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**Title:** An investigation into the evolving professional identities of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in relation to their impact on teachers' skills

**Creator:** Qureshi, S.

**Example citation:** Qureshi, S. (2015) *An investigation into the evolving professional identities of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in relation to their impact on teachers' skills*. Doctoral thesis. The University of Northampton.

**Version:** Accepted version

<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/7619/>





**An investigation into the evolving professional identities of  
Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in relation  
to their impact on teachers' skills**

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
At the University of Northampton

2015

Saneeya Qureshi

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The research reported in this thesis examines the impact that Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) have on the practices of their teacher colleagues. Since SENCOs are central to supporting children's inclusion and achievement, the research centres around three research questions: whether SENCOs are able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms; whether SENCOs enhance teachers' abilities to become effective teachers of children with SEN; and how the impact of SENCOs is currently being assessed within primary schools.

The project was conducted within an interpretivist framework, and applied a mixed methods approach consisting of two phases: an exploratory questionnaire survey of 223 (responses n=42) primary school SENCOs from the 'National Award for SEN Coordination' Course; and semi-structured interviews of 18 SENCOs and 18 teachers, including head teachers. Document scrutiny of school SEN policies and other related documentation was also undertaken. Data triangulation aimed at ensuring the trustworthiness of data was accomplished through a multi-pronged methodological approach. The research was conducted in accordance with an Ethical Code informed by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and University of Northampton guidelines.

Results indicated that SENCOs have a complex role, impacting upon teachers' practices by utilising a wide range of skills, knowledge and expertise across different contexts. This is influenced by whether or not they are members of their School Leadership Teams. Further, SENCOs' time management is a constant concern in balancing competing priorities and demands, which include liaising with external agencies and keeping up to date with legislative changes which impact the requirements of the role. There is evidence that the degree to which SENCOs have a positive impact on teachers' inclusive skills varies, as the SENCO-teacher dynamic is influenced by SENCOs' training and skills and the dissemination to teachers; SENCOs' and teachers' professional identity; SENCO-teacher engagement and perceptions of inclusion; and the interventions and provision made for children with SEN. Implications for further possible research that were identified included the use of contact and non-contact time by SENCOs, the impact of the mandatory SENCO training and also the role of the SEN Governor as a crucial advocate for SEN at management level.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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My eternal gratitude goes to my mother, Maleeha, and my brother, Faisal, for their forbearance and continual encouragement during the many occasions that my confidence wobbled. I am also grateful too, for the support from my father, Fazal, my beloved Uncle Monavar and my grandmother, Masudah.

I would like to express my utmost appreciation to my supervisor Professor Richard Rose, who unwearingly helped to guide and feedback on my work throughout the process; for being a supportive sounding board and a calming voice of sanity. Richard, you have been instrumental in developing my passion for research, and encouraging my quest to always learn more and explore ideas further, even when not necessarily directly related to my PhD. May all your future students be much easier to supervise!

My appreciation to the National Award for SEN Coordination programme tutors – Mary Doveston, Julian Brown, Andy Smith and Steve Cullingford-Agnew – at the University of Northampton who played an integral role in aiding my access to research participants and my continued participation in subsequent SENCO training meetings and conferences which greatly added to my knowledge bank. I would like to thank Professor Sue Ralph for her generous time and assistance throughout the course of this study.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the input, guidance and inspiration that I have received from my friends and fellow researchers – Carmel Capewell, Josephine Chen, Lilika Begum, Meanu Bajwa-Patel, Melanie Slade, Paola Bethmage, Phil Ellender, Shelley Morales and Yu Zhao – both with regard to my doctoral and my personal journey over these past few years.

Finally, I must convey my admiration and respect for the SENCOs, teachers and head teachers at primary schools around Northamptonshire and Leicestershire who took both the time and the trouble, despite the intensely demanding nature of their roles, to invite me to interview them in their respective schools, and provided me with the various SEN documentation, whilst patiently putting up with all my queries. I have the utmost regard for the dedication and tenacity that they bring to their roles and their willingness to engage with the challenges in improving educational provision for children with SEN.

## DEDICATION

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I dedicate this piece of work to my mother Maleeha, as recognition for her continuous support in my academic endeavours and for being my bulwark – even across the continents – throughout this journey.

During the initial days of my research, after I explained to my mother what my project is about, she was inspired to write a poem about what she saw as the essence of my PhD. I share this poem below:

### *The Special One*

Life is a tapestry of magnificence  
Woven with threads, incredible, some rare.  
Differing in texture, tints and hues  
They represent strengths, aptitudes and traits.  
Yes, that is exactly how life is!  
Me, you, he and she...personalities, so unique!  
Mmm, a beautiful fragrance fills the air  
The sweet scent wafts everywhere.  
A bouquet of flowers—three dozen or more,  
All bunched together with a pretty, neat bow.  
The blooms—ten, twelve, twenty or so  
Are put in a vase, crisscross their stems go.  
Amidst the blossoms and leaves so green, there is, alas, obscured...  
Hardly noticed...espied, a tiny bud, warped, sad and smothered.  
Quickly, knowingly, a caring hand picks it out, and sees that...  
Its stem is bent, the leaves are curled, and yes, it differs from the rest.  
So, with love and patience, and ever so gently, it is helped to grow  
Nurtured properly; tended wisely...its special needs are soon fulfilled.  
For, when guided rightly, the bud blooms well...oh, do come and see it shine!  
It's an amazing transformation through passionate dedication and devotion!  
True, it is—this proven fact—that just often what is needed...  
Is a little extra *special* push to help set that spark alight!

*by Maleeha Ahmad Qureshi, 2011*

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## GLOSSARY

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ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder
BACIN	Behaviour and Curriculum Inclusion Team, existed within the Northamptonshire Local-Authority whose overall objective was to provide a preventative service for pupils at risk of being excluded in Northamptonshire schools. Pupils are referred to the service by their schools, or they are identified as being at risk of exclusion by monitoring the weekly schools' pupil exclusion lists.
BERA	British Education Research Association
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CoP	Code of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DCSF	Department of Children, Schools & Families
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EFA	Education for All (based on the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action)
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
ECM	Every Child Matters
G & T	Gifted and Talented
GTC	General Teaching Council
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectors
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
HT	Head teacher
IAP	Individual Action Plan
IBP	Individual Behaviour Plan
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Individual Development Plan (same as IEP: Individual Education Plan)
IEP	Individual Education Plan (same as IDP: Individual Development Plan)
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LA	Local Authority (same as LEA: Local Education Authority)
LAC	Looked after children
LEA	Local Education Authority (same as LA: Local Authority)
LM	Learning Mentor
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
NASEN	National Association for Special Educational Needs
NASENCO	National Award for SEN Coordination; this is a TDA-approved award of a new national SENCO qualification, introduced in 2009.
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
OCD	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education

OT	Occupational therapist
PD	Physical Disability
PECS	Picture exchange communication system
PGCSENCO	Post Graduate Certificate in Special Educational Needs Coordination which leads to a National Award for SEN Coordination.
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
PPA	Planning, Preparation and Assessment
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
PSLD	Physical and Severe Learning Difficulties
PT	Part Time
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QCDA	Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RSA	Referral for Statutory Assessment
SATs	Standard Assessment Tasks
SCD	Severe Communication Difficulties
SDP	School Development Plan
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEBD	Social, Emotional and/or Behavioural Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SENCO Standards	The National Standards for SENCOs, introduced by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in 1998, setting out the knowledge, skills, understanding and training that SENCOs should have, to carry out their role effectively.
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
SLT	Senior leadership Team (same as SMT: Senior Management Team)
SMT	Senior Management Team (same as SLT: Senior Leadership Team)
SPD	Severe Physical Disabilities
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
TA	Teaching Assistant
TDA	Teacher Development Agency
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
VI	Visually Impaired

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

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### Chapter Summary

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Chapter one gives a brief overview of the rationale behind the study presented within this thesis. It includes a historical overview of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) role, the focus of the research, where it was undertaken, the research questions, aims and objectives, a description of the study cohort and the arrangement of text and chapters. The basis for inquiry is laid out in the context of the timeliness and pertinence of the research focus, as well as the nature of the SENCO role in view of past and present trends in inclusive education.

### 1.1 Introduction

---

This research project was essentially about the impact that SENCOs have on teachers' abilities to address the needs of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in English mainstream Primary Schools. It is a qualitative study that gathered data to describe and understand the nature of the SENCO role and to contextualise this within the English primary school system. Research instruments were designed to elicit relevant data, which were then critically analysed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the emergent themes in relation to the research questions and identify potential areas where further research may be undertaken.

### 1.2 Doctoral Research Dissemination

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Throughout the duration of my doctoral studies, I have been involved in attending various national and international forums to disseminate my research. I have written some papers which I submitted for publication in various journals. My endeavours with regard to this are detailed in Appendix 23 at the end of this thesis.

### 1.3 Rationale for the Research

---

Wedell (2005, p.8) posited that “in special needs education, it has long been recognised that pupils’ progress can only be achieved if there is effective collaboration between teachers and many others.” I have been a teacher for many years at primary level in Pakistan, where I observed a lack of consideration in the planning and implementation of teaching initiatives for children with additional needs.

I chose to research the impact of SENCOs as I felt that, although there had been a considerable number of investigations in this area, the role is essentially an evolving and fluid one which is influenced by changes in legislation as well as school organisation. Indeed, before coming to the UK for my Masters course, I had not heard of SENCOs. The school visits that I was fortunate to be a part of, and concurrent reading for various assignments and module tasks during my MA in Education, instilled in me further curiosity about this role. The more I read, the more questions were raised and the more varied the answers were.

Through informal class discussions, conversations with tutors, school teachers and support staff who worked around SENCOs at various SEN-related forums that I attended, I learned that there was a general lack of cohesion between the theoretical, policy and practical application of the role of SENCOs. Indeed, further reading around the subject indicated even more tensions that exist particularly in terms of research that is also conducted within the educational arena, as alluded to by Norwich (2010, p.37) in his comments about the “unrealistic policy expectations about what teachers in this (SENCO) role can do for children with SEN and disabilities.” This contention was further substantiated by Mackenzie who discussed the ‘SENCO’s ostensibly pivotal role in special educational needs policy and strategy’ (Mackenzie, 2007, p. 212), but this issue of policy expectation is one that I had not heard much about in my discussions with SENCOs’ professional colleagues.

### 1.3.1 Personal and Practical Rationale

---

I arrived at a practical, as well as a personal rationale for my research on the basis of my early informal discussions with professional colleagues and through my reading around the area. The practical rationale behind my reason for choosing to investigate the challenging aspects surrounding the impact of SENCOs upon teaching practices, was to clarify the role of the SENCO for those in English Primary Schools and to enable them to use the outcomes, for the improved management of children with SEN and to support the school as a whole, whether this be through the redesigning of SENCO-related policies, or a re-evaluation of the SENCOs role.

My personal research rationale was further determined because the role specifically designated as that of a SENCO's, is non-existent in my country of origin, Kenya. Therefore, for my own knowledge and personal development I anticipated that by investigating the subject further, I would be able to contribute to the field of SEN support in developing countries such as Kenya. Indeed, as Ranson (1998, p. 48) affirms:

*“Only if learning is placed at the centre of our experience can individuals continue to develop their capacities... Interpreting the significance of learning in this way suggests the importance of educational research for the future of our society.”*

Additionally, as I have degrees in MBA (Master of Business Administration) as well as MA Education, already, it was fascinating for me to be able to combine my background knowledge of management, along with my passion for education and examine how these two areas (Management and Education) formed a cohesive structure for a SENCO to have optimal impact.

Through my research, I hoped to identify those school environmental factors that impact upon the SENCO-teacher dynamic, and whether there were certain identifiable aspects that could be interrogated so as to ensure an optimal output from the role. It was thus my hope that the outcomes of my research would yield better insights into the nature of support mechanisms for SENCOs, teachers and head teachers, who would be able to utilise the findings to facilitate more effective provisions which would better



meet the needs of children with SEN. It was also anticipated that the outcomes would further benefit the SENCOs involved in the study through the identification of the factors that influenced their own motivation, professional and self-development, as well as that of their colleagues in the workplace.

### 1.3.2 National and Political Rationale

---

Considering my motivations as outlined above, throughout the period of my MA studies, and continuing on during my doctoral research, I conducted an in-depth inquiry into the national and political contexts which formed the framework of the SEN-related aspects of the English educational system. This exercise was important as it helped lay the knowledge base of my own understanding about the historical and dynamic professional and legislative contexts in which SENCOs and their teaching colleagues operated (Ekins, 2012; Ellis and Tod, 2014), particularly around one of the most common dilemmas faced by both SENCOs and teachers alike – the identification of SEN in children who are in their classrooms (Ellis and Tod, 2012; 2014).

Indeed, a relevant and concise summary of why this area held my interest could be summarised in a recommendation made by House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, with regard to the place of SEN provision:

*“SEN policy continues to operate in a separate system for special educational needs (SEN), and as a result, SEN continues to be sidelined away from the mainstream agenda. This must not continue”* (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006, para 48, p.19).

The role of the SENCO in England was established in the *1994 SEN Code of Practice* (DfE, 1994) which stated that all mainstream schools must have a SENCO responsible for coordinating services around children with SEN and helping teachers develop and implement appropriate provision for these children. Since 1994, the SENCO role in the UK has changed as various policies have continually redefined SEN provision (DfES, 2001a; DfES, 2001b; DCSF, 2004), despite Dyson’s now-defunct argument that:

*“SENCOs are a dying breed. In 10 years’ time they [SENCOs] will be outmoded as “remedial teachers” or teachers of special classes are today” (Dyson, 1990, p.116).*

Past and recent research into the role illustrated not only an essential requirement for such a position, but also its challenging and complex nature, which was the outcome of a lengthy process of evolution of the work of special educators over the last two decades (Male, 1996; Rose, 2001; Cowne 2005; Szwed, 2007a; Mackenzie, 2012b; Robertson 2012). Indeed, despite Dyson’s prediction, the SENCO role has been, and continues to be, more developed and recognised as a key part of the senior management team (SMT) and “the heart of the [inclusion] process” (Layton, 2005, p. 53; Szwed, 2007b, p.159).

A more recent contention for the current political rationale was the allusion of the SENCO role as “muddied” (Rosen-Webb, 2011), and Ellis and Tod’s assertion of the significance of:

*“...the complex interaction that provides schools and teachers with a powerful focus for action (as regards consistency in the identification of SEN)... (and the) manipulation of aspects of the (school) environment... to influence the interaction positively to bring about improvements in learning outcomes for pupils” (2012, p.65).*

That particular debate about an increasingly multifaceted SENCO role, was further sparked, as Ellis and Tod (2012, p.65) also made mention of “the complexity – and arguably necessity – of identification of SEN focusing on the interaction between the individual and their environment.” These statements – “manipulation of aspects”, “complexity” and “arguably necessity of the identification of SEN” – in my view, served to lend even further credence to the matter of the vagaries related to the SENCO’s role, and hence the significance of this in-depth study about its impact.

### 1.3.3 International Rationale

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During my doctoral studies, I was fortunate to attend a number of international conferences and symposiums across Europe, including those in Ireland, Spain, Norway and Portugal. I also interacted with various international visitors to the Centre for Education and Research, where I am based. These visitors came from countries as diverse as India, Iraq and Brazil. During each interaction, what struck me was the international pervasiveness of the concept and importance given to inclusion.

Having grown up in Africa, where the very idea of inclusion for children with SEN in mainstream schools is still very much in its infancy, it was particularly interesting for me to learn about the various policy documents that not only had the UK been a signatory to, but interestingly, my own country Kenya too! This knowledge compelled me to explore the international documentation around inclusion.

I began by going through the *World Declaration on Education for All*, signed in 1990 at Jomtien, Thailand, which, interestingly, made no specific mention of inclusion for SEN children, albeit containing the implied vague statement recognising that:

*“Basic education should be provided to all children, youth and adults.. (and that) to this end, basic education services of quality should be expanded and consistent measures must be taken to reduce disparities” (UNESCO, 1990).*

Later on however, the 1994 *Salamanca Statement* called for schools to accommodate “all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions” (UNESCO, 1994, p.6).

The oversight in relation to special educational needs was again specifically addressed in the *Dakar Framework for Action*, which adopted a *World Declaration on Education for All (EFA)* (UNESCO, 2000) as a call for access to resources for EFA, which was further addressed in the *Kochi Declaration* (IDP, 2003), as being extended to encompass inclusive education.

The *Kochi Declaration* was preceded by the definition of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. The second goal; that of ensuring by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling, (United Nations, 2000), interestingly made no specific mention of the concept of inclusive education in the world at all; though achievement of that particular goal would make a noteworthy contribution to its achievement. The World Bank, in 2003, published a report in which it stated that “Inclusive Education in the context of the goals for EFA is a complex issue, and no coherent approach is evident in the (international) literature” (World Bank, 2003, p.1).

Thereafter, the United Nations did ultimately acknowledge the significance of recognising and endeavouring for the support of children with SEN, through its 2007 treaty on the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations, 2007), and the subsequent *World Report on Disability*, which acknowledged that those with disabilities generally also have lower educational achievements (WHO, 2011).

Essentially, therefore, in relation to the international rationale for undertaking this doctoral research project, I felt it appropriate to make reference to various drives towards inclusive educational development in the international contexts, which were not always definitive in their focus towards inclusion and SEN-specific initiatives.

#### 1.4 The Research Context

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At the time of the commencement of this research project, there were no specific documents that detailed the specifics of how SENCOS were able to skill the teachers in their schools to become effective teachers for children with SEN.

However, related to the issue of SENCOS playing an integral role in enabling teachers to effectively manage SEN in the classrooms, were the National Standards that were introduced in 1998 to help SENCOS in their roles (TTA, 1998). These Standards illustrated key areas of SEN coordination and in addition to defining the core purpose of the SENCOS as someone who:

*“...with the support of the head teacher and governing body, takes responsibility for the day-to-day operation of provision made by the school for pupils with SEN and provides professional guidance in the area of SEN in order to secure the high quality teaching and the effective use of resources to bring about improved standards of achievement for all pupils” (TTA, 1998, p.5).*

SENCOs were therefore documented to be essentially responsible for the strategic direction and development of SEN provision in the school; for the teaching and learning of children with SEN; for the leading and managing of staff; and for the efficient and effective use of staff and resources. Indeed, it was these very generalised, but widely-impacting job descriptors that formed the basis for my research regarding SENCOs' abilities to motivate teachers to take more ownership of disseminating SEN support within their classrooms.

My research project investigated those challenges and explored approaches taken by SENCOs and teachers to address them and to have an impact upon learning. I felt that this area of research was especially noteworthy because, as indicated by the research that I conducted for my MA Education (Qureshi, 2010), SENCOs were increasingly faced with heavier workloads, which was reaffirmed as early as 1996 by Male (1996, p. 88), continuing on into the coming decade, by Wedell, (2004, p.105), Cole (2005, p.297;) and Pearson and Gathercole (2011, p.31). Indeed, this status quo was made abundantly clear in more recent research, in which Pearson found that 'heavy workload', supported by a particularly telling comment by one SENCO who hoped to retire “2/3 years early as the work load is unmanageable” (Pearson and Mitchell, 2013, p.25), was the primary factor that SENCOs gave as an influence in their decision to leave the role. That thus supported my own reading, and associated questions that were raised, and the consequent variation and lack of coherence to the answers as regards SENCO workloads.

#### 1.4.1 Brief History of the SENCO Role

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A significant period, during which SENCO role was formally specified for the first time in an official document, commenced in 1994 with the introduction of the original *Code of Practice for Special Education*. The Code stated that all schools needed to have a Special Education Needs Coordinator who would be responsible for coordinating all the services around children with special needs and to help teachers in schools to develop appropriate individual education plans and programmes for those children.

It is relevant to note here, as Evans and Docking (1998, p.51) also did, that “the SENCO’s role, and their experience of working within evolving frameworks driven by the Code (of Practice), cannot be divorced from LEA policy...” This notion was also echoed by Clark *et al.* who maintained the high degree of responsibilities placed on LEAs (Local Education Authorities) at the time, “including the coordination of assessment and the provision of specialist services to meet the needs of those pupils with more complex needs” (Clark *et al.*, 1997, p.143) Recognising this, and illustrating that the basic profile of the role remained essentially the same over the years, was Northamptonshire County Council’s *‘Manual for SENCOs working in Primary and Secondary Settings’*. The Manual detailed the role of a SENCO as working in partnership with others to provide high quality provision for pupils with SEN. The Manual further affirmed that “the SENCO should help to raise standards and levels of achievement of pupils with SEN” (Northamptonshire County Council, 2005, Section 1).

However, mention must be made at this point about the declining power of Local Authorities. Corbett, as far back as 1998, stated that “LEAs are financially constrained by the limits of their annual special education budget” (Corbett, 1998, p.38). Indeed, this was also most-recently evidenced from the financial aspect in a 2013 report by the National Audit Office. This report examined the central government’s approach to local authority funding, and reviewed local authorities’ financial sustainability against a background of changes to their funding, stated that:

*“As part of its fiscal deficit reduction plan, central government planned at the 2010 spending review to reduce funding of local authorities by 26 per cent*

*(£7.6 billion) in real terms, between April 2011 and March 2015 (excluding police, school and fire)... (and consequently), local authorities may find it harder over the rest of the spending review period to absorb funding reductions and maintain services..." (NAO, 2013, p.6).*

Further, the report stated that:

*"The Department for Education could not give an estimate of cost pressures and the scope for savings across the entirety of children's services... (because) while it monitors national and local spending on children's services, it considered that it was not appropriate to model cost pressures and potential savings for the spending review at an aggregate level, as local authorities have discretion in how they discharge many of their statutory duties" (NAO, 2013, p.28).*

Webster and Blatchford (2014a, p.196-197) and Smith (2015, p.4) also alluded to the increasingly functionally-reduced Local Authorities, and associated financial uncertainties with regard to schools as a topic of much debate in current academic circles. Apart from an oblique reference to "a particular problem (about)... the declining role of LEA support services" (Lewis et al., 1997, p.8), I could not find much peer-reviewed literature in that regard. Research by West and Bailey (2013) about the privatisation of school-based education in England, briefly alluded to the declining influence of Local Authorities in this regard. I therefore contacted Professor West, who referred me to the work of Glatter, whom I subsequently contacted, and who also acknowledged the lack of peer-reviewed research in the area (Glatter, 2013a).

Lawlor (1998, cited in Glatter, 2012b p.563) in a pamphlet titled 'Away with LEAs: ILEA abolition as a pilot' maintained that Local Authorities "controlled the life of individual schools through their extensive bureaucracy and support services." Glatter and Young (2012, para.10) in fact drew comparison with the Local Authorities as having been "transformed from a trusting referee and resource provider to a demanding and impatient managing director with frequently changing identities", whilst in an article shortly following that, Glatter made reference to the "surreal... Whitehall attempts to crush Local Authorities and denude them of any real power" (2012a, para.1), whilst

Wolfe (2013, para.1) stated that changes to legal arrangements for schools “leaves Local Authorities with obligations but no real power to act.” Indeed, in a scathing review regarding ownership and control of schools, Glatter concluded that “the powers of local government in education have been greatly reduced in spite of international evidence that a strong mediating layer is vital for successful performance” (2013b, para.3).

With regard to the training required for SENCOs, since the introduction of the *SEN Code of Practice* in 1994, there was a move to increase training specifically for those in the role. The 2005 Northamptonshire ‘*Manual for SENCOs working in Primary and Secondary Settings*’ called attention to training as per the National Standards that were introduced in 1998 to help SENCOs in their roles. These Standards illustrated key areas of SEN coordination, in addition to defining the core purpose of the SENCO as someone who:

*“...with the support of the head teacher and governing body, takes responsibility for the day-to-day operation of provision made by the school for pupils with SEN and provides professional guidance in the area of SEN in order to secure the high quality teaching and the effective use of resources to bring about improved standards of achievement for all pupils”* (TTA, 1998, p.5).

Following the 1994 *Code of Practice*, the 2001 *Special Education Needs Code of Practice* was then introduced which was an updated and modified version. The 2001 Code took into account not only the experiences of schools and LEAs that implemented the original Code, but also developments in education since 1994. A notable document that was considered was the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001*, which emphasised the rights of children with Special Education Needs to be educated in mainstream schools (DfES, 2001a, p.iv).

In 2008, the Government launched *The Education (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) (England) Regulations 2008*. The regulations came into force in September 2009, and prescribed the necessary qualifications and experience of SENCOs, setting out governing bodies’ associated functions, as well as plans for nationally accredited training for new SENCOs (DCSF, 2008).



As per the legislation's guidelines, by 2011, the intention was that all SENCOs would be a qualified teacher or the head teacher; although it did suggest that aspects of the role could still be supported by non-teaching staff — either as individuals or part of a team (DCSF, 2008, p.3 and Cowne, 2008, p.11).

The *National Standards* of 1998 were followed by a March 2009 undertaking by the TDA (Training and Development Agency), subsequent to *The Education (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) (England) Regulations 2008*, requiring certain education providers around the country to offer the 'National Award for SEN Coordination' (NASENCO) qualification for SENCOs (TDA, 2010), a mandatory professional development for all new to role SENCOs and those who had been working in their respective schools in the SENCO role for less than 12 months prior to September 2009 (DCSF, 2009).

