor (myself) was stepping out of this role in order to act and think as an independent researcher.

The population contributing to Strand (2) came from two sample groups. The first of these sample groups (II) comprised of (n=40) SENCOs from eleven different Local Authorities who had, in the main, been in post for a minimum of one year and who had all recently completed their *National Award for SEN Coordination* Training by June 2015 although, in reality, there were a small number of SENCOs who had been in post for an excess of four years but who had not undertaken formal SENCO training until recently. The (n=40) SENCOs came from the overall population of (n=120) SENCOs who had completed their *National Award for SEN Coordination* during the period September 2014 to June 2015, all of these SENCOs were invited to participate in this study and were sent information and a blank questionnaire (with a stamped, addressed envelope for their replies). The response rate for this sample group is discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

The differentiating factor between the Strand (1) sample group (I) and Strand (2) sample group (II) SENCOs was the successful completion of their *National Award for SEN Coordination* rather than time in post as a SENCO. To state that each individual SENCO in the Strand (2) sample group (II) was at the same stage of their SENCO career would be incorrect but they were all at the same stage of their recognition as *qualified* SENCOs after completion of their *National Award for SEN Coordination.*

The Strand (2) sample group (II) had experienced considerable direction and guidance through engagement on their training course and from their school-based mentors whose role was to support the SENCOs in applying what they had learnt from their training in their schools/settings in order to develop provision for pupils with SEND and also to develop their own skills and practices as reflective, pro-active and strategic SENCOs.

Although the taught-course experiences of this sample group (II) was consistent as it was supplied by the University tutor team supported by specialist teachers from the various LAs and then evaluated through the University's quality assurance processes, it was acknowledged that the school-based mentoring experience was an inconsistent factor and so was considered as a particular influence on the SENCO experience. Evidence supporting this view on inconsistency was generated from the SENCOs' own course evaluations

completed at the end of their training and through professional discussions/course reviews by the course tutors and Local Authority partners.

The responses from sample group (II) were collected using the main questionnaire. Questionnaires were chosen over the re-use of the concept maps and linked narrative-collection method due to this much larger Strand (2) sample and the range of schools and venues spread over eleven LA areas and counties. Concept map completion and narrative collection had to be done *in situ* while questionnaires were able to be completed without my presence and at a time and place which suited each participant, thus the questionnaire was chosen as the appropriate method for data collection from this sample group.

The third sample group (III) contributing data to Strand (2) came from the population of experienced primary school SENCOs who had completed their *National Award for SEN Coordination* through the University/LA partnership arrangement but who had been in role as a 'trained SENCO' since 2012 . From this wider population of trained and practising SENCOs a sample of (n=10) from a single LA cohort group, with which I had a previous connection as their SENCO 'trainer', were invited to support this study by piloting the Strand (2) questionnaire; from this sample (n=4) experienced SENCOs accepted their invitation to engage with the questionnaire piloting. After the questionnaire piloting these (n=4) SENCOs were then invited to participate in Strand (2) by completing *'Day-in-the-Life-Of'* Diaries; (n=3) SENCOs agreed to do this. In every respect the justification for choosing this final sample was based on simple availability and their match with the common characteristics listed below.

All sample groups from both strands were distinct, but they had three common characteristics:

i.   They were all working as qualified teachers in English Primary Schools within the East Midlands Region.

iii. They were all doing the same specialist job - being a SENCO (or equivalent)

iv.   They were all known to the University through their engagement in compulsory *National Award for SEN Coordination* training (schools from Local Authorities which were all in partnership with the University)

In effect, this was a sample of individual SENCOs who were willing to participate and who were fairly easily available, Robson (2002) called this *convenience* sampling. Perhaps a suitable term for these groups within each strand was a *purposeful* sample (Walliman, 2001) as they were a typical sample of primary school SENCOs or, better still, as intact groups (Allison, 1993) as they were specific and all related to a single underpinning factor in that everyone within each sample group had received their *National Award for SEN Coordination* training at the University of Northampton within the period 2012 to 2016. Daniel (2011) identified this as when a researcher chooses a particular group for a specific purpose, one reason for the *purposeful* sampling being to provide a degree of commonality while the *convenience* sampling provided a variety.

These elements outlined above created a particular and defined sample subset with shared experiences coming from out of the wider population of all primary school SENCOs in England. This provided a level of suitability for the sampling strategy based on the limited expense, time and accessibility which prevented gaining information from the whole population of SENCOs working in English primary schools (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010) across all LAs. However, to state that this subset (although very pertinent to each Local Authority partner, the University department where the *National Award for SEN Coordination* formed a part of their portfolio of studies and in developing my own professional understanding of the SENCO role and SENCO identity) was representative of the whole English Primary School SENCO population would be incorrect. In terms of a sampling bias it is argued that a fully representative sample is an abstract ideal which is unachievable in practice (Coolican, 1999).

In theory all of the SENCOs should have been working according to the guidelines and practices presented through the learning outcomes of the *National Award for SEN Coordination* and the requisites of the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP*. However, this study was not designed to produce generalisations about the role of SENCOs in primary schools, as Walliman, (2001) stated that it was exceptionally difficult to make generalisations using purposive sampling, but the findings of this study identified factors and issues which had previously been presented in other wider and larger-scale research projects and other published SENCO narratives relating to such things as limited time/resources and over-work.

5.4 Sample Detail: Identifying the Characteristics and Variables

Although the sample groups had common features, there were categorical variables (defined as 'characteristics') within each group. According to Punch (2009) *categorical variables* vary in kind rather than degree, amount or quantity and people are classified into mutually exclusive categories. The variables in the following tables mainly fell into this area as the variance was between categories, for example, gender and membership of the Senior Leadership Team. However *continual variables* which can be measured vary in degree, level or quantity rather than in categories, in the case of the sample groups this is shown by age, years as a qualified teacher and years in post as a SENCO. These variables are presented in the following tables, with the first table (5:21) presenting the Strand (1) sample group (I):

Table (5:2)   *Sample Group (I) contributing to   Strand (1): Characteristics*

SENCO (Pseudonym)	Gender	Years as qualified teacher	Previous Occupation (before teaching)	Local Authority
Julie	F	3	Legal Secretary	LA 1
Sarah	F	2	Undergraduate study then PCE	LA 1
Brenda	F	5	Finance Assistant and then TA	LA 1
Margaret	F	2	Undergraduate study (BA with QTS)	LA 1
Isobel	F	3	Undergraduate study then PCE	LA 2
John	M	5	Bar Manager and Nightclub Manager	LA 2
Penny	F	3	Undergraduate study (BA with QTS)	LA 2
Megan	F	16	Teacher, Deputy Head now Head in an Academy chain	LA 3
Mina	F	4	Undergraduate study then PCE	LA 3
Denise	F	7	Undergraduate study (BA with QTS)	LA 3

The characteristics of this sample exhibited the following ranges:

Ten SENCOs made up the sample; they came from three different Local Authorities. LA 1 (n=4), LA 2 (n= 3) and LA 3 (n=3). Data on which type of primary school they worked in was not collected for this phase of the study.

Gender: (n=9) of the sample were female with only (n=1) being male. The DfE (2015) School Workforce in England data reported in November 2014 that in the

teaching profession as a whole the gender split indicated that three out of four teachers were female thus this sample strongly supported this phenomenon by presenting data which significantly extended this statistic.

Qualified teacher experience: All of the SENCOs were qualified teachers who had been teaching for two, or more, years before taking on their SENCO role. (n=6) had been teaching for less than five years. (n=3) had been teaching for five to seven years whilst one SENCO had 16 years' teaching experience (this was the head-teacher who combined her school leadership role with that of the SENCO).

Previous working experience: (n= 3) of the sample had had previous experience of working other than being a teacher.

The following table (5:3) presents the variable characteristics of the Strand (2) sample group (II). There was a small inconsistency when compared to the Strand (1) sample in that additional variables/characteristics were collected relating to status (being a full-time or part-time teacher/SENCO and being a member of the senior leadership team/policy forming group of the school or not).

Table (5:3) 	*Sample Group (II) contributing to Strand (2)*
	(Questionnaire) Characteristics

SENCO No	Gender	LA	Yrs Teaching	Yrs SENCO	Career prior to teaching (Y/N)	FT/PT	On SLT
1	F	1	17	10	N	FT	Y
2	F	4	10	1	Y (Product manager)	FT	Y
3	F	2	11	2	Y (Nursery Nurse)	FT	Y
4	F	7	4	2	Y (Finance)	PT	Y
5	F	11	4	1	N	FT	N
6	F	1	20	2	N	FT	Y
7	M	7	12	1.5	N	FT	Y
8	F	10	16	2	N	PT	Y
9	F	4	2.5	1.5	N	FT	N
10	F	4	20	2	N	FT	Y
11	F	1	22	11	N	FT	Y
12	F	7	3	1	Y (Admin. County Council)	FT	N

13	F	7	26	1.5	N	PT	N
14	F	3	13	8	N	PT	N
15	F	6	5	2.5	Y (Deputy Manager, Nursery)	FT	Y
16	F	7	8	2	Y (Estate Agent)	FT	Y
17	F	1	15	2	Y (Telephonist)	FT	Y
18	F	11	20	1.5	Y (Postal Officer)	FT	Y
19	F	1	12	1.5	Y (Journalist)	PT	N
20	F	3	16	2	Y (Self-employed)	PT	N
21	F	4	6	1	N	FT	Y
22	F	3	12	1.5	N	PT	N
23	F	3	9	4	N	PT	N
24	F	2	4	1	N	FT	N
25	F	11	3	1	N	FT	N
26	F	1	2	2	N	FT	N
27	F	5	4	3	N	FT	Y
28	F	1	4	2	N	FT	N
29	F	8	7	4	N	FT	Y
30	F	9	6	2	N	FT	Y
31	F	2	8	2	N	FT	Y
32	F	6	4	4	N	PT	N
33	F	5	4	2	Y (Police)	FT	N
34	F	1	5	2	N	FT	N
35	F	8	5	3	N	FT	Y
36	F	5	5	3	N	PT	N
37	F	3	4	3	N	FT	N
38	F	8	5	3	N	FT	N
39	F	6	6	4	N	FT	Y
40	F	3	6	1	N	PT	N

The characteristics of this SENCO sample (II) did match the Strand (1) sample (I) data on gender as nearly all of the sample, were female (n=39;98%). In terms of status there were (n=29;:73%) full-time SENCOs and a significant number of part-time at (n=11;28%). Membership of the Senior Leadership Teams in their schools was more even with (n=19;48%) holding membership and (n=21:52%) not having this status. When identifying careers prior to becoming a teacher, (n = 12;30%) had previous experience with (n=28;70%) coming into teaching directly from their university training courses.

For time spent as a teacher the range was 24 years (from 2 years to 26 years). A significant number/percentage (n=21;52%) of SENCOs had more than five years of teaching experience with (n=15;38%) having ten or more years in service. Unlike the Strand (1) sample who were all new to the SENCO role, this sample group had a range of time-in-post of ten years (from one to eleven years) with the (n=28;70%) majority falling in the two years or less SENCO experience bracket.

5.5   Strand (1) Conduct of the Research

5.5.1   Methodological Justification for the Use of Concept Maps

Concept mapping is a structured process which is focused on a topic or a construct of interest (Trochim, 2008). This produces an interpretable pictorial view (the concept map) of a person's ideas and concepts and the inter-relation between them. Concept mapping is a tool for organising and representing these ideas and concepts and helps the individual constructing it, and any one interpreting it, to appreciate and/or understand a particular situation (Novak, 2008). Particular features of concept maps include the central domain familiar for the person constructing it which sets the map in a specific context; there is the inclusion of cross-links (lines) which show the relationships between the different ideas/features on the concept map, other features are the inclusion of specific examples and images of events or objects that help to clarify meaning.

The use of concept mapping in this general format was employed to explore the views of SENCOs and their interpretation of the work that they do. In Strand (1) the objective was to provide their insights as indicative of what Davies, Garner and Lee (1999) call their maturing role and the ways in which they have adapted their role as managers and leaders in a variety of contexts. The use of concept-mapping was a commonly-used tool for training SENCOs on their *National Award for SEN Coordination* in order for them to reflect upon their on-going concerns in a manner which enabled them to explore their thoughts, feelings and experiences in a non-threatening way in a supportive professional setting (Garner, Hinchcliffe and Sandow, 1995). As such, this process was not a new one for the SENCOs in Strand (1) and neither was it generally unique as it has been employed in a variety of ways for a significant number of years (Lewin, 1938; de Lauwe, 1952; Boulding, 1956; Popeil, Hollinger, Loschi and Crawford,

1983; Garner, Hinchcliffe and Sandow, 1995; Davies, Garner and Lee, 1999; Trochim, 2006 and Novak, 2008).

The adoption of a Buzan (1998)-style model of concept mapping for this study presented a non-hierarchical design which differed from other types of structure-down models which incorporate the most inclusive and most general concepts at the top of the map and the more specific, less general concepts arranged hierarchically below them (Novak and Canas, 2006). This more hierarchical model for a concept map does make it easier to determine the overall context in which the particular domain of knowledge presented in the map is being considered; it is also easier to construct the concept map in relation to a focus question, however the design of the concept map chosen for this SENCO sample was used in a general/non-technical way without a focus question or a quantitative objective process of identifying SENCO perceptions. Concept mapping was purely designed as a tool, or 'trigger', to start the discussion based on a personal reflective evaluation of their role as SENCO at this early point in their career pathway rather than on a description of a single situation. This triggering of the discussion led to creating a context for the map leading to an understanding about what their SENCO work entailed, the *'conflicting demands made on them'* (Garner, Hinchcliffe and Sandow, 1995. p5) and also a form of evaluation where both ideas and knowledge held by SENCOs could be identified *before* their full engagement with their *National Award for SEN Coordination* (Edwards and Fraser, 1983).

When using concept mapping with SENCOs, Davies, Garner and Lee (1999) made the valid point that the complexity of the SENCO job does not easily lend itself to simplistic analysis and that there are *'dangers in using this kind of graphical device'* (p 40) as it can lead to an overly anecdotal or simplistic view of what is a complex role. They also highlighted the issue of SENCOs becoming overly preoccupied with a negative interpretation of their role as a result of the acknowledged pressure they were under. However, whilst concept maps may appear to be just a simple arrangement of words and illustrations presenting a graphical representation of information, they also provide a powerful tool through the organisation of the concepts represented by those words and images and the prepositions and links between them (Novak, 2008). As a result of this, a good concept map is certainly 'simple' to look at in terms of clarity of ideas and

the connections between them but it is also coupled with a complexity created by a deep level of meaning.

The issue in regard to concept mapping leading to a potential negative interpretation of the SENCO role did appear in this study as most of the new SENCOs in this sample group did reveal doubts about their roles in their schools with their uncertainties mainly expressed through annotations and comments relating to their increasing workload and their abilities to cope with it. This was, however, an expected outcome of this opportunity for SENCOs to use a non-judgemental/non-threatening 'space' where their accepted identities of themselves as teachers (or headteacher in one case) evolving into a new teacher/SENCO identity could be explored freely. Although the participants in Strand (1) were aware of their negative emotions and 'struggles' in relation to the emotionally challenging role of SENCO, they balanced this with the positive aspects of their experience 'in role', particularly in terms of their relationships with children with SEN(D), improving outcomes for them, supporting and advising classroom teachers/TAs and expressing their appreciation of the complexity of their contractual duties as SENCOs with a growing understanding of their institutional role and status within their schools; particularly in regard to their professional relationships with colleagues, headteachers and governors. This balance of both the negative and positive factors relating to the role was specifically asked for in the task briefing, with some SENCOs actually dividing their concept maps to emphasise the difference between their negative and positive perceptions (e.g. Brenda, Margaret, Isobel and John) whilst others made a clear distinction between negative and positive perceptions/emotions (e.g. Penny and Denise).

Unlike the questionnaire in Strand (2) of this study, I did not pilot the concept mapping process before presenting it to the participants; the justification for this being that the exact method had been employed (and was still being employed) as an activity for generating discussion on different topics within the teaching of the *National Award for SEN Coordination.* In short, I knew in advance that the general process was sound.   The protocol established and followed for the use of the concept maps in the research was that the concept maps and narratives provided by the participants were not collected as a part of their training or used for their National Award for SEN Coordination; this was made very clear in a presentation to the SENCO cohorts at each LA location.

5.5.2　　　Venue and Timing

For Strand (1) all narrative 'capturing' (as a part of the concept map data collection) took place *in situ* at their cohort venue but in a location which provided a private, comfortable and safe place for both the participant and myself acting as the researcher rather than as their course academic tutor; a distinction which was clearly made to each SENCO participant. Completion of the concept maps and the sharing of the SENCOs' narratives was either after the taught day had finished or during the lunchtime break period at each of three National Award for SEN Coordination centres (LA 1, LA2 and LA 3).

5.5.3　　　The Process of Creating the Concept Maps

As the 'facilitator' for the concept mapping activity the process adopted was simple in its intent and expected outcome. SENCOs were each given a plain piece of A4 paper with a central, communal resource 'pot' of pens/pencils/erasers/pencil sharpeners in the room made available in order to enhance their own resources. The SENCOs in each cohort engaging with the activity were given a straightforward opening instruction: *'Using your own equipment, and the resources given to you, construct an annotated drawing on the piece of plain A4 which best sums up your role and the work you have been doing as a SENCO so far…feel free to state your thoughts, feelings and ideas about your role and work, both the positive and the negative…nothing is "barred" but make sure that you maintain confidentiality by not "naming real names"'.*

An unnamed concept map with a domain not related to the role of SENCO was shown to them in order to provide a neutral example which would not overly influence their maps, along with a general introduction which explained how concept maps could be used to capture a variety of information, however a clear direction was given to all the participating SENCOs that this was to be *their* concept map and *their* creation with flexibility in terms of their own interpretation of what the concept map should look like.

The concept maps were produced in isolation in that the SENCOs did not engage with others as they were working; they each had 30 minutes in which to produce their maps.

The SENCOs were then asked, after completing their concept maps, to provide a verbal explanation (narrative) of their concept maps. These supporting narratives were provided by the SENCOs in each cohort throughout the day as each individual had uninterrupted time alone with myself in order to 'talk through' what they had drawn and how it related to their thoughts, feelings and ideas relating to their new role as SENCO. Each narrative account was recorded (with agreement from each SENCO) and then transcribed (word-for-word) afterwards for presentation in the main body of this study's text after the corresponding concept map. All names on the maps and in the supporting narratives are pseudonyms. One SENCO did not provide a narrative as she felt that the concept map could '*talk for itself'*. Just exactly as Davies, Garner and Lee found in 1999,

> 'the exercise proved to be a challenge, but once the initial fear of 'not being able to draw' was overcome, the work produced suggested that the SENCOs found the intuitive and instinctive personal assessment of a given situation in a graphical format to be liberating.'
> (p 37)

Although not forming a part of the evidence or data for this study, several SENCOs stated that they enjoyed the Concept Mapping activity, with one SENCO stating that they found the process, '*very refreshing as I could tell it like it is without looking over my shoulder all the time to see if the Head is listening in!'*

5.6   Strand (2): The Conduct of the Research

Strand (2) comprised two data collection methods: the deployment of a questionnaire and the creation of narrative diaries.

5.6.1   The Methodological Justification for the use of a Questionnaire

The stimulus for adopting a questionnaire for data gathering for Strand (2) of this study was that it is a tried and tested method of data collection; Crowther et al (1997) developed a SENCO questionnaire which was subsequently adopted by Szwed (2007) and questionnaires were used to gather data from SENCOs in NASEN's (2007) large scale research on *the recruitment, induction and retention of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators* and the National Union of Teachers' (2012) survey of SENCOs '*There is Always More to Do'.*

An initial questionnaire was designed with the aim to draw out the personal views of SENCOs on their professional role in order to explore any potential mismatch between the legislative/statutory guidance/content of their National Award for SEN Coordination training and the actual reality of being a SENCO in a primary school. The objectives were to create a questionnaire which achieved this by being:

(a)   fairly economical with time (understanding that SENCOs are exceptionally busy people with a large amount of work to do and with little time available to spend on completing questionnaires);

(b)   clear in each question in order that the SENCO participants understood what information was required by the question, that they had this information and were willing to divulge it;

(c)   *'able to be administered without the presence of the researcher'* (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2010. P 317);

(d)   'non-threatening' in terms of SENCOs not feeling coerced into completing it with the study/completion of the questionnaire not harming them (professionally and personally) – Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2010) termed this the *'issue of non-maleficence'* (p 318);

(e)   able to provide data representative of the target population of primary school SENCOs working in the East Midlands who completed their *National Award for SEN Coordination* with the University of Northampton within the period September 2014 to July 2015.

Munn and Drever (1999) stated that questionnaires had significant advantages for practitioner-researchers in that they are an efficient use of time, maintained anonymity for the respondent, with the possibility of a high return rate with the use of standardised questions. A strength of being an inside researcher was my knowledge of SENCO training and the evolution of the SENCO role over the years – all of this contributing to my particular position; but such familiarity did create a degree of difficulty in that certain factors could have been taken for granted rather than being questioned so the use of a questionnaire which was designed to be anonymous helped to create, unlike with the Strand (1) Concept Maps, a critical distance between myself (as *bricoleur*/inside researcher and SENCO tutor) with the SENCOs completing it.   However, Sudman and Bradburn (1982) highlight sensitive items being included in a questionnaire; although the questionnaire for Strand (2) was designed to be anonymous/confidential and

non-malificent the issue of sensitivity was not avoided particularly this this might have led to what Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2010) termed *'under- reporting'* (p333) in the form of non-disclosure or even exaggeration by SENCOs. Cooper and Schindler (2001) questioned why should those completing questionnaires share private and sensitive matters about their lives, professional work and opinions with a stranger? They also suggested that if a questionnaire continued to ask for more sensitive responses and became more threatening to the respondent they would be more inclined to be biased in their responses thus leading to unreliability.

The decision for planning, designing and employing a questionnaire to collect data from the SENCO sample was also made based on the real factor relating to the availability of the SENCOs as they had completed their training and were distributed/dispersed over eleven LA areas covering a significant amount of square mileage thus it would have been impossible to set up an equivalent number of SENCO interviews across all the University-linked Local Authority cohorts in a variety of settings/venues to suit each individual SENCO (potentially 120 of them) or to even distribute the questionnaires by hand as, according to Denscombe (2003), this would have led to a higher response/return rate. In connection with this, the opportunity to administer the questionnaires *in situ* would have created many of the features of an interview allowing myself (the researcher) to interact with the participants, explaining what is expected of them and clarifying the questions if required. This approach would have contributed to a high response rate but this could not be adopted due entirely to the issues already outlined relating to very limited SENCO availability and time. In addition this might very well have led to serious conflict in relation to creating a lack of anonymity, enhancing feelings of coercion and even adding an element of 'threat' in the perceptions of the SENCOs.

In order to explore the scope of the SENCO role, a 4-piece model was constructed covering the organisational structure, responsibility and scope within the role, strategic leadership and experience (Fig 5:2). This model was devised in order to reflect the grouping of the key learning outcomes from the original TDA (2008) *SEN Co-ordination Award* and certain factors emerging from the study of the literature such as the nature of the SENCO role, time and resourcing, status as manager and leader and influences on their role.

For the purposes of creating the model/questionnaire the following brief definitions were adopted:

1. **Experience**: the number of years the SENCO had been teaching and the amount of time they have been working as a SENCO
2. **Responsibility & scope**: the SENCO's status within their school and the autonomy and opportunity available to the SENCO to take the lead in managing the day-to-day operation of SEND provision and policy.
3. **Leadership**: the ability for the SENCO to engage in the evaluation of SEN provision coupled with opportunities to progress planning, the embedding of these within whole-school development and the ability to be able to project a tangible 'vision' for SEN development and influence others to actively promote and realise this vision.
4. **SENCO 'well**-**being'**: focusing on how the SENCO is protected from professional 'burn-out' and how the school supports the SENCO in order for them to be pro-active and efficient in role.

Fig (5:2) *'4- Piece Model': The Scope of the SENCO Role*
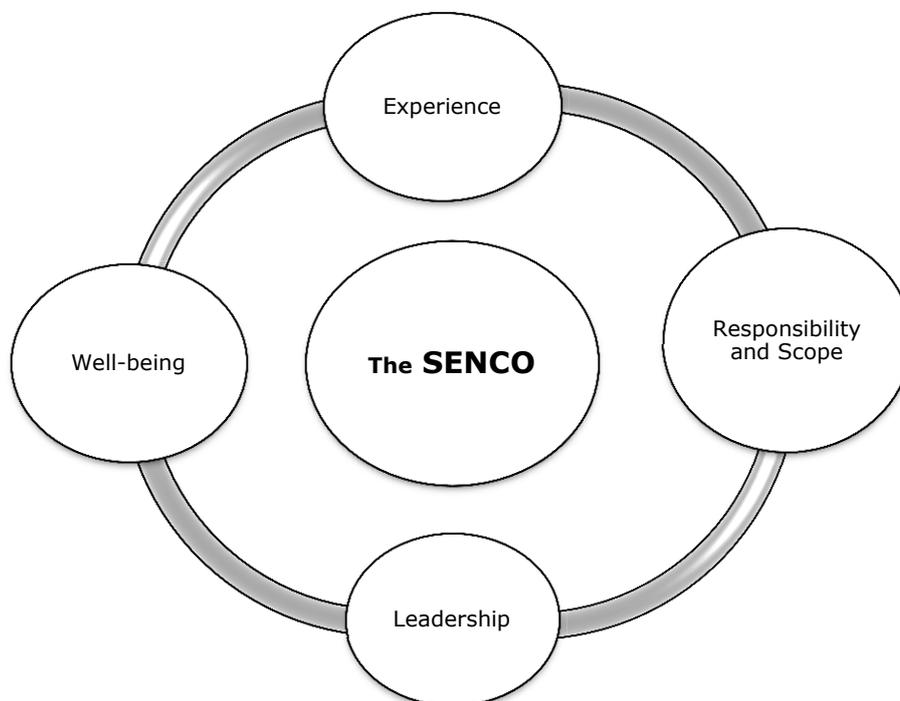
In order for all the participants to understand the questions and the types of responses required the questionnaire was piloted. The 4-piece model provided the structure for the original questionnaire designed for piloting; this was constructed in four broad sections designed to address the elements in the model above. The covering letter and the questionnaire for piloting are shown in

Appendix (1) and (2). The forty-two questions followed the format outlined in Table (5:4):

Table (5:4) *Pilot Questionnaire Format*

Section 1: **Context**	**Questions (1) through to (17)** Covering: Experience (general teaching and as SENCO in role) Employment status Title Membership of SLT Line managership Additional responsibilities
Section 2: **Communication & In-Service Education & Training (INSET)**	**Questions (18) through to (25)** Covering: Communication (with teaching staff, with head-teacher and the SEN Governor in the school) Managing and leading the TA team Delivering and leading Staff INSET
Section 3: **Managing SEN Provision, own continuing professional development (CPD) and working with external services**	**Questions (26) through to (37)** Covering: SEND Policy formation & development plan Responsibility for finance and budgeting Examination arrangements Own CPD/INSET Range of experience in working with external services
Section 4: **SENCO well-being (plus any additional comments)**	**Questions (38) through to (42)** Covering: What the school does for SENCO well-being Reflections on the benefits of being a SENCO; on the negative aspects of being a SENCO; on how the role could be better Opportunity for the SENCO to add anything else.

These questions were presented using a mixture of closed-questions, multiple-choice/fixed-choice questions, and open questions designed to capture the SENCOs' opinions and/or justifications.

5.6.2 Piloting the Questionnaire

The small sample (n=10) invited to pilot the questionnaire all came from a single LA group. They were all established SENCOs working in primary schools who had been in their SENCO post for at least five years and who were known to me through their previous engagement with the *National Award for SEN Coordination.* As previously stated, the justification for choosing this group was

based on simple availability and that they fitted the profile of the full Strand (2) sample.

Table (5.5) *Sample Population for the Pilot Study*

Item	Pilot Study (Questionnaire)
Sample number	10
Rationale for sample	Availability and known to me
Return rate	40% (4 questionnaires returned)
Sample demographics	Previous attendees on 'M' Level course based on the TDA 2008 National Award for SEN Coordination
Professional status	All qualified teachers working in primary (or equivalent) schools. Appointed as SENCO since 2010
Number of local authorities	1

There was a 40% (n=4) return rate for the pilot questionnaire; this was felt to be a suitable number for piloting in order to gain key information on how long it took the participants to complete, to test the clarity of the questions and to test the reaction of the participants' interpreting the questions as being valid to their professional status as SENCOs. . Due to this small number their responses to the questions were collected in a 'Response Matrix' (Appendix A:2:4). From this exercise it was noted that all participants seemingly understood the questions and were able to make suitable responses; Bickman and Rog (1998) highlighted this as a factor in questionnaire design as all the questions needed to be clear and able to be understood consistently in order that valid analysis can be conducted. Additional feedback on the format of the pilot questionnaire was sought relating to the format, types of question, clarity, time for completion and any other comments (Appendix A:2:3 Feedback Sheet and A:2:5 Collated Responses).

The Pilot Study participants' comments were generally positive with all four approving the mix of open, closed and multiple-choice questions with the majority (three out of four) stating that they felt there had been a fair opportunity to present their own identity as a SENCO through answering the range of questions. One participant wanted further clarification of the question related to SENCO 'well-being' while a second wanted an extended range of closed questions covering an opportunity to list the things they did as a SENCO. Other comments related to adding additional, specific questions on opportunities for leading provision and how teachers become SENCOs. The time it took the participants to complete the questionnaire varied from fifteen minutes through to

an hour (with breaks), one SENCO indicated that, although they enjoyed completing the questionnaire, it did take up a significant proportion of their time. A particularly positive comment came from a SENCO who stated that engagement with the questionnaire helped her to assess/review her own role, something she had not been able to do before.

Interestingly, the pilot questionnaire had first been sent out by e-mail with instructions to return it using the same means. There were no returns after a two week period so the questionnaires and covering letters were then sent out again but as paper copies with a stamped addressed envelope for return; this proved successful with one participant stating that this was, by far, her preferred option as she felt far more secure in relation to anonymity and confidentiality. In the light of this review, a number of alterations were made to the pilot questionnaire. Although *'methodological purity'* (Rothwell, 1993. p38) meant that this pilot group's responses to the questions had to be excluded from the final analysis of the amended questionnaire, they did have the opportunity to contribute further in the study by being the sample group (III) for the Strand (2) *'Day-in-the-Life-of-a SENCO'* diaries; in this capacity I believed that my contact with them might have altered their views in relation to completing an amended questionnaire but not in terms of them completing a separate narrative account.

5.6.3 Final Questionnaire :   Amendments and Construction

Amendments to the pilot questionnaire are shown in Table (5:6) below. The final questionnaire and covering letter is at Appendix (3) sections (A:3:1) and (A:3:2). A major factor underpinning the changes in the questionnaire was the introduction of the new DfE/DH (2015) *CoP*; as this was such a substantial piece of statutory guidance which had a significant impact on SENCOs and how they worked it was felt that an extended questionnaire with specific questions linked directly to the new *Code* was required.

Table (5:6) *Final Questionnaire: Amendments and Construction*

Pilot	Final	Justification for change
42 Questions	59 Questions in 9 sections	Added questions related to: Listing key SENCO duties undertaken in the school SENCOs justifying their choices in a previous closed-question Specific responses required relating to

		the SENCOs' autonomy as leaders What encouraged them to become SENCOs How they became SENCOs
Pilot was pre-DfE/DH (2015) *CoP*	A key question on the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* added	Updating and a need to discover if the 2015 *CoP* is having an effect/impact on the SENCo
Closed questions on SENCO communications within the school	Re-design of these questions in the form of *Likert-type scales* (Likert, 1932)	Created added nuances and a greater range of responses
Loose structure	Tighter structure with questions set within defined sections: Part 1: Role and Experience Part 2: Resources Part 3: Communication Part 4: Managing TAs Part 5: Professional Development and INSET Part 6:SEN School Policy Part 7: Finances and Budgeting Part 8: Own CPD Part 9: Well-being and Reflections on Role	Structuring the questionnaire to better match the 4-piece model. Matching questions to defined areas of a SENCO's professional work. Defined sections creating greater clarity for more effective thematic analysis Questionnaire contains a range of closed questions with supporting statements with Part 10 including an increased opportunity for SENCOs to write reflectively and freely.
Distributed electronically and then by post	Distributed only by post (with s.a.e. included for return)	Electronic distribution failure at piloting

5.7 Conduct of the Research Strand (2): SENCO Diaries

5.7.1 The Methodological Justification for the use of a Narrative Diary

A discussion on the mixed-methods approach adopted for this study and the engagement with the SENCO through their narrative accounts is presented in Chapter (4) section (4.4). This section provides a justification for the use of the Narrative Diary and a discussion around truth, validity and reliability.

Bold (2013) referred to 'narrative' as a means of developing and nurturing the skills of critical reflection and reflexivity. Schön (1984) described one of reflection's functions as 'reflecting-in-action' whilst working and 'thinking on our feet' about how to react to different and changing situations and events and 'thinking-on-action' as events were looked back at afterwards with a

consideration as to how a different response might have been used and/or how to modify and change things. These two forms of reflection, 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action', were adopted as the core of the SENCOs' diaries as SENCOs wrote both during and/or immediately after events in their chosen day. Schön identified this process as an automatic response in an experienced practitioner. However, Webster and Mertova (2007) stated that a major criticism of narrative as a research method is that of subjectivity, with a writer providing their interpretation of the facts but, for the SENCO diaries in this study, this is exactly the intention as they have an auto-biographical truth. Clough (2002) believed that this sort of 'truth' cannot be judged by the usual tests of positivist research data, reliability, validity and ability to be replicated and so must be judged by their aesthetic content, the emotive force within the story, their 'appearance' of being true or real and their authenticity to the people the stories portray. The SENCO diaries can thus be questioned in terms of the existence of truth within them but they cannot be judged by their truthfulness and so Clough's judgment of narrative accounts provides a re-conceptualization of a positivist test with the content, the emotion and the authenticity of each account providing a clear alternative for validity, reliability and replicability. This is particularly relevant as all research involves interpretation (Bold, 2013) with even a positivist-based report being fully influenced by a researcher's interpretation of the findings (Czarniawaska, 2004). Only believing that a positivist approach can provide 'truth' has, according to Bold, *'has little truth itself. Different scholars might provide different interpretations of the same research findings.'* (p 144) whereas *'Participant's stories are their interpretations and are most likely reconstructions of actual events that will change each time they are told'* (p 145). As the inside researcher/*bricoleur*, I was in no doubt that the SENCOs presenting their diaries might have re-told the story of their day differently in different contexts and to different audiences however the reflecting 'in' and 'on' action provided an alternative to a positivist interpretation of validity and reliability through content, emotion and reality according to the thoughts, feelings and ideas generated and recorded by the SENCO on that *actual day*.

5.7.2   The Process of Creating the Diaries

An initial sample number of (n=10) SENCOs were invited to participate in this study, who:

(a) were from a single Local Authority,

(b) were well-experienced having been in post for more than four years

(c) had previously completed their *National Award for SEN Coordination* through the University and

(d) had previous knowledge of this study by being invited to pilot the Strand (2) questionnaire.

Covering letters and blank diary sheets were posted out to all (n=10) of the invited sample group (with a stamped addressed envelope for return); this approach being adopted due to the failure of the on-line piloting for the questionnaire. From this initial posting a small number (n=3) volunteered to participate in this study by completing the short, reflective diary covering one single day in their busy working week. These diaries were designed to complement the data gathering process in the questionnaire by providing an additional rich narrative source.

The simple diary format accompanied a covering letter which provided information on the research focus, the ethical protocols/code underpinning the research and instructions on how to complete the diary. Like the questionnaire, this diary was designed for deployment and return as a paper-based tool. The covering letter and blank diary which explained the nature of the study, the protocols and ethical policy and instructions on how to complete the diary embracing '*the freedom of writing a completely uncensored, naturally occurring and very personal account of your day's experience as a SENCO'* are at Appendix 5 (A:5:1) with all three completed SENCO diaries in Appendix 5 (A:5:2; A:5:3 and A:5:4).

5.8   Ethical Code , Protocols and Practice for Strands (1) and (2): Introduction

All processes and aspects related to this full study were undertaken and executed in strict obedience with the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011) as presented by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University of Northampton's Ethics Code and Procedures. The concept maps and narratives in Strand 1 and the questionnaire data and diaries in Strand (2) all contained potentially confidential information thus there were important ethical considerations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). These considerations were

further complicated by my own position as an 'inside-researcher' so, in the light of this researcher identity, the ethical underpinning of this study was carefully and closely managed throughout (Stenhouse, 1975) as it involved working with SENCOs who were either starting their National Award for SEN Coordination training or who had completed their training, as an approximate third (n= 3) of the Strand 1 SENCOs initially knew me as their current/new course tutor (those coming from LA 3) while (n=8) of the Strand (2) SENCOs (coming from LA 4) and all of the SENCOs contributing their diaries knew me as their past course tutor. This raised potential issues around the misuse of any perceived power and manipulation with the importance being to make sure that none of the participants felt forced into complying (particularly in the light of my adoption of a 'living theory' where my own experiences and status were fully entwined with the whole research process), as a result it was vital that I did not influence participant responses/contributions and that I obtained the informed consent of all participants. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) stated that:

> 'The principle of informed consent arises from the subject's right to freedom and self-determination…Consent thus protects and respects the right of self-determination …As part of the right to self-determination, the subject has the right to refuse to take part, or to withdraw or to withdraw once the research has begun…Thus informed consent implies informed refusal.'
> (p 52)

Diener and Crandall (1978) defined informed consent as the process where an individual chooses to take part after being informed of all the facts; as I was researching using my own (current and past) students and with SENCOs who knew me as a lecturer at the University, the obtaining of informed consent was vital to the integrity and validity of this research.

5.8.1 Strand (1) Concept Maps: Ethical Practices

The interviews were recorded and transcribed only with the participants' permission; this permission was given verbally by each participant.

The participants were informed that they were not obliged to answer any questions, respond to any statement or acquiesce to any task/activity unless they wished to do so. They were also made aware that they could stop their commentary at any time or decide not to submit their concept map illustration.

Personal details were kept confidential and separate from the data, and stored in a locked cabinet and password protected memory stick. Participants were informed that their personal details were only be kept for the sole purpose of the research and were to be destroyed six months after the completion of the research. Codes and pseudonyms were used when writing this thesis and the names of their schools/settings and LAs were fictionalised to ensure anonymity

Participants did not respond adversely to creating their Concept Maps and giving their verbal commentaries or answering my questions; however I was prepared for this eventuality by having a system where I would have responded in a sensitive manner by asking if they wished to continue with the research at this time and asking if they wished to withdraw. I was also prepared to offer all participants the opportunity for 'time out' of the research gathering exercise or the provision of additional time for them to recover (although I was acutely aware of the time pressure on these small groups of SENCOs in that the concept map creation was being undertaken in their own time on their National Award for SEN Coordination programme of study).

All participants were sent a copy of their concept map and their supporting commentary transcription in order to check that it was an accurate representation of their narrative. All participants were given the opportunity to receive feedback on the results of the research.

The study remained sensitive to social, cultural and language differences in all phases of undertaking and reporting the research. During the research process I perceived the participants as a difficult to engage group due to my own substantial professional background as an ex-SENCO and as a SENCO trainer/tutor of ten-plus years standing, thus I had a clear understanding in relation to the restricted time available to the selected SENCOs to enable them to participate in this study due to the significant demands of their professional work in their schools; this formed the basis where I had to adopt a sensitive approach to all investigations in order that no pressures or unease was experienced by the participants.

5.8.2 Strand (2) Questionnaire and Diaries: Ethical Practices

Following the protocols established in Strand (1) underpinned through the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) guidelines on ethical research , all SENCOs invited to participate in this study were informed of their rights as a potential participant through the use of a covering letter to both the questionnaire and the diary. In this letter there was a brief description of the nature of the research and their part within it (if they chose to participate). Direct links to BERA (2011) were made with clear information relating to their informed consent. Particular emphasis was placed on my understanding of their limited time and of my appreciation if they decided to engage as a participant.

In both strands of this research I did make an assumption that all of the participants had been involved in their own research at some time or another (either through practitioner processes such as the 'School Improvement Cycle' and general provision evaluation and development or through their previous dissertation work in their undergraduate and qualified teacher status studies, some SENCOs also having post-graduate qualifications) and so I held the belief that they had a level of understanding about the nature of researching, particularly as their second assignment from the National Award for SEN Coordination tasked them with engaging in school-based inquiry using a practitioner-researcher approach.

During the construction of the final questionnaire I was aware of potentially 'sensitive' questions, or questions which asked SENCOs to provide answers/responses which they considered as being sensitive in the sense of them having to reflect on their conditions of service, their professional relationships with their headteachers and of identifying particular areas of their practice and their role which, in their opinion, could be improved and developed.   Questions requiring SENCOs' critical reflections were particularly situated in Part (9) *SENCO 'Well-Being' and Reflections on Your Role*; this section was a key part of the questionnaire as here the SENCOs had 'free rein' to comment and express their thoughts and feelings but I was careful not to assume that all SENCOs would be able to do this freely without any sense of fear (or even professional harm) if their responses became intercepted by a third party who might take offence and sanction/penalise the SENCO in spite of the strict protocols against this which were put in place . Coolican, *et al* (2005) made the point that,

'There is no argument against the principle that …investigators should guarantee the safety of their participants and that everything should be done to protect them from harm or discomfort. The difficulty comes in trying to decide what kind of stress or discomfort, physical or mental, is unacceptable'. (p 481)

Thus, I (as the researcher) took the responsibility of working within my constructed ethical code with its strong underpinning of 'well-being' for the participants; this study's ethical code, as previously stated, being firmly influenced and modelled by the BERA (2011) guidelines. Through providing a postal-based hard-copy rather than IT-based questionnaire requiring presentation and completion on a screen which could be easily seen by others I believed a greater degree of privacy during completion could be maintained in order to limit risk or harm. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed in the questionnaire covering letter along with the purpose of the questionnaire clearly being stated in order to gain informed consent from potential participants, my clear intention being to manage the study/research with integrity, care and empathy with the SENCO work-load (this questionnaire being an additional task which demanded their time and thought).

5.9   The Analysis Processes: SENCO Questionnaire Responses and Concept Maps/Diary Narratives

5.9.1 Strand (2) Questionnaire Analysis

The data analysis for the Strand (2) questionnaire was through a comparative process for closed and ratings scale questions which presented charts, graphs and tables.   The raw questionnaire data (response frequency from closed questions and narrative-style responses from open questions) were collated into one manageable document using the original questionnaire design as a simple grid (Appendix 4).   Using this grid the closed questions (multiple-choice and ratings scales) presented a range of direct/focused responses which enabled measuring of frequency and comparisons to be made across the SENCOs in the sample (Oppenheim, 1992) making for quicker description (Munn and Drever, 1999) and then drawing out the analysis (Bailey, 1994).   The SENCO written responses generated through open-ended questions enabled a specific response to be given and an opportunity for the SENCO to give more complex responses;

these were subjected to analysis where the narrative was broken down, coded and themed in order to provide a higher level synthesis (Moore, 2006).

From this process there emerged six Initial Themes:

(1)   Additional responsibilities and duties

(2)   Differences across schools in resourcing/supporting the SENCO

(3)   Inconsistencies in opportunities for SENCOs to lead and manage (staff teams, SEN provision, financing/budgeting)

(4)   Time pressures

(5)   Work-life balance

(6)   Recognition of the positive impact of their work with pupils who had barriers to their learning/engagement

These were compared with the themes which were revealed from the Strand (1) SENCO concept maps and narratives and were used to support the thematic analysis of the Strand (2) SENCO diaries.

5.9.2   The Thematic Analysis of Strand (1) Concept Map Narratives and the Strand (2) Diaries

A thematic analysis approach was adopted for a key reason, as the practitioner researcher/*bricoleur* collecting the data I naturally became very familiar with the content of the data and with many of the SENCOs contributing their comments and narratives. This familiarity sat at the core of this thematic approach along with the view that thematic analysis is not a single, identifiable, standardised method; Howitt and Cramer (2011) stated that,

> ' it is impossible to provide a universally acceptable set of guidelines which, effortlessly, will lead to a good thematic analysis. Actually this is true for many different aspects of research, including the analysis of data using statistical methods'
> (p 330).

 This level of flexibility built into the thematic analysis process complemented the interpretive mixed methods paradigm which formed the heart of my *bricolage*. At each stage of this process I was able to modify the analysis accordingly as ideas developed thus I was then able to alter codes made earlier in response to gaining a fuller picture of the data. These 'closer-fitting' to the data codings formed the

basis for the identification of initial themes, this was what Howitt and Cramer called *'something of a trial-and-error process in which change and adjustment will be a regular feature'* (p 329). This systematic process was described in detail by Braun and Clarke (2006) who described thematic analysis as a qualitative analytic method for,

> 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally *organises* and *describes* your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and *interprets* various aspects of the research topic.'
> (p 79)

Braun and Clarke (2006) identified two different approaches to this initial coding process depending on whether the data are data-led or theory-led: A data-led approach, similar to grounded theory, is embedded within a process where the close analysis of what is contained within the data creates the characteristics of the coding. A theory-led approach is where the initial coding of the data is influenced by the key elements of the theory being applied. In the case of this study, the thematic analysis of the data is influenced by both the adoption of 'living theory' and the use of the 'Key Influences Model' (The Legal Contract, the Psychological Contract and Contextual Variety) to structure and frame the emerging themes thus this study fits within the 'theory-led' approach.

The Braun and Clarke six-stage model for comprehensive/high quality thematic analysis was adopted for this study in order to create a systematic pathway to follow for the close scrutiny of the rich data. The six stages were:

(1)   Familiarisation with the data
(2)   Initial coding generation
(3)   Searching for themes based on the initial coding
(4)   A review of the themes
(5)   Theme definition/labelling
(6)   Final report writing.

This 'Braun and Clarke Model' seemed to be a simple flow chart of (1) through to (6) however, at each stage, there was a backwards flow to earlier parts of the analysis if the research required it in order to refine or for greater clarity. In this way the six steps, although defined for the purposes of presenting a clear model, did have a significant degree of 'overlap'.

Using the 'Braun-Clarke Model' each SENCO Concept Map and supporting commentary in Strand (1) and the *'Day-in-the-Life-Of'* SENCO diaries in Strand (2) was subject to initial coding generation at regular intervals (every four lines) throughout the text. This provided me with brief summaries of each 'chunk' of text after simplifying the text (being very careful not to 'over-code' at this stage which could have led to obscuring the overall meaning) with the initial codes and themes being synthesized from the data by myself (influenced by living theory and the three-part conceptual model of 'SENCO Influences') rather than being located in the data and emerging as in a grounded theory model (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006).

Generating themes was the second level of interpretation. Themes were created by joining together several of the codes to form patterns according to the relationships between them. This was through a trial-and-error process of physically/actively sorting and collating the codes written down on cards, looking for similarities, differences and patterns. This produced a set of, at first, tentative and fairly unrefined themes which were then reviewed and amended by dividing up larger themes into more precise sub-themes, subsuming themes with little supporting data into others (or deleting them altogether) and creating new themes which housed data previously not fitting the original/tentative themes. Each theme was then carefully defined and labelled according to the factors which differentiated it from the others, this required a further refining process as further sub-themes were created which had to be accountable to the original data. During this process data was found which had been missed during the initial coding, this was then incorporated into the now refined themes. An example of the initial coding of a single SENCO's 'chunked' narrative account (relating to her concept map) and leading to the first tentative initial themes and then main themes is to be found in Appendix 1 (A:1:1:1 to A:1:1:10).

As previously stated, the above actions illustrate the 'to-and-fro'/overlapping character of the thematic analysis process. Following this course enabled me to gain a better understanding of the data and a level of rigour through careful check-and-review. A degree of congruence between the narratives/data and analytic claims and the time and effort expended by myself (rather than engaging in a rushed manner) created a level of integrity as the specific

approach to thematic analysis with its 'theory-led' underpinning was made clear, with the researcher (myself) positioned as 'active' in the research process.

The reporting of the findings and the final critical discussion provided a further opportunity for reflection on the data, its analysis and the whole usefulness of it all, rather than providing a limited description. However, a proportion of Strand (1) was, what Allison (1993) termed to be, descriptive research as it mainly dealt with the '*what is'* the experience of this tranche of SENCOs before any detailed analysis or understanding of the '*why it is so'*, although most of the SENCOs did attempt to justify their thoughts and feelings expressed through their concept maps in their supporting commentaries. In these concept maps the SENCOs set out their descriptions of activities, objects, processes and persons as well as the more difficult to quantify human characteristics and attributes such as happiness, personality , values and opinions…all factors which were difficult to measure quantitatively with any great degree of precision. In Strand (1) the descriptive-research focus was categorised by each SENCO's concept map and commentary being followed by my own interpretive commentary in order to draw out key inferences, much like the process used by Davies, Garner and Lee (1999) in their work when using SENCOs' illustrations based on their experiences. This combination of SENCO concept map, narrative and researcher interpretative commentary was designed to try to capture the SENCOs' circumstances and situations with the prospect of revealing understandings of a kind which might have escaped a broader survey. The idea of each SENCO presenting their narratives (both drawn and verbal) was adopted to represent instances which were different in degree but not in kind – my interpretation of 'degree' being the Contextual Variety and Psychological Contract and the 'kind' being the Legal Contract.

5.10 Triangulation

Two data streams were created using the questionnaire and then the diaries from the qualified SENCOs contributing to Strand (2). When added to the work in Strand (1), a process of methodological and data triangulation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) enabled accurate and reliable findings to be made. Triangulation consisted of mapping the complexity of SENCO behaviour and experience by studying it from multiple standpoints using a variety of methods for data collection and then making a comparison (Elliott, 2001; Cohen, Manion and

Morrison, 2010). The triangulation of methods was designed around the emergence of the themes which appeared across all methods and participant triangulation came through using different sources of information.

Fig (5:3) *Methodological and Participant Triangulation*
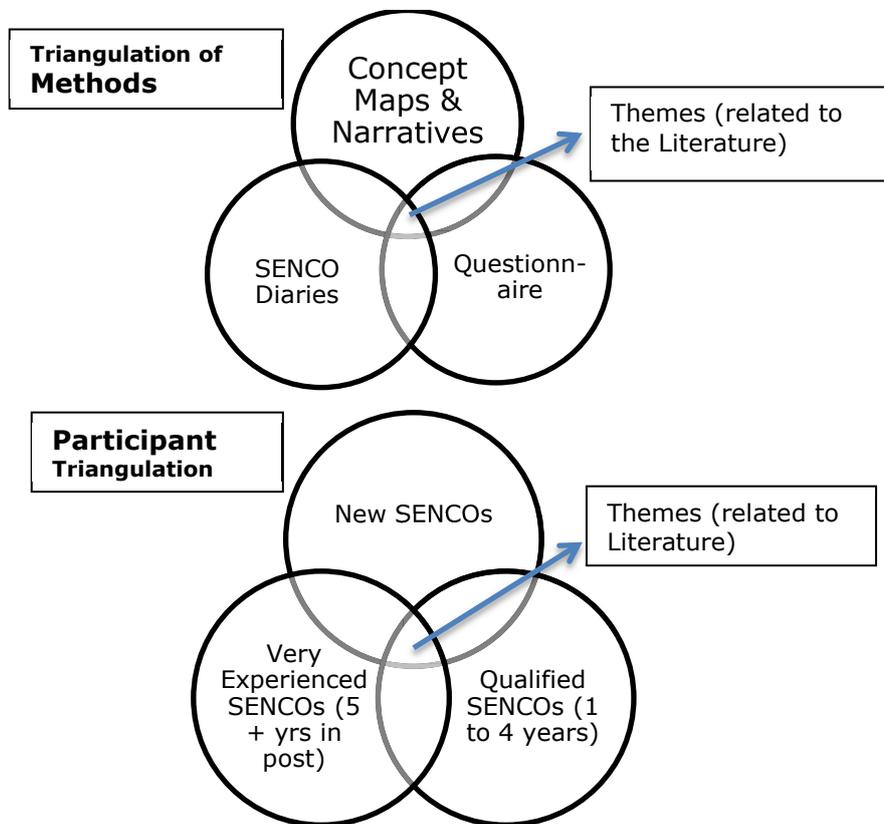
Although explored in greater detail later in this study in Chapter Six, examples of commonly occurring themes were: *The lack of time* (allocated by head-teachers to SENCOs for them to exclusively devote to their SENCO duties/responsibilities), general *lack of key resources* (e.g. direct telephone line, office space etc. made available to conduct these duties and to have private communication with parents, carers and children), *excessive workload, excessive administration/paperwork* and *limited opportunities to work as a leader* ('transformational' or otherwise). However, this was significantly balanced by themes which indicated that most SENCOs (from all three sample groups) had a firm belief in how they knew that they made a significant *positive difference* for pupils with SEND in their schools and that, although there were clear themes relating to overwork, frustration and lack of resources, their adherence to a moral code underpinning their Psychological Contract as a teacher who strives *to*

do the right thing for the pupils, parents and other members of staff in their schools maintains their resilience.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the practical procedures for carrying out this study using a clear ethical code and the nature of the interpretation findings emerging from the two strands through the coding of data which enabled a series of common themes to be uncovered which were verified through the triangulation of data and methods using a thematic analysis process.   Underpinning this description was how these simple methods grew out of the research model moulded by the *bricolage* and the justification for the sample populations. Whilst this approach may seem to have offered a level of insight it did pose a number of difficulties in that this present study only had its focus on (n=10) new SENCOs (concept maps) and (n=40) SENCOs who had completed their SENCO training (questionnaire) and (n=3) supporting narrative diaries. As stated previously, this was too small a population to allow for any generalizations which could apply to all primary school SENCOs in England; however, the research design was certainly not intended to do this as the focus was firmly on a representative sample from the SENCOs who came from the Local Authority areas serviced by the University of Northampton through their National Award for SEN Coordination programme of study and so, in this context, any data and findings were only relevant to this specific population. As Woods (1988) stated, studies like this are a '*snapshot frozen in time'* (p102). A complex and rich picture is created but this was a rich picture limited to, in this case, two sets of people and circumstances collected at two moments in time. However, a positive aspect of this two-part sampling was that it gathered opinion/response from across a range of primary schools (rural and urban) and from a range of Local Authorities in order to try to prevent any form of sampling error. It was felt that this SENCO sample was appropriate for the limitations of this present study as inquiries drawing on small and local populations are more '*feasible for practitioner research than inquiries which involve gathering large amounts of data from samples drawn from wider populations'* (Faulkner, D. *et al,* 2000. p 14).

The next chapter (6) presents the findings and key themes from Strand (1)

CHAPTER SIX:

STUDY FINDINGS Strand (1): SENCO Concept Maps

6.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from Strand (1) of the research. A group of SENCOs (n =10) from three purposefully selected cohorts (according to matching cohort availability with my availability) from the 2015/16 National Award for SEN Coordination population participated in this study according to their availability and willingness. Each participant was asked if they would present and share their current thoughts and feelings about their role as a SENCO in their school/setting in a pictorial way by using an adapted model of a 'Buzan-style' concept map (Buzan, 1998) where the centre of the concept map forms the main idea and acts as the hub for linked ideas and themes to branch out. The response was excellent with all of the randomly chosen SENCOs enthusiastically engaging with the task, with only one SENCO from the sample choosing not to provide an additional narrative to her concept map.

Table (6:1) *Strand 1 SENCO Sample (Participant Responses)*

Local Authority SENCO Cohort *(names withheld in order to maintain anonymity)*	Number of SENCOs completing concept maps and narratives	Submitted concept maps and narratives
LA 1	4	4 (1 x SENCO did not submit a commentary with their concept map)
LA 2	3	3
LA 3	3	3

This chapter presents each SENCO's concept map and their supporting narrative where they explained certain points on their maps in addition to using it as an opportunity to verbally present their own feelings at this very early evolutionary stage of their SENCO training. It is important to note, however, that none of these new SENCOs are new to teaching so their experiences as teachers (in one case a head-teacher) assimilating the SENCO role in their schools underpinned their perceptions of their identity as a SENCO and their gradual 'maturing' in this role.. The full thematic analysis of these maps and narratives can be found in Appendix (1).

