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“Like a Cog in a Wheel...”

A Study about SENCO Impact

1. Who is a SENCO?

A Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in England coordinates services around children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), helping teachers develop and implement appropriate planning, provision and resources for children with SEN in mainstream schools. (DfE, 1994)

3. Findings

- School ethos

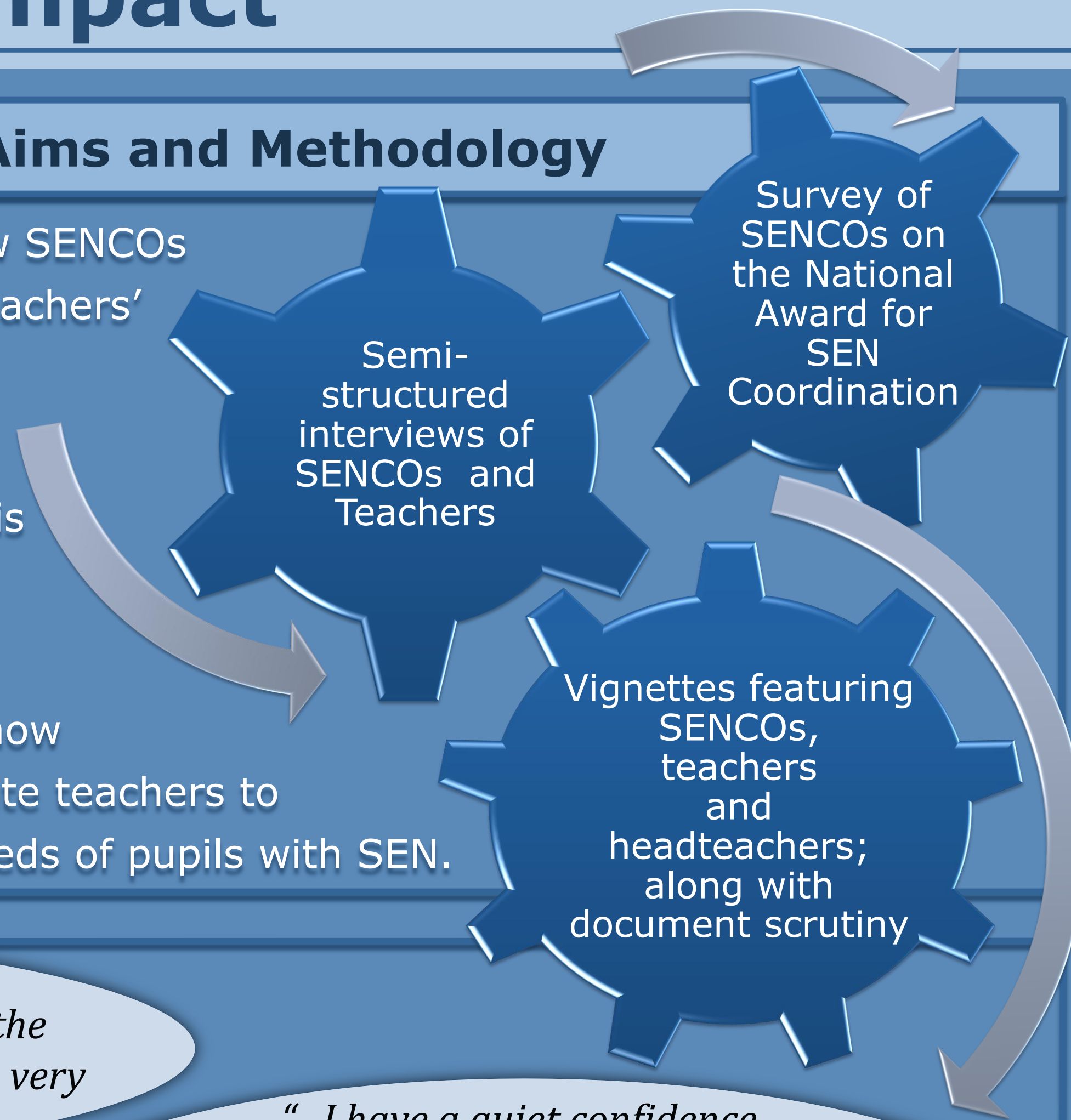
“... SENCOs are very valid...especially as (SEN) education is now integrated...you need that person there to support...the strategies ... to ensure that every child meets their potential. I think it's a very important job, like a cog in a wheel.” [Teacher]

- SENCOs' sense of professional identity: 'agents of change'
- SENCO-teacher engagement: over- versus under-reliance; knowledge dissemination/application

“... (the SENCO)empowered me as a teacher by allowing me opportunities to experiment with my teaching using strategies that she showed me, and that itself has gained me the knowledge and confidence... working with low ability children.” [Teacher]

2. Research Aims and Methodology

- To consider how SENCOs contribute to teachers' SEN-skills.
- To identify how SENCO impact is currently being assessed.
- To investigate how SENCOs motivate teachers to manage the needs of pupils with SEN.



“...I have a quiet confidence that we will be able to filter it (change) down and break down some of the resistance... there have also been some really strong conversations with... (some) staff about the change that needs to be made.” [SENCO]

- ‘Quantifiability’ issue of SENCOs input to teachers: evidence of ‘usual’ versus ‘SEN’ support

“Setting targets is something that she (SENCO) is particularly good at, because... sometimes it's hard to sit down and actually come up with measurable targets... (so) she's had significant impact on my teaching.” [Teacher]

4. Projected Outcomes

Research outcomes will be of use to SENCOs, teachers and headteachers, who will be able to utilise findings to facilitate effective initiatives and exchanges which meet the needs of children with SEN.



How effectively are SENCOs enabling teachers to address the needs of children with SEN?

** Image credits: pictures from anonymised schools in which data was collected for this research project*