The role of the SENCO involves the key areas of SEN Coordination as mentioned in the 2005 Northamptonshire '*Manual for SENCOs working in Primary and Secondary Settings*'. SENCOs are deemed to be responsible for the strategic direction and development of SEN provision in the school; for the teaching and learning of children with SEN; for the leading and managing of staff; and for the efficient and effective use of staff and resources.

Indeed, it was those very succinct, but far-reaching and widely impacting responsibilities that formed the bulwark of challenges faced by SENCOs in their role as enabling teachers to plan and deliver optimal SEN-provisions for children with SEN.

#### 1.4.1.1 The National Award for SEN Coordination

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As part of laying out the research context, it is relevant to make specific note and explanation of the 'National Award for SEN Coordination' (NASENCO) Course. This is a mandatory professional development for all new-to-role SENCOs and those who had been working in their respective schools in the SENCO role for less than 12 months prior to September 2009, and is an ongoing training programme offered by various training providers all over the country (DCSF, 2009b).

Prior to the inception of the NASENCO Award, legislation had required that the person (SENCO) designated by a school's governing body as being responsible for the co-ordination of SEN provision, must be qualified either as a teacher working at the school, the deputy head, head teacher or acting head teacher (DCSF, 2008). The Regulations also provided that where the person undertaking the SENCO role was not a qualified teacher, but had been in post for at least six months on 31 August 2009 they could continue in that role provided that the governing body was satisfied that there was a reasonable prospect of them being able to become a qualified teacher by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011.

In view of the fact that when my research project commenced in 2011, there were still some ambiguities with regard to the qualifications of SENCOs in some schools, it was therefore decided to ensure, for the purposes of clarity in qualifications, to access the participant pool from the University of Northampton's NASENCO course.

#### 1.4.1.2 Cohort for this Research Project

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The SENCOs who were surveyed and interviewed for the purposes of this research were those who were undertaking the NASENCO Course. They were all SENCOs who actively worked as full-time or part-time SENCOs in a variety of primary schools around Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Derby City, Rutland, Lincolnshire and Nottingham City. Each of these areas are those for which the University of Northampton conducted the one year long NASENCO Course, which enabled Qualified Teachers to gain SENCO accreditation.

Another reason for that particular cohort selection was on the basis of convenience and accessibility, and because it could be argued that the cohort was typical of many others managed by other professional development providers around the country. All these SENCOs were currently undertaking the one-year NASENCO Award at the University of Northampton, and therefore, worked in schools within a geographical proximity. Additionally, the ease of access to these SENCOs also played a factor in them forming

the cohort for the purposes of my research, as I was able to meet with them in person and so made an initial introduction of myself before requesting their participation in the project.

Similarly, the teachers who were interviewed for the purposes of this research project were also selected as being employed in primary schools having close connections with the University of Northampton, as I was able to access them through the Partnerships Office in the School of Education. It is relevant to note here that the teacher participants who were interviewed for the purpose of this project were not in the same schools as the SENCOs. Whilst this might have been desirable, the practicalities of establishing such a sample proved difficult. Despite interviewing the SENCOs whom I recruited via the NA SENCO Award course at the University of Northampton, none of those participants were able to convince their teaching colleagues to take the time out to be interviewed as well. Consequently, I had to turn to the University's Partnerships Office for assistance in recruiting teacher participants to be interviewed. One of the advantages of having teachers from different schools was that they were unlikely to have been influenced by discussions with the SENCOs from my sample. Section 4.4.1 within this thesis further details the sampling process for the purpose of this research project, including details about the Partnerships Office.

All members of the research cohort voluntarily agreed to participate in my research, and will henceforth be referred to as 'participants'. To summarise thus, the person responsible for choosing the sample cohort to interview for this research project was myself, based on the information and advice given to me by my supervisors, teaching staff on the NASENCO Course, and my colleagues in the Partnerships Office.

This sample – which will be discussed in more detail in the Section 4.4 of this thesis – can be described as both purposive, because it identified individuals suited to a specific purpose, and a convenience sample in respect of the accessibility of potential respondents (Plowright, 2011, p.42-43).

In a study of this scale, a truly representative sample was unlikely to be achieved, particularly in wake of the fact that each SENCO was attached to a primary school of varying student numbers and school environments. However, I also recognised that I had access to a group of individuals who would provide real life insights into their interpretations and experiences of the role of a SENCO, and as such, would enable me to arrive at reasonably reflective conclusions through my research.

#### 1.4.2 Current Trends in Inclusive Education in England

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Inclusive education in England has its elemental origins from the impact of the 1978 *Warnock Report* (DES 1978) which paved the way for a continuing drive to reduce the number of pupils educated in special schools.

Subsequent publications of the *SEN Codes of Practice* (DfE, 1994 and DfES, 2001b), and particularly the 2009 Lamb Inquiry indicated the essential role played by the SENCO in helping to identify both training needs and professional development opportunities in SEN and disability for children and teachers of children with SEN alike (DCSF, 2009a, p. 30).

Since 2001, legislation and guidance for schools, including the *Special Education Needs and Disability Act* (DfES, 2001a), *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004), the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DfES, 2005) and *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2005), have focused on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities. Indeed, more recent research by the TDA, recognising the integral role of a SENCO in ensuring the transformation of SEN provisions in schools nationally, has resulted in a programme for nationally approved training for SENCOs (NASEN Special, 2010, p. 21; DCSF, 2009a, p. 31; Blamires, 2001, p. 104; TDA, 2010).

The SENCO role is being increasingly seen as a managerial post dealing with whole-school issues, ranging from individual students IEPs (Individual Education Plans) to the budgeting for and use of resources. Research by Cole (2003, p. 69) has examined how the integral role played by the SENCO in cohesion with other school management

personnel impacted upon the ultimate ethos and effectiveness of the school. Robertson (2003, p.100) elaborated on the collaborative significance of a SENCOs role via a “Collaboration Scale that could be used in a variety of education contexts, and as part of school improvement planning and practice.”

Interestingly though, research about SENCOs’ images of themselves in relation to the perceptions of three groups of their colleagues: members of the senior management team, teachers and teaching assistants, illustrated that despite the complex nature of the role, “there was limited evidence of the co-ordination role of the SENCO in terms of working with a range of colleagues within the school and beyond” (Pearson and Ralph, 2007, p.43).

In my opinion, this has far-reaching consequences in terms of the SENCO-teacher relationship and its subsequent impact on the teaching and learning of children with SEN, particularly in view of the DfES document *Removing Barriers to Achievement* which stated that:

*“SENCOs play a pivotal role, co-ordinating provision across the school and linking class and subject teachers with SEN specialists to improve the quality of teaching and learning” (DfES, 2004, p.58).*

It is noteworthy to mention, however, the SEN-related initiatives such as the creation of GEPs (Group Education Plans) that were the responsibility of class teachers, and had been shown to result in a process of change management led by SENCOs (Frankl, 2005, p.77).

My intention was to further examine and explore whether such initiatives were indeed enabling teachers to take on the responsibility for the dissemination of optimal teaching to the students with SEN in their classrooms. I also considered the notion of SENCOs being either ‘discoverers’ of ensuring curriculum development around the child rather than the other way around, or ‘settlers’ operating within a well-defined system (Shuttleworth, 2000, p. 6).

Moreover, it has been illustrated that the degree of involvement of the SENCOs at Leadership or Management levels and continued opportunities for CPD would also enhance or hinder their abilities to perform their roles effectively, including the interactions with teachers (Mittler, 2000, p. 185, Mackenzie, 2007, p.217, Cowne, 2005, p.67 and NASEN Special, 2010, p.21).

It was against this background context of the current trends in SEN and Inclusive education in England that I chose to pursue research into how SENCOs impact teachers' practices in mainstream primary schools.

### 1.5 Research Aims and Objectives

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The overall research aim was to examine the motivation of SENCOs in relation to the other teachers in the schools. For the purposes of the research, I “deconstructed the term” (Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K., 2007, p. 81) ‘motivation’ into several components, for example what constituted teachers taking ownership of SEN teaching in their classroom; how confident teachers felt in successfully managing children with SEN in their classrooms; and to what degree teachers felt that they could ‘successfully’ manage children with SEN without needing regular intervention by the SENCO – and whether or not those views were then in tandem with the views of the SENCO in question for each situation.

My personal view even before commencing with the project, had been that all situations, particularly research within the realms of the Social Sciences were context specific. I was, therefore, interested in exploring those contexts and examining their related impact-factors so as to develop an in-depth understanding of the issue.

The aims of my research were thus detailed as follows:

- To investigate the degree to which SENCOs are able to successfully motivate the teachers who have children with SEN in their primary school classrooms to confidently manage the needs of these students

- To consider the various factors through which SENCOs contribute to the teachers' skills of dealing with the students who have SEN and the perceived success of such skills
- To identify which elements (interventions, resources, training, etc) most positively impact the success of the SENCO–teacher interactions

The essential purpose of the research was therefore to investigate the impact that SENCOs had on the practices of their teaching colleagues, and how SEN-related provisions might be enhanced in light of the project outcomes.

### 1.6 Research Questions and Focus

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The specific research questions that I intended to investigate were:

1. Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
2. Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
3. How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

### 1.7 Structure of the Thesis

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The arrangement of the text within this thesis is done so that the reader finds it easy to understand the findings in relation to the research aims. The thesis is divided as follows:

**Chapter One:** The preface deals with the reasons why I chose this topic. It also deals with the research questions, objectives and research cohort of this piece of work.

**Chapter Two:** The first literature review deals with the management of the literature review process, and historical background of SEN, the SENCO role and present-day SEN-related matters.

**Chapter Three:** The second literature review deals with the SENCO–teacher dynamic and a review of research questions in the face of past and present research in that regard.

**Chapter Four:** The first methodology chapter explains the reason behind using the deductive approach to carry out this study. It also seeks to justify the research approach, paradigm and sampling strategy.

**Chapter Five:** The second methodology chapter discusses the various pilots, data collections matters and ethical considerations.

**Chapter Six:** The data coding chapter represents a theme-wise breakdown of the research outcomes, including a chart which makes it easier for the reader to have a clearer visual picture of the thematic results.

**Chapter Seven:** The findings and analysis chapter is a critical analysis of the findings in view of motivation in the SENCO-teacher context. It compares the data findings across this theme with what has been researched in the literature review.

**Chapter Eight:** The findings and analysis chapter is a critical analysis of the findings in view of the enhancement of teachers' skills as attributed to SENCOs. It compares the data findings across this theme with what has been researched in the literature review.

**Chapter Nine:** The findings and analysis chapter is a critical analysis of the findings in view of SENCO impact in current school contexts. It compares the data findings across this theme with what has been researched in the literature review.

**Chapter Ten:** The discussion and conclusion chapter is a reflective account of the research project. It reviews research limitations and implications in terms of teaching practices and SEN-provisions, and also mentions possible areas for continued research.

## 1.8 Chapter One Key Points

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Chapter one thus introduced the project, the key points of which were:

- 'SENCO's (have a) pivotal role in special educational needs policy and strategy' (Mackenzie, 2007, p. 212), although the role is now a "muddied" (Rosen-Webb, 2011), functioning within a:

*"...complex interaction that provides schools and teachers with a powerful focus for action... to influence the interaction positively to bring about improvements in learning outcomes for pupils"* (Ellis and Tod, 2012, p.65).

- At the time of the commencement of this research project, there were no specific documents that detailed how SENCOs were able to skill the teachers in their schools to become effective teachers for children with SEN, apart from general guidelines of the role as laid out initially by the Codes of Practice 2001 (DfES 2001b) and the NASENCO Award (DCSF, 2009b).



- The specific research questions that I intended to investigate were:
  1. Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
  2. Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
  3. How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW PART 1 – THE ROLE OF THE SENCO

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### Chapter Summary

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Chapter two provides an examination of the historical and current literature with reference to Special Educational Needs in England, and the development of the SENCO role in the English context. Mention is made of how the literature review was managed, along with an examination made of past and present research into the role with reference to the SENCO scope of action and varying role remit, the effectiveness of the SENCO in a multitude of roles, the leadership and management challenge. Changing legislation and consequent impact on SENCO provision for the future is also discussed. I have endeavoured to explain literature that had influenced my thinking, including both that which supported my arguments, whilst concurrently acknowledging research that could contain findings to the contrary. The purpose is to ensure that readers of this work are given the opportunity to recognise the differing aspects and perspectives about the role, and the fact that context-specific factors were important when interpreting the influences upon SENCO working practices.

### 2.1 Introduction

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The literature that is discussed in this section was categorised into two key areas with respect to the development of the SENCO role: policy context was laid out in terms of the historical SEN-related aspects of inclusive education in England, as well as the four key aspects that were relevant so as to lay the basis of the SENCOS' remit for the purpose of that research project.

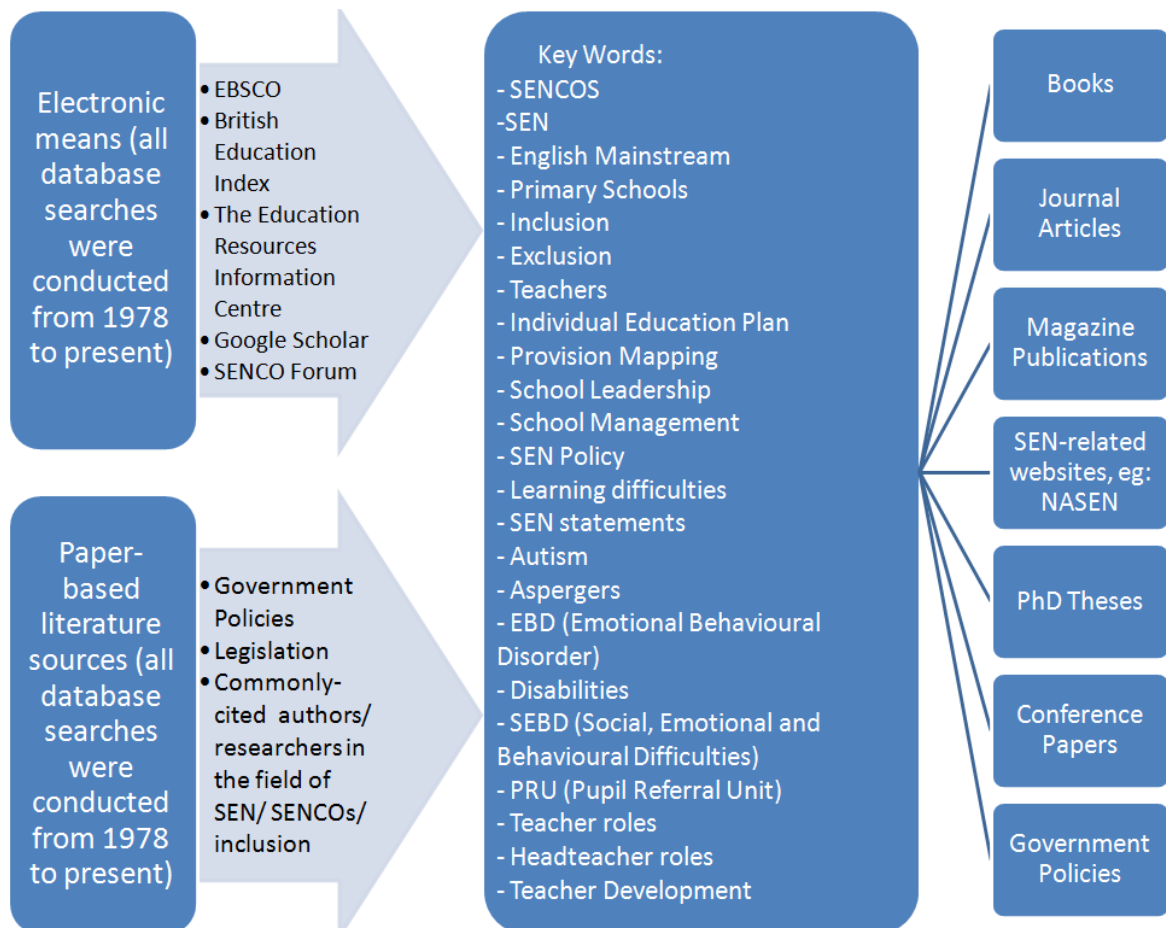
### 2.2 How the Literature Review was Managed

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I employed a two-pronged approach to my literature search, using both electronic as well as paper-based resources, focusing on sources post-1994, although also taking into consideration the *Warnock Report* of 1978 (DES, 1978) which was the landmark document that advocated the concept of inclusion of children with "Special Educational Needs" in mainstream schools, and subsequent such documents.

The criteria for selection of material that I referred to in my literature review were as follows:

- Material containing the primary keywords (as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below). These keywords were based on my research questions and the issues they sought to address, including associated SEN terms which apply to the SENCO-teacher roles and relationship
- Material linking the keywords
- Articles by researchers whose published work focused upon addressing the management of SEN in schools.
- Articles cited by the researchers whose work focused around the role of the SENCO



**Figure 2.1: Search strategy for electronic and paper-based literature**

Additionally, key journals in the field were systematically and regularly searched, and electronic alerts, such as Zetoc, EBSCO, Google Scholar, Google Reader (RSS feeds to

electronic journals, such as JORSEN (Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs), etc) set up. Trawls were defined to be conducted on a weekly basis.

For the purposes of this study, a combined chronological (Creswell, 2003, p.40) as well as thematic approach (Creswell, 2003, p.38) was used to synthesise the literature. These themes emerged through the literature review.

Key words were obtained as a result of my investigation of the literature. They were the key words that were repeated in articles which I referred to, as well as words that I felt were relevant to my research, which I have added to, on an on-going basis throughout my project.

### 2.3 SEN Terminology and Definitions

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The *Education (Special Educational Needs) (Information) (England) Regulations 1999* (TSO, 1999) required the governing body of every maintained school to publish an SEN policy in a single document that parents and the local authority could have copies of and that it was published on the school website.

Whilst scrutinising the SEN Policies of various Primary Schools, I observed that every policy had been created on the basis of the *Revised SEN Code of Practice* [Appendix 1 - example of an anonymised SEN Policy from a research participant's school]. Therefore, for the purposes of this particular research project, I based my definition of SEN on that as defined in the *Revised SEN Code of Practice 2001* (DfES, 2001b), which governs – and indeed, forms – the bulwark upon which the role of the SENCO rested and SENCO responsibilities were defined.

For the purpose of this project, SEN was defined as per the *Revised SEN Code of Practice* (DfES 2001b):

*“Children have 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; or*

*(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.”* (This meant that children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) were excluded from the classification of those having SEN.)

*“Special educational provision (for children over two) means: educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in schools maintained by the LEA (Local Authority), other than special schools, in the area”*

(DfES, 2001b, p.6).

This particular definition of SEN was echoed in documentation relating to SEN for both the Northamptonshire as well as the Leicestershire Local Authorities, in which the bulk of the research for this project had taken place (Leicestershire County Council, 2002; Northamptonshire County Council, 2005).

Further SEN-related acronyms and commonly-used terms can be referred to in the Glossary at the beginning, on page xi of this thesis.

It was against this backdrop thus, that SENCOs’ function in their current roles, and their impact on teachers’ practices to ensure optimal special educational provision for children with SEN was examined for the purpose of this research project.

## 2.4 Policy Context

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The 1970 *Education (Handicapped Children) Act* came into operation in 1971, after which all local authorities in England had the responsibility to educate all children, regardless of their needs or abilities. As a result of that, there had been a very small number of children who, until April 1971, had not gone to school, and instead, had gone to Social Services and Health Provision (Rose, 2010). Indeed, as affirmed by Sebba, Byers and Rose (1995, p.7), “Prior to 1971, pupils deemed to have an IQ of less than 50, were assumed to be ineducable and did not receive any kind of instruction.”

In April 1971, however, a number of special schools all around the country opened as a result of the *Education (Handicapped Children) Act* of 1970 which brought to a halt the arrangements for “classifying children suffering from a disability of mind as children unsuitable for education at school” (OPSI, 1970, p.1). The Act also took away the power of health authorities to provide training for “children who suffer from a disability of mind who are... of compulsory school age” (OPSI, 1970, p.1).

From 1971, some 24,000 children from junior training centres and special care units across England, along with 8,000 in 100 hospitals were required to enter schools. Some junior training centre facilities at this time were re-classified as schools and came under the responsibility of Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Investment was also made to provide for the retraining of training centre instructors to become teachers within these newly designated schools. Thus, for the first time in UK history, 100% of school-age children were now entitled to an education (CSIE, 2010).

### 2.4.1 Historical Overview of Special Educational Needs in England

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As illustrated above, as a result of the 1970 *Education (Handicapped Children) Act*, people became far more aware of children who had difficulties in schools (Rose, 2010, personal interview). In 1978 the *Warnock Report* was published, which was based on the recommendations of the committee chaired by Dame Mary Warnock, as she is now

known. Dame Warnock was then in charge of a commission called *The Commission of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People*, and based the *Warnock Report* on recommendations with regards to changes in the way that children with special needs were perceived. In the Report, it was asserted that:

*“A teacher of a mixed ability class of 30 children even in an ordinary school should be aware that possibly as many as six of them may require some form of special educational provision at some time during their school life and about four or five of them may require special educational provision at any given time” (DES, 1978, p. 55).*

In as much as the *Warnock Report* (1978) was the primary basis on which the concept of inclusion was borne, it is relevant to mention here, that in 2010, Warnock co-edited a book, *Special Educational Needs: A New Look*. In this, she acknowledged that certain points raised in the 1978 report, such as the idea of integration, as then intended and since subsumed in notions of inclusion, could not be optimally fulfilled for every single student, and that there may often be more benefit for such students to be educated in Special Schools (Terzi, Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

Following on from the publication of the *Warnock Report* in 1978, the *Education Act 1981* was ratified. This Act “attempted to leave behind the notion of applying categories of handicap to some children and young people and introduced instead the concept of special educational needs (SEN)...loosening definitions and accepting the interactive nature of disability and learning difficulty” (Black-Hawkins *et al.*, 2007, p.17).

The *Education Act 1981* therefore, not only outlined the definition of a child with special education needs, but also examined the need for improvement of training and provision for teachers committed to working with children with special education needs in mainstream schools. The Act established three conditions that were to be met for that to successfully happen: firstly, that a child with special needs would be able to receive the special educational provision that he or she required; secondly, that the other children's education would not be adversely affected; and thirdly, that there would be an efficient use of resources (DES, 1981, p. 2).

The Act detailed 'special educational provision' for educating a child with special needs in a mainstream school as that "being educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of his age in schools." Furthermore, the Act maintained that the child being educated in a mainstream school should not adversely affect, and thus be compatible with "the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he will be educated; and the efficient use of resources" (DES, 1981, p.1-2).

Wedell *et al.* (1982) discussed some challenges presented by the concept, assessment and formulation of SEN, specifically in terms of formal procedures to be adopted by schools. They spoke of the relative simplicity involved in the provision with regard to the instances wherein an LEA formulates a 'Statement' of SEN' which sets out the nature of a child's needs. However, Wedell *et al.* concluded that they foresaw the arising of subsequent challenges when there is no specific such 'Statement' drawn up prior to a child moving from a Special School to a mainstream one. Indeed, such issues, in terms of the process of 'Statementing' at the time, as well as the further allocation of resources, was also reported by Hurst (1984) who discussed the questions involved not only in the specificity of identification of children with SEN, with reference to the "continuum of provision to try to suit each individual child" (Hurst, 1984, p.7), as implied by the *Warnock Report*, but also the content, curriculum and teaching techniques and skills involved.

Clunies-Ross (1984) discussed specific practical aspects with regard to how classroom teachers can best help pupils with SEN in ordinary classrooms, following the April 1983 implementation of the 1981 *Education Act*. These included amongst others, classroom organisation and location of facilities; positioning for visually impaired pupils; noise factors and illumination; pupil groupings; teaching strategies; cooperation with other staff; preparing teaching materials; pupil needs; and the importance of peer tutoring and personality factors in ensuring success. However, besides this article, there are few other comprehensive empirical research studies in the period between 1980 and 1984



that made reference to how 'efficiently' resources could be allocated so as to ensure the optimal placement of children with SEN.

Interestingly, neither the *Education Act 1981*, or the subsequent *Education Act 1996*, made specific mention about what the 'efficient use of resources' entails, although both make reference to the provision as being "so far as is reasonably practicable and is compatible with" the provision of "efficient education" for the children with whom the child with special educational needs will be educated (DfEE, 1996, p.180).

That ambiguity in defining what constituted 'the efficient use of resources' was preliminarily addressed in the landmark *Education Reform Act 1988* which tried to delineate for the first time in statutory history, what could possibly contribute to 'the efficient use of resources', by imposing a limit on "the relevant standard number of pupils in that (school year)" (DES, 1988a, p. 22).

Further, the subsequent guidance document *Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs* (DfES, 2001c), made multiple references to Schedule 27 of the *Education Act 1996* which related to the appropriate provision around a child with special educational needs who was being educated in a mainstream school unless, "the attendance of the child at the school would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he would be educated or the efficient use of resources" (DfEE, 1996, p.421). That shall be shortly clarified, as subsequent legislation between 1988 and 2001 is first discussed.