6.2   The SENCOs' Concept Maps

In this section, each SENCO's concept map and supporting narrative (*verbatim*) is presented along with my interpretive commentary which attempts to draw out inferences. The thematic analysis of the concept maps and narratives was only exercised on the actual SENCO narrative and map and included none of my commentaries.

6.2.1   Julie

Age: 29
Qualified Teacher: 3 years
In post as SENCO: 1 year
School: Large Local Authority Primary School   (NoR 300+)

Fig (6:1) *Julie's Concept Map*
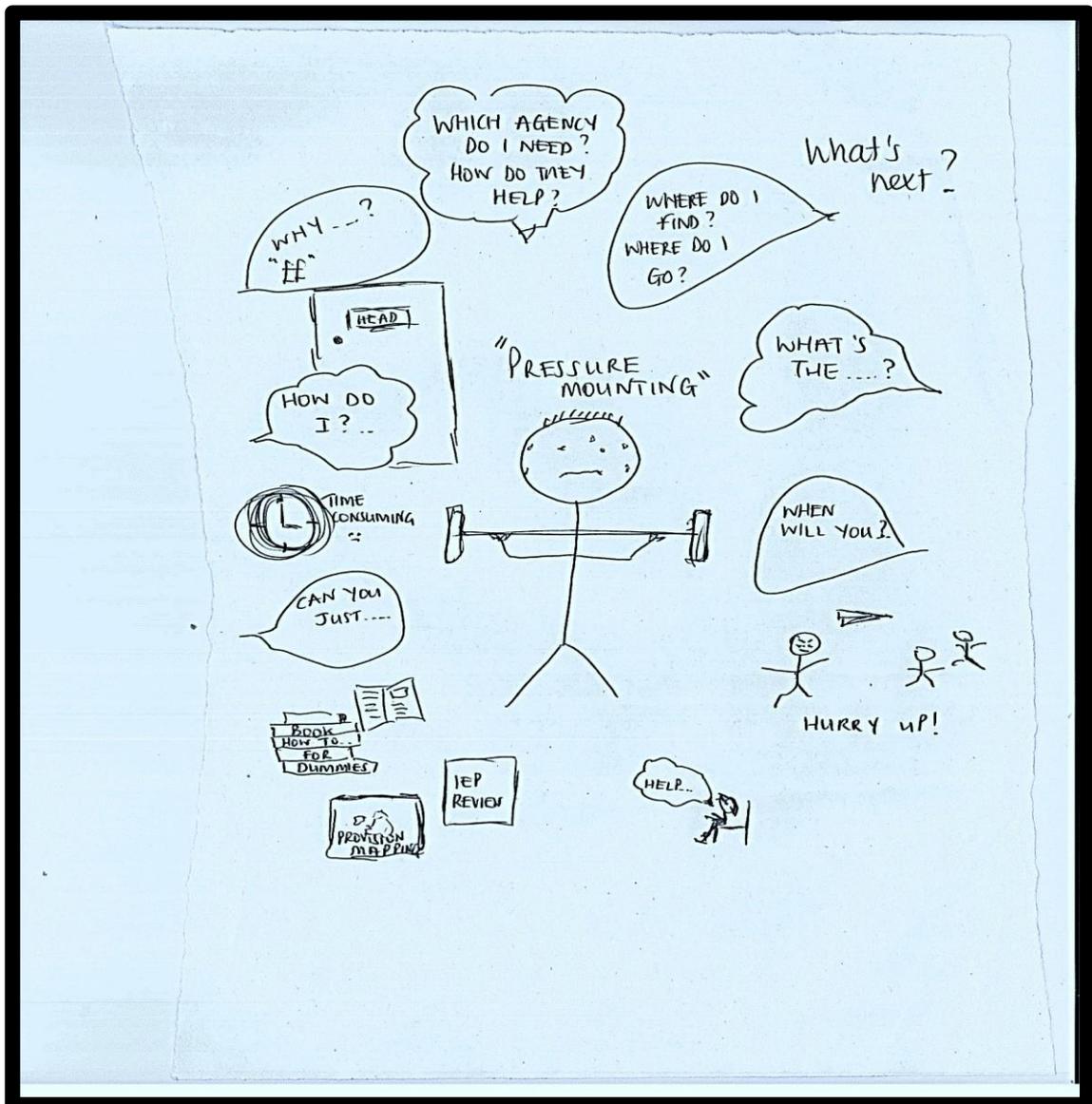
Julie's concept map is a fairly simple design. She placed herself (represented by the stick-person with drops of perspiration dripping from her brows whilst lifting a heavy weight) in the centre (positioned as per the concept map directions). However, it is interesting that there were no connecting links between this central SENCO figure and the variety of elements surrounding her. Each of these elements, apart from the cluster of drawings in the bottom left and the forlorn seated figure at bottom right with its plaintive cry of *'Help…'* was shown as a question posed by the SENCO herself or a demand for instruction or direction. Where the demand came from was not made explicit or clear in the drawing. The bottom left cluster was depicted as a pile of documents, mainly those related to administrative tasks. This is a powerful concept map design no matter how simplistic it appeared at first glance. There was a lot going on here as it provided a brief 'snap-shot' or insight into the felt and perceived pressure placed on a new SENCO. Julie's description of her concept map focused on this aspect:

> *'I drew it this way because this is just how I feel most of the time. I've got my own class to teach and that is an all-time consuming job and now I have to do the full SENCO role. I know it was my own choice to take it on and I like the work but…but…look at it! That's me in the middle trying to keep up an increasing work-load; at the moment I look quite strong but I've added the sweat as it's really starting to hurt a bit. Around it I've put all the questions that other people chuck at me – other teachers who want me to do all their work in supporting and teaching kids with SEN and the demands of my head too. I've also put in my own questions too. I need to be able to get support for myself so I've got questions about that too, about who can I go to, where can I look? This course* (SEN Coordinator's Course) *is really good for me because I'm starting to get some good ideas but until now I've been chucked into the deep end of the SENCO pool without a rubber ring! At the bottom I've shown all the admin I have to do…and I haven't got a TA to help me on this either as they have all been hived away without any say from me. I haven't included anything about TAs on here but it really annoys me that I'm the SENCO but I don't have a say in how the TAs are used…how daft is that? I could have added that and the fact that I haven't got a proper office or phone – I have to use the head's office and that's not ideal. I wouldn't mind but, as I've said here, the pressure's mounting and I'm not even paid anything in addition to do this job and my big question is up here in the right corner…what's next? Perhaps my mental breakdown? It certainly feels close!'*

There were a number of key points emerging from Julie's concept map and supporting statement. She illustrated and mentioned the demands placed on her by other teachers and the head-teacher and by the amount of administration which a SENCO had to make sure was completed during and after the working day; she used this to illustrate the central theme of the *'Pressure Mounting'*. Another important theme was shown by the forlorn *'Help…'* image and the impression of the SENCO being central to the support system of the school and

thus being the only one able to help, but there is also the sense of the SENCO as left in a vacuum or unsupported in terms of her own professional development and well-being relating to the questions why, which, where, when and what? This idea was strengthened by the verbal comments made relating to lack of office space, having no confidential telephone line and even a lack of additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role. The final statement, although made half in jest, did have something of a 'sinister resonance' about it…the potential of an impending breakdown for the SENCO.

Using the Braun and Clark (2006) thematic analysis model (as described in Chapter 5), initial broad themes were extracted from Julie's concept map and supporting narrative, these broad themes being generated through items which were strongly drawn/represented and emphasised in the narrative. To begin the process for the complete cohort (10 x maps and narratives), Julie's presentation provided the initial framework/model for the first broad theme entries. Table (6.2) presents these themes.

Table (6:2) *Julie's Initial Themes: Generated from the initial coding of her narrative and map*

Julie's Initial themes
Increased workload through multi-role as class-teacher and SENCO leading to significant pressure and feeling unprepared
The demands of the head and fellow teachers creating stress
The need for support (for developing knowledge of SEN, direction and administrative support)
Limited resources available in school
No additional pay allowance for doing the job
SENCO does not manage the TA team
Likes being the SENCO

The majority of the themes in Julie's map and narrative were negative ones mainly relating to the external pressures on her when undertaking her work as a SENCO. The factors relating to workload, managing a 'multi-role', lack of resources, lack of administrative support, the SENCO not being able to act as a 'leader' and having no additional allowance (pay) for undertaking the SENCO role became underpinning themes across most of the SENCO narratives. However, like the Ancient Greek myth of 'Pandora's Box' there was one element of 'hope' amongst the chaos, Julie likes being the SENCO.

6.2.2 Sarah

Age: 24
Qualified Teacher: 2 years
In post as SENCO: 1 year
School: Academy Primary School (NoR 250)

Fig (6:2) *Sarah's Concept Map*
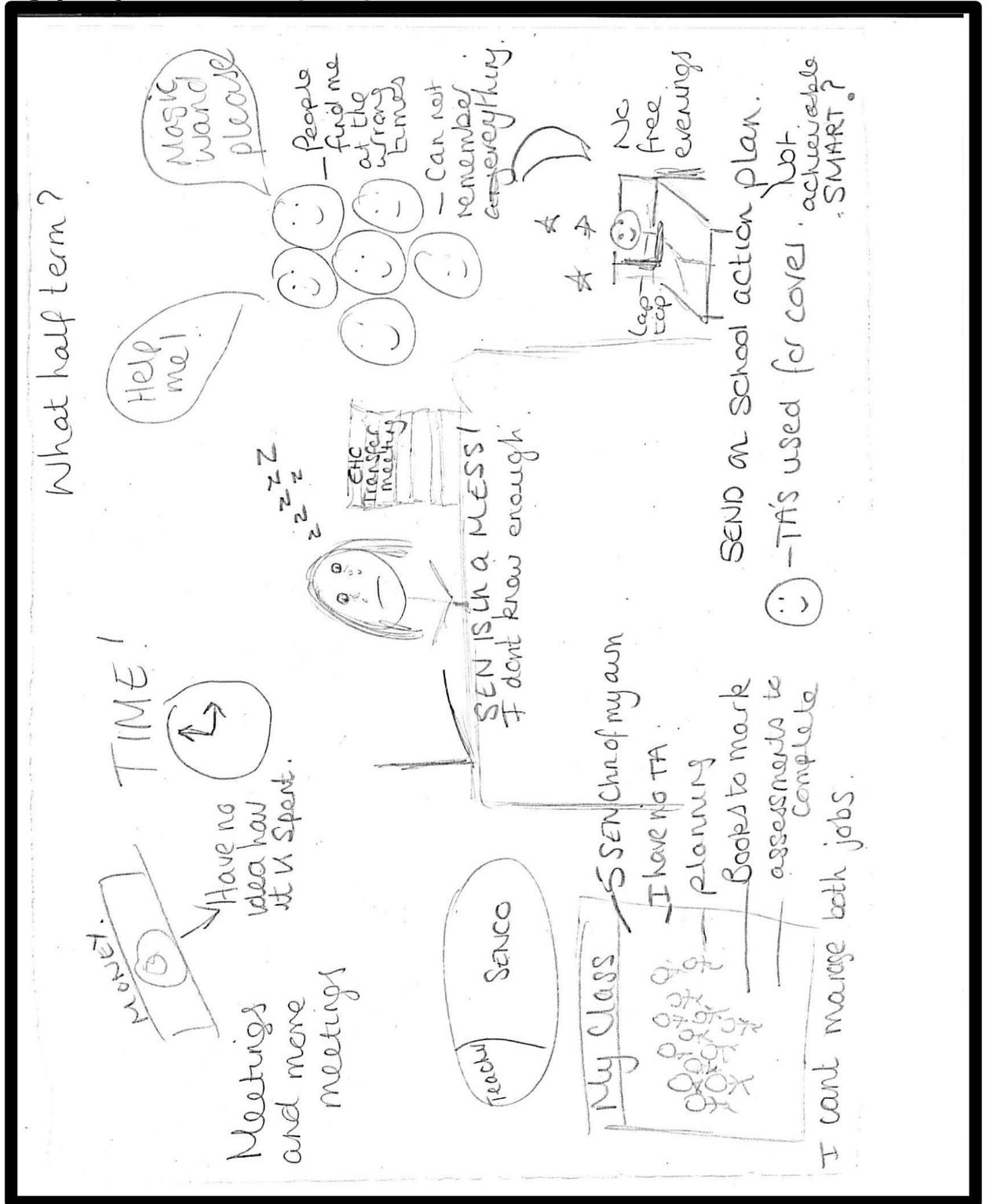
Sarah's concept map presented a complicated picture. The self-depiction of Sarah as SENCO saw her sitting behind her desk with a bulging in-tray, arms held up and tears on her cheeks.   The caption underneath presented a bold statement, *'SEN is in a mess!'* and the strap-line in smaller handwriting added the confirmation *'I don't know enough'* as if this lack of knowledge was the direct result of SEN being in a mess. The tears on Sarah's cheeks made an interesting comparison's to Julie who had beads of perspiration as she struggled with the weight of mounting pressure; in Sarah's picture there did not seem to be any struggle as such but a whirl of demands. Each segment of the concept map illustrated a demand: the top right with a sea of smiling (but indistinct) faces packed together and chanting out their needs ….*'help me'* and the interesting phrase…*'magic wand please'.* Linked to this idea are two statements by Sarah: *'People find me at the wrong times'* and *'cannot remember everything',* this almost implied that there was a sense of failure in that she was not able to manage the demands of others. Still on the right side of the page, this central theme of not being able to meet other's needs/demands is sandwiched between another emerging theme – that of the role eating into Sarah's own personal or 'quality' time; the question *'what half term?'* and the drawing of her sitting up alone in bed at night with an open lap-top engaged in SENCO and school administrative work with the supporting comment *'no free evenings'* presented a strong statement relating to this imposition.

Underneath the central SENCO figure are two statements; that SEND is on the school action plan (a positive element) but that the targets for SEND action were not achievable or SMART (Short, Measurable, Attainable, Time-limited).   An emoticon (smiling face) indicated that Teaching Assistants being used for covering absent teachers was a positive factor for Sarah. The bottom left-hand segment of the concept map had its focus on the other side of Sarah's work – she is also a full-time class-teacher (as clearly illustrated by the box full of stick-children with the title *'My Class'*); this class box was annotated by a series of statements of fact: (i) she has five children with SEN in her class (*'5 SEN Chn of my own'*) (ii) there is no TA support (iii) that planning and (iv) books to mark and (v) assessments to complete all continue to place demands on her time and energy. The underpinning comment for this sector of the concept map was, *'I can't manage both jobs'.* Above this class box is an oblong which is divided, roughly, into two-thirds devoted to the SENCO function and one-third devoted to

teaching (in Sarah's verbal commentary she stated that this would be her ideal model in terms of time dedicated to her role in school). The top left segment of Sarah's concept map is a mixture of specific duties (*'Meetings and more meetings'* expressed in a negative tone without any indication of any positive outcomes from these meetings) and the continuing pressure of lack of time (expressed in large capital letters with an exclaimation mark). Finally there is an admission of lack of knowledge around how funding for children with SEND is managed and spent within the school.

In many ways Sarah's concept map was similar to Julie's, particularly around the issues relating to time, excessive administration and the demands of others. However, Sarah introduced new factors around the imposition of the extensive SENCO duties intruding into her home life and the head-on clash between managing two demanding roles – that of SENCO for the whole school community and that of being a full-time class-teacher where there is no remission from the day-to-day duties expected. Sarah's verbal commentary justified, according to her own perception, many of the elements presented in her concept map:

> *'That's me in the middle and that's how I feel most of the time and that's what I've done in the staffroom a couple of times…just got all teary. My friends were sympathetic but I don't think the Head gives a 'monkey's chuff' to tell you the truth…just as long as I got on with it and got all the stuff done. I find it really hard at the moment doing all the SENCO stuff and being a class-teacher – I'm always feeling that I'm doing a crap job at both of them and I'm really worried that my children will suffer. Mind youI know that there are loads of other SENCOs on this course who are in the exact same boat as me and I don't know how they manage it either; I spoke to Mary (another SENCO in the same cohort on the National Award for SEN Coordination) and she feels just like me…she even said that she thought of giving it up and just going back to being a class-teacher and she's even being paid extra for doing the SENCO job too. Sounds like a bloody good idea too but…really…I like the SENCO job and I like the way that other teachers and parents think of me as being someone who cares and can make a difference but some of the teachers, TAs and parents think I've got a 'magic wand' that I can just wave to sprinkle my SENCO 'fairy-dust' over their problems and everything will be 'cured' – they have no idea how hard this job is because it just takes over. I find I'm taking tons of stuff home to do because there's no time during the day as I'm at it 100% of the time. I don't have a partner at the moment…perhaps that's a good thing as we wouldn't be able to spend any quality time together anyway as all I'm doing is work…work…work.*

This was a very personal statement by Sarah which touched on important issues related to SENCO wellbeing; the admission that she had been tearful in the staffroom due to the pressure of work in being both a new SENCO and a full-time class-teacher was a courageous one to make. She discussed her use of the

phrase *'magic wand please'* in the light of her feeling that many of her colleagues and parents felt that she could 'cure' any problems just by being the SENCO – a role which she does like in terms of being recognised as someone who does 'care'. However, Sarah did also state that she knew other new SENCOs were feeling similar pressures. Of significant interest is Sarah's perception that, whilst her colleagues 'cared' when she was tearful, her head-teacher did not. Although not directly related to the SENCO role, this feeling amongst teachers has been identified elsewhere; Mary Bousted, the general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, writing for the Times Educational Supplement on 20th October 2015 stated:

> 'Even more recently I heard of one young teacher who had, as a performance objective, the instruction that she must not cry in the staffroom. She did not know what to be more mortified about – that she had cried in the staffroom, or that her line manager could propose such an objective without any thought about what might cause her to cry in the first place.'
> (Bousted, 2015)

The last section of Sarah's statement supporting the drawing of her with her lap-top open throughout the night was a pertinent one as it voiced her concerns over the excessive work-load she experienced as a SENCO/class-teacher and how this work-load invaded her own time every evening, during the holidays (e.g. *'What half-term?'*) and even its potential for restricting any future personal relationships for her.

The coding for Sarah's concept map and narrative built on the process established by the unpicking of Julie's key themes. The Initial Themes identified within Sarah's narrative and map are shown in Table (6.3)

Table (6:3)   *Sarah's Initial Themes: generated from the initial coding of her narrative and map*

Sarah's Initial themes
Overwhelmed by high workload and pressure to perform
Difficulty balancing SENCO role with other school commitments (class-teaching)
Empathy with other SENCOs
Likes being a SENCO (making a difference)
Demands and lack of understanding from colleagues
SENCO work has to be done at home (work-life balance suffers)

As already stated, Sarah's concept map and narrative did complement Julie's perceptions of herself in the SENCO role around both the more negative themes

and the positive aspect of liking being the SENCO and of being proud of making a difference for the pupils in her school.

6.2.3 Brenda

Age: 38
Qualified Teacher: 5 years
In post as SENCO: $2\frac{1}{2}$ years
School: Local Authority Primary School (NoR 300 +)

Fig (6:3) *Brenda's Concept Map*
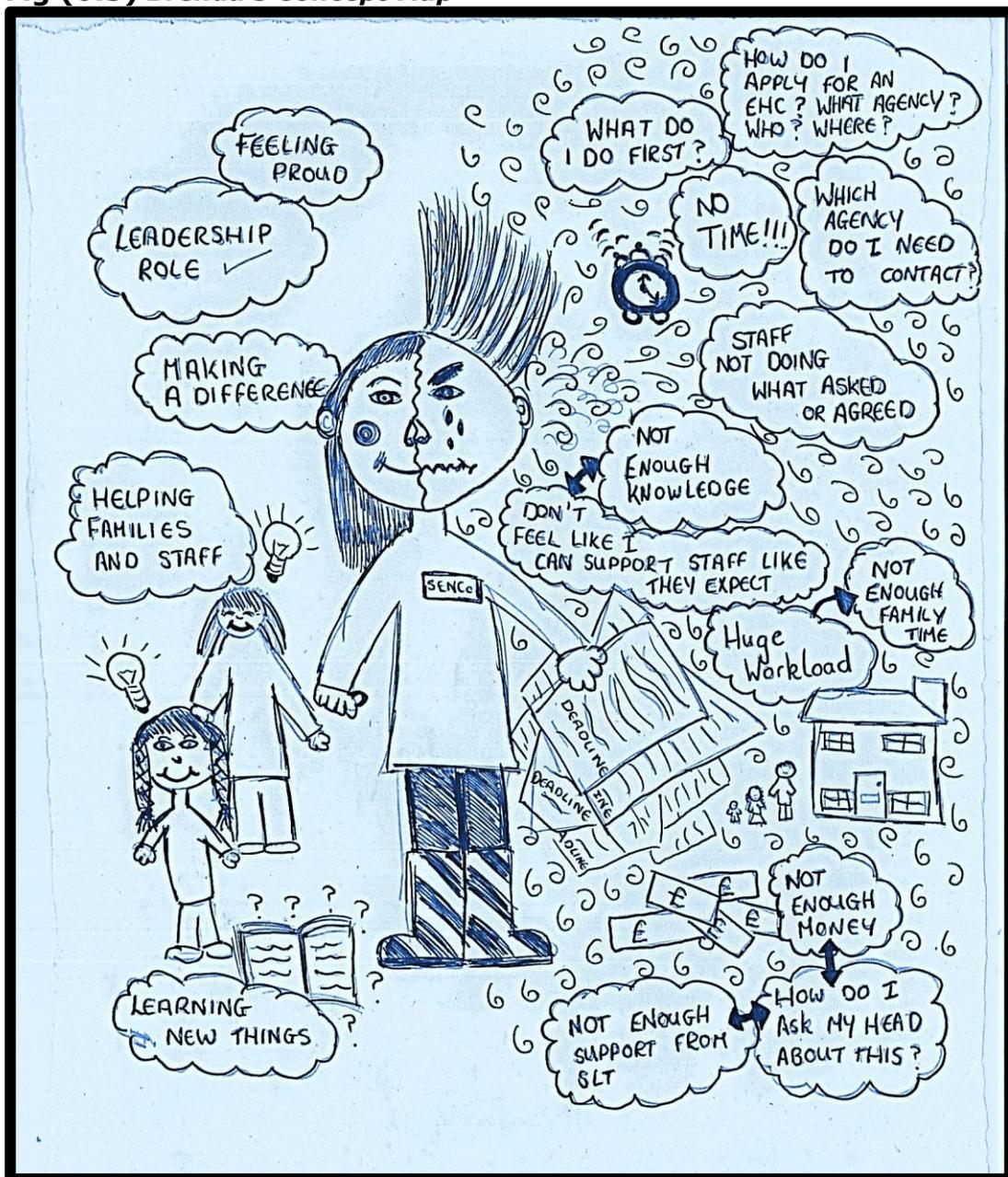
Brenda provided her concept map without any supporting narrative, however it shows her detailed and balanced perception of herself in role at this fairly early stage in her career as a SENCO.

In many respects, Julie and Sarah (**Figs 6:1 and 6:2**) presented a rather 'deficit model' view of their role as SENCO as they focused on their negative experiences; Brenda attempted to provide more of a balanced concept map in the style of an old-fashioned 'weather-clock' where two characters come out of their 'houses' according to the weather (atmospheric pressure). This idea is strengthened by having the maelstrom of a 'storm' on the right-hand side and lightness (with the addition of several 'light-bulb' moments as metaphors) on the left….the central SENCO figure also wears rather 'jazzy' wellington boots. However, looking at the SENCO face depicted, the split-personality image is quite clear; on one side is a calm, smiling, well-groomed SENCO but on the other side (within the previously mentioned maelstrom of the storm) is an angry, storm-ravaged, confused and tearful SENCO – both faces sharing the same body, the same working environment, the same job/role but torn between the positive and the negative. All of the ideas and themes represented within the 'storm' had been experienced and commented upon by the previous two SENCOs: lack of time, excessive workload, staff demands, impending deadlines, the need for information/support, lack of support from the head-teacher and senior leadership team, incursion of work-load into family time and lack of funding/resources. To this list Brenda adds her own lack of knowledge (although it was not made clear whether this was knowledge related to special educational needs and disability, knowledge related to being a SENCO or both) and a question relating to establishing priorities – '*What do I do first?'*

However, the positive half of Brenda's concept map, although less 'dense' in content, does present a series of light-bulb statements – literally in this case as light bulb images appear over the heads of smiling characters which seem to represent parents and staff colleagues. Brenda sees this 'helping' aspect of the role, helping both families and members of staff, as a significant part of her SENCO role and duties; this caring factor is ranked alongside the opportunity to learn '*new things'* all leading to '*making a difference'* within the school and with being in a leadership role (this factor has a large 'tick' which emphasises this part of her role as SENCO). What is interesting is the 'opposition' which is illustrated here as the '*helping families and staff'* statement is balanced by the statement

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on the other side of the concept map which says, *'don't feel like I can support staff like they expect'*; this represents a real sense of being torn between the two sides of the role, again literally represented by the torn face on the central SENCO figure. To end Brenda's concept map on a positive note is her clear statement that she is *'feeling proud'.*

As Brenda did not produce a supporting narrative the process of thematic analysis was amended to concentrate on the codes and Initial Themes within her illustration and from my inferential commentary on her map (her thematic grid does not appear in Appendix (1) but are shown in Table (6.4) below); although my commentary is 'interpretive' in the sense that it was my understanding of her map without additional clarification or direction from Brenda, there were a number of strong initial themes presented.

Table (6.4) *Brenda's Initial Themes(from the concept map only)*

Brenda's Initial themes
Need for knowledge and advice/direction in role
Workload leading to poor work-life balance
Conflict between negative staff response to direction from Brenda and need to support them according to their expectations
Level of support (resourcing and lack of money for provision and time)
Professional relationships between Brenda (SENCO) and Head-teacher/SLT and staff colleagues (wanting to help them more but receiving non-compliance and/or lack of support)
Feeling proud to be SENCO (someone who 'makes a difference' for pupils, families and staff)
Opportunity to learn in role and to develop 'leadership' potential – self-identified as a leader who has a positive impact across the school (pupils, families and staff)

These themes presented a very interesting conflict around the relationship between Brenda and the staff in her school; she is proud to be a SENCO supporting them and the recognition that she needs to do more for them but with the frustration that there is a lack of co-operation as the staff *'do not do what is asked or agreed'* combined with the statement that there is not enough support from the senior leadership team. Once again, these themes indicate issues with work-life balance due to the workload and time given for the job but, akin to a set of scales presenting a balanced view, Brenda is very aware of being a positive force across the school for pupils, families and staff.

6.2.4   Margaret

Age: 24
Qualified Teacher: 2 years
In post as SENCO: 2 years
School: Local Authority Primary School (NoR 300+)

Fig (6:4) *Margaret's Concept Map*
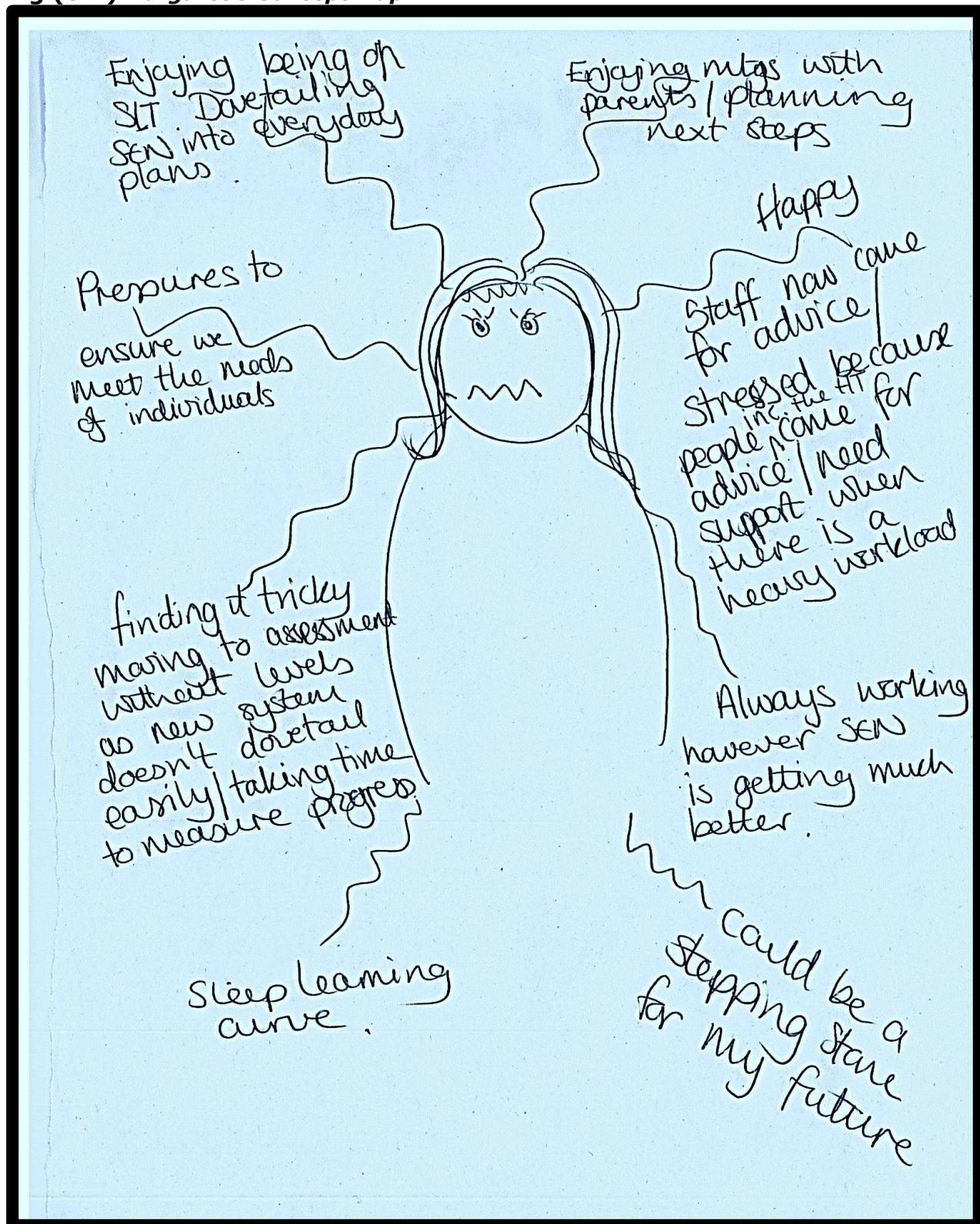
Margaret's concept map presented a mixture of positive and negative factors with a comment that, *'Always working however SEN is getting much better.'* This up-beat feeling is further strengthened by a range of complementary comments such as:

'Enjoying being on SLT. Dovetailing SEN into everyday plans''
'Enjoying mts with parents/planning next steps'
'Happy'
'Staff now come to me for advice'
'could be a stepping stone for my future'.

Of the concept maps presented so far, Margaret's map presents the most positive range of annotations/comments, perhaps the most significant one being the simple *'Happy'.* Interestingly, although surrounded by positive commentary the image which Margaret chose to draw depicts a somewhat 'confused-looking' SENCO with jagged mouth and spiky lines emanating outwards to each statement giving a sense of annoyance or conflict; although she does give a reason for this in her verbal commentary (below).   Linked to this are a few comments which mirror the statements made in the previous concept maps, particular areas of stress being staff coming for advice or needing support at the wrong times due to the SENCO's heavy workload and pressures to meet the needs of individual pupils. It was interesting to note that Margaret made a direct statement in relation to the fairly recent (2015) changes in National Curriculum content and the removal of Key Stage levels leading to difficulties for her in reporting progress and achievement.

Margaret's narrative provided further insight into her concept map annotations and design:

> *'I drew me first before I really started to think how I feel about the job. In talking to everyone else they all say that they feel stressed-out by the whole thing – the job and all this additional training that we have to do…so I just drew myself as a stressed-out SENCO as that is what I expected to be. Then I had a thought about the job and what I've been doing and what the school thinks of me. Do you know what? It isn't all bad you know…that's when I started to think about the good things first. I realised that I was enjoying myself…not a word I'd normally think to use about the job as it's so full of different stuff and I'm always feeling that I've got piles and piles of things to do, but I like the meetings and I like being on the SMT- that'll really help me in the future as I'm on the leadership team and get to do a lot of stuff outside of my classroom. I like being able to advise and help colleagues but they always want me to sort out things for them when I'm busy with masses of things to do…but I like the fact that I can help and give advice; it makes me feel as if I've got status in the school – but I've got my feet on the ground too as I can see that it's still 'early days' and that I've got tons of things to learn*

about the job…so I'm not complaining about the job or about all the things we have to do on this course…perhaps I'll re-draw my face here with a smiley-face on it…then it'll be more realistic.'

This has a positive underpinning with forward thinking being a key factor complemented by her understanding that, although the job is demanding, she is still at the starting point of this new career pathway and that she has a great deal to learn. The comment on re-drawing her central image as a SENCO with a 'smiley-face' provides some insight into her perception of self-in-role as she feels she has *'status'* and has a realistic appreciation of herself as a new SENCO with *'tons of things to learn about the job'.*

Table (6:5)   *Margaret's Initial Themes: generated from the initial coding of her narrative and map*

Margaret's Initial themes
Recognition of enhanced status as SENCO
Recognition of potential to be a leader in school
Demands from colleagues (expecting SENCO to do everything SEND-related- SENCO as the expert)
Understanding at being at the beginning of SENCO career

Margaret added a range of positive themes generated by her appraisal of her position as a new SENCO with the potential of having an enhanced future career. Margaret was thinking ahead with a vision beyond the immediate demands of the role with teaching and her current work/life balance. However, the factor of colleagues (teachers) expecting her to be the expert in matters relating to SEND together with the 'passing over' of their responsibilities in the field to her still coloured her narrative.

6.2.5 Isobel

Age: 26
Qualified Teacher: 3 years
In post as SENCO: 1½ Years
School: Local Authority Primary School (NoR 300+)

Fig (6:5) *Isobel's Concept Map*
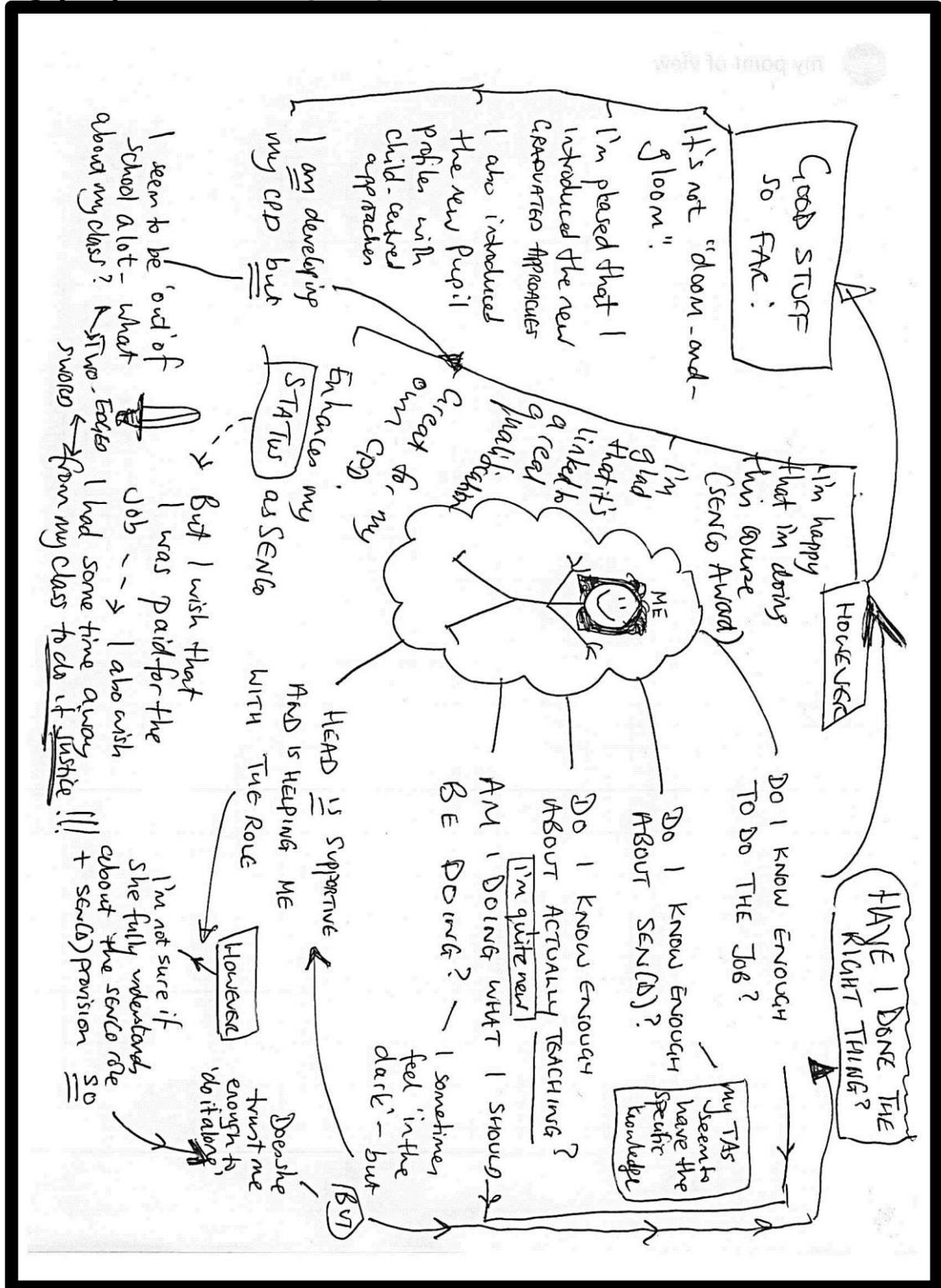
Isobel produced a very dense concept map with a number of inter-linked annotations and statements. In a similar way to Brenda, although far less 'dramatic' in terms of presentation, Isobel has balanced what she believes to be the positive elements linked to the role (on the left of the map) with the issues, questions and conflicts generated by the role (on the right hand side); separating the two is the exuberantly-portrayed central SENCO stick-figure complete with huge smile contained within a 'cloud-like' bubble.

The annotations and the way they are presented suggest that Isobel, when making the concept map, thought through the role systematically: Having a thought, making a statement and then re-thinking that statement by linking it to other comments, questions and ideas. On the right hand side there are four major questions which stand out in capital letters. These questions are self-posed and relate to knowledge about the role, about special educational needs and disability, about the nature and practice of teaching and about doing the SENCO job in practice. Isobel admits (in additional annotations linked to these questions) that not only is she new to the post of SENCO she is reasonably new to teaching too, she also admits to knowing that her teaching assistant has the specialist knowledge about SEND – the knowledge which she feels she does not have herself. The last question, 'AM I DOING WHAT I SHOULD BE DOING?' is linked to her question about knowing enough about the job and to the statement *'I sometimes feel 'in the dark'.* This whole segment appears underpinned by a general sense of confusion and self-doubt however there is a single positive link to the capitalized statement, 'HEAD IS SUPPORTIVE AND IS HELPING ME WITH THE ROLE' but this is somewhat undermined by more doubt where Isobel questions the head-teacher's understanding of the SENCO role and provision for SEND in the school then this, in turn, leads to Isobel questioning the head's trust and views on Isobel's ability to be able to be an independent SENCO. This last link then leads to a key question which provides a headline for the right hand side of the concept map, as a title in a text box Isobel states, in larger-sized capital letters, 'HAVE I DONE THE RIGHT THING?'

This is a significant question for Isobel as it provided her analysis and hypothesis of the doubts she had been expressing so far but, in Isobel's systematic/step-by-step thinking process, there is another link which sweeps her narrative from the doubtful towards two positive strands on the left hand side of her SENCO image.

The first strand is the presentation of a list of factors relating to being on the National Award for SEN Coordination course, accreditation, enhanced professional development and enhanced SENCO status and the second relating to the good practice she had introduced for developing provision for SEND in her own school all under the large boxed sub-title of ' GOOD STUFF SO FAR' with the strap-line, *'It's not all 'doom-and-gloom''*.

The bottom segment of Isobel's concept map related to the conflict she felt existed in terms of balancing her new enhanced status as SENCO developing her own knowledge through attending professional development opportunities and courses and the impact on her mainstream class (as a full-time class-teacher). In this context Isobel used the image of a two-edged sword in that she was worried about the impact of her being away and doing the SENCO role on her class-teaching and pastoral time but she was also vociferous about being able to have dedicated time away from her class in order accomplish her SENCO role and to, *'…do it justice!!!'.* In many respects, she could have used a 'cleft-stick' image here too.

Finally, there was a telling statement which was slipped above the discussion relating to the SENCO and class teaching time; this statement had the feel of a 'plea' about it as Isobel said, *'But I wish that I was paid for the job.'*

In her commentary, Isobel expanded on several of these factors:

> *O.K. me in the middle with a smile on my face and waving hands…perhaps not waving but drowning (laughs)...feels like it. Over here (points to right-hand side of concept map) are all the things I'm most worried about. I've got tons to do and I'm expected to know everything…but I know that I don't and that worries me. My head's great but he has his own plan for school and I don't think SEN is a high priority…it's all about pupil outcomes and high SATS scores…I think he forgets about the barriers to learning which a lot of our pupils have but he doesn't seem to leave me to look after the SEN…I've put here that. Perhaps that's good…but I dunno…I want to be independent and make my own ideas work but I've got the idea that I don't know enough. I've done some good things (points to left of concept map)…I'm really pleased about those things and I really like the course (National Award for SEN Coordination). I'm meeting other SENCOs and finding that I'm not alone and that we're all suffering all the same stuff as each other especially about balancing teaching with being SENCO, how other staff think the SENCO can sort out all their own problems and how few of us are paid any extra for doing the SENCO job…and that makes me feel a lot better. I've said here that 'Have I done the right thing'…perhaps I have…yeah…I have.*

Isobel's commentary did complement other SENCOs' worries and issues however she identified the positive outcomes of engaging with her National Award for SEN Coordination, particularly related to developing her status as a SENCO.

Table (6:6)   *Isobel's Initial Themes: generated from the initial coding of her narrative and map*

Isobel's Initial themes
SENCO workload (no remission from class-teaching)
SENCO lack of knowledge (of responsibilities, procedures and of SEND)
Need for CPD (for self)
Recognition of SEN Award and its value
School climate – SEND a low priority (performativity-driven?)
Recognition of SENCO as needing to lead and manage but not given the opportunity
Need for SENCO independence (head as micromanager) to develop provision and to lead
Empathy with other SENCOs ('I'm not alone')
Identifies good work carried out so far in role
No allowance (payment) for SENCO role

Again, there was the reappearance of a number of negative themes in Isobel's map and narrative with a specific reporting of a lack of SENCO pay and a lack of independence.   There was also the balancing factor of positive themes, one directly related to Isobel's recognition of the professional value of her SEN Coordination training so far and how she is able (now) to identify good professional practice she is engaging in.

6.2.6   John

Age: 34
Qualified Teacher: 5 years
In post as SENCO: 2 Years
School: Local Authority Primary School (NoR 300+)

John had drawn himself in the SENCO role depicted as a swan. This central metaphorical swan image was presented in a typical way – with an air of 'unruffled calmness' above the water and churning turmoil hidden beneath. Once again, this was a concept map of 'two halves' divided by the central image.

The disturbed water beneath the swan was made up of questions and statements which highlight negative factors and doubts about the role, this included such statements as not being confident in such a leadership/management role, the

role being much bigger than expected, the impact/influence of an impending Ofsted inspection, worries about expectations and the efficacy of the systems for provision put in place, pupil tracking, staff attitudes and issues directly relating to time and being unprepared.

Fig (6:6) *John's Concept Map*
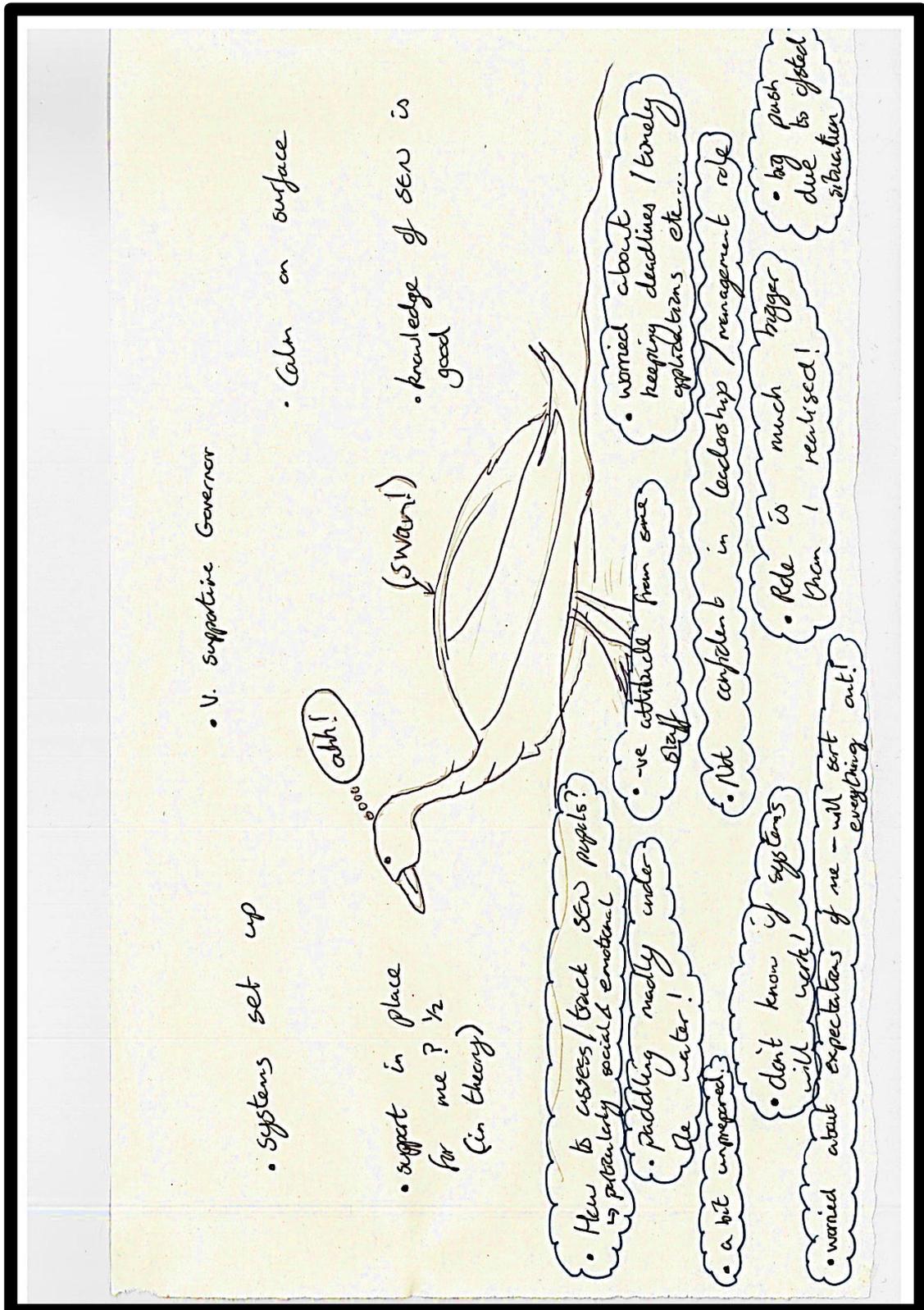
The calm water contained fewer statements, but all of a positive nature, relating to having systems set up, personal knowledge of SEND and support in the form of a governor and additional time for the role being awarded. John's commentary added to his concept map and confirmed some of the information related to the disturbed water beneath his swan:

> 'I decided not to draw a version of myself as a SENCO in the middle...I went for a picture of a swan as I think that the SENCO role as I see it is just that... that everyone else sees you smoothly doing the job, sorting out this-and-that, supporting the kids, working with parents, organising all the provision, running the TAs etcetera...but they don't see...or don't want to see...all the things which are going on underneath the water. The swan's frantically paddling and so am I. Here's all the things which I do and which I sometimes get really up-tight about (indicates bottom half of concept map). I've been co-opted into the SMT but not as a permanent member. The head says that I join it 'when required'...whatever that means...it's required all the time though isn't it as I do stuff in all year groups, with all members of staff, with parents, outside agencies and in the catchment area too? I've been called a leader and manager but I'm not sure what that means. I do all the day-to-day stuff but I'm not allowed to make important decisions about staffing, training, funding or developing provision- the head makes those decisions along with the deputy head and Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators....mind you I have been given half a timetable to do the SENCO job in and I do know that it's a bit of a luxury as most of those here (other new SENCOs on the National Award for SEN Coordination) don't get any additional secure time at all...I also get the allowance too so at least I know that I've been recognised as doing a difficult job. ...I'm also aware that I've got to live up to all of this too and I sometimes get a bit shaky with it all and question if I'm up to it.'

John raised points in his commentary related to his role as a leader/manager, not differentiating between the two distinct functions. Although he was a member of the school's senior leadership team his membership was a restricted one, a situation which confused John as he saw the SENCO role as being a significant one with implications and duties across the whole school and beyond into the wider community. John also made a linked comment related to the restrictions placed on his expectations about leading and developing provision for SEND in his school as key decisions had been taken away from him to be taken by, naturally, the head-teacher, and other staff who sit on the senior leadership team but whose expertise and professional roles sat outside of the specialist SEND sphere.

Table (6:7) *John's Initial Themes: generated from the initial coding of his narrative and map*

John's Initial themes
Colleagues not realising/understanding the work required to do the SENCO job (Swan metaphor)
Recognition of SENCO needing to be a manager and a leader
Frustration at being a non-permanent member of SMT and lack of opportunities to lead (decisions made by head & deputy)
Workload (amount and range)
Time , resources and allowance for SENCO role are made available (recognises that not all SENCOs get these 'luxuries')
Self-doubt in being able to 'live up' to expectations

John introduced more themes: the perception that the complex nature of the SENCO role was not understood or appreciated by others and his restricted leadership opportunities and a 'lack of independence in role' as the key decisions are still taken by the head-teacher and deputy head. Balancing these two negative themes was his clear expression around having protected SENCO time on his timetable, payment for the role and of having a good working relationship with the school's governing body. There is also an element of 'self-doubt' expressed as John feels that he has to *'live up to all of this.'* mainly due to the fact that he has been given the time, the resources and the pay to do the job – things which John, significantly, calls *'luxuries'* rather than entitlements.

6.2.7   Penny

Age: 25
Qualified Teacher: 3 years
In post as SENCO: 2 Years
School: Academy Primary School (NoR 300+)

Penny's concept map had herself represented in the centre within the 'bubble' with a theme of 'Different and Conflicting Feelings' underpinning the map; this theme was depicted through the use of smaller SENCO figures supported by factors related to the SENCO role as experienced by Penny scattered around the central figure.

Each factor was then awarded either a plus (positive) or a negative (minus) grading accordingly. She did not make any connections/links between these factors – this was explained in her commentary – thus this gave a fractured but 'rich' picture, much like that drawn by Julie (**Fig. 6:1**).

Fig (6:7) *Penny's Concept Map*
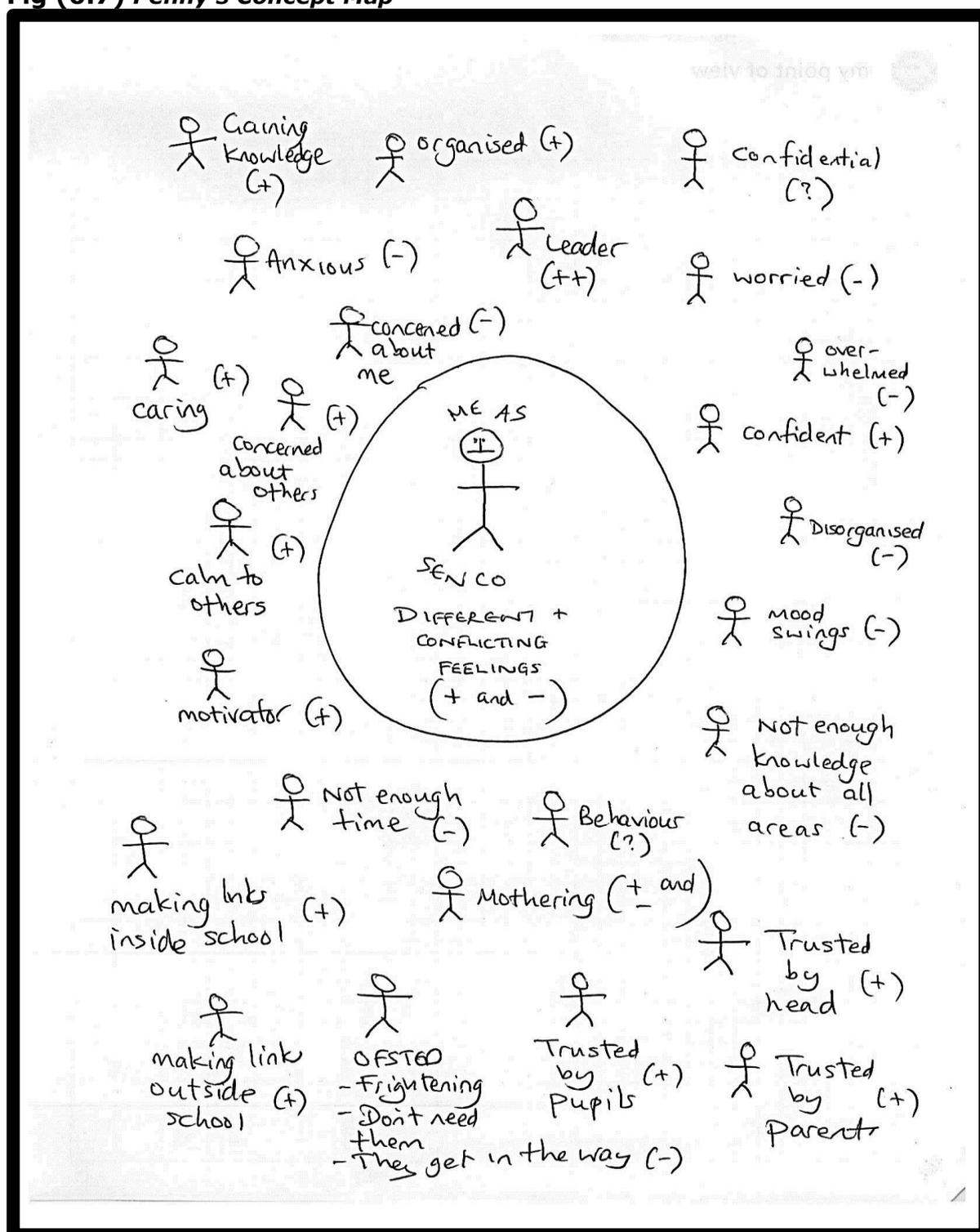
Each factor was randomly presented around the concept map; Penny explained that this happened as each idea or feeling came to her and that she quickly recorded them before moving on or structuring the factors in themes or categories. The factors echoed many of the themes and ideas already generated through the previously presented SENCO concept maps, however Penny's experience of being in-role expressed through the plus and minus symbols

provided her personal insight which was, on balance, an overall positive one with 'leadership' being awarded a double plus. Penny did express her feelings in regard to Ofsted inspection, calling it '*frightening – don't need them*' and '*they get in the way*'. She also had a focus on factors relating to her own wellbeing experiencing mood swings, a lack of confidence, a lack of knowledge, a lack of time, feeling disorganised and overwhelmed and being '*concerned about me*'. The comment related to '*Mothering*' being awarded both a plus and a minus is explored in Penny's commentary:

> '*I just put down all the things which I thought about when I thought about being a SENCO. I'm enjoying it really but I'm still worried about loads of things…sometimes I can't sleep at night because of all the stuff I'm worried about. I've even had a panic attack when Ofsted came in. I don't know what they do and why we have 'em as they don't tell us anything we don't know already and they really get in the way…they make us frightened and when people are frightened you don't get good work out of them. It's a form of bullying really…keeping us teachers in our place. It's horrible. Anyway, I'm blabbering on about the things which worry me but, as I've said here…look (refers to concept map) I've said that I feel confident about doing the job and we had a good Ofsted too. Anyway…there's a right old mix here…I think I'm good at making links in and outside of the school and I think that the kids and their mums and dads trust me and what I do and say, the staff too…they always come to me for help and I try to help 'em as much as possible as I'm concerned about them and about the kids with special needs which they teach…so I make sure that I help the staff as much as possible. Look here on the picture…I've said that I 'mother' them…I do a bit too…but I've put a minus and a plus because I think I can mother them too much so they don't think about doing special needs stuff for themselves…expecting me or the teaching assistants to do the differentiation and planning for the kids with SEN…and that's not a good thing….but I'm not helping by trying to be a magic fairy with a magic wand sorting out everybody else*'

Penny touched on pertinent issues around the duties of a teacher in meeting the needs of all pupils in their class; she noted her own role in maintaining this situation in her school and even admitted that her own actions were creating the difficulties. The main theme which started to emerge through Penny's concept map and commentary was the SENCO as a 'caring' specialist with time for colleagues, the pupils and the parents all seen in a positive light whilst the price of this was expressed through the negative factors related to Penny's own wellbeing and her sleepless nights.

Penny's narrative exposed several of the themes already expressed however she introduced, for the first time, her awareness of her own self-imposed pressures by '*mothering*' pupils, parents and colleagues leading to her colleagues passing on the responsibility for differentiating/personalising their teaching and learning in the classroom to her and to the TAs.

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Table (6:8)   *Penny's Initial Themes: generated from the initial coding of her narrative and map*

Penny's Initial themes
Enjoys being the SENCO
Work-life balance and well-being suffering (not sleeping)
Generating strong relationships with parents/carers
Worries/fears about Ofsted (cannot see relevance)
Aware of 'over-helping' (*mothering*) staff – they pass on responsibility for SEND to SENCO
SENCO & TAs differentiate for pupils with SEND and not teaching staff

The external pressures exerted by Ofsted inspection and the specific nature it had been noted by Penny as creating additional pressures. Once again, the SENCO recognising the heavy workload and its effect on her well-being and work/life balance is clearly presented.

6.2.8   Megan

Age: 40
Qualified Teacher: 16 years
In post as SENCO: 1 Year
School: Academy Primary School (NoR 200)

Megan was in a unique situation in that she was a head-teacher *and* a SENCO; as a result she used the framing device of a school for her concept map. She did not appear in the centre but was shown in each room as a stick figure complete with always attendant children. Her school is a part of a federation and she was new in both posts – as a head-teacher and as a SENCO - thus there was a significant blurring of the lines between the two as Megan combined both roles in her concept map and through her commentary, as a result there was a difficulty in differentiating her thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Standing on the roof of the school was the depiction of Megan's Head of Federation, attached to this figure were two key comments, *'Lack of support' and 'understanding'.* The roof-space was filled with a range of statements related to Megan's perception of the current situation and her new role: *Brand new, inexperienced staff, lots of other demands* and the statements relating to being overwhelmed in all aspects coupled with the demands of staff (a commonly occurring factor across a number of the SENCO concept maps).

Fig (6:8) *Megan's Concept Map*

In general, most of the items represented on Megan's concept map related to negative aspects of the role particularly her own inexperience in both roles when compared to being a teacher …*'When I was a teacher I just did it! I knew what I*

was doing.' This perception was further strengthened by the comment in the bottom right of Megan's concept map where she openly admitted to being under-confident and detached from class practice but confused as to her current multi-faceted role as she likened it to wearing a series of hats , all neatly drawn and labelled at the right-hand side of her map – School Evaluation Form, observations, PPA, safeguarding, dinner-lady, Ofsted – with a clear arrow linking this multi-tasking to Megan 'at home' where she is drawn with a stressed expression on her face surrounded by representations of her husband (aged 42) and three children (aged 7, 5 and 18 months) and the statement *'neglecting needs'.*

Of particular interest is Megan's relationship with her executive head-teacher; this character appeared on top of the roof but in room two of Megan's 'school' is a direct statement about him; he was identified as being a *'Bloody know it all'* who *'Undermines me'* and who was a *'Negative impact on the group.'* This professional relationship was further presented by Megan stating that she felt that she was a small fish in a big pond.

However, not all of Megan's concept map represented this negative image. Underpinning the whole of the school structure was a key strap-line which stated, *'excited that we are working from a blank canvas & that we can put all this in place together.'* This 'starred' comment related directly to Megan's positive engagement with her SEN Coordination programme of study. The other positive comment appeared in room three of the school where Megan presented the comment, *'My biggest support'.* An understanding of this phrase was not possible from a simple description of the concept map or any interpretation of the image, Megan made herself clear on this in her commentary.

> *'As you know I'm a new head and a new SENCO with both roles put together in one. I'm OK when I feel that I'm the one in charge but as a part of an Academy cluster with a Head of Federation over all of the four schools in it, it can all get very frustrating. Look, I've put him on the roof overlooking everything. I shouldn't say this but it's all about the money and pupil progress scores…it's even more confusing now that levels have gone and we're all a bit in the dark about reporting pupil data* (Ref: changes to the National Curriculum Sept 2015 ff). *He doesn't have a clue about the complexities of special needs provision so I feel that I have no support or direction from him in this area. I want a separate SENCO for my school but he says 'no' as he thinks we're too small and to appoint a SENCO would cost extra money – so I have to do it. I like the job but it doesn't fit in with being a head-teacher; I suppose it's like a SENCO being the SENCO and a full-time class-teacher…it's an impossible mix as the two jobs are crashing into each other and competing for your time, your energy and your attention. Anyway,*

he hasn't been a teacher…I think he comes from Business or Industry…if he has been a teacher it wasn't for long…he's good at spreadsheets though!

I get very little from my 'Superhead' – where I get my support is from the children themselves. I've put this in one of the central rooms of the school drawing. As I'm new at this I need supporting to respond to all the pupil and staff needs but it's an odd position as I'm the head and the SENCO so I should be the supporter and the 'fount of all knowledge'…I've said there that when I was a class-teacher everything was clear cut…but not now as I'm feeling overwhelmed by the whole thing. It's not what I'd call a happy time but at least things are looking up as I'm finding this course (National Award for SEN Coordination) *to be really useful. I've got plenty of ideas to help me with prioritising provision and next steps in terms of developing provision; what have I said here? Yes…working from a 'blank canvas' and 'working together' with other SENCOs as I'm sure that most of them feel just as overwhelmed.'*

Megan's commentary appeared to illustrate a significant conflict between her double roles as a SENCO and head-teacher together with her sense of being disenfranchised as the leader of her own school as all executive decisions were taken by the head of the academy chain in which her primary school is a member. Megan had identified that such a double role is not an effective way of managing the leadership and management of SEN provision in the school but the frustrations of being subjected to budgetary restraints, a lack of empathy about SEN from the executive, her own view of the executive head's lack of experience in the field of Education and teaching and the significant pressures of being a head-teacher compounded by recent government-imposed changes to the National Curriculum and assessment led her to feeling *'overwhelmed'*. Megan's positive outcome here was her engagement with the SEN Coordination programme of study and how it had been instrumental in helping her to develop ideas and priorities for SEND provision in her school.

Table (6:9)   *Megan's Initial Themes: generated from the initial coding of her narrative and map*

Megan's Initial themes
Role conflict (head-teacher vs SENCO) and double-workload (excessive)
Disenfranchised as leader (relating to both head-teacher and SENCO roles) by Executive Head (tensions)
School culture performativity-driven (SEND as low priority)
Confusion over 'supporter' role…needs support in role (as SENCO) but feels the need to support others (as Head & SENCO) – SENCO as 'expert'
Positive attitude and engagement with CPD
Impact of role on work/life balance and well-being

As stated, Megan was in a specific situation as a Head-teacher/SENCO but still faced many of the negative themes already witnessed by other SENCOs with the added confusion between her own support needs and her leadership role in

needing to support her staff. A particular tension she faced was in the professional relationship with the Executive Head-teacher in the Academy chain and the new performativity-enhanced 'culture' created across the chain which placed SEND as a low-priority area.

6.2.9   Mina

Age: 27
Qualified Teacher: 4years
In post as SENCO: 1 Year
School: Local Authority Primary School (NoR 300+)

Fig (6:9) *Mina's Concept Map*
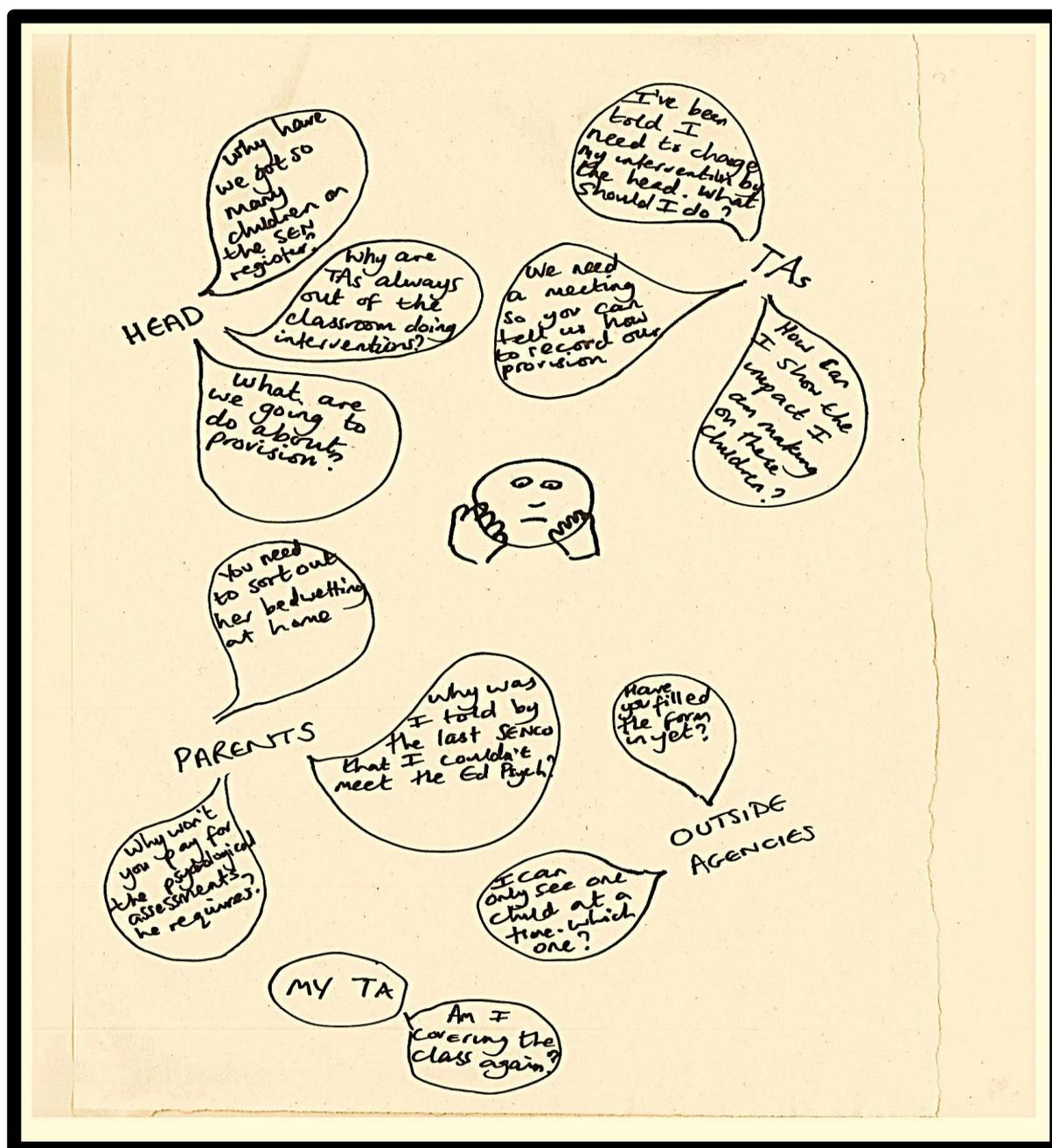
Mina's concept map was created without any interconnecting links between the central image of herself (with head in hands - in despair?) and the key areas of this concern surrounding her, almost like a besieging force providing significant pressure on the SENCO who has 'bunkered-down' into a defensive position. This siege interpretation is taken further as the inter-connections occur in the form of speech bubbles connected to the areas of concern, as if each area is throwing out its trenches and saps towards the besieged SENCO from where they can wear down the defences. This was, possibly, an 'over-fanciful' interpretation however Mina's commentary (see later) did add to this feeling of being besieged. The areas of concern surrounding the central SENCO depiction represented the people with whom a SENCO naturally professionally interacts in their day-to-day work: The head-teacher, the teaching assistant team, the parents and outside agencies. There is one specific question coming from 'My TA', *Am I covering the class again?'* Attached to each of these specific people or groups are the speech bubbles containing, in the main, questions and demands for the SENCO. This concept map doesn't have any overtly positive images, outcomes or comments on it. Mina's commentary extended some of the ideas and feelings expressed in her map:

> *'These are all the things I'm hearing every day from people like my head, from the parents, from the TAs etc. All of the questions and demands flung at me all the time…as if I've got a magic wand which I can wave and make everything better. It's like being machine-gunned all the time with the 'brrrraaaatttttt-braattttt-braattttt' coming all the time. We've been looking at World War One with the kids as it's the one-hundred year commemoration and how it started and the start of the trench war…well, it's a bit like that…I'm keeping my head down while all the bullets and bombs are flying at me. What makes it worse is that you know that I've only really just started doing this SENCO job and they all seem to think that I'm the instant expert…well, I'm not…I'd love to be but I know that it'll take time but they all want it all 'now'…like greedy gannets!*
>
> *I've left the children out of this picture as I think that sorting out their needs and supporting them I think that's the straightforward bit – not the easy bit as teaching is never easy but the bit which is the easiest to sort out. But look at this….as I'm sometimes out of the classroom a fair bit doing SENCO work I get my TA moaning all the time that she has to take the class….I don't think she's paid any extra for it either…but I'm not paid any extra for my SENCO work; I always thought that I would be but the head says that she and the governors might consider it in the future after I've become more experienced'. I dunno what they want…but I think it might be blood as I've already given my sweat and tears…literally!*
>
> *All of these questions being shot at me…I suppose they're all valid and should be things which either I should and could sort out or SEND 'em to someone or to somewhere where they can be answered as I am the SEN specialist who*

should have the knowledge. Some of them they should be sorting out for themselves but I'm not confident enough – yet – to state that to 'em….yet. I can see that it's all about my learning curve…from a class-teacher to a SENCO who eventually should be a leader who really has a proper overview of whole-school provision for SEN and teaching and learning. Trouble is….I'm not given the time, resources or pay to do this….I get an hour a week and that's not protected either that's why I have to steal time from my class to meet parents and thinks…that's why my TA moans at covering for me. Now you can see why I've drawn myself with my hands up to my panicky face. What can I say that's good'? Well I can say that I do like the job as I know that I can really make a difference but it is wearing me out!'

Table (6:10)   *Mina's Initial Themes: generated from the initial coding of her narrative and map*

Mina's Initial themes
Pressure from staff, parental, head-teacher and TA demands
SENCO seen as the (instant) expert by head, staff, parents & TAs
No additional pay for doing SENCO role (used as a 'carrot' incentive by head-teacher)
Self in role on a learning curve from class-teacher to SENCO in leadership role (recognises own limitations as new SENCO)
Limited time for SENCO role(called out of class & TA has to cover)
No additional resources
Enjoys being SENCO but…
SENCO wellbeing (being 'worn out')

Mina's story presented nothing new in terms of emerging themes, however it did reflect many of the frustrations and negative perceptions already presented by the others in this cohort.

6.2.10   Denise

Age: 34
Qualified Teacher: 7 years
In post as SENCO: 3 Years
School: Local Authority Primary School (NoR 300+)

Denise's concept map was a rich-picture of ideas, perceptions and sentiments which swirled around her central depiction of herself in role. A particular interpretation of the concept map was the way in which Denise kept questioning herself in role apart from the right-hand side of her drawing where she made a number of statements, one emphasised by the use of an exclamation mark, *'Fighting fires!'.* Denise's map covered ground around budgeting, time, the impact of her interventions, her own professional development needs, worries about Ofsted inspection and her own self-doubt in terms of *'Am I doing it right?'*

and *'Am I strong enough to be a leader?* What was important is that Denise had an awareness of the need for the SENCO to be an effective leader rather than just a manager of provision for SEND.

Fig (6:10) *Denise's Concept Map*
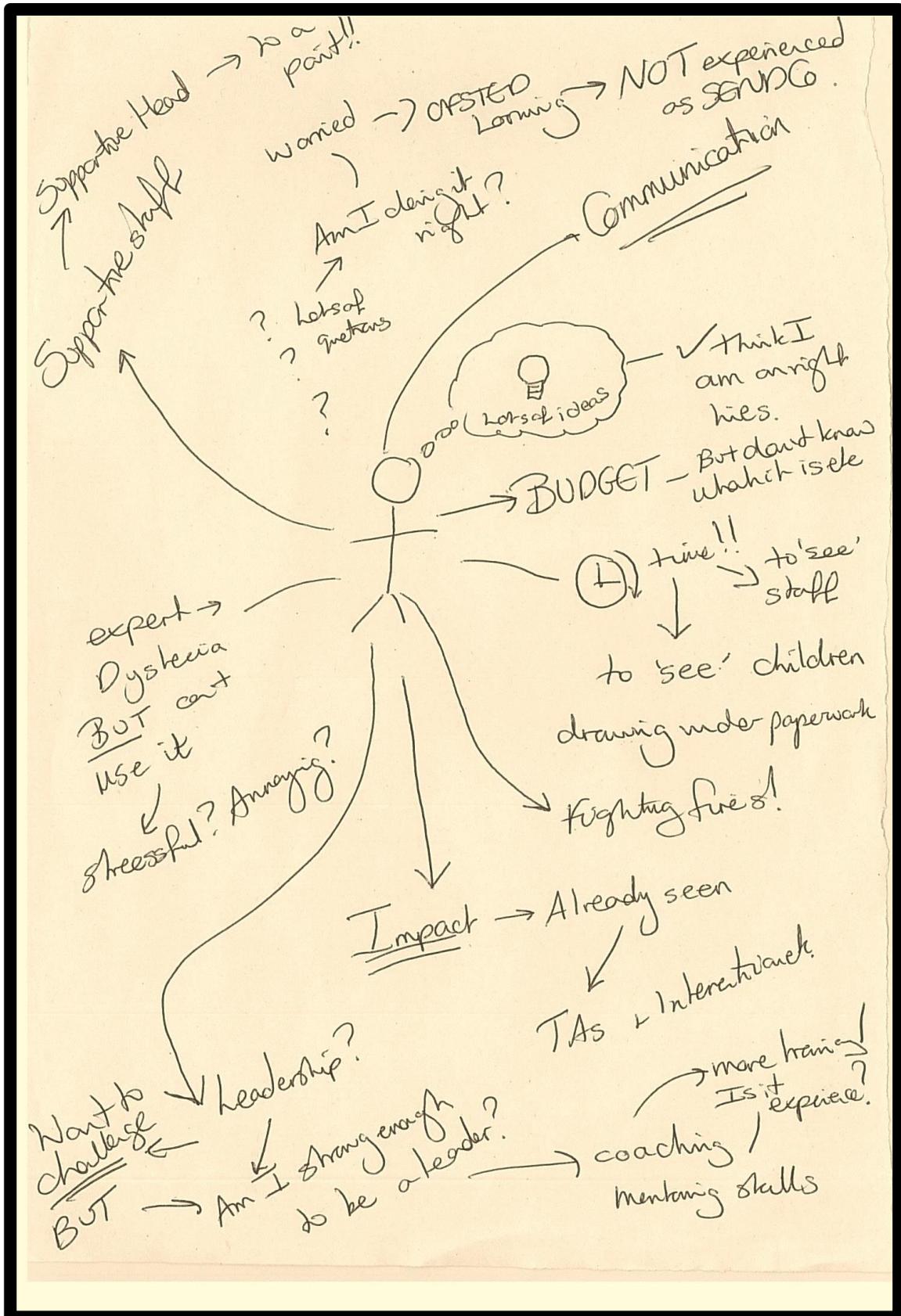
Denise's supporting narrative developed these thoughts/ideas further:

'Sorry about the stick-person in the middle…I'm useless at drawing and it's all a bit of a mess as I just plonked down each idea as it came to me…there's no pattern or anything complicated like that…just me and my thoughts…this is how it all came to me…how the job seems to me…a swarm of things which need loads of time to sort out properly. That's the big problem as I haven't got the time as I'm teaching my class all the time. I won't be given it either as the head says that I'll have to do both jobs and fit in the SENCO stuff around the teaching. Actually, she's quite good to me – so I'll start with her- she does provide me with support, mainly of the moral support kind as she backs me up with parents and things like that. She's good on the 'understanding' too but she will draw a line when anything I ask for, need or want to do costs additional money. I wanted to SEND a couple of my TAs off to do some accredited training for ASD but she said 'no' and said I could do it 'in house'…but I don't have a clue how to go about doing it on a shoe-string. I suppose the bottom line is always the money isn't it? Without the money nothing happens…so I know that I won't be getting any pay for doing the SENCO job. The head did say that she'd ask the governors for it but only when I've finished all my SENCO training….I suppose it's because we're an academy so the Trust can pay what it wants as everything is up in the air now. I wish I knew more about budgeting, particularly funding for SEN in the school and for those with EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans) but the head keeps all that to herself and doesn't share it out; I have asked her on several occasions but she still refuses to provide me with the information, this makes it really difficult to manage provision for some kids as I always seem to be begging for money to support them. Anyway, when I hear from the others what some of their heads are like I can't complain really because mine's an angel in comparison.

OK…what have I put here… Ofsted…yes, I'm deffo worried about that; I feel really stuck out on a limb with this as no one can really help me apart from the head and she's up to her eyes in things. I do lay awake at night frightened about this…some of the other SENCOs are right cocky about it as they say that they've got everything 'sorted' but that only scares me even more as I don't know what I've got right or wrong…or missing. I hate all this 'second-guessing' what Ofsted want to see anyway. Time…s'easy…I haven't got any …I want to see the staff, I want to see the children but I'm spending all my time doing admin and 'fighting fires'. I want to be proactive rather than reacting to situations and demands all the time but I can't seem to 'jump the fence' so that I feel in charge rather than being 'done to'…I suppose that's when you feel like a leader rather than a 'doer' or follower. I've said here that I want to be a leader and I want the challenge but I just don't know if I'm strong enough to do it; I've picked out some areas for my own CPD in coaching and mentoring as I think that these are vital but I've not really been given much of a chance to stretch my wings as a leader as I always, or nearly always, have to ask permission for the smallest change – perhaps this is all down to the money again…I don't know but it does feel like micromanagement to me.

Some positive things…well the head did pay for me to do my OCR Level 7 Diploma so I'm a Dyslexia specialist…but I haven't been able to use it properly in the school apart from providing evidence to support access arrangements for SATS. The TAS do all the literacy support so that does annoy me. But I suppose the best thing is that I've seen some positive impact on progress for pupils on our special needs register and look…next to the lightbulb…I do have some really good ideas for developing provision and I really do intend to put them into operation regardless of how much funding I'm allowed or not! I

really like this part of the job…the bit where I'm trusted to get on with things and to use my ideas…pity about the lack of time and being always monitored.'

In many respects Denise, being the tenth SENCO producing a concept map and supporting narrative, seemed to bring together many of the Initial Themes presented by the previous nine. Her concept map and narrative gave a detailed account of a SENCO experiencing a frustrating situation where she had important skills and knowledge (the OCR Level 7 Diploma is the specialist area of Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia) and a drive for developing, enhancing and leading whole school provision for SEND which was not facilitated by her perception of a head-teacher who was felt to be limiting and micro-managing.

Table (6:11)   *Denise's Initial Themes: generated from the initial coding of her narrative and map*

Denise's Initial themes
Heavy SENCO workload
Conflict between SENCO role and class-teaching – no additional time allocated for SENCO role
No resource allocation
No pay for SENCO role
Heateacher controls all funding (SENCO has no say)
Ofsted Inspection (external pressures)
Self-doubt in developing as a leader
Awake at night (well-being)
No opportunities to develop as a leader (micro-management by head)
Existing skills and knowledge not being used by school (SENCO as Dyslexia specialist)

6.3   Conclusion: Strand (1)

The issue of using such a simplistic graphical method and the very real danger of it leading to an overly anecdotal view potentially generating SENCOs' preoccupied negative interpretations of their complex roles as a result of the pressures they experience was fully appreciated. It was also fully understood that the sample for Strand (1) was a small one and that it could not be (or was even designed to be) indicative of the whole SENCO population for the study (SENCOs working in English primary schools who are undertaking or have undertaken accredited, national level 7 SEN Coordination training through the University of Northampton). However, the sample was designed in order to provide a 'snap-shot in time' at the beginning of their National Award for SEN Coordination training (the 'gateway' to their status as a fully qualified/accredited SENCO), in addition this also provided a highly personalised (SENCO) institutional overview of some of the strengths and weaknesses in their schools'

provision with the participants in this sample indicating their range of interpretations of their function as the SENCO in their schools with some indication of the overall manner in which provision was managed for SEND thus creating a merging of the personal and professional nature of their role within their schools – a combination of the Legal and Psychological Contracts with the Contextual Variety. From this snap-shot and following thematic analysis a series of main themes emerged from the process where themes were generated from the data through coding leading to initial and then main themes. These main themes were then cross-matched to the Conceptual Model (Legal/Psychological Contracts and Contextual Variety) in order to gauge the influence of the Contextual Variety on their work This was a useful process as the findings came directly from the participants' own stories without being influenced by my own ideas/stance. This process of critically exploring the participants' experiences fitted with the '*Living Theory'* model adopted as I was able to discover how new SENCOs perceived their new roles and responsibilities, the pressures they felt, the positive outcomes they desired and the potential they recognised in the role in terms of developing their status in the school and their opportunities for strategic leadership.

Table (6:12) shows the collation of the generated main themes (n=16). The underpinning throughout the SENCOs' maps and narratives was made up of a range of positive comments relating to SENCOs stating that they enjoyed being the SENCO as they knew that they '*made a difference'* (*Julie, Sarah, Brenda, Penny, Mina*) and that they were on a steep learning-curve which would lead to improved conditions and alleviate their feelings of self-doubt. Positive comments on developing their own status as school leaders were made by *Brenda*, *Margaret*, *John* and *Mina* (themes at serials 14 and 15 in Table (6:12)). In contrast a surprising feature of this main theme collation was the majority of negative responses presented by these new SENCOs. Most of these themes relating to the Contextual Variety across schools resulting in the reporting of excessive workloads leading to issues with well-being, lack of allocated time and resources, lack of payment for undertaking the SENCO role and a lack of opportunities for SENCOs to act independently as managers and leaders (rather than as administrators).

Table (6:12)   *Strand (1) Main Theme Matrix (SENCO Concept Maps and Supporting Narratives).*

Serial	Main Themes	Links to 3-Part Conceptual Model (Commentary)
1	SENCO well-being and work/life balance negatively affected by excessive SENCO workload	The Contextual Variety between schools – individual school culture, level of funding/resourcing and priority placed on SEND creating these multi-roles for SENCOs and heavy workload. The Psychological Contract is in the form of the 'Emotional Labour' expressed by the SENCO as a part of their own culture of care for their pupils.
2	No (or little) additional time allocated for SENCO work	Contextual Variety – each school determines the time set for SENCO duties.
3	No (or little) additional resource allocation for SENCO work	Contextual Variety – each school determines the resource allocation.
4	No additional allowance (pay) for being the SENCO	Contextual Variety– each school determines the pay allowance for the SENCO (according to the priority for SEN in the school and available funding)
5	Lack of support and/or knowledge of SENCO role by head and/or other staff & parents	Contextual Variety relating to individual school culture; the priority for SEN(D) and/or staff professional training & development in the area of SEN(D) is sometimes not seen as a priority.
6	Teachers passing on their responsibility for managing the learning experience of pupils with SEND in their own mainstream classrooms to SENCO (e.g. differentiation/personalising learning activities etc.)	Contextual Variety relating to individual school culture and priorities. The SENCO is seen as the expert and as a 'rescuer' by colleagues. There are implications here for the SENCO's Legal Contract (role and responsibilities of the classteacher in relation to pupils with SEND)
7	Head-teacher providing no (or few) opportunities for SENCO to act as a 'leader'	Contextual Variety. Although the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* (like all previous Codes) suggests that the SENCO should be on the SMT it is not mandatory. Although SENCOs can be leaders *without* being on the SMT.
8	SENCO not on Senior Leadership Team	As above.
9	SENCO not able to act independently (micro-management by head-teacher)	Contextual Variety relating to individual school culture
10	Conflict between the SENCO role and maintaining the role of class teacher	The multi-role of SENCo matched with whole-class teaching. Contextual Variety/ SENCO's Psychological Contract as they attempt to do both (or more) roles.
11	Tensions created by Ofsted inspection	National Educational Culture/High-Stakes Assessment Regime/Marketisation of Schools (the 'Performativity Factor' impacting on the SENCO and the culture of his/her school).
12	SENCO lack of knowledge/SENCO self-doubt	Legal Contract (knowledge of) Psychological Contract (SENCO 'caring approach' to pupils and colleagues)

		SENCO seen as 'expert' by others SENCO seen as 'the rescuer' by others Contextual Variety/school culture (time & resourcing for SENCO)
13	Performativity-driven school culture making SEND a low priority	Comment (11)
14	Enjoying being the SENCO	Psychological Contract – expressed as the SENCO's 'Emotional Labour' in the form of application and significant effort in/to their work & responsibilities (as a teacher and as a SENCO) and caring about children's needs and experiences.
15	Pride felt in being a SENCO and being able to 'make a difference'	Comment (14)
16	Need for SENCO CPD & recognition of SEN Award	Legal Contract (knowledge of) Psychological Contract – the desire to be a better SENCO (linked to (14) and (15))

All of these SENCOs (bar one, Megan the head-teacher) were making the transition from class-teacher to SENCO and, in the process, feeling a significant strain in having to handle the excessive workload of both with limited resources, funding and support and managing not only the demands of pupils with SEND but also their parents/carers and the needs of their colleagues who saw the SENCO as the 'expert' and the 'rescuer', in several cases it was reported that their colleagues devolved their responsibilities for teaching pupils with SEND to the SENCO and the TAs.

Several of the SENCOs in this sample for Strand (1) were fairly new-in-post as teachers, and so were developing their professional identities as teachers in addition to developing their professional identities as SENCOs too. Beltman *et al* (2015) stated that developing a professional teacher identity can be complex as the process of teacher development was based on teacher engagement informed by their life histories, their previous experiences of teachers and teaching, by learning and by societal expectations; these factors all affected the way that they managed the 'becoming process'. Beltman *et al* also argued that self-image and ownership of an emerging professional identity were conditions that helped teachers to apply knowledge acquired through continuing professional development and training into their schools. This does have resonance when related to the SENCO role as the new SENCOs sampled in Strand (1) all went through the same pathway as they came to terms with re-imagining their identities as teachers into that of a SENCO affected by the same informing factors – their life histories, experience of teachers and teaching, by their professional development/training and by societal expectations. However, there

was an added layer of complexity for SENCOs as 'societal expectations' was extended to include the wider expectations of a performativity-infused educational system and the Contextual Variety inherent within their schools and settings; these factors, the personal and the contextual, interacting in a reciprocal and dynamic process to shape identity (Day *et al* 2007; Moore, 2004) which is often negotiated '*through a rich and complex set of relations of practice'* (Chong & Low, 2009 p 70).   Beltman *et al* and Pillen *et al* (2013) agreed that finding a balance between the personal views and experiences and the professional or cultural expectations of what it means to be a teacher was a key part of developing a professional identity as a teacher. When applied to the role of a SENCO navigating between conflicting worlds such as their work-life balance, the friction between the class-teacher vs SENCO scenarios which played out in their schools and the realisation that they were expected to be a specialist, an expert and a leader where before they had been 'led' created significant tensions.   Friedman (2004) described this gap between expectations and the reality shock of experience as '*shattered dreams'* (p312).

'*Shattered dreams'* might have been an apt descriptor for the SENCOs who presented their thoughts and feelings through their concept maps and commentaries but, perhaps, a better phrase was 'the reality shock' already mentioned as the data not only indicated that these new-in-post SENCOs (in the main) identified themselves as professionals who could conduct themselves as SENCOs and who were confident in themselves as teachers but with a strong awareness of the existing and potential complexities and challenges of their Legal Contract compounded by the Contextual Variety shown by their schools. This, in turn, raises questions in how to prepare new SENCOs for the reality of the workplace whilst maintaining a positive approach particularly as the new SENCOs in this sample had already experienced several negative experiences so early in their careers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

STUDY FINDINGS Strand (2): SENCO Questionnaire and Diary

7.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the two data-gathering methods employed for Strand (2) of this study, the SENCO questionnaire and the small selection of diaries which were designed for SENCOs to capture a typical 'working day'. The aim of the data gathering process in Strand (2) was to focus on SENCOs who had already completed their formal training through their National Award for SEN Coordination and who were now fully practising in their schools. Like in the previous chapter (6) this chapter draws heavily on the SENCOs' stories, words and opinions but this time collected after the SENCOs had been *qualified* in post for at least one academic year rather than at the very beginning of their accredited/formal training for SENCO qualification. This chapter reveals how SENCOs are coping with their roles within a changing educational and economic climate, how they are (or are not) supported by their schools, how they manage the expectations placed upon them as specialists and perceived 'experts' in the field of special educational needs and how their role as emerging transformational leaders is either facilitated or restricted by the climate in their schools created through the infusion of performativity and the quasi-marketplace which influences their head-teachers' priorities for SEND.

This chapter is constructed in four main sections; the first section provides an overview of the SENCO population generating the Strand (2) data for the questionnaire. The second section provides a detailed presentation and interrogation of questionnaire data in the 'spirit' of the two interrelated research questions as stated in Chapter (1). This is followed by the third section which returns to using a thematic analysis approach to draw broad and then main themes from the SENCO diary narratives whilst the final section identifies major similarities and differences across all data from both strands in the form of final main themes. These final main themes and findings are not generalised to the universal population of all SENCOs working in all English primary schools but are used to inform my own understanding of the contemporary working lives of SENCOs in order to improve my own practice in managing and leading SENCO accredited training and development. However, although not designed for generalisation, key findings emerged relating to the concept of 'threat' towards

the SENCO created by their conditions of service, little change in levels of support and resourcing, the impact of performativity in moulding school cultures and the poor work/life balance from which a significant proportion of SENCOs suffered.

7.2   Questionnaire: Return rate

In order to place this in context, the data return was compared and contrasted with another, significant, piece of national research. The initial sample for this study (n=120) was considerably smaller than the sample (n=500) sought by Pearson (2007) for NASEN's March 2008 national report on the *Working Lives of SENCOs,* but the return rate was exactly the same. For their 2008 Report, NASEN achieved a return rate of 33% (n=166); they theorised that two factors accounted for this: The survey was conducted in the autumn term, a busy time of year for SENCOs and the research coincided with a postal dispute which delayed the circulation of the questionnaire.

This study also had a return rate of 33.3% (n=40). Table (7:1) below presents the breakdown by Local Authority.

Table (7:1)   *Strand (2) SENCO Questionnaires*

Local Authority SENCO Cohort	Questionnaires and covering letters sent out by post	Completed questionnaires returned
LA 1	16	8
LA 2	10	3
LA 3	14	6
LA 4	8	4
LA 5	16	3
LA 6	7	3
LA 7	15	5
LA 8	16	3
LA 9	5	1
LA 10	8	2
LA 11	5	2
TOTAL	**120**	**40**

This 33.3% return rate was comprised of (n=40) out of (n=120) SENCOs participating by completing questionnaires (1/3rd of the invited population).

The first point made by NASEN in association with their study's disappointing return rate was also pertinent in terms of the same rate for this study; in short,

SENCOs are exceptionally busy people with a punishing time schedule all year around and not just in the autumn term.

The NASEN 2008 Report had different elements to this study in terms of sampling; their (n=500) sample included all the SENCOs from one Local Authority (n=164) with the remainder being randomly selected members of NASEN who had indicated that they were SENCOs all living in England (n=336). It was stated that structuring the sample in this way was intended to ensure coverage of all types of settings and all geographical areas of England, however not all of these SENCOs were, in fact, teachers and so NASEN admitted that there would need to be some caution about the representativeness of their findings since the Local Authority involved had not encouraged the appointment of TAs as SENCOs whereas some other Local Authorities (from the larger sample across England) had. NASEN additionally identified that there may have been variations in the willingness of the two groups (teacher SENCOs and TA SENCOs) to complete the questionnaires. In comparison, the sample for this study's Strand (2) differed in that *all* of the SENCOs held qualified teacher status (so there was no confusion over status), *all* had completed their compulsory SEN Coordination training with a single provider (all SENCOs sharing the same experience in this aspect), and were *all* at (approximately) the same stage in their career – this factor being another shared experience although the Contextual Variety did impact upon this; but this also presented another shared experience as the SENCOs all fell under the demands of the performativity inherent within the current education and political climate. The SENCOs were also all from English primary schools rather than from the NASEN's study range of early years to post-compulsory settings.

7.3   Questionnaire: SENCO Responses and Findings

As previously stated in Chapter (5) the questionnaires were distributed by post to all SENCOs who had completed their National Award for SEN Coordination in the 2014-2015 academic year. These SENCOs came from a range of primary schools from eleven Local Authorities giving a level of diversity providing a purposeful sample in that every participant was now a qualified SENCO, all were working in primary schools and all had attended their formal training through the University of Northampton in partnership with their LA. Although all of the SENCOs had the invitation and opportunity to engage with this study with

(n=140) questionnaires and covering letters being sent out, only (n=40) were returned thus the whole sample is only recognised as being representative of this 33.3% return rate group so there were no generalisations made in relation to the wider population of all qualified/teacher SENCOs working in English primary schools, although there did emerge a large number of themes which matched and complemented the findings of previous studies in the field. This return rate was somewhat disappointing but it matched the return rates of other large-scale surveys completed previously by organisations such as NASEN and the National Union of Teachers. However, these reports were, in the main, conducted before the introduction of compulsory SENCO professional accreditation and the huge educational changes as forced by the current (Conservative) and previous (Coalition) Governments began to significantly influence the role of the SENCO and provision for SEN(D) within schools. .

The first section of the questionnaire **(Part 1 Qs 1 to 16)** had its focus on the nature of the SENCOs' roles and level of experience in order to prepare the context for further exploration and interrogation of the data. All of the SENCOs completing this questionnaire were qualified teachers and (since 2014) qualified SENCOs working in primary schools within the Local Authority/University partnership region. In terms of gender there were an overwhelming number of female SENCO participants (n=39) with only one male SENCO in this sample (higher than the Department for Education's (July 2015) School Workforce in England statistics which stated that 85% of teachers in primary schools were female).

Question (1) responses provided data on how long the SENCOs had actually been teaching (as distinct from being in a SENCO role) with the range being 24 years, from two years in post to 26 years. A significant number (n=14; 35%) had ten or more years' experience. This range of experience as a teacher immediately presented an example of the Contextual Variety across the SENCOs. The (n=14) SENCOs with ten or more years' of experience were complemented by those with between four and eight years' in the profession (n=21; 52.5%). Only (n=4; 10%) SENCOs had less than four years' teaching experience. Within this sample the majority of the SENCOs being experienced teachers before becoming a SENCO is shown as n=36 (90%) had four or more years of teaching experience.

Fig (7:1) Q.1

How long have you been teaching?
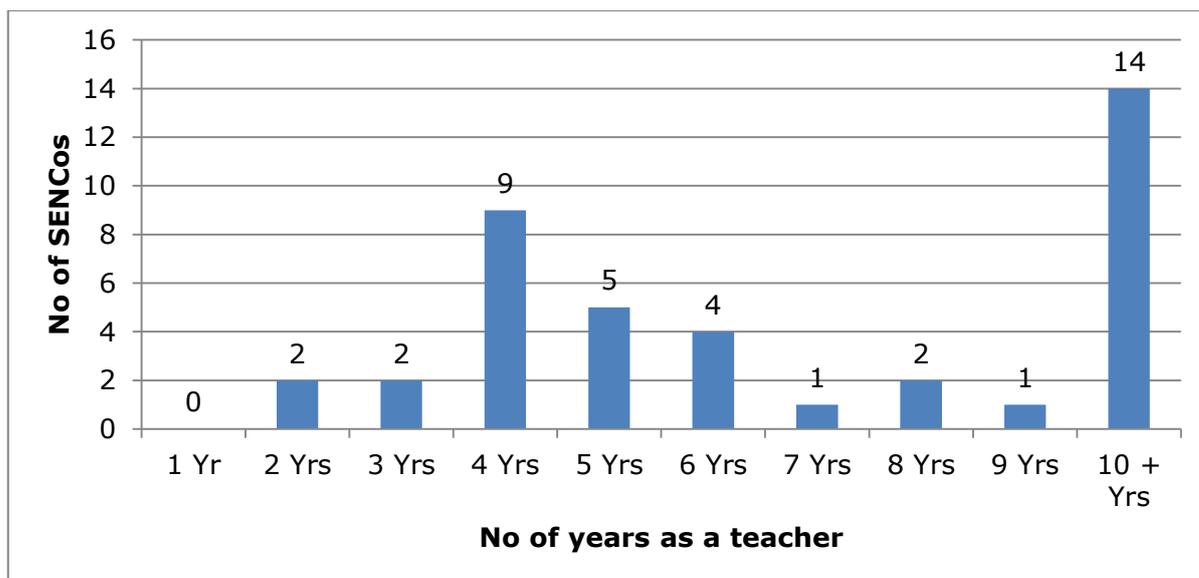
(Qs 2 and 3) responses showed that (n=28; 70%) have had a previous career before becoming a teacher. No discernable pattern could be established as to any 'type' of career being more likely to lead into teaching as the range was diverse. The significant number of SENCOs with previous career experience further enriched the Contextual Variety within the SENCO sample.

(Q.4) provided a comparative response to **(Q.1)** as the majority of SENCOs had been in their SENCO post (as distinct from being a teacher) for fewer than four years. This was expected due to the requirements of the National Award for SEN Coordination that all 'new' SENCOs had to complete the compulsory training within three years of appointment; however, it was interesting to note that (n=3) SENCOs had eight or more years 'in post' (these three coming from the tranche of SENCOs with 10 years plus in the profession). Their justification for choice as to why they felt it necessary to attend this type of professional training after such a long time as a SENCO was not sought in the questionnaire, perhaps this would have been an interesting/informative area to have explored. The overview of years in post as a SENCO is given at Fig (7:2):

Fig (7:2) Q4

How long have you been a SENCO (or equivalent)?
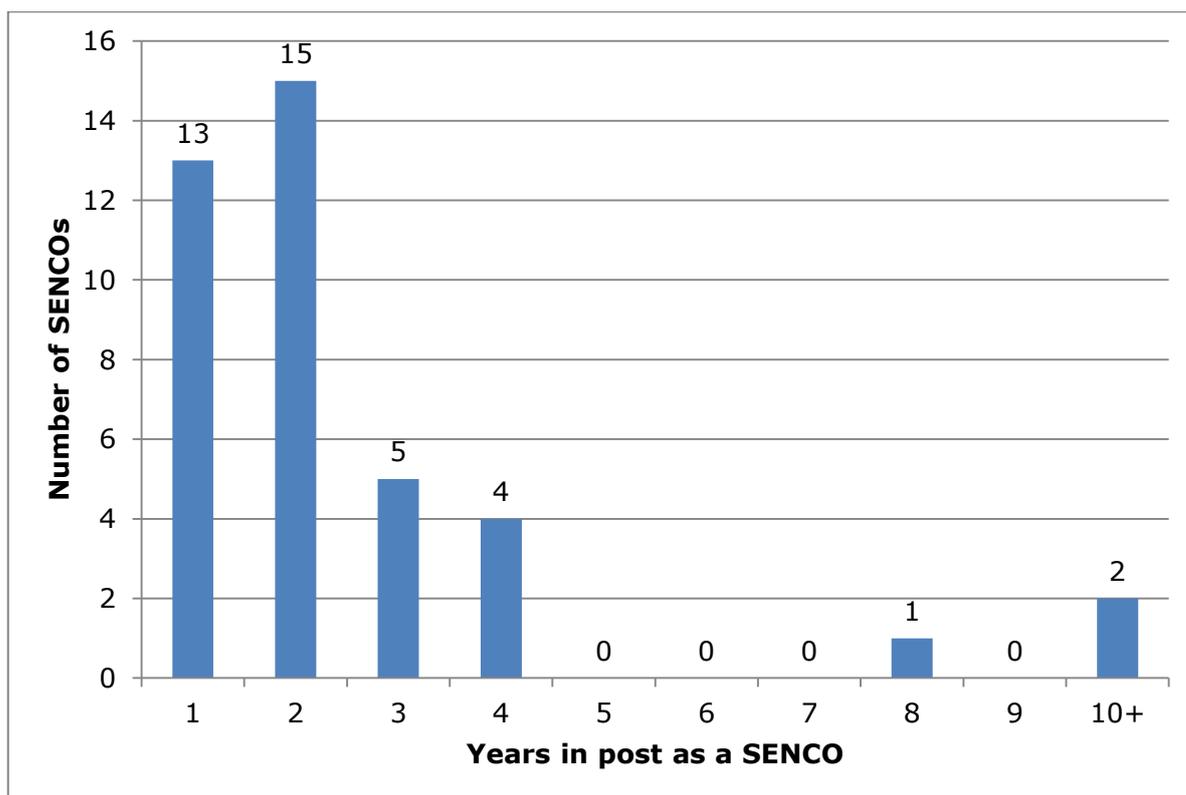
Of the (n=40) SENCOs completing the questionnaire (n=29; 72.5%) were full-time teacher/SENCOs while (n=11; 27.5%) were part-time SENCOs operating on one or more days per week. This high percentage of part-time SENCOs was surprising, as a recurring theme throughout the questionnaire returns (and Strand (1) concept maps/narratives plus Strand (2) diaries) was the formidable workload SENCOs have and the demands on their time from their colleagues. Many of these part-time SENCOs commented later in the questionnaire (**(Q 52), (53), (55)** & **(59)**) that they found managing the part-time role difficult, particularly around key factors such as liaison, communication, consistency and time-management.

The majority of the sample were named as the 'SENCO' (n=25;62.5%), although there was a range of post titles reported with some holding a significant SLT position being called the Assistant Head-teacher (SENCO) or Deputy Head. Four SENCOs were titled as INCO (Inclusion Coordinator), this might indicate a possible 'pathway' for the future as more schools realise the range of influence and responsibility inherent within the role across the school and its wider community hence a new title is required to reflect this new realisation. Along

with the range of job titles, the SENCOs also taught in a range of primary schools with the majority (n=23; 58%) working in academies (or academy trusts/chains) and the remainder in LA schools (n=11; 27%), Church schools (n=4; 10%) or 'all-age' schools (n=2; 5%). The high percentage working in academies was not unexpected as the national trend is for an 'academisation-process' across all LA areas, although (currently) the realisation of all schools converting to academy status has not been possible.

(Qs 8 and 9) were directly related to the status of the SENCO as a leader and manager.   Although every *Code of Practice* since the first in 1994 has clearly stated that the SENCO *should* be on the senior leadership team within the school, only (n=19: 48%) of this sample held that status; this is after the passage of twenty-two plus years since the first Code and twelve years since the DfES (2004) *Removing Barriers to Achievement* strategy identified the identity for SENCOs being in,

> 'a pivotal role, coordinating provision across the school and linking class and subject teachers with SEN specialists to improve the quality of teaching and learning….We want schools to see the SENCO as a key member of the senior leadership team, able to influence the development of policies for whole school improvement.'
> (p 58, para.3.14)

It is also ten (+) years since the final House of Commons (2006) Education and Skills Committee report, after their parliamentary enquiry on special educational needs took evidence from witnesses who expressed concern about developments in the SENCOs' role, stated that SENCOs needed to be part of the leadership team in order to have an overview of the strategic developments in the school. The perceived effectiveness of a SENCO was often linked to being a key part of this team with their recommendations stating that the SENCO should,

> 'in all cases be qualified teachers and in a senior management position in the school…The role and position of a SENCO must reflect the central priority that special educational needs should hold within schools.'
> (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2006. p 74)

There appears to have been very little change as less than half of the sample had this senior leadership status but the requirement for SENCOs to *'manage the day-to-day operation of the school's special educational needs policy'* (DfES, 2004 Para 2.14) still remained as the SENCOs' key duty and responsibility. There

was a strong association between membership of the school's senior leadership/management team and those SENCOs who disclosed that they received an allowance linked to their role. However, the majority (n=25; 63%) did report that their direct line-manager was their head-teacher (meeting the suggested requirement of the *Codes*) with (n=15: 37%) having an additional layer of 'management' between themselves and the head-teacher. Some of these SENCOs did state later in their questionnaire responses that this was an area of difficulty in that the additional manager sometimes stopped, held-up, altered or misrepresented the flow of information between the SENCO and the head-teacher.

(Qs 10 and 11) concentrated on attempting to obtain data on the *range* and *nature* of the SENCOs' work. The SENCOs presented examples of their key duties in their schools. When compared across the sample there was an unsurprising degree of consistency in that all SENCOs listed the coordination of provision and the completion of pupil referrals for Education and Health-Care Plans (EHCPs), although not all of the SENCOs were responsible for the final version of these as several reported that their head-teachers took over this responsibility after they (the SENCO) had completed the majority of the administration and data gathering. Liaison with parents and external agencies, the monitoring of pupils on the school's SEN list/register and the monitoring and reporting on pupil performance data frequently appeared as key duties along with supporting teachers in developing in-class strategies for pupils with SEND. There was an interesting inconsistency around duties such as managing the funding requirements for SEND in the school, leading the Teaching Assistant Team, organising and managing special arrangements for statutory assessment (i.e. Key Stage 2 SATS), up-dating the policy for SEND and providing training for school staff in matters relating to SEND – in these cases there was a significant range of responses from a very few SENCOs who engaged with all (or more) of these factors and a significant number (n= 10; 25%) who did very little (or none) of this work having most of it completed by their head-teachers or deputy head-teachers.

In addition to holding the SENCO role every member of the sample (n=40; 100%) held down at least one other role/responsibility in the school with (n=25: 63%) holding two or more, including that of head-teacher (n=1) or deputy head-teacher (n=5); the most frequent 'additional role' was that of full-time class-

teacher (n= 29; 73%) across the range from Foundation through to Year 6 in Key Stage 2 (the majority at n=10;25%), although to term this an 'additional role' would be incorrect as there was a level of difference in SENCOs' opinions related to this in **(Q15/16). Fig (7:3)** illustrates the range of other additional duties undertaken by the SENCOs (with many SENCOs holding more than one of these including whole-school responsibilities). It appears that there has been a significant 'slippage' in this since the DfES (2001) *Code* stated that due to the time-consuming nature of the SENCO role that it is '*usually inappropriate'* for the SENCO to have other school-wide responsibilities. In connection with this, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in their 2012 survey of SENCOs and their work '*There is Always More to Do'* reported their findings that,

> 'The other consistent barrier identified was 'other teaching commitments'. This was the greatest barrier for 45% of SENCOs. Within their group, some SENCOs chose to continue a teaching commitment, and in some schools it was appropriate for them to do so given the manageable demands on the SENCO and the number of pupils with SEN. However, for many within this 45%, the extent of their teaching commitments was undermining and restricting their ability to carry out the pivotal role of SENCO provision in their school.'
> (para. 9, p 3)

Although not represented on the graph **(Fig 7:3)** there was (n=1) acting-head-teacher/SENCO, (n=2) deputy head-teacher/SENCOs and (n=5) assistant head-teacher/SENCOs; the acting head-teacher and the deputy head-teachers reversing the situation regarding additional responsibilities by having the SENCO function as their added duties.

Fig (7:3)   Q.11
In addition to SENCO duties, what other responsibilities are held by SENCOs in their schools?
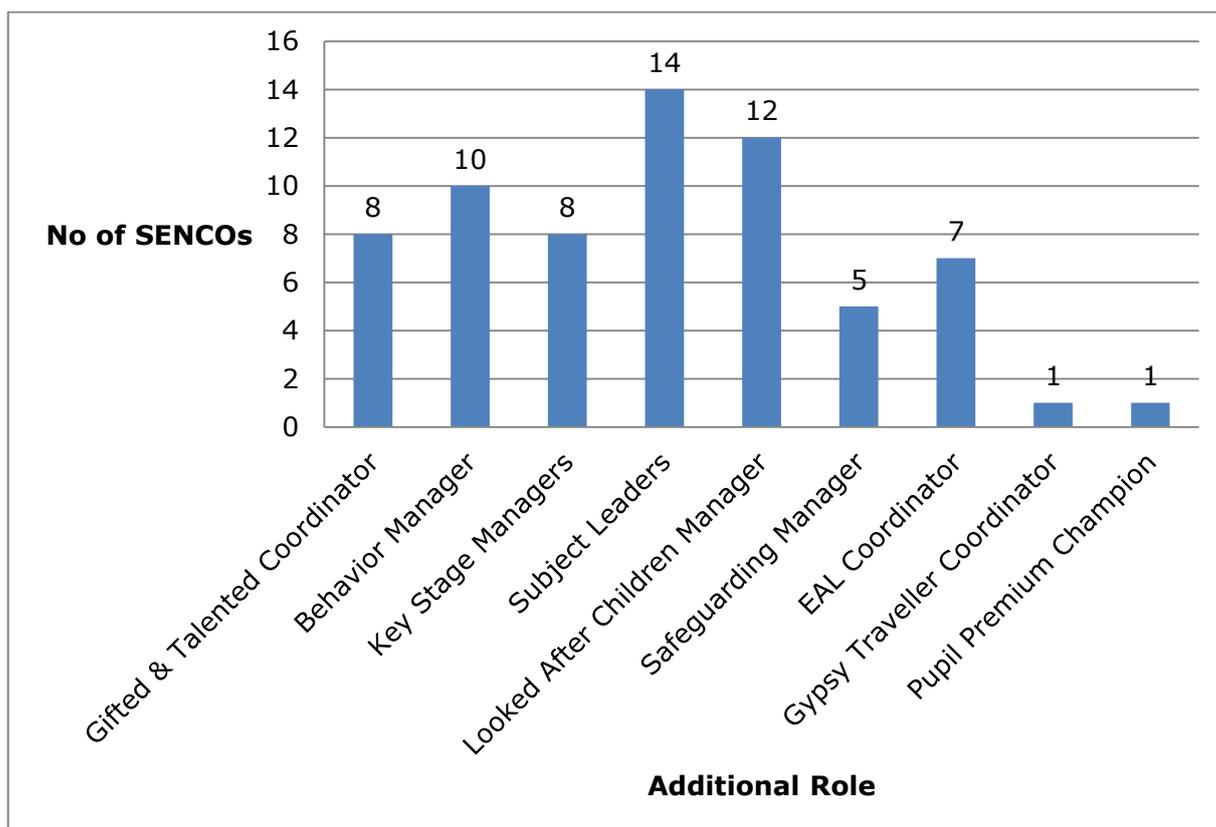
The link between size of school and additional duties was a clear one with SENCOs in the smaller primary schools having to undertake the greater/wider range, although this was not exclusively so as (n=8) SENCOs from larger primary schools did report that they had to undertake at least three other duties, their class-teaching role and the role of SENCO.

The current DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* and all preceding Codes suggested that all schools needed to pay particular attention to the amount of time allocated to SENCOs in order for them to effectively/efficiently coordinate SEN provision across the school; however, this time allocation has never been specific or quantified. When asked to quantify how many hours were given to them exclusively for their SENCO work **(Q.12)** there was a range of hours per week from zero to ten plus.   **Fig (7.4)** illustrates this range of hours; the majority of the SENCOs had less than two hours of 'exclusive SENCO time' per week in order to do the 'job' (n=19; 48%) with (n=7;18%) of these having no time at all. There were (n=10; 25%) with between three to six hours per week; both of these groups of SENCOs (0 to 2 hrs and 3 to 6 hrs) made up the majority within

the sample (n=29; 73%). All of the SENCOs who declared part-time status (n=11) appeared in the 10+ hours per week category, although all of the part-time SENCOs also undertook additional school responsibilities. Those with zero hours had to complete the SENCO function in their non-teaching time, before school, after school and at home. However, (**Q.13**) reported that only (n=19; 48%) of SENCOs had their hours protected, with the majority (n=21; 52%) knowing that this time could be (and frequently was) taken from them for other school-wide duties (mainly cover for absent colleagues or directed work by their head-teachers).