When the *Education Act 1981* came into force in April 1983, it brought in a controversial, lengthy and bureaucratic assessment and statement procedure. The new law prompted a tentative movement of some disabled children and young people from the special school sector to mainstream, but that was against enormous professional and administrative resistance. Nevertheless, the practice of supporting and encouraging the education of children with special needs in mainstream schools was set in motion (CSIE, 2010).

This period of infancy in the process of the integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools, occurred concurrently as the landmark *Education Reform Act 1988* was implemented. That national legislation brought about, for the first time in the UK, a National Curriculum, and the division of school year groups into 'Key Stages' (DES, 1988a; 1988b, p.2). However, this Act was 'immediately controversial as it raised questions relating to equality of opportunity' as no particular mention was made regarding differentiation for children with special needs within the framework of the National Curriculum at that stage, (Garner, 2009, p.115), as the guidance on the National Curriculum generally suggested that "all children of school age are entitled to a 'broad and balanced' programme" (Stakes and Hornby, 2000, p.3; Petrie, 1989, p.139).

In 1993, the *Dearing Report on The National Curriculum and Its Assessment*, led by Sir Ron Dearing, the then Chairman of the Schools' Curriculum and Assessment Authority, was the first major review of the National Curriculum (Byers and Rose, 2004, p. 3). It argued that the curriculum had become an unwieldy structure which was virtually impossible to implement and that the time spent on paperwork and testing was damaging good teaching and learning.

The *Dearing Report* led to *The 1993 Education Act* which was based partly on the 1992 white paper and partly on the 1993 *Dearing Report* (Byers and Rose, 2004, p. 3). The *1993 Education Act*, among other subjects, covered:

1. Responsibility for education (roles of the Secretary of State and funding authorities; new rules about school places, admissions and religious education)
2. Grant-maintained schools (changes in funding and new rules to make it easier for schools to become grant-maintained)
3. Children with special educational needs (legal definition, *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* - came into force in 1994)
4. School attendance (attendance orders, parental choice of school)
5. Schools failing to give an acceptable standard of education ('special measures')

(DfE, 1993).

The process establishing the education of children with SEN in mainstream schools was further supported internationally, through the promulgation of the 1994 *Salamanca Statement*, supported by the United Kingdom, which called for schools to accommodate “all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions” (UNESCO, 1994, p.6).

Returning to the discussion on a national level, in terms of Educational Frameworks that are relevant to SEN, the *SEN Code of Practice* was introduced in 1994, and contained practical advice for Local Education Authorities and schools about carrying out their statutory duties to identify, assess and make provision for children’s special educational needs.

In 1995, the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DfE, 1995) was promulgated, which aimed to end discriminatory practices faced by many disabled people. The 1996 *Education Act* came into effect soon after, making provision for the publication of the *SEN Code of Practice*, designed to give education providers guidance on the identification and assessment of children and young people with special educational needs (DfEE, 1996, p.178). Following that, the *Education Act 1997* was the first statutory guidance which addressed the statutory setting of targets for all pupils (DfEE, 1997b, p. 17).

In an attempt to address what Dyson and Millward termed “the ‘dilemma of difference’ in terms of responding to substantive differences between students within a common educational framework” (Dyson and Millward, 2000, p.173), and also what Garner termed as the “selective modification or ‘disapplication’ (of the original National Curriculum), where a case could be made that a pupil would be incapable of coping” (Garner, 2009, p.115), the year 2000 saw the introduction of the *National Curriculum Statutory Inclusion Statement*. This statutory framework which stated that:

*“Schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. The National Curriculum is the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils”* (Northamptonshire County Council, 2011).

The *Inclusion Statement* sets out three principles that are essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum:

1. Setting suitable learning challenges
2. Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
3. Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils

(LGfL, 2012).

The *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act* (DfES, 2001a) amended the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DfE, 1995) to make it unlawful for education providers to discriminate against disabled pupils. As a result, education providers had to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils in education do not suffer “a substantial disadvantage in comparison to their peers who are not disabled” (DfES, 2001a, p.10), and that the same education providers also had “a duty not to treat disabled pupils less favourably, without justification, for a reason which relates to their disability” (DfES, 2001a, p.56). Alongside the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act* (DfES, 2001a), came the *Revised SEN Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001b), which contained a revised framework for the identification, provision and assessment of pupils with SEN.

The guidance document *Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs* (DfES, 2001c) was then published, containing comprehensive advice about how the statutory framework for inclusion and provisions within the *Education Act 1996* applied to children and examples of the sort of steps schools should consider taking to ensure that a child’s inclusion was not incompatible with the efficient education of other children. That guidance document also made note of the United Kingdom being a signatory to the UNESCO world conference document from the meeting held in Salamanca (Spain in 1994), which called upon all Governments to “adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise” (UNESCO, 1994, p. ix).

However, one of the major criticisms of the document *Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs* (DfES, 2001c), was that it contained a number of controversial 'get out' clauses, for instance, "If a pupil, once admitted, is found to be seriously and persistently disruptive, then the school may consider disciplinary action, including temporary or permanent exclusion procedures" (DfES, 2001c, para 47, p.20). Indeed, the document further went on to ambiguously state that despite a school not being able to refuse mainstream education on the grounds that the child's needs cannot be provided for (DfES, 2001c, para 24, p.9), it was still possible for a school to refuse mainstream education on the grounds that such an arrangement would be incompatible with "the provision of efficient education of other children" (DfES, 2001c, para 22, p.9). Armstrong (2005, p.142) alluded to this document full of anomalies, as continuing "a qualification on inclusion that has a long legislative history."

#### 2.4.2 Inclusive Education of Children with SEN

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The 2001 guidance document *Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs* made an effort to define the ubiquitous terminology of "the efficient education of other pupils or the efficient use of resources" and "efficient training and instruction" (DfES, 2001c, p.15).

The document explained the term "efficient education", as that "providing for each child a suitable and appropriate education in terms of a child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs he/she may or may not have" (DfES, 2001c, p. 15).

The term "reasonable steps" was also clarified "without intending to be exhaustive", as the following factors which could be taken into account when considering what was reasonable:

- a) whether taking the step would be effective in overcoming the incompatibility
- b) the extent to which it is practical for the maintained school or local authority to take the step
- c) the extent to which steps have already been taken to facilitate the child's inclusion and their effectiveness

- d) the financial and other resource implications of taking the step
- e) the extent of any disruption taking the step would cause

(DfES, 2001c, p. 17).

Around this time period, 'barriers to learning' was a term largely applied with reference to inclusion, and specifically in the context of children with SEN (Overall and Sangster, 2003, p.159). In 2004 the Government initiative *Removing Barriers to Achievement – The Government's Strategy for SEN* came into effect, which set out the then government's vision and programme for action to enable children with SEN to realise their potential. The 2004 document essentially reinforced the commitment to consistent practice in the identification of SEN, early intervention (also recommended in a report on SEN by the Audit Commission in 2002, p.53), inclusion, the raising of expectations and achievement, and the development of partnership networks. Further, it addressed the SENCO role with regard to multi-agency liaising, by stating that:

*"SENCOs play a pivotal role, co-ordinating 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"* (DfES, 2004b, p.58).

This was concurrently supported by the *Every Child Matters* initiative, which focused on the development of a framework for improving outcomes for all children and their families, through a working multi-agency framework that integrated various Children's Services (DfES, 2004a).

Shortly after, 2005 also saw the endorsement of the *Disability and Discrimination Act* (DfE, 2005) which placed a formal duty on all public bodies to promote disability equality, anticipate the needs of disabled people, and the adjustments that might be needed to be devised for them. Essentially, this Act prescribed a proactive duty on public bodies to incorporate disability equality in their daily activities from the outset, as opposed to having to make adjustments at the end of any given process.

*The Equality Act 2010* subsumed all prior Discrimination Legislation, including the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DfE, 1995) and the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act* (DfES, 2001a). The *Equality Act* protected all those disabled pupils through the production of an “Accessibility Plan” which would be implemented over a prescribed period so as to:

- (a) increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school’s curriculum
- (b) improve the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school
- (c) improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled

(DCSF, 2010, p.180).

Furthermore, as endorsed in the additional guidance documentation to the *Equality Act 2010*, all schools also now had a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and needed to identify and publish the action they were taking toward equality in all the areas, including disability, by April 2012 (DCSF, 2010).

Various other statutory frameworks were also in place, which related more specifically to the SENCO role itself. These shall be covered in greater depth in later the subsections within Section 2.5 of this chapter.

## 2.5 SENCO Role

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There is a considerable amount of literature that exists about the role of SENCOs in England. I chose to examine the role firstly, as per a chronological pre-1994 and post-1994 framework, and subsequently, in terms of present-day status quo aspects that set the scene in view of my project’s original research questions.

### 2.5.1 Pre-1994

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The role of the Special Education Needs Coordinator or SENCO was created following the *Education Act 1993*. A SENCO essentially, was a coordinator of provision for pupils with special educational needs in a school, with those SENCOs in primary schools having to shoulder an extensive array of additional related responsibilities (DfE, 1994; DfES, 2001b; Shuttleworth, 2000, p.2-3).

The generic SENCO job description, as detailed on the Teachernet website, referred to the main duties involving appropriate and relevant teaching and learning support for pupils with SEN; related recording and assessment of pupils in consultation with various other agencies and key stakeholders; leadership responsibilities regarding SEN across the school; and ensuring standards and quality assurance in terms of general pastoral terms (Teachernet, n.d.).

Initially, I began my reading into the historical aspect of the role with the question as to whether there was indeed a need for the creation of the SENCO role and to what extent that role was being fulfilled as intended.

Dyson (1990, p.116) had controversially argued that:

*“SENCOs are a dying breed. In 10 years’ time they [SENCOs] will be outmoded as ‘remedial teachers’ or teachers of special classes are today.”*

His reasoning was two-fold. Firstly, that there were too many contradictions in the manner in which the role was then conceived. And secondly, that the mandates within the *Education Reform Act* of 1988 (which was discussed in Section 2.4.1 earlier in this chapter) with regard to the changes being made to the ‘whole school approach’ towards SEN provision, would render the SENCO role “untenable” (Dyson, 1990, p.116). Dyson concluded his position by saying that SENCOs would soon have to be renamed as ELCs (Effective Learning Consultants), as their focus would be helping teachers to improve “the effectiveness of the learning situation” (Dyson, 1990, p. 126).



Although Dyson himself later acknowledged that there was evidence that the concept of ELCs did indeed already exist within variants of the SENCO role itself (Dyson, 1994, p.53); in a rejoinder to what was then termed 'The Dyson Debate', Butt (1991, p.13) alluded to the historical ACCESS model, originally developed by McCall (1982, in Hinson and Hughes, 1982). McCall's model, as summarised by Butt succinctly summarised the SENCO's job as one of being:

A – Assessor/ decision maker concerning individual children

C – Consultant to the mainstream staff

C – Curriculum modifier and adaptor

E – Evaluator of programmes

S – Supporter of mainstream colleagues

S – Specialist skills holder

(Butt, 1991, p.13).

Butt contended, that the SENCO undertaking the role of SEN coordination on the basis provided by the ACCESS model outlined above, reflected what he had been emphasising for many years, that is, that the SENCO would be a valuable SEN 'resource' for all mainstream teaching staff (Butt, 1991, p.13; Butt, 1986, p.15).

It is appropriate to note here that as early as 1984, Gipps and Goldstein, and later in 1986, Visser also explored the semantics involved in the role of what was then coined 'the SEN professional'. They explored the variations in roles as per the terminology of the time, when 'remedial teachers' were increasingly being called 'support teachers', as the term 'remedial' had increasingly begun to have negative connotations (Gipps and Goldstein, 1984, p.6; Visser, 1986, p.5). At the time, the National Association for Remedial Education (NARE) highlighted seven possible aspects within the role of the SEN teacher: assessment, prescriptive, liaison, management, staff development, teaching and support (NARE, 1985). However, Visser argued that using the term 'support' for a teacher with SEN responsibilities, whilst useful in terms of conveying the seven possible NARE attributes, would still have drawbacks, largely due to the active and dynamic nature of the role. Indeed, Visser concluded by saying:

*“Perhaps the next title could be the Teacher Enabler, since the real role of the teacher with the responsibility for special educational needs is to enable the children to have access to the curriculum, and to enable colleagues to present their curricula in ways in which they are more accessible to all pupils”*(Visser, 1986, p.8).

Following the passing of what was at the time termed the “revolutionary watershed” legislation (Hegarty, 1989, p.205), the *Education Reform Act 1988* (earlier referred to in Section 2.4.1 of this chapter) which resulted in the development of a ‘National Curriculum’, also did not clearly specify how national testing of children with SEN would be implemented. Hegarty raised a number of questions, including how much extra time should be given to children with SEN to ensure comparability; and how to ensure that additional help during assessment is pitched at the right level (Hegarty (1989, p.207).

Interestingly, in 1993, Dyson and Gains edited a book titled *Rethinking special needs in mainstream schools towards the year 2000* in which chapters were written by researchers and practitioners in the field at the time, each exploring specific aspects with regard to the dissatisfaction felt at the time with SEN-related trends and events. Dyson and Gains surmised that ‘special needs teachers’ would be soon required to clarify what services they offer, and how they can support the (mainstream teaching) problem-solving processes. They envisioned the future of mainstream SEN to take either of two directions: firstly, an increased specialisation of specific SEN skills for some teachers, including responsibilities related to “staff development and the management of delegated budgets”; or secondly, an increased generalisation, involving the “whole-school management of effective learning provision” (Dyson and Gains, 1993, p.169-170).

To conclude this section therefore, it is certainly remarkable to note the full circle that Dyson’s original contention had travelled. Indeed, the SENCO role up to the period just before it was formalised in 1994, was positively reframed as one of a professional transitioning from a devolved remedial department (Luscombe, 1993, p.64), to a “Quality Assurer” (Simpson, 1993, p.77) and “Institutional Developer” (Scott, 1993, p.89). O’Hanlon summarised this evolutionary process of the role by positing that:

*“When SENCOs promote reflective educational practice and encourage colleagues to enquire into their practical understanding of educational situations, when they develop collaborative research activities into the school’s policy and practice in the education of all pupils, then the school culture will be transformed by their intervention” (O’Hanlon, 1993, p.108).*

### 2.5.2 Post-1994 and Present Day Status Quo

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Thus, it was in the environment as concluded by the previous section, in which the 1994 SEN Code of Practice was introduced. Indeed, to further refute Dyson’s pre-1994 argument about SENCOs being a ‘dying breed’, Pearson’s research into the recruitment, induction and retention of SENCOs in England maintained that although SENCO roles were perceived as being “less attractive” and more populated by those who were nearing “the end of their careers”, thereby giving rise to higher rates of attrition, nonetheless, “the (attrition) rate has not increased dramatically in the last 10 years” (Pearson, 2008a, p.106).

My own firsthand experience, however, as a result of my six-month placement at a Primary School, as part of the ‘Institution Based Placement’ module when I was undertaking my MA Education, as well as Szwed’s research on the topic, had led me to deduce that not only was there indeed a requirement for such a role, which was actually the outcome of a lengthy process of evolution of the work of special educators over the last two decades (Szwed, 2007a, p.96), but that unlike Dyson’s inaccurate prediction, the SENCO role had been and continued to be more developed and exceedingly recognised as a key part of the senior management team (SMT) and “the heart of the [inclusion] process” (Layton, 2005, p. 53; Szwed, 2007b, p.159).

I shall now conduct an in-depth examination of the post-1994 to present-day status quo of the SENCO role in terms of the following main categories:

1. Scope of Action and Variable Remits
2. Effectiveness in a Multiple Roles
3. The Leadership and Management Challenge
4. Changing Legislation and SENCO Provision for the Future

### 2.5.2.1 SENCO Scope of Action and Variable Remits

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In terms of the SENCOs scope of action, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) defined “the core purpose of a SENCO” in the following manner:

*“The SENCO, with the support of the head teacher and the governing body, takes responsibility for the day-to-day operation of provision made by the school for pupils with SEN and provides professional guidance...in order to secure high quality teaching and the effective use of resources to bring about improved standards of achievement for all pupils”* (TTA, 1998, p.5).

Research following the 1998 TTA National Standards for Special Education Needs Coordinators document however, had illustrated how the changing face of special education continued to impact the nature of SENCOs’ work, the sphere of their responsibilities and the authority they had to undertake their role in ways that they perceived to be most effective (Davies, Garner and Lee, 1998, p. 36; Phillips *et al.*, 1999, p.6; Layton, 2005, p.54).

My own opinion, in view of my reading about and my firsthand experience of the role, indeed, was that the degree to which SENCOs scope of action could be clearly defined depends largely on situational factors which were specific to the respective SENCO workplaces. Szwed (2007b, p.147), concluded that although the role of the SENCO has altered dramatically, schools needed to understand the parameters of the role and to reconsider the roles and responsibilities of all the staff who work with children with SEN.

Robertson (2012) alluded to the rising profile of SENCOs in English schools, as having a “pivotal strategic role” envisioned for them, in view of upcoming legislative changes that commenced with the key reform Green Paper *Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability*, (DfE, 2011) culminating in the *Children and Families Bill* (2013a) and the *Draft SEN Code of Practice* (2013b). Robertson laid emphasis on the fact that more SENCOs needed to be recognised as a formal part of school leadership teams, instead of having to rely on proxy representation (Robertson, 2012).

Packer too, in a publication interestingly titled 'The Perfect SENCO', maintained that a SENCO's duties include not only the provision of advice with regard to statutory duties about the identification, assessment and provision to be made for children with SEN, but also the provision of a strategic direction for the school, and the seeking of opportunities for development through coordinating provision, tracking progress and leading or developing others (Packer, 2013, p.4-5).

The role of the SENCO as illustrated above thus had developed greatly in a short period of time. The speed of that had meant that development had not always been as intended by the strategies driving it, as continued research demonstrated.

#### 2.5.2.2 Effectiveness in Multiple Roles

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A study by Barnes (2008) highlighted the multi-agency liaison role played by a SENCO. Indeed, my own personal observations were also supported by Barnes' and Wedell's (2008b, p.57) research. Both authors explored the perspectives of SENCOs and parents regarding the rationale for multi-agency working and what an effective service might look like. Wedell's research illustrated that parents regard school staff and partners as more knowledgeable than themselves, but this also potentially related to the barrier whereby the parents feel apprehensive in asserting their views. Barnes' work also illustrated that although there was overwhelming support for multi-agency activity, there were a select few who did consider "the act of multi-agency assessment to be potentially stressful for the child and family" (Barnes, 2008, p. 234). The points above both serve to highlight the significance of the role that must be played by a SENCO in ensuring the stress around liaison between stakeholders is kept to a minimum.

Cole (2003, p. 69) discussed how the integral role played by the SENCO in cohesion with other school management personnel impacted the ultimate ethos and effectiveness of the school. Robertson (2003, p.100) elaborated on the collaborative significance of a SENCOs role via a "... Collaboration Scale that can be used in a variety of education contexts, and as part of school improvement planning and practice."

Interestingly, research about SENCOs' images of themselves in relation to the perceptions of three groups of their colleagues: members of the senior management team, teachers and teaching assistants, illustrated that despite the complex nature of the role, "there was limited evidence of the co-ordination role of the SENCO in terms of working with a range of colleagues within the school and beyond" (Pearson and Ralph, 2007, p.43). In my opinion, that had far-reaching consequences in terms of the 'reinvention' of the SENCO role with regard to multi-agency liaising, as implied by the DfES document *Removing Barriers to Achievement* which, as mentioned earlier, stated that:

*"SENCOs play a pivotal role, co-ordinating 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"* (DfES, 2004b, p.58).

Clearly, the Government's *Every Child Matters* (ECM) initiative, crucially underlined and reiterated the importance of multi-agency liaising, as it was the ground-breaking legislation that required for the first time ever:

*"...the local authorities to bring together in one place under one person services for children, and at the same time suggesting real changes in the way those (who are) asked to do this work carry out their tasks on... children's behalf"* (DfES, 2004a, p.1).

Indeed, the SENCO role in wake of ECM was highlighted by its crucial position in the ECM's 'Targeted Services within a Universal Context' Plan. Within that Plan, SENCOs' crucial contribution to the process was highlighted in the second tier of action in which targeted services were specified for children and families with identified needs, for example, SEN and disability, speech and language therapy, and so on (DfES, 2004a, p.21; Cheminais, 2005, p.22-24).

Furthermore, the multi-agency liaising aspect was elaborated in ECM, through the intended development of the development of an SEN Action Programme which:

*“...will focus on practical measures to promote early identification and intervention for children with SEN, raise expectations and achievement..., working with health and social care, to provide good teaching and support for all children” (DfES, 2004a, p. 28).*

Perhaps that phenomenon was best illustrated by Kearns who recommended ‘Five SENCO Roles with Priorities for Continuing Professional Development’. Kearns had delineated the following role types and associated opportunities for learning:

- *SENCO as Arbiter*: with a focus on negotiating, rationalising and monitoring the use of SEN resources
- *SENCO as Rescue*: with a focus on supporting pupils with learning difficulties and planning appropriate programmes
- *SENCO as Auditor*: with a focus on helping teachers to meet codified procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils with special needs
- *SENCO as Collaborator*: with a focus on the meeting of large and small groups of teachers and pupils for review, planning and evaluation activities regarding staff as well as curriculum development
- *SENCO as Expert*: with a focus on specialist qualifications in teaching pupils with specific or severe disabilities

(Kearns, 2005, p.137-144).

However, despite all those obvious aspects relating to the multi-faceted SENCO role, a key impacting factor upon all the above-mentioned opportunities remained time constraints.

Cole (2005, p.287) further elucidated that issue by maintaining that despite the revision of the *Special Education Needs Code of Practice* in 2001, many SENCOs were still overwhelmed with the operational nature of the role with little support, time or funding to consider more strategic aspects of inclusion or SEN.

Whilst I did recognise the potential impact of the above-mentioned matters relating to time and budgetary constraints upon the role of the SENCO and the ability to carry out duties effectively, I could only reiterate Ellis and Tod's contention that current and future guidance to LEAs on the management of SEN expenditure would allow the time and resources needed to support the various SENCO functions (Ellis and Tod, 2005, p.89).

### 2.5.2.3 The Leadership and Management Challenge

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When research indicated that SENCOs increasingly perceived their role as a "managerial post dealing with whole-school issues" Cowne further elaborated on that phenomenon by recommending that SENCOs be viewed as "agents of change who aim at improving teaching and learning of all pupils, but especially those with diverse and different needs" (Cowne, 2005, p.61, 67).

In terms of the key guidance for SENCO remits of authority, all SENCOs had to abide by the *SEN Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001b) which briefly, gave practical guidance to all SENCOs in terms of their roles and the various capacities in which they interacted with the diverse group of stakeholders involved in Special Education Needs. That was particularly the case with regard to the relationship between SENCOs and parents or carers of children with Special Needs, as repeatedly recognised in publications by respective governments at various stages in their tenures (DfES, 2001c and DCSF, 2009a), as well as various teacher training publications, with specific focus on supporting children with SEN (Jones *et al.* 2001, p.11; Byers and Rose, 2004, p. 105; Rose and Howley, 2006, p.97; Spooner, 2006, p.89; Cheminais, 2010a, p.99; Cheminais, 2010b, p.96).

However, in terms of the ever-changing legislation that related to the SENCOs, one might focus on the increasingly management-oriented nature of the role, which was emphasised in *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (2004b), a government-initiated SEN action programme, which suggested that the SENCO should be a key member of the



senior management team in a school so that he or she would be able to influence the development of policies for whole-school improvement. My opinion was that while the development of SENCO status, in terms of a role within the Senior Management Team had seen a logical and incremental widening of the SENCO's responsibilities, recent legislative developments had created uncertainty over the SENCO's role.

Thus, in wake of that trend involving the evolution of the SENCO role into one as a harbinger of change, it had been recognised in national documentation that the SENCO had a key role in helping to identify both training needs and professional development opportunities in SEN and disability (DCSF, 2009a, p.30).

As opposed to the more tacit roles that SENCOs initially started as, around the early nineties, Cowne (2008, p.85), Szwed (2007a, p. 96) and Garner and Davies (2001, p.97) all conceded, the SENCOs current role was evolving into one that was more empowered at not only the senior management level, but one that had a greater degree of recognition by teachers and other members of school staff. Moreover, since 2001, legislation and guidance for schools, including the *Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Act* (DfES, 2001a), the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DfES, 2005), *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004b) and *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004a), focused on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities. Indeed, more recent research by the TDA in 2010, recognising the integral role of a SENCO in ensuring the transformations of SEN provisions in schools nationally (DCSF, 2009a, p.31; Blamires, 2001, p.104), had resulted in a programme for nationally approved training for SENCOs (NASEN Special, 2010, p. 21; TDA, 2010).

The compulsory SENCO Standards Qualification, was said to have been brought in at the most fitting time, as the issue had been alluded to in a number of research-based recommendations leading up to their implementation (Cowne, 2005; NASEN Special, 2010; Garner, 2001a, p. 57 and Mittler, 2000, p.90). Indeed, even in the present day scenario, the role was being increasingly seen as a managerial post dealing with whole-school issues, ranging from individual students IEPs (Individual Education Plans) to the budgeting for and use of resources, which in my view, warranted the extensive support

for a SENCO that could be provided through a role on the Senior Management Team (SMT), as also contended by Robertson (2012, p.82), Tissot (2013, p.39) and Pearson and Mitchell (2013).

Furthermore, related to the issue of SENCOs undertaking their diverse roles was research which had yielded the fact that the ability of a SENCO to carry out the role was dependent on the level of support provided by the School Management Team or Senior Leadership Team (NASEN Special 2010, p.21 and Mittler, 2000, p. 125), and the number of contact, versus non-contact hours, that were specific to the role.

Without a doubt, the degree of involvement of the SENCO at Leadership or Management levels and continued opportunities for CPD would also enhance or hinder the ability to perform the role effectively (Mittler, 2000, p. 185, Mackenzie, 2007, p.217, Cowne, 2005, p.67 and NASEN Special, 2010, p.21). Indeed, a senior inspector for SEN involved in Gerschel's research commented, "Where the...school's management system excludes the SENCO from decision-making, things can go wrong...SENCOs then become fire-fighters and don't think proactively" (Gerschel, 2005, p. 70).

That fact was additionally supported by Cole who surmised:

*"When there is...SMT support for policies of inclusion, the SENCO's role, in both carrying out their statutory duties in relation to SEN and in implementing policies of inclusion, is made very much easier..."* (Cole, 2005, p.301).

It was evident to me though, that due to the increasingly complex and diverse nature of the SENCO responsibilities, there was a need to develop a higher level of sophistication in terms of leadership and management within the role. By that, I meant that my personal view was that one cannot simply generalise by saying that SENCOs should be part of the SMT, and that would largely solve the bulk of their administrative challenges.

Certainly that fact had been noted by Szwed who maintained that despite the consideration given to re-examining the role, SENCOs operated in a range of ways in a variety of organisational structures and with very different styles of leadership

management (Szwed, 2007b, p.159). I, personally, felt that that was a noteworthy fact to be cognizant of whilst examining the impact that SENCOs had on their teaching colleagues, particularly in the face of the multi-agency roles, and their related leadership and management roles.

#### 2.5.2.4 Changing Legislation and SENCO Provision for the Future

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Shuttleworth (2000, p.5) talked about the evolution of the SENCO role as being that of shifting from the philosophy of 'segregation' to 'inclusion' via 'integration', while balancing managerial responsibilities in an increasingly fluid curricular environment. That aspect of the role was critical when one considered the impact of the *Warnock Report* (DES, 1978) which led to a continuing drive to reduce the number of pupils educated in special schools.

The notion of SENCOs being either 'discoverers', ensuring curriculum development around the child, or 'settlers' operating within a well-defined system was also explored by Shuttleworth (2000, p.6), with the 'ideal SENCO' being defined as someone who lay somewhere between the two. My own view was that whilst SENCOs could not fall into either extreme category, they should tend more towards the role of 'discoverers', as their responsibilities related to the personalisation of the support that a particular child required on a case by case basis, as opposed to the notion where SENCOs "operate within clear expectations of their role which is enshrined in a job description linked to the *Code of Practice*" (Shuttleworth, 2000, p.6).

That concept was further elucidated by Cowne (2008, p.9) who maintained that the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b) "advises flexibility in the response adopted by schools... but ...that they must be able to demonstrate that in the arrangements made for children with SEN, they are fulfilling their statutory duty to have regard to the Code." Cowne further went on to discuss the manner in which the role of the SENCO and the concept of a whole-school policy for SEN had been developing over the years (Cowne, 2008, p.9), along with the SENCO being a "change-agent" within the school as an organisation (Cowne, 2008, p.84).

It was a fact that the increasingly dynamic nature of the role brought with it a plethora of challenges. Davies, Garner and Lee (1998, p.36) alluded to the policy-related challenges facing SENCOs in the years to come and the issues of practicability of the *SEN Code of Practice* within the current environmental contexts. The SENCO was referred to as “the hub – even if the wheel is falling off” (Davies, Garner and Lee, 1998, p. 40).

Mackenzie (2007) and Szwed (2007a) debated the effectiveness of the SENCO role in terms of policy, practice and future priorities. Recognition was given to the fact that individual schools would continue to make their own judgements and choices around the respective SENCO roles and that SENCOs would continue to carry out their responsibilities in diverse settings, with considerable variations in how the role was interpreted. Szwed alluded to the fact that although SENCO duties had altered dramatically in the past few years, it was imperative for schools to understand the parameters of the role and then reconsider the roles and responsibilities of all the staff who worked with children with SEN, not specifically just SENCOs (Szwed, 2007b, p.147). Indeed, the exigent role of a SENCO was further investigated by Mittler (2000, p.91) who referred to the SENCOs overall job description as conjuring “up a paragon of professional perfection rather than a harassed coordinator...”

Essentially, it was acknowledged that making generalisations about the issues relating to the challenges faced by SENCOs was situation-specific. Generally though, a more innovative approach was called for, to address issues faced by SENCOs. This was because the challenges covered a broad range of areas and were not simply restricted to bureaucratic matters.

Szwed referred to the current and future climate in which SENCOs operated as being one in which there was:

- an increase in the significance attached to the role in practice
- an increased complexity of the role in practice
- an increased importance of partnership between parents, schools and other agencies

- an increased importance of interpersonal skills in implementing change
- an increased potential for conflict and strain in the role in practice

(Szwed, 2007b, p. 149).

In wake of the above-mentioned escalating challenges, it is imperative to mention that:

*“All current research points to SENCOs as a group of educational professionals who are completely committed to children with special educational needs, and who work tirelessly to promote their learning and inclusion sometimes within what can only be described as ‘hostile’ environments”* (Cole, 2005, p. 304).

Indeed, despite the difficulties involved in undertaking the role, Mittler (2000, p.92) and Davies, Garner and Lee (1998, p.10) affirmed what a tribute it was to SENCOs that there had been the general move to include SEN pupils into mainstream schools and the subsequent progress that had been made in introducing the role of SENCOs in schools. Moreover, as mentioned before, the issue of SENCO impact on teachers’ practices is even more timely now that legislation in England, *The Children and Families Bill* (DfE, 2013a) lays out “the biggest reform in 30 years” (Petersen, 2012, p.1; Morewood, 2014, p.29) to SEN provision, which are further underpinned by a new SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014a). Both legislative articles have been implemented in schools from September 2014, with an updated *Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years*, which includes guidance on children and young people in youth custody, coming into effect from 1st April 2015 (DfE, 2015).

A major implication for the role of the SENCO will be the introduction of a family-centred system in which the collaboration of Support Services across Education, Health and Care will be required to support the early identification and assessment of children with SEN from birth to 25 years (DfE, 2013c). This research project is therefore constructed within the past, present and future of SEN initiatives in England at a time of major overhaul of the principal guidance for the inclusion for children with SEN in mainstream schools.

## 2.6 Chapter Two Key Points

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Chapter two thus introduced the historical and current literature relating to SENCOs in England, the key points of which were:

- For the purpose of this project, SEN in the participants' schools SEN policies, was defined as per the *Revised Code of Practice* (DfES 2001b):

*“Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Special educational provision (for children over two) means: educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in schools maintained by the LEA (Local Authority), other than special schools, in the area”* (DfES, 2001b, p.6).

- The role of the SENCO was created following the *Education Act, 1993*. A SENCO essentially, was a coordinator of provision for pupils with special educational needs in a school (DfE, 1994).
- Dyson (1990, p.116) had argued that “SENCOs are a dying breed.” However, further research over the years, proved his prediction to be false, culminating with Robertson’s (2012) research about the rising profile of SENCOs in English schools; having a “pivotal strategic role” envisioned for them, in view of the legislative changes as detailed in the *Children and Families Bill* (2013a) and *The (0-25) SEN Code of Practice* (2014a).

## CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW PART 2 – THE SENCO-TEACHER DYNAMIC

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### Chapter Summary

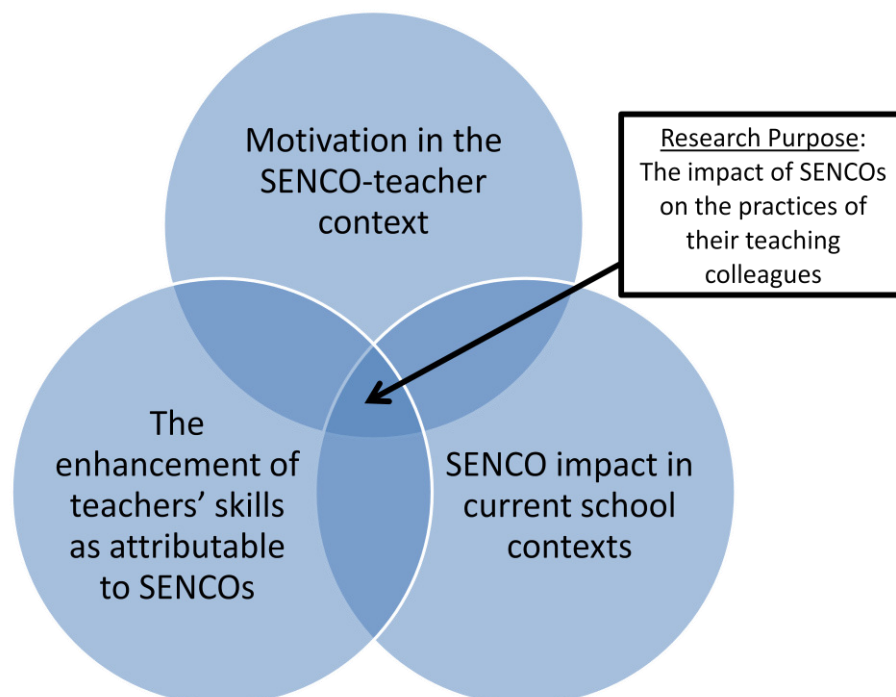
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Chapter three examines the historical and current literature relating to the SENCO-teacher dynamic, and the impact that SENCOs have on inclusive school practices. The project's research questions are also reviewed in that context and an in-depth study conducted of literature that relates to SENCO motivation of teachers, SENCOs' contribution to the enhancement of teachers' skills and the current school context with reference to the impact that SENCOs had.

### 3.1 Introduction

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I decided to have the literature review of aspects related to SENCO-teacher interactions as a separate chapter, to follow on from the previous chapter, which was an examination of research specifically relating to SENCOs and the challenges they faced in their role from a generalist perspective. This chapter however, discusses literature with particular emphasis on the impact that SENCOs have on the inclusive teaching practices of their colleagues, as I have endeavoured to illustrate in the following figure:



**Figure 3.1: Categorising literature themes in relation to the research purpose**

### 3.2 SENCOs and Teachers

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SENCOs have been documented as ‘agents of change’ in relation to schools’ visions and values, and as primary advocates for the needs and rights of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools (Cole, 2005, p.301; Cowne, 2005; Cowne 2008; Morewood, 2011, p.26; Morewood, 2012; Pearson *et al.*, 2015).

It is necessary here to reflect upon the notion of values and attitudes as applicable to interactions between SENCOs and their teaching colleagues. Bush (1995, p.65) alluded to the manner in which school professionals who are deemed to possess specific skills and knowledge are valued by their colleagues in what he termed “authority of expertise.” Visser (2005) reported qualities essential to all good teaching practice, which were extended by Rosen-Webb’s (2011) research into SENCOs’ values and roles during the period 1994-2011. Rosen-Webb (2011, p.165) indicated that SENCOs’ development and role enactment relied on “an identified core of a self-efficacy arising from their aspirations, identity and personality” with the best interests of their pupils at heart. Her findings support my own views that both SENCOs and teachers must possess the attributes of empathy, working within boundaries and with challenges, maintaining positive relationships and being transparent in communication so as to ensure optimally inclusive settings. Section 3.3 of this thesis further elaborates the notions of what I define as inclusion and optimally inclusive settings for the purpose of this project.

Cowne (2005) applied the term in a description of the SENCO role being that of a school professional whose aim is to improve the teaching and learning of all pupils, particularly those with SEN; in addition to enabling changes in staff attitudes via the sharing of strategies to enhance teaching, as well as the strategic management of resources. Morewood (2011) discussed his first-hand experience as a SENCO being an agent of change, through the child-driven advocacy role, not only for children with SEN, but also parents, carers and other stakeholders within the environment that exists around a child. This notion of the centrality of the role of the SENCO was also echoed by Blamires *et al.* in a publication about parent-teacher partnerships (Blamires *et al.*, 2013, p.7).



It is worthwhile to note here, however, that despite firm assertions by Hallett and Hallett (2010) that SENCOs are 'change agents' for whole school inclusion, Pearson *et al.* questioned whether the SENCO should instead be seen as a SEN specialist, using advanced knowledge and skills to promote the learning of specific students (Pearson *et al.*, 2015, p.49), whilst making reference to the same argument presented by Oldham and Radford (2011) in their study about secondary school SENCOs. My own view, backed by my own previous research on the subject, is that SENCOs are change agents for whole school inclusion, and in fact are generally seen as such by teachers (Qureshi, 2010; Qureshi, 2014).

In 2005, Cheminais also affirmed that skills and attributes required by SENCOs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in order for them to be effective, included being a commissioner and broker, a facilitator, a solution assembler and a lead professional (Cheminais, 2005, p.23-24). Pearson and Gathercole (2011, p.23-26) further evidenced that allusion to the SENCO's transformatory role in their exploration about SENCOs' increasing confidence and sense of empowerment, and their active part in raising the profile of SEN in their schools. This was elaborated upon by Ekins (2012, p.71) in using metaphors such as "'facilitator' and 'enabler'" to describe the 'weighty' SENCO role.

Morewood (2009, p. 8) further substantiated SENCOs' "proactivity" in their role as change agents, emphasising that while the SENCO holds the mantle of change-maker, it was also important to recognise that such a task could not be undertaken in isolation, and required the support of "a whole team approach", in which the "provision for students with SEN is a shared responsibility (which)...must be seen by all those involved for the provision to be most effective."

This factor as related to the increasing significance of the SENCO role, had also been recognised. Florian (1998a; 1998,b; 2008, p.202) maintained that the actual achievement of inclusion itself requires the successful integration and differentiation made for *all* children regardless of any perceived difference, disability, or social, emotional, cultural or linguistic differences in mainstream schools. Florian further stated

that to achieve the aforementioned notion of inclusion, the reconsideration of incumbent teaching roles and responsibilities was essential. However, she also acknowledged that it was far easier to outline and define inclusive practices and teaching methods than it was for them to be actually implemented.

Garner (2001b, p.134), in research undertaken to explore the perceptions of teachers' experiences of working with children with learning difficulties, concluded that while it was the SENCO who had an "overt duty" for the effective provision of SEN support in a school, all other teachers were also implicated in the task. Therefore, the SENCO, in the capacity of an 'agent of change', assumed what could be contextualised as more of "a developmental role" (Garner, 2001b, p.134) with regard to teacher support for SEN engagement.

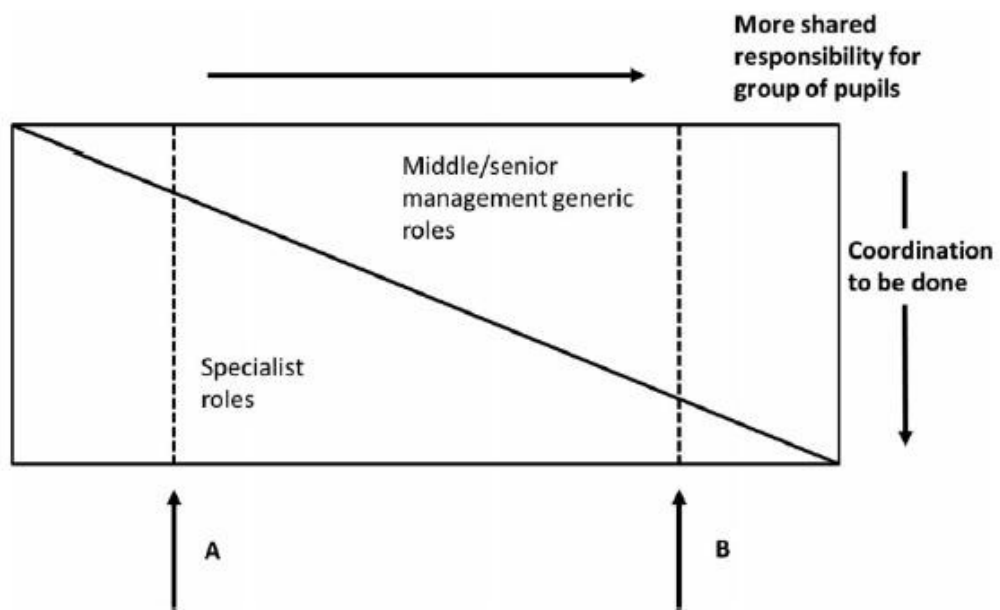
Giangreco recommended what he considered to be the eight key inter-related features of successfully inclusive schools:

1. Collaborative teamwork
2. A shared framework
3. Family involvement
4. General educator ownership
5. Clear role relationships amongst professionals
6. Effective use of support staff
7. Meaningful Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
8. Procedures for evaluating effectiveness

(Giangreco, 1997 in Rose, 2001, p. 148).

In discussing those features above, Rose (2001, p.148) drew out how SENCOs in mainstream schools were regarded as the "first port of call in dealing with pupils who present teachers with a learning challenge." This therefore, Rose argued, led to the abdication of responsibilities by the teachers, regarding those pupils with special educational needs in their classrooms.

A question thereby arises about the possibility that SENCOs may get in the way of optimal SEN provision by virtue of their positioning within the school hierarchical structure. Norwich (2010) indirectly alluded to this quandary through the development of a model for alternative roles by the SENCO to justify the boundaries of specialism. In his model (Figure 3.2 which follows on the next page), (A) reflected a specialist or 'expert' positioning of the SENCO, while (B) profile emphasised a more generic management role. The vertical axis represented the amount of coordination to be done.



**Figure 3.2: The balance between SENCO as a specialist and a management role (adapted from Norwich, 2010, p. 43)**

However, even within this model, Norwich himself recognised that in the case of more shared responsibility for groups of pupils, there may be certain individuals within the school structure, or “champions” for certain specific SEN groups, who may be “willing to take on responsibilities for specific aspects of coordination and those with generic coordination responsibilities wishing to externalise them” (Norwich, 2010, p.43).

In any case, the possibility still remained about whether or not SENCOs may get in the way of what might be considered optimal SEN provision. Therefore, in an attempt to elucidate the issue, it is worthwhile to consider Dyson and Gain’s (1995, p.51) now relatively-historical research in which they maintained the implicit role of the SENCO, and:

*“...the SENCOs’ necessity of managing contradictions... as special teachers in ordinary schools, they have to be, at one and the same time, the advocates of the new movement towards inclusion and part of the traditional apparatus of separate education... (and hence) beset by uncertainties about the role, subject to a wider range of conflicting expectations.”*

This assertion underwent a plethora of variations over the years. Wearmouth (1997, p.124) maintained how in her view, the SENCOs’ SEN provision offering was “in essence, discriminating positively against some children.” Later, Barnes’ 2008 research into the multi-agency aspect of SENCOs’ roles highlighted the debate about how “the initial identification and screening process within many schools is based upon the individual SENCO’s perception of need” (Barnes, 2008, p.237). This debate was more recently addressed in the Green Paper *Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Needs and Disability* (DfE, 2011) in which a concern was raised about the issue of over-identification of children with SEN through the inappropriate labelling of children with SEN from an initial stage, thereby engendering a culture of low expectations (DfE, 2011).

However, the points made above did not in any way indicate a shifting of blame onto the shoulders of SENCOs as muddling the provision of SEN. In my view, the factors discussed served to further underline the complications involved in undertaking the SENCO role. Indeed, it was the very executing of the role of SENCOs as enactors of a positive model of inclusion, that resulted in the complications hitherto alluded.

To further illustrate my contention, along with the guidance issued in Sections 4.14, 5.30 and 6.32 within the *SEN Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001b), which made mention of how SENCOs should take the lead in providing professional guidance to colleagues to ensure optimal teaching strategies and techniques for all children, particularly those with SEN, I also agreed with the contention, as made by Rose (2001, p.148) that:

*“Before inclusion can be achieved, it will be necessary for all teachers to accept a responsibility for the education of all pupils.”*

It was therefore on the basis of this argument that I contended that the SENCO-teacher dynamic should be examined in greater depth, so as to enable the development of a distinctive picture of how SEN provision could be optimally ensured, with the participation and constructive underpinning formulated by all parties involved in the support around children.

The following sections of this chapter are thus formulated with the above-mentioned assertion at the fore.

It is necessary before further exposition of how SENCOs impact teachers' inclusive school practices, to define terms such as 'management', 'leadership', 'impact', 'effectiveness' and 'inclusion' in relation to the SENCO role as these aspects illustrate how the SENCO role has expanded beyond the original definition in the *Code of Practice*, as discussed earlier in Section 2.5 of this thesis.

Management is about working with people to achieve common objectives. Shuttleworth (2000, p.205) contends that research into management styles in all types of institutions, including schools, suggests that the most common problem is in reconciling the demands of the organisation and the needs of the individual. Indeed, currently, in many primary school settings the concept of the teacher as an autonomous professional is being sidelined by the pressure to perform against measurable indicators, such as pupils' achievements in assessments, and the holistic school league tables, among other parameters. For the purposes of this research project however, the term management relates to the particular participative style in which SENCOs function in cohesion with their teaching colleagues, whilst acknowledging that they will perform better if their opinions are understood and valued.

The question of management style naturally influences or 'effects' an individual's leadership attributes. In the context of a participative management style within the SEN-context, I would contend that for SENCOs to be effective in their roles, they should have an action-centred leadership style. Mackenzie (2007, p.216) contends that, "effectiveness' is very difficult to measure, and can be operationalised in very different

ways by using indicators such as... satisfactory administrative procedures; specialist knowledge in particular disabilities and so on.” However, in the context of this research project, I would argue that the concept of ‘effectiveness’ implies the development of skills, knowledge and child-centred SEN-initiatives as a result of a course of action; hence the notion of SENCO effectiveness. In relation to this, Adair (1983, p.38) suggests that it is important for a leader to have an understanding of the three areas of needs which exist in working groups: individual needs; group maintenance needs; and task needs. I would argue that effective leadership on the part of SENCOs requires a balancing of these requirements, and recognition of the interdependencies that exist between them in relation to managing the needs of children with SEN. However, whilst research supports the leadership aspect of the SENCO role (Phillips *et al.*, 1999; p.17; Szwed, 2007a; Ekins, 2012, p.189), considerable variation exists in practice as earlier explored in Section 2.5.2.3 of this thesis. Furthermore, the lack of homogeneity in the hierarchical placement of SENCOs on school leadership teams (SLTs) leads to deviations in practice and also gives rise to a tension between the theoretical agreement that SENCOs have a pivotal SEN-leadership role in relation to their teaching colleagues and the day-to-day work done when making school-wide decisions on priorities and practice in the context of the needs of the individual, the group and the specific tasks.

Both management and leadership style necessitate the consideration of an outcome or impact upon practice. In terms of defining impact for the purpose of this research project, I began by literally reviewing the Oxford English Dictionary definition of the word, which was, “a marked effect or influence”. However, I did not feel this was specific enough for the purpose of my project, and therefore, I endeavoured to explore my own understanding of the concept of ‘impact’ through discussions with my colleagues, in particular those who taught on the NA SENCO Award. After reflecting on those informal conversations, and the implication of SENCO impact on practice as inferred in the literature (Mittler, 2000; Cheminais, 2005; Szwed 2007c; Pearson, 2008b; Pearson 2010; Rosen-Webb, 2011), I concluded that for me personally, the notion of ‘impact’ encompassed not only a specific resultant outcome on teachers’ abilities to address SEN, but also a process by which SENCOs were enabled and allowed to do what they thought they should be doing in relation to the official definition of their role, as

well as their own perceived understanding of this. I have further elaborated upon this in Section 5.2.2., subsection (a) in which I explain how I came to see impact as a process rather than a singular phenomenon. The ensuing definition that I developed was: “A sense of progression or regression which enables an individual to bring about a resultant change (whether positive or negative) in a status quo.”

### 3.3 How SENCOs Impact Inclusive School Practices

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As mentioned in the previous Section 3.2 of this thesis, legislation recommended that SENCOs play a primary role in the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (DfES, 2001b). However, the word ‘inclusion’ itself is a multi-faceted term within a variety of contexts, and note should be made of the particular connotation about which this research project related to.

Inclusion in schools is a human right (Mittler, 2000), an “unending process of increasing learning and participation for all students” (Booth *et al.*, 2000, p.3) that involved the welcoming of and participation by all pupils, regardless of the diversity of their interests, abilities and attainment. Inclusion did not simply stop at the placement of a pupil with special needs in a school, after necessary adjustments had been made. Inclusion was seen as an on-going course of action by all staff in school, which revolved around the ever-changing needs of a child as they progressed through school, both academically, socially, and in an extra-curricular manner. Inclusive practice therefore, was “about the things staff in schools *do* which give meaning to the concept of inclusion” (Florian, 2009, p.38).