Fig (7:4)   Q.12
How many hours per week are given to you exclusively for your SENCO work?
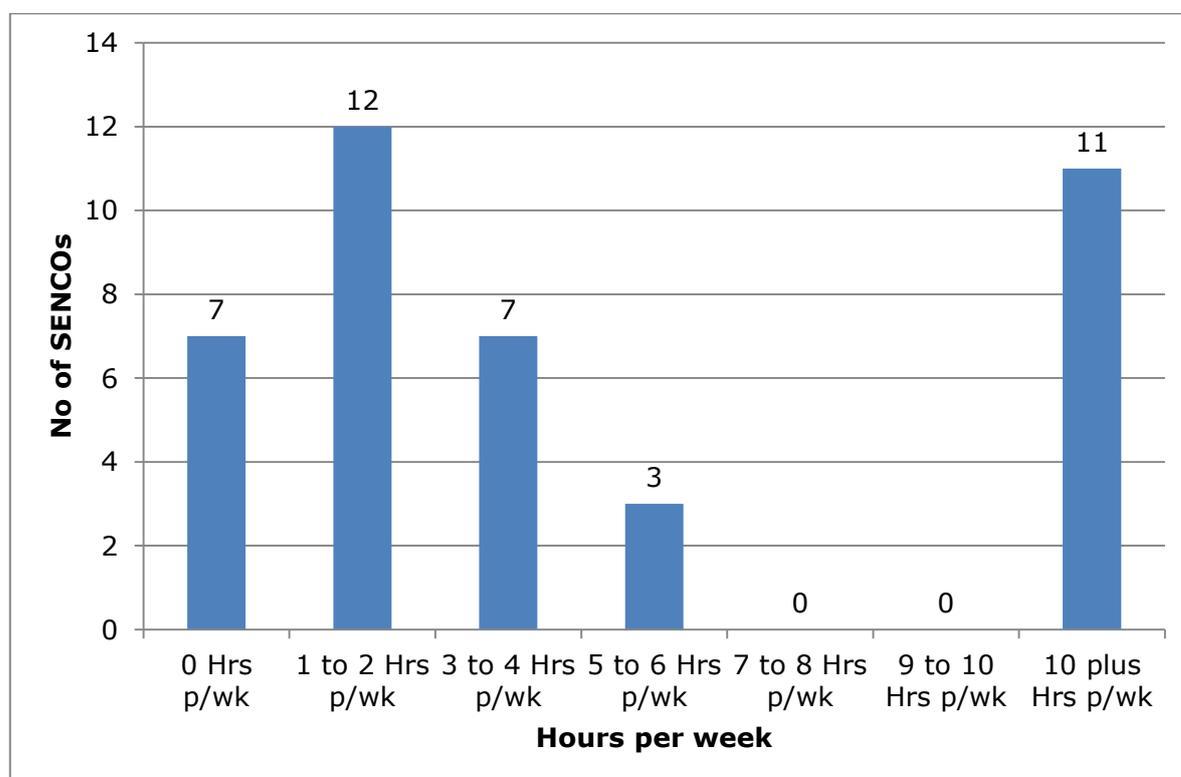
In relation to the percentage of time given for undertaking their SENCO duties this allocation and its degree of 'protection', SENCOs gave their choice about what percentage of their time they would like to see devoted to their SENCO duties **(Q.14)**. There was consistency in the SENCOs' responses here as the majority (n=23; 58%) of them indicated that they would like more than 60% of their time at work devoted wholly to their SENCO duties with (n=17; 43%) wishing to see *all* of their time (100%) engaging in work relating to managing provision for SEND in their schools; when compared to their responses for (**Q.15**) (n=10: 25%) of them stated that the SENCO should have a whole-class

teaching commitment whilst the majority (n=28: 70%) stated *'no'*. Justification for this included SENCO statements relating to the heavy SENCO workload (the majority of comments referred to this factor in one form or another), the strategic nature of the role requiring a *'whole school overview'* and the SENCO needing to be *'on call'* at all times. The reasons SENCOs said *'yes'* varied from the need to,

> *'keep in with the expectations, demands and skills of teaching.'*

To,

> *'I need the other teachers in the school to see at first hand that I can actually be a good teacher so the SENCO should be a full-time teacher in order to keep the respect of their colleagues.'*

This particular SENCO lacked some empathy with her colleagues in other schools by also stating that SENCOs who complain about having to balance both a class-teaching and SENCO role should, *'…just be more resilient and get on with the job! I can do it so why can't others!'* Perhaps, a lack of empathy might be too strong a judgment to make as this SENCO could quite easily be frustrated by her own workload and this is how it is communicated. One SENCO was very honest in her response by stating that she just does not like being away from the children in her class. Significantly, several SENCOs who stated *'no'* to having a whole class commitment did provide a realistic 'rider' by also stating that it usually depended on the size of the school, funding levels and staffing whether the SENCO held a non-class-teaching role or not.

Part 2 (**Qs 17 to 21)** of the questionnaire related to the resources made available to SENCOs. Once again, there was a range of SENCO responses relating to their allocated resources and support – from zero through to well-resourced. Like the issues around schools providing SENCOs with sufficient time to do their job and placing them as members of the senior leadership team; **Fig (7:5)** illustrates the comparative data:

Fig (7:5)   Qs 17-19
SENCO access to administrative support, a secure area and secure telephone line.
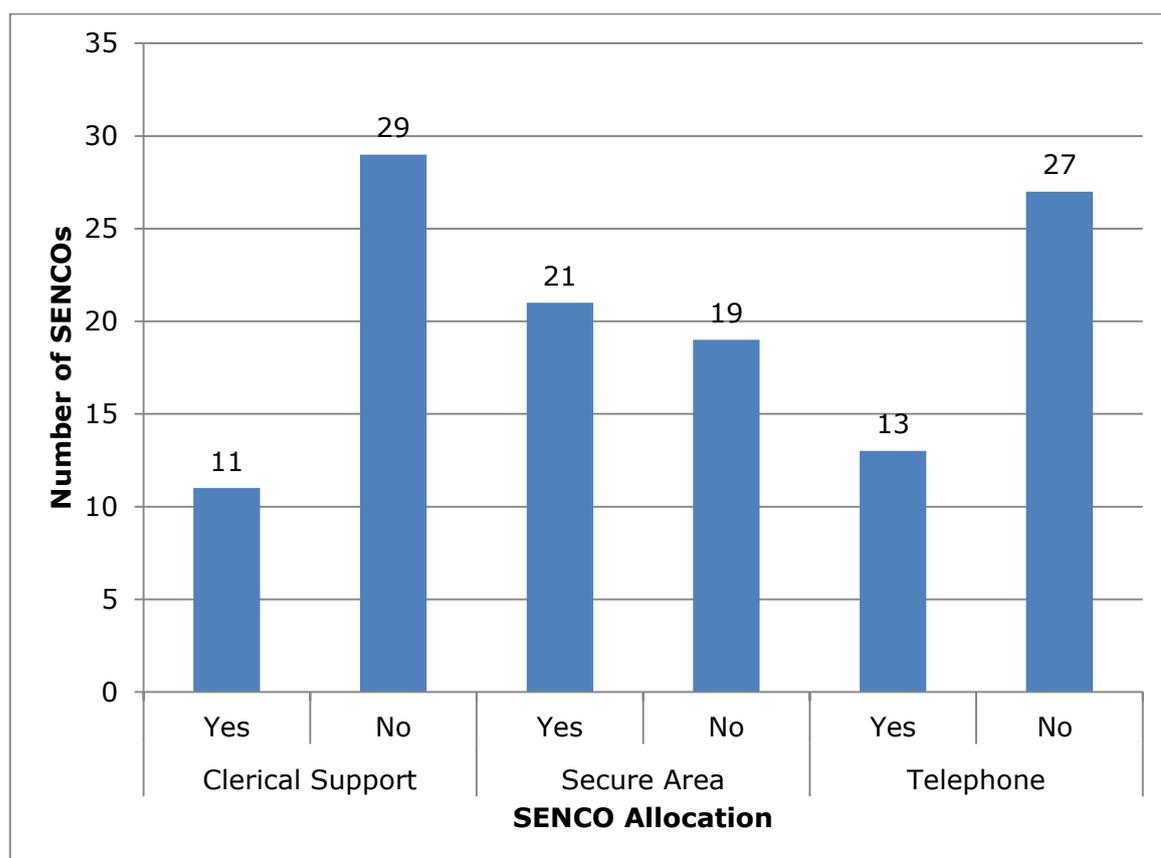
The DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* stated that a school's head-teacher and governing body should,

> '…ensure that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out these functions.   This   should   include   providing   the   SENCO   with   sufficient administrative support and time away from teaching to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in a similar way to other important strategic roles within a school.'
> (para 6.91 p 109)

The word '*sufficient*' was not quantified and was even *less* specific than the DfES (2001) *Code* which, at least, mentioned SENCO support requirements in greater detail, highlighting a range of possible SENCO duties and mentioning key resources by name:

> 'Governing bodies and head teachers will need to give careful thought to the SENCO's timetable in the light of the Code and in the context of the resources available to the school.   Experience shows that SENCOs require time for: planning and coordinating away from the classroom; maintaining appropriate individual and whole school records of children at School Action, School Action Plus and those with statements; teaching pupils with SEN; observing pupils in

class without a teaching commitment; managing, supporting and training learning support assistants; liaising with colleagues. …Access to a telephone and an interview room is also desirable where possible. In many schools the governing body has been able to allocate some administrative staff time to help the SENCO, thus releasing the SENCO to use their expertise more effectively.'
(Para 5.33 p 50)

As illustrated in **Fig (7:5),** in only one of the areas *(SENCOs having a secure and adequate area for meetings, small group work and document storage*) does the data indicate more than 50% of SENCOs receiving this allocation, then it is only by a narrow margin (n=21;53%). In the other two areas, SENCOs from the sample were still under-resourced/supported by their schools. This poor level of resourcing was seemingly not being alleviated by the introduction of the 2015 *Code* as in (**Qs 20 and 21**) SENCOs mainly admitted to this having no difference (N=15; 38%) with even more SENCOs being unsure of the *Code's* impact on their resource allocation (n=17; 43%). Those few SENCOs who provided a *'yes'* response to (**Q20**) (n=8; 20%) mentioned how their resources have changed to enable better SEN pupil progress tracking with an increased spend on training for all school staff in matters relating to SEND and an increased funding for specific interventions. However, not all responses were as positive as one SENCO stated,

> *'I'm told by the head/bursar that you could view the funding as 'Each time you are successful in getting a child an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan), the school has to find £6000' OK if they are existing pupils, but if new ones want to join the school it has cost implications!!! I don't know!'*

Whilst another stated, *'I know that I have to do more and more with a decreasing amount of money each year!'* Once again, this SENCO viewpoint has altered little from SENCO perceptions in previous studies.

There was a significantly positive SENCO response in Part 3: Communication (**Qs. 22 & 23**) in terms of the SENCOs being able to present and discuss pupil needs/provision and issues relating to the management of provision with staff (in briefings and meetings) and with parents/carers. Here (n=32;80%) had occasional or regular meetings with staff and (n=37;93%) had occasional or regular meetings with parents/carers.   However, there was the worrying proportion of (n= 8; 20%) of SENCOs who had infrequent or no formal channel for communications with staff and the (n=5; 13%) who had infrequent communications with parents.

Fig (7:6) Qs 22 & 23.
To what extent are you able to present/discuss pupil(s) needs & provision (and any issues relating to the management of SEN provision) in staff briefings and staff meetings (Q22) and with parents/carers (Q23)
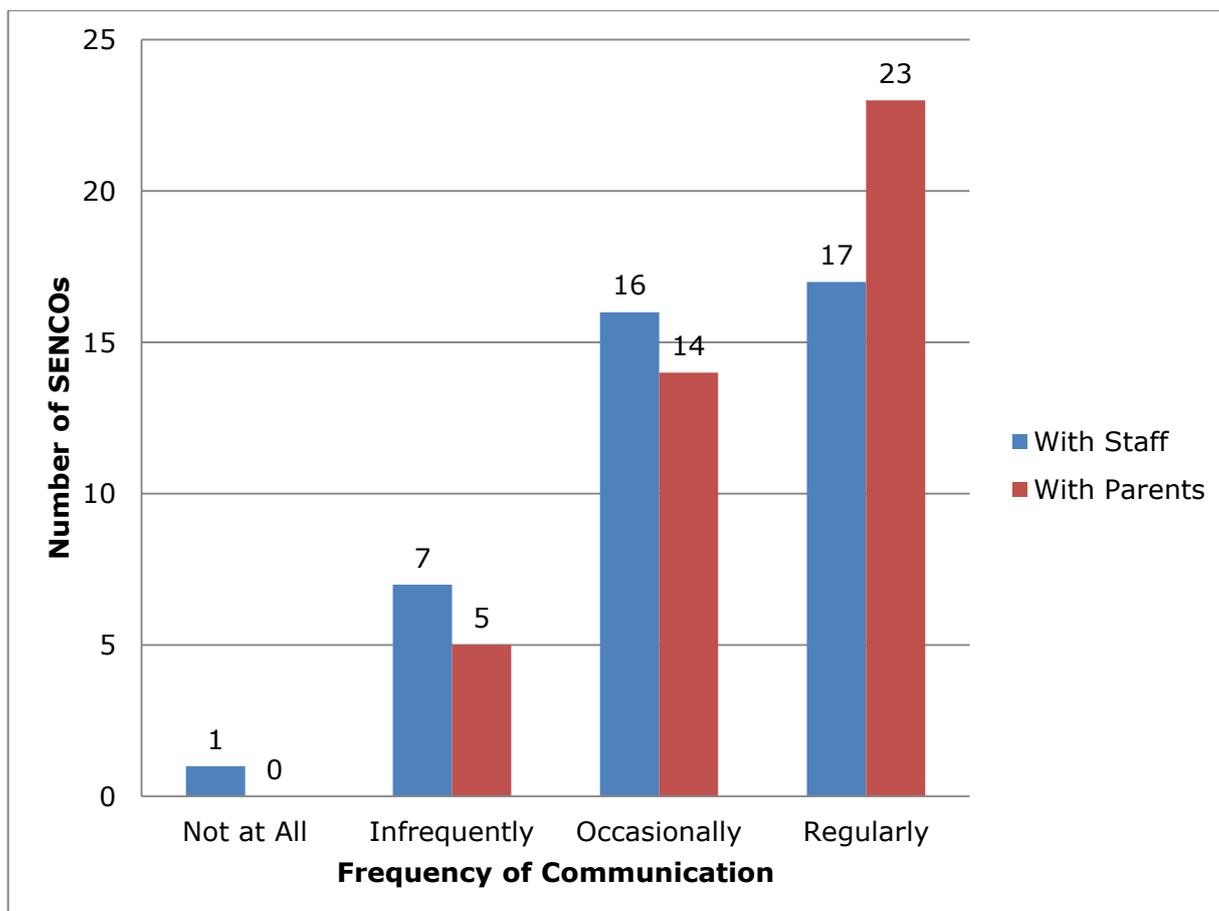
(Q 24), which asked SENCOs to judge the frequency with which they were able to meet with their head-teachers in order to discuss matters relating to provision for SEND did present some surprising data as I did expect all SENCOs to respond in the *'Regularly'* category on the given Likert Scale; however only (n=22; 55%) reported this to be the case with (n=10; 25%) stating that they met 'occasionally' and (n=8; 20%) stating that any such meeting was infrequent. The DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* is explicit in Section 6.87 (p97) when it states that SENCOs have an important role to play with their head-teachers and governing bodies in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in their schools. The question arises as to the ability of some SENCOs not being able to meet like this on a regular basis in order to do this with any efficacy; however **(Q24)** did not ask for further clarification as to whether this level of liaison was facilitated by the SENCO or the head-teacher.

A positive response was obtained from (**Q 25)** relating to how many SENCOs had a governor who was assigned the SEND 'brief' in their schools with the majority (n=36;90%) reporting that they had one. However, responses to (**Q 26**) about how they worked in partnership with this governor were varied. Some SENCOs saw their 'SEN governor' on a regular basis (at least monthly) in both formal and informal contexts. For example, one SENCO stated,

> *'We meet every month and the SEN Governor comes into school for a half-day to talk with me and asks me if there is anything he can 'champion' for me at the full governors' meeting. He's a good bloke who really has my welfare at heart and the welfare of the children in the school.'*

Others (in the main) had a termly meeting and/or had regular e-mail contact with them but one SENCO stated:

> *'Haven't met him yet as the Head meets with the Gov so does the Inclusion manager but not me…I feel left out!'* And…*'I don't – the Assistant Head/INCO does it all'.*

Another SENCO stated,

> *'Currently we have a poor working relationship. We recently became an academy and the Gov body is new. I haven't made contact with the SEN Gov as yet ..but he hasn't contacted me either!*

This range of SENCO experience relating to partnership with their SEN governor presented a sharp contrast between schools, but perhaps a much stronger illustration of this Contextual Variety came through the responses to **Part 4: Managing Teaching Assistants (Qs 27 to 29).** Being responsible for employing, inducting, deploying, training, assessing the quality of and managing the Teaching Assistant Team can be viewed as significant indicators of SENCOs acting, certainly, in a 'management' role but with the potential for leadership' in terms of developing provision for SEND in the school and enthusing colleagues with their 'vision'. Overall, the general picture of managing & deploying TAs presented a partly deficit view as the *'no responsibility'* returns for (**Q27**) far outnumbered the *'full responsibility'* in all but one segment **(Fig. 7:7).** However, the results were not entirely negative in outlook as a high number reported that they had 'partial responsibility' and shared the duty with a range of other staff (**Q28**) **(Fig. 7.8)** but out of those who had no or shared responsibility for managing and deploying the TA team **(Q29)** data reports that (n= 15; 38%) were not happy with the situation and (n=11; 28%) were only partially happy.

As expected, there was a high proportion of both head-teachers, and other senior managers (deputy heads, assistant heads and key Stage leaders) taking on the responsibility of managing and deploying the TA team. There were a couple of unusual situations of class-teachers being allocated their own 'personal TA' and taking on complete responsibility for their work and of an academy having a specialist member of the Administrative Team taking on the responsibility in all matters relating to TA employment, deployment , quality assurance and overall 'management'.

Fig (7:7)   Q.27.
Are you responsible for any of the following duties involving the management of Teaching Assistants in your school?
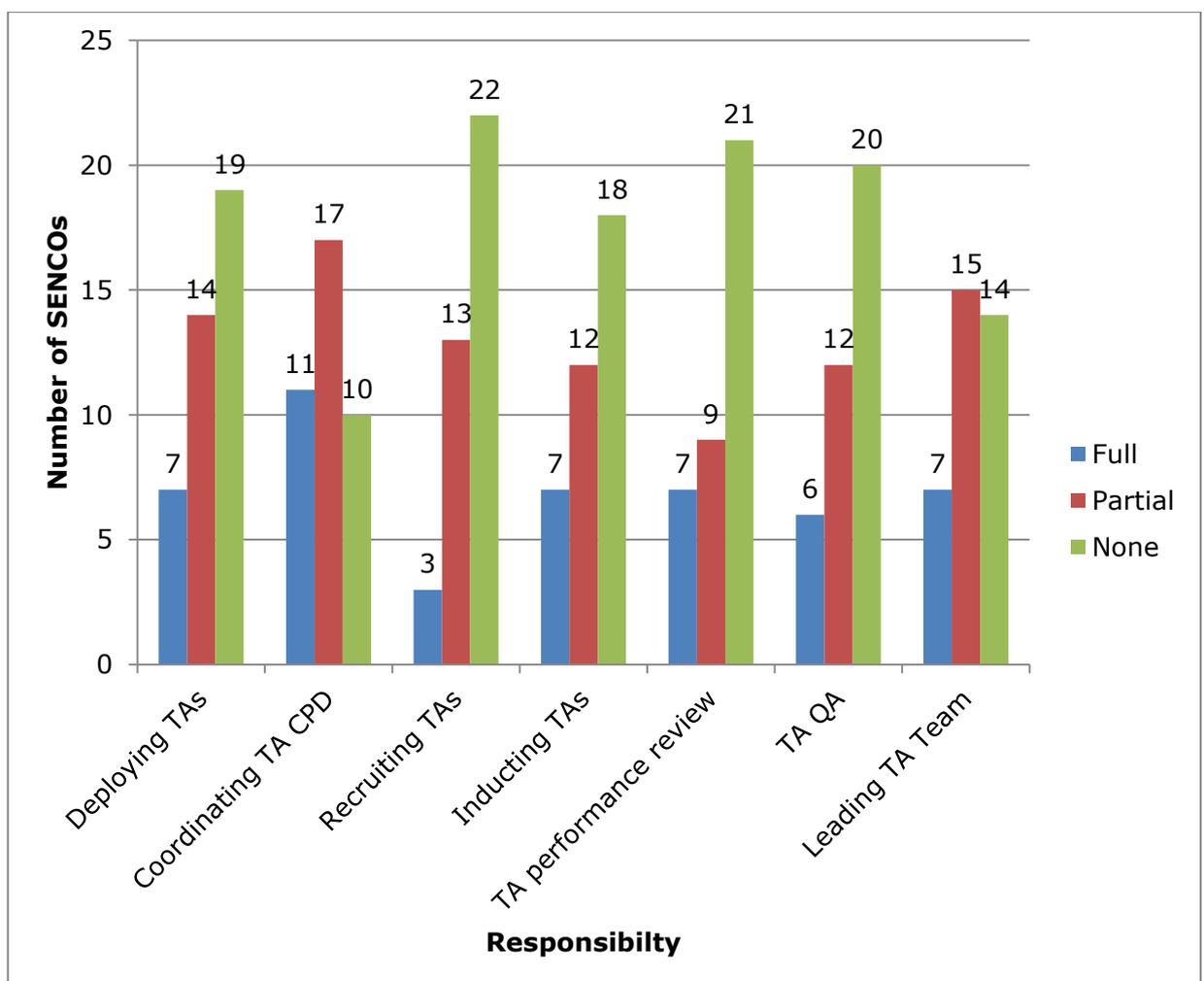
Fig. (7:8)   Q.28.
If you are not responsible for managing & deploying TAs in your school – who is? **(Note:** For (Q28) only (n=37) SENCOs provided a response to the question)

.
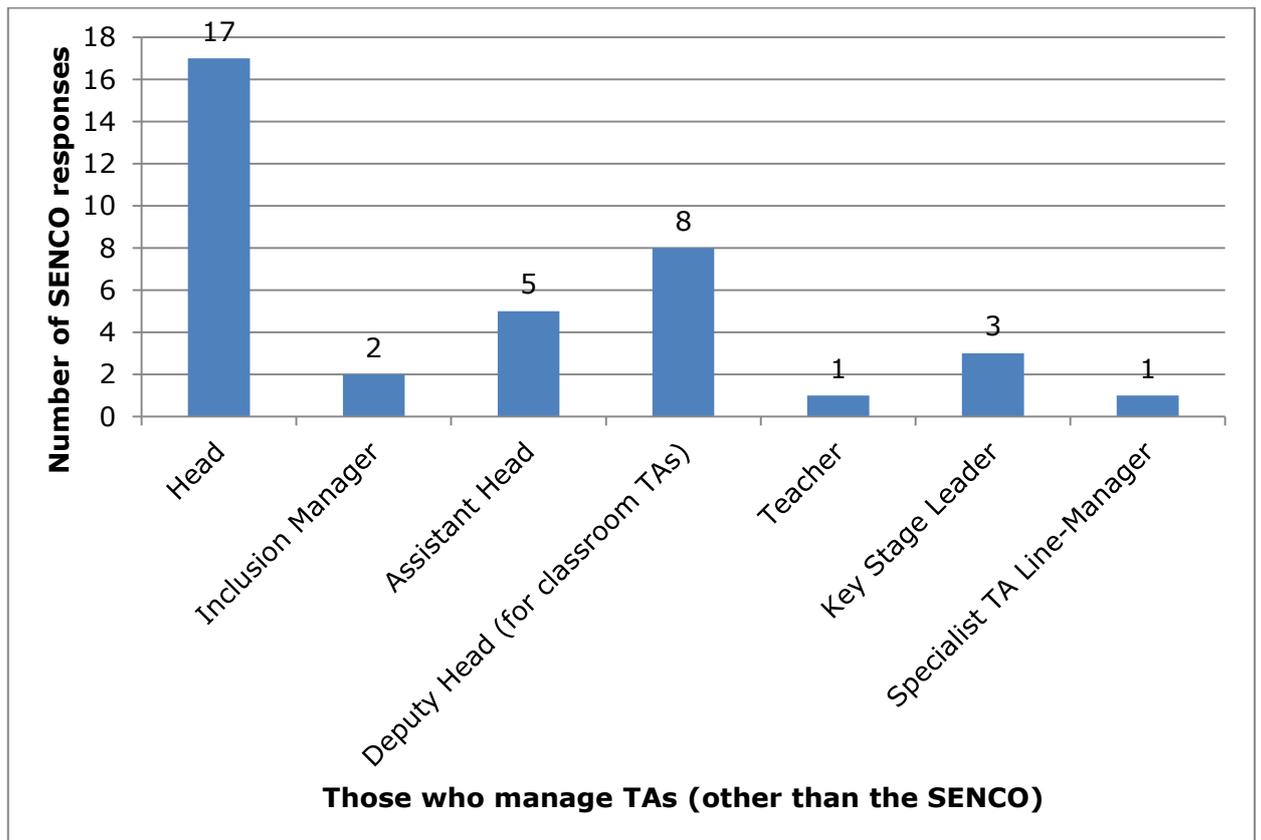
In all of these cases, the SENCO seemed to have had little or no 'voice', hence in **(Q.29) (Fig 7:9)** there appears a high level of SENCOs exhibiting dissatisfaction and partial satisfaction (n=26: 65%) with these arrangements.

Fig. (7:9)   Q29
If the last question (Q28) applies to your situation, are you happy with this set up?
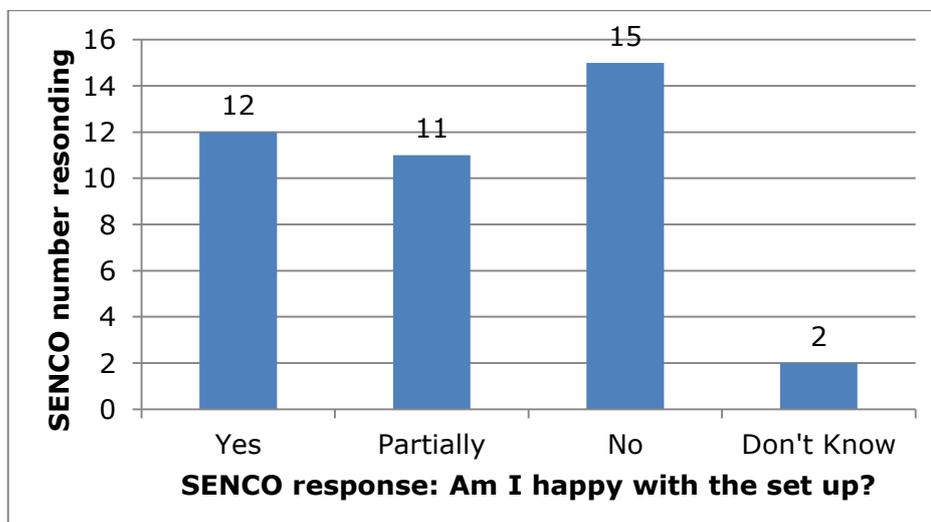
Note: For (Q29) (Fig 7:9) above there was some inconsistency as (n=40) SENCOs responded to this question compared to (n=37) for (Q28).

The overall picture regarding this sample group of SENCOs being responsible for managing and deploying their TAs in their schools still remains particularly fractured in spite of over twenty-two years' worth of statutory guidance expressing that the SENCO is best placed to do this task. Unfortunately, for this sample, nearly half of them do not get any opportunity to do this with their TA team(s).

Part 5: Professional Development and INSET (Qs 30 to 32) provided a positive outlook in terms of SENCOs engaged in leading staff development as three-quarters of them (n=30: 75%) were actively involved in some form of school-based training related directly to SEND. The range of training was diverse and very pertinent to teachers and TAs' understanding of pupil needs, new legislation, school procedures and processes linked to the identification of SEN and reporting on pupils' progress, encouraging the pupils' voices, training/supporting newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and partnership working. This range and level of SENCO engagement was shown in the responses for **(Q.31)** in **Fig. (7:10).**

Fig (7:10) Q. 31

Areas where the SENCOs deliver Staff INSET
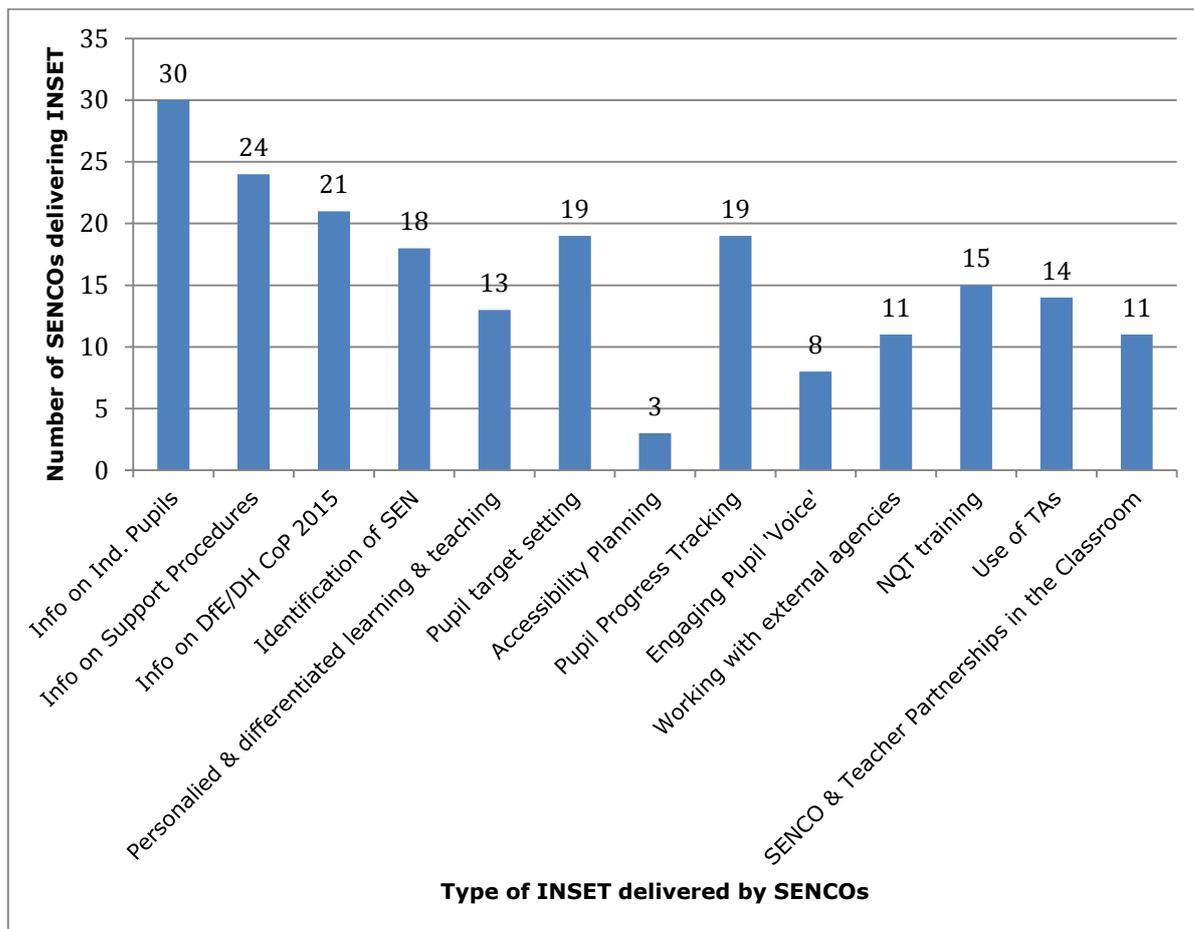
Although this was a positive outlook in comparison with SENCOs managing and leading the TA team, it cannot be ignored that a quarter of the sample group did not engage with delivering professional development and training for their colleagues in their schools. This is a significant finding which might indicate some schools as not having SEND as a priority and not giving SENCOs the opportunity to practice this key aspect of their management/leadership role. It is also interesting that the range illustrated in **(Fig 7:10)** features most SENCOs engaging in the INSET that is more aligned with the 'performativity-driven' aspects of their role – target setting, pupil performance tracking, identification, processes and procedures and the *CoP* – with fewer engaged in INSET relating to developing an inclusive school, encouraging the pupil 'voice', accessibility planning, personalised learning, and SENCO and teacher partnerships. Surprisingly, working with external agencies and supporting newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are reported with lower figures.

For those who stated that they did not take part in delivering staff training **(Q. 32)** the restricting factors were being given no time to do it (one SENCO reported that *'I'm told to use my time for SENCO admin. by the head'*), other staff were doing it (another SENCO stated, *'The Inclusion Manager takes this on and won't share it!'*), SEND not being seen as a school/academy priority as the focus was on STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) and, *'examination (SATS) improvement for those children on borderlines'.* One SENCO reported that, *'I was told that it wasn't a part of my SENCO role by my head.'* The Contextual Variety between schools and its influence on the SENCO role is illustrated by this range of responses and the priorities placed on the type of INSET provided by the SENCO.

Part 6 (Qs 33 to 35) focused on policies for SEN in the school. The majority of schools had a policy for SEND (n=39; 98%). Policy review was mainly undertaken by the SENCO (n=13; 33%) or through SENCO/head-teacher partnership (n=15; 38%), however a significant number reported that they had no policy review input as this was undertaken by either the head alone or by the SLT (n=12; 30%). Like SENCO input into staff INSET, although this figure is in the minority, it provided another indicator for SENCOs not being given the opportunity to work as a leader influencing and directing the development of provision across their schools.

Part 7 (Qs 36 to 42) focused on financing and special examination arrangements. This is where SENCOs reported a lack of opportunity to engage. Only a small number (n=5; 13%) reported being responsible for managing any funding for pupils with SEND. The majority stated that other staff controlled funding arrangements for SEND. Mostly it was the head-teacher alone (or with an inclusion manager) who managed funding (n=26;65%) although the emergence of 'business managers' in academy primary schools doing this became evident (n=9;23%). This did provide a strong 'flavour' of primary education being in the quasi-marketplace.

The SENCO being restricted in matters relating to funding by their school leaders was further illustrated in **(Q39)** as only a few (n=8;20%) were fully responsible for managing Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) for pupils with SEND; the majority of SENCOs did work in partnership with others (n=27; 68%) but there was a worrying number (n=7;18%) who had little or no input into EHCPs ; this

was a worrying statistic as it was always assumed, by myself as a SENCO trainer, by my professional colleagues delivering SENCO training and by LA representatives supporting us in SENCO training, that this was a key SENCO management function for all of them which was enshrined in the learning outcomes of the *National Award for SEN Coordination* and in the succession of *Codes of Practice since* 1994. This was clearly not the case within this sample group. These figures were similarly represented in **(Q. 40)** in the SENCOs' engagement in managing Pupil Premium funding arrangements.

Although not directly related to funding **(Qs 41 and 42)** focused on special examination (KS2 SATS) arrangements. This is a procedure involving careful individual pupil data gathering and assessment usually involving external services and the creation of a strong case for additional support during formal/summative national testing. I did make the assumption that the SENCO must be a central member of staff in the coordination and management of this complicated and time-consuming process due to their professional and specialist role in coordinating the day-to-day provision for pupils with SEND, but this assumption was proven to be incorrect for this sample as the majority (n=26;65%) had no input as other senior staff (mainly the head-teacher alone or layers of 'management' staff placed over the SENCO in the school's hierarchy) took on this responsibility, much like the situation involving funding for SEND.

Part 8 (Qs 43 to 48) was designed to explore the SENCOs' engagement with their own professional development. All SENCOs reported that they had the opportunity to attending INSET for their own needs; they all recognised that their *SEN Co-ordination Award* had been a part of this with the majority (n=35;88%) attending regular LA SENCO conferences. They reported on a range of other types of INSET delivered by both their LAs and by other training providers in subjects/areas specific to their own (and their school's) needs (e.g. safeguarding, specific learning needs, pupil progress tracking, behaviour and mental health amongst others). SENCOs reported a limited engagement with their own self-directed study/reading as only a few kept themselves updated through accessing journals, literature or websites (including the DfE/OFSTED websites). In a more positive vein a small majority (n=26; 65%) did undertake some school based inquiry/research with most of these remembering that the assignments for their *National Award for SEN Coordination* required them to engage in this way; unfortunately the remainder (n=14;35%) had forgotten about their work on their

Award and did not engage in any other form of practitioner research. Those recognising their SEN Award as being an important factor in their school-based research reported that it was effective as it set out the requirements/expectations of their role, helped to develop effective provision mapping, helped with systematic critical reviews of provision, was school-based and purposeful and had taught them everything they needed to know to get started in the role. One SENCO also reported,

> *'I'm starting to understand how badly I'm used by my academy. I now have knowledge and a voice but I'm still not allowed to use it in my school.'*

Another SENCOs stated:

> *'It opened my eyes to the scope of the role and the status, resources that I should have to be able to do it properly,'*

While another reported that it,

> *'Made me see how little my views are actively sought but it also gave me the opportunity to do some monitoring of provision and drawing together a plan to improve things'.*

The frustration appearing here relating to the opportunities available for SENCOs to use their 'voice' and to be recognised in terms of status in their schools came through in their responses in the final section of the questionnaire.

Part 9 (Qs 49 to 59) focused on SENCO 'well-being' and their own reflections on their role. SENCO responses here enhanced, complemented and supported many of the indicators already presented. When asked why they wanted to become a SENCO **(Q.49)** the highest number of primary ranked-responses on the sliding scale indicated that it was to gain specialist knowledge in the field of SEND and to develop/enhance their existing management and leadership skills. Career progression/career change appeared to be less of a reason for taking on the SENCO role. When asked **(Q.50)** *how* they became the SENCO, only (n=15;38%) stated that they applied for the post; (n=17;43%) reported that their head-teacher asked them to take it on and (n=9;23%) stated that they had little or no choice in becoming the SENCO. This sort of response was similar to some of the responses from SENCOs in Pearson and Gathercole's (2011) report for NASEN in the *National Award for SENCOs: Transforming SENCOs.* In this

report the SENCOs reported different routes into the role with only one SENCO referring to an interview process with comments from others about being

> 'nudged or invited to take on the role…in such cases there appeared to be some pre-existing contact or a disposition towards the role….one spoke of drifting into the role …There was evidence of an internal turnover of the role in some schools.'
> (p 10).

There was a range of responses in (**Q.51**) which asked SENCOs directly to consider the amount of autonomy as a leader they perceived themselves to have in their school – from having a great deal of autonomy to having none at all. The majority felt themselves to have a 'reasonable' amount of autonomy with some elements of the role being led by others, however the term *'reasonable'* was not specifically quantified in the question.

Fig (7:11) Q.51
How much autonomy do you have in your role as a SENCO who leads SEN provision across the school?
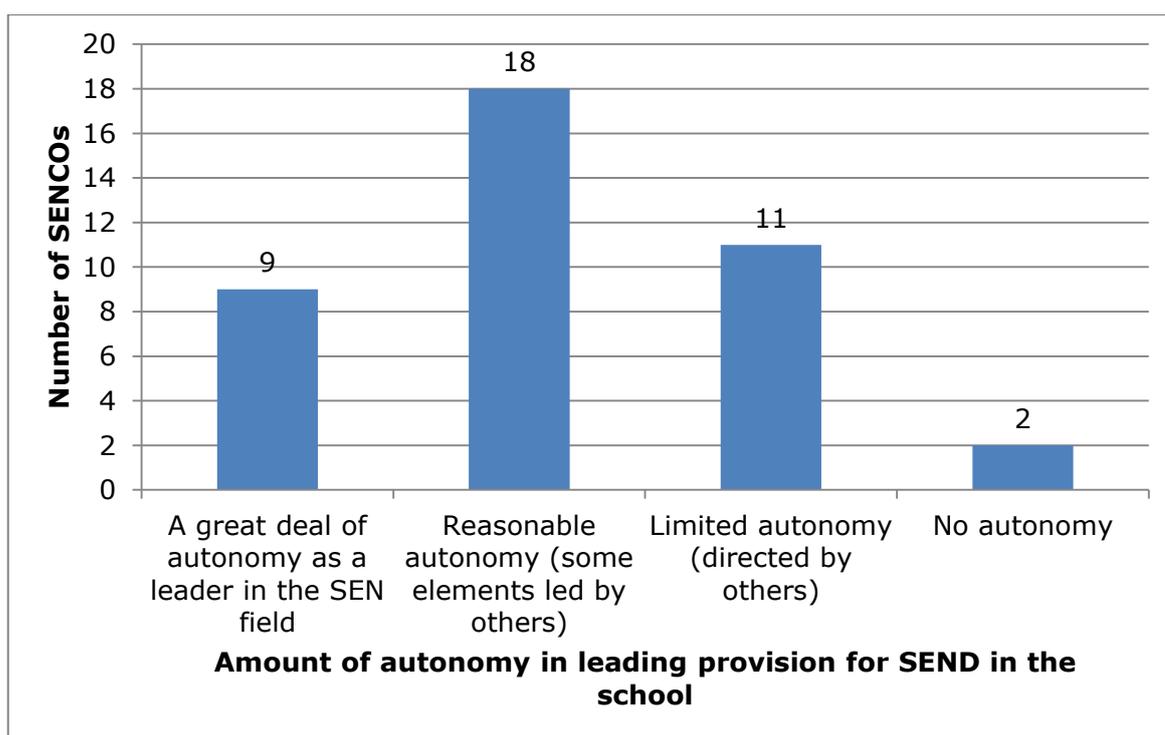
In justifying their situation in relation to their autonomy as a leader, SENCOs' statements were varied. Table (7:2) presents their statements on the level of autonomy they have (a great deal, a reasonable amount and limited/none).

Table (7:2)

SENCO statements: Autonomy as a Leader

Level of Autonomy		
A Great Deal	**Reasonable Autonomy**	**Limited or No Autonomy**
I have re-written the policy, introduced new resources and developed a new system of resourcing.	*I am not on the SLT therefore do not always have a say on the 'bigger picture' – however in some areas I am expected to take on a leadership role making other staff accountable.*	*The INCO does it all (or nearly). I don't have a say. It's very frustrating as I really DO know best where to deploy TAs*
Developed own assessment & identification flow-chart and hold regular pupil-progress meetings for SEND with HT & staff. I am frequently asked for advice.	*I have 2 x days to do the SENCO work each week. I manage my time and am flexible. The Head & Bursar make the funding decisions but they liaise with me. Although I make the majority of other decisions I feel able to double check with them. This works well. I'm not on the SLT but I have many conversations which feed into the SLT.*	*The Assistant Head/INCO won't let go of the reins – she's the previous SENCO who's been elevated into this leadership role but she hasn't realised that she isn't the SENCO any longer. Nice woman but an absolute pain in the backside as a line-manager!*
I am able to recruit, train and monitor TAs and make changes to suit the needs of the school, I'm given free rein to deal with all aspects of SEND but I get excellent support from the head.	*I organise interventions in consultation with teaching staff and I manage the TAs. I don't have any influence over funding but in all other matters I work in partnership with the head*	*I am able to organise my own time and my work with pupils and my paperwork. I'm not on SLT and don't manage TAs or have control over any funding but I have a fixed amount given to me.*
I'm allowed to manage my own timetable so this makes me more flexible when managing appointments. I am allowed 2 x days over the week but am trusted to assign enough time to SEN and my other management duties.	*I am able to organise my own time, arrange meetings, direct work with the governor, organise INSET all without the need to check with the head. But, I don't have financial control of the SEN budget or any knowledge of the notional budget.*	*I can set my own timetable but am given elements & direction of areas to promote.*
		I have a really limited control of any budget related to SEN and it is very, very frustrating…I don't even know how much funding is coming into the school as I am left out of the loop for this.
		I'm not on the SLT, I don't have to manage the funding, I don't (really) deal with external agencies, my head does all the reviews and all I do is the paperwork and some interventions. The SENCO Award is a real eye-opener as I've learnt how a SENCO

	should work and how they should be treated by the school. To say that I feel undervalued is an understatement!

In the table above the range of SENCO 'experience/status and responsibility' relating to autonomy to act as a leader strengthens the idea of the SENCO being on *'Shifting Sands'* (Fig (4:2) p 134) due to the Contextual Variety between schools. The factors relating to a SENCO having a great deal of autonomy as a leader seem to relate to the head-teacher supporting and having trust in the SENCO to manage provision without micro-managing or restricting time/resources. The SENCO responses in the first column of Table (7:2) indicate significant examples of SENCOs being able to both manage and lead provision across their schools. The factor in relation to a SENCO feeling that they have a medium (or 'reasonable') level of autonomy is the 'partnership' of SENCOs and heads/SLT members sharing the responsibilities. There seems to be three key factors relating to SENCOs feeling that they have a low level of autonomy – head-teacher/SLT micro-management, the SENCO having very little (or no) input into financing and budgeting for SEND provision and the SENCO not being on the senior leadership team; these factors had the potential to lead to levels of frustration.

The responses to the following question **(Q.53)** on what the SENCOs' schools do to enhance their well-being presented a range of responses, as was expected due the contextual differences between schools with a significant number of SENCOs (n=17;43%) stated *'nothing'* or *'very little'.* There were a number of well-being activities/enhancements listed with some SENCOs focusing on supportive head-teachers who recognise the work they do (n=8;20%) while others focused on 'comforts' such as social events and free staffroom refreshments (n=10;25%) . Some of the frustrations felt by SENCOs appeared in their responses to **(Q.54)** where they listed what they considered to be the current benefits and opportunities for them due to being the SENCO in their school. Although the question asked for a positive response, the negative did surface. The SENCO responses were collated and displayed as a column chart (**Fig 7:12**).

Fig (7:12) Q 54
What are the current benefits/opportunities of being the SENCO in your school?
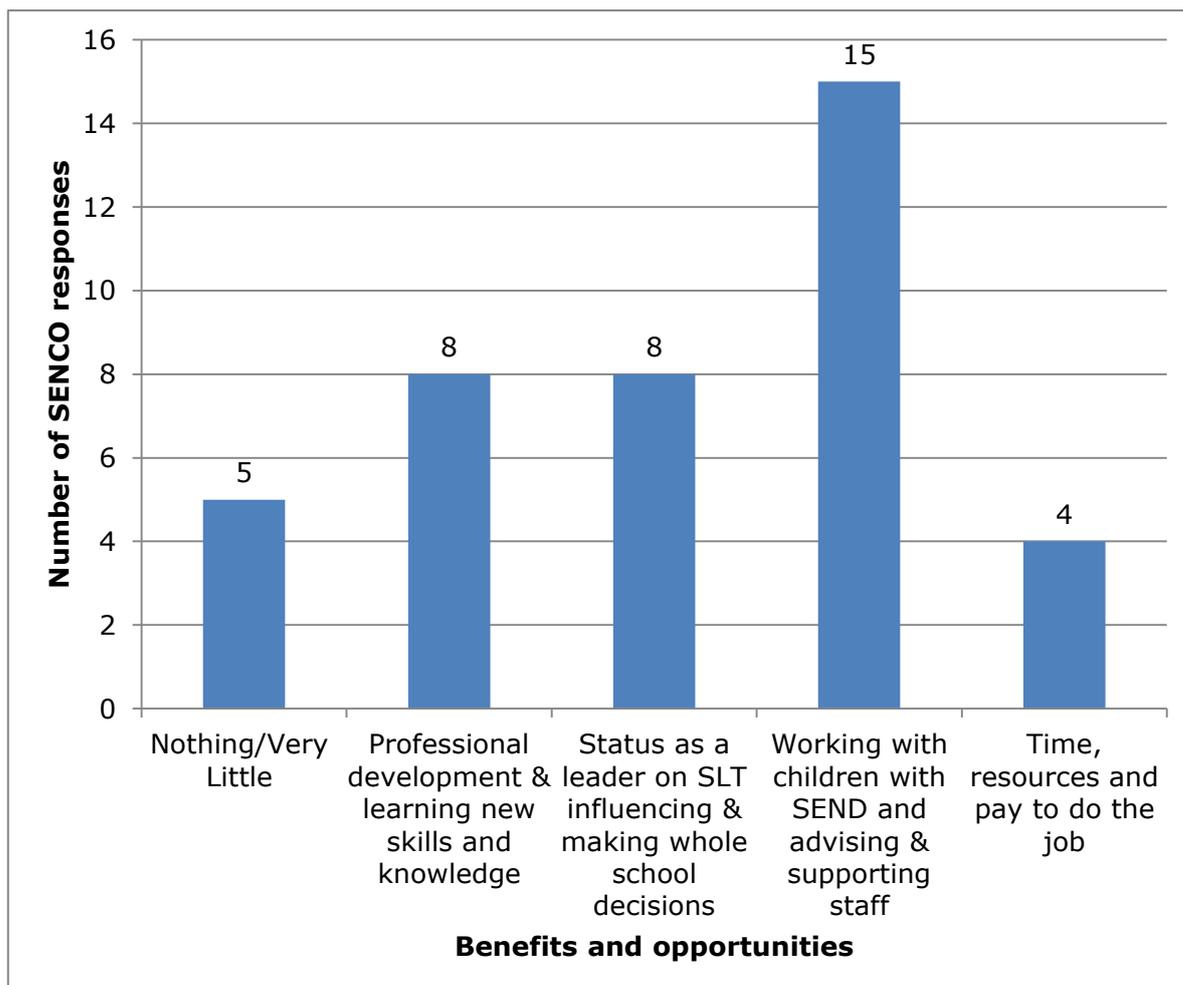
The category with the highest response focused on the SENCO working with the pupils and with the staff with SENCO comments including*,*

> *'Working with unique and interesting children with SEND in the school and making a difference to their engagement, achievements and positive outcomes'* and *'to help teachers (my colleagues) understand and meet the needs of children with SEND'.*

However, this exceptionally positive response was opposed by the few (n=5;13%) who made statements such as,

> *'Nothing yet. Now that I know how I'm not being able to really 'do' the job properly due to poor management in my school'* and *'Nothing at the moment as I seem to be the SENCO 'in name only' (and it's VERY frustrating!)'.*

The parallel question **(Q.55)** which asked the SENCOs to provide their opinions on the current negative aspects of being a SENCO drew out unsurprising

comments particularly related to lack of time, lack of resources and receiving no additional pay/allowances for doing the job. Once again the SENCO responses were collated and presented as a column chart (**Fig. 7.13**). Most negative responses were recorded against things such as lack of time (mainly due to having to balance the SENCO role and responsibilities with class-teaching) resulting in an excessive workload, the lack of resources and administrative support and the low status of the SENCO (with limited autonomy and no place on the school's SLT). These negative issues comprised 57% of the overall comments with other factors relating to the volume of paperwork, teachers not taking on any responsibility for SEN in their classes whilst expecting the SENCO to be the *'instant expert'* and SENCOs receiving no additional payment/allowances for doing the SENCO role being important areas for concern. SENCO comments included:

> *'The lack of autonomy to be a mover-and-shaker in my school…the head makes ALL the decisions with matters SEND and I am expected to just manage things…never to be proactive and lead change. I'm not happy with this situation especially when we are expected to develop our professional skills as strategic leaders…all I do is administer and shift paper...it's not good enough!'*

> *'The demands and sheer pressure from fellow teachers, TAs, parents etc. The expectation that I'm the 'perfect SENCO' who can cure all their problems with SEN at the wave of my 'magic wand'…it's very wearing and it's really getting me down!'*

Further comments included:

> *'There's no chance to develop provision, engage with external agencies or to work with my colleagues in their classrooms (a mixture of not being given the chance and of always being stuck in my classroom teaching)'*

> *''Pay for the job…I don't get any! All this extra/specialist work seems to be done out of the goodness of my own heart because it's the right thing to do. You know I wouldn't mind if the academy was hard up but it isn't so I deserve a better pay rate for this job so I really think that my goodwill is being taken for granted!'*

> *'The sheer rate of change in SEND matters making schools political footballs with all this testing-testing-testing regime and the constant supervision/monitoring and inspection. I HATE IT but I LOVE the kids.'*

Fig (7:13) Q.55
In your opinion, what are the current negative aspects of being a SENCO?

Number of SENCOs (y-axis)

- SENCO role is an isolated one: 1
- No time made available (excessive workload): 16
- Volume of paperwork & administration: 5
- Poor or no resources or admin support: 9
- No additional payment for role: 4
- Limited external services support (due to cut-backs): 3
- SEND is not a school priority: 2
- Lack of autonomy & status (not on SLT): 8
- Demands from parents: 3
- Teachers not taking responsibility for SEN (SENCO as 'instant expert'): 6

Negative aspects of being a SENCO in my school (x-axis)

Some of these SENCOs identified the 'performativity-driven' climate within their school impacting on their role and the conflict between their legal and Psychological Contracts where engaging with additional work was identified as *'the right thing to do'* but this was felt to be consistently exploited by the school due to not being awarded a suitable level of pay for the status of being the SENCO.

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When given the opportunity in **(Q.56)** to think about three aspects of their SENCO role they would like to change in order to make the role more manageable and fulfilling the results were, in the main, unsurprising as the majority 'wish' was for significantly more protected time (and time 'freed from the classroom') in order to manage provision for SEN and to work with their colleagues in their classrooms. This issue of 'time' was followed by better/more resources (this included support for administration), to be paid for doing the job for recognition/higher status by being a member of the SLT and for a greater input and understanding into funding/budgeting for SEND. Two SENCOs interestingly 'stood back' from purely school-orientated matters and focused on wider issues and one SENCO commented that,

> *'The Media view of teachers needs to change as we're often reported as being incompetent and lazy having all these holidays. I'm also fed up with the government banging on about how they are raising standards by what they are doing it's what we're doing that counts they're just messing it up and interfering and the newspapers believe them and not us but they've done that for years as most of the press are run by people like Murdoch! Thank god for 'Educating Yorkshire' and the other things on the TV as that's much better.'*

Another SENCO wanted to change the excessive focus on assessment and inspection nationally. Although formal/summative national assessment and inspection were included in the content of their *SEN Award* training only this single SENCO gave it any significance in their 'wish list' of changes although worries relating to OFSTED inspection did feature in previous question responses and in the narratives/concept maps from Strand (1).