Whilst the literature regarding the efficacy of inclusion is inconclusive, it is clear that the need to move towards an education system that is equitable and reduces the marginalisation of children is regarded as essential by a significant number of researchers (Slee, 2001; Florian, 2009; Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). I therefore believe that an inclusive education system is one that values all individuals, regardless of needs or ability and strives to make amendments to schools to ensure that they are afforded learning opportunities that address their individuality and diverse needs.

Previous government strategies had outlined the pivotal role that SENCOs play in:

*“...coordinating provision across the school and linking class and subject teachers with SEN specialists to improve the quality of teaching and learning” (DfES, 2004c).*

Szwed (2007a, p.97) argued that the reality was that SENCOs carried out a wide variety of roles depending upon the environment within which they operated. Within the face of this challenging environment, it was thus fair to say that SENCOs had a marked impact of inclusive school practices, but the extent of this differed from school to school.

At the core of the discussion about how SENCOs impact inclusive school practices was what had commonly come to be referred to as ‘The Inclusion Debate’. This debate arose from the government educational policies in the nineties, in which the ‘inclusion agenda’ was pursued, through an emphasis on the education of children with special needs in mainstream schools, such as the *Education Act 1997* (DfEE, 1997b) and the white paper *Excellence for All Children* (DfEE, 1997a). Although subsequent policies, such as the *Removing Barriers to Achievement* document, did later make mention of the significant role played by Special Schools within the inclusive education framework (DfES, 2004b). As a consequence of those sometimes contradictory policy messages about inclusion, the Debate had come to impact the resultant activity of core participants in that process, that is, the SENCOs and teachers. Indeed, a number of inclusion commentators and researchers maintained that for inclusion to be successful – or indeed, to happen at all – teachers must first feel confident and would need to be appropriately skilled for ‘best practices’, so as to enable optimal SEN provision to be imparted to those children who so require it (Robertson, 1999; Corbett, 2001; Cowne, 2008; Runswick-Cole, 2011, p.117). Interestingly however, it is relevant to make mention here of a point of caution expressed by Tomlinson (1996, p.185) who warned that SENCOs could become “the latest addition to the organisational professionals appointed to solve impossible ideological commitments (i.e. ensuring optimal inclusive practice and SEN provision) and wider educational dilemmas.”



As a counter to the caution above, Peterson, (2013, p.202) reiterated the importance of acknowledging the knowledge and expertise of SENCOs in educational settings, so as to ensure that regulatory implementations were “effectively aligned with the needs of schools, the pupils and teachers.” It is worth noting that the allusion to SENCOs’ roles in ensuring that SEN-specific inclusive initiatives were aligned with the needs of teachers. I found this notion to be noteworthy because my research project is based on the premise that SENCOs do indeed have an impact on teachers’ abilities. As such therefore, Peterson’s research indicates that the initiatives that SENCOs put into place to ensure optimal inclusion can have long-lasting impacts on their teaching colleagues.

The above-mentioned matter raises a further question about the needs of teachers in relation to inclusion and how SENCOs supported them. Wedell (2008a, p.130) contended that a crucial prerequisite for teachers to achieve the pedagogic elements for successful inclusive practice, involved the “awareness” at a point of “concern” for pupils, who might then later go on to be identified as having a ‘learning difficulty’ or a ‘disability’ that might or might not ‘prevent or hinder’ that pupil from making use of what were the “educational facilities of a kind provided in schools”, as detailed in *The Education Act 1996* (DfEE, 1996).

Further, Mackenzie (2012b, p.1075) referred to the need for teachers to have ‘resilience’ in coping with children with SEN, and the difficult emotions associated with the isolation and stress that she maintained, were derived from the “plate spinning and juggling” that teachers do in what they described as the complex and sometimes emotionally-demanding support that they provided to children with SEN. Therefore, we were introduced to what could be termed as the ‘pastoral’ element of the SENCO role in terms of supporting teachers’ inclusive practices. I elaborate upon this aspect further in this thesis, as part of the ‘Findings and Analysis’ Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

The nature of the training and development that SENCOs undertook in terms of ‘upskilling’ their teaching colleagues was also in direct relation to the confidence that teachers should have in terms of addressing the needs of children with SEN in their

classrooms. Pearson (2011a, p.503) affirmed that “professional development has been seen as a key to progress towards inclusive education”, with the overall goal of having “all teachers as teachers of children with SEN”, as similarly advocated in the *Revised SEN Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001b).

Clough (1998, p.67) made a compelling argument about how SENCOs’ teacher-skilling and development knowledge was comparable to the sharing of best practices involved in a role change from “stage management” to “theatre administration” – there was a more comprehensive day-to-day requirement of the knowledge needed to ensure optimal support for those that require it. This was supported in a similar vein by Griffiths and Dubsky (2012, p.168) in their evaluation of the impact of the National Award for SEN Coordination, as they clarified the “concrete and practical impact (that it had) on both SENCOs’ practice and that of their schools... (including) whole-staff workshops... (leading to a) more collaborative approach.”

### 3.3.1 Communication and Bureaucratic Matters

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Barrell (2010, in Hallett and Hallett, 2010, p. 168) emphasised the pivotal role that SENCOs played in giving feedback and support to both teaching and non-teaching colleagues so as to ensure optimal learning opportunities for children with SEN. Indeed, the *SEN Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001b, Section 15) stated that:

*“All teaching and non-teaching staff should be involved in the development of the school’s SEN policy and be fully aware of the school’s procedures for identifying, assessing and making provision for pupils with SEN.”*

This was further replicated as one of the key outcomes for the current SENCO training specifications (TDA, 2010), and highlighted the importance of communication amongst school colleagues.

Griffiths and Dubsky (2012, p.170) made reference to the communication and bureaucratic matters involved in SENCOs’ impact on inclusive school practices, as they defined “enhancers” and “modifiers” of impact. By this, they meant those contextual

factors that either 'enhance' or 'modify' SENCOs' undertaking of their inclusion-oriented responsibilities. Matters alluded to, included the support of senior management, and the associated perceived tensions between 'standards' and 'inclusion', as also emphasised by Cole (2005), in which one teaching colleague commented:

*"We've got people in higher echelons... that make sure blocks are in place. She wants it done her way... other people want it done their way, even when it's done in a non-inclusive way... because they want a high achieving academy" (Griffiths and Dubsy, 2012, p.170).*

The notion of SENCOs either as 'gardeners' or 'landscapers' in their communication of the inclusive elements of SEN support in terms of teachers' practices, was further explored in Griffiths and Dubsy's discussion about inclusion. To illustrate that, a metaphorical illustration was given regarding the practice of SENCOs taking the lead through a "visionary leadership role" in the context of collaborating with teachers, or conversely, a more landscaping-oriented approach, in which transformations were undertaken at a whole-school level (Griffiths and Dubsy, 2012, p.170).

My personal view is that optimal SENCO practice would involve more of a 'landscaping' approach. This was reaffirmed by Rosen-Webb (2013, p.166) who made reference to the "dual foci" of keeping in mind both the learners' needs, as well as the development of colleagues, so as to enable the most favourable conditions for the strategic development and operational management of SEN provisions in a mainstream school.

### 3.3.2 Training and Pedagogical Dilemmas

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Pearson (2010, p.33) delineated "five aporiae" as related to the role of the SENCO. Pearson took note to mention that the term subtly acknowledged both the inherent, unavoidable complexities involved and the uncertainties as related to the SENCO role. The one aporia that was relevant to highlight at that stage was that of SENCOs having the relevant and specialised skills and expertise for ensuring optimal provision for pupils with special educational needs. However at the same time, Pearson, acknowledged the counter-argument in that "legitimising these characteristics is in tension with an

approach in which all teachers are ‘teachers of special educational needs’.” This argument was further substantiated by the *SEND Code of Practice (0-25 years)* which stated that “High quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils is the first step to responding to pupils who have or may have SEN” (DfE, 2014a, Section 6.37), and the subsequent *Carter Review of Initial teacher Training* which indicated that “all teachers are potentially teachers of SEND” (DfE, 2015, p.34).

Whilst SENCOs should possess SEN-specialised knowledge, as argued earlier in this chapter, my own contention is that it is concurrently necessary that all teachers also take ownership of the teaching, and make the necessary adjustments to their pedagogical methods to ensure the appropriate learning for all pupils. Indeed, as Pearson further went on to point out:

*“The presence of expertise and the professional roles held should not be confused... (and that) gains in personal knowledge, skills and understanding through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are necessary” (Pearson, 2010, p.33-34).*

Creese, Daniels and Norwich (1997) and Emanuelsson (2001, p.136) affirmed the significance of the SENCOs’ own training, and the subsequent dissemination of skills to teachers, as well as the importance of the receptiveness of teaching colleagues in schools to be thus inclined to take on board the knowledge and training as so deemed by the SENCO.

### 3.3.3 SENCOs and Parents

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Burton and Goodman (2011, p.142) emphasised the effective communication skills required for SENCOs and teaching staff in general, to liaise with parents of children with SEN. Indeed, it was a historically-documented fact that parental involvement in children’s education was directly linked to their academic attainment and socio-cultural well-being (DCSF, 2007). Blamires *et al.* (2013) acknowledged the critical role played by a SENCO in allaying parents’ concerns with regard to the various facets of SEN provision. Research by Barnes (2008) also evidenced the various tensions felt by parents in

identification and assessment of the needs of their children with SEN, and how SENCOs were key agents in helping to explain the sometimes complicated matters involved therein. Indeed, the significance of being aware of what was happening in the home environments of children with SEN, and SENCO's ability to involve parents in their child's education, had a marked impact on whether or not SENCOs and related school professionals were subsequently able to respond and made the corresponding appropriate and necessary academic and extra-curricular provisions for such children in school (Burton and Goodman, 2011, p.143; Anders *et al.*, 2011, p.436).

Wedell (2008b, p.57) however, made note of the dilemma involved in that exchange. He pointed out that situations did indeed arise at times when SENCOs felt their practices and SEN-related judgements and commitments were questioned by parents. That predicament was further sensitised by the prevalent feeling, as noted by Wedell, that parents did not always empathise with the pressured environment within which SENCOs operated. The corresponding side of a different coin of that nature was also that SENCOs sometimes saw parents as making "unreasonable demands and attempts to manipulate procedural aspects of the (SEN) Code to their advantage" (Wedell, 2008b, p.57). That matter was of timely concern with the impending legislation in which parents of children with SEN would have access to a personal budget to spend on the support for their child's education (DfE, 2011; BBC, 2011).

Robertson's (2012, p.79) commentary about the above-mentioned guidance, *Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability* (DfE, 2011), in terms of qualifying inclusion as being subject to 'limits' and parental preferences with regard to those resources – human, financial, conceptual and material – supported my contention, and that of SENCOs' too, that it could lead to a "resource-based provision... (which) when supported by (the current government's) counter inclusive rhetoric, may lead to the increased marginalisation of pupils."

Cole (2005, p.303) had highlighted the issue of how the evolving nature of the SENCO role and its associated discrepancies may be interpreted by parents and various other agencies, in a question:

*“Who will decide what this professionalism will contain: policy-makers, the Government, SENCOs, LEAs, teachers, parents, the children, the community at large, or commerce and industry? What will the priorities be for SENCOs and what will count as success?”*

Pearson (2010, p.35) made reference to the differing views of efficiency that parents had with regard to the support role of a SENCO and parents’ views of how SENCOs executed the empathetic, caring and emotional aspect of the role. Pearson noted a specific example of one SENCO who reported that “(the parent of a child with SEN) probably thinks that I (the SENCO) am very ineffective, because we haven’t got anyone working one-to-one with her child” (Pearson, 2010, p.35). Pearson further noted that this particular SENCO recognised that the perceptions (of parents of a child with SEN) with regard to her professional effectiveness might vary. In further explaining this dilemma of varying expectations from parents, that is faced by a SENCO, Pearson discussed how, to address the matter, the SENCO was actively engaged in a process of reconciling external parental perspectives, and as a result, also managed her own internal professional self-perception. To further evidence this contention, Blandford’s (2012,p.14) work established that one of the key outcomes of the *Lamb Report* (2009) was a change in policy which resulted in a positive impact on parental attitudes with their increased involvement at the local level in the development of support packages for their children.

Robertson (2012, p.79), in a review of the upcoming legislation regarding landmark reforms to SEN policy, provision and practice, maintained how the “political determination to replace the value of inclusion with the value of parental choice or preference” could result in a variety of dilemmas, stemming from financial allocation matters, to the issues related to a choice or worth of particular interventions which parents might want for their children, but which would not normally have otherwise been recommended by SENCOs.

As a concluding note to this section therefore, it is relevant to reiterate that whilst there was undeniable benefit of SENCOs including parental voice within their plans for SEN

provision as regard specific children, it was also worthwhile being cognisant of the need for parents to be appropriately informed, so as to enable them to make optimal decisions for their children.

### 3.4 Research Questions Reviewed

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At this point, it is appropriate to review specific research parameters that this project investigated:

1. Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
2. Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
3. How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

The following sub-sections within this chapter are based on an examination of each research question above, in the context of SENCO-teacher interactions.

#### 3.4.1 Motivation in the SENCO-Teacher Context

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Motivational factors exert an inordinate degree of influence on a person's needs and wants. Humans, unlike animals, do not rely wholly on instincts, but are influenced by learned behaviour. Therefore, it was important for me, a researcher, to reflect upon the various motivational influences as regards SENCOs and teachers, so as to understand the driving factors behind their chosen lines of work.

##### 3.4.1.1 Definition of Motivation

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In considering motivation, I found it useful to draw upon research from a number of disciplines. Researchers working in the field of business studies had drawn upon the work of various theorists whose works were relevant to the nature of educational leadership and practice as well, in particular, the SENCO-teacher dynamic. In view of the demanding nature of Special Needs Educational support, the needs-driven theories

would stand out as those most relevant to determining motivational factors. Of the two main needs-driven theories: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), and Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1959), I chose to focus on the latter, as it related directly to motivational theories as regards the workplace, as opposed to Maslow's more holistic review of human developmental psychology.

According to Herzberg (1959), motivational factors in the workplace consisted of two elements: 'Motivation' factors, or those which cause job satisfaction, whilst at the opposite end of the spectrum, there were the 'Hygiene' factors that led to dissatisfaction. What specifically stood out for me, as regards the relation of Herzberg's Dual-Factor theory to my research about the SENCO-Teacher dynamic, was that to help explain the fundamental part of his theory, Herzberg maintained that the factors which motivated people at work were different to and not simply the opposite of the factors which caused dissatisfaction. He wrote:

*"We can expand ... by stating that the job satisfiers deal with the factors involved in doing the job, whereas the job dissatisfiers deal with the factors which define the job context"* (Herzberg, 1959, p.82).

I felt that was particularly relevant for my research, as I had come to realise that there were no clear delineations between motivators and demotivators, and that what might be perceived as motivators in one context might not necessarily have had the same effect or be discerned in the same way by the various school personnel in question. Having considered Herzberg's work which was largely located within a business research environment, it was possible to relate that to my own field of study, as was similarly done by Shuttleworth (2005) in her doctoral study titled, *'Why on earth do you want to teach those kids?: insight into the initial and continuing motivation of teachers of children with EBD'*.

In terms of my own definition of motivation in the context of SENCOS' interactions with teachers, a successful SENCO should be one who is sensitive to the needs and aspirations of ones' colleagues, so as to inspire commitment to their roles. Whilst supporting and meeting the needs of children with SEN, professionals must have their



needs noticed and listened to by SENCOs. Furthermore, teaching colleagues should be encouraged, trusted, appreciated and made to feel like valued members of the school system. It is essential that SENCOs value teachers' input as they endeavour to inform their practice, whilst contributing to the development of their SEN-management skills and abilities.

Garner (1999) recognised that it is uniquely challenging to teach 'pupils with problems'. Indeed, in 2000, Ainscow, indirectly alluding to the matters of motivators and demotivators, stated, "the field of special education faces deep changes in relation to its thinking and practices" (Ainscow, 2000a, p.1). That statement was directly impacted by the concept of SENCO-teacher motivational elements, as they formed a key component of mainstream school environments. Furthermore, motivation also encompassed the various regular patterns in routines, SEN support, planned and implemented provisions; teacher attitudes towards SEN, SENCO support (Mittler, 2000) and was an over-arching factor in ensuring the national agenda for inclusion was given due diligence and was foremost in all teaching practices.

#### 3.4.1.2 Aspects of the SENCO-Teacher Dynamic within the Classroom

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Mittler (2000, p.124) succinctly summarised the SENCO-Teacher dynamic within the classroom, by affirming that "the SENCO's first task was to support ordinary teachers in carrying out their responsibilities to teach all children." Indeed, there was evidence to suggest that in many instances, teachers were motivated by the actions of SENCOs in supporting their professional practice. Rose (2001, p.148), as we have already examined, established how "SENCOs in mainstream schools have become regarded as the first port of call in dealing with pupils who present teachers with a learning challenge." This was reflected in my own research and will be discussed later in this thesis within the 'Findings and Analysis' Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

However, at the same time, there were various complexities regarding the nature of the SENCO-teacher motivational dynamic. Mackenzie (2012a) discussed this issue in a study specifically focused on what factors led to teacher retention within schools, in a

research study aptly titled, *'I Can't Imagine Doing Anything Else': Why Do Teachers of Children with SEN Remain in the Profession? Resilience, Rewards and Realism Over Time*. She particularly emphasised the word "resilience" in the context of teacher motivation, citing Howard and Johnson (2004, in Mackenzie, 2012a, p.152) who first used the concept, defined as the "strong sense of vocation, self-efficacy and motivation to teach which are fundamental to a concern for promoting achievement in all aspects of students' lives." Key factors in teacher motivation supported by SENCOs, as identified by Mackenzie, included:

1. The intellectual challenge and the unique rewards, such as the 'buzz' of working with children with SEN
2. Situated factors, including whole-school change motivated by SEN-support

(Mackenzie, 2012a, p.155-156).

These will each be examined separately:

1. The intellectual challenge and the unique rewards: the 'buzz' of working with children with SEN

Mackenzie, in another study regarding the myriad emotions of teachers of children with SEN, quoted Hargreaves (1998, p.835, in Mackenzie, 2012b, p. 1069) in maintaining that "...good teachers are... passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy." However, the associated "expertism discourse" (p.1079) which inevitably emerged from any SEN-support related discussion, identified factors relating to matters of teachers being confident in terms of their knowledge-base to ensure the appropriate level of provision for children with SEN.

Mackenzie (2012b, p. 1074) supported this notion further in a discussion about the caring, emotional aspects of the role, the 'buzz' and importance of 'passion' in teachers' work. Participants in her study discussed how SEN was "in their blood" and how one was "born to be a SENCO." At the same time, the negative emotions associated with motivation were also acknowledged, including the physical and emotional demands; the

stressful nature of SEN-related support, including “staff attitudes towards inclusion and the frustrations of working with particular pupils” (Mackenzie, 2012b, p. 1076).

2. Situated factors, including whole-school change motivated by SEN-support  
Burnett (2005) and Rose (2001, p.148) emphasise the creation of inter-related conditions for successful inclusion in schools, such as those including collaborative team work; a shared framework (Ekins, 2012); general educator ownership; clear role relationships amongst professionals; effective use of support staff; meaningful Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and procedures for evaluating effectiveness. Therefore, whilst the SENCO had a pivotal role in ensuring teacher motivation through situational factors, it was also imperative, as highlighted by Ekins (2012, p.55) that “teachers understand that they cannot rely solely on others (including the SENCO) to meet the needs of pupils with SEN.”

Kearns (2005, p.139), in the various roles that he delineated for SENCOs, said that in their function as ‘Rescuers’, SENCOs showed “a strong empathy for teachers and pupils in need, and an awareness of anxiety and pressure to improve pupil behaviour and achievement.” Rosen-Webb (2011) also conducted research amongst SENCOs in which she found that empathy and maintaining positive relationships had a direct correlation with the progress of students with SEN. Gascoigne (2014, p.5) described the SENCO as the “linchpin” of a school’s SEN policy, and a crucial person in terms of the parent-child-school partnership, and external “filter” contact for outside agencies, enabling parents to make sense of the social and emotional experiences involved in having a child with SEN. Indeed, Mackenzie (2007, p.214) had also alluded to this caring and emotional aspect of the SENCO role as she described SENCOs within her research cohort as seeing their role “as learning to help teachers and parents clarify their concerns and to help them feel positive about the process of inclusion.”

Conversely, Mackenzie (2012b, p.1078) highlighted the negative aspects regarding situational factors, including “frustration...with paperwork, statementing and other colleagues”, as well as the ‘frustration’ engendered by ever-changing SEN policies and the feeling of being “deskilled” as a result of the “rollercoaster” changes in legislation,

resulting in much “plate-spinning” and “ball-juggling” (p.1080). As early as 1997, Male’s research explored the impact of ‘Stress, Burnout and Workload in Teachers of Children with Special Educational Needs’, concluding that unreasonable workloads and challenging behaviour were primary considerations in such situations. Mittler further explored the increasingly worrying pace of legislative upheaval as “an avalanche of change in which (teachers) views have not been seriously considered” (2000, p.134); and emphasised that SENCOs and indeed the school leadership teams as a whole should take into account teachers’ attitudes when putting into effect policy practices.

At the same time, research indicating the “muddying role of the SENCO” (Rosen-Webb, 2011, p.160), the “uncertainty” (Hallett and Hallett, 2010, p.6) and the consequent status quo of it being open to variation and interpretation (Derrington, Evans, and Lee, 1996; Norwich, 2010; Petersen, 2010; Robertson, 2012), meant that the resultant environmental factors relating to motivation that influenced the impact of SENCOs upon teachers’ practices were in a state of flux and varied as per school contexts.

#### 3.4.2 The Enhancement of Teachers’ skills as attributable to SENCOs

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Pearson *et al.* (2011, p.42-43) conducted an in-depth examination of formal CPD as regards SENCOs and the support that the CPD played in the execution of their roles. In terms of professional development, differentiation was first made in terms of formal versus informal CPD, and an acknowledgement given of the ambiguities in drawing up a direct co-relation between CPD and the impact on performance. However, in light of that ambiguity, Pearson *et al.* (2011) undertook a discussion about SENCOs’ own learning in terms of changes to the knowledge structure that they sought as a result of CPD-related training. Within that framework, the authors concluded that the development of teachers’ skills as attributable to SENCOs is complex. They further maintained that there were a number of superficial factors, and naïve linear connections between CPD and outcomes, which meant that the relationship could not always be well-defined, although the bulk of the facts did support the importance of training for professional growth.

### 3.4.2.1 Overview of SENCOs' Training (National Award)

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The requirement for schools to appoint a SENCO to coordinate the provision and implementation of various initiatives around children with SEN, have existed since 1994. Initially, the role was taken on by parent volunteers, and then later transitioned into a more official role, in which a paid member of staff, most usually a Teaching Assistant, executed the SENCO-related responsibilities.

SENCOs are central to supporting children's inclusion and achievement, as evidenced by the various training policies and procedures that had been developed relating to them. The first of which was the National Standards that were introduced in 1998 to help SENCOs in their roles. These Standards illustrated key areas of SEN coordination and in addition to defining the core purpose of the SENCO as someone who:

*"...with the support of the head teacher and governing body, takes responsibility for the day-to-day operation of provision made by the school for pupils with SEN and provides professional guidance in the area of SEN in order to secure the high quality teaching and the effective use of resources to bring about improved standards of achievement for all pupils" (TTA, 1998, p.5).*

In 2008, the Government launched a *Consultation on Draft Regulations for the Training of Newly Appointed Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in England* (DCSF, 2008). The regulation came into force in September 2009, and prescribed the qualifications and experience of SENCOs, setting out governing bodies' associated functions, as well as plans for national accredited training for new SENCOs (DCSF, 2009b).

The current course, the 'National Award for SEN Coordination', was a mandatory professional development for all new to role SENCOs and those who had been working in their respective schools in the SENCO role for less than 12 months prior to September 2009 (DCSF, 2009). As per the legislation's guidelines, therefore, the intention was that by 2011, all SENCOs would be a qualified teacher or the head teacher, which was indeed the case, as my research illustrated. Legislative guidelines did, however, also suggest

that aspects of the role could still be supported by non-teaching staff — either as individuals or part of a team (DCSF, 2009, p.3 and Cowne, 2008, p.11).

#### 3.4.2.2 CPD within schools

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Mittler (2000) maintained that professional development of teachers was central to the achievement of what might be termed ‘successful’ inclusive education. Indeed, Tissot (2013,p.35) affirmed the central role that a SENCO played in terms of guiding and facilitating staff to ensure that differentiated provision was put into place, despite the fact that there were rare occasions when “some teachers are less accepting of this fact.”

My own contention is that SENCOs do indeed play an integral part in the dissemination of CPD within school, ably supported by their own CPD (including the National Award for SEN Coordination, as well as the more specialised and SEN-condition-specific training). This is further evidenced by the information shared with me during my formal interviews with SENCOs, as well as extensive informal discussions with both SENCOs and teachers alike, during the course of my research project. This topic of SENCO training and skills dissemination in the context of the research questions of this project, shall be discussed in depth later in Sections 7.2, 8.2 and 9.2 of this thesis.

#### 3.4.3 SENCO Impact in current school contexts

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Wedell (2004, p.105) stated that:

*“SENCOs have a tremendous commitment to their work, and that, in some instances, this led them to accept very unreasonable workloads.”*

This assertion was further reaffirmed by Pearson (2008, p.104) whose data demonstrated the continuing negative impact of workloads upon SENCOs, in relation to a variety of factors, such as time, bureaucratic policies, procedures and practices, inconsistent patterns of remuneration and a lack of status for the requisite expertise that was associated with the job. Rosen-Webb, in 2011 (p.159) stated that “the SENCO role is unclear in both policy contexts and in the research literature.” More recently, Tissot (2013, p.37) ascertained that whilst government guidance did indeed seem to

differ from the manner in which SENCOs were actually undertaking their roles within schools, a majority of their concerns lay around the matter of their day-to-day jobs being focused on low-level tasks, such as paperwork and the more functional tasks, such as making phone calls to set up appointments, as opposed to spending a majority of their time actually ensuring the appropriate implementation of provisions and SEN-related measures.

Furthermore, varied interpretations about the recommendation in the *Revised SEN Code of Practice* (2001b) regarding the SENCO being a member of the Senior Leadership Team, as well as vast differences in terms of the teaching versus non-teaching responsibilities of SENCOs, meant that those in-role in SENCOs post needed to prioritise their responsibilities amidst a plethora of other timetabled activities (Tissot, 2013, p.38).

It was therefore in this context that my research had been undertaken, and shall be further explored and discussed in terms of the methodological approach that I then chose to adopt for the study.

### 3.5 Chapter Three Key Points

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Chapter three introduced the historical and current literature relating to the SENCO-teacher dynamic, and the impact that SENCOs have on inclusive school practices, the key points of which were:

- SENCOs have been documented as ‘agents of change’ in relation to whole school inclusion (Cole, 2005; Cowne, 2005; Cowne 2008; Qureshi, 2010, Morewood, 2011; Morewood, 2012; Qureshi, 2014; Pearson *et al.*, 2015).
- Mittler (2000, p.134) commented on the increasingly worrying pace of legislative upheaval as “an avalanche of change in which (teachers) views have not been seriously considered”; and emphasised that SENCOs and indeed the school leadership teams as a whole should take into account teachers’ attitudes when putting into effect policy practices.
- Sections 4.14, 5.30 and 6.32 within the *SEN Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001b) make mention of how SENCOs should take the lead in providing professional guidance

to colleagues to ensure optimal teaching strategies and techniques for all children, particularly those with SEN, in tandem with Rose's contention (2001, p.148), that:

*"Before inclusion can be achieved, it will be necessary for all teachers to accept a responsibility for the education of all pupils."*



## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY PART 1 – RESEARCH APPROACH, PARADIGM AND SAMPLING STRATEGY

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### Chapter Summary

Chapter four presents a discussion of the research approach, paradigm and main sampling strategies that were utilised for the purposes of this project. An overview of the finalised research participant cohort and an explanation of the codes ascribed to participants for the purposes of reporting this project are also discussed.

### 4.1 Introduction

Research within the increasingly complex and varied environment of SEN in England, necessitated an in-depth examination of diverse aspects that related to past and current SEN-related practices. Elliot maintained that:

*“Educational research needs to be redirected towards the systematic development of a body of knowledge that is capable of informing practical judgements...”* (Elliot, 2001, p.556).

The emphasis of this research on evidence-based practice, and the research orientation of this particular project which involved an investigation about the impact of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) on teachers’ abilities to address SEN in English Primary Schools. Ultimately, as a researcher I want to influence change in practice because my own personal belief is that teaching is a profession of never-ending professional development. However, this will be more readily achieved on the basis of evidence gathered through investigations of this nature, as change is best effected when founded upon research evidence.

There is potential for improvement in practice and the manner in which teachers and school staff address the needs of children within their classrooms, particularly the needs of children with SEN; and indeed, this idea is supported by a plethora of research (Frost and Harris, 2003; Lewis and Ogilvie, 2003; Dockrell and Lindsay, 2007; Mitchell, 2007;

Morrison and Glenny, 2012; Lindsay and Dockrell, 2014). It is appropriate to mention here though, that Lindsay and Dockrell (2014, p.213) also acknowledged that despite the “multifaceted evidence base (being) a very rich resource that has been valued”, the interface between evidence-based policies and their alignment with practice for children with SEN is a complex affair. Despite Hammersley’s contention that educational research did not always have relevance and impact as claimed by various proponents, (Hammersley, 2007, p.37), I shared the same view as Hargreaves who asserted that there was a definite potential for educational research to have a more optimal impact (Hargreaves, 2007, p.43). However, this depends on the nature through which research is applied in respective schools.

It was important to recognise that while this research was undertaken with the overall objective of unearthing answers to key questions within a field, *how* the findings and recommendations of research were then put into practice, and the realism and practicality within which this was done, by default, reflected upon the usefulness of the research. Indeed, this particular belief of mine is further echoed by Goldacre’s assertion about the importance that evidence not be misrepresented, but instead, being purposive and utilised to affect changes for optimal practice because:

*“By collecting better evidence about what works best, and establishing a culture where this evidence is used as a matter of routine, we can improve outcomes for children, and increase professional independence”* (Goldacre, 2013, p.4).

This assertion was almost mirrored word for word by Wedell’s summary of a discussion on the SENCO Forum in that “SENCOs all agreed that teachers should be guided by ‘what works’ for children” (Wedell, 2014a, p.106).

It was with this view, that I informed my methodological approach to this project, the main research parameters which I investigated being as follows:

1. Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?

2. Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
3. How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

#### 4.2 Qualitative Research Approach and Justification

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My research is primarily a qualitative study, which can be described as being undertaken in the context of “social research in which the researcher relies (mainly) on text data, rather than numerical data” (Carter and Little, 2007, p.1316). However, I also make reference to quantitative school and SEN demographic data so as to ensure a more comprehensive illustration of participants’ school environments, and their associated responsibilities in ensuring optimal provision for children with SEN.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.49) made reference to the term “fitness for purpose” in a discussion with regard to the choice of a particular research approach. In view of the variety of approaches available, my decision to use a mixed-methods approach will be examined in detail below.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2002) and Johnson *et al.* (2007) discussed the significance of using mixed methods in research projects that related to complex educational or social contexts. Klingner and Boardman further asserted that:

*“A broader view of research that encompasses mixed methods would enable special education scholars to collect (relevant) empirical data... thereby expanding the kinds of research problems that can be addressed...”* (Klingner and Boardman, 2011, p. 208).

Berliner further reiterated that “mixed-methods designs are better suited to unravelling educational phenomena of “enormous complexity” (Berliner, 2002, p.20), whilst Greene (2008, p.20) ascertained that mixed methods “actively engages us with difference and diversity in service of both better understanding and greater equity of voice.” Also, whilst focusing specifically on the importance of mixed methods research in SEN, Mertens and McLaughlin (2004, p. 113) reiterated that these had the potential to

contribute towards addressing multiple purposes and therefore, towards meeting the needs of multiple audiences. In the context of the current research project, the methods used referred to the qualitative and quantitative questionnaire surveys, as well as the qualitative interviews that were conducted for the purposes of data collection. However, the basic quantitative aspect of the current project related specifically to the collection of demographic data, and that aside from that information, the research was primarily a qualitative project which collated data with regard to the study of SENCO impact on teachers.

The main focus of my project is centred on the qualitative data obtained from interviews with participants. Rose and Grosvenor maintained that “interviews allow the researcher to explore complex issues in detail, (and) to probe beneath the surface of events” (Rose and Grosvenor, 2001, p.112). Brown and Dowling further emphasised the usefulness of interviews to find out “how people think” and “how they construct meaning” (Brown and Dowling, 1998, p.60). My personal view is that qualitative data is more vivid in description, and enables one to undertake an in-depth exploration of personalised perceptions and opinions. Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Schwandt (2001 (p.118 in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), Creswell (2012, p.204), Silverman (2010, p.117) and Mertens and McLaughlin (2004, p.96), all key authors who explore qualitative methodological domains, maintained the importance of ensuring diversity and richness of qualitative data collected to paint a descriptive and informative picture of complex educational issues. It was within that context that my project sat mainly as a qualitative study.

I opted to undertake data collection in two phases: the first phase involving survey questionnaires, and the second, in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews. I chose not to use focus groups during the course of my research because I specifically wanted to explore individual SENCOs’ and teachers’ experiences and views in person, and not encourage group discussion, as school environments vary to a large degree, and this particular variable would potentially impact the nature of discussion within a focus group.

Furthermore, observational techniques were also ruled out because I wanted to be able to probe and prompt participants based on information given to me, as the focus of my research is related to impact which is a concept that is not always visible in actual school or classroom-based situations which occur within a restricted timeframe as per the daily timetable.

In the rest of this chapter, I shall further discuss the methodological choices I made, and their implications, along with the measures I took to address various associated methodological issues that arose during the course of the project.

#### 4.2.1 Survey Questionnaires

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The main reasoning behind the selection of self-administered questionnaires as my first instrument of primary data collection, was the potential of that method to gain access to a larger sample. The questionnaires were intended to elicit information to inform the interviews for the second phase, and also to gain specific information about SENCOs in view of my limited background knowledge and experience of the role. An ongoing review of the literature regarding SENCOs, teachers, inclusion, SEN teaching and support also formed the basis for the development of survey questions.

My methodological decisions and choices, besides being guided by my supervisor, had also been influenced by three key studies in the arena of SENCO roles conducted by known researchers in the field at various points during the past decade, who had also utilised similar modes of instrumentation (Crowther, Dyson and Millward, 2001; Szwed, 2007a and Pearson, 2008b). Each study acknowledged the strengths and limitations associated with questionnaires, but maintained the convenience of ensuring a wide pool for the exploratory nature of data collection.

Robson (2002, p. 233) maintained that survey questionnaires provided a relatively simple and straightforward approach to study specific information - in my case, SENCOs' attitudes, values, beliefs and motives. That was opposed to interviews, observations or

case studies, for example, which were more time-consuming in nature and by default, were more exclusive in terms of the research cohort.

It was imperative to recognise that there are strengths and weaknesses associated with any type of instrument through which data is collected. In view of the various advantages as discussed above, I also felt that questionnaires would enable me to approach a wider audience for the exploratory nature of data collection at that stage, along with a general consistency in terms of the structure of responses. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.317) acknowledged, using questionnaires as an instrument of collecting data could have some pitfalls, the most noteworthy of which was the possible ambiguity in terms of the respondents' interpretations or meanings associated with the information sought. They further discussed the limitation of the "flexibility of response" in questionnaires. That matter was further elucidated by Robson (2002, p. 228) who stated that:

*"Often, however, there is no obvious reality test (of survey questionnaires) and judgements of reliability and validity have to fall back on an analysis of how the survey was carried out."*

The data that I received through the open and close-ended questionnaires, with the exception of that related to demographics and context was generally qualitative in nature. This is because I had intentionally structured questions with an exploratory, knowledge-building base in mind. Indeed, Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.41), refer to such a practice as that of "blue skies' research (as it) is open-ended, exploratory, contributes something original to the substantive field and extends the frontiers of knowledge and theory." This is in contrast to 'applied research' in which there is usually a theory which is interrogated or tested.

Using this knowledge base, I then went on to address the issue of trustworthiness in the data I collected through the survey questionnaires, through interviews in which I probed further as regards participants' views that needed to be explored and dissected for the purpose of the study. The matter of 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)

regarding the data collected for this project is explored in more detail within the next chapter, in Section 5.4.2 of this thesis.

To summarise, the structure of the research project revolved around two separate phases of data collection. The first being survey questionnaires of 223 (response n=42) SENCOs through which data was elicited and then used as a base upon which to inform the questions and information for the second phase of semi-structured interviews. A detailed examination of the process through which those questionnaires were developed, streamlined, piloted and then finally administered is discussed within the next chapter in Section 5.2 and its sub-sections.

It is relevant to mention the three invalid questionnaire responses that were also received, as they had been filled in by SENCOs in secondary schools, and therefore, were those who did not fulfil the criteria for participation in my project. This is because, as reported by Lingard (2001, p.189), Mackenzie (2007, p.213) and Brown and Doveston (2014, p.496) there are variations in how the SENCO role is interpreted between primary and secondary phases, and my research project focused only on the primary phase.

#### 4.2.2 In-depth Semi-structured Interviews

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The second phase of this research project consisted of semi-structured, one-to-one interviews of SENCOs, head teachers, deputy head teachers and teachers. This enabled me to obtain the data that I required from my respondents via a more personalised and flexible approach through open-ended questions, during which I probed and prompted the participants as and when required. This strategy is explored in greater depth during a discussion later in this thesis about how the questionnaire and subsequent semi-structured interview schedule was developed. I was also able to explore the reasoning behind various thoughts and opinions that respondents expressed as a result of conducting face-to-face interviews. Although 21 SENCOs had initially agreed to be interviewed, three later declined to be interviewed as one went on maternity leave and two others gave general workload-related reasons.

Besides challenges faced in interviewing SENCOs, I also faced others in accessing the participants for the teacher interviews. This was mainly due to one school which had agreed to participate, being put into Special Measures following an OfSTED inspection two weeks before I was to go in to speak with them. Therefore, instead of the originally intended 22 teachers, I was only able to interview 18 teachers.

It is relevant to note at this stage, that I considered Denzin's assertion that an interview can be treated as a number of instances and analysed in great depth, (Denzin 2012, cited in Baker and Edwards, 2012, p. 23), and the National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM's) paper on '*How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough?*', in which it was posited that the optimal number is dependent on the:

*"...epistemological and methodological questions about the nature and purpose of the research: whether the focus of the objectives and of analysis is on commonality or difference or uniqueness or complexity or comparison or instances"* (Baker and Edwards, 2012, p.42).

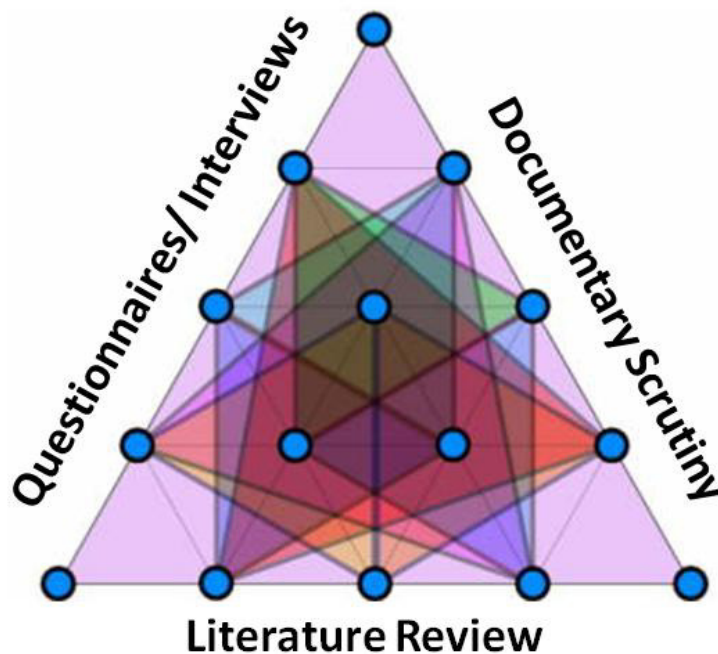
At this stage, following comprehensive discussions with my supervisory team about the data that I had transcribed from my interviews, it was concluded that I had sufficient data to satisfactorily engage in analysis, as a process for answering the project's research questions.

During the second phase of interviews, I also undertook a document scrutiny of school SEN policies and other related documentation that evidenced SENCOs' impact and input into teachers' practices. This was undertaken simultaneously during the interviews, as I had requested all SENCOs and teachers to share such documents with me beforehand. Therefore, during the interviews, SENCOs and teachers alike, were able to refer to the documents (the anonymised hard copies which I was then given to keep) and explain to me how they used the documents to support inclusive teaching practices. For example, some SENCOs showed me the provision maps that they used, and how these tied in with a child's Target Workbook, which enabled them to chart children's progress and target achievement. Other teachers shared with me the Pupil monitoring and pupil interview forms, and during my interviews with them, gave specific examples of the children, with



the accompanying paperwork to evidence their support. As a result of this exercise, I collected an array of supporting documentation that evidence inclusive practices within schools. These documents are listed in Section 4.2.3 shortly in this chapter.

Through this three-pronged methodological approach, that included survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document scrutiny, it was my intention to ensure the simultaneous triangulation of data (Creswell, 1994, p.182; Patton, 1999, 2001; Bell, 2005, p.116), so as to try to ensure the verification and trustworthiness of this data (Silverman, 2010, p. 277; Guba, 1981, p.75). At all times, I was also mindful of the need to ensure the concept of ‘trustworthiness’ of data, as affirmed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Robson (2002, p.93).



**Figure 4.1: Multi-method approach to data triangulation (Image adapted from [http://www.terrystickels.com/spatial-visual-puzzles\\_4.html](http://www.terrystickels.com/spatial-visual-puzzles_4.html))**

Another informal resource that supported the triangulation process, and one which I adopted simply as an informal knowledge base, rather than a formal source of data, was my online subscription to ‘The SENCO Forum’. The Forum, hosted online by the Department for Education, was established in 1996, as a resource for those supporting children with SEN, “with the aim of providing an opportunity to discuss issues and share

practical advice of help SENCOs in carrying out their roles. The Forum has a commitment to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and inclusion, and to offering a solution-focused, collaborative and mutually supportive resource” (DfE, 2014b). This resource helped to keep me up to date with the legislative developments, as well as specific discussion points and current areas of concern that SENCOs raised about their own practices at various stages of the academic year (Wedell, 2001, p.98). The knowledge benefits of the Forum were also similarly concluded during an independent research project conducted by Lewis and Ogilvie (2003); and further substantiated by Kershner (2007). It was also a useful insight for me with regard to explanations of how certain concepts, for example, the policy of ‘Pupil Premium’ works. Although not directly related to my research, such points of information were useful in understanding various technicalities of SENCOs and teachers’ responsibilities in schools.

The SENCO Update Newsletter, was also a useful source of information for me, in terms of expanding my knowledge-base about SENCO-related matters, particularly with regard to columns written from SENCOs’ perspectives, and the case studies described within each issue.

#### 4.2.3 Document Scrutiny

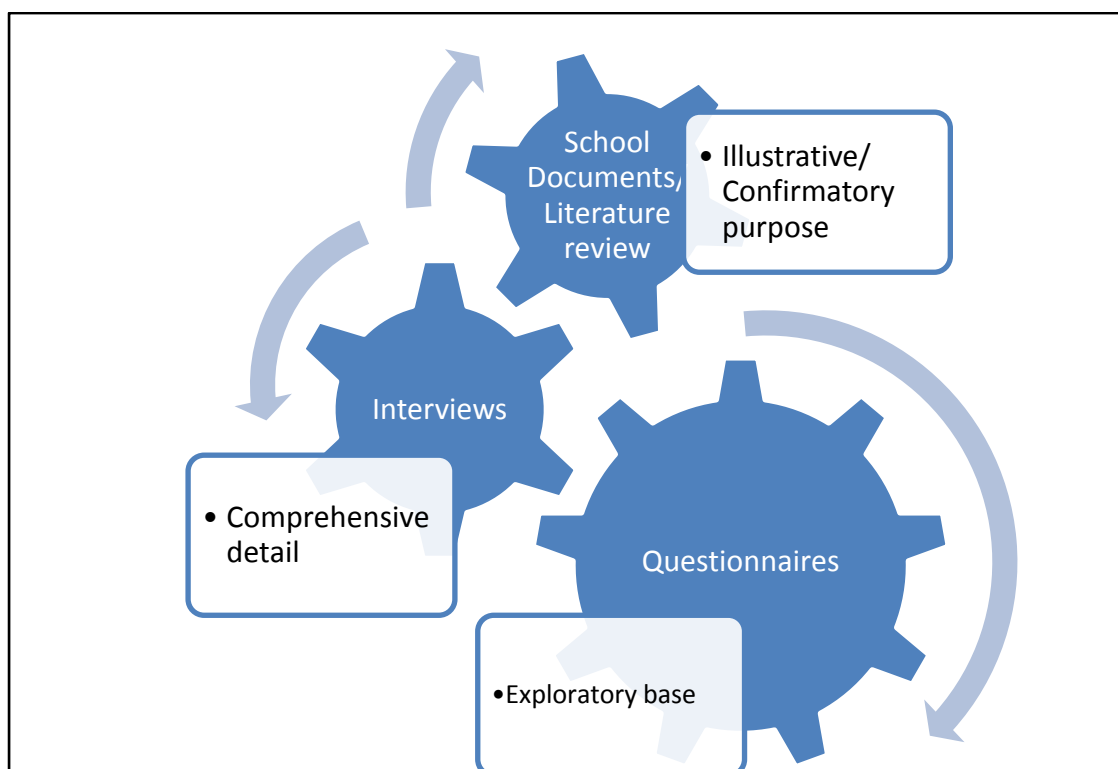
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The various documents that were collected during the course of this research project to evidence the SENCO-teacher relationship, included:

1. SEN Assessment to Provision Model/ Provision maps
2. IEPs
3. Child’s Target workbook + other adopted forms to evaluate child’s progress
4. Pupil monitoring forms/ pupil interviews
5. Staff questionnaire for SEN support staff/ Lesson observation forms/ 1:1 tuition survey before-after
6. Parent/ carer questionnaire
7. Job descriptions
8. Performance management plan

9. SEN improvement/ monitoring plan + SEN Action plan (including list for strategies used to support targeted children)
10. SEN report to governors + whole school + “The story so far...” summary for OFSTED
11. SEN policies
12. Inclusion policies
13. Others:
  - a. Disability access plan
  - b. Good behaviour policy/ behaviour and discipline policy
  - c. Confidentiality policy
  - d. A guide to special needs through inclusion
  - e. Disability access plan
  - f. Fixed and permanent exclusion policy
  - g. Procedures to protect vulnerable pupils
  - h. Policy on looked-after children
  - i. Policy on disability discrimination
  - j. Policy on teaching assistants
  - k. NCC safeguarding/ child protection policy

To summarise my qualitative approach to data collection and triangulation therefore, it is possible to review each instrument via the purpose behind its utility, as illustrated in the summary in Figure 4.2 on the next page:



**Figure 4.2: Data source triangulation cross-referenced with specific purposes**

#### 4.2.4 Mini-case Study Vignettes

Vignettes are defined as ‘short descriptions of a person or a social situation which contain precise references to what are thought to be the most important factors in the decision-making or judgement-making processes of respondents’ (Lee, 1993 in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 130). I employed the use of these mini-case studies later in this thesis during the ‘Findings and Analysis’ Chapters 7, 8 and 9 to give an enhanced view of the various environments within which my research participants undertook their roles.

I specifically selected to undertake the use of vignettes, as tools to depict “a vivid account of a professional's practice” (Miles, 1990, p. 37) as the process enabled me to better set the context of the interview, and the SENCOs’ and teachers’ practice. Indeed, Poulou in a study about the role of vignettes in research about the support given by teachers to children with emotional and behaviour difficulties, maintained that these are “concrete and specific, and delineate precisely the situation under investigation. Therefore, they provide the means of eliciting both individualised and comparable responses” (Poulou, 2001, p.58). It is therefore with this in mind, that I selected

vignettes as a tool to illustrate the selected quotes in a more informed setting for a reader to evaluate.

To further illustrate the vignettes, I have endeavoured to provide a comprehensive picture of the demographic information of the schools and SEN context within which each of my research participant's function. This has been done through the allocation of a Participant ID Code, which is described in detail in Section 4.4.2 later in this chapter, and illustrated in Table 4.4.

### 4.3 The Research Paradigm

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Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108, in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), acknowledged that qualitative "purists" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.14) discussed research philosophy as revolving around paradigms of inquiry, which were basic belief systems, or world views, from which a researcher approached a particular study. Each paradigm had three primary aspects with reference to the ontological, epistemological and methodological nature of projects. Ontology referred to the nature of reality, whilst epistemology can be defined as what constitutes acceptable knowledge in the field of study, and methodology reflected the methods used by a researcher to answer the study's questions in view of the ontological and epistemological facets of the project.

#### 4.3.1 The Interpretative Paradigm

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The paradigm within which I had approached this research project was that of interpretivism, as I:

*"...(began) with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them... (resulting in) theory that is emergent... from particular situations... (and) 'grounded' on the data generated by (my)... research"* (Cohen and Manion, 1998, p.37).

I also believe that, through an interpretivist approach, I attempted to acknowledge the various 'relative-ness' of diverse elements and social issues that had impacted upon my research findings. The ontological approach of my project, therefore, reflected what

Schwandt (1998, p. 223, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) referred to as the “uniqueness of human inquiry”, in that research participants brought to the study their own views and background experiences, and by default, I, as the primary researcher, brought my own perspective on the themes that emerged from my data.

My epistemological stance, drawn from my ontological perspective, was, as Guba and Lincoln affirmed, (1994, p. 113, in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), that “knowledge consists of those constructions about which there is relative consensus.” However, at the same time, I was cognisant of the fact that my study was not comprehensive enough to suggest nationally holistic themes or outcomes.