Fig (7:14) Q.56.
If you could change 3 aspects of the SENCO role in order to make the job more manageable, secure and fulfilling for you, what would these three things be?
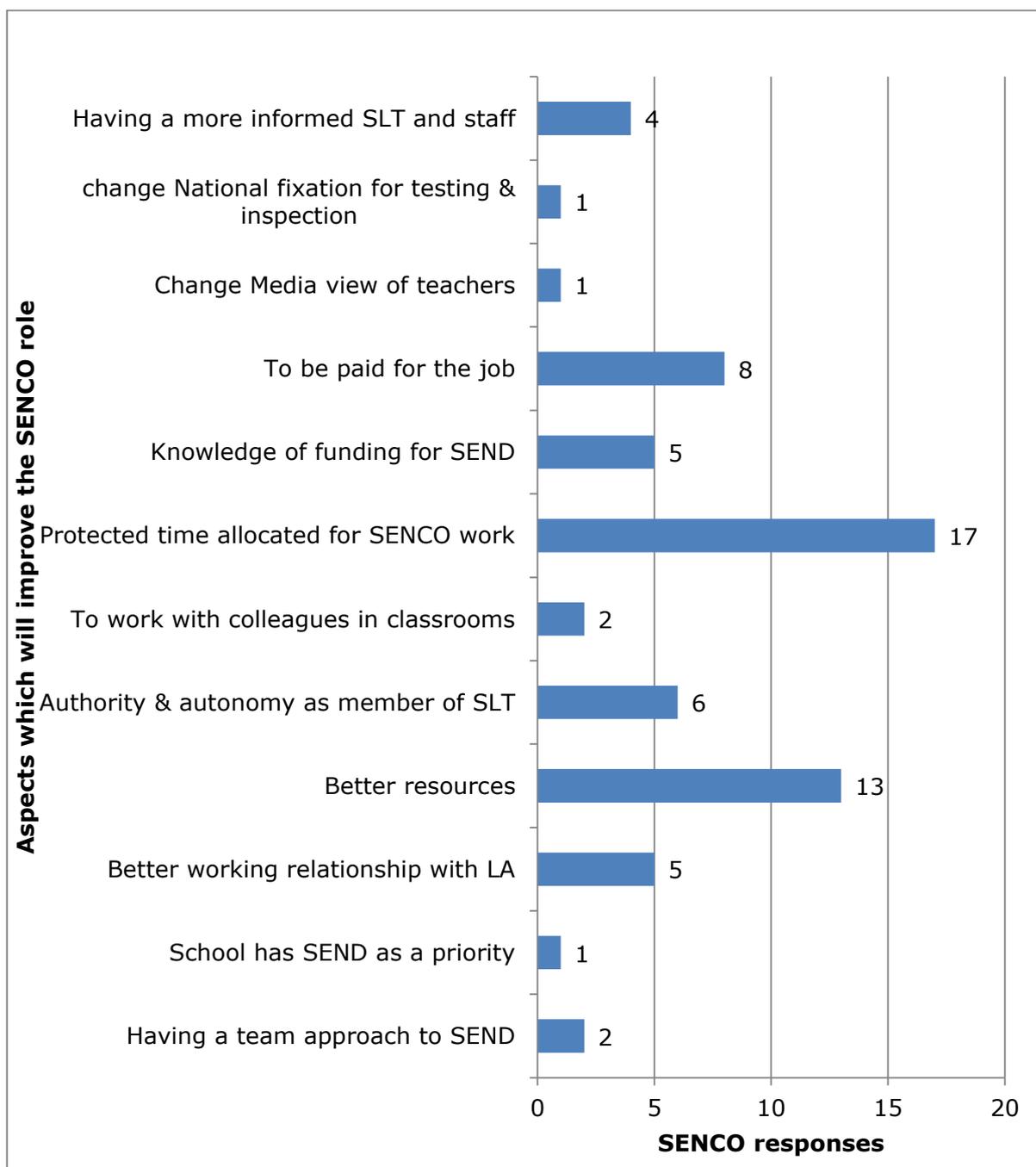
When asked , in **(Q. 57),** if their head-teacher was to give them the choice to give up their SENCO role in order to take on another post within the school the majority of the sample group (n=26;65%) stated that they would stay in post. However, the large proportion (n=14;35%) who would give up the role could not be 'down-played' as there were indications of dissatisfaction or perhaps even some 'SENCO burnout'. This initial indication was strengthened by SENCO

comments in **(Q.58)** where they were asked to predict where they might be (professionally) in five years' time. Some of the comments supported the findings in **(Q.57)** as they ranged from leaving the profession altogether (n=2), to getting out of their academy/academy chain (n=4), to retirement ('*Hooray!'* was the actual written comment). In a more positive light some saw the SENCO role as a route to headship/deputy headship (n=11) either in their own, or another school; this factor of the SENCOs seeing themselves on a career pathway hoping for a senior managerial position was recognised by NASEN in their 2007 report on *The recruitment, induction and retention of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators* where the point was made that although this impacted on the retention of SENCOs there were longer-term advantages in that there will be deputy head-teachers and head-teachers who will be well-informed about SEND and the role of the SENCO.   The largest number (n=19;48%) saw themselves remaining as the SENCO in a primary school with several qualifying this with higher status, elevation to the SLT and with greater links to working with Local Authority teams. One SENCO comment was an honest, '*I don't know'.*

The final question **(Q.59)** provided the opportunity for the SENCOs to add anything else they would like to say about their role which had not been communicated already. There were several statements about the lack of time, resources and administrative support and the need to make the SENCO a mandatory position on schools' senior leadership teams, one SENCO stated, '*At present I feel more like an underpaid, inexperienced social worker…'* all of which I expected to be expressed. There was the SENCO who, although resigned to whole-class teaching, commented on the value of the role and the specific need for time devoted to developing leadership-based working,

> '*This is a very important and valuable role where 'time' (or lack of it) is the main factor in completing the job to a high standard. Although I am happy teaching full time as well as being SENCO, I would prefer an extra afternoon for leadership-based working so I can devote my other time to SENCO on the other 'one afternoon' I have per week.'*

While others commented on issues wider than those related to their own school, one SENCO from an academy school identified the elements of Contextual Variety and the influence of the head-teacher in determining the nature of the role in spite of the statutory guidelines held within the 2015 *CoP* and the learning outcomes and content of the *National Award for SEN Coordination* ,

> *'The SENCO role seems to vary from school-to-school and there seems to be a real disparity between SENCOs – time allocation, responsibilities etc. I think that the Nat. SENCO Award and the new CoP has given more importance to the status of a SENCO which could easily be a full-time role in most primary schools…however, it seems that it is up to each school's head to decide how the SENCO works and what she should do in the role regardless of what the Award and CoP state.'*

The influence and power of the head-teacher was expressed, in a negative way, by another SENCO who focused on the school's priorities and micro-management by senior colleagues,

> *'My Head is seemingly not interested in SEND and the INCO is far too controlling (micro managing) but never lets me actually 'do' what the job entails. She was the old/previous SENCO until given an assistant head position as INCO now she can't delegate (apart from the crappy jobs she doesn't want to do – like the never ending paperwork) so I have no opportunity to develop, review, manage or lead.'*

This SENCO was denied the opportunity to lead and their comment directly opposed the ideas of SENCOs being promoted to senior positions having a more understanding view of the role of the SENCO and their professional needs as expressed in the discussion around *'well-informed'* senior staff who had previously been SENCOs, in the previous question. The SENCO as a leader was the focus for another SENCO's comment:

> *'The Government needs to fully clarify the status of SENCOs in schools…MUST they be on the leadership team or not? None of this shady 'should' nonsense…the same also goes for allocated/statutory hours for SENCOs …let there be a firm decision made over the % of protected hours for SENCOs in a school which all schools should abide by.'*

This SENCO identified the key area of tension within the role and how it was realised within all schools – the issue of the *'should'* versus the *'must'* becoming the 'seed-bed' which generates the Contextual Variety based on individual school culture, priority for SEND, school 'vision', head-teacher/SLT general knowledge and understanding of SEND/barriers to learning (both in terms of specialist provision for SEND and of differentiated/personalised learning and teaching within the mainstream classroom) and the willingness of the SENCO to develop as a transformational leader which extends their managerial/administrative role.

Although these SENCO commentaries presented a negative view, there were several commentaries which had a significantly positive feeling, particularly in relation to working with children and *'making a difference'* to positive outcomes for them:

> *'I really love the sense of reward and the forming of positive relationships with parents and outside agencies. It's nice to know that I can make a difference to the children – be it contributing to diagnosis, referrals, deciding next steps, just supporting them to feel happier.'*

And,

> *'I absolutely love the role! It's very hard work and a steep learning curve but I love that every day is different and I get to work with some amazing children and their families. I love being able to learn more about different SEND and extend my own knowledge. '*

Penultimate comments came from two SENCOs who used the opportunity to think-back over the previous years since they took on the role. This was an interesting factor as it had a resonance with the sample in Strand (1), the SENCOs who were new to SEN Award training and were, in the main, 'brand new' in post. Several of the Strand (1) participants expressed the same vulnerability and self-doubt about being able to manage the role. One SENCO in **(Q.59)** stated,

> *'Having taken on the role 2 yrs ago I was very unsure of my ability to make changes, now time has passed and I am busier than ever but I know I have made a positive difference.'*

And the second, in recognising the 'long haul' of becoming a SENCO and the demands of others, wrote,

> *'The area of SEN is a big one and should involve significant study time over many years for a SENCO. This can be daunting to a new SENCO particularly as colleagues and parents demand that they should know everything about SEND from the beginning!'*

The final comment from a SENCO identified the heavy administrative load as reducing the time spent working with children, but placing this as a significant part of being a teacher *per se*. She stated,

> *'There's just far, far too much paperwork and not enough time made available for focusing on the children…although isn't that 'teaching' full-stop now?'*

7.4   Questionnaire Key Themes

Although all of the SENCOs had the same shared experience of attending, studying on and successfully completing their National Award for SEN Coordination the questionnaire data/findings illustrated that any other shared experience did not apply as there was a significant diversity/disparity between schools and SENCOs in role title, resourcing, protected time given for undertaking SENCO responsibilities/duties, pay levels, status on the senior leadership team, expectations and demands made upon them (many SENCOs holding a full class-teaching position and the SENCO role in additional to a tranche of other responsibilities across their schools). An item which frequently appeared within SENCO commentaries in the questionnaire was administration and the amount of *'paperwork'* which the role generated. A number of SENCOs commented on the time spent outside of the allocated SENCO time given to them and their normal working day which was used to complete this, thus negatively impacting on their well-being, work-life balance and time set for their other duties within the school (particularly class-teaching). Although all *Codes of Practice* defined the requirements for SENCOs with an expectation for schools to follow this guidance, head-teachers and governing bodies were free to implement this in their own way according to their priorities.

However it was in restrictions placed on SENCOs to act as leaders that the Contextual Variety was most evident. Several SENCOs reported on how they were given the opportunity to effectively manage provision for SEN(D) with the autonomy to be leaders within their schools, however a significant number of SENCOs felt prevented from actively leading as the opportunity was not given to them, even though every evolution of the national guidelines relating to SEND since the first *Code of Practice* was issued in 1994 stated that the SENCO *should* be on the senior leadership team influencing policies for whole-school development and the SENCO Regulations (DCFS, 2008) *suggested* a leadership role for the SENCO. A key indicator of this missed opportunity for actively leading rather than managing or administering was in the area of head-teachers and deputy head-teachers 'micro-managing' and restricting their SENCO's autonomy to act independently by holding back key aspects of the SENCO leadership function for themselves. Two significant examples of this particular factor being SENCOs not leading the TA team within the school; the majority of the SENCOs in Strand (2) having no, or only partial/limited, responsibility for

directing their school's potentially most effective resource (the TA team) for supporting the wide ranging needs of pupils with special needs, disabilities and barriers to their learning. The second example of the restrictions placed on SENCOs to develop as leaders relates to their understanding of finances and budgets for SEND, this frequently being controlled and distributed by, in the main, their head-teachers and thus kept from SENCOs' scrutiny and management.

In many respects, the experiences (both negative and positive) and conditions of service of these trained SENCOs differed little from the experiences of the SENCO sample in Strand (1); they understood their *'Legal Contract'* in terms of the requirements of the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* and their responsibilities as a SENCO in making sure that the identification of and provision for pupils with SEND complied with these requirements. However, these Strand (2) SENCOs seemed very much aware of their conditions of service with some SENCOs feeling *'undervalued'*, *'badly used'* with their goodwill *'being taken for granted'* by their schools and academies. In addition to this the SENCOs also recognised the usefulness of their *National Award for SEN Coordination* in helping them to understand their specialist role in meeting the requirements of not only the *CoP* but also of the legislative framework which supported the Code. The SENCOs themselves, on the whole, identified key aspects of their *Psychological Contract* particularly around their significant input in terms of 'making a difference' for both the pupils and for their colleagues (teachers and TAs); a more detailed reflection on this significant aspect of how SENCOs work with the children and their colleagues in their schools is presented in Chapter 8 'Conclusion' in terms of the '*Emotional Labour'* freely given by teachers and SENCOs during their working day and beyond.

7.5   *'A Day in the Life of…a Primary School SENCO'*: SENCO Diaries

Three experienced SENCOs from the group who originally sampled the pilot questionnaire volunteered to keep a dairy of one of their normal working days. They had 'free rein' to record whatever they wished in whatever manner using the diary template provided. As previously stated, the stimulus for this approach for SENCO narrative gathering was through the use of *'bite-sized, day-in-the-life-of'* –style articles as used in a variety of specialist journals and national

magazines. The effect of these short, accessible diary pieces presented an intensely personal narrative where the voice of the diarist was the dominant factor as they related their thoughts and feelings which underpinned their rich description of events. As a result of this I decided to adapt this creative approach to generate SENCO diaries in the hope that their response would be just as personal and thoughtful.

The three diaries were completed by SENCOs from a single Local Authority who had all completed their National Award for SEN Coordination with the University of Northampton in June 2012; since that time they had all been working as SENCOs in their LA area:

'Caz' is a full-time member of staff in her small primary school and has a multi-role as the SENCO and as the lead teacher in the school's Reception Unit. She is given one day per week in which to do her SENCO work, this day is not fully 'protected time' as she states that also has to share her SENCO time with her preparation (PPA) time during this time.

'Alex' is a full time teacher and, like Caz, she has a multi-role as SENCO, assistant head and class-teacher in a large primary school. She started at the school four years ago as the SENCO, completed her Master' s Degree at the University (after the SEN Award) and has since been 'fast-tracked' to assistant head. She states that she spends 50% of her time devoted to combined SENCO/Assistant Head duties and the other half of her timetable class-sharing with a colleague.

'Becky' is a full-time teacher and has the multi-role of SENCO and class-teacher. She has two afternoons a week for SENCO work, this time is not protected as she is frequently called away to cover classes for absent colleagues or to deal with *'other people's problems'* (Becky's words) when they arise.

Caz, Alex and Becky chose one day at random, from their busy schedule, between the period from September to the end of November 2015 to complete their diaries. Their full diary entries are in Appendix 5. The same process of simple thematic analysis as employed for the SENCO concept maps/narratives in Strand (1) was used to code and then draw out initial and then main themes from the diaries.

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The main themes emerging from the diaries were then related to the three-part conceptual model (Legal Contract, Psychological Contract and Contextual Variety).

7.5.1   'A Day in the Life of Caz, a Primary School SENCO'
Commentary and Inferences

Caz's full diary is available in Appendix 5 (A:5:2). This is Caz's 'non-teaching day' where she attempts to spend the morning engaged in her SENCO work with the afternoon devoted to preparation time for the remainder of the week where she is the Lead Teacher in the school's Reception Unit. Caz presents a strong image of the SENCO balancing a range of multi-duties in a small primary school but although the school is small it does not naturally follow that her SENCO duties are 'light' as the main theme for Caz is the sheer 'relentlessness' of the range and amount of work which comes her way during the working day. This work is mainly in the form of administration relating to applications for funding, reviewing pupil Education and Health care Plans (EHCP), liaising with external specialists (Speech and Language Teacher and Behavioural Support Teacher) and completing an assessment process using what she calls the 'FACT tool' . Although Caz does not explain, in detail, what this tool is and how it works she is particularly frustrated at the length of time it takes to produce one, the amount of repetition and the lack of certainty as to the desired outcome of generating evidence for sufficient funding for provision; the additional issue arises in her account of this tool being the preferred system for the Local Authority and its imposition across all schools, Caz calls this process '…a complete nightmare' due to the excessive amount of time it takes and the difficulty of getting the teaching staff to complete their part of the FACT target-setting process. Caz, although exceptionally supportive of all the staff in the school, does point out that many of them are not taking the responsibility for pupils with SEND, although she does admit that '*I do feel that if I had more time I could be more effective in supporting other teachers especially emotionally. I hate to see teachers so upset and to feel so powerless.'*

What is very clear In Caz's diary is her knowledge of individual pupils and their needs, the processes of developing provision for them, an awareness of funding processes, engaging in liaison with external agencies, her desire to support and

train her colleagues and her sheer resilience in managing the range of incidents and work which she has to do. Caz does have a working relationship with her head-teacher and believes that the senior leadership team does provide her with support but she wishes for more time to undertake her SENCO duties as she is frustrated by the amount of *'paperwork'* and *'…continually chasing teachers for support plans and evidence to be included with requests'* when she wants to engage more with parents, to engage more with teachers through her being released from class-teaching more and the personal management targets set for her by the head-teacher: to monitor provision for SEND through classroom observations and pupil interviews. In spite of the lack of time and the frequent frustrations she has Caz does that that, ' *I love my SEN role and I do feel that I have learnt so much and can work together with teachers to find solutions to children's learning and behaviour'.* However, there is an impact on Caz's work-life balance as she does have to complete a great deal of work at home in the evening – usually the work which she has not been able to complete during the working day due to having to react to issues and demands bought to her attention by other teachers.

Caz's diary account shows how the process of meeting the needs of pupils with SEND is so firmly enmeshed with assessment, the imposition of external processes from the LA and to generating funding. To do this Caz is immersed in a whirlwind of external liaison, form-filling/paperwork and chasing colleagues for information on pupils for reporting/monitoring processes. All of these can be said to contribute to the discourse of performativity as the amount of time devoted to the processes of funding, resourcing and assessing pupils with SEND seems to be proportionally distorted when compared to the support of their needs in the classroom. Caz is aware of this situation when she states that, *'I get that SEN is more outcome driven but is it really necessary to include so much information on a form?'*

The term *'relentless'* was used, in the opening of this section, to describe Caz's typical day but with reason as it is an important word as it can be applied, equally well, to a large number of SENCOs who are balancing their work-life relationship.

7.5.2 *'A Day in the Life of Alex, a Primary School SENCO'*

Alex's main diary is available in Appendix 5 (A:5:3). Alex is in an interesting and challenging position as a SENCO who is also one of the school's assistant head-teachers. This creates a complex multi-role for her as she balances SENCO duties with the wider-school expectations which come with her leadership role plus sharing class-teaching with a colleague. She does have a significant background as a practitioner-researcher engaged in school-based inquiry and action-research for school/provision improvement and has a very strong/positive working relationship with the head-teacher. However, she does report that although all of this sounds very positive,'…*it's not all a 'bed of roses''*. Like Caz in her diary, Alex presents an equally frenetic day where *'relentless'* can once more be accurately applied to describe the variety of issues addressed.

One key factor of particular note (an underpinning of this diary) is the impact of Alex's multi-role on her work-life balance as her day starts early then into work, straight in to the day-to-day pressures, home late and finally to bed late after taking home more work to do. She particularly complains about the amount of e-mails she has received and the demand of people expecting an instant reply. As a member of the SLT and with a significant status in the school, Alex manages a number of cross-school needs such as organising access arrangements and TA staffing/deployment, She does have administrative support from a TA but this is only on a part-time basis although she does admit that , compared to other SENCOs, this is a 'luxury' as they can plan together. However, she also admits that it is not the large projects which cause her *'issues'* but the everyday demands and happenings which come her way do as they eat up her time allocation. Although on the SLT, Alex states that she only has 50% of her time available for SENCO duties with the rest devoted to her leadership role and a class share. Alex is quite vociferous about this and believes that the time allocation for SENCO and assistant head-teacher work is not enough.

In her diary, Alex systematically lists her activities throughout the day after she enters into a detailed commentary on finding and training suitable TAs for acting as scribes and readers for access arrangements making a particular point around the pressures on schools to cheat during the Key Stage 2 SATS (TAs giving answers to the pupils in order to help them). She fears that if this happens, and

the 'exam board…descend and find odd pockets of TAs and kids engaged in fiddling the test' the negative media response will deal an 'almighty stuffing' to the school. Alex uses this fear as a springboard to attack the integrity and use of SATS in general, particularly their effect on the school curriculum during the middle term of the academic year as most of the time is spent 'cramming for this stupid test'. Whereas Caz vented her frustration on the amount of paperwork/administration, chasing teachers for information and the imposition of an LA-favoured assessment tool, Alex intensified her attack on wider educational issues relating to political interference in the UK system when compared to the Finnish system and the excessive form-filling and auditing of pupil performance, central government control and constant monitoring of schools by OFSTED. She links the climate with an under-current of 'fear' (relating this to Maslow's Hierarchy) and an attack on school-based (as opposed to HEI-based) routes in to teacher training.   This significantly negative view of the whole of UK-education did not appear in any of the Strand (1) SENCO narratives although there was a reference to 'The sheer rate of change in SEND matters making schools political footballs with all this testing-testing-testing regime and the constant supervision/monitoring and inspection' being given by a SENCO in her response to (Q.55) in the Strand (2) questionnaire and a commentary by a SENCO in (Q.56) about the generally negative view which the Media has of teachers. However, Becky (in her diary) attacks the same high-stakes assessment regime in KS 2.

Alex describes the range and amount of administration relating to SEND and pupils with SEND, complains about missing her morning break and coffee and issues relating to trying to get her colleagues to complete useful/fact-based evidence (rather than opinion-based) paperwork and reports which are central to her in order to complete her work as a SENCO.   She describes some members of staff not having ' the will or the actual understanding/knowledge of meeting the needs of kids with SEN in their classes – all they want to focus on is their own teaching' and of them passing on the responsibility for teaching pupils with SEND on to her.

Surprisingly, although she is the SENCO and an assistant head-teacher, Alex is not responsible for managing the TA team as the head-teacher does this, unless he delegates parts of this duty to her. Alex is keen to change this situation in order to remodel and train (accredited training) the TA team.

Alex enters into another wider-ranging discussion, this time relating to the debate around inclusion in mainstream school settings. She appreciates what the school is doing for a particular pupil but then questions that in trying to be inclusive the school is actually discriminating against this pupil who requires a special school placement. Interestingly enough, although the SENCO in a school is usually a key member of staff in enabling and developing a school's inclusive learning community, out of all the data and evidence gathered from all of the SENCOs in strands (1) and (2) and the importance placed on the SENCO and the inclusion agenda in the literature, Alex is the *only* SENCO who directly refers to inclusion and the SENCO's role in supporting it. Linked to this is Alex feeling guilty at not being able to engage more with teachers in their own classrooms, working alongside of them (advising and modelling effective learning/teaching for pupils with SEND) and not having the time to engage in observing children and analysing the findings from this to inform approaches to supporting their learning and mental health needs.

Alex admits to her own poorly managed work-life balance and states that an additional *'ring-fenced'* time allocation for SENCO working, full leadership of the TA team and time/funding to engage in outside links (local, regional, national & international) would make her a better SENCO able to fully develop provision in the school. Finally, Alex also admits that in relation to other SENCOs she has spoken to, she can appreciate her own situation and that *'I'm quite well off, particularly in my head-teacher as some of them can be awful!'*

7.5.3 *'A Day in the Life of Becky, a Primary School SENCO'*

Becky's full diary is available in Appendix 5 (A:5:4). Like Alex, Becky has an early start to her day and, after a lengthy journey, arrives at school to immediately start work answering e-mails (complaining about people wanting instant responses) and marking. Becky is a SENCO and a class-teacher and so spends the morning with her Year 5 class, however she does (like Alex) launch a strong attack on KS2 SATS and the way in which the school engages in *'drilling for tests'*. She highlights the pressure she is under from the head-teacher as she will have to, *'squeeze all of our kids with SEN through the horrors of these tests...'sores on the doors'...progress...progress...progress...etc.'* and, *'I see their poor little faces and can sometimes cry for 'em! Schools can be bastard places*

to be in…so much for enjoying learning when it's all sucked out of them by SATS, crappy Phonics and the ludicrous new SPAG drilling.'

Other main themes emerging from Becky's diary relate to teachers not taking the responsibility for teaching pupils with SEND (Becky reports that she is frequently interrupted when teaching by colleagues coming in to her room asking her to '*sort out'* issues with individual pupils) and the excessive paperwork and administration she has to do resulting in her missing taking breaks throughout the day. Although the afternoon is given over to SENCO working, Becky reports that this time is not protected and that she can be called away for other tasks (mainly covering classes). In this time Becky is able to complete some pupil reviews but feels limited in that she has no control over any matters relating to funding, the head-teacher manages this and so Becky cannot completely create her provision maps. Becky is on the SLT but she states that business is usually devoted to general school matters relating to funding cuts and monitoring pupil progress data. Once again, like Caz and Alex, Becky reports on a poor work-life balance.

7.5.4   Diary Main Themes

These were three experienced SENCOs explaining and commenting on what one day of their working week was like. None of these diaries could be called 'normal' or typical, however several consistent themes thread themselves through all three SENCO diary accounts:

- The amount of administration and paperwork connected to the role of SENCO.
- SENCOs having a multi-role; usually being connected with having a class teaching commitment.
- The frustrations that SENCOs feel when trying to engage their colleagues in taking responsibility for pupils with SEND (expecting the SENCO to do this as they are viewed as 'the expert').
- The work-life balance the SENCOs experience.
- SENCO well-being - as Caz, Alex and Becky frequently have to miss out on taking essential breaks during the school day due to the *relentlessness* of their normal day.

- The frustrations that SENCOs feel about the high-stakes assessment regime at KS 2 and its negative effects on pupils with SEND.

Using a similar Matrix as used in Table (6:12) when presenting the Strand (1) Main Themes and their link with the 3-Part Conceptual Model, all of the above, with the exception of the strong attacks on KS2 SATS and the performativity-driven high-stakes assessment regime, are occurring themes as they appear throughout the Strand (1) and Strand (2) SENCO responses (see Table 7:3 below):

Table (7:3)   *Strand (2) Main Theme Matrix (SENCO Diaries)*

Serial	Main Themes	Links to 3-Part Conceptual Model (Commentary)
1	Excessive administration connected with the SENCO role	The Legal Contract associated with the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* and its procedural nature combined with the Contextual Variety across schools which determines how much of this administrative workload is given to each SENCO to do (with or without support).
2	The multi-roles undertaken by the SENCOs in their schools	A mixture of the Contextual Variety across schools with individual headteachers determining the contracts and job roles for their SENCOs and the SENCOs' own Psychological Contracts as they feel that they have to take on multi-roles in order to create positive outcomes for the pupils.
3	Lack of teacher responsibility for pupils with SEND (SENCO seen as 'the expert')	The Legal Contract (DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* & *SEN Coordination Award)* presents the SENCO as the 'specialist' but also makes clear the duties and responsibilities of all teachers. The Contextual Variety across the schools presents an inconsistency as to the priority which is placed upon SEND provision, staff training in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN(D) and the time allocation for SENCOs to train and work alongside their colleagues.
4	SENCOs aware of changes in the National 'Educational Climate' (particularly in relation to KS 2 Statutory Assessment)	The high-stakes assessment regime as a key factor within the Performativity-Culture of schools in the quasi-marketplace.
6	Work-life balance/general SENCO well-being	Is presented as a key issue which is created and/or compounded by all of the above themes/factors. A mixture of the Legal Contract, Contextual variety across the schools into how this is enacted and SENCOs' own Psychological Contract expressed as 'emotional labour' (see 7.6.2) in their multi-roles and main identity as a teacher.

What particularly differentiates these diary accounts from other SENCO narratives is the level of knowledge which the SENCOs display relating to individual pupils, their needs and their provision; a factor which is particularly enhanced by these SENCOs being very well experienced in role. Another differentiating factor is that only one SENCO (Alex) directly referred to the school (and the SENCO's role) in developing an inclusive learning community; this is surprising as the conflict between the current agenda set by the previous Coalition and present Conservative governments (DfE, 2010, 2011 and 2014) which focuses on standards rather than inclusion are well known (Glazzard 2014b). This seemingly 'de-sensitizing' of current SENCOs to the inclusion agenda as they wrestle with the requirements of the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP,* the preparation for KS 2 SATS, OFSTED inspection and meeting the learning outcomes of their National Award for SEN Coordination is a cause for concern.

7.6   Summary

7.6.1 The SENCO as Administrator, Manager and Leader

The findings from all three data collection methods employed across both strands of this study have shown that being a SENCO does not equate to having a shared experience in role as there is a significant diversity of experience across the different schools within the local authorities.   Through identifying these differences areas of common experience emerged, particularly related to SENCOs having constrained time to do the job, the effect of the job on the SENCOs' work-life balance/wellbeing, the additional tasks and roles a SENCO had to take on (particularly being a class teacher) and the demands of their teacher colleagues expecting the SENCO to automatically deal with their perceived issues with pupils having SEND.

Unsurprisingly, the SENCO working as 'administrator' rather than 'leader' or 'manager' was a common theme, something which Shuttleworth (2000) recognised long ago when he commented that when the SENCO role was formed it became translated into an administrative function rather than one having an influence on learning and teaching across the school.   This had also been identified by other authors/commentators on the SENCO role and by the SENCOs themselves in various forums. All three of the experienced SENCOs detailed in their diaries how a large percentage of their day was spent engaged in

administrative tasks which were generated through normal processes related to managing the day-to-day provision for SEND in their schools. Although many SENCOs commented on the need for reducing this administrative overload and/or for being given TA support to manage the 'paperwork' there was no indication from them that they expected it all to disappear as it was identified as being a key part of their workload.

7.6.2 The Psychological Contract for SENCOs expressed as 'Emotional Labour'

Perhaps the most important common feature was that all of the SENCOs contributing to the study were committed to their SENCO role as they frequently referred to making a positive difference for vulnerable pupils in their schools, working in partnership with external agencies and their activities in supporting the professional development needs of their colleagues in the area of SEND. This form of nurturing forms the core of the SENCOs' Psychological Contract' as they continued to care for their pupils and their professional colleagues whilst engaging with the frustrating elements of their job. Isenberger and Zembylas (2006) called this process 'Emotional Labour', theorising that it is an important aspect of the reality of teaching where 'caring' can be regarded as an approach and as an emotion where teachers are expected to be exemplary in controlling their anger and frustration in their drive to become better teachers where they only display the positive emotions associated with caring. Data provided by the SENCOs in their concept maps/narratives, the questionnaire and their diaries provides evidence for a combined testimony of the emotional challenges in enacting caring teaching and provision coordination which emphasises the complex relationships between teaching and caring within the Psychological Contract for the SENCO.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

8.1   Introduction

In the light of the research findings (re-stated in the form of a brief overview in section 8.2), this chapter re-visits the evolution of the SENCO role but underscored by questioning if the role has actually evolved or stagnated over the past twenty-plus years, particularly relating to SENCOs' conditions of service and status as school leaders.   Although not designed to be a 'generalised study' an attempt is made to produce a 'Composite SENCO Model' based on the questionnaire returns from Sample Group (II) in Strand (2) and a revisiting of the 'Shifting Sands' concept (Fig: 4:2) and (Table 8:1).   The contribution of this study to both theoretical and professional knowledge is considered.   The contribution to theoretical knowledge particularly references the new Conceptual Model (the relationship between the SENCOs' Legal/Psychological Contracts and the influence of the Contextual Variety which determines where and how their role is enacted within each individual school).   The professional knowledge contribution references the use of the Conceptual Model as a framework for schools reviewing and evaluating the status, role and working conditions of their SENCOs. This is in order to develop quality provision for pupils who have special educational needs, for recognising the significant *emotional labour* exhibited by SENCOs as they strive to provide positive outcomes for vulnerable pupils/in supporting their colleagues and for maintaining the school's pathway towards being a fully inclusive learning community – this last factor, surprisingly, being given very little consideration by the majority of the sample group populations.

After a brief review of the integrity of the study, its limitations and suggestions for further research, a final commentary is reserved for the underpinning Living Theory adopted and how this has informed my own understanding of the complexities inherent within the SENCO role and how this has enhanced my own professional practice as a SENCO trainer/tutor on the *National Award for SEN Coordination.*

8.2   Overview of Findings

This study has discovered that the SENCO role, although defined to some extent within the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* and the SEN Coordination Award, has clear

variations in how both the SENCOs contributing to it and their school leadership (headteachers and governing bodies) implement the role, the responsibilities attached to it and any expectations.   This Contextual Variety, which has evolved through any precise/prescriptive definition on the SENCO role, responsibilities and entitlements being missed out from successive Departments for Education statutory guidance over the past twenty-plus years, does create an inconsistency between how schools provide key resources (a room, a telephone, support for administration) for their SENCOs and on their status and opportunities to be leaders (or upon how a SENCO is able to define their own role). The SENCOs in this study all had multiple whole-school responsibilities but the responsibility for leading and deploying the teaching assistant team and being allowed to have any influence over how funding for SEND is allocated were, again, varied. Key issues arose in relation to a significant number of SENCOs not being included on their school's senior leadership team and/or policy-forming group, not being allocated sufficient protected time to undertake their SENCO duties (with remission from whole-class teaching) and being awarded an additional allowance/increased salary for the job. The majority of SENCOs highlighted the combination of factors listed above, together with the day-to-day, high-frequency demands from their teaching colleagues, led to an excessive workload; with a significant number reporting that this was a direct cause of stress and poor work-life balance. However, most SENCOs reported that they 'liked' being the SENCO with an 'ethic of caring' and commitment to pupils with SEND and to the professional development of their colleagues.

8.3   The SENCO;   is this an evolving or little-changing role?

Although the legislative framework which drives the provision for primary school pupils with SEN(D) has been through a period of significant change and evolution since the DfE (1994) *Code of Practice* provided the first statutory guidance and defined list of duties for SENCOs (their Legal Contract') it seems, through the findings of this study, that little has changed in practice in regard to enhancing and developing the status of SENCOs as leaders or for addressing their professional needs.

There has also been a significant change in how the SENCOs in this study interpret their contribution to their school's inclusion agenda. Only one SENCO,

the experienced Alex, discussed her role in connection with inclusion. If, as Glazzard (2014a) stated, '*Inclusion has been high on the political agenda since the 1990s*' (p24) it is surprising that the SENCOs in this study did not make any connection with this whole-school policy or their role in supporting it. I used the term 'de-sensitizing' in connection with SENCOs and the inclusion agenda but perhaps this is more of a de-sensitizing of their schools as inclusion is relegated in favour of the emphasis on the standards agenda with schools being accountable through published pupil attainment/progress data and OFSTED inspection with teacher performance, in turn, being measured on the very same pupil outputs and achievements. Cornwall (2001) made the point that inclusive schools cannot really exist in,

> 'a milieu of heavy competition and exclusivity…League tables and politically constructed social stigma provide a significant disincentive for schools to be inclusive. The current short-term 'target-based economy' linked to the political rhetoric of 'standards raising' and a hierarchical view of educational change (top down) militates against successful cultural change.'
> (p 129)

However, this was sixteen years ago and his concept of the '*current*' short-term target-based economy linked to political rhetoric has become more entrenched and, as Cole (2005) has stated, although inclusion for schools is a risk worth taking, it can be perceived by school leaders to have a detrimental impact on a school's performance data and be financially costly. In this climate, perhaps it is natural for schools and their SENCOs not to embrace or prioritise a culture of inclusivity as it is far too risky; hence the lack of the SENCOs in this study engaging with it in any depth even though the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* states all schools have duties under the Equality Act (2010), must not discriminate against disabled children and that,

> 'Teachers are responsible and are accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff.'
> (Para 6.36. p 99)

This does have a tenuous link with the idea of the school as an inclusive environment as comments made by SENCOs across the two Strands were fuelled by their perceptions of the demands placed upon them by other members of staff who tended to pass the responsibility for pupils with significant needs on to them with this, in turn, perhaps weakening their teachers' contribution in supporting

their school's continuing drive towards becoming an inclusive learning environment, if this goal is an actual priority for the school (as such a thing can no longer be assumed). Hallett and Hallett (2010) defined this as SENCOs carrying out a role where other teachers feel absolved of responsibility by passing everything to the SENCO related to SEN rather than by working in cooperation/collaboration. Although the SENCO role carries a cross-school/whole-school responsibility and they are considered as the 'expert', the SENCOs in this study stated that this issue identified by Hallett and Hallett created a significant amount of additional administrative and re-active (rather than pro-active) 'action' which infiltrated into their working day. Norwich (2010) questioned the reality of having a single person (the SENCO) being responsible and accountable for such a wide range of tasks and functions; earlier in 2007 he advocated that subject coordinators could take on a greater responsibility through developing the knowledge of staff within their own subject areas in matters relating to SEND. This resonates with the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* statement that teachers are responsible and accountable and also interrelates with the need for the SENCO be part of the leadership team acting, as Layton (2005) would have liked, as an empowered leader developing inclusive practices leading to a shared staff responsibility for decision making for pupils with SEND.

Jordan et al (2009) indicated that teachers, in general, felt that they were not confident about working with pupils with SEND in their classrooms due to a lack of knowledge and skill. However the SENCOs in this study, on the whole, do state that they actively engage in leading a variety of staff professional development/training activities meeting this challenge, as Dyson and Millward (2000) highlighted, of staff clearly needing to receive training if they are to balance inclusive practices with ensuring all pupils can access the curriculum. The DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* does direct the SENCO in this respect as, although it is somewhat 'light' on focusing on inclusion, it does make a clear statement on educational and training provision and the LA 'Local Offer' securing expertise among teachers to support children with SEN or disabilities through three levels, basic awareness of types of SEN, enhanced practice in adapting teaching and learning to meets the needs of pupils with SEN and specialist in-depth training about types of SEN. The *CoP* further states that,

> 'The quality of teaching for pupils with SEN, and the progress made by pupils, should be a core part of the school's performance management arrangements

and its approach to professional development for all teaching and support staff.'
(Para 6.4 p 93)

Ironically, the positive directive on professional development of all teaching and support staff is wrapped up within the performativity-driven performance management parcel. However, by identifying the three levels of 'expertise' (awareness, enhanced practice and specialist knowledge) the *CoP* does provide an opportunity to increase staff knowledge in the field of SEND in order that teaching staff and TAs are able to take on their statutory responsibilities without the SENCO feeling isolated in a limited administrative or coordination role.

When identifying the difficulties that SENCOs were starting to face in managing their role, Dyson (1990) envisaged early on in the SENCO-evolutionary scale, of the need for the SENCO becoming a leader with a cross-curricular/whole-school role in strengthening and developing effective learning and teaching strategies and provision for all pupils and not just for those with SEND as SENCOs have to work alongside and influence every member of staff in the school. This approach still could be the solution for contemporary and future SENCOs to make a positive step towards transformational leadership as they initially act as the 'expert' in the field but with opportunities to share this knowledge gained through their own extensive professional training/development in guiding, advising and working alongside colleagues thus steadily eroding the situation as identified by Ekins (2012) who, along with other commentators and researchers on the role of the SENCO before her, commented that many teachers saw matters relating to SEND as being separate from their normal duties. The positive model of a strong SENCO/tTeacher partnership in the mainstream classroom seems to depend upon SENCOs being allocated protected/ring-fenced time away from their class-teaching or the myriad of other additional duties they do; a concern which was highlighted as a major issue for the SENCOs in this study.

In over twenty years of SENCO evolution, the SENCO still remains the champion of pupils with SEND but, using a series of metaphors, the surface of the arena (leading and managing the day-to-day provision for pupils with SEND in their schools) upon which SENCOs fight is now a very a fluid one. The arena floor frequently changes its constituency according to a political ideology where it now appears that 'inclusion' is no longer such a major part of the mix. Inclusion has

seemingly having been replaced by a hard-core of 'performativity', as Allan (1999) stated eighteen years ago, *'Inclusion, then, is an ethical project of responsibility to ourselves and others'* (p 126) and the seven principles of an inclusive education service (p 2) as presented in the DfES's (2001) *Inclusive Schooling* statutory guidance crasheds headlong into the Coalition Government's desire to '*remove the bias towards inclusion'* (p 17) as expressed in the DES (2011) consultation paper *'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability'.* In this Green Paper where inclusion was replaced by parental choice through the strengthening of the market-place by extending the Academy programme and by and the introduction of Free Schools. Still keeping with the 'Gladiatorial' metaphors , the 'weapons' the SENCO champions have to fight with (allocated time, resources, support, pay and status as leaders) being either withheld or issued according to the Contextual Variety formed by the priorities of their head-teachers and governors.

8.4   The SENCO Model (1) The 'Shifting-Sands' Re-visited

The findings of this study cannot be used to make generalisations about the SENCO role across the whole population of SENCOs working in English primary schools and can only be applied to the sample population. However, in chapter (1) section (1.5) a commitment was made to attempt to create *'an up-to date, model of a contemporary SENCO working in an English primary school.'* In hindsight, this is an impossible process due to the restrictions on the findings as stated above and, in the main, because a clear definition which encompasses the complex, multi-nature of the SENCO role which is entirely interpreted through the culture of an individual school and its priorities is not possible. However the findings can be used to create a model for this tranche of three SENCO groups in order to illustrate levels of consistency across the role at three points in time, amalgamating Fig (5:1) *The Theoretical SENCO from Novice to Expert* with Fig (4:2) *The 'Shifting Sands' Model of SENCO Status* and the concept of the SENCO being, literally, on 'shifting sands' as their entitlements and status are so varied.

The model for SENCOs from primary schools across the local authorities from the East Midlands which partner the University of Northampton in delivering the TDA National Award for SEN Coordination is constructed using the comparative grid in table (8:1). Focusing on the areas of consistency on the grid in (8:1) there is a

positive response relating to 'Responsibility and Scope' in that the SENCOs from both strands engage in their own CPD and in delivering in-house CPD to other staff, liaising with external agencies and parents and in their 'Legal Contract' in reference to meeting the requirements of the DfE/DH (2015) *CoP*. There was also a consistency around the multi-responsibilities undertaken by teachers (frequently being the SENCO and a full-time class-teacher) and the number of SENCOs feeling that their teacher-colleagues do not take responsibility for teaching pupils with SEND passing this on to the them (the SENCO) as they are seen as the 'experts'. All other areas of the 4-Piece Model (created for the construction of the questionnaire comprising of Experience, Responsibility and Scope, Leadership and Wellbeing) generated using the modal (highest frequency) responses from all three sample groups in both Strands, show a significant level of inconsistency placing the SENCOs, literally, on 'shifting sands'*.* However, there are two key areas of consistency which underpin the re-visited 'Shifting Sands' model; one was identified by Packer (2014) who stated,

> '…the importance of the role is clear: the SENCO is currently only one of two statutory school roles (the other….is the head teacher). But only one of these roles requires someone with qualified teacher status (QTS) – and it's not the head!'
> (p 2)

The second key area of consistency is related to a teacher-based professionalism set within the sphere of 'caring' which, according to Acker (1995) is both an approach and an emotion requiring both '*love and labour'* (p 21); this is the SENCOs' Psychological Contract expressed as emotional labour (see Chapter 7, section 7.6.2).

The 'Shifting Sands (Revisited) (Table 8:1) presents the areas of consistency and inconsistency (expressed as Contextual Variety, although the areas of 'consistency' can be catalogued under Contextual Variety too) across the SENCO experience in this study. In this re-visited model, the 'shifting sands arrow' now applies to the right-hand column with its identified areas of 'Contextual Variety' as SENCOs experience the range from low engagement/opportunity through to high.

Table (8:1)   *Revisiting the 'Shifting Sands' for SENCOs: The Comparative Status of SENCOs across the Sample Groups*

The Scope of the SENCO Role (from the 4-Piece Questionnaire Model)	Area of Consistency	Area of Contextual Variety (The Area of 'Shifting Sands' – from 'low' to 'high')
EXPERIENCE	All SENCOs hold QTS and are employed as teachers within their school(s)	Years qualified as a teacher
	Engaged with formal SENCO training	Time in service as SENCO
RESPONSIBILITY & SCOPE	Duties directly related to DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* (Legal Contract)	SENCO knowledge of & responsibility for funding mechanisms for SEND
	SENCO having multi-role in school (SENCO and class teacher and/or other role)	Priority of SEND in the school
	SENCOs tasked to deliver in-house CPD (SEND) to teachers and TAs in the school	
	SENCOs liaising with external agencies	Membership of SLT
	Opportunities for SENCO-teacher communication	
	SENCOs Seen as the 'expert' by other teachers with Some teachers not taking responsibility for pupils with SEN	
	Opportunities for SENCO-parent communication & liaison	
	SENCO as Administrator	
LEADERSHIP	Recognition by other staff of the status of the SENCO	Payment/allowance for being a SENCO
		Leading and deploying the TA team
		Level of SENCO autonomy & opportunity to lead
		SENCO duties as manager and transformational & strategic leader
WELLBEING	Ability to 'make a difference' for pupils (high level of '*Emotional Labour*')	Level of resourcing (office, telephone)
		Amount of protected time given per week for SENCO duties
		Administrative workload
		Support for administration
		Opportunity to work alongside colleagues in their classrooms
		Work-life balance
		Wellbeing supported and/or addressed by the school

The inferences generated through this study indicate that the SENCOs care about not only their children's academic progress but also about their social and mental well-being. This caring approach or depth of emotional understanding (Denzin, 1984) has, according to Isenberger and Zembylas (2006), a lot to do with who the SENCO is as a person and that, generally, teachers do not separate their 'labour' in terms of teaching, administration, management and leadership and their 'caring' as all are inter-related/adopted as a part of a teacher's sense of personal and intellectual stance. Nias (1989) went so far as to say that this

culture of care creates some of the satisfactions of teaching as it depends on taking more care of others and often ignoring ones' self. In this study frequent comment is made by SENCOs relating to their heavy workload, their multi-roles and the effects upon their work-life balance but they still like the SENCO job in spite of the emotional cost of their frustrations and disappointments. This is particularly important as stress and 'burnout' are widespread features of the teaching profession which negatively influences emotional well-being; SENCOs, due to their complex role and high-level work-load, are certainly not immune to this (as several SENCOs stated in this study). These negative influences, as previously argued in this study, are compounded by the national performativity-culture influencing individual school culture but it appears from the findings that many seem to recognise that the activity which creates the greatest difficulty (the 'caring' aspects) provides them with the greatest enjoyment and reason for wanting to be a SENCO in spite of the emotional labour involved.

8.5   The SENCO Model (2): Creating a Composite rather than a Generic Model

The level of Contextual Variety makes it impossible to construct an *accurate* SENCO model, however a form of SENCO model is possible using the composition of the modal (highest frequency) responses to the questions from the Strand (2) questionnaire. This does not illustrate the diversity of SENCO experience or conditions of service which sits at the core of this study, however it does provide a starting point for an appraisal of how far the SENCO role has evolved from its earliest manifestation in the DfE (1994) *Code of Practice.* Fig (8:1) provides an illustration of the 'Composite SENCO', however, on the basis of the evidence which has emerged from the study findings so far, there is an omission from the Composite Model as nothing is shown about the SENCO's role in supporting the school's inclusion agenda. As previously discussed, perhaps this is an assumed thing as it is something which every member of the school community holds responsibility for doing, however only Alex (in her Diary) directly mentioned 'inclusion' as any part of their wider role as a SENCO

Fig (8:1) The Composite SENCO is:

Female

A qualified teacher who has been teaching for approx. 4 to 6 years

Coming into teaching directly after their training course (either from university or from a school-based route)

A full-time SENCO with approx. 1 to 2 years' experience in post

Undertaking a multi-role in school (mainly balancing their SENCO duties with a whole-class teaching responsibility and other school-wide duties)

Given/allocated approx. 1 to 4 hours per week for SENCO work (this time is not protected/ring-fenced so it can be used for other duties such as covering for absent colleagues)

Not entirely happy with their time-allocation as they would like to see at least 60% of their time allocated to the SENCO role (with no class-teaching responsibilities)

Not allocated support for administration/paperwork

Not able to access a private telephone for confidential discussions (linked to SENCO working)

Given access to a private room/area in the school (for SENCO working & meetings etc.)

Does sometimes have difficulty in regard to work-related stress and work/life balance.

Not a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Not a leader of the school's TA team and is not responsible for their deployment or monitoring of their performance (as this is done by the head or deputy head)

Having no (or very little) experience or knowledge of funding arrangements for pupils with SEND (as this is done by the head or deputy head)

Not engaged in organising special examination arrangements for SATS (as the head or deputy head does this)

Feeling that more protected time and being given payment or an allowance for being SENCO would help

SENCO has a good overview & knowledge of individual pupils' learning, emotional & behavioural needs

Engaged in a range of duties specific to the SENCO role e.g.:
- Coordination of provision for SEND
- Completing pupil referrals for EHCPs
- Liaising with external agencies
- Liaising with parents/carers
- Administration
- Pupil progress monitoring
- Reporting on pupil performance and maintaining records
- Advising staff on matters relating to pupils with SEND
- Meeting with the SEN Governor at least once per-term
- Reviewing the SEND Policy (in partnership with the head-teacher)
- Involved in own CPD
- Running in-house CPD for school staff

Reasonably happy with their level of autonomy in decision-making (working in partnership with head/SLT)

Benefiting from being the SENCO by working with the children and supporting colleagues in order to generate positive outcomes (academic and social)
The SENCO's Emotional Labour

Feeling that the main drawbacks are:
- Lack of time allocated
- Poor resourcing
- No admin. support
- Not being on SLT
- Colleagues not taking on the responsibility for SEND (leaving it all to the SENCO)

8.6 Contribution to Knowledge – Theoretical and Professional

I believe that this study/research contributes to knowledge in two areas, the first of these areas relates to theory by the adoption of a new Conceptual Model which critically interrogates the professional role of the SENCO. The interrogation of the role using the Model is accomplished in this study in relation to how SENCOs meet their Legal Contract through their experience of working within, and complying with, their individual schools' cultures (the Contextual Variety) which are, in turn, significantly influenced by the performativity infused quasi-marketplace which underpins the wider National Educational culture. This interface between the Legal Contract (what *has* to be done according to legislation and statutory guidance) and the Contextual Variety (the influences on *where* it is done and, to a great extent, *how* it is done in individual schools according to the headteachers' and governors' understanding of, and priorities for, SEND) then inter-connects with each SENCO's Psychological Contract which is defined as the SENCOs' *own* set of ethical values in terms of what makes a good, *caring* teacher who *makes a difference* for pupils and colleagues in their school (expressed as emotional labour) which, according to many SENCOs from this study, has a major influence on what keeps them in their role.

8.6.1   Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge

The original Conceptual Model was illustrated and labelled/titled, in Chapter One and Chapter Three, as '*The Key Influences on SENCO Performance'* (Fig (1:2) and was designed to show how the three factors (Legal, Psychological and Contextual) impacted upon the professional performance of the SENCO. Through the application of this Model in this study, the original design has altered along with its title. A more accurate description is '*How a SENCO Works in their Primary School'* (Fig 8:2) with a re-alignment of the three factors where the Legal Contract which forms the core of the SENCOs' work now sits within the field of Contextual Variety created through individual school culture/ethos. The SENCOs' Psychological Contract is now illustrated as cutting through and then overlaying both segments as SENCOs try to do what is best for the children, parents and their colleagues when attempting to meet the legislative requirements within the confines of their schools' cultures.

Fig (8:2)   Influences on How a SENCO Works in their Primary School (a new Conceptual/Theoretical Model)

> **The Legal Contract** for SENCOs (DfE/DH (2015) Code of Practice; 2014 Children Act; Equality Act 2010). SENCOs doing what *has* to be done according to the legislation

> **The Contextual Variety** (the individual school culture within which the SENCO attempts to meet and achieve their Legal Contract - this Contextual Variety is significantly influenced and moulded through the high-stakes assessment and performativity-infused National Educational culture

> **The Psychological Contract** (the ethical /moral code & protocols adopted and employed by each SENCO in *'doing the right thing'* for the pupils, colleagues and parents/carers in their school). The SENCO acting as a 'caring' professional freely giving their ***Emotional Labour***).

This revision of the Conceptual Model has the potential for being a theoretical, or conceptual, tool for interrogating and critically exploring any professional role within a school using a three-step process. Step one involving the school engaging in an honest appraisal of what constitutes their 'culture' and ethos and how this is influenced by the National picture. Step two involving a 'distilling down' into the core legislative requirements for the professional role under review and step three identifying the values which drive the professional(s) to '*make a difference'* for pupils, parents and colleagues in the school. Each step of this process being a broad platform for a school to engage in practitioner/teacher-led research linked to school improvement and staff professional development.

8.6.2   Contribution to Professional Knowledge

This study's contribution to professional knowledge is defined through the lens of historical and continuing inquiry into the role and status of the SENCO and of developments in the field of legislation and school-based provision for SEND. Some of the findings relating to SENCO conditions of service have been identified in previous studies; however the uniqueness of this study comes through the methodology, the use of the new Conceptual Model and the sample range (new SENCOs, trained SENCOs and experienced SENCOs) with the research being undertaken by a practitioner-researcher/*bricoleur.* This enabled the combination of both a real-time, face-to-face, instant engagement with SENCOs (listening to and collecting their narratives) and a more distant engagement where SENCOs had extended time to consider their responses to a range of questions about their role and their thoughts and feelings on this in their schools. This gave SENCOs 'free rein' to write, in their own way, about a working day in their busy week. Although this seemingly 'messy' process had the potential to lead to a fractured study, the adoption of the *bricolage* held the interpretive approach together.

This overall study has engaged with, and extended, 'older knowledge' relating to the Contextual Variety, difference and conditions of service for SENCOs working within the culture of a performativity-and-standards-driven National Education system. It has accomplished this by identifying issues relating to SENCOs being restricted as leaders and the dis-connect between the SENCo role and their relationship with the inclusion agenda in their schools- this being evidenced by what was *not* stated about inclusion in the SENCO narratives, questionnaire data and diaries. The positive feature strongly emerging from this research is the importance of '*caring*' as a key part of the SENCOs' work in their schools. This has been identified as a major aspect of teaching in general (Rogers and Webb, 1991; Noddings, 1992; Heath, 1994; Collinson, Killeavy and Stephenson, 1999) with Goldstein (2002) identifying the caring teacher as having three key values: commitment, intimacy and passion.

Through the concept maps, questionnaire returns and diaries, SENCO comments defined their 'caring' values; for example just taking the first three SENCO concept maps and narratives provides a sound underpinning for this high level of

commitment, intimacy and passion: Julie (Appendix A:1:1) identifying the time-consuming nature of the role with its increasing work-load and mounting pressure still '*likes*' being the SENCO; Sarah (Appendix A:1:2) admits to crying in the staffroom due to the demands of the role but still states that, '*…I like the SENCO job and I like the way that other teachers and parents think of me as being someone who cares and can make a difference…'.* Brenda (Fig 6:3) devoted half of her concept map to comments relating to the positive aspects of her role, ' *…making a difference'*, '*helping families and staff'* and '*feeling proud'* being the SENCO. The other seven concept maps/narratives have similar comments and annotations where their difficulties and frustrations were balanced by their commitment, intimacy and passion.

The opportunities to work with children with SEND and in advising and supporting colleagues formed the majority response for (Q54) in the questionnaire in Strand (2), which asked SENCOs what they considered to be the benefits and opportunities for them as the SENCO in their school however this was balanced by their majority responses for (Q55) which asked them what the negative aspects of being the SENCO are, in this case it was the lack of time available to them in school resulting in an excessive workload; this pattern, balancing 'caring' with excessive workload and lack of resources, underpinned both strands of this research. This is a feature of the emotional labour exhibited by many of the SENCOs in this study as their caring relationships provide a source of professional and personal satisfaction (Nias, 1993) but linked to being a source of anxiety, stress and disappointment (Acker, 1995). The emotional labour of SENCOs happens when they control and inhibit these negative emotions in order to engage in these caring relationships without exhibiting what they consider to be inappropriate behaviour which will be seen as unacceptable by their school leadership, so SENCOs' frustrations and (sometimes) anger is supressed (Isenberger and Zembylas, 2006) with SENCOs seemingly enjoying and seeking out the enjoyable activities ('*caring'* and '*making a difference'*) which forms the bedrock of their Psychological Contract but which also create the greatest difficulties and stress for them in the culture of both their individual school (the Contextual Variety) and the intensification of the performativity-driven National-standards/assessment culture.   The opportunities for SENCOs to express both their positive and negative emotions through the concept maps, questionnaires and diaries created this new emphasis on the SENCO role which distinguishes it from other studies and writing which have tended to focus on the

duties of a SENCO, how to perform them (administrative and managerial) and the legislation and critical 'un-picking' of the three Codes of Practice and other statutory guidance.

8.6.3　Contribution to My Professional Knowledge (informing my role as a SENCO Trainer/Tutor on the National Award in SEN Coordination)

In my personal/professional challenge I did admit to having a particular positionality created through my previous experience as a SENCO and my current work as a school governor with the 'SEND brief' and tutor on the *National Award for SEN Coordination*, due to this I wanted to develop a new understanding of contemporary SENCOs and their working lives in order to inform my own professional work, hence the adoption of Whitehead's '*Living Theory'* which I identified as being the most flexible (and relevant) approach for my own inquiry.　As this inquiry generated an 'inside/practitioner-researcher' role for me I was , at all times, conscious of the subjective influences working on me, particularly as I chose to engage a paradigm which was significantly qualitative-rich due to the type of narrative data I wanted to draw out of my sample group participants.　What I discovered was both unsurprising and surprising; the 'unsurprising' is the diversity of SENCO experience according to the climate of their schools and the direction of their head-teachers.　This was indicated by the very diffuse nature of the SENCO role across the school – in short, the original idea of trying to capture a SENCO's 'typical working day' resulted in my clear understanding that such a thing as 'typical' did not exist. The 'surprising' was the high number of SENCOs contributing to Strand (2) who thought that they should *not* have a whole-class teaching responsibility (n=28; 70%) and the actual non-movement of working conditions for SENCOs from 1994 to the present, in particular the lack of opportunities for SENCOs to act as leaders in their schools and their struggle for resources, time, space and being awarded additional payment/allowances for taking on the SENCO appointment. This non-movement is set against the exceptionally rapid changes in legislation and statutory guidance over the years relating to the curriculum, assessment, general teachers' conditions of service, the 'school-in-the-marketplace' where parental choice replaces inclusion in mainstream schools, the rolling-back of local education authority responsibility and the evolution of new kinds of schools.　In

addition to this, although it is well known that SENCOs work hard, the actual and absolute '*relentlessness*' of their working day, as evidenced by Caz in her diary, was shocking, particularly when it negatively impacted on SENCOs' work-life balance but the emotional labour given by SENCOs evidenced their dedication to their job; as one SENCO previously stated,

> '*I absolutely love the role! It's very hard work and a steep learning curve but I love that every day is different and I get to work with some amazing children and their families'.*

The research question I posed in Chapter (1) Section 1.4.1 focused on the possibility of a mismatch between the training of SENCOs on their compulsory National Award for SEN Coordination and current legislation/statutory guidance and their actual school experience and practice as a manager and leader. This managerial/leadership facet of a SENCO's responsibilities forms the core of this study and the findings show that there is a significant degree of mismatch in practice due to the Contextual Variety providing an inconsistency in how a SENCO's status as a transformational/strategic leader is recognised, how they are treated and the opportunities they are given to make and lead change. The findings from this study show that all of the SENCOs are teachers and administrators and that many manage provision (for example: leading staff development, supporting their colleagues, managing the complex quality assurance and planning of provision with pupil progress tracking and assessment) as the 'agent' of the head-teacher or other member of the senior leadership team but few feel empowered to have a 'vision' for change particularly when a significant number report that they are restricted by lack of resources, support and time. Kearns (2005), Szwed (2007) and Hallett and Hallett (2010) commented on the SENCO role being too bureaucratic, the findings from this study support this view and that the amount of procedural/administrative tasks they have to do in addition to their class-teaching and/or multiple school responsibilities creates the work-overload experienced by many SENCOs which then builds up a considerable barrier for them to engage in their leadership function.

Although this is a serious issue which has not been addressed through any of the three *Codes of Practice* which only indicate that the SENCO should be a leader but without providing any essential, firm/clear indication and guidance as to how

this can be done in practice, the belief that this presents a *threat* is too strong a statement. Where SENCOs across this study reported a high level of practical leadership was through their development of staff knowledge and skills in the field of SEND and in their personal ethics relating to caring for pupils and staff across the wider school and all curriculum areas, unlike other primary school curriculum managers who, in the main, have a narrower remit. As a SENCO trainer/tutor I now understand that the third 'dimension' of the *National Award for SEN Coordination*, relating to personal and professional qualities and leadership has to be addressed more effectively as it particularly relates to SENCOs shaping an ethos and culture based upon person-centred, inclusive practice where the interests and needs of children with SEND are '*at the heart of what takes place'*. Thus it is important, in my work with SENCOs, that their emotional labour is recognised through not drifting towards a 'compliance only' focus to training, the third dimension being identified as the SENCOs' Psychological Contract which cuts through their Legal Contract and the Contextual Variety which forms a part of the identity of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator in an English mainstream primary school in the East Midlands.

8.7   The Integrity of the Study

This study was researched and written following the ethical guidelines presented by both the British Educational Research Association (2011) and the University of Northampton's Ethics Code and Procedure (2017). In addition to this, and in conjunction with the other processes engaged to maintain the integrity of this body of work, I ensured that 'honesty' underpinned all aspects of my relationships with the participants and in my exploration and interrogation of their narratives, concept maps and questionnaire returns. Although the physical and chronological distance between the Strand (2) participants and myself (as the 'inside-researcher'/*bricoleur*) did have the potential to lead to elements of manipulation in order to support my initial position and bias, this did not occur as none of the data was fabricated; it is presented without alteration or censorship, however the commentaries and interpretation of the data and findings are all mine.

A number of validity processes were adopted ranging from using multi-data sources (from different strands and different sample groups) and different methods of collecting data (concept maps/narratives, questionnaire and diaries)

to create a system of method and data triangulation. This mix was kept intact through adopting the *bricolage* as the framework to mould the process together. The themes which emerged from the methods and data were completely generated through the SENCOs' own words and responses to questions, these were related with the review of the literature, particularly with other surveys and research based on SENCOs and their work. As this study is underpinned by my adoption of a '*Living Theory*' and the link with my own experiences as a past SENCO and my current role as a SENCO trainer, the themes which were exposed through the study were checked as I maintained contact with the participants from Strand (1) in order to provide greater clarification if asked. This was a valuable process, Creswell and Miller (2000) called this a prolonged engagement in the field as the SENCOs saw me as a fellow SENCO/supporter of SENCOs. In relation to this feeling of 'being one' with the participants this also existed for a large number of participants in Strand (2) as my professional status was well-known to the SENCOs from four of the LA groups completing questionnaires and by all of the experienced SENCOs contributing diaries.

This closeness with the participants, although assisting in creating validity in terms of maintaining an honest process of data collection and presentation, did have the in-built issue of creating a subjective foundation to the whole research process but this is a common issue within the whole design of qualitative/interpretive research where critically reflecting on the feelings and comments of participants and/or interpreting their actions makes it impossible to adopt a clearly defined scientific approach to data collection and analysis with its core of employing a repeated process with the same participants and producing the same results on every occasion.

8.8 Study Limitations

This study had its challenges and limitations. One limitation of the research was to focus only on the experience of each SENCO in their own school setting rather than using a wider LA perspective in order to expand the argument around contextual differences, however I felt that the questionnaire employed in Strand (2) did capture the 'essence' of this when the SENCOs provided commentaries about their role in general, their evaluation of their CPD and their views on developing their professional roles and their projections for the future.

A comparison across each Local Authority or the size and type (rural, urban etc.) of each SENCOs' school and the numbers on their SEN register/list was not formally made in this study, although information on the size of schools was generated through some of the open-ended questions and through SENCO diaries; however, I do feel that this is an omission/weakness in that an awareness of each individual SENCO's position according to these factors would have provided a better understanding of their perceptions of the relationship between class-teaching and SENCO work.

The main limitation relates to the scale of the research as only (n=40) out of (n=120) SENCOs completed questionnaires, there were only (n=10) SENCOs completing concept maps and even fewer (n=3) submitting diaries. This equated to only (n=53) participants, certainly not representative of the whole population of primary school SENCOs so there could be no specific generalisations made outside of the small sample group(s). However this study did not set out to do this (part from the failed attempt to create a 'generic SENCO model') and the themes which were generated by the data from both strands of the research did provide findings related to wider issues as identified in the literature and in other studies/research and surveys. This generation of data from three differing sample groups at three different times, using three different collection methods had the potential to become 'messy', fractured and corrupted in terms of validity hence the adoption of the *bricolage* approach to hold the pieces together. In hindsight it might have been more effective to have employed a longitudinal study approach using a single sample group over time with a series of SENCO case studies capturing their narratives; this would have been a particularly relevant course of action as the frequency and amount of change in national Education policy has been significant during the life of this research and so it would have been fascinating to have critically explored the impact of this change on the SENCOs and how they saw their role and their own expertise evolving in relation to this change.

Any case study/longitudinal study approach would, of course, demand a consistent level of SENCO engagement and time, this was the key factor which led me to adopt the two strand/three sample group approach as the amount of time I had with the SENCOs face-to-face was exceptionally limited and so this time was given to the Strand (1) sample for the construction of their concept maps and the collection of their narratives. I did not and could not gain access

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to their schools and so this data collection activity took place after their first day on their *National Award for SEN Coordination.* The questionnaire and diary were employed to gather data from the larger number of SENCOs in Strand (2) quickly from across a large geographical area. I knew this approach certainly was not perfect but in the true nature of the artisan *'bricoleur'* I was determined to use the materials at hand in order to create an artefact.

8.9 Next steps? Further Research Opportunities

Tracy (2013) stated that new ideas and new arguments in order to generate new thinking sit at the core of qualitative research. This study identified areas of stagnation for SENCOs over the last twenty-three years and attempted to question *'why?'* Evidence did emerge from this study which tentatively suggests that some head-teachers did not have to make those changes to conditions of service as the legislation and statutory guidance was not specific enough and did not direct that these conditions *must* be put into place for all SENCOs no matter what size or type of school. This same question*, 'why?'* had been asked in previous studies on and around the role of SENCOs and similar findings had been uncovered relating to a lack of definition and clarity in legislation and statutory guidance. However, it is precisely because of this stagnation that the same question(s) should *continue* to be asked and similar research and studies *continue* to be made in order to keep this stagnation and the sometimes restrictive conditions for a significant number of primary school SENCOs a 'live subject' and to move any critical judgments from 'tentative' to 'firm'.

As already stated, this study re-affirmed findings from previous studies but there is a need for further exploration in relation to developing SENCOs with the status of transformational leaders able to empower school staff in improving their knowledge and skills in learning and teaching with a focus on meeting the needs of pupils with SEND/ barriers to their learning within an inclusive school culture. *The National Award for SEN Coordination*, although providing a useful grounding in the 'nuts-and-bolts' of being a SENCO (as a *'survival'* or *'tool kit'* so to speak) does not provide enough of a focus on the identity of the SENCO in the multi-role of teacher/specialist/administrator/manager/leader and how the SENCO can develop and promote themselves in order to work in close cooperation and partnership with colleagues so they fully realise and take on their responsibilities for pupils with SEND. This focus on the efficacy of SENCOs and teachers working

in partnership within the mainstream classroom can provide a sound platform for further school-based and national research in how the knowledge and skill-base of class-teachers can be significantly enhanced in order that they concentrate on the needs of pupils with SEN(D) which, in turn, might hopefully re-vitalise the seemingly 'missing' focus on inclusion which was highlighted within this study. Packer (2014) stated that,

> 'It could be argued that, ultimately, the purpose of the SENCO is to do themselves out of a job. Why? Because a key priority must be to ensure that all teachers are fulfilling their responsibilities towards pupils with SEN. Providing support for colleagues in school through training, coaching, mentoring or joint planning will enable all staff to become more confident in their own classroom practice.'
> (p 2)

To examine how far individual primary schools and Local Authorities are enabling this sort of positive partnership to flourish, or wither, within the current political/ ideological/economic climate could determine the future of SENCOs as transformational leaders within their schools with a working partnership with their teaching colleagues and direct contact with pupils and their parents.

Although identified as a potential issue within this study due to the fractured nature of the three sample groups across a time-line from fairly newly appointed SENCOs at the start of their training through to experienced SENCOs who have been in post for at least three years (Fig 5:11 *The Theoretical SENCO Journey from Novice to Experience'.* p 139), there is a future opportunity to adapt the new Conceptual Model to explore the SENCO role through the use of individual SENCO case studies.   Such a study would critically explore/examine the experiences of primary school SENCOs from a much wider population of schools/settings and Local Authorities.   These SENCOs could contribute their thoughts, feelings and ideas using the Conceptual Model as a framework with a case study approach providing, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) stated a,

> ' unique example of real people in real situations' with contexts which are, 'unique and dynamic, hence case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance.'
> (p 253)

The uniqueness of each SENCO could be recognised through similar '*Day in the Life Of…'*-type diaries as presented in this study but collected as a series over a

long time period with supporting individual SENCO contextual information/data and a corresponding series of reflective statements. A longitudinal study of this kind could provide a rich and chronological description/narrative of events. Geertz (1973) stated that the use of a case study approach portrays what it is like to be in a particular situation by catching this 'rich description' of participants' lived experiences and their feelings. This use of SENCO descriptive (Yin, 1984; Merriam, 1988) and collective (Stake, 1994) case studies with a wider participant group of SENCOs from English primary schools with the same SENCO participants contributing data, maintains the 'spirit' of the *bricolage* used within this current study. However, this opportunity to engage in a new SENCO study with a properly defined longitudinal approach over a significant period of time (a long-term study) will not only present individual SENCO stories but could also have the key focus on how political decision-making and national educational change has an impact at a human level.

8.10   Learning from the '*Living Theory*': A Final Commentary

This practitioner-led study was designed to explore the working lives of contemporary SENCOs during a period of significant flux. Even during the study's construction several major factors impacted upon its progress; the Coalition Government's Education Policies sweeping away many of the positive aspects of the DCFS *National Strategies* and rolling back the responsibilities of local authorities from 2010 to 2014, the Conservative Government from 2014 onwards forcing through the programme of Academisation and Free Schools, the introduction of the new DfE (2015) *CoP* , changes to the content of the National Curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2, how it is assessed through SATs at Key Stage 2 and how pupil progress is measured and reported.

Within this maelstrom of change there was one consistent factor – in general, the working lives of individual SENCOs contributing to this study were maelstroms too as they had to contend with this change without any significant development of their conditions of service. Through this study and my use of a '*Living Theory*' approach - which I felt enhanced my own status as an inside/practitioner researcher/*bricoleur* I was able to explore issues through my own lens as a past SENCO and current SENCO trainer - I now understood that SENCOs, although receiving the same accredited training and following the Legal Contract as specified in a succession of *Codes of Practice*, were different and diverse. Their

professional experience ranges from those who had the opportunity (and who took it) to be leaders in their schools with a high status and a generous time and resource allocation, to those who held down a full teaching commitment with additional duties and no time, resourcing or additional allowance/payment for the SENCO role. There were SENCOs who had a significant level of autonomy and those who were micro-managed by their head-teachers and senior leadership teams. Finally, there was a lack of SENCO commentary around the inclusion agenda within their schools.

In terms of the SENCOs' conditions of service, although there was little (or no) 'change' discovered, the continuing uncovering of this lack of change was important as questions and discussion relating to SENCO workload, work-life balance/well-being and evolution as high-status school leaders able to enthuse and empower their colleagues should keep being asked and presented in order to try and facilitate change. From my perspective as the inside-researcher and as a professional SENCO trainer my understanding of, and empathy with, SENCOs has increased as I did discover something which was 'new'; the role is no longer the same as it was when I was a SENCO as the climate in many schools - which subscribe to the rigidity of norm and standard related measures of pupil success and achievement –breed 'pressure-cooker' environments underpinned by monitoring, auditing and excessive pupil assessment which has dominated the weak *'shoulds'* and *'have regards tos…'* embedded in a succession of *Codes of Practice*. In these new school 'environments', Inclusion' is seemingly relegated.

When delivering future SENCO training sessions on the *National Award for SEN Coordination* I will certainly be far more aware of their typical working day and the continual 'balancing act' they engage in, both in their schools when holding down their multi-roles and in their work-life situation too…to repeat what Edwards (2015) said, *'The SENCO role is huge!'* (p 8) and, according to Caz (the first Strand (2) diarist) it **is** *'Relentless'*.

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Appendix (1)

Strand 1 (Concept Map and Narratives) Thematic Analysis

(A:1:1)

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: JULIE		
Code	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
Persistent 'feeling'. Full-time class-teacher as well as SENCO.	*'I drew it this way because this is just how I feel most of the time. I've got my own class to teach and that is an all-time consuming job and now I have to do the full SENCO role.*	Increased workload through multi-role leading to significant pressure & feeling unprepared.
Increasing workload Pressure mounting.	*That's me in the middle trying to keep up an increasing work-load; at the moment I look quite strong but I've added the sweat as it's really starting to hurt a bit.*	Demands of head and teachers.
Questions & demands from colleagues & demands from headteacher.	*Around it I've put all the questions that other people chuck at me – other teachers who want me to do all their work in supporting and teaching kids with SEN and the demands of my head too.*	Need for support: Self (for knowledge, direction & payment for role) and for admin & resources.
Need for support for self. Questions/unsure of where to get support. Recognition of National Award for SEN Coordination as being useful. Good ideas generated. Feeling of being 'thrown in'.	*I've also put in my own questions too. I need to be able to get support for myself so I've got questions about that too, about who can I go to, where can I look? This course (SEN Coordinator's Course) is really good for me because I'm starting to get some good ideas but until now I've been chucked into the deep end of the SENCO pool without a rubber ring!*	Does not act as manager for TAs (with no say in TA deployment). Likes being SENCO (own choice).
Additional administrative duties with no support. No input into TA management & deployment.	*At the bottom I've shown all the admin I have to do…and I haven't got a TA to help me on this either as they have all been hived away without any say from me. I haven't included anything about TAs on here but it really annoys me that I'm the SENCO but I don't have a say in how the TAs are used…how daft is that?*	
No resources (phone, office etc.).	*I could have added that and the fact that I haven't got a proper office or phone – I have to use the head's office and that's not ideal.*	
Likes the work (own choice to take on role). No additional pay for SENCO role. Under significant pressure.	*. I know it was my own choice to take it on and I like the work but…but…look at it I wouldn't mind but, as I've said here, the pressure's mounting and I'm not even paid anything in addition to do this job and my big question is up here in the right corner…what's next? Perhaps my mental breakdown? It certainly feels close!'*	

Main Themes
Workload pressures in multi-role created by demands of others and lack of personal support.
No status as leader/manager (does not lead TA team or receive additional pay for SENCO role).
Lack of resources for role (phone, office, admin support etc.).
Likes being SENCO.

(A:1:2)

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: SARAH

Code	Narrative	Initial Themes
Reduced to tears. Surrounded by everything	*'That's me in the middle and that's how I feel most of the time and that's what I've done in the staffroom a couple of times…just got all teary.*	Overwhelmed by high workload and pressure to perform.
Friends understand but no support from head (task driven).	*My friends were sympathetic but I don't think the Head gives a 'monkey's chuff' to tell you the truth…just as long as I got on with it and got all the stuff done.*	Difficulty Balancing SENCO role with other school commitments (e.g. class-teaching).
Balancing class-teaching with SENCO role. Feeling of inadequacy due to above. Worried about impact on children. Empathy with other SENCOs in same situation. Thoughts about giving up SENCO role.	*. I find it really hard at the moment doing all the SENCO stuff and being a class-teacher – I'm always feeling that I'm doing a crap job at both of them and I'm really worried that my children will suffer. Mind youI know that there are loads of other SENCOs on this course who are in the exact same boat as me and I don't know how they manage it either; I spoke to Mary (another SENCO in the same cohort on the National Award for SEN Coordination) and she feels just like me…she even said that she thought of giving it up and just going back to being a class-teacher and she's even being paid extra for doing the SENCO job too. Sounds like a bloody good idea too*	Empathy with other SENCOs. Likes being SENCO as it leads to 'making a difference'.
Likes the job. Feels as if making a difference. Others make demands (teachers & TAs) without understanding.	*but…really…I like the SENCO job and I like the way that other teachers and parents think of me as being someone who cares and can make a difference but some of the teachers, TAs and parents think I've got a 'magic wand' that I can just wave to sprinkle my SENCO 'fairy-dust' over their problems and everything will be 'cured' – they have no idea how hard this job is because it just takes over.*	Demands made by, and lack of understanding from, others (colleagues, parents etc.). Poor Work-life balance.
Work taken home. No time during day. Work dominates personal life.	*I find I'm taking tons of stuff home to do because there's no time during the day as I'm at it 100% of the time. I don't have a partner at the moment…perhaps that's a good thing as we wouldn't be able to spend any quality time together anyway as all I'm doing is work…work…work.*	

Main Themes
Workload & pressures to perform in multi-role leading to poor work-life balance & doubts about ability to perform. Empathy with fellow SENCOs and recognition of formal SENCO training in developing own knowledge and skills.

(A:1:3)
THEMATIC ANALYSIS: BRENDA

Note: Brenda did not submit a supporting narrative for her concept map. As a result of this the thematic analysis of her map could not be processed using the same procedure as the complete map/narrative combinations; in order to maintain some level of consistency the thematic analysis processes were adapted by using my commentary and Brenda's own annotations on her illustration. The themes generated through this procedure are shown in Table (6:3) which is situated in the main text (Chapter 6).

(A:1:4)

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: MARGARET		
Code	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
Links with other SENCOs. Feeling 'stressed' & expected to be stressed.	*'I drew me first before I really started to think how I feel about the job. In talking to everyone else they all say that they feel stressed-out by the whole thing – the job and all this additional training that we have to do…so I just drew myself as a stressed-out SENCO as that is what I expected to be.*	Empathy with other SENCOs on course – believing that she is 'stressed' through volume of work. Influenced by thoughts/ideas of others(?)
Reviewing and reappraising position as SENCO: Identifying good points about being a SENCO.	*Then I had a thought about the job and what I've been doing and what the school thinks of me. Do you know what? It isn't all bad you know…that's when I started to think about the good things first.*	Re-appraisal of role in school and nature of positive factors: variety, advising/supporting colleagues.
Enjoying self in role. Variety of job with lots to do. Enjoys meetings. Likes being on SMT. Recognition of potential future leadership development. Opportunity to work outside of the classroom.	*I realised that I was enjoying myself…not a word I'd normally think to use about the job as it's so full of different stuff and I'm always feeling that I've got piles and piles of things to do, but I like the meetings and I like being on the SMT- that'll really help me in the future as I'm on the leadership team and get to do a lot of stuff outside of my classroom.*	advising/supporting colleagues. Recognition of enhanced status as SENCO. Increased potential to be a leader within the school. Recognition of colleagues as being too demanding… expecting SENCO to do everything relating to SEND.
Likes advising & supporting	*I like being able to advise and help colleagues but they always want me to*	

	sort out things for them when I'm busy with masses of things to do…but I like the fact that I can help and advise; it makes me feel as if I've got status in the school –	
Recognises that colleagues can be too demanding. Likes enhanced 'status' of being SENCO.		
Realistic – understands that she is at the beginning of career as SENCO. Lots to learn & do. Reappraising position…changing original 'stressed' position to a 'smiley-face' and positive outlook.	but I've got my feet on the ground too as I can see that it's still 'early days' and that I've got tons of things to learn about the job…so I'm not complaining about the job or about all the things we have to do on this course…perhaps I'll re-draw my face here with a smiley-face on it…then it'll be more realistic.'	

Main Themes

Recognition of SENCO status as a strategic leader in the school with a range of responsibilities outside of the classroom.

Enjoying being the SENCO

Recognition of colleagues (teachers) not taking on responsibility of SEN within their classrooms.

(A:1:5)

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: ISOBEL		
Code	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
Waving or drowning? Not sure.	O.K. me in the middle with a smile on my face and waving hands…perhaps not waving but drowning (laughs)…feels like it	Unsure of self-in-role. Finally decides that it's the role for her.
Pressure of workload. Expected to be the expert all the time. Aware of gaps in knowledge. Worried by lack of knowledge.	. Over here (points to right-hand side of concept map) are all the things I'm most worried about. I've got tons to do and I'm expected to know everything…but I know that I don't and that worries me.	High workload as SENCO with no remission from class-teaching duties. Gaps in knowledge causing stress.
Says head is 'great' but SEND in school not a high priority. Focus is on pupil outcomes/SATS and Head forgets about barriers to learning some pupils face. Head micromanages	My head's great but he has his own plan for school and I don't think SEN is a high priority…it's all about pupil outcomes and high SATS scores…I think he forgets about the barriers to learning which a lot of our pupils have but he doesn't seem to leave me to look after the SEN…I've put here that.	CPD in place to remedy this (and enjoys engaging with CPD – particularly National Award for SEN Coordination). SEND not on priority list for school.

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according to pupil performance indicators.		High level of 'performativity' affecting school culture.
Need for independence in role. Wants to make own ideas but believes that she doesn't know enough to do this. Recognises some good factors (from concept map l.h. side: introduced Graduated response & new child-centred pupil profiles). Enjoys National Award for SEN Coordination.	*Perhaps that's good…but I dunno…I want to be independent and make my own ideas work but I've got the idea that I don't know enough. I've done some good things* (points to left of concept map)…*I'm really pleased about those things and I really like the course* (National Award for SEN Coordination).	Need for SENCO independence and opportunities to manage and lead (developing new approaches for provision development). Evidence of new developments put in place by SENCO. No payment for SENCO role.
Awareness of other SENCOs feeling the same. Issue of balancing full-time class-teaching with SENCO duties. Demands of other staff thinking SENCO can do all SEND work. No pay for SENCO role. Feeling better that she's not alone.	*' I'm meeting other SENCOs and finding that I'm not alone and that we're all suffering all the same stuff as each other especially about balancing teaching with being SENCO, how other staff think the SENCO can sort out all their own problems and how few of us are paid any extra for doing the SENCO job…and that makes me feel a lot better.*	Questions her move into the SENCO role …admits that this was the *right* thing to do.
Questions self-in-role…have I done the right thing? Finally agrees that she has.	*I've said here that 'Have I done the right thing'…perhaps I have…yeah…I have.*	

Main Themes

Excessive SENCO workload (no remission from class-teaching).

SENCO lack of knowledge (responsibilities, procedures & SEND generating need for CPD.

Performativity-driven climate in school making SEND a low priority.

Recognition of SENCO as needing to lead and manage but not given the opportunity (due to (3)).

No payment for SENCO role.

Ability to question 'self' in role…and decides that the SENCO position is 'right' for her.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: JOHN		
Code	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
View of others – they see a smoothly performing SENCO and not the amount of turmoil & work going on 'underneath'. Staff not wanting to see the amount of work(?) undertaken by SENCO.	'*I decided not to draw a version of myself as a SENCO in the middle…I went for a picture of a swan as I think that the SENCO role as I see it is just that… that everyone else sees you smoothly doing the job, sorting out this-and-that, supporting the kids, working with parents, organising all the provision, running the TAs etcetera…but they don't see…or don't want to see…all the things which are going on underneath the water.*	Others' perception of SENCO without realising the amount of work required to do the job. Recognition of SENCO as a leader/manager (on SMT).
Workload. Identification of good practice. SENCO status *partially* recognised (co-opted on to SMT but not permanent member). Disenchantment with the above situation. Workload identified again.	*The swan's frantically paddling and so am I. Here's all the things which I do and which I sometimes get really up-tight about* (indicates bottom half of concept map). *I've been co-opted into the SMT but not as a permanent member. The head says that I join it 'when required'…whatever that means…it's required all the time though isn't it as I do stuff in all year groups, with all members of staff, with parents, outside agencies and in the catchment area too?*	Frustration at not being a permanent member of SMT and with restricted opportunities to lead (Head makes all decisions). Importance of SENCO having adequate resources and time.
Role of leader and manager identified. Not allowed to make decisions (staffing, training, funding, developing provision). Head makes all the key decisions relating to SEN. supported by Deputy & KS managers.	*I've been called a leader and manager but I'm not sure what that means. I do all the day-to-day stuff but I'm not allowed to make important decisions about staffing, training, funding or developing provision- the head makes those decisions along with the deputy head and Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators…*	Importance of SENCO having incentives (pay for job). SENCO 'self-doubt' – realising that they are expected to 'perform' due to high level of resourcing.
Generous allocation of time to do the job (50% of timetable). Aware of this allocation of time when compared to other SENCOs (on course). Receives additional pay for SENCO role (as an incentive for doing a 'difficult job').	*mind you I have been given half a timetable to do the SENCO job in and I do know that it's a bit of a luxury as most of those here* (other new SENCOs on the National Award for SEN Coordination) *don't get any additional secure time at all…I also get the allowance too so at least I know that I've been recognised as doing a difficult job.*	Recognition of amount of time given by school for the SENCO function. Receives an additional allowance for being SENCO.
Awareness of having to perform well stress and self-doubt about ability ('Imposter Syndrome'?)	*…I'm also aware that I've got to live up to all of this too and I sometimes get a bit shaky with it all and question if I'm up to it.'*	

Main Themes
The SENCO as being very 'self-aware' of his position within the school and of others' perception.
Heavy workload.
Importance of resource and time allocation for job.
Importance of payment (incentive) for job.
SENCO 'self-doubt' (Imposter Syndrome?).
Recognition of generous allocation of time and additional allowance for SENCO job in relation to having to do a 'difficult job'.

(A:1:7)

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: PENNY		
Code	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
Enjoying being SENCO. But worried…stress related, not sleeping at night. Concerned about staff and pupils.	*'I just put down all the things which I thought about when I thought about being a SENCO. I'm enjoying it really but I'm still worried about loads of things…sometimes I can't sleep at night because of all the stuff I'm worried about.*	Enjoying SENCO role. Affecting Work-life balance (stress & not sleeping). Strong relationships (staff/parents).
Panic attack when Ofsted came to school. Lack of knowledge about purpose of inspection & fear of Ofsted (form of 'bullying').	*I've even had a panic attack when Ofsted came in. I don't know what they do and why we have 'em as they don't tell us anything we don't know already and they really get in the way…they make us frightened and when people are frightened you don't get good work out of them. It's a form of bullying really…keeping us teachers in our place. It's horrible.*	Fear & misunderstanding of Ofsted (creating stress – see above). 'Over-helping' staff ('mothering') – causing them to pass on responsibility for SEN to SENCO.
Conflicting view…feeling worried & fearful but overall having confidence. Admission of having a good Ofsted inspection. Recognition of positive practice (links inside and outside of school) Helping staff and pupils (but concerned about them).	*Anyway, I'm blabbering on about the things which worry me but, as I've said here…look (refers to concept map) I've said that I feel confident about doing the job and we had a good Ofsted too. Anyway…there's a right old mix here…I think I'm good at making links in and outside of the school and I think that the kids and their mums and dads trust me and what I do and say, the staff too…. They always come to me for help and I try to help 'em as much as possible as I'm concerned about them and about the kids with special needs which they teach*	SENCO & TAs differentiate for pupils with SEN and not teachers.
'Mothering' staff and pupils…perhaps too much so that they don't take on the responsibility for SEND in their classes?	*…so I make sure that I help the staff as much as possible. Look here on the picture…I've said that I 'mother' them…I do a bit too…but I've put a minus and a plus because I think I can mother them too much so they don't think about doing special needs stuff for themselves*	

| SENCO & TAs differentiate and not teachers.

Recognition that this is not good practice.	*…expecting me or the teaching assistants to do the differentiation and planning for the kids with SEN…and that's not a good thing….but I'm not helping by trying to be a magic fairy with a magic wand sorting out everybody else'*	

Main Themes

Enjoys being a SENCO – feeling confident overall.

Work/life balance disrupted.

Fear of Ofsted/disruption to school.

Forging good relationships with parents & teachers.

Teachers not taking responsibility for pupils with SEN.

(A:1:8)

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: MEGAN		
Code	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
Being a Head and SENCO – balancing both roles.

School part of Academy Cluster with Exc Head overseeing all.Feeling frustrated by this situation. | *'As you know I'm a new head and a new SENCO with both roles put together in one. I'm OK when I feel that I'm the one in charge but as a part of an Academy cluster with a Head of Federation over all of the four schools in it, it can all get very frustrating. Look, I've put him on the roof overlooking everything.* | The difficulty of being a head-teacher and a SENCO with the double (and excessive) workload….leading to frustration. |
| The Exc Head does not understand SEND and the complexities of provision.

Feels that no support is given by Exc. Head. | *I shouldn't say this but it's all about the money and pupil progress scores…it's even more confusing now that levels have gone and we're all a bit in the dark about reporting pupil data (Ref: changes to the National Curriculum Sept 2015 ff). He doesn't have a clue about the complexities of special needs provision so I feel that I have no support or direction from him in this area.* | The difficulty of being the Head/SENCO but having to be line managed by an Executive Head-teacher in an Academy Chain creating tensions in terms of being able to 'lead'.

School culture perceived to be one with a priority for pupil progress, attainment and funding (performativity-focused).

Tensions over being the Head and expecting to be the expert & with being the SENCO needing support to be able to support others. |
| Wants a separate SENCO but refused by Exc. Head due to costs.

Likes the SENCO job but it doesn't fit in with being headteacher.

Comparison made with being SENCO and FT Class-teacher.

Impossible mix due to heavy workload in both. | *I want a separate SENCO for my school but he says 'no' as he thinks we're too small and to appoint a SENCO would cost extra money – so I have to do it. I like the job but it doesn't fit in with being a head-teacher; I suppose it's like a SENCO being the SENCO and a full-time class-teacher…it's an impossible mix as the two jobs are crashing into each other and competing for your time, your energy and your attention.* | |

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States that Exc Head has never been a teacher so doesn't understand….. gets little from '*Superhead*'. Gets her support from the children.	*Anyway, he hasn't been a teacher…I think he comes from Business or Industry…if he has been a teacher it wasn't for long…he's good at spreadsheets though! I get very little from my 'Superhead'*	Tension between liking being the SENCO (and empathising with other SENCOs) but wanting to pass it on to another member of staff (thwarted by Exc Head).
Needs own support to respond to demands from staff and children. Recognises the conflict within the dual role of head and SENCO…as head she feels that she should be the 'fount of all knowledge'. When in classteacher role everything was clear…now overwhelmed.	*– where I get my support is from the children themselves. I've put this in one of the central rooms of the school drawing. As I'm new at this I need supporting to respond to all the pupil and staff needs but it's an odd position as I'm the head and the SENCO so I should be the supporter and the 'fount of all knowledge'…I've said there that when I was a class-teacher everything was clear cut…but not now as I'm feeling overwhelmed by the whole thing.*	Enjoying SEN Award and is using it efficiently in managing SEN provision in the school.
Not a happy time. Finding SEN Award useful – generating lots of ideas & helping to prioritise provision. Positive about working with other SENCOs and empathises with & understands their position.	*It's not what I'd call a happy time but at least things are looking up as I'm finding this course (National Award for SEN Coordination) to be really useful. I've got plenty of ideas to help me with prioritising provision and next steps in terms of developing provision; what have I said here? Yes…working from a 'blank canvas' and 'working together' with other SENCOs as I'm sure that most of them feel just as overwhelmed.'*	
Main Themes Tensions around being the Head-teacher and the SENCO creating a doubly excessive workload. Tensions around dual role and relationships with (a) staff…wanting to support them BUT needing support herself and (b) Exc. Head who has a performity-driven view of the Academy Chain with little priority for SEND. Liking the SENCO role but wants to give it up. Value of SEN Award translating into effective provision & planning for SEND in the school.		

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: MINA		
Code	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
Demand made on SENCO by head, staff, TAs, parents (like machine gun fire in WW1). SENCO does not have a 'magic wand' to solve everything immediately. '*Keeping my head down*'.	'*These are all the things I'm hearing every day from people like my head, from the parents, from the TAs etc. All of the questions and demands flung at me all the time…as if I've got a magic wand which I can wave and make everything better. It's like being machine-gunned all the time with the 'brrrraaaatttttt-braattttt-braattttt' coming all the time. We've been looking at World War One with the kids as it's the one-hundred year commemoration and how it started and the start of the trench war…well, it's a bit like that…I'm keeping my head down while all the bullets and bombs are flying at me.*	SENCO under pressure from staff demands for support, advice as they see her as 'the expert' who can solve what they perceive as their problems immediately (the 'magic wand') without understanding SENCO needs.
Aware of own inexperience as SENCO. But says that staff do not take this into consideration expecting her to be the '*instant expert*'.	*What makes it worse is that you know that I've only really just started doing this SENCO job and they all seem to think that I'm the 'instant expert'…well, I'm not…I'd love to be but I know that it'll take time but they all want it all 'now'…like greedy gannets!*	SENCO knows that she can not solve everything and is aware of her own inexperience – lacks some confidence in herself because of this.
Working with the children is seen as the straightforward part of the job…working with staff is not.	*I've left the children out of this picture as I think that sorting out their needs and supporting them I think that's the straightforward bit – not the 'easy' bit as teaching is never easy but the bit which is the easiest to sort out.*	
Out of the classroom engaging in SENCO duties so TA takes the class. TA complains at this – she's not paid for it. SENCO not paid for SENCO work but Head says that it might happen as she develops 'experience'. SENCO not sure what they mean by 'experience' as she's doing everything required now.	*But look at this….as I'm sometimes out of the classroom a fair bit doing SENCO work I get my TA moaning all the time that she has to take the class….I don't think she's paid any extra for it either…but I'm not paid any extra for my SENCO work; I always thought that I would be but the head says that she and the governors might 'consider it in the future after I've become more experienced'. I dunno what they want…but I think it might be blood as I've already given my sweat and tears…literally!*	SENCO called out of the classroom a lot and has to 'steal' time away from teaching to undertake SENCO duties and so the TA takes the lesson (cover). Receives 1 x non-protected hour per week for SENCO work. TA complains at not receiving additional pay for this but SENCO does not receive incentive and/or additional pay for her SENCO role either.
Questions fired at SENCO by staff which she feels she should be able to	*All of these questions being shot at me…I suppose they're all valid and should be things which either I should and could sort out or SEND 'em to someone or to*	Head-teacher using possibility of additional SENCO allowance as an

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respond to but not feeling confident enough. SENCO on *'learning curve'* from class-teacher to SENCO. Feels that eventually she'll be able to answer questions and have a proper overview of provision.	*somewhere where they can be answered as I am the SEN specialist who should have the knowledge. Some of them they should be sorting out for themselves but I'm not confident enough – yet – to state that to 'em….yet. I can see that it's all about my learning curve…from a class-teacher to a SENCO who eventually should be a leader who really has a proper overview of whole-school provision for SEN and teaching and learning.*	'incentive' (to come with SENCOs greater experience in role). But SENCO does everything already. SENCO has no resources for job. Feels that, in time, she will be able to cope with head, staff & parental demands. Enjoys being SENCO but it is personally wearing. Knows that she can *'make a difference'* in this role.
No additional time, resources or pay (1 x non-protected hour a week). 'Steals' time from teaching to do SENCO work (reason for TA complaining?).	*Trouble is….I'm not given the time, resources or pay to do this….I get an hour a week and that's not protected either that's why I have to 'steal' time from my class to meet parents and thinks…that's why my TA moans at covering for me.*	
Enjoys job…but it's wearing her out.	*Now you can see why I've drawn myself with my hands up to my panicky face. What can I say that's 'good'? Well I can say that I do like the job as I know that I can really make a difference but it is wearing me out!'*	

Main Themes
Workload pressure caused through head, staff & parental demands.

Loss of confidence due to inexperience (on a 'learning curve') and not being able to be the 'SENCO expert' immediately.

No additional resources or time given for SENCO work (has to steal time from class-teaching).

Not paid for SENCO role; head-teacher using potential of future allowance as an incentive.

SENCO feels that she's given 'blood, sweat and tears' already and is frustrated at not receiving additional allowance.

Overall feeling that time in post will develop expertise so as to be able to address demands and develop provision.

SENCO well-being affected (job is 'wearing her out')

SENCO aware that she can '*make a difference*' in the school.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: DENISE		
Coding	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
SENCO job is a 'swarm' of things which need time to sort out in the school. Does not have time allocated (full time class-teacher). Will not be given the time (head insists she needs to balance both roles).	*'Sorry about the stick-person in the middle…I'm useless at drawing and it's all a bit of a mess as I just plonked down each idea as it came to me…there's no pattern or anything complicated like that…just me and my thoughts…this is how it all came to me…how the job seems to me…a swarm of things which need loads of time to sort out properly. That's the big problem as I haven't got the time as I'm teaching my class all the time. I won't be given it either as the head says that I'll have to do both jobs and fit in the SENCO stuff around the teaching I'm allowed or not!*	Heavy SENCO Workload with no resources allocated to do it. SENCO as full-time class-teacher with no additional time allocated for SEND coordination. Funding and all matters relating to funding are fully organised by head-teacher – SENCO has no input or say.
Head provides moral support with parents and general 'understanding' but not with funding ('line drawn').	*Actually, she's quite good to me – so I'll start with her- she does provide me with support, mainly of the moral support kind as she backs me up with parents and things like that. She's good on the 'understanding' too but she will draw a line when anything I ask for, need or want to do costs additional money.*	SENCO self-doubt due to inexperience and lack of knowledge.
Head turned down request for accredited training for TAs in ASD. Lack of knowledge to run in-house training. Money/funding is recognised as key factor Receives no additional pay for SENCO role (*might receive it after SEN Award is completed*). School is part of Academy Trust – SENCO perceives that it can pay what it likes.	*I wanted to SEND a couple of my TAs off to do some accredited training for ASD but she said 'no' and said I could do it 'in house'…but I don't have a clue how to go about doing it on a shoe-string. I suppose the bottom line is always the money isn't it? Without the money nothing happens…so I know that I won't be getting any pay for doing the SENCO job. The head did say that she'd ask the governors for it but only when I've finished all my SENCO training….I suppose it's because we're an academy so the Trust can pay what it wants as everything is up in the air now.*	Fear of Ofsted. SENCO well-being affected by pressures of work. Issues around the external training of TAs (linked to funding) – in house CPD delivered by SENCO (link to SENCO feelings of lack of knowledge) SENCO need to know more about budgeting & finances. Issues around Academy Trust status.
Wishes to know more about funding for SEN (EHCP). Head manages all factors relating to funding and doesn't	*I wish I knew more about budgeting, particularly funding for SEN in the school and for those with EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans) but the head keeps all that to herself and doesn't share it out; I have asked her on several occasions but she still refuses to provide me with the*	Potential to be a transformational leader restricted as the SENCO feels a *'follower'* and not a

share. SENCO asked head on several occasions for information on funding but head refuses. Lack of knowledge on funding makes it difficult to manage provision. Begs for money for children with SEN.	*information, this makes it really difficult to manage provision for some kids as I always seem to be begging for money to support them.*	*'leader'.* Has developed essential knowledge in areas of SEND but has little/no opportunity to use this knowledge.
Feels she can't complain about head (as other SENCOs' heads are worse).	*Anyway, when I hear from the others what some of their heads are like I can't complain really because mine's an angel in comparison.*	
Worried about Ofsted – feels isolated (head can't help as too busy) Lies awake at night worrying…feels that she doesn't know what she's got right or wrong (scared of other SENCOs who say that they're 'sorted').	*OK…what have I put here… Ofsted…yes, I'm deffo worried about that; I feel really stuck out on a limb with this as no one can really help me apart from the head and she's up to her eyes in things. I do lay awake at night frightened about this…some of the other SENCOs are right cocky about it as they say that they've got everything 'sorted' but that only scares me even more as I don't know what I've got right or wrong…or missing. I hate all this 'second-guessing' what Ofsted want to see anyway.*	
No time for SENCO job. Identifies a range of key SENCO functions but admin and 'fire-fighting' take up time. Wants to be pro-active rather than re-active SENCO. Wants to feel *'in charge'* rather than at the receiving end of demands.	*Time…s'easy…I haven't got any …I want to see the staff, I want to see the children but I'm spending all my time doing admin and 'fighting fires'. I want to be proactive rather than reacting to situations and demands all the time but I can't seem to 'jump the fence' so that I feel in charge rather than being 'done to'*	
Feels like a *'follower'* rather than a *'leader'*. Wants to be a leader with the challenge but has self-doubt. Identified CPD for	*…I suppose that's when you feel like a leader rather than a 'doer' or follower. I've said here that I want to be a leader and I want the challenge but I just don't know if I'm strong enough to do it; I've picked out some areas for my own CPD in coaching and mentoring as I think that these are vital but I've not really been given much of a chance to stretch my wings as a leader as I always, or nearly always, have to ask*	

self (coaching & mentoring). Not given a change to practice being a leader as she has to ask permission from head for any developments or the smallest change in provision – micromanagement (down to funding as a reason for this?).	*permission for the smallest change – perhaps this is all down to the money again…I don't know but it does feel like micromanagement to me.*	
Positive elements: head paid for her OCR L7 Diploma (now a Dyslexia Specialist). Not been able to employ skills & knowledge in this area (apart for access arrangements). TAs do all the additional Literacy support – annoys SENCO. Has seen SEN pupil progress SENCO does have some good ideas for developing provision which she intends executing.	*Some positive things…well the head did pay for me to do my OCR Level 7 Diploma so I'm a Dyslexia specialist…but I haven't been able to use it properly in the school apart from providing evidence to support access arrangements for SATS. The TAS do all the literacy support so that does annoy me. But I suppose the best thing is that I've seen some positive impact on progress for pupils on our special needs register and look…next to the lightbulb…I do have some really good ideas for developing provision and I really do intend to put them into operation regardless of how much funding*	
Likes being able to 'get on with things' and use ideas. Doesn't like lack of time and micro-managing.	*I really like this part of the job…the bit where I'm trusted to get on with things and to use my ideas…pity about the lack of time and being always monitored.'*	

Main Themes

SENCO well-being affected by heavy SENCO workload

No additional time, resources allocated

No additional pay allowance for SENCO role.

No input into funding.

Head-teacher directing SEN provision through controlling funding.

Fear of Ofsted.

Wants to be pro-active but is mainly a re-active SENCO.

SENCO Specialist knowledge not used sufficiently by the school.

Micro-management and monitoring by Headteacher restricts opportunities for SENCO to display leadership skills.

Appendix (2)

(A.2:1)   Pilot Questionnaire : Letter to SENCOs

From: Andy Smith
To: *(SENCO Name)*
Date: May 2014

'Exploring the Context for the SENCO Role'

Dear (SENCO name)

I'm writing to you in the hope that you will be able to help me with my own post-graduate level (Phd) research at the University of Northampton which has its focus on the professional lives, experiences and well-being of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) working in primary school settings.

I will need to collect data in order to create the current 'context' for the research. This will be a general picture of the nature of the SENCO role and how it is realised in a variety of ways across a range of primary settings in the East Midlands area.This 'rich picture' is designed to capture and then critically present the nature of the SENCO role and SENCO views/informed opinions of their roles and how they compare with the established role as detailed in the TDA (2008) criteria for the National Award for SEN Coordination. Through this 'capturing' of views/opinions it is hoped to gain a real 'feel' of how the SENCO function is perceived and achieved in reality/practice rather than through any theoretical/synthetic role description determined through Government imposed achievement criteria.

*I would be very pleased if you could support me with my research by helping me with my questionnaire construction. This attached SENCO questionnaire is designed as a **PILOT STUDY** and your participation in engaging with it will prove to be of great help to me in the construction of my completed questionnaire tool.*

In order to protect the integrity of this research every aspect of the work will be conducted with a strong ethical underpinning which meets the requirements of the British Educational Research Association's 2011 guidelines and the ethical regulations for post-graduate research set down by the University of Northampton. In short:

a) *Your contributions will be treated in absolute confidence as you, and your school (and any member of your school) will not be identified*
b) *You are fully entitled to decline from taking part in any (or all) aspects of my research*
c) *If you do decide to accept this invitation to contribute to my research you have full right to withdraw your contribution (or parts of your contribution) at any time.*
d) *Any contribution you make will be securely stored and will only be used by me in two specific ways:*
   (i)   *To develop my final questionnaire for SENCOs and,*
   (ii) *To support any published paper(s) in academic journals which are written by me and which are directly linked to this research*
After this your questionnaire returns will be shredded.

I fully understand the exceptionally demanding nature of your SENCO role and that your time is both precious and limited so any help you can give me by completing the attached questionnaire is highly appreciated. If you would like feedback on the progress of my research, please feel free to contact me by e-mail (andrew.smith@northampton.ac.uk).

Thank you once again for your kind support. Completed questionnaires can be returned to me (address at the top of the questionnaire) in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.
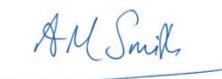
Yours sincerely

AM Smith

Andy Smith
Senior lecturer in Special & Inclusive Education
The University of Northampton

(A:2:2)

	Male/Female (please delete)

Pilot Questionnaire

'My Role as SENCO'

Thank you for completing this pilot questionnaire. All of the instructions in the questionnaire have been written in italic script in order to help you to distinguish them from the questions. Sometimes you will be asked to write a response in the space provided; if you require additional space to record your responses please feel free to do this on the reverse of the sheet (but please make sure that you clearly state the question number)

Your responses to the questions will be treated confidentially and you will not be identified by person or by school/setting.

Once you have completed your questionnaire, please attach it to an e-mail and return it to me at andrew.smith@northampton.ac.uk. *Or, if you prefer not to use electronic means, please post it to:*

Mr Andrew Smith
Senior Lecturer in Special & Inclusive Education
School of Education
The University of Northampton
Boughton Green Road
Northampton
NN2 7AL

Using the enclosed s.a.e

If you have any concerns or queries regarding this questionnaire please feel free to contact me by e-mail.

Thank you for your time, patience and for sharing your views.

Andy Smith

1. **How long have you been teaching?**

Years	

2. **How long have you been a SENCO (or equivalent)?**

Years	Months

3. **What is your employment status?** *(please tick)*

Full time	
Part Time (If P/T please state numerical value e.g 0.2=1 day per week)	

4. **What is your job title?**

5. **What type of school/setting do you work in? (e.g. KS1 & 2, Academy, Church School etc.)**

6. **Are you a member of your school's Senior Management/Leadership Team or Policy Forming Group?** *(Please tick)*

Yes	
No	

7. **Who is your direct line-manager for your SENCO role?** *(please tick)*

Head-teacher	
Deputy Head-teacher	
Assistant Head-teacher	
Inclusion Manager	
Other *(please specify)*	

8. **In addition to your SENCO duties, what other roles/responsibilities do you have in your school/setting?** *(Please tick all that apply)*

Head-teacher	
Deputy Head-teacher (or equivalent)	
Key Stage Manager	
Class teacher (give year group)	
Subject Leader/coordinator	
Gifted & Talented coordinator	
Inclusion Manager (whole school)	
Behaviour Management Coordinator	
Looked-After-Children Manager	
EAL Coordinator	
Other *(please specify)*	

9. **How many hours per week are given to you exclusively for your SENCO work?**

10. **Are these hours 'ring-fenced'/protected?**

Yes	
No	

11. **If you had the choice, what % of your time at work would you like to see devoted to your SENCO duties?**

12. **In your opinion, should the SENCO have a whole-class teaching responsibility?**

Yes		*Go to Q13*
No		*Go to Q14*

13. **If 'Yes' please briefly explain why**

Now go to Q15

14. **If 'No' please briefly explain why not**

Now go to Q15

15. **Do you have access to administrative and clerical support?** (*Please tick*)

Yes	
No	

16. **Do you have access to a secure and adequate area/environment for meetings, one-to-one/small group work with pupils and for the storage of documents/pupil records?** (*please tick*)

Yes	
No	

17. **Do you have access to a private (non-shared) telephone line?** (*Please tick*)

Yes	
No	

18. **Are you given the opportunity to present/discuss pupil(s) needs & provision (and any issues relating to the management of SEN provision) in staff briefings and staff meetings?** (*please tick*)

Yes	
No	

19. **Do you have the opportunity to meet regularly with the Head-teacher in order to discuss matters relating to provision for pupils with SEN and the day-to-day management/operation of the SEN Policy?** (*Please tick*)

Yes	
No	

20. **Are you responsible for any of the following duties involving the management of Teaching Assistants (inc HLTAs) in your school/setting?** (*Please tick all that apply*)

Full responsibility for deploying TAs in lessons	
Full responsibility for coordinating the professional development of TAs	
A significant contribution to the recruitment, selection and interviewing of TAs	
A full (or significant) contribution for managing the Induction process for new TAs	
Full responsibility for managing TA performance reviews/appraisals	
Full responsibility for the monitoring and quality assurance of TAs across the school	
Full responsibility for leading the TA team	
If you have 'partial' responsibility for any of the above, please list them here:	
For which of the above do you have little or no contribution to make in your school/setting?	
If you are not responsible for managing & deploying TAs in your school/setting – who is?	
If the last sub-question applies to your situation...are you happy with this set up? **(***Please circle your response and then give your reasons in the space below).* **Yes No Partially** **Reason:**	

21. **Do you deliver staff INSET and guidance in areas relating to SEN, Disability and Inclusion?**

Yes		*Go to Q22*
No		*Go to Q23*

22. **If '*Yes'* in what areas have you provided (or will be providing) staff INSET and guidance?** (*please tick all that apply*)

Information on individual children	
Information on procedures for supporting the learning and social development of children with SEND	
Information on National issues relating to SEN & Inclusion (e.g. SEN in the White Paper 2010, the 2011 Green Paper etc.|)	
Leading on some (or all) of the National Strategies Inclusion Development (IDP) materials	
The identification of children with SEN	
How to plan, prepare and deliver differentiated/personalised learning at Wave 1 (classroom) level	
How to meet the needs of children with SEND who have barriers to their learning/social development within the mainstream classroom	
How to use pupils' individual targets/success criteria on IEPs and/or provision maps to inform planning (and as 'working documents')	
How to manage the requirements of the school's Accessibility Plan	

How to monitor and record the progress of pupils with SEND	
How to ensure the 'voice' of the child with SEND is actively encouraged and addressed	
How to work in partnership with external agencies	
Providing guidance and training to NQTs	
How to effectively deploy/use Teaching Assistants in the mainstream classroom in order to support the learning needs of pupils with SEND	
Partnership working (the SENCO working with classroom teachers in their classrooms – team-teaching, supporting and providing expert advice on matters relating to SEND)	
Others (*please list below*)	

23. **If you do not lead (or take a part in delivering) Staff INSET – what are the factors which inhibit your duties in this area?** (*please list below*)

24. **Do you have a designated 'SEN Governor' for your school/setting?**

Yes		If 'Yes' go to Q25
No		If 'No' go to Q26

25. **If 'Yes' to Q19, briefly state how you work in partnership with your SEN Governor in the box below.**

26. **Your Special Educational Needs Policy: In the box below, can you briefly state how your SEN Policy inter-relates with other school policies** (*e.g. Teaching/Learning Policy; Behaviour Policy; Equal Opportunities Policy etc.*)

27. **Your SEN Development Plan** (*please tick all the statements which apply*)

The school does not have an SEN Development Plan	
The school does have an SEN Development Plan – but I don't write it or review it	
I produce, in collaboration with colleagues, the school's Special Needs Development Plan (or equivalent)	
The Special Needs Development Plan is reviewed annually	
The SEN Development Plan feeds into whole-school improvement/development plan(s)	
Teacher and TA performance review data (e.g. requests for specific INSET etc.) feeds into the SEN Development Plan	
Pupil performance and achievement data helps form key aspects of the SEN Development Plan	
A review of local, national and international legislation and policy (and its expected impact on SEN provision) forms a part of the SEN Development Plan	
Local Authority advice is sought when creating/reviewing the SEN Development Plan	
The SEN Development Plan is discussed in detail with the Head-teacher/SEN Governor and then shared with all staff	

28. **Finances and Budgeting – Do you have the responsibility for managing all funding relating to statutory assessment and the statementing process (including the monitoring of statemented monies)?**

Yes		Go to Q30
No		Go to Q29

29. If you answered 'No' to Q28 – who does control the funding for pupils with statements in your school?

Now go to Q30

30. Do you know how much funding is generated for your school through pupils at School Action and School Action Plus on your Special Needs List?

Yes		*Go to Q31*
No		*Go to Q32*

31. If you answered 'Yes' to Q30 – How are you informed of this funding stream? *Tick all that apply.*

Directly from the Head-teacher	
From a Deputy Head-teacher (or equivalent)	
From a member of the Administrative Team (or equivalent)	
Directly from the Local Authority	
Other source *(please list below)*	

32. Are you responsible for organising and managing special examination arrangements for pupils who have SEN?

Yes	
No	

33. Do you have the opportunity to attend any professional development INSET for your own needs?

Yes		*Go to Q35*
No		*Go to Q37*

34. If you answered 'No' to the above question – what are the barriers which restrict you accessing personal professional development in your role of SENCO? *(Please list them below).*

Please go to Q36

35. If you answered 'Yes' to Q33, on the list below please put a tick by the 'type' of INSET you have attended:

Formal, accredited, SENCO training (at Level 7/Masters Degree Level)	
Local Authority SENCO Conference	
Specific training delivered by the Local Authority *(please list in the space below)*:	
Specific training delivered by external providers *(please list in the space below)*	
Specific training which is 'school-based' *(please list in the space below)*	
On-line training *(please list below)*	
Self-directed study/reading *(please list below)*	
Other *(please list below)*	

36. Out of the training you have attended/engaged with (above) which do you consider to have been the most effective in developing your professional role as a SENCO/strategic leader? (*Please list below*)

Training	Reason why this training was effective

37. **Please put a tick below against the external services you actively work in partnership with:**

I **do not** work in partnership with external services as this is carried out by other staff in my school/setting	
Local Authority: Educational Psychologist	
Local Authority: SEN Support Service (or equivalent)	
Local Authority: Behaviour Support Service	
Local Authority: English as an Additional Language Support Service	
Local Authority: Educational Welfare Service (or equivalent)	
Local Authority: Looked After Children Team	
Local Authority: Gypsy Traveller Support Team	
Local Authority: Other (*please specify below*)	
Social Services: Family Support Worker	
Social Services: Child Case Worker	
Social Services: Other (*please specify below*)	
Heath Service: Speech & Language	
Heath Service: Occupational Therapist	
Heath Service: Physiotherapist	
Health Service: CAMHS	
Health Service: Designated Doctor/GP/Specialist	
Health Service: School Nurse	
Health Service: Other (*please specify below*)	
Police Liaison Officer	
Parent-Partnership Service	
Local/Regional and community groups/organisations (*please specify below*)	
Charities and Support Groups (*please specify below*)	
Other (*please specify below*)	

38. **What does your school/setting do in order to enhance your own 'well-being' as a SENCO ?(***please list below***)**

39. **In your opinion, what are the current benefits/opportunities for you of being a SENCO in your school/setting?** (*please list below*)

40. **In your opinion, what are the current negative aspects of being a SENCO?** (*please list below*)

41. **If you could change 3 aspects of the SENCO role in order to make the job more manageable, secure and fulfilling, what would these three things be?**

1	
2	
3	

42. **If you have anything else you would like to say about your own role as a SENCO or about the SENCO role in general, please feel free to write it here.**

Finally...as this is a pilot study I am very interested in your feedback as it will help me to refine and review this questionnaire. There is a box on the next page for you to write your feedback. Thank you – your help will be invaluable tome in my studies.