Through my research, it was my intention to undertake a phenomenological study. Creswell (1998, p.51-52) illustrated that particular kind of study as one in which individuals are asked to “describe their everyday lived experiences” as related to the phenomenon under investigation. In the specific case of my research, the phenomenon investigated was the impact of SENCOs on teachers’ abilities to address SEN as they went about their day-to-day roles in English Primary Schools. This appropriateness of this phenomenological aspect of my research is further reaffirmed by the work of Starks and Trinidad (2007) who categorised a phenomenological study as one in which a meaning is ascribed to the lived experiences, through description of a phenomenon, as is the case of the SENCO-teacher dynamic, in my research; as opposed to the method of discourse analysis, which is more applicable to linguistic analysis to understand how people create and enact their identities.

Schwandt (1998) and Merriam (1998) (cited in Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004) affirmed the interpretative/ constructivist and the phenomenological orientations that underlay what was typically reflective of qualitative research. However, it was appropriate to reflect on the concern of research practitioners regarding the “situatedness” of knowledge as described by Willis (2007, p.99), who emphasised that “the goal of interpretative research is an understanding of a particular situation or context much more than the discovery of universal laws or rules.” That particular ‘criticism’ of the

interpretative paradigm, was echoed by Greene (1990, p. 235) who further maintained that:

*“Any given interpretative reconstruction is idographic, time- and place-bound; (and that) multiple reconstructions are pluralistic, divergent, even conflictual. Hence, interpretivist knowledge... (is) more context-specific...”*

With that in mind it was imperative to review the philosophical assumptions and methodological implications in special educational research as these would impact upon the project at hand.

#### 4.3.2 Application of the Interpretative Principles

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Mertens and McLaughlin (2004, p.99) discussed the first philosophical assumption in interpretative/ constructivist SEN research as there being no one single reality that was waiting to be “discovered.” They illustrated this with the assertion that in SEN research, “the concept of multiple realities and social construction of reality also mean that the perceptions of a variety of types of persons must be sought.” Taking a cue from that, the first philosophical assumption upon which my project rests was that there would be multiple perspectives explored in terms of the overall project aims to arrive at an understanding of SENCO impact on teachers.

The second philosophical assumption related to the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm referred to the interactive aspect between the researcher and participants. That was also linked to the researcher’s background knowledge and understanding of the issue at hand. In my case, being a person coming from an international teaching background in which I did not specifically teach children who had been identified as having SEN, there had been a steep learning curve in terms of the various SEN-related matters in England.

Thirdly, Mertens and McLaughlin (2004, p.100) discussed the importance of how “the values surrounding any statement of ‘facts’ (considered products of social construction) must be explored and made explicit.” I have ensured this through the comprehensive

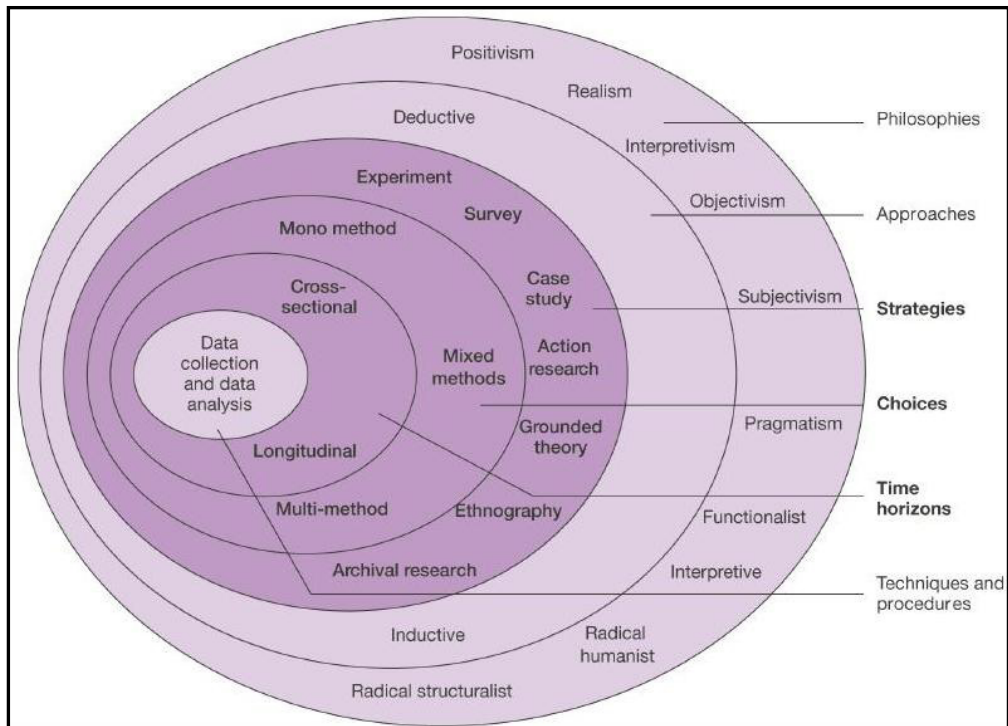
triangulation of participants' views along with data from other sources in order to ensure that I present data that can be generalised to practitioners within the settings described.

My personal opinion is that, by triangulating data, and also exploring the underlying values and school-specific situational factors that exist in SENCOs' and teachers' workplaces, I am able to declare that my research is robust. Schwandt *et al.* (2007, p.12) summarised the manner in which interpretations can be justified as "socially constructed undertakings with noteworthy implications for the ways in which we inevitably use those interpretations to continue to go on with one another." And that is exactly the view that I subscribe to.

Indeed, taking that a step further was Creswell's (1998, p.52) explanation about various traditions of inquiry, as a result of which this particular research project could be described as a phenomenological study of "the meaning and lived experiences for several individuals about the phenomenon of SENCO impact on teachers. Further, as also maintained by Creswell, the idea that "all experiences have an underlying 'structure'", formed the premise for my research project. The experiences of the research cohort could then be used as the basis for what Bassey would term the "fuzzy generalisation" (Bassey, 1995, 1999) for SENCO-teacher interactions.

To summarise this section, with regard to the heuristics of the research philosophy that formed the basis for my project, it is relevant to make reference to the figure that follows on the next page, Figure 4.3: 'The Research Onion' (Saunders *et al.*, 2011, cited in Saunders *et al.*, 2012, p.128).





**Figure 4.3: 'The Research Onion' (Saunders *et al.*, 2011, cited in Saunders *et al.*, 2012, p.128)**

This figure most accurately and comprehensively depicted the various layers involved in the development of a research philosophy, as particularly relates to a qualitative study such as that reported in this thesis.

Subsequently, with reference to Saunders *et al.*'s 'Research Onion', I was able to summarise my project as being a cross-sectional, mixed-methods, survey, utilising a deductive approach to data collection, underpinned by interpretivist philosophy.

#### 4.4 Context of Sample Selection

The organisational context within which the project was carried out related to a selection of SENCOs and schools based in counties where the SENCOs who formed my overall research cohort were working; that is, those SENCOs from the NASENCO Course. The NASENCO Course is a mandatory professional development for all new to role

SENCOs and those who had been working in their respective schools in the SENCO role for less than 12 months prior to September 2009 (DCSF, 2009).

The primary research cohort for my project came from those SENCOs enrolled on the NASENCO course at the University of Northampton. They volunteered to be a part of the project, as I initially approached them by attending their University-run training sessions (both on and off-site). During their day-long sessions, I was kindly given 5 minutes by the course tutors to present my research and request for the SENCOs' participation.

During the questionnaire phase of my research, questionnaires were distributed both by myself and the course tutors, along with pre-paid envelopes for the SENCOs to fill and return at a time convenient to them. During the interview phase, after my 5-minute presentation, a sign-up sheet was then sent around the group, and any SENCOs who wanted to volunteer to be interviewed, provided their contact details.

#### 4.4.1 Basis for Purposive and Selective Participant Samples

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The selection of the initial cohort had occurred as a result of 'convenience' and 'purposive' sampling (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.113-114) as I had not only taken into consideration accessibility to individuals, but also the fact that those SENCOs possessed the particular characteristics that I required for the purposes of my research, i.e., they were actively working in the SENCO role at that time. Teddlie and Yu (2009, p.80) referred to purposive sampling as that also known as "qualitative sampling", whose primary aim is to achieve representativeness or comparability, as is most relevant to my research.

The primary sample for questionnaires included SENCOs who were working in a variety of primary schools around Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. The cohort for my interviews came from Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. The main reasoning behind this was that I would have access to these SENCOs via their training on the National Award for SEN Coordination, run by the University of Northampton, and therefore, would, by default, most probably be working

in schools within a geographical proximity. This ensured ease of access to them from a researcher's point of view.

Selection of the participants who formed the sample for the second phase of the research, involving semi-structured interviews, was done via a two-pronged strategy. During the first phase of research, at the time of administering the self-completion questionnaires, SENCOs were asked if they would like to volunteer to be interviewed for the second phase. However, only four of the original 42 respondents were eligible to be interviewed, as they were within the selected geographical location. I therefore attended further NASENCO Award sessions in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire to request for SENCOS' participation in my research project, and consequently, 14 more SENCOs self-selected themselves to be interviewed.

However, when it came to selecting teacher participants to be interviewed, the only school in which I had existing links, based on a placement I undertook during my Masters course, was unfortunately put into Special Measures by OfSTED. I therefore had to turn to colleagues in the School of Education's Partnerships Office at the University of Northampton. The Partnerships Office oversees and supports staff and their students who are on placements in schools. The Office's role includes building strong partnerships with schools, settings and organisations. My colleague in the Partnerships Office therefore, kindly sent out multiple email requests on my behalf, to partnership schools. The email [Appendix 2] introduced me to the key contacts in schools, along with a brief about my research [Appendix 3], and what I was requesting in terms of interview focus and time constraints. In exchange for their help, at this point, I offered to help teach a Key Stage 2 level session about Kenya, giving a brief about my background, a short session on the names of popular animals in Swahili, ending the session by teaching the children a famous Kenyan song, in Swahili, accompanied by a musical video, getting them dancing and moving to the beat. These sessions were very positively received.

To summarise, the person responsible for choosing the sample cohort to interview for this research project was mainly myself, based on the information and advice given to

me by my Supervisor, Professor Richard Rose, the NASENCO Award Tutors and the University of Northampton's School of Education Partnerships Office.

#### 4.4.2 Sampling Considerations

It is important to recognise that samples have various strengths and weaknesses. In the case of my purposive sample for the questionnaire survey, (which almost mirrored the demographics of my interview participants) all respondents consisted of those on the NASENCO course. Hence, the majority of them possessed less than two years of experience within the role (Table 4.1 below), and this most certainly impacted the responses given.

<b>B3: Approximately how long have you held the SENCO position? (n=42)</b>		
<b>Ranges</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
<=6 months	6 (incl. One who has 11 years previous experience as SENCO, but is currently in the process of taking over from retiring SENCO)	14.29
6.1 months – 1 years	11	26.19
1.1 – 1.5 years	7	16.67
1.51 – 2 years	8	19.05
2.1 – 2.5 years	2	4.76
2.51 – 3 years	4	9.52
3.1 – 3.5 years	0	0.00
3.51 – 4 years	0	0.00
4.1 – 4.5 years	0	0.00
4.51 – 5 years	1 (5y)	2.38
>5.1 years	3 (8y3m; 10y6m; 15y)	7.14
Total	42	100%
<b>Weighted average years of experience in role: 1.5 years</b>		

**Table 4.1: Number of years of experience of questionnaire survey respondents**

A notable strength of this sample was the fact that being on the course meant that they were SENCOs who were at the forefront of the latest knowledge and initiatives at the time. Thus, in the second phase of the project, their answers to my questions regarding the role and their interactions with teachers, could be said to be those associated with the most current skills and opportunities for empowerment as enabled by the NASENCO course.

Another point to note when it comes to sampling, is that when a sample is self-selected, one should be conscious of the fact that participants have volunteered to be surveyed or interviewed. Therefore, it is important to make reference to the representativeness of the sample, in terms of the sample frame. Sample frames refer to characteristics of the wider population, which in the case of SENCOs can be vast and varied depending on their respective school structures. Table 4.2 below illustrates this aspect, as it depicts the official title or position of employment of the SENCOs who completed the questionnaire, and Table 4.3 which shows the nature of their employment status. The employment position and status of interview participants are more comprehensively detailed within their Participant ID Code, which is examined shortly in this in section of the thesis.

<b>B1: Position of the person completing this questionnaire (n=42)</b>
SENCO x28
Classroom teacher and SENCO x4 (incl. new SENCO + class teacher)
Deputy Head of school and SENCO x2
SENCO (SMT)
Head teacher and SENCO
SENCO/ KS2 leader
Senior Teacher and SENCO
Inclusion manager and senior teacher
Primary manager and SENCO
SENCO and KS1 teacher
Part-time SENCO (KS1)

**Table 4.2: Official title of research participants**

<b>B2: Please indicate how you are employed. (n=42)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Employed FT and work FT as SENCO: 14</b>	33.33
<b>Employed FT and work PT as SENCO: 15</b>	35.71
<b>Employed PT and work wholly as SENCO: 5</b>	11.90
<b>Employed PT and work partially as SENCO: 6</b>	14.30
<b>Not employed as SENCO or other: 2 (incl. comment1: "FT SENCO as part of my role as Head teacher" and comment2: "no response" (as she was a SEN teacher in a Special Needs School)</b>	4.76

**Table 4.3: Nature of participants' employment status**

In terms of the participant sample for the interview phase of the project, Table 4.4, which follows below, summarises the demographic aspects of each group.

Notes for the Participant IDCODE column in Table 4.4 are:

- DH** ..... Deputy Head teacher
- FS** ..... Full-time SENCO responsibilities
- FT** ..... Full-time teaching responsibilities
- FTT**..... Full-time teacher with full-time teaching responsibilities
- HD** ..... Head teacher
- I** ..... Interview
- NSMT**..... Not a member of the Senior Management Team
- NT**..... No teaching responsibilities
- PS** ..... Part-time SENCO responsibilities
- PT** ..... Part-time teaching responsibilities
- PTT** ..... Part-time teacher with full-time teaching responsibilities
- S1, S2, etc**..... SENCO participant
- SMT** ..... Member of the Senior Management Team
- T1, T2, etc**..... Teacher participant

As an example, the first participant's ID CODE can be decoded as illustrated in the following figure:

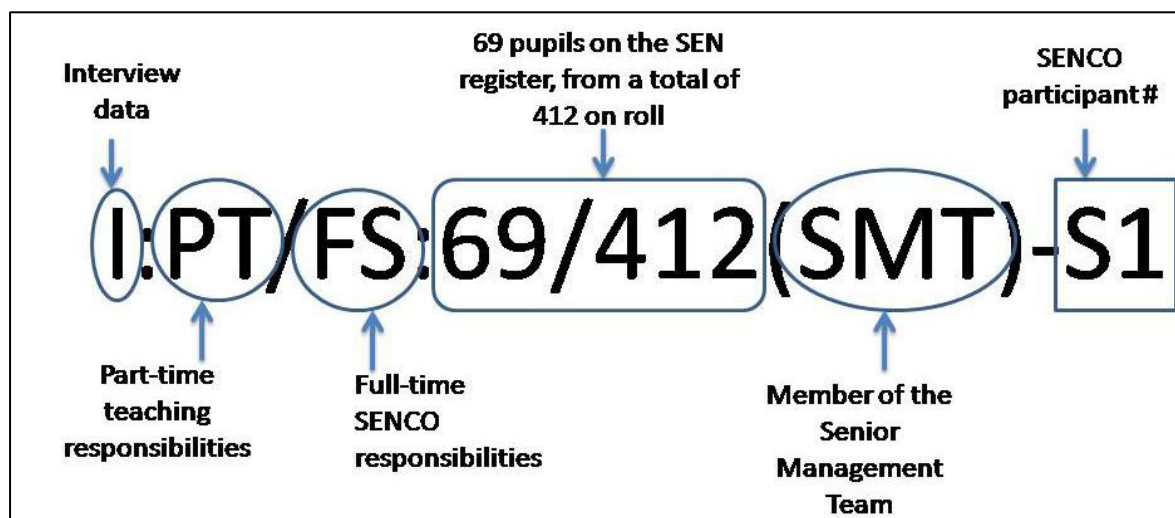


Figure 4.4: An example of how to decode the participant codes as discussed in this research project.

#	Participant ID CODE (n=36)	Role	Whether PT/FT employed (and PT/FT SENCO responsibilities)	Tchg resp	On SMT
1	I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1	SENCO and teacher	PT (FT SENCO 7.5 hrs/wk)	Y	Y
2	I: NT+DH/PS:38/412(SMT)-S2	SENCO and deputy head	FT (PT SENCO 2days/wk)	N	Y
3	I:PT/PS:16/203(NSMT)-S3	SENCO and teacher	PT (PT SENCO 3days/wk, but teaching one whole afternoon)	Y	N
4	I:FT/PS:13/195(SMT)-S4	SENCO and teacher	FT (PT SENCO 0.5day/fortnight)	Y	Y
5	I:PT/PS:15/90(SMT)-S5	SENCO and teacher and EYFSCo	PT 3days/wk (PT SENCO – but has no time for SENCO)	Y	Y
6	I:PT+HD/PS:12/61(SMT)-S6	SENCO and head teacher	FT (PT SENCO; but no dedicated SENCO time per se)	Y	Y
7	I:PT/PS:14/137(SMT)-S7	SENCO and teacher and assessment coordinator	PT 3 days/wk (PT SENCO – 1 afternoon/wk)	Y	Y
8	I:NT/FS:28/160(SMT)-S8	SENCO only	PT (FT SENCO 2days/wk)	N	Y
9	I:FT/PS:56/313(SMT)-S9	SENCO and teacher	FT (PT SENCO 1day/wk)	Y	Y

#	Participant ID CODE (n=36)	Role	Whether PT/FT employed (and PT/FT SENCO responsibilities)	Tchg resp	On SMT
10	I:FT/PS:91/509(NSMT)-S10	Apprentice SENCO and teacher	FT (PT SENCO – 0.5 day/ fortnight)	Y	N (but Y after course)
11	I:FT/PS:11/67(NSMT)-S11	SENCO and class teacher	FT (PT SENCO 1 afternoon/wk)	Y	N (but says Head will say yes)
12	I:NT+DH/PS:75/410(SMT)-S12	SENCO, Deputy Head, Assessment and Inclusion Lead	FT (PT SENCO – hours vary)	N	Y
13	I:FT/PS:20/115(SMT)-S13	SENCO and class teacher	FT (PT SENCO - 1 or 2 afternoons per half term)	Y	Y
14	I:PT/ PS:35/100(NSMT)-S14	SENCO and support class teacher	PT (PT SENCO no fixed hours as its been sporadic over the past 6 months)	Y	N
15	I:NT/FS:45/200(SMT):S15	SENCO	PT (FT SENCO – 15hrs/wk +4hrs/wk G&T Maths)	N	Y
16	I:FT/PS:15/126(NSMT):S16	SENCO and class teacher	FT (PT SENCO – 1hr/wk)	Y	N
17	I:PT/PS:12/210(NSMT):S17	KS2 SENCO and Wave2 coordinator	PT 3 days/ wk (PT SENCO – 1 afternoon/wk)	Y	N
18	I:NT/FS:24/210(SMT)-S18	SENCO	PT (FT SENCO – 2days/wk)	N	Y
19	I:FTT:62/407-T1	Yr 3 class teacher	FT	Y	N/A
20	I:FTT+DH:62/407-T2	Deputy head and yr 6 class teacher	FT	Y	N/A
21	I:FTT:62/407-T3	Yr 1 teacher	FT	Y	N/A
22	I:PTT:62/407-T4	Teacher	PT (3 days/wk)	Y	N
23	I:FTT:62/407-T5	Yr 2 teacher	FT	Y	N/A
24	I:FTT+DH:96/433-T6	Asst. Head teacher	FT	Y	Y
25	I:FTT:96/433-T7	Yr 3 class teacher and D&T Coordinator	FT	Y	N/A



#	Participant ID CODE (n=36)	Role	Whether PT/FT employed (and PT/FT SENCO responsibilities)	Tchg resp	On SMT
26	I:FTT:96/433-T8	Yr 4 teacher and Set 1 Maths literacy (higher ability)	FT	Y	N/A
27	I:PTT:96/433-T9	Teacher	PT (17hr/week)	Y	N/A
28	I:FTT:76/480-T10	Teacher	FT	Y	Y
29	I:FTT:76/480-T11	Teacher	FT	Y	N/A
30	I:FTT:76/480-T12	Yr 1 teacher	FT	Y	N/A
31	I:FTT:76/480-T13	Yr 6 teacher	FT	Y	N/A
32	I:FTT:76/480-T14	Yr 4 teacher	FT	Y	N/A
33	I:FTT+HD:6/105-T15	Head teacher	FT	Y	Y
34	I:FTT:6/105-T16	Yr 1 and Yr 2 class teacher	FT	Y	N/A
35	I:FTT:6/105-T17	Yr 3 and Yr 4 teacher and IT coordinator	FT	Y	N/A
36	I:FTT:6/105-T18	Yr 5 and Yr 6 teacher and Maths coordinator	FT	Y	N

**Table 4.4: Comprehensive list of all participants involved in the second phase of the research project (n=36)**

#### 4.4.3 Local Authority Considerations

As discussed in the second chapter in Section 2.4 and 2.5, the time frame during which this research was conducted was one of considerable policy change. Not only had there been the introduction of the key reform Green Paper *Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability*, (DfE, 2011) culminating in the *Children and Families Bill* (2013a) and the *SEN Code of Practice* (2014a). Indeed, Martin (2011, p.465) maintained that “*The Green Paper points to a weakened role for Local Authorities in terms of planning and funding and makes it less likely that a fair, coherent and effective system will emerge within the next three to four years.*”

Furthermore, the declining power of Local Authorities (Glatter 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Smith, 2015), as already discussed in detail in Section 1.4.1 of Chapter One of this thesis,

coupled with the disbanding of various support services within the Local Authorities, and the move towards SEN support having to be 'bought in' from independent charities and consultancies, mean that this research project was framed within an educational environment that was in a state of great flux and change.

#### 4.5 Chapter Four Key Points

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Chapter four introduced the research approach, paradigm and sampling strategies that were utilised for the purposes of this project, the key points of which were:

- My research project is largely qualitative in nature, because I believe that qualitative data is more vivid in description, and enables one to undertake an in-depth exploration of perceptions of complex educational issues, as also supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Schwandt (2001 (p.118 in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994)), Creswell (2012, p.204), Silverman (2010, p.117) and Mertens and McLaughlin (2004, p.96).
- The project subscribes to an interpretative paradigm (Cohen and Manion, 1998, p.37), whilst possessing the ontological approach of what Schwandt (1998, p. 223, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) referred to as the “uniqueness of human inquiry”, in that research participants brought to the study their own views and background experiences, and by default, I, as the sole researcher, brought my own perspective on the themes that emerged from my data.
- Data collection was undertaken in two phases: the first phase involving survey questionnaires of 223 (responses n=42) SENCOs, and the second phase involving in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews of 18 SENCOs and 18 teachers. Participants were accessed via the University’s National Award for SEN Coordination course, as well as the University’s Partnerships Office.

## CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY PART 2 – PILOT, EXECUTION OF INSTRUMENTS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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### Chapter Summary

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Chapter five provides a discussion of the various stages involved in data collection for this project. It describes the piloting of research through to the final instruments used in data collection and the ethical considerations taken for the conduct of the study. The chapter includes the development of an 'audit trail' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 146; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p. 149; Shenton and Hay-Gibson, 2009, p.21) through the application of specific research instruments.

### 5.1 Introduction

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It is important to explain the process through which a research project was conducted in depth, as LeCompte and Preissle (1993) and Golafshani (2003, p.601) maintain that this enables the development of an audit trail, which allow the researcher to address the issue of 'confirmability' of results, in terms of process and product. In undertaking this exercise, I was able to review my research instruments at various stages and make changes accordingly.

Instead of having a separate methodological section for 'Problems in Implementation and their Resolution', I made the decision to discuss these specific situations during each relevant phase of data collection. This is to enable the depiction of a more holistic picture of the various situations at each stage of the research data collection process in greater depth and discussion.

### 5.2 Phase One: Survey Questionnaires

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As a result of my initial groundwork for the topic and associated research during my Masters studies, I designed my pilot questionnaire as a knowledge-gathering tool. I later then used the data gathered through that process as the basis for design of the semi-structured interview research instruments. This task was undertaken using the salient

features of Creswell's list of researcher practices in qualitative approaches to data collection:

- Positioning myself in terms of the paradigm within which I will approach my research
- Collecting participants' meanings of the issue at hand
- Focusing on the single concept or phenomenon of the challenges that relate to SENCOS
- Studying the context or setting of participants through document scrutiny and probing interview questions
- Validating the accuracy of my findings through the mixed methods approach of data triangulation, as previously discussed in this assignment
- Making interpretations of the data so as to generate outcomes for the purpose of answering my research questions

(Creswell, 2009, p.17).

### 5.2.1 Pilot Research Sample

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Both tools were piloted separately on different SENCOS. These 'pilot' SENCOS were accessed through my previous contact with them for the purpose of my Masters research. They kindly kept in touch and were very forthcoming with their help and suggestions during the pilot process of my PhD research instruments.