Andy Smith

(A:2:3)   PILOT Questionnaire Feedback Sheet: 'My Role as SENCO' (May 2013)

What is your opinion of the format of the questionnaire with its mix of closed, open and multiple-choice questions	√ for good/suitable x for poor/unsuitable

Through your responses to the questions, did you feel that you were given a fair opportunity to present a clear 'picture' of your identity as a SENCO?	**YES NO PARTIALLY**

Are there any questions w ich you felt were difficult to interpret/understand due to lack of clarity...if so, can you list them in the space on the right and then add a comment about them below;	**Questions which require greater clarity**
Comment	

How long did you take to complete the questionnaire?	

Are there any questions which you think should have been asked but were not? Can you write them in the space below:

If you have any other comments you would like to make, please feel free to make them on the reverse of this sheet. Thank you.

(A:2:4)   Pilot Questionnaire Response Matrix

Q	Return rate 4/10 = 40%	SENCO 1 (F)	SENCO 2 (M)	SENCO 3 (F)	SENCO 4 (F)
1	**Years Teaching**	6	15	5	2
2	**Years as SENCO**	1	1	1	1
3	**Status**	Full Time	Full Time	Full Time	Part-Time
4	**Title**	Class Teacher/SENCO	SEND Deputy Designated Child Protection Assessment Operator Senior Learning Team	Upper KS 2 Leader & SENCO	
5	**Type of school**	Academy	Primary (KS 1)	Primary (F to KS 2)	Primary (KS ½)
6	**Leadership Team role**	No	Yes	Yes	No
7	**Line-manager**	Head-teacher	Inclusion manager	Head-teacher	Deputy Head
8	**Other roles**	Class teacher (Yr ½) Behaviour management coordinator Looked-after children Assessment operator	Key Stage manager Class-teacher (Yr 6)	Class-teacher Yr 1 Science coordinator	Class-teacher Yr 5/6 Literacy coordinator
9	**Hrs p/week for SENCO role**	2	0	2	1
10	**Hrs 'ring-fenced;**	No	No	No	No
11	**Choice how many % hrs does SENCO need?**	205	20%	50%	50%
12	**Should SENCO have whole-class teaching ?**	No	Yes	No	No
13	**Explanation for 'yes'**		To keep SENCO 'in touch' with latest teaching developments and to see the impact/effect of policies in action		
14	**Expl. For 'No'**	Too demanding a role – in order to keep abreast of things SENCO time should be allocated accordingly			SENCO can keep 'up-to-date' by research, reading and by working with colleagues in their classes. There is no need for a SENCO to teach their own class as they have a whole-school management role (or should have!)
15	**Access to admin support?**	No	Yes	Yes	No
16	**Environment?**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17	**Access to private telephone**	No	No	Yes	No
18	**Can discuss SEN issues at staff meetings?**	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
19	**Regular meetings with Head**	No	Yes	Yes	No
20	**Responsibility for TAs**	None (Deputy & Head do it	CPD Performance	None (Deputy Head does it all)	None (Head-teacher does it

		all) **Happy with this**? No answer	reviews Q/A Leading TA team *Partial responsibility (with Head) for deployment into class* *Class-teachers decide exclusively how TA is used in lesson* *No responsibility for recruiting TAs* *No responsibility for induction of TAs* **Happy with this:** Partially – having responsibility for Q/A & performance shortly I expect to have responsibility for recruitment and induction of TAs	**Happy with this?** No. Difficult for SENCO to manage provision without responsibility for TAs – as they are the ones who provide the majority of interventions and I am not able to manage them effectively.	all) **Happy with this?** No. It makes me angry as how can I plan and manage SEN provision without direct management of the TAs. They need to be deployed to best advantage to maximnise learning...as the SENCO I am best placed to dothis and not the Head (due to admin/financial reasons). It's absolutely stupid and it devalues my position/.role and status.
21	**Deliver Staff Inset?**	No	Yes	No	Yes
22	**Which areas?**	None	Info on ind children Procedures supporting leadrning IDP materials Identification of SEN Classroom support for learning Using pupil tarhgets for planning Progress planning for pupils with SEN Using TAs in class to maximise learning	None	Info on ind. children
23	**If not leading Staff INSET what inhibits you?**	No pre-organised staff meeting	N/A	As a school – SEN is not the focus of our work at the moment (school under notice to improve)	No time or significance given to SEN provision during formal training sessions – it's all about assessment and record keeping and SEN doesn't get a 'look-in' (or is seen as an 'add-on')

24	**Designated SEN Govenor ?**	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
25	**How work in partnership?**	N/A	Meet with SEN Gov 2 x termly to discuss what I have put in place since the last meeting. I also discuss any constraints (inc, budget) that are affecting my role. The gov also highlights any SEND children that are not making expected progress and what I am going to do about it, inc. supporting staff in their provision. The gov also attends LA training recommended by me.	As a Gov myself I work closely with other Govs in working groups. The SEN Gov has a number of different responsibilities and has not felt it appropriate to meet with me at this stage.	No meetings as yet. I have asked to be invited to Gov meetings but this hasn;t happened. The SEN Gov is a parent of one of the children in the school.
26	**How does SEN Policy relate to other school policies?**	Unable to answer as I have not seen the SEN Policy	Not sure	Cross-referenced to: Teaching & Learning – states that the needs of all chn inc. those with SEND will receive differentiated teaching. Through theuse of IEPs & provision mapping barriers to learning will be identified and strategies & interventions will be used to overcome them. TAs used to support & provide interventions Behaviour – use of traffic light system to manage behaviour (may be identified as having SEN but not assumed). Teachers/TAs explore this and investigate barriers. Appropriate provision put into place. Equal Opps – all chn will be treated fairly and with respect.	SEN Policy is written by Head. I haven't seen the latest edition as it is currently being 'reviewed' and is at least six months late.
27	**SEN Development Plan**	There is a plan but I am not involved in writing or reviewing it.	There is aPlan but I don't write or review it. It is reviewed	There is a Plan but I don't write or review it. Pupil Performance data forms a large	No Plan in place

			annually by the Head & SEN Gov Pupil performance data forms a major part of it. Reviews of local, regional & national policy & legislation form part of it. The Dev Plan is discussed by Head & Gov and then shared with the staff.	part of it A review of local/regional/national legislation & policy forms a part of it	
28	**Responsibility for managing finance (stat assessment/statemented)?**	No	No	No	No
29	**If 'No' to 28 – who does?**	Head & Business manager	Head & Office Bursar	Head	Head
30	**Do you know how much funding through SEN (other than statemented) the school receives?**	No	No	No	No
31	**N/A**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
32	**Organise special exam arrangements?**	No	No	Yes (Yr 6)	No
33	**Attend prof development?**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
34	**N/A**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
35	**Type of INSET attended**	Accredited SENCO training	Accredited SENCO training LA Provision mapping Self-study through reading & research	Accredited SENCO training LA SENCO Conference	Accredited SENCO Training LA SENCO conf LA Provision Mapping Self-study through reading & research
36	**Which training has been most effective?**	SENCO Training (made me aware of role and responsibilities)	SENCO training by the Uni – I was new to the role and had no idea where to begin. SENCO course has provided me with a basic & then more detailed understanding of the role.	SENCO Training by Uni (the opportunity to meet & work alongside other new SENCOs and learn together.	SENCO Training by Uni (unbiased teaching and with a great opportunity to critically discuss and not just have a LA 'show-and-tell'. We are encouraged to make our own minds up about legislation/provision etc.
37	**External services accessed (partnerships)**	No response	LA Ed Psych LA SEN team LA Behaviour Support LA Welfare Service Health: Speech & Language Health: Occupational	LA Ed Psych LA SEN team LA Behaviour Support Health Service – Speech & language	LA Ed Psych LA Behaviour LA SEN team LA Welfare Health Doctor/GP Social Services: Child case Worker

			Therapy Health: Physiotherapist Health: CAMHS Health: Doctor/GP Health: School Nurse		
38	**What does school do to enhance your well-being?**	Nothing	Nothing	Head supports me in meetings (often by chairing or leading) Office staff SEND e-mails/make phone calls on my behalf when appropriate	Nothing much
39	**What are the current benefits of being a SENCO?**	No benefits as I am unable to make any decisions without discussing with the Inclusion Manager. I feel that I have the title without the status, the responsibilities or any benefits at all.	I am now on the school's leadership team which allows me to influence the school's direction. It s also extremely useful for my professional development.	I have developed as a leader and manager this year and feel more confident about taking my role further. It has given me more management experience as well as development opportunities which will enable me to progress my career more quickly to the role of deputy head in the future.	An opportunity to have a wider school role and to actually make a difference fir the pupils with SEND. But I need the time, resources and control to do this properly and I'm not getting it at the moment – the Head and Deputy 'micro-manage' far too much!
40	**What are the negative factors?**	The inability to do what you think you should do without going through so many people.	Length of time getting external agencies in for support. Amount of time taken up by the role. Lack of support from colleagues. Amount of paperwork involved.	Paperwork overload! Time constraints (making referrals, SENDing e-mails, chasing other staff, returning phone calls is time consuming and slows support down). Lack of understanding of the role by other staff including the head/deputy head who don't seem to have any real idea about SEND or about provision for them. Ensuring effective interventions are in place and that teachers and TAs are supporting the needs of all their children with SEND by using them and understanding how to make the transition of knowledge & skills on this back into the classroom.	No time, no resources, no telephone, no status and a lack of understanding by my colleagues that they have the responsibility for maximising learning for all the children in their classes (and not to palm them off on me when they perceive a 'weakness') Also, the lack of opportunity to deploy TAs in the right places!
41	**Changing 3 x aspects of the role – which ones?**	Freedom to make decisions More time out of my class (class teaching)	Less paperwork More specialists for each external agency Greater	The opportunity to spend time with all the chn in the school with SEN and to get to know them Understanding from my Head/Deputy of	Less whole-class teaching so that I can dedicate protected time to my SENCO role Less micro-managing from

		To be able to attend meetings with outside agencies	financial incentives (increased pay for the role)	what the role entails and its impact on my role as class-teacher and team leader. Dedicated time to complete SENCO tasks	the Head so that I can be seen by the others as a SENCO and not as a 'paper-pusher'/admin person. Greater understanding from (a) the Head into what the SENCO role actually means/is/entails and (b) greater understanding from teachers as to their responsibilities in taking charge of the learning of all the children in the class.
42	**Anything else to say?**	No	Although there are many areas with the role that are demanding and could be improved, it is an extremely rewarding position.	No	A hard job which is not really understood by Heads Deputy Heads or other teachers for that matter. SENCOs will always be 'let down' by their schools until there is some very clear legislation and firm comments about what a SENCO must do and, in return, must have in order for them to do their jobs. At the moment it's still far too 'open' in interpretation and Heads have far too much authority in determing what a SENCO should be.

(A:2:5)   PILOT Questionnaire Feedback Sheet: 'My Role as SENCO' (May 2013) COLLATED RESPONSES

What is your opinion of the format of the questionnaire with its mix of closed, open and multiple-choice questions	√ n=4

Through your responses to the questions, did you feel that you were given a fair opportunity to present a clear 'picture' of your identity as a SENCO?	YES n=3 PARTIALLY n=1

Are there any questions which you felt were difficult to interpret/understand due to lack of clarity…if so, can you list them in the space on the right and then add a comment about them below;	Questions which require greater clarity
Comment *You need to explain what you mean by 'well-being' as this can mean different things to different people* *Don't like the last question as it's too open. There are lots of things I'd like to say – about my conditions of service, if I'm allowed 'my say' over provision, examples of all the wide and varied things I have to do in my job etc. but I'm too busy. Perhaps you need to ask more closed questions on these things or open ones which are more specific.*	38 42

Time	15 mins (n=2) Half-an-hour About an hour (but I took a break in the middle and came back to it)

Are there any questions which you think should have been asked but were not? Can you write them in the space below:
There's nothing here really about leading provision in the school.   *I enjoyed doing this as it enabled me to assess my role as SENCO, something I haven't really been able to do before.*   *I like the format, it covers a lot of ground, I like question (41) about 3 x ways to make things better*   *I'd have liked to have said something about how I became the SENCO but I ran out of time as I was going to write something about it at the end.*

If you have any other comments you would like to make, please feel free to make them on the reverse of this sheet. Thank you.

Thank you doing this as a paper questionnaire with a proper letter and an s.a.e. for return as I HATE IT-based ones because they're so fiddly and I'm unsure about confidentiality. I know you sent it to me through an e-mail attachment first but I'm glad you sent a paper copy too.
It took me a long time to do this. Don't get me wrong I did enjoy doing it but time was really tight. Hope the responses wereOK.

Appendix (3):

(A:3:1)   Revised Questionnaire (after Pilot) Covering Letter

'My Role as SENCO & Strategic Leader'

Dear SENCO

I'm writing to you in the hope that you will be able to help me with my own post-graduate (Phd) research at the University of Northampton which has its focus on the professional lives, experiences and well-being of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) working in primary school settings.

Your support will contribute to my research which explores the current nature of the SENCO role. This will be a general picture of the nature of the role and how it is realised in a variety of ways across a range of primary schools/settings. This 'rich picture' is designed to capture and then present your own view of your professional identity and how your role is enacted in your school/setting. Through this 'capturing' of SENCOs' views & opinions it is hoped to gain an appreciation of how the SENCO function is perceived and achieved in reality rather than through any published post description.

Any information you wish to give will be collected through the attached questionnaire (there are 60 questions in total).Once the data from this questionnaire has been critically explored it will be used to support the creation of a 'SENCO Exemplar Model' and the contextual differences between primary school in terms of how the SENCO role is realised in practice.

In order to protect the integrity of this research, it will be conducted with a strong ethical underpinning which meets the requirements of the British Educational Research Association's 2011 guidelines and the ethical regulations for post-graduate research set down by the University of Northampton. In short:

- *Your contributions will be treated in absolute confidence as you, and your school/setting (and any member of your school/setting) will not be identified*
- *You are fully entitled to decline from taking part in any (or all) aspects of my research*
- *If you do decide to accept this invitation to contribute to my research you have full right to withdraw your contribution (or parts of your contribution) at any time.*
- *Any contribution you make will be securely stored and will only be used to support my research for my Phd at the University of Northampton and to support any published paper(s) in academic journals which are written by me and which are directly linked to this doctoral research.*

After this your questionnaire returns will be shredded.

I fully understand the exceptionally complex and demanding nature of your SENCO role and that your time is both precious and limited so any help you can provide by completing the attached questionnaire is highly appreciated.

If you would like feedback on the progress of my research, please feel free to contact me by e-mail (andrew.smith@northampton.ac.uk).

Thank you once again for your kind support. Completed questionnaires can be returned to me (address at the bottom of this letter) in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

Yours sincerely

Andy Smith
Senior lecturer in Special & Inclusive Education
The School of Education
The University of Northampton
Boughton Green Road
Northampton
NN2 7AL

(A:3:2)

Gender	
M F	
(please circle)	

Local Authority Area (please tick)	
LA 1	
LA2	
LA3	
LA4	
LA5	
LA6	
LA7	
LA8	
LA9	
LA10	
LA11	

PART 1 Your Role and Experience

1.   How long have you been teaching?

	Years

2. Is teaching your first career?

Yes		*Go to Q4*
No		*Go to Q3*

3. If 'No', what other employment/career have you had before becoming a teacher?

4. How long have you been a SENCO (or equivalent)?

Years	Months

5. What is your employment status? *(please tick)*

Full time	
Part Time	

6. What is your job title?

7. What type of school/setting do you work in?

Type of school/setting	Please tick all that apply
Local Authority School	
Academy	
Free School	
Church School	
Private Sector School	
Special School	
Primary Sector of an 'All-Age' School	
Other (please specify)	

8. Are you a member of your school's Senior Leadership Team or Policy Forming Group?
(Please tick)

Yes	
No	

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9. **Who is your direct line-manager for your SENCO role?** *(please tick)*

Head-teacher	
Deputy Head-teacher	
Assistant Head-teacher	
Inclusion Manager	
Other *(please specify)*	

10. **What are your key SENCO duties in your school/setting?**

11. **In addition to your SENCO duties, what other responsibilities do you have in your school/setting?** *(Please tick all that apply)*

Head-teacher	
Deputy Head-teacher (or equivalent)	
Key Stage Manager	
Class teacher (give year group)	
Subject Leader/coordinator	
Gifted & Talented coordinator	
Inclusion Manager (whole school)	
Behaviour Management Coordinator	
Looked-After-Children Manager	
EAL Coordinator	
Other *(please specify)*	

12. **How many hours per week are given to you exclusively for your SENCO work?**

13. **Are these hours protected?**

Yes	
No	

14. **If you had the choice, what % of your time at work would you *like to see* devoted to your SENCO duties?**

%

15. **In your opinion, should the SENCO have a whole-class teaching responsibility?**

Yes	
No	

16. **Briefly justify your answer to (Q15) above**

PART 2: Resources

17. **Do you have access to administrative and clerical support?** (*Please tick*)

Yes	
No	

18. **Do you have access to a secure and adequate area for meetings, one-to-one/small group work with pupils and for the storage of documents/pupil records?** (*please tick*)

Yes	
No	

19. **Do you have access to a private (non-shared) telephone line?** (*Please tick*)

Yes	
No	

20. Do you feel that the new DfE/DH (2015) CoP has made a difference to the level of resourcing which you receive as the SENCO in your school/setting? (Please tick)

Yes		*Go to Q 21*
I don't know		*Go to Q22*
No		*Go to Q22*

21. If you answered 'Yes' to (Q20) can you briefly state the ways in which your resources have changed due to the imposition of the DfE (2014) Code of Practice

PART 3: Communication

22. To what extent are you able to present/discuss pupil(s) needs & provision (and any issues relating to the management of SEN provision) in staff briefings and staff meetings? (*please indicate on the following Likert Scale*)

Not at All   Infrequently   Occasionally   Regularly
I_____I_____I_____I
0   1   2   3

23. To what extent are you able to present/discuss pupil(s) needs & provision (and any issues relating to the management of SEN provision) with Parents/Carers? (*please indicate on the following Likert Scale*)

Not at All   Infrequently   Occasionally   Regularly
I_____I_____I_____I
0   1   2   3

24. To what extent are you able to meet regularly with the Head-teacher in order to discuss matters relating to provision for pupils with SEN and the day-to-day management/operation of the SEN Policy? (*please indicate on the following Likert Scale*)

Not at All   Infrequently   Occasionally   Regularly
I_____I_____I_____I
0   1   2   3

25. Do you have a designated 'SEN Governor' for your school?

Yes	
No	

26. (*If 'Yes' to Q25*) Briefly state how you work in partnership with your SEN Governor in the box below.

PART 4: Managing Teaching Assistants

27. Are you responsible for any of the following duties involving the management of Teaching Assistants (inc HLTAs) in your school? (*Please tick*)

Duty/Responsibility	Full Responsibility	Partial Responsibility	No Responsibility
deploying TAs in lessons			
coordinating the professional development of TAs			
recruitment, selection and interviewing of TAs			
managing the Induction process for new TAs			
managing TA performance reviews/appraisals			
monitoring and quality assurance of TAs across the school			
leading the TA team			

28. **If you are not responsible for managing & deploying TAs in your school/setting – who is?**

29 **If the last question (Q28) applies to your situation, are you happy with this set up?**

Yes	
Partially	
No	
Don't Know	

PART 5: Professional Development and INSET

30. Do you deliver staff INSET and guidance in areas relating to SEN, Disability and Inclusion?

Yes		*Go to Q31*
No		*Go to Q32*

31. **If '*Yes'* in what areas have you provided (or will be providing) staff INSET and guidance?** (*please tick all that apply*)

Area of INSET/Staff CPD	Tick
Information on individual children	
Information on procedures for supporting the learning and social development of children with SEND	
Information on National issues relating to SEN & Inclusion (*e.g. the DfE (2014) Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice for 0 to 25 yrs etc.*)	
The identification of children with SEN	
How to plan, prepare and deliver differentiated/personalised learning	
How to meet the needs of children with SEND who have barriers to their social interactions within the mainstream classroom	
How to use pupils' individual targets/success criteria on IEPs and/or provision maps to inform planning (and as 'working documents')	
How to manage the requirements of the school's Accessibility Plan	
How to assess, monitor and record the progress of pupils with SEND	
How to ensure the 'voice' of the child with SEND is actively encouraged and addressed	
How to work in partnership with external agencies	
Providing guidance and training to NQTs	
How to effectively deploy/use Teaching Assistants in the mainstream classroom in order to support the learning needs of pupils with SEND	
Partnership working (the SENCO working with teachers in their classrooms – team-teaching, supporting and providing expert advice on matters relating to SEND)	

32. **If you do not take a part in delivering Staff INSET/CPD – what are the factors which inhibit your duties in this area?** (*please list below*)

PART 6: Special Educational Needs School Policy

33. **Does your school/setting have a Special Educational Needs Policy?**

Yes		*Go to Q 34*
No		*Go to Q 35*

34. **If you have a Special Educational Needs Policy – who is responsible for reviewing it? (*Please tick all that apply*)**

Me (as SENCO)	
The Head-teacher only	
Senior Leadership Team Member(s)	
A joint responsibility (SENCO & Head)	
It's a full staff responsibility	

Other (please specify below)	

35. **Your SEN Development Plan** *(please tick all the statements which apply)*

The school **does not** have an SEN Development Plan	
The school does have an SEN Development Plan – but I don't write it or review it	
I produce, in collaboration with colleagues, the school's Special Needs Development Plan (or equivalent)	
The Special Needs Development Plan is reviewed annually	
The SEN Development Plan feeds into whole-school improvement/development plan(s)	
Teacher and TA performance review data (e.g. requests for specific INSET etc.) feeds into the SEN Development Plan	
Pupil performance and achievement data helps form key aspects of the SEN Development Plan	
A review of local, national and international legislation and policy (and its expected impact on SEN provision) forms a part of the SEN Development Plan	
Local Authority advice is sought when creating/reviewing the SEN Development Plan	
The SEN Development Plan is discussed in detail with the Head-teacher/SEN Governor and then shared with all staff	

PART 7: Finances and Budgeting

36. **Do you have the responsibility for managing funding relating to the new Education Health and Care Plans (including the monitoring of funding)?**

Yes		*Go to Q31*
No		*Go to Q38*

37. **If you answered 'No' to (Q37) – who does control the funding for pupils with special needs in your school?**

Now go to Q40

38. **If you answered 'Yes' to (Q37) – How are you informed of this funding stream?** *Tick all that apply.*

Directly from the Head-teacher	
From a Deputy Head-teacher (or equivalent)	
From a member of the Administrative Team (or equivalent)	
Directly from the Local Authority	
Other source *(please list below)*	

39. **What is (or will be) your role in organising/managing the new Education and Health Care Plans (DfE Code of Practice 2014)?** *Tick whichever applies*

Fully responsible for the creation of the new EHCP	
Work in partnership with other teachers and external agencies in developing, organising and administering the new EHCPs	
The EHCPs are organised and administered by others (SENCO has significant input)	
The ECHPs are organised and administered by others (SENCO has little or no input)	
Other *(please specify below)*	

40. **Do you have any input into deciding where to focus individual pupils' 'Pupil Premium' funding?** *Please tick whichever applies*

Yes...a significant input (SENCO makes the key decisions on how to use the funding)	
Yes...a joint input (SENCO works in partnership with Head-	

teacher and/or other teachers and external services to determine where to use the funding)	
Yes... but a minor input as the main decision is taken by the Head-teacher/others)	
No...I have no input into making the decision on targeting the funding but my opinions on supporting the pupil are sought	
No...I have no input at all into the Pupil Premium or the pupils who receive this additional funding	
Other *(please specify below)*	

41. Are you responsible for organising and managing special examination arrangements for pupils who have SEN?

Yes		Go to Q44
No		Go to Q43

42. If you aren't responsible for special examination arrangements for pupils with SEN in your school/setting – who is?

Now go to Q44

PART 8: Your Own Professional Development and Training

43. Do you have the opportunity to attend any professional development INSET for your own needs?

Yes		*Go to Q46*
No		*Go to Q45*

44. If you answered *'No'* to the above question – what are the barriers which restrict you accessing personal professional development in your role of SENCO? *(Please list them below).*

Please go to Q47

45. If you answered 'Yes' to Q44, on the list below please put a tick by the 'type' of INSET you have attended:

Formal, accredited, SENCO training (at Level 7/Masters Degree Level)	
Local Authority SENCO Conference	
Specific training delivered by the Local Authority (*please list in the space below*):	
Specific training delivered by external providers (*please list in the space below*)	
Specific training which is 'school-based' (*please list in the space below*)	
On-line training (*please list below*)	
Self-directed study/reading (*please list below*)	
Other (*please list below*)	

46. Do you have the opportunity to engage in school-based research linked to aspects of school development & improvement?

Yes		*(Go to Q 48)*
No		*(Go to Q 49)*

47. If 'Yes' can you list below, some examples of the school-based research you have undertaken:

Now go to Q49.

48. Out of the training and/or school-based research you have attended/engaged with which do you consider to have been the most effective in developing your professional role as a SENCO/strategic leader? (*Please list below*)

Training	Reason why this was effective
Research	Reason why this was effective

PART 9: SENCO 'Well-Being' and Reflections on Your Role

49. Why did you want to become a SENCO? (*Please rank in order of relevance i.e. most relevant =1 to least relevant= 5*)

Reason	Ranking (1 to 5)
To gain specialist knowledge in the field of SEN & Disability	
For career development and progression	
To enhance and/or develop existing management & leadership skills and expertise	
For a 'career change' (a new and challenging post)	
Other reason (*please specify and rank*)	

50. How did you become the SENCO in your school? (*Please tick all that apply*)

I applied for the post	
I was asked to take on the role by my Head-teacher	
I had to take on the role (given little or no choice)	
Other (*please specify below*)	

51. How much autonomy do you have in your role as SENCO who leads SEN provision across the school? Tick all that apply:

I have a great deal of autonomy and feel that I am a leader in all aspects of SEN provision in my school	
I am reasonably autonomous although there are some elements of the role which I have no control/influence over	
I have a limited amount of autonomy as other colleagues direct my work	
I have no autonomy in my role	
Other (please expand)	

52. Can you give any examples which justify your choice above (Q52)?

53. What does your school do in order to enhance your own 'well-being' as a SENCO ?

54. **In your opinion, what are the current benefits/opportunities for you of being a SENCO in your school** (*please list below*)

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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55. **In your opinion, what are the current negative aspects of being a SENCO?** (*please list below*)

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56. **If you could change 3 aspects of the SENCO role in order to make the job more manageable, secure and fulfilling for you, what would these three things be?**

1	
2	
3	

57. **If your Head-teacher offered you the choice to give up your SENCO role , would you prefer to hold another role/responsibility in your school or to stay as the SENCO?**

Yes … I'd give up the SENCO role and do something else		**No**…I'd stay on as the SENCO	

58. **Where do you see yourself (professionally speaking) in five years' time?**

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59. **If you have anything else you would like to say about your own role as a SENCO or about the SENCO role in general, please feel free to write it here.**

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Thank you for your time and patience in completing this long questionnaire. Your participation in, and contribution to, my research is very much appreciated.

Andy Smith

Appendix (4):

(A:4:1) SENCO Questionnaire Return: Raw Data

Gender	
M	**F**
1	39

PART 1 Your Role and Experience

1. **How long have you been teaching?**

Years										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10+
	2	2	9	5	4	1	2	1	1	13

2. **Is teaching your first career?**

Yes	28
No	12

3. **If 'No', what other employment/career have you had before becoming a teacher?**

> Product Manager (Grad Programme)
> Army
> RAF
> Trainer at HSBC
> Nursery Nurse
> Extended Services Coordinator (County Council)
> Deputy manager in a day nursery
> Journalist
> Postal officer
> Estate Agent
> Self-employed business
> Telephonist

4. **How long have you been a SENCo (or equivalent)?**

Years											
-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10+
1	12	15	5	4				1		1	1

5. **What is your employment status?** *(please tick)*

Full time	29
Part Time	11

6. **What is your job title?**

> SEN Teacher 1
> SENCo (25)
> SENDCO (across the Federation) 4
> Assistant Head (SENCO) 5
> Acting Head-teacher 1
> Inclusion Coordinator (INCO) 2
> Deputy Head 2

7. **What type of school/setting do you work in?**

Type of school/setting	Please tick all that apply
Local Authority School	11
Academy	23
Free School	
Church School	4
Private Sector School	
Special School	
Primary Sector of an 'All-Age' School	2
Other (please specify)	

8. **Are you a member of your school's Senior Leadership Team or Policy Forming Group?** *(Please tick)*

Yes	19
No	21

9. **Who is your direct line-manager for your SENCo role?** *(please tick)*

Head-teacher	25
Deputy Head-teacher	5
Assistant Head-teacher	4
Inclusion Manager	4
Other *(please specify)* Safeguarding/LAC Lead (1 Executive Head (Academy Trust) 1	

10. **What are your key SENCO duties in your school/setting?**

11. **In addition to your SENCo duties, what other responsibilities do you have in your school/setting?**
(Please tick all that apply)

Head-teacher	1
Deputy Head-teacher (or equivalent)	5
Key Stage Manager	8
Class teacher (give year group)	10 (Yr 6) 5(Yr 5) 4 (Yr 4) 1 (yr 3) 3 (yr 2) 4 (FS 2) 2 (Yr ½)
Subject Leader/coordinator	9 (Eng/Lit) 4 (Maths) 1 (History)
Gifted & Talented coordinator	8
Inclusion Manager (whole school)	8
Behaviour Management Coordinator	10
Looked-After-Children Manager	12
EAL Coordinator	7
Other *(please specify)* Medical Conditions coordinator 1 Gypsy/Traveller Coordinator 1 Safeguarding 5 Pupil Premium Champion 1	

12. **How many hours per week are given to you _exclusively_ for your SENCo work?**

Hours											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10+
7	8	4	4	3	1	2					11

13. **Are these hours protected?**

Yes	19
No	21

14. **If you had the choice, what % of your time at work would you _like to see_ devoted to your SENCo duties?**

0%	1 - 20%	21- 40%	41- 50%	51-60%	61-70%	71-80%	81-90%	91-100%	100%
	3	6	8		5		1		17

15. **In your opinion, should the SENCo have a whole-class teaching responsibility?**

Yes	10
No	28
?	2

16. **Briefly justify your answer to (Q15) above**

> **Yes**…It's good to 'keep in' with the expectations, demands and skills of teaching so you know what you're talking about.
> **No**…because there's far too much to do as the SENCO
> **No**…I think it is too much to know – your class & the children on the SEN Register – thoroughly. Although the SENCO role is mainly strategic I still feel the SENCO is vital in guiding 'Next Steps' which can only be done effectively if they know the children very well.
> **Yes**…in my school there is only 1 x class per year group so there's no scope for anyone not to be teaching. Also it keeps you up-to-date with the curriculum, assessment and the effectiveness of interventions
> **No** Role of the SENCO is a strategic one and requires time spent observing, supporting teachers,-

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training all staff, Implementing & coordinating interventions. There's no time to teach a class.
No time is needed for responsibility to SENCO duties (but it does depend on the requirements of the school)
No There just isn't enough time to hold down a full (or even part) time class commitment and a full-on SENCO job (**6**)
Yes as I need to have time with my class children and I don't like being away from them
Yes I need the other teachers in the school to see at first hand that I can actually be a good teacher so – yes – the SENCO should be a full-time teacher in order to keep the respect of their colleagues…so they should just be more resilient and get on with the job! I can do it so why can't others?
No too much of a huge operational workload as a SENCO…holding down a class-teaching role as well is a joke…and not a good one either!
No…you can't commit to both roles
No- as a SENCO you are 'on call' all the time…and you also need time and space to be pro-active.
No – SENCO provides an overview of the whole school and opportunity to lead interventions…you can't get this as a class teacher.
Yes – But only in certain schools depending on pupil numbers and the level of SEN need.
No – it's a full-time job all by itself
Yes…but only if I was teaching part-time…I could never do it full-time

PART 2: Resources

17. **Do you have access to administrative and clerical support?**

Yes	11
No	29

18. **Do you have access to a secure and adequate area for meetings, one-to-one/small group work with pupils and for the storage of documents/pupil records?**

Yes	21
No	19

19. **Do you have access to a private (non-shared) telephone line?**

Yes	13
No	27

20. **Do you feel that the new DfE (2015) Code of Practice has made a difference to the level of resourcing which you receive as the SENCO in your school/setting?**

Yes	8
I don't know	17
No	15

21. **If you answered 'Yes' to (Q20) can you briefly state the ways in which your resources have changed due to the imposition of the DfE (2014) Code of Practice**

I'm told by the Head/Bursar that you could view the funding as 'Each time you are successful in getting a child an EHCP, the school has to find £6000. OK if they're existing pupils, but if new ones want to join the school it has cost implications'!!! I don't know!
I'm unsure yet but I do want to focus on having a more careful review of provision for SEN
Better/tighter SEN pupil progress tracking
I know that I have to do more and more with a decreasing amount of money each year
An increased school focus and spend on SEND training for all staff (inc. admin staff and lunchtime supervisors)
Increased funding for key interventions
Mentoring & tracking interviews with staff are now timetabled. Staff are very clear of their expectations.

PART 3: Communication

22. **To what extent are you able to present/discuss pupil(s) needs & provision (and any issues relating to the management of SEN provision) in staff briefings and staff meetings?**

Not at All	Infrequently	Occasionally	Regularly
1	7	16	17

23. **To what extent are you able to present/discuss pupil(s) needs & provision (and any issues relating to the management of SEN provision) with Parents/Carers?**

Not at All	Infrequently	Occasionally	Regularly
	5	14	23

24. **To what extent are you able to meet regularly with the Head-teacher in order to discuss matters relating to provision for pupils with SEN and the day-to-day management/operation of the SEN Policy?**

Not at All	Infrequently	Occasionally	Regularly
	8	10	22

25. Do you have a designated 'SEN Governor' for your school?

Yes	36
No	4

26. (*If 'Yes' to Q25*) Briefly state how you work in partnership with your SEN Governor in the box below.

> Termly review meetings – report discussed at Govs' Meeting
>
> Haven't met him yet as the Head meets with the Gov so does the Inc. manager but not me…I feel 'left out'!
>
> I don't – the Assistant Head/INCO does it all
>
> We meet approx.. 2 or 3 a term. Initially I explained an overview of SEND (as a mind-map). I discuss my reports, VFM on the external services & assessment data. I also like to chat about 'steps forward'. I feel we've made progress with action plan targets. The more she knows, the easier it is to work together.
>
> SEN Gov is new to role and haven't been able to meet with her (yet) but at Gov meetings the Head has passed on policies etc.
>
> Currently have a poor working relationship. Recently became an academy & the Gov body is new. Have not made contact with SEN gov as yet (but he hasn't contacted me either!)
>
> Feedback at Gov meetings and Gov visits into school
>
> We have one but I haven't met with them – I think the head likes to keep us out of the picture – we tell him and he links with the SEN Gov
>
> We meet once a term
>
> Meet twice a year
>
> We meet every month and the SEN Gov comes into school for a half-day to talk with me and asks me if there is anything he can 'champion' for me at the full Govs' meeting. He's a good bloke who really has my welfare at heart and the welfare of the children in the school too!
>
> He attends frm meetings with parents and corresponds with me through e-mail …we have met face-to-face a couple of times…but not many. We're a bit 'distant' really.
>
> Gov is new to role but we discuss policies and provision…he is my 'voice' at Gov meetings (Staff & Resources Committee)
>
> Attends meetings, e-mails me and in-person when the need arises.
>
> Very well as the SEN Gov is also the School Inclusion manager situated in the adjoining office. It's all kept 'in house'.
>
> Only occasional visits to the school
>
> Monitoring, termly discussions and policy development
>
> SEN GOv is also a TA so we have frequent informal meetings.
>
> Termly meetings (2)
>
> Only occasional meetings and joint 'looks' at interventions…but not many
>
> On learning walks and when he attends staff CPD in school

PART 4: Managing Teaching Assistants

27. Are you responsible for any of the following duties involving the management of Teaching Assistants (inc HLTAs) in your school?

Duty/Responsibility	Full Responsibility	Partial Responsibility	No Responsibility
deploying TAs in lessons	7	14	19
coordinating the professional development of TAs	11	17	10
recruitment, selection and interviewing of TAs	3	13	22
managing the Induction process for new TAs	7	12	18
managing TA performance reviews/appraisals	7	9	21
monitoring and quality assurance of TAs across the school	6	12	20
leading the TA team	7	15	14

28. If you are not responsible for managing & deploying TAs in your school/setting – who is?

> Head (**17**
> Inclusion Manager (**2**
> Asst. Head/INCO (**3**
> Jointly (with the Deputy Head)**2**
> Deputy Head (for classroom-based TAs)(**8**
> Teachers they support **(1)**
> Key Stage Leader (**3**)
> Specialist TA line-manager (**1**)

29 If the last question (Q28) applies to your situation, are you happy with this set up?

Yes	12
Partially	11
No	15
Don't Know	2

PART 5: Professional Development and INSET

30. **Do you deliver staff INSET and guidance in areas relating to SEN, Disability and Inclusion?**

30
10

31. **If 'Yes' in what areas have you provided (or will be providing) staff INSET and guidance?** (*please tick all that apply*)

Area of INSET/Staff CPD	
Information on individual children	30
Information on procedures for supporting the learning and social development of children with SEND	24
Information on National issues relating to SEN & Inclusion (*e.g. the DfE (2015) Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice for 0 to 25 yrs etc*).	21
The identification of children with SEN	18
How to plan, prepare and deliver differentiated/personalised learning	13
How to meet the needs of children with SEND who have barriers to their social interactions within the mainstream classroom	14
How to use pupils' individual targets/success criteria on IEPs and/or provision maps to inform planning (and as 'working documents')	19
How to manage the requirements of the school's Accessibility Plan	3
How to assess, monitor and record the progress of pupils with SEND	19
How to ensure the 'voice' of the child with SEND is actively encouraged and addressed	8
How to work in partnership with external agencies	11
Providing guidance and training to NQTs	15
How to effectively deploy/use Teaching Assistants in the mainstream classroom in order to support the learning needs of pupils with SEND	14
Partnership working (the SENCo working with teachers in their classrooms – team-teaching, supporting and providing expert advice on matters relating to SEND)	11

32. **If you do not take a part in delivering Staff INSET/CPD – what are the factors which inhibit your duties in this area?** (*please list below*)

> Not given the time to do it…the Inclusion manager takes this on and won't share it
> No time…other staff do this
> Time constraints…I'm told to use my time for SENCO admin by the head
> I was told that it wasn't a part of my SENCO role by my head
> SEND isn't seen as a priority in my Academy…the focus is on STEM subjects and examination (SATS) improvement for those children on borderlines
> Deputy Head runs all the Staff INSET and takes on delivering SEND focused INSET

PART 6: Special Educational Needs School Policy

33. **Does your school/setting have a Special Educational Needs Policy?**

Yes	39
No	1

34. **If you have a Special Educational Needs Policy – who is responsible for reviewing it? (*Please tick all that apply*)**

Me (as SENCO)	14
The Head-teacher only	9
Senior Leadership Team Member(s)	3
A joint responsibility (SENCO & Head)	15
It's a full staff responsibility	
Other (please specify below)	

35. **Your SEN Development Plan** (*please tick all the statements which apply*)

The school **does not** have an SEN Development Plan	7
The school does have an SEN Development Plan – but I don't write it or review it	4
I produce, in collaboration with colleagues, the school's Special Needs Development Plan (or equivalent)	7
The Special Needs Development Plan is reviewed annually	27
The SEN Development Plan feeds into whole-school improvement/development plan(s)	20
Teacher and TA performance review data (e.g. requests for specific INSET etc.) feeds into the SEN Development Plan	13
Pupil performance and achievement data helps form key aspects of the SEN Development Plan	17
A review of local, national and international legislation and policy (and its expected	6

impact on SEN provision) forms a part of the SEN Development Plan	
Local Authority advice is sought when creating/reviewing the SEN Development Plan	**8**
The SEN Development Plan is discussed in detail with the Head-teacher/SEN Governor and then shared with all staff	**22**

PART 7: Finances and Budgeting

36. **Do you have the responsibility for managing funding relating to the new Education Health and Care Plans (including the monitoring of funding)?**

Yes	**5**
No	**35**

37. **If you answered 'No' to (Q37) – who does control the funding for pupils with special needs in your school?**

Executive Head-teacher **1**
Head and Inclusion manager **4**
Head-teacher (**21**
Business Manager **9**

38. **If you answered 'Yes' to (Q37) – How are you informed of this funding stream?** *Tick all that apply.*

Directly from the Head-teacher	**3**
From a Deputy Head-teacher (or equivalent)	
From a member of the Administrative Team (or equivalent)	**1**
Directly from the Local Authority	**1**
Other source *(please list below)*	

39. **What is (or will be) your role in organising/managing the new Education and Health Care Plans (DfE Code of Practice 2015)?** *Tick whichever applies*

Fully responsible for the creation of the new EHCP	**8**
Work in partnership with other teachers and external agencies in developing, organising and administering the new EHCPs	**13**
The EHCPs are organised and administered by others -SENCo has significant input	**14**
The ECHPs are organised and administered by others -SENCo has little or no input	**7**

40. **Do you have any input into deciding where to focus individual pupils' 'Pupil Premium' funding?** *Please tick whichever applies*

Yes...a significant input (SENCo makes the key decisions on how to use the funding)	**4**
Yes...a joint input (SENCo works in partnership with Head-teacher and/or other teachers and external services to determine where to use the funding)	**8**
Yes... but a minor input as the main decision is taken by the Head-teacher/others)	**13**
No...I have no input into making the decision on targeting the funding but my opinions on supporting the pupil are sought	**10**
No...I have no input at all into the Pupil Premium or the pupils who receive this additional funding	**5**

41. **Are you responsible for organising and managing special examination arrangements for pupils who have SEN?**

Yes	**14**
No	**26**

42. **If you aren't responsible for special examination arrangements for pupils with SEN in your school/setting – who is?**

Assessment co-ordinator/assistant head **1**
Inclusion Coordinator **1**
Asst. Head/INCO **2**
Head-teacher & Phase Leader **5**
Head-teacher only **11**
KS2 Leader (or equivalent) **4**
Deputy Head **1**

PART 8: Your Own Professional Development and Training

43. **Do you have the opportunity to attend any professional development INSET for your own needs?**

Yes	**40**
No	

44. **If you answered *'No'* to the above question – what are the barriers which restrict you accessing personal professional development in your role of SENCo?** *(Please list them below).*

Please go to Q47

45. If you answered 'Yes' to Q44, on the list below please put a tick by the 'type' of INSET you have attended:

Formal, accredited, SENCo training (at Level 7/Masters Degree Level)	**40**
Local Authority SENCo Conference	**35**
Specific training delivered by the Local Authority (*please list in the space below*): Looked after children **4** Safeguarding (**4** Behaviour (**5** Pupil Progress Mapping (**1** GRIP (**1** Secondary transition (**1** Diocese SEND Conference **2** SENCO Networking Meeting **2** SEN CoP 2015 **1** ASD Team Leader **2** Domestic Abuse **1** EHCP **1** Assessment **1** SEN Support Planning **1**	
Specific training delivered by external providers (*please list in the space below*) MA (SEN & Inc) – building on SEN Award (**1** People First Education (Visual Support & Social Stories) (**1** Ros Blackburn (ASD) (**1** Olga Bogdashina (Sensory Issues) (**1** Autism Know-How **2** Team-Teach Training **2** Dyslexia **2** Selective mutism **1** Speech & language Development **2** AET L 1 & 2 **1** Forest Way Teaching Alliance **1** Behaviour **1** Drawing & Talking Therapy **1** Provision Mapping **1** Protective behaviours **1**	
Specific training which is 'school-based' (*please list in the space below*) Dyslexia (**3** Ofsted (**2** Team-Teeach (**1** Growth Mindset (**1** Pitch perfect (**1** A range of after-school (twi-light) sessions **4** Pupil Premium Funding **2** Pupil Progress Tracking **5** Epi pen/First Aid **1** Positive handling **1**	
On-line training (*please list below*) Safeguarding (**3** Safer Recruitment **1**	
Self-directed study/reading (*please list below*) Reading for SENCO Award purposes **5** SEN Leader Magazine Subscription **1** Times Educational Supplement **5** Guardian Education (Tuesday) **2** DfE Website **3** Member of NASEN (reading Support for Learning) **2** 'Special' Magazine **7**	
Other (*please list below*) SENCO Cluster Group: Visual & Hearing Impairment (**1** TV (Educating Essex, Educating Yorkshire etc.) **2**	

46. Do you have the opportunity to engage in school-based research linked to aspects of school development & improvement?

Yes	No
26	14

47. If 'Yes' can you list below, some examples of the school-based research you have undertaken:

School-based inquiry work for Assignment 2 of the SENCO Award (the school-based project and case study) (**24** Effectiveness of First Class @Number Intervention; 'The Lost Motivation' Project; Dyslexia-

friendly Classroom Effectiveness. Dyslexia Support Lego Therapy School video-mentoring system CBT Intervention Parental Engagement Lesson study Writing development for reluctant boys Dyslexia project linked to boys' progress in spelling Use of TAs within SEN and the class The role of interventions within our school	

48. **Out of the training and/or school-based research you have attended/engaged with which do you consider to have been the most effective in developing your professional role as a SENCo/strategic leader?** (*Please list below*)

Training	Reason why this was effective
SENCO Award (**25**	Sets out the expectations of what is required I'm starting to understand how badly I'm 'used' by my academy. I now have knowledge and a voice but I'm still not allowed to use it in my school. Opened my eyes to the scope of the role and the status, resources that I should have to be able to do it properly. Helped to develop an effective provision map Good to meet & discuss with other SENCOs (similar and different situations/conditions/contexts) Helped me to do systematic, critical reviews of provision in order to make amendments/make improvements It taught me everything I needed to learn to get started School-based and purposeful Activities to emphasise (what it's like) leading to practical strategies Knowledge/perspective & practical strategies
Dyslexia Friendly Classroom (1	
Secondary Transition (1	Own project (led to greater understanding of SLCN and more confidence in understanding the reasons for the delivery of interventions Made me aware of children's needs and how to recognize the warning signs
Small group Language Intervention (1	
Safeguarding (1	

Research	Reason why this was effective
SENCO Award Assignment 2 (School-Based Project) (**7**	Made me see how little my views are actively sought but also gave me the opportunity to do some monitoring of provision and drawing together a plan to improve things. Enabled me (as new SENCO) to evaluate current practices in school and develop new ideas) Time was given to reflect upon the impact of nurture which led to changes being made Opportunities to review interventions in school
Role of Interventions	

49. **Why did you want to become a SENCO?** *(Please rank in order of relevance i.e. most relevant =1 to least relevant= 4)*

Reason	1	2	3	4	5
To gain specialist knowledge in the field of SEN & Disability	16	13	7		
For career development and progression	6	7	13	7	2
To enhance and/or develop existing management & leadership skills and expertise	9	10	8	5	1
For a 'career change' (a new and challenging post)	5	6	9	4	3
To make good use of previous knowledge, experience & training *To impart my knowledge & experience to improve outcomes for children with SEN* *Role of SENCO better fitted my experience and career pathway* *Needs of the school*	1 1 1		1		

50. **How did you become the SENCO in your school?** *(Please tick all that apply)*

I applied for the post	**15**
I was asked to take on the role by my Head-teacher	**17**
I had to take on the role (given little or no choice)	**9**
Other *(please specify below)*	

51. **How much autonomy do you have in your role as SENCO? Tick all that apply:**

I have a great deal of autonomy and lead and manage all aspects of SEN provision in my school	**10**
I am reasonably autonomous although there are some elements of the role which I have no control/influence over	**18**
I have a limited amount of autonomy as other colleagues direct my work	**11**
I have no autonomy in my role	**2**

52. **Can you give any examples which justify your choice above *(Q52)*?**

I am not on the SLT therefore do not always have a say on 'the bigger picture of the school'. However, some areas I am expected to 'take on' the leadership role, making other staff accountable. The INCO does it all (nearly) I don't have a say. It's very frustrating particularly as I really DO know best where to deploy the TAs!
The Asst Head/INCO won't let go of the reins – she's the previous SENCO who's been elevated into this leadership role but she hasn't realized that she isn't the SENCO any longer. Nice woman but an absolute pain in the backside as a line-manager!
I have 2 x days to do the SENCO role each week. I manage my time & can be flexible which days I work at it. The Head/Bursar make funding decisions (TAs, training, EHCPs etc.) but they liaise with me. Although I make the majority of other decisions, I feel able to double check with them. This seems to work well for both of us. I'm not SLT but I have many conversations which feed into SLT & attend staff meetings. I personally like this balance of being able to influence & decide things but with SLT back-up & security.
I organize interventions in consultation with teaching staff and I manage the TAs (appraisal and which interventions they run…but this is constrained by where else they are needed). I don't have any influence over matters relating to funding but in all other matters I work in partnership with the head.
I am able to manage my own time and so I organize my work with the pupils and the time I allow for paperwork etc. I am not on the leadership team and do not manage the TAs. I do not have control of the SEN budget but have a fixed annual amount to spend on SEN resources.
I am able to organize my own time, arrange meetings, direct work with the gov, organize ISET all without the need to check with the head. I don't have financial control of the SEN budget or knowledge of the notional budget.
I have re-written the policy, introduced new resources and developed a new system of resourcing.
I can set my own timetable but am given elements/direction of areas to promote.
Developed own assessment & identification flow-chart; regular pupil-progress meetings for SEND with HT…I am frequently asked for advice.
I have a limited say on the budget spending, although the head does consider my opinion
I am able to recruit, train and monitor TAs and make changes to suit the needs of the school.
I'm given free rein to deal with all aspects of SEN but I get excellent support from my head through weekly meetings.
I have a really limited control of any budget related to SEN and it is very, very frustrating….I don't even know how much funding is coming into the school as I am left out of the loop for this.
I'm not on the SLT, I don't have to manage the funding, I don't (really) deal with external agencies, my head does all the reviews and all I do is the paperwork and some interventions when I can. The SENCO Award is a real eye-opener as I've learnt how a SENCO should woirk and how they should be treated by the school. To say that I feel undervalued is an understatement!

> I don't deploy TAs and I am not on the SLT so I sometimes feel as if I'm always playing 'catch up'
> I'm allowed to manage my own timetable so this makes me more flexible when managing appointments. I am allowed 2 days over the week but am trusted to assign enough time to SEN and my other management duties.

53. **What does your school do in order to enhance your own 'well-being' as a SENCo ?**

> Nothing! (**14**
> Very little – head isn't interested really (**3**
> Good relationship with line manager (Head) and flexibility within the 2 days I work. I'm allowed to work extra paid days when work-load becomes very heavy.
> Provides training when I ask for it
> Head is Supportive towards importance of interventions & provision maps (**2**
> I'm allowed my own time within the constraints of the available time given to me for SENCO working.
> Free refreshments to the staff during the working day (**6**
> Good social events and friendly atmosphere (**4**
> Off-loading of additional duties on to head, being given a deal of flexibility in time requirements and having administrative support.
> Gives me time out of the classroom together with time for regular discussions with the head.
> Head & deputy supportive in meetings (**2**
> Time is given to me as SENCO is a non-teaching role (**2**
> School funds my SEN award
> Weekly HT briefings
> I can get time out of the classroom when I'm 'snowed under'
> Praise and recognition by the head and some good social time
> Keep me fully informed of upcoming training, invests in this CPD and has taken away my class-teaching responsibility…this makes a MASSIVE difference!

54. **In your opinion, what are the current benefits/opportunities for you of being a SENCo in your school** (*please list below*)

> Professional development, Learning new skills & Liaising with external agencies
> Nothing yet (now that I know how I'm not being able to really 'do' the job properly due to poor management in my school)
> Nothing at the moment as I seem to be the SENCO 'in name only (and it's VERY frustrating!)
> I can attend any training which I feel is relevant to my professional development; I have no other responsibilities within the school and I enjoy working with the parents.
> I can learn about how outside agencies work. Helps to develop my own practice . Develops my leadership skills
> I have an overview of all the pupils with SEND in the school and I can coordinate meetings with parents and outside professionals when I feel that I need to.
> Working with unique and interesting children with SEN and making a difference to their engagement, achievements and positive outcomes (**14**)
> Being able to make whole-school decisions and actions
> Enhanced status through having an important and far-reaching role
> Opportunity to engage in whole-school issues and activities
> Being on the SLT enables me to help drive the SEN agenda forward (**2**)
> Developing knowledge of SEND
> Having an overview across the whole school, this provides me with a far more strategic role and ensures SEND is a high priority.
> Career development & enhancing leadership skills
> TA development for the school. A high level of support for pupils is given through effective application of statements & EHCPs.
> 3 days a week to do it in, excellent support from head and from all TAS
> Better pay and increased responsibility and opportunities for career progression
> To help teachers (my colleagues)understand and meet the needs of children with SEND
> The least I can say is that I'm called a 'SENCO' (but this is in name only) - -erhaps I can use this title and my real/useful SENCO training to get a better SENCO job in a better school…and where I receive proper payment for the job too!
> Just being a SENCO with no class to teach – bliss!
> Opportunities to attend lots of CPD in order to enhance expertise
> Good working relationships with all in the school community; I am usually available for informal and formal discussions and have time to monitor and evaluate provision more regularly.

55. **In your opinion, what are the current negative aspects of being a SENCo?** (*please list below*)

> It's an isolated role for me (SENDCO across two schools) as I'm not teaching and not on the SLT and not having the confidence/experience to implement big changes across such a large Federation – but with the expectation to do so.
> No time (too much class teaching), no resources, no status and being treated like a glorified TA when I'm not teaching my class!
> No chance to develop provision, engage with external agencies or to work with my colleagues in their classrooms (a mixture of not being given the chance and of always being stuck in my classroom teaching)
> Sheer volume of the paperwork and trying to get class-teachers to take more responsibility before asking for outside help & passing responsibility to me before even trying! Arranging meetings when

everyone can attend and making sure that everyone knows what's happening….and the endless e-mails!

No time (**6**)

Chasing up staff who miss deadlines/don't understand the importance of IEPs and provision maps – just trying to change their attitudes that SEND is 'nothing' to do with them!

Some elements of being 'alone' in the role within the school. The staff who demand a large range of specialist knowledge about SEND from me….that I am viewed as the 'expert'in spite of having little training – thus I lack confidence when advising others. However, the SEN training in the LA is excellent and I have a close association with them. I also think that there is a greater need for trainee teachers to learn much more about SEN before they start to teach.

Difficulty resourcing the needs of children and responding to new intakes and their needs. Changes to the referral process and frustrations with external services when fighting for the support for the children. (**2**)

Rejection of EHCP by LA without clear justification or with the assumption that you're 'coping' and therefor you receive no funding!

Lack of time and poor resources…doing the job on a shoe-string!

The demands and sheer pressure from fellow teachers, TAs, parents etc. the expectation of these groups in me as being the 'perfect SENCO' who can cure all their problems with special needs at the wave of my 'magic wand'…it's very wareing and it's really getting me down!

The bloody parents! They are awful!

The head just doesn't see SEND as a major priority in his school….I've been side-tracked in favour of the usual Literacy & Numeracy (assessed subjects) and now this fixation with STEM!

The sheer speed of change in all issues SEND…schools have become a political football with the testing-testing-testing regime and the constant supervision/monitoring and inspection….I really do hate it but I LOVE the kids…

The lack of autonomy to be a mover and shaker in my school…the head makes ALL the decisions with matters SEND and I am expected to just manage things…never to be pro-active and lead change. I'm not happy with this situation especially when we are expected to develop our professional skills as strategic leaders….all I do is administer and manage….it's not good enough!

Pay for the job…I don't get any! (**3**) All this extra/specialist work out of the goodness of my heart. I don't care if the school is hard-up…I deserve a better pay rate for this job so I really think that my goodwill is really being taken for granted!

Hours/workload

Lack of time & resources and lack of support from the LA STS due to funding cuts (especially the Ed Psych Service is V. limited!)

A lot of the challenges I face are due to the circumstances of the school which is receiving lots of external support from our Academy. As a result the work is hard and unmanageable but I think it's down to school problems and not the SENCO role. I would really like to be working somewhere that is more settled!

Excessive workload especially liaison with external agencies. Combining the SENCO role with class-teaching….it's impossible!

Time, paperwork and frustration when trying to get extra funding and help for children (**4**

Just far too much work….it's hurting me!!!

No admin support – most of my time is taken up just dealing with the unending paperwork and audit trail!!!

Lack of time, payment, admin support and status.

Stressful (particularly with child protection issues)

Trying to support teachers in realizing that there is no such thing as a 'quick-fix' for children they're concerned about.

Being expected to be an expert in all fields and parents wanting a 'quick-fix' solution to their child's needs.

I didn't want to take on the responsibility of this role. It is too demanding and challenging without any allocation of time in my school to perform it properly.

Low expectations of parents

56. If you could change 3 aspects of the SENCo role in order to make the job more manageable, secure and fulfilling for you, what would these three things be?

(1) Having more of a team approach to making changes across the school (2) SEN being seen more of a priority by SLT (3) Clearer information from LA about expectations/services available, processes, protocols etc, (a lot of guess-work & finding it out for yourself)

(1) Better resources (space, admin support, phone etc. (2) More authority & autonomy (make me a member of the SLT!) (3) Released from class-teaching to work with colleagues in their classrooms)

(1) for the Asst. Head/INCO to just 'let go' and let me do my job as SENCO (very frustrating as the INCO is years out-of-date in terms of knowledge and methods…she hasn't done any professional training apart from one day courses!) (2) for the school to actually provide the resources for me to do the job…just a telephone and a filing cabinet would be a start! (3) Protected time for me to do the job…stop class-teaching and spend a 100% of my time as the SENCO!

(1) full admin support (2) having my own room for SENCO working (3) more time (for all the strategic stuff)

(1) Have 2 hrs a week just for SENCO time – not everything else too (2) Staff given more time at staff meetings to perform SEN-based tasks/training (3) Have more of an understanding of the funding for SEN

(1) CPD with a structured programme of training in how to support pupils with high incidence needs. (2) having a more informed leadership team and staff in areas of SEND with regular opportunities for meetings with myself to discuss pupils with SEN and whole school approaches to teaching those

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pupils. (3) twice yearly meetings with a mentor from the LA SNTS to look at what I am doing in my role and how I can develop and improve

(1) clearer/fairer allocation of funding (2) Home LA vs School LA – difficult to manage cross-boundaries (3) Just more bloody time being allocated to do the job!

(1) More time (2) higher status in school (3) payment for the job!

(1) better resources (a room, a phone, some admin support would do for a start…all the things listed in the CoP) (2) to change the Media view of teachers….why do they think we're incompetent all the time when it's successive governments' fault by having useless Secretaries of State for Education who just pump out the ideological Party-line all the time without any idea of what it means to be a teacher? (3) The ridiculous assessment/testing/reporting regime in schools is killing Education…especially education for children with SEN…it needs a massive review…NOW!

(1) Having a flexible time allowance (2) More administrative support (3) Access to help & support without having to exclude a child to get it

(1) No class-teaching commitment (2) More hours assigned to the role (3) More resources

(1) Better funding for bringing in outside agencies so that things can move faster (2) Less paperwork/admin (3) More time made available during the working day

(1) Being paid for the job (2) More time made available (3) Greater opportunities to lead training

(1) Time to attend review meetings (2) opportunity to work more closely with the TAs (3) Opportunities to share methods of teaching and how to use specialist resources with colleagues

(1) More funding at school level (2) Easier to involve outside agencies (3) more time to do reviews

(1) Some support for all the administration (2) More SENA guidance so I know what to do (3) the adoption of standardized approaches across the LA and with all the external services

(1) Full time admin support (2) Additional time to complete EHCPs (3) To actually get paid for doing the SENCO job!

(1) Admin help (2) more time just for the SEN coordination job (3) a 50/50 timetable where my SENCO time is protected and can't be used for anything else like covering lessons.

(1) Pay (2) Pay (3) Pay….and recognition/status!

(1) Fewer bloody meetings! (2) More time to spend on the children (3) I need admin support – desperately

(1) Paperwork – reduce it (2) cut down on the review meetings per year (or get help for me to do them) (3) Actually getting paid to do the SENCO job (and not have the constant complaint that the 'school doesn't have any money '…I feel taken for granted!

(1) Having a TA to support with admin (2) At least one full day per week allocated to SENCO work (3) More opportunities to work with SEND children

(1) Regular, protected/designated time given to o the job (2) Assistance with paperwork (TA support) (3) To be paid for the job!

(1) Funding…to be clear and identifiable in the school (I'm kept in the dark) (2) Social Services letting me know what is happening (3) More time…there's too much to do in too little time.

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57. If your Head-teacher offered you the choice to give up your SENCO role, would you prefer to hold another role/responsibility in your school or to stay as the SENCO?

Yes … I'd give up the SENCO role and do something else	**14**	**No**…I'd stay on as the SENCO	**26**

58. Where do you see yourself (professionally speaking) in five years' time?

I don't know
In a better school (preferably NOT an academy) with a higher status/better recognition! (**2**)
To get out of this academy/academy chain! (**2**)
I'd love to be a part of the 'Working Together Team' (LA) – perhaps delivering training with a master's qualification.
Progressing on to training for Educational Psychology
In exactly the same role (**15**
As a head-teacher (**7**
Out of teaching altogether (**2**
Working in HE training teachers (PCE/NQT) to develop knowledge of SEND
Deputy head with SENCO responsibility in a larger school (**2**)
In this job but with the chance to give up my class-teaching responsibility
Deputy head …if not…another career!
SENCO on the SLT working more closely with LAC
It's already happened…I've just been appointed as the head-teacher of an infants school so will leave the SENCO post and my current school in Jan!
Retired (hooray!)

59. If you have anything else you would like to say about your own role as a SENCo or about the SENCo role in general, please feel free to write it here.

My Head is seemingly not interested in SEND and the INCO is far too controlling (micro-managing) but never lets me actually 'do' what the job entails. She was the old/previous SENCO until given an assistant head position as INCO now she can't delegate (apart from the crappy jobs she doesn't want to do – like the never ending paperwork) so I have no opportunity to develop, review, manage or lead.
I really love the sense of reward and the forming of positive relationships with parents and outside

agents. It's nice to know that I can make a difference to the children – be it contributing to diagnosis, referrals, deciding next steps, just supporting them to feel happier.

This is a very important and valuable role where 'time' (or lack of it) is the main factor in completing the job to a high standard. Although I am happy teaching full time as well as being SENCO, I would prefer an extra afternoon for leadership-based working so I can devote my other time to SENCO on the other 'one afternoon' I have per week.

The SENCO role seems to vary from school-to-school and there seems to be a real disparity between SENCOs – time allocation, responsibilities etc. IU think that the Nat SENCo Award and the new CoP has given more importance to the status of a SENCO which could easily be a full-time role in most primary schools…however, it seems that it is up to each school's head to decide how the SENCO works and what she should do in the role regardless of what the Award and CoP state.

The area of SEN is a big one and should involve significant study time over many years for a SENCO. This can be daunting to a new SENCO particularly as colleagues and parents demand that they should know *everything* about SEND from the beginning! As a part-time SENCO I find that I spend many of my 'days-off' weekends and holidays studying and completing the administrative work left over from my days in-school.

The Government needs to fully clarify the status of SENCOs in schools…MUST they be on the leadership team or not? None of this shady *'should'* nonsense…the same also goes for allocated/statutory hours for SENCOs …let there be a firm decision made over the % of protected hours for SENCOs in a school which all schools should abide by.

It's such an important role but not valued enough in general I think (**2**).

It should be mandatory that the SENCO is on the SLT

Having taken on the role 2 yrs ago I was very unsure of my ability to make changes…now time has passed and I am busier than ever but I know I have made a positive difference.

There's just far, far too much paperwork and not enough time made available for focusing on the children…although isn't that 'teaching' full-stop now days?

I absolutely love the role! It's very hard work and a steep learning curve but I love that every day is different and I get to work with some amazing children and their families. I love being able to learn more about different SEND and extend my own knowledge.

All staff should have access to the info presented on the NASENCo …I have tried to disseminate as much as possible.

At present I feel more like an underpaid, inexperienced social worker as so many parents are experiencing difficulties at home. I would ike to spend more time on the academic needs if the children with SEN.

Appendix (5)

(A:5:1) 'A Day in the Life of a Primary School SENCO'

Friday 3rd July 2015

Dear

I'm writing to you in the hope that you will be able to help me with my own post-graduate (Phd) research (at the University of Northampton) which has its focus on the professional lives, experiences and well-being of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) working in primary school (or equivalent) settings.

Your support will be invaluable for my research with its focus on the **'lived experiences'** of SENCOs in their professional role…what they do during a typical day at their school, what they think and feel about the events and 'happenings' which occur and their general (and sometimes, specific) reflections on what it's like being the SENCO – the successes, fulfilment, the frustrations etc.

If you agree, I'd be very grateful if you could choose a 'typical day' from your obviously busy working week and then write a narrative diary entry –be free to describe what you do, state how you 'feel', present your ideas/theories or even give 'vent' to your frustrations and fears. There are no rules in a traditional sense here, I suppose the best phrase to use would be to *'embrace the freedom of writing a completely uncensored, naturally occurring and very personal account of your day's experience as a SENCO'.*

In order to protect your own freedoms and the integrity of this research, the whole process will be conducted with a strong ethical underpinning which meets the requirements of the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) 2011 guidelines and the ethical regulations for post-graduate research set out by the University of Northampton. In short:

- Your contribution will be treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity (**no one** will ever find out who you are or attribute your contribution to you)
- Your school/setting won't be identified
- You are fully entitled to decline from taking part in my research…please don't feel 'pressured' to accept – although I would love you to accept, of course!
- If you do decide to accept this invitation you have the right to withdraw your contribution (or parts of your contribution) at any time without giving a reason (just contact me, give me directions and it shall be done!)
- Your contribution will be securely stored and will only be used by me in two specific ways:

To develop my research for my Phd and to support any published paper(s) in academic journals which are written by me and which are directly linked to this research.

I fully understand and appreciate the exceptionally complex and demanding nature of your SENCO role/responsibilities and that your time is both precious

and limited so, in order to help you when compiling and writing your *'Day in the life of…'* diary entry , I have created a Diary Template which is attached to this letter. Completed diaries can be returned to me in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

If you would like feedback on the progress of my research, please feel free to contact me by e-mail (andrew.smith@northampton.ac.uk)
Once again, thank you for your very welcome cooperation.
Yours sincerely

Andy Smith
Senior Lecturer in Special & Inclusive Education
The University of Northampton
Boughton Green Road
Northampton
NN2 7AL

'A Day in the Life of…a Primary School SENCO'

Note: There are 4 x sides of A4 here…you don't need to use all of them. However, if you have a lot to write/a lot to say, please feel free to add sheets.

An additional 3 x blank pages for the diary.

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SENCO Diaries

(A:5:2)   'A Day in the Life of *CAZ* , a Primary School SENCo'

Thursday 26th November 2015		
Coding	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
• Non-teaching day spent on SENCO admin • 4 days as specialist teacher	*Today is my non-teaching day. Half which is spent an SENCo tasks and half is PPA time. I spend most of this time doing SENCo tasks about 80-90%. The other four days of my teaching week I am lead teacher in our Reception unit.*	**SENCO balancing role with whole class teaching**. ½ day as a SENCO per week (**limited time for SENCO work across school**)
• Admin for child from Romania (A) • Admin for Child E EHCP • Frustration over E's previous ECHP application being turned down • Liaison with Behaviour Support (ext) • Completing FACT tool (admin) • Analysing sensory checklist • Responding to e-mails & printing pupil info • Liaison with SALT	*Today started well. I had a long to do list which I felt was manageable, if I put my head down and got on. This included writing an application for top up funding for A in year 1. She is newly arrived from Romania with a diagnosis of ASD, she hit us like a whirlwind in May but were only given temporary top up/high needs funding until Christmas. Collating evidence for E's EHC. E has already had one application for a statement turned down probably as he didn't have his medical diagnosis of ASD which he does now. This was very frustrating as he cannot function without one to one support and also the amount of work involved for his teacher and me. Meeting a specialist teacher from behaviour support, completing a First Assess Communication Tool (FACT) tool on L (Don't get me started on the FACT total, waste of time tool, will come back to that later) and analysing a sensory checklist. As well as responding to various e-mail and printing information sent by Suzanne our independent speech and language therapist.*	SENCO time filled with **administrative duties** (writing applications for funding, collecting evidence, e-mails and printing) **Liaison** with external specialists (teachers and TAS Issues dealing with generating/obtaining **funding** for pupils with SEN Pupil **assessments** (FACT & sensory checklists)
• Top up funding request carried out • Form layout changed • Frustrated at amount of info required (took time to deal with new form) • Info supplied by 'A' (other teacher) • Regular admin task (all done recently)	*Started work on A's request for top up funding this is the first one I have filled out since September 2015 and I discover they have changed the form again. I get that SEN is more outcome driven but is it really necessary to include so much information on a form. After getting my head around the new layout and decipher the information they want I begin to fill it in. I have been unable to meet with A's teacher as she has such a big workload and is very stressed managing two children with ASD, so I begin to fill out the form with all the information I have collated on her so far. This is all giving me a*	Further **administration** linked to **funding** Note on **outcome driven systems** and **amount of information** required on pupil SENCO collating info again with same task & outcomes a month ago (**repetitive admin** duty)

• Asking for a more streamlined process using technology	*huge sense of déjà vu as a month ago I collated the same evidence and wrote similar outcomes, interventions, strengths and difficulties on a request for involvement form to the Communication and Interaction team. I do feel that there must be a more streamlined approach, could teams not link together to information share especially with google drives and modern technology. It could save hours of form filling in time.*	**Streamlining** of reporting system required **to ease admin workload** Using **technology** to **save time**
• Supporting student on placement • Liaison with external specialist teacher & TA • Discussion about individual pupils • Discussion on resources & strategies for pupils • Giving opinion on sensory box based on pupil performance & engagement • Frustrated with teachers who do not engage with advice and resources & provision • Teacher & pupil relationship not established • Pupils (M & J) taught out of class by deputy head in am to protect staff well-being	*This time was cut short as the university student I currently have on placement wanted to meet to go through policies, procedures and special needs, which I did.* *Time is disappearing as I now have to meet a specialist teacher and specialist TA from the Emotional, Social and Mental Health team who have been observing M. They were very positive about how staff interact with M which was good. They observed M and commented that he finds transitions hard, anything new and continually sought sensory experiences. They had a suggestion that we can put into place now about making him a special sensory treasure chest and gave us a twiddle keyring to get started. I agree that he needs this but am apprehensive about saying this to his teacher as I can hear her answer before she says it. 'He already has a sensory box he doesn't use it'. Its hard to get across that it can be the best sensory box in the world but if the adult does not scaffold its use it will be useless! Part of the problem with M and another child J is that their teacher has not formed relationships with them and they are currently being taught out of class in the morning by the deputy head. The decision was taken by the head to do this for staff's well being as the challenging behaviour was consuming them and was not making a positive learning environment.*	**SENCO running CPD** (for teaching student in matters SEND) SENCO **high level** of **knowledge** about individual pupils and their needs SENCO able to **review** efficiency/use of strategies and resources for individual pupils **Teachers not engaging or taking responsibility** for persisting with strategy & resourcing **Withdrawn provision** for pupils with SEBD to protect staff wellbeing
• Possible application for group top-up funding • Use of single form for all pupils • Frustration at process of top-up funding and	*The specialist teacher had mentioned to our head that possibly we could apply for group top up funding for our group of four boys who are taught out of class. I asked her which form it is and she said, 'ermmm there isn't one, you will have to put them all on the same form,' She said she would come in to do an observation and give notes to support this and I agreed but on*	SENCO frustration at **finding skilled TAs** for temp contract **paid by top-up funding** Possibility of **funding** application being **rejected** (lost hours of work)

need to find skiled staff to come in for a set/brief period on a temp contract (chance is 'slim') • Possibility of rejection of funding request after hours of work • Amount of form filling (top-up funding, EHCs, requests)	*reflection its another frustrating thing. We are often told to apply for top up funding and people think it is a problem solver but realistically it doesn't help at all. The likeliness of someone highly skilled being employed for 2 terms on a temporary contract is very slim, it is more likely that resources are deployed from elsewhere in the school but in turn has a huge impact in teaching and learning of other children and teachers. It is also frustrating as without hours of form filling and hours collating (and making up) evidence the request would be rejected at panel. It also makes your heart sink at filling in another form when I already have five different forms in process (2 EHC's, 2 Top-up funding and a request for involvement).*	**Workload and excessive administration** (form filling for funding, EHCs and involvement by ext agencies)
• Contact with HT over priorities • Detailed information on pupil and level of social & learning need required • Crucial that EHCP is provided for the pupil • Need for more info from his class-teacher • More form filling and collation of evidence	*I then asked to talk to our head to ask which form needs to be the priority, does it need to be this group made up top up funding request or A's. She was frustrated as she thought it was something we could actually apply for, not just made up as a lovely idea by the specialist teacher! This meeting only lasted five minutes as she was called to year 1 to remove a very anxious E who was destroying the classroom. Since moving into temporary accommodation since being made homeless he had been unable to access his class for learning. He shows high levels of anxiety, aggression and violence. It is crucial that we complete his EHC as soon as possible but I need to pin his teacher down to fill a form in and collate more evidence!*	SENCO & Head-teacher **direct liaison** SENCO able to **prioritise**
• E-mail/voicemail communication with ext agencies • Crisis point with E • Use of Calm Room for him but restricting its use by others • SENCO administers first aid to other member of staff	*I then left a, 'help' e-mail and a voicemail for our Communication and Interaction specialist teacher. We are at crisis point with E he is making himself, staff and other children unsafe. We have a calm room at school but if he is based in there it means it is unable to be used by our other 4 children who have anger outbursts.* *We then had a member of staff faint so I dealt with her for 30 mins as I was not teaching.*	SENCO has **multi-tasks** to do in school apart from duties & teaching (e.g. **first aid**)
• More form filling • Feedback given to learning	*I am now slightly concerned that I have not ticked anything off my to do list. I go back to A's form filling but our learning mentor comes to see*	**SENCO giving feedback** on pupil progress to learning mentors

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• mentor • Note to e-mail M's teacher later • Short lunch break	*requesting feedback from the observation today. She is positive with the outcome. I have not managed to catch up with M's teacher as she is busy at lunch to give her feedback. I make a mental note to e-mail her later.* *Quick 10 minute lunch break then pop to my class to check on my children. It is now 1.30 and feel like I have achieved nothing.*	V. short lunch break (**SENCO wellbeing**)
• More form filling • Liaison with deputy head for feedback on M • Discussion on strategies & resourcing for M • Feels supported by SLT • But needs more time to do SENCO role • Only a small school (180 chldn)	*Back on A's form I manage to fill in part of A's form, then I have a visit from our deputy head who asks about the feedback for M. She is very positive and agrees to make the treasure basket with him and it totally on board. I do feel supported by my SLT I just wish they could give me a lot more time to do the SENCo role but we have a very small school 180 children which include 60 nursery children and we all need to be hands on deck. This chat is cut short again as she has to go yet again to E who is, 'kicking off' in the calm room and has bitten his TA.*	SENCO feels **supported by SLT** **More Time** is needed by SENCO to do the job Small **size of school** is main **restricting** factor
• Liaison with head • Realistic about applying for funding ('having a laugh') • No time left for more form filling • Pupil in question has top-up funding • No more adults available for supporting • Can't employ a skilled person for 2 x terms • Head will liaise with specialist teacher – helpful to SENCO	*I then have a meeting with our head who has spoken to the specialist teacher I left the help message for. She has given advice, one of those was, 'do you know you can apply for top up, top up funding' at this point you are having a laugh goes through my head. I don't believe this will help and I haven't got the time to fill in any more forms. He already has top-up funding, he has a full-time 1:1. There are no more adults we could release in the school and couldn't employ a skilled person for a couple of terms. We make a plan and chat to his teacher. The specialist teacher has agreed to come in to school and do an observation and the head has said that she will liaise with her. This is really helpful as it feels like Chinese whispers having to feedback to so many people and the head can just sort out his provision so, 'phew'.*	Importance of **SENCO-Head direct communication** (avoiding 'Chinese Whispers')
• Supporting E's class teacher (timetabling/resource provision) • FACT tool	*I then support E's teacher to make a timetable with her to support his new provision.* *I then quickly complete a FACT tool on L in my class. I have spoken at length*	**Supporting teachers** **Liaison** & partnership working with **parents/carers and**

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admin on L • Liaison with L's parents (SENCO completes FACT and so does home) • Feedback to CFP worker • Planning for 'next steps'	*his his mum about her concerns about his. She believes that he has ASD we haven't seen anything to concern us in school so I promised I would complete a FACT tool for home time. I missed the deadline but hopefully can share the findings with her tomorrow, where he scored age appropriately and it shows no concerns. I will get her to fill it in form a home perspective and also a sensory checklist. I then need to feed this back to her Children & Family Practice (CFP) worker and talk about where to go next.*	**with external services** (CFP)
• Complaints about FACT tool and difficulty of use (time to fill in and need for 2 x cycles before external involvement and funding application) • Strong internal school group of 'experts' (SALT, intervention delivery etc.) • Difficulty in getting teachers to complete essential reports & targets • Lots of admin & liaison to do before interventions & recommendations put into practice for chldrn • FACT process is the LA 'baby' & they are protective of it but took SENCO 2 x hrs to fill in for a child who already has lots of support making FACT sheet useless.	*The FACT tool is a complete nightmare, it is sold as a brilliant resource which it would be if it didn't take so long to fill in. To enable involvement from the specialist teaching teams or request top up funding you have to show 2 FACT cycles. It is so frustrating as most of the recommendations are wave 1 quality first teaching and stated on our provision map. We have our own independent speech and language therapist who can set personalised targets and a skilled staff team who can deliver interventions. It is a complete nightmare to get teachers to fill in and the get them to write targets after reading pages of recommendations, get parents to sign then actually put the support into place then review the outcomes. I have made up about 5 FACT cycles, the children were receiving the interventions and targets were recorded in other places just not on the FACT. It is the baby of (*) council SEN team and they are very protective of it! The FACT + is even worse and the Early Years Fact + took me two hours to fill in for 1 child who already receives so much support from different agencies the FACT is pointless!*	FACT tool used by LA and **imposed** on school. SENCO admits its lack of 'usefulness' for children already receiving support & funding and the number of cycles of FACT and time spent before any application for support & funding can be made.
• Supporting teacher in	*I also had a visit from a very upset teacher, all our KS1 teachers are*	SENCO's **knowledge** of individual **pupils**

• 'distress' • Concern about E's behaviour • empathy with teacher and the number of chldrn with SEN & behavioural issues in her class • SENCO feels she needs more time to enable her to support this teacher and others(hates to see teachers so upset)	*currently consumed by the few children with very challenging behaviour. She had a chair thrown at her yesterday, is becoming very stressed with E's anxiety driven behaviour finding him incredible hard to manage and his two meltdowns today tipped her over the edge. She currently has many low achieving children in her mixed year ½ class and she is really feeling the strain. We talked about what was working well and how she was going to support through the Christmas timetable. We talked through the things she needed to complete and who could help. I do feel that if I had more time I could be more effective in supporting other teachers especially emotionally. I hate to see teachers so upset and to feel so powerless*	and their **needs** SENCO **supporting** other **teachers** SENCO wish for more **time** to do this **support** more **effectively**
• Management targets for SENCO relating to monitoring SEN provision, observing, monitoring planning, interviewing • Excessive 'paperwork' stops much of this happening • Loves SEN role & has learnt so much • Works with teachers to find solutions of learning & behaviour • Frustrated by having to chase teachers for support plans & evidence • Feels powerless to support teachers who've had a challenging time • No time to work with parents • Feels that 'pupil voice' isn't captured in the provision	*My PM targets are to monitor the SEN provision in the school through observations, monitoring planning, pupil interviews etc but I haven't managed to get away from form-filling to do that now. I do love my SEN role and I do feel that I have learnt so much and can work together with teachers to find solutions to children's learning and behaviour. I feel frustrated by the amount of paperwork involved – it is totally ridiculous. I also find it frustrating to be continually chasing teachers for support plans and evidence to be included with requests. I also feel powerless sometimes and unable to support our teachers who have had an awful start to the year managing very challenging children. I feel if I had more time out of class I could help towards this. I also feel that I don't have time to work with parents and I don't feel that we really get their voice or children's voice into our provision.*	**Prof Management targets for SENCO** (mainly monitoring) **Excessive** paperwork & **admin** restricts SENCO in addressing PM targets **Loves role** & has learnt a lot **Likes** working with **teachers** but **frustrated** by them too (chasing them for information & plans) Feels **powerless** to **Support teachers** having challenging time and working with **parents**. (**time** an issue)

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• SENCO work taken home to do	*Home to start my planning I didn't get any PPA done today and to write e-mails summarising the feedback from the visit for M today*	**Work-life balance** (work taken home as time ran out at school)

Main Themes (Caz)

SENCO in a multi-role- balancing whole class teaching with SENCO duties (Contextual Variety)

time allocated throughout the week dedicated for SENCO work (Contextual Variety)

Amount of administration and paperwork undertaken by SENCO (SENCO as administrator rather than manager or leader)

SENCO understanding of funding, external agency liaison and assessment processes.

Imposition of LA favoured tools and approaches

SENCO as 'expert' (delivering Staff CPD) and as a 'rescuer' (colleagues expecting SENCO to take responsibility for pupils with SEND)

High level of SENCO knowledge of pupil needs

SENCO reviewing and evaluating (auditing)

SENCO supports all staff (expert, rescuer, collaborating, SENCO's Emotional Labour)

SENCO liaises with parents (collaborating and being 'the expert')

Direct SENCO-Head liaison (sustaining the relationship between head as overall manager of provision for SEN and SENCO as day-to-day manager)

SENCO well-being and work-life balance compromised both in and out of school due to workload (SENCo's 'Emotional labour')

SENCO NOT on SLT -but feels supported (Contextual Variety)

SENCO asks for more time to engage fully with SENCO workload (SENCO as negotiator)

Loves being SENCO (Emotional labour)

(A:5:3)   'A Day in the Life of *Alex* a Primary School SENCo'

Tuesday 19th October 2015		
Coding	**Narrative**	**Initial Themes**
• Multi-role SENCO and deputy head • Promoted from SENCO post • CPD to M level (school-based/practitioner research on matters relating to SEND)	*I'm one of the Assistant Head-teachers in my large-ish, inner-city primary school (the one with the SEND portfolio/duties). I started here as the SENCO four years ago, did my SENCO training at the University (of………) and was then promoted into this position. Since then I've finished off my Master's degree (MA Special Educational Needs) at the University (through taking more SEN-focused modules and doing my dissertation on developing provision for SEN in my school). I get on well*	SENCO in **leadership role/multi-role** **Close** working **relationship** with **head** & SEN gov SENCO as **practitioner-researcher** in school

• Good working relationship with head & SEN gov ('head-hunted' to deputy role) • Leadership potential recognised by head	*(professionally and personally) with my head-teacher (he was the one who saw my potential as a 'school leader' – his words) and with the governor with the SEND 'brief'. Sound good so far? But it's not all a 'bed of roses' (nothing is in teaching is it?) So…*	
• Early riser…straight to work before children are awake.. • Aware of this…reproaches self • General comment on teachers always concerned with other people's children over their own • Calls teaching a '*shit job*' in general	*A typical day for me is as follows (warning – it's no-holds barred here as this is just how I feel – I'm not even going to apologise for the 'language', although I have attempted to 'blank' some of the more colourful words!):* *I get up early, about 5.30am, no matter what I've been doing the night before more often than not it's been school work - admin and marking usually. I grab something quick to eat (if I'm lucky) then say goodbye to my husband and then I'm off to work at about 6.45. The kids are still asleep so I miss them, I normally write out a note for them and have all their stuff ready for school. 'This is no way to be a parent' I always think to myself, it always makes me laugh that we teachers spend all of our time with other people's kids and not our own, and then when we're with our own kids we're always thinking about work and other people's kids again. What a shit job (teaching in general)!*	**Work-life** balance (straight from beginning of day to end) Recognition of **demands** of **teaching** in general (a '*shit job!*')
• On arrival (7.00am) admin duties and answering e-mails (sent e-mails at midnight & demands of others wanting instant reply) • Access arrangements for SATS	*I'm in the office at school for 7.00am – nice - particularly in the depths of winter (not!) Then I'm checking my e-mails (that takes a fair bit of time - why is it that people e-mail at a quarter past midnight and then get snotty with you with you don't respond immediately? Arrogance and ignorance probably). Anyway, today is a bit different as I then start to wrestle with sorting out all the access arrangements for SATS…who needs what and why and then seeing if we have enough TAs and places for those pupils who need readers, scribes, additional time etc. I'm lucky in that the*	Level of **admin** (e-mails, access arrangements – staffing/resources and time taken for processing applications)

organisation (places, staffing) applications already processed • Time taken for access arrangement processing	*applications have already been processed and approved, that was earlier and took a vast amount of time getting all the required evidence together;*	
• TA admin support available (but P/T) so SENCO has to do a lot of admin herself or leave it	*I do have a TA who is a dedicated SEND admin assistant but she only works part-time with me so she's in on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays for SEN (D) provision and Tuesdays and Fridays as the TA linked to the Literacy Coordinator, as a result I've either got to do a lot of the 'nitty-gritty' admin stuff myself or leave it until she's in for the SEN work–*	**TA Admin Support provided**
• Time spent liaising with TA Admin Support • (luxury of this level of support is recognised) • Usefulness in planning big projects like access arrangements, reviews etc.	*then I have to spend a fair amount of time explaining and directing and checking up. However, we do have the luxury of being able to plan together so important/big projects like the access arrangements and annual reviews etc. are nicely sorted - it's*	SENCO **recognises the 'luxury'** of having this TA Admin Support
• Normal day-to-day demands on SENCO creates issues • 50% of time-table ring-fenced for SENCO working (rest devoted to leadership role across the school and job share as classroom teacher) • Feels that she	*the usual stuff which just 'appears' throughout the day which causes me issues, particularly as I am only given 50% of my timetable as ring-fenced SENCO time…the rest of it I have to devoted to general Assistant Head-teacher duties and classroom teaching (I do a class-teacher 'job-share' with Alice for 50% of the time). Now that sounds bonkers - 50% SENCO and 50% classroom teacher and then having to do Assistant Head-teacher duties (i.e. whatever 'turns up' or, more truthfully, what the other members of the SMT don't want to do) above and beyond all of that. I know it sounds like an old cliché but why don't they just stick a broom handle up my @rse and I'll clean the school floors*	**Multi-role** (SENCO, Deputy Head and class teacher) **SENCO concerns over time allocation for role.**

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is given duties that other SMT members don't want • Feels she is given too much to do (multi-roles)	*too!*	
• Lists duties undertaken -finding TAS to be scribes/readers for access arrangements - planning to find time for training of these TAs (worried about exam boards) -worried about TAs giving away answers - worried about local press if TAs caught cheating (for the pupils' sake)	*So the things I dealt with today were:* *Who do we have (TA-speaking) who're actually capable of being readers and scribes? I produced a list and tried to link them to the children with access arrangements. I was reasonably successful at this but I know that I'd have to find the time to actually train the TAs on how to do this properly as the last thing I want is for the exam board to descend and find odd pockets of TAs and kids engaged in fiddling the test. I know that some of our TAs will try, as they desperately want to help the kids - so do I but we can't afford to get caught and have to deal with the almighty 'stuffing' we'll get afterwards. I can almost see the headlines in the local press!*	Recognises **pressures** on **pupils to perform** in SATS creating **pressures on TAs** who may give answers when supporting for access arrangements. Awareness of school reputation in local press creating more stress (**school in the 'public eye'**)
• Feels that head will blame her for any potential mistakes in access arrangements • States that SATS are not fit-for-purpose creating a 'cramming' ethos in the school	*And any cock-ups of that nature I know the head-teacher will place squarely on me. SATS are a nightmare anyway – despicable tests which have no intellectual or ethical 'soul' - they're certainly not 'fit-for-purpose' anyway, particularly as you can forget the middle term in Yr 6 as it's spent cramming for this stupid test (no matter what head-teachers say) then the school is hung out to dry on the scaffold of published league tables.*	Awareness of **'performativity'** issues related to SATS and their effect on the school – 'cramming' for testing, and performance league tables all **creating stresses**
• Empathy with pupils with SEN • Compares UK to Finland • Attacks political	*I really feel sorry for the kids in the school who have special needs and barriers to their learning…why on earth can't we be more like Finland? Oh yes - I know – bl00dy politicians who think they are the experts in Education controlling what we do and how we do it, what we should*	Shows **wider understanding**/links (Finland – political power etc.). **School and Education in a wider context**

ideology (dangerous amateurs)	*think and what we should say…dangerous interfering amateurs!*	
• Anger over centralised Govt control/direction • Supported by OFSTED and the generation of 'fear' through inspection • Comment on being 'swamped' by excessive workload • Link to research (Maslow) and need for 'freedom from fear' • Attack on school-based teacher training routes • Sates that we are all controlled by the fear	*I've gone off on a tangent but I am angry about the amount of centralised control supported by the prowling of Ofsted and the fear that that generates. At least we're not 'due' for an inspection there is still this undercurrent of fear – and how can you do or enjoy a job when you're frightened and swamped by an excess of target setting, form-filling, pupil tracking etc. We all know that it's the middle part of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (or should do if we haven't been swamped by teachers who have come through school-based routes rather than through university teacher-training routes!) and that if fear is present you might as well forget about the higher order needs…but still we let ourselves be controlled by it!*	Attacks Central Govt control and **fear** generated by **OFSTED inspections** **Workload&** administration SENCO makes links to **research** and **academic reading** Attack on **limitations** of **school-based** teacher **training routes.** Awareness of being '**controlled**' by elements of **'performativity'**
• Anger at general situation • Booked all the rooms	*I do get angry. Anyway, I also spent a fair bit of time checking out which rooms, offices, cubby-holes etc. will be available for SATS and then making firm bookings for them. Woe-betide anyone who moves into one of my booked spaces!*	
• No morning break (due to incident) • Admin tasks completed in office (full range from review prep, letter writing to parents, links to ext	*I didn't go to the staff room at morning break, although I was desperate for a coffee (other things 'turned up' which needed direct action - see my comments later on) so I hung on in the office as I put the finishing touches to some annual review paperwork for children with EHCPs/statements; this was a series of letters to parents and outside agencies inviting them to SEND their comments and attend. The easiest bit (admin*	**Work-life** (health) **balance** – **doesn't take a break** due to dealing with incident. Amount (and range) of **paperwork**

agencies, staff comment forms)	*speaking) was to prepare the paperwork for members of staff – response forms where they can provide their comments on the children's performance. Levels, etc.*	
• Says paperwork is 'easy' • Getting staff to give information is difficult (ranges from effective/insightful to useless opinion-led 'stuff'))	*Yeah…easy paperwork but I also know it'll be a right sod trying to get them to do it – I know exactly who will produce some really insightful, accurate, fact-based information, who'll produce nothing but opinion-led/subjective stuff and who will need to have the info squeezed out of them or secrewed out of them with a spanner and then the information will be largely useless as it'll be so superficial.*	Issues with **obtaining** useful pupil reports **from staff** (variety of staff responses – from insightful/ 371 vidence information to opinion-subjective comments) Evidence of SENCO employing **evidence-driven, objective reporting on pupils** (effect of 'M' level working and of being a practitioner/researcher?)
• Fed up of staff stating they don't have the time • Believes that they don't have the 'will' or knowledge about SEN • They just want to focus on own teaching	*I get fed up of the constant bleating of 'I don't have the time'. Yeah, I KNOW you don't have the time but I also feel that quite a few members of staff don't have the will or the actual understanding/knowledge of meeting the needs of kids with SEN in their classes - all they want to focus on is their own teaching.*	Staff not having **time, knowledge or will to teach** pupils with **SEN** only their own teaching
• Spent hours on staff training • Explaining that they are responsible for the learning experience of all pupils in their classes • SENCO still stopped by	*This is a great shame as I've spent hours and hours on their CPD/in-house training, embedding the new Code of Practice and explaining that they are the ones responsible for the whole learning experience and the progress of pupils with SEN in their classes – but I still get stopped in the corridor with stuff like.'Little Johnny in my class still can't read very well - what are YOU going to do about it?' – actually, this one was very ironic as it came from the Literacy Coordinator - nice! She's good at drilling*	Understanding of **DfE/DH (2015) CoP** **Challenging teachers** to **act** first on SEN **before** asking SENCO to intervene

teachers expecting her to solve their issues before they have done anything first. • SENCO challenges teachers to act.	*them for KS2 SATS though (that's me being b1tchy now!)* *Venting again - I know - apologies…..*	
• Comments on differences between TAs (those who care – Sarah- and those who only work within their own defined areas and are not willing to step outside)	*So, carrying on in the office – thank you sarah for bringing me in a coffee and a piece of cake (she's an angel and is probably my best TA as she has a real rapport with the children and is willing to turn her hand to anything she's asked to do, willingly, unlike some of the moaning bitc4es on the TA team who don't like to put a painted toenail outside of their 'comfort zones'.*	**TA effectiveness** – range from good to restricted.
• SENCO not in charge of whole TA team – head does it • Head does delegate when needed	*Interesting point this – from reading this diatribe so far I bet you think that (automatically) I'm in charge of the whole TA team, their recruiting, training, deployment, performance review etc. but 'Ta-daaaaaah!' I'm NOT! Surprise, surprise! The Head does that unless he decides to give me the job (like in the complex process for access arrangements…or in sorting out some CPD).*	**SENCO not TA team leader** (head leads team & delegates when required) Recognised by SENCO as **something to change**
• Needs to change this • Recognises that TAS are the most expensive and should be most effective resource • Recognition of their limitations in school (some are lazy)	*It's a situation which I need to change a.s.a.p. as I need to really sort out the TAs; they're our most expensive resource so they should be our most effective – sadly they're not (across the board that is- don't get me wrong as we have some superb individual TAs but we do have a core of the long-standing ones who have become stale and – yes, I'll say it – lazy!)*	**TAs r**ecognised as **key resource** in school (most **expensive** so should be most effective – but some are not)
• In PM teaching Yr 4	*So - there's my morning eaten up. In the afternoon I try and hold it together*	Importance of effective school

– enjoys History Project • Praises 'sparky' head as he inspires the pupils • But admin/paper work overload mentioned	*teaching Year 4. I quite enjoyed doing this as it was their 'Project Time' with plenty of History, drama/improvisation and cross-curricular linking. Thank goodness we have a 'sparky' head (apologies Brian for 'having a go' about the TA team in the section above – I know that you're great!) who sees the real value of inspiring our kids rather than boring then stupid- the old/previous Head woudn't have considered something like Projects in a million years. So – teaching = good BUT…* *Here's the thing (and I warned of this earlier)so far I've written about the morning devoted to the never-ending SEN-based 'admin' and the afternoon devoted to teaching my job-share Yr 4 class. OK. Sounds 'do-able' doesn't it?*	leadership from **head** creating the **right climate** for the school
• Catalogue of SENCO activities throughout the day • Teacher brings child to SENCO/Deputy rather than sorting out the issue herself (as child has SpLD ') • SENCO mentions her 'magic wand and fairy dust' – it's what the staff expect • SENCO sorts out child • Paperwork when writing up incident • Worry to watch out for in future	*Right then – here goes:* *Morning:* **9.10** *Mrs Richardson (TA) brings in Kyle (made up name – real kid) Yr 4 (not my class). She says he's been lifting up girls' skirts and has been using inappropriate language of a 'sexual nature'. She brings him to me rather than sorting it with the class teacher as she says that Kyle has Dyslexia and so has a special need – so it's my job to sort out the problem! Brilliant! Of course I have the magic wand to wave magic SENCO 'fairy dust' over Kyle. Mrs R and Kyle's class-teacher must have simply 'run out' and are awaiting a new 'fairy dust' delivery. Result: BIG talking to about inappropriate touching/talking to Kyle, note on pad to contact his parents, note to self to write up incident and to inform his class-teacher (Amy - who should know better – she should have dealt with this herself as it's Kyle's first indiscretion like this and he is in her class - his specific learning difficulty is neither here-nor-there in this case). Mind you – this is a disturbing thing and something to be very vigilant about. Make a note for the next staff information briefing (after talking it all through with Amy).*	**Staff not taking on responsibility** for dealing with issues and pupils related to SEND – SENCO as having a 'magic wand'
• Advises on	**10.20** *Have a word with Mrs Richardson*	

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teacher as first port of call in issues such as this	*(nicely) thanking her for highlighting/identifying the important 'issue' with Kyle's behaviour. Then 'nicely' asking/telling her to make sure that the first port of call should be his class-teacher (and all class-teachers) in the future. She 'grudgingly' accepts the point (why grudgingly? Body language…)*	
• Another pupil (John) bought straight to SENCO rather than teaching staff dealing with the issue first. • Ages spent dealing with John as his TA confused him and he responded negatively (ASD) • Questions effectiveness and professionalism of TA who is a specialist in ASD (after plenty of training) • Recognises need for better accredited training rather than single day/LA-led CPD	**10.45-ish** *John (lad on the Spectrum…another made up name but real kid) decides to 'kick-off'. We have protocols etc. for this but 'oh no' he's bought straight in to me to 'cure'. Spend ages trying to calm him down then Sarah (bless her) takes over and pours the oil on the troubled waters. The reason for the 'kick off'? His TA support confusing him, pinning his arms to the table etc…God forbid! This woman is supposed to be a 'specialist' in ASD! She's always banging on about it and her 'specialist' two days of training (two whole days - wow! Impressive!) Perhaps it's time to ask the head to spend some money and SEND her on a proper accredited course around ASD provision at the University – make a note ref. TA specialisms and accreditation.*	SENCO rather than teacher-led interventions **Quality** of **TAs** and their **training** Need for **accredited training** in matters relating to SEND recognised
• Carries on admin/paper work through lunch • Incident at lunchbreak (John) has to be sorted out by SENCO	*So it's now **lunchtime** and all of the above has eaten inexorably into my morning of essential admin. SO, I carry on the admin through lunchtime and grab a quick M&S sarnie (which has been festering in my bag all morning as I couldn't get to the staffroom fridge in time!) then…* *Lo and behold – at the end of lunch - time*	No lunchbreak (**work-life balance**)

	for my class. Get the register open and bingo! Here we go…the lunchtime supervisor come in with John. He has been 'distressed' and has punched another kid - arrrrggg! SEND for Sarah. I think I owe her BIG time today; perhaps a box of nice biscuits for her to say 'thank you for helping to keep me a bit sane'???	
• Excludes John • Thinking through if school has done enough for him • Questions system of trying to be inclusive creating exclusions for some pupils (some need things which are beyond what the school can offer • John's needs best met in a special school • This move blocked by parents (their 'social standing' being affected by this? SENCO states an opinion)	*Finally sorted! John is sent home after Mum comes to collect him. You know, I really wonder if we're doing the right thing for him at the school; we've done the best we can but it's just not good enough as it's almost as if we (the school) in an attempt to be 'inclusive' actually starts to be 'exclusive' as we try and squeeze provision around him. John really needs something which is 'beyond and different to' the present provision we give him, in reality his needs will be best met in specialist alternative provision/special school but his parents are just not willing to listen as it seems to me that they feel that (somehow) John being in a special school will diminish their 'social standing'; mind you, that's my own subjective/opinionated view coming through here.*	SENCO aware of debate around **inclusion in the mainstream** and the need for some pupils needing provision which is significantly above, beyond or different to a mainstream school. Recognises the **place of special schools** **Parental power** dominating over issues relating to **pupil placements** in schools
• SENCO enjoying teaching class • Calls it 'escaping into the classroom' and feels guilty as SEN work mounts up	*Thankfully I'm not disturbed during the afternoon. I really enjoyed escaping in to the classroom to teach my class. Then I felt guilty. I felt guilty because I knew that there was a mountain of SEN-focused stuff left to do/building up and I felt guilty as I hid away from keeping an over-view of the pupils who do have barriers to their learning across all classes in the school and…*	**Conflict** felt **between** enjoying **teaching** (the 'escape') and having time away from **SENCO work.**
• Guilty at not	*Perhaps the main feeling of being guilty*	Recognition of

able to spend time in leading SEN provision • Wants to work alongside colleagues in their classrooms – advising, modelling and team-teaching • Needs to monitor quality of interventions and do classroom observations • All to make objective, evidence-based comments and not subjective/opinion-based comments on pupils • Lack of time to do this	*links to not being able to spend enough time on the parts of my job which are vital in terms of leading the SEN provision – I want to be able to work alongside/with my colleagues in their own classes doing exciting things such as advising them on teaching pupils with SEN and modelling and team-teaching. I also really need to be able to monitor the interventions which have been put into place and how teachers and TAs are differentiating for individual pupils and small groups…but this takes a lot of time. I really want to do some classroom observations (of pupils who are 'borderline SEN' , of existing pupils with SEND, for those requiring access arrangements etc.) so as not to have to rely on any 'dodgy' subjective opinions on pupil engagement and performance from teachers & TAs or just relying on the 'cold calculations' of data. Alll vital activities and parts of the SENCO function.*	SENCO and teachers working in partnership in the classroom Recognition of importance of evidence-based data through monitoring, evaluating and observing rather than subjective & opinion-biased comments on pupil progress
• Additional time in school on admin at close of day • When at home…continues with school work (recognises that she gets 'grumpy' at home • Bed at 1.00am	*End of the day - kids go home, I don't. Another two hours in school continuing with the admin which was disturbed by the on-going 'pupil issues' in the morning. Then home…quick dinner with my kids. I'm grouchy, grumpy and a bit 'sharp' to them and my husband. Then I feel bad for my behaviour. Kids to bed. Me to work - marking this time, tons of it and all having to be marked marked according to the school's procedure- all very, very tiresome. I'm shattered. Husband goes to bed. I go to bed too, but at 1.00am. Lay awake thinking about the next day and what I need to do, finally fall asleep.*	Poor **SENCO work-life balance**
• Next day…more of the same.	*The next day? Surprise, surprise – more of the same (but different) – apart from spending a catharthic hour writing this*	

• Writing diary is seen as a 'break'..but feels guilty doing it in school time • States that work-life balance is 'crap'	*diary entry (then I felt guilty doing this in school time – I can never win can I?)* *Overall:* *So much for work-life balance and all that cr@p about 'Mindfulness' is just airy-fairy, pie-in-the-sky, hippy-trippy-drippy smoke and mirrors New Age b******s (oooohhhh - can't you tell I'm a little 'on edge' about this??)*	
• Wants 100% of time devoted to SENCO work (with no class-teaching or additional duties)	*There we are, just a typical day for me with nothing special. What would make it better? Although it really pains me to say this:* *Having a 100% of my time devoted to doing the SENCO stuff (with a proportion of whole-school stuff too as I am an Assistant Head) with NO whole-class teaching (I can clearly see that to 'escape' into the classroom' is not a viable option any longer as they both 'clash')*	**SENCO lists needs**: All '**time**' related Importance of • Leading the TA team • Partnership working with teachers in class • CPD programme (SEND) • Monitoring &evaluating and quality assurance of provision • Observing children in classrooms • Links with feeder schools • Links with external agencies • National & international links
• To have full control of the TA team • To have ring-fenced/protected time for team teaching, monitoring and observing	*To have sole control over the TA team (everything – from advertising, appointment, induction, training, deployment, management, performance review etc.)* *To have my own 'ring-fenced' time for team-teaching, monitoring of provision, monitoring of pupil progress and engagement inc. classroom/pupil observations*	
• Dedicated time given for teacher/TA CPD • Dedicated time for external links – particularly with feeder schools	*To have dedicated time given to me to arrange a whole on-going programme of teacher/TA CPD around SEND & inclusion* *To be given time (and funding) to engage in professional links outside of the school – locally (SENCO forums, links with the LA etc.), regionally and nationally….perhaps even internationally???? Make **much** stronger links with local special schools and the feeder upper school(s)*	
• Compares herself to other SENCOs and states that she is actually quite well off.	*Then I'd feel as if I was really moving things on in the school and I'd be pro-active rather than re-active. Mind you – when I've spoken to other SENCOs I can see that I'm quite well off, particularly in my head-teacher as some of them can be awful!*	**Identifies contextual differences between schools** and appreciates her own status and conditions of service

Main Themes (Alex)

SENCO in a multi-role (also Assistant Head) on SLT (Contextual Variety)

SENCO as 'restricted leader' re; not leading TA Team (Contextual Variety)

SENCO as leader with 'vision' re list of SENCO 'needs' to improve provision (Legal Contract – SENCO as manager and leader and Emotional Labour – SENCO as expert and collaborator)

Close liaison with head and governors (SENCO as expert and collaborator)

SENCO as active practitioner – researcher in school with additional post-grad quals (SENCO as expert)

SENCO work-life balance -due to paperwork/administration and balancing multi-role (SENCO's Emotional labour)

Admin support provided (Resourcing – Contextual Variety)

Understanding of the SENCO's Legal Contract (DfE/DH (2015) *CoP* & responsibilities of class teachers for pupils with SEN

Recognition of wider issues in Education (SENCO as expert through SENCO recognition of Contextual Variety linked to current Educational climate & performativity-driven high stakes assessment regime)

Relationship with staff as SENCo– (SENCO as expert and rescuer)

(A:5:4) 'A Day in the Life of *Becky* a Primary School SENCo'

Coding	Narrative	Initial Themes
• Early start quick exit • Blames herself for missing own children in morning due to need to leave early for school • Blames herself for being a 'bad parent'	*A typical day for me is as follows:* *I get up early, about 6am, no matter what I've been doing the night before more often than not it's been school work…admin and marking usually. I grab something quick to eat…if I'm lucky…say goodbye to my husband and then I'm off to work at about 7.00amThe kids are still asleep so I miss them, 'I often blame myself for being a bad parent and having all my time spent doing school stuff…teachers are meant to actually like kids but we stuff up our own don't we ?*	**Work-life** balance. Putting **work before own needs** and family needs
• Long car journey (hr) • Checking e-mails (lots)	*I'm in the office at school for 8.00am after a usually rotten car journey (hate it in the winter as it's so bloody dark!) I'm checking my e-mails (tons of em usually about silly*	E-mail communication (**admin** & **demands** of

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• Frustration at those who ask questions and expect instant responses – slave to e-mails • Marks books	*questions which I've already answered…from silly people who demand an instant response…I feel a right slave to e-mails!!!) Mark some books* *Then it kicks off big time*	others)
• Teaching in the morning • Comments on Y 6 SATS and pressures on pupils and staff • 'Drilling' for SATS • Head focus on pupil performance • Comment on putting pupils with SEN through this pressure • Emphasis on testing and then re-testing at upper school • Comment on imposed teaching & assessment (SATS, Phonics, SPAG)	*Teaching in the morning…OK..Yr 5…but I feel sorry for the Yr 6 teachers as the ugly head of SATS is just peeping over the horizon…pressure is building and the drilling for tests will start soon..Head is pizzing her pantz about results, results, results. Mind you there's pressure on me as I have to squeeze all of our kids with SEN through the horrors of these tests…'scores on the doors….progress…progress…progress. etc…What's the point because as soon as we finish testing them till they burst they go off to the upper school and they test ';em all over again as they don't believe us…poor little sods! I see their poor little faces and can sometimes cry for 'em! Schools can be bastard places to be in …so much for enjoying learning when it's all sucked out of them by SATS, crappy Phonics and the ludicrous new SPAG drilling.*	SENCO as a **multi-role** with class-teaching SENCO critically evaluating climate of **performativity** in school relating to pupil stress through emphasis on **assessment regime and reporting of performance** & imposed methods of teaching (Phonics/SPAG)
• Teaching but disturbed by staff who pass on sorting out issues with pupils (with SEN) to SENCO • No lunchbreak doing paperwork & administration	*Even though I'm busy teaching I still get disturbed about three or four times with teachers and TAs coming in and asking me to sort out 'Jimmy' or 'Donny' or the rest of the Osmonds (not their real names of course)…HLTAs are the worst, they get a bit of status and it goes right to their heads. At least the morning finishes reasonably calmly. Now comes the horror of the lunchbreak…do I get one? Don't be a silly-billy! As it's paperwork, administration, paperwork and chasing bloody teachers to give me information. I did grab a slice of cake from Maggie as it's*	**Teachers not taking responsibility** for SEN – passing issues directly to SENCO without acting first. **Excessive paperwork & admin** (SENCO not taking lunchbreak)

	her 60th birthday (how she's managed to stay in teaching all this time and still look serene I really couldn't say, Maggie does say that it is down to gin and lots of industrial strength narcotics though!).	
• Allocated SENCO time in pm (2 x pms per week) • Time not ring-fenced or protected	*Into the afternoon…and it's SENCO TIME!!!! Hooray…one of my two afternoons a week where I can actually get stuck in to do stuff…unless I'm whisked away to sort out other people's problems or to cover for an absent colleague because…yes folks…it ain't protected time…of course it isn't you silly-billy!*	SENCO **time** allocated but **not protected**
• Completes pupil review • Provision map review • No costings & no input relating to funding	*Anyway I do manage to do some reviews on pupils and think about doing my provision map, which is a joke as I don't have any control over funding so I can't cost anything out (particularly TA time as I don't lead them either…the head has his tight little grip on them and the cash so that really causes me a headache!).*	Some elements of leading & managing provision (e.g. provision map) but SENCO has **no input** into **funding for SEN**
• Checking staff absences for rest of week for cover	*Stuff I was able to do:* *Check the staff absences for tomorrow (and the rest of the week) and look for cover (dunno why I'm doing this as it should be the deputy head!)…ring around a few people then the delights of the*	SENCO undertaking **other SMT duties**
• Attends SMT meeting in SENCO time – general school matters discussed – focus on funding cuts and pupil progress data • Leaves school very late	*SMT meeting….all matters relating to funding restrictions/budget cuts and pupil progress (of course…..what else is there?????)..finally get out of school at 8.00pm…drive home thinking about what might be on TV as I really need a nighty off …suddenly I don't care a monkey's chuff .Stop for bread and milk…then get in.*	**SENCO on SMT**
• After quick dinner more e-mails and marking • Recognition of there not being such as thing as a typical SENCo or a typical day for one	*Quick dinner (thankfully cooked by hubby) – mark rest of books for tomorrow…and then spend an eternity answering bloody e-mails again (arrrgggggggggg! TV-time has been buggered! before crashing out. There we are…a typical day in a typical junior school…in a typical town…I won't say by a typical SENCO as there ain't such a thing!*	**Poor work-life balance** (work taken home) *'Slave to e-mails'*

Main Themes (Becky)

Work-life balance (Contextual Variety & SENCO Emotional labour)

Administrative workload (Contextual Variety & Emotional Labour. The SENCO as expert)

Multi-role of SENCO (Contextual Variety and Emotional labour)

SENCO working within culture of high-stakes assessment (Contextual Variety, Legal Contract – 'performativity')

Teachers not taking on responsibility (SENCO as expert and as a rescuer)

Time & resourcing (Contextual Variety)

On SMT – but limited opportunities as a leader (Contextual Variety)