### 5.2.2 Pilot Research Instruments

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The research instruments that I developed have been through the following phases:

- a) Pre-Pilot Development Phase**
- b) Pilot Phase One**
- c) Pilot Phase Two**
- d) Finalising the Research Instrument Pre-rollout**

I felt it was imperative to highlight these phases because as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.341) maintained "the wording of questionnaires is of paramount importance and that pretesting is crucial to their success." Each phase shall be referred

to individually during the course of this chapter, so as to make it easier for the reader to place the stages at which discussion of the various pilot phases took place.

The questionnaire instrument formed the bulwark of the first phase of data collection of the overall project research, it was, therefore of great importance to me to ensure that I could use the pilot process to ensure increased trustworthiness and practicability of the questionnaire (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.341) for the time when I actually did implement it. Additionally, that pilot informed my approach to the research project as a whole, as it focused on a manageable sample group (three SENCOs) and enabled me to test whether the decisions I had made about that particular element of my research were correct at this stage.

#### **a) Pre-Pilot Development Phase**

The initial development of my questionnaire consisted of an in-depth examination of my research questions, which were as follows:

1. Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
2. Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
3. How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

From those questions, I then endeavoured to explore my own understanding of the concept of 'impact'. After reviewing various definitions and reflecting upon my own past research about the SENCO role, I concluded that for me personally, the notion of 'impact' encompassed not only a specific resultant outcome on teachers' abilities to address SEN, but also a process by which SENCOs were enabled and allowed to do what they thought they should be doing in relation to the official definition of their role, as well as their own perceived understanding of this.

I therefore, concluded that for the purpose of my research project, I would develop my own definition of 'impact', because I saw it as a process rather than a singular phenomenon. The ensuing definition that I developed of the word 'impact' therefore, for the purposes of that research project was: "A sense of progression or regression which enables an individual to bring about a resultant change (whether positive or negative) in a status quo."

The questions were developed, as mentioned earlier, based on my research questions, and after I brainstormed various questions which I thought would be relevant to uncover answers to these.

I was also fortunate enough to be able to view a selection of questionnaires previously rolled out for other School of Education research projects. That opportunity provided me with the idea of dividing up my questionnaire into five distinct sections:

Section A: Demographic Information

Section B: Questions related to the respondents' employment arrangements

Section C: SENCO-Teacher Interactions

Section D: Interventions

Section E: Other comments that the respondent might want to make, either prompted by this questionnaire, or as a result of their role as a SENCO

I made a decision to divide the questionnaire up in sections so as to make the flow of the instrument easier for respondents to understand. Having sections also broke the monotony of one continuous document which might have seemed lengthy and time-consuming to complete. In this I was aware of the voluntary nature of completion by the respondents and my dependence upon their good will.

The initial questionnaire that I therefore designed and discussed with my supervisor on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 is illustrated in Appendix 4.

The revisions made, based on our discussion, are evident in Appendix 5. These include a definition of the sort of school a SENCO worked in [Infant, Junior, Primary, in Question A2, Appendix 5]; streamlining of the specific special needs that would be included under the SENCO's domain [Question A3, Appendix 5]; deletion of further questions about the curriculum and age-range of pupils that were irrelevant to my research questions [Questions B4 and B6, Appendix 4].

Some possibly contentious questions asking SENCOs to describe the partnership between themselves and their teacher colleagues [Question C5, Appendix 4] were removed.

Other potentially leading questions asking SENCOs to directly discuss their perceived impact on teachers and the implementation of IEPs [Questions D4-D7, Appendix 4] were also removed. For example, the question D4 (Appendix 4) asked what issues the impact of SENCOs on teachers' abilities to address SEN in their classrooms had raised in the school, by giving examples of staff interpretation of criteria, subjectivity of observations to support judgements, discrepancies between age phases, classes or during transitions. The purpose for removing such a question was to ensure that the answers given by SENCOs would not be leading in these specific areas, and so a more general question was posited as question C3 (Appendix 5), which asked, "what, in your opinion, are the barriers to effective use and impact of SENCOs?"

### 5.2.3 Pilot Research Data

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Following discussions with, and feedback from my supervisor regarding the questionnaire design, I implemented the changes as discussed briefly above and reflected in Appendix 5. I took the instrument with me to a PhD Support Group meeting. These PhD Support Group meetings occur once a month, and are informal sessions where research students and supervisors from the School of Education met. There was no pre-defined agenda to those meetings, as essentially students and supervisors alike brought items to share ideas, issues and experiences. The usefulness of such meetings

and the informal, supportive atmosphere was evident as researchers such as myself, brought along works in progress to seek opinions and ideas of others.

#### **b) Pilot Phase One**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2011, I took along the questionnaire [Appendix 5] and the information sheet [Appendix 6], to one such PhD Support Group meeting. A number of supervisors and research students from the School of Education were present. During one part of the session, they individually went through my information sheet and questionnaires. They fed back a number of constructive comments regarding the design of both the information sheet as well as the questionnaire. The feedback provided to me at this stage was of immense significance as it enabled me to 'humanise' the research subjects – something that I had not previously given much consideration to. At that stage, I was able to make basic revisions based on comments from the group.

As regards the Information Sheet [Appendix 6], for example, I had not realised that I had not added the heading 'Information Sheet' to the page, and so my audience was a little lost initially as I handed those out, not knowing what to expect.

A number of other revisions were made, as reflected in the differences between Appendix 6 and Appendix 7. Essentially, the Support Group enabled me to 'humanise' the research participants, and put myself in their place, as they were introduced to the project for the first time through that Information Sheet. Simple rephrasing of sentences such as making 'What will happen to me if I take part?' into 'Are my rights protected?' ensured that with the Group's suggestions, I could produce an Information Sheet that was not only accurate, succinct, but congenially phrased too. The resultant Information Sheet is reflected in Appendix 7.

As regards the main questionnaire, the Support Group thought it necessary that I specifically point out that I created my own definition of 'Impact', and so that was highlighted in the box at the beginning of the questionnaire.



The Group also felt there was no harm in asking for the SENCO's name at the beginning of the questionnaire, as an optional question (Question A1, Appendix 8).

Additionally, I was advised to rephrase the negative-leaning question about barriers that prevent SENCOs from fulfilling their responsibilities, into 'What factors enable you to fulfil your responsibilities as a SENCO?' [Question B5, Appendix 8].

Through discussion, we also arrived at the conclusion that it would be beneficial to enquire whether SENCOs had had any previous training in relation to SEN [Question B7, Appendix 8].

However, the most significant feedback that I received from the Group related to Sections C and D of the questionnaire, which were about SENCO-Teacher interactions and Interventions respectively. I was able to gather various views about how sensitive, contentious and possibly leading, the questions C1 and C2, Appendix 5 sounded. These were accordingly rephrased, keeping in mind my research questions at all times, as illustrated by Questions C1 and C2, Appendix 8, as follows:

#	Question in Appendix 4	Question in Appendix 8 after suggestions
C1	How do you interact primarily with teachers in your school about pupils with SEN?	What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be?
C2	How do you perceive the benefits of teachers having the guidance of a SENCO?	What activities do you undertake in order to support your school colleagues? Please give details of who is supported and how.
D1i	How do you and/or your school currently assess the abilities of teachers to address SEN in primary schools? a) You (SENCO) b) Your school	How do you identify the training needs of staff in relation to SEN?
D1ii	Who is involved in this assessment?	Who is involved in this identification? Please give details.

**Table 5.1: Specific changes in questions about SENCO-teacher interactions**

Further feedback from the group also considered the Likert Scale in Question C4, Appendix 8. General consensus was that as regards SENCOs' views of teachers' knowledge of SEN, instead of having 'Very knowledgeable' at one end of the scale, and 'Poor' at the other end, there should be 'Very limited knowledge' instead. I had no idea at the time of the dissonance that that question would cause during the final pilot.

Another revision which I would have ordinarily overlooked concerned the phraseology of the final paragraph requesting for the SENCOs further support in terms of a possible interview for the second phase of the project. The difference is reflected in the explanatory paragraphs on the last pages of Appendices 9 and 4 respectively.

### **c) Pilot Phase Two**

Following the useful suggestions from the PhD Support Group, and also taking into consideration Cohen, Manion and Morrison's assertion that "*everything* about the questionnaire should be piloted; nothing should be excluded, not even the type face or the quality of paper" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.113-114), I was therefore able to produce another revised version of my questionnaire [Appendix 8]. That was then disseminated to three SENCOs for their feedback.

The main reason why I selected 3 SENCOs to be the pilot group for this first phase of the project was because, as per recommendations by Simmons (Simmons, 2001, p.103, cited in Plowright, 2011, p.88), "as a guide, in a proposed survey of 2000 respondents, the pilot sample should include between 10 and 20 respondents." Therefore, using the same proportion, for my intended sample survey of approximately 50 questionnaire respondents, having 1 or 2 pilot subjects would have sufficed.

In terms of location, the questionnaires were disseminated at various locations that the respondents themselves suggested were suitable for them, as I had asked them about that when I had made my initial request about for the pilot. The reason for that was that I preferred for them to be in comfortable settings during the process. Following each

session, small tokens of appreciation in the form of a hand-wrapped chocolate bar and a thank you note were also given to them.

Of the SENCOs who willingly volunteered to help pilot the instrument when I contacted them, two had already helped contribute to the research for my Masters Dissertation and so I knew they would be comfortable and honest in giving me feedback. The third SENCO I met through the auspices of the ongoing MA Education Research Methodologies module. All three met the defined criteria for the cohort for my research in that they were practising primary school SENCOs. As I piloted the instrument with them, I received further feedback about whether or not my line of questioning was appropriate, and whether the questionnaire document was understandable and simple to navigate.

The questionnaires were self-administered in my presence. That enabled the respondents to make comments or ask questions for further clarification. I had taken prior consent from them to make notes during our discussion. I found this process particularly helpful as it enabled any queries or uncertainties to be immediately addressed by myself (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.344).

All three SENCOs were of the opinion that the Information Sheet [Appendix 7] was a very useful summary of the project and “proactively clarified any queries that one might have”, in the words of one SENCO. On average, they took less than a minute to read through it. I must add here that the timing of the entire process from start to finish was of extreme significance to me, as I would be taking up time from the National Award for SEN Coordination course day when I intended to administer my questionnaires in person at the various course venues.

In terms of time, all three SENCOs were of the opinion that the 20-30 minutes that it took on average to complete the questionnaire (without any interruptions or mid-instrument discussions), was a fair amount of time, considering the research project and its aims.

Two SENCOs had questions about Question A5i [Appendix 8] regarding the number of children having SEN in their school. They maintained that the number kept varying on a frequent basis and therefore suggested I should have the wording as “approximate current number of students...”

Two SENCOs again had queries regarding what I meant by “factors” in Question B5 [Appendix 8], which asked, “What factors enable you to fulfil your responsibilities as a SENCO? Please give details.” I had to explain that to them, and when asked for suggestions about improving the wording of the sentence, they maintained that the original wording was satisfactory. When I queried the third SENCO about whether there might be a doubt about the clarity of the same question, she said that as far as she was concerned, she could see no problem with it.

As regards Question C4 [Appendix 8], there was some discussion from the SENCOs about the understanding of the Likert scale. Two of them felt that there could be differences in interpretation of the various parameters defined, whereas a third felt it would be more appropriate to have had numbers instead of words defining the different points. The third SENCO also circled two factors instead of only one as was requested, later telling me that she had not read the instructions carefully.

Consequently, I decided to change the Likert scale into a numerical one, defining only the two extreme numbers, and also made the request to ‘circle only one’ more prominent, as illustrated in Question C4, Appendix 9.

As regards Question C5 [Appendix 8], in which respondents were asked, “Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers’ abilities to address SEN in your school? Please give details”, one SENCO commented that the question would elicit a lot of “thinking about the practical implications and limitations of such an answer.” She did suggest that I ask the question as, “How would you like to improve the way in which you as a SENCO...”, however, after discussion, we concluded that the original question implied a sense of practicality in itself and therefore should remain as it was.

#### **d) Finalising the Research Instrument Pre-rollout**

General feedback from the pilot respondents, which I had incorporated into the final questionnaire which would be disseminated, as illustrated in Appendix 9, included the fact that more space should be left for answers in Section C.

One SENCO told me that she felt the questionnaire would encourage respondents to be “reflective about their roles and their own practice” and that questions such as C5 [Appendix 9], about what plans they had to improve their impact on teachers, would enable them to “consider practically whether or not they are doing their job wholeheartedly.”

Another SENCO felt that the questionnaire layout was suitable and “eases one into the thinking questions, such as those in Section C.”

All of the SENCOs said they did not notice the marked sections, i.e. Section A: Demographic Information; Section B: Questions related to how you are employed; Section C: SENCO-Teacher Interactions; Section D: Interventions; and Section E: Other [Appendix 9]. However, these were for my convenience later in the process, for the purpose of analysis and therefore they would remain.

Furthermore, none of the SENCOs made particular note of the notion of ‘Impact’ as defined by me at the beginning of the questionnaire.

As regards points of concern, one SENCO mentioned that the questionnaire might be a bit daunting for new SENCOs who would have not had the experience that they may readily draw upon to answer the questions within the questionnaire there and then. I told her then that I intended to be present as the questionnaires were being administered and would be available as such to answer queries about any ambiguous questions there and then too.

Additionally, the SENCO made it a point to comment that she had not written the name of her school, as she had not asked the permission of her Head teacher, despite the fact that she was aware that the project assured anonymity of all individuals and schools. That was a matter of concern for me, as I was not sure how to address this, except to encourage teachers to write their names at the time of the questionnaire, and then if indeed later on, I did contact them for an interview, to arrange for permission from the Head teacher then.

The finalised version of the questionnaire that was then ready for dissemination through the first phase of the research project as illustrated in Appendix 9.

#### 5.2.4 Pilot Research Instrument Analysis and Resultant Changes

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All three pilot interview experiences were illuminating in their respective ways, and gave rise to key issues as regards how the data would be analysed and turned into useful information for the purposes of the research project. For that purpose, I would be referring to the Questionnaire in Appendix 9.

It was important at that stage to revisit the essential research questions of the project. They were as follows:

1. Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
2. Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
3. How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

Questions in Section A, regarding Demographic Information, and Section B, questions 1-4, regarding quantitative SENCO employment matters, would be easily collated into tabular form based on respondents' answers.

As regards Questions B5 onwards, and Sections C, D and E, for ease of understanding, I had developed a grid to illustrate the manner in which that data would be analysed with regard to the research questions above. This is depicted in Table 5.2 which follows:

Question	Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?	Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?	How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?
B5: What aspects enable you to fulfil your responsibilities as a SENCO? Please give details.	✓	✓	
B6: What changes, if any, would you like to make to your current role and conditions as a SENCO?		✓	possibly
B7: What previous training have you had in relation to SEN?	✓	✓	possibly
B8: Please give any additional details, if any, that you think might be relevant about your particular role as SENCO.	possibly	possibly	possibly
C1: What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be?	✓	✓	✓
C2: What activities do you undertake in order to support your school colleagues? Please give details of who is supported and how.	✓	✓	✓
C3: What are the barriers to effective use and impact of SENCOs?		✓	✓
C4: In your estimation, how knowledgeable are teachers in your school, about the special needs of pupils in their respective classrooms? Please circle only one, using the following key: 1: Very knowledgeable and 4: Not very knowledgeable	possibly	possibly	possibly

Question	Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?	Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers for children with Special Educational Needs?	How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?
C5: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in your school? Please give details.	✓	✓	✓
D1i: How do you identify the training needs of staff in relation to SEN?	✓	✓	✓
D1ii: Who is involved in this identification? Please give details.	✓		✓
D2: Have you provided training to school colleagues in your school? Please give details.	✓	✓	✓
D3: Are there other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN issues in the school? (If yes please specify their role in school)			✓
D4: What kind of training (if any) has been provided in your school in relation to SEN? Please specify who received the support and the provider or who else was involved, and the kind of support provided.	✓	✓	✓
E1: Any other comments.	possibly	possibly	possibly

**Table 5.2: Grid cross-referencing research questions with the survey questionnaire questions**

#### 5.2.4.1 Things That Went Well

The four-stages of the pilot process had been of great significance for me. I had already highlighted a number of practical suggestions and constructive feedback that I received from colleagues in the School of Education. However, aside from the logistical implications on the actual instrument itself, the process had been one of understanding the importance of discussion and shared information with colleagues.



Indeed, I almost felt a sense of anti-climax that my final pilots with the three SENCOs had not revealed the need for many changes to the instrument itself. I felt that was the result of the pre-pilot phases wherein I was able to transform my original instrument [Appendices 4 and 5] into the resultant questionnaire [Appendix 8] which was then piloted on the SENCOs and finalised in the form of the questionnaire in Appendix 9. The pre-pilot phases played a key part and enabled me to review and re-review my questions not only with regard to my research questions, but also taking into account the human element of the respondents.

### 5.3 Phase Two: Semi-Structured Interviews

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As the second phase of the research, I developed an interview schedule which was implemented with a research participant cohort of 36, including 18 SENCOs, some of whom were also deputy heads, or head teachers, and 18 teachers. For the purpose of manageability and geographic accessibility to the cohort, I focused on primary schools within Northamptonshire and Leicestershire.

#### 5.3.1 Developing and Piloting the SENCO Interview Schedule

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Once I collated data from my questionnaires, I then developed pivot tables based on the responses from participants to each question. Quantitative data was simply tabulated as illustrated previously in Section 4.4.2. However, qualitative data derived from open-ended questions at this stage was first put into tables via Microsoft Excel, and then a two-pronged approach to coding was used.

The first level of coding was done on the basis of the three original research questions, as follows:

- 1) **Motivation**: Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
- 2) **Effective Teachers**: Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?

- 3) **Impact Assessment**: How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

Within each column, which was allocated to each research question, general questionnaire answer codes were derived after looking at the questionnaire data for the first time. The resultant 'messy, first-glance' coding is depicted in Appendix 10.

The second level of coding was then undertaken on the basis of this initial coding process. During this stage, I examined the qualitative answers to each question in the questionnaire and highlighted them as per the following colour-coded themes (an example is illustrated in Appendix 11):

1. **Time constraints within the role**
2. **SENCOs' support from SLT and other support staff such as TAs and LSAs**
3. **SENCO-teacher interactions re: SEN provision**
4. **SENCO interactions with other stakeholders**
5. **Teachers' Training and resource support**
6. **Financial constraints**

A resultant summary working document was then developed, as illustrated in Appendix 12. This then formed the basis of the interview schedule which I produced for the second phase of my research project.

### 5.3.2 SENCO Interview Instrument Analysis and Resultant Changes

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As a result of the process outlined above, I developed the first draft of my SENCO interview schedule, cross-referenced with how each question adds to my understanding of the research questions [Appendix 13]. This was developed with the help of a grid of related suggestions of probing/ prompting questions for more comprehensive and relevant answers.

After this initial exercise, I then set out to rearrange the questions so that they appeared in a more consequential format that would be easier to refer to during the conversational, semi-structured interviews that I intended to undertake, as opposed to a rigidly structured interrogation. The resultant schedule is illustrated in Appendix 14, along with the additional column, of a further cross-reference with the questionnaire data codes, as was suggested by my Supervisory team.

Once again, this second draft of the questionnaire was taken to the PhD Support Group meeting. Here, in an invaluable exercise of question by question analysis, my peers helped me to further rearrange and rephrase the questions so that they appeared in a more consequential format, and were sub-divided into sections relating to:

1. SENCO Job Description
2. Responsibilities to Teachers
3. Interactions with Teachers
4. Teachers' Training and Performance Management
5. Deployment of Support Staff: TAs/ LSAs
6. Other

The final SENCO questionnaire is depicted in Appendix 15 (cross-referenced with earlier codes and my main research questions) and Appendix 16 (the final format which I used during the interviews themselves).

### 5.3.3 Developing and Piloting the Teacher Interview Schedule

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In terms of the development and pilot of teachers' semi-structured interview schedules, I adapted my SENCO interview schedule, to developed a more concise and specific version for teachers, as illustrated in Appendix 17. The primary reason for this is that I initially started my interviews just with SENCOS (a number of whom had teaching responsibilities too, as illustrated in Table 4.4), and so by the time I started to interview teachers, I was well aware of the key questions to ask that would prompt participants to give me the data that would enable relevant answers to my research questions. Sections 5.3.4 and 5.3.5 later within this chapter contain further details of what I learned from both the SENCOS' and teachers' instrument pilot process.

The pilot for the teachers’ semi-structured interviews was undertaken during the process in which I interviewed SENCOs. Questions were initially cross-referenced against the original research questions for the project, and then collated with regard to collating teachers’ views. This was undertaken following the comprehensive exercise illustrated in Appendix 15, in which I considered how the questions from the finalised SENCO interview schedules related to the project’s original research questions. The Figure below illustrates the relation between piloting the teachers’ schedules (Appendix 17) with the SENCOs (Appendix 16) who were all interviewed before them in terms of the chronological order of events.

<b>Question in Teachers’ interview schedules (Appendix 17) versus SENCO interview schedules (Appendix 16)</b>	<b>Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?</b>	<b>Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?</b>	<b>How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?</b>
1. What do you perceive as the role of the SENCO? <i>(Question 4 in Appendix 16: What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be?)</i>	✓	✓	
2. What impact, direct or indirect, do you feel the SENCO has had on your teaching practices? Please give specific examples. What support have you received from the SENCO? <i>(Question 8 in Appendix 16: In your opinion, what is the general impact of SENCOs on teachers’ abilities to address SEN in their classrooms?)</i>	✓		✓
3. What barriers are there that prevent you from maximizing the SENCOs advice/ input? <i>(Question 2 in Appendix 16: What are the barriers to the SENCO’s role?)</i>		✓	

Question in Teachers' interview schedules (Appendix 17) versus SENCO interview schedules (Appendix 16)	Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?	Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?	How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?
4. Do you think SENCOs skill or inhibit teachers from become effective teachers for children with SEN? (optional) <i>(Question 17 in Appendix 16: How do you know that skills, knowledge and understanding provided in training is applied in classrooms?)</i>		✓	✓
5. What would make the SENCO role better/ more impactful? <i>(Question 9 in Appendix 16: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in your school?)</i>	✓		✓
6. Is there anything more that you would like me to know, either prompted by this interview, or about the focus of my research in general?	possible	possible	possible

**Table 5.3: Grid illustrating teachers' instrument pilot cross-referencing SENCOs' instrument and project research questions**

All participants were also given a form in which I requested for their school demographic information [Appendix 18].

#### 5.3.4 Things that Went Well

The pilot phase of the interviews was conducted on three SENCOs, who all had class teaching responsibilities as well. Two of these SENCOs had also been part of the pilot for my questionnaire earlier during the course of my research. The feedback from the pilot interviews was generally positive. As before, once the 'interview' was over, I requested

the SENCOs for their feedback with regard to my interview style, the content of the questions, the prompts, etc.

Generally, feedback was positive, in that the schedule flowed well. However, one SENCO did tell me that she would not have minded if I had interrupted her in the middle of her answer to ask what a certain term meant, as she had used when describing 'Irlen Screening', which I later learned was an assessment for a specific visual impairment. During the course of the actual interviews themselves, I found SENCOs and teachers to be happy to explain certain acronyms for me, and this did not derail in any way from the course of the interview questions as I had feared.

The teachers' interviews also went well in that because whilst piloting them during the SENCOs' interviews, I developed a comfortable interviewing style, and consequently, did not waste time on trivial matters such as trying to be conversationalist by rephrasing the questions that I wanted to ask. The specific questions selected for teachers' interview schedules (Appendix 17) led to a number of other aspects of discussion within the interview that yielded the rich descriptive data as reported in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 of this thesis.

Another example of good practice that I learnt during the pilots was to get participants to fill out the school demographic information [Appendix 18] before the interview started, so that I could use it as a point of reference for any specific questions during the course of the interview.

### 5.3.5 Problems in Implementation and their Resolution

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Despite the thorough and comprehensive piloting process, I did run into some issues whilst interviewing participants for the second phase of my research. Indeed, some of my initial interviews with SENCOs lasted as long as one hour, because of the depth of detail that I asked them to go into. As I became more comfortable with the process, and indeed, the questions and more importantly, the purpose behind each question that I was asking [whilst keeping in view my original research questions, as illustrated in Appendix 15], I was able to

refrain from asking for in-depth insights into certain questions. For example, one SENCO earlier in the phase, spent about 10 minutes telling me about the barriers to the SENCO role, which was only question Number 2, of a total of 24! This lesson also later stood me in good stead as part of the pilot process through which I developed a shorter interview format for teachers, as as earlier discussed in the previous section, with respect to the teachers' interviews.

Also, a problem that I faced during my pilot interviews for SENCOs was that I repeated myself often, sometimes out of nervousness, but mostly because I would read the question, and then try to ask it in a conversational way by rephrasing it according to what was being discussed at that point. One of my pilot SENCOs suggested to me that it was not a negative issue if some questions were phrased in a more formal way, as opposed to the more dialogic manner of the interviews. I myself noticed, that the more interviews I conducted, the more familiar my style became with the format and the manner in which I could then guide the interviewee to the subsequent questions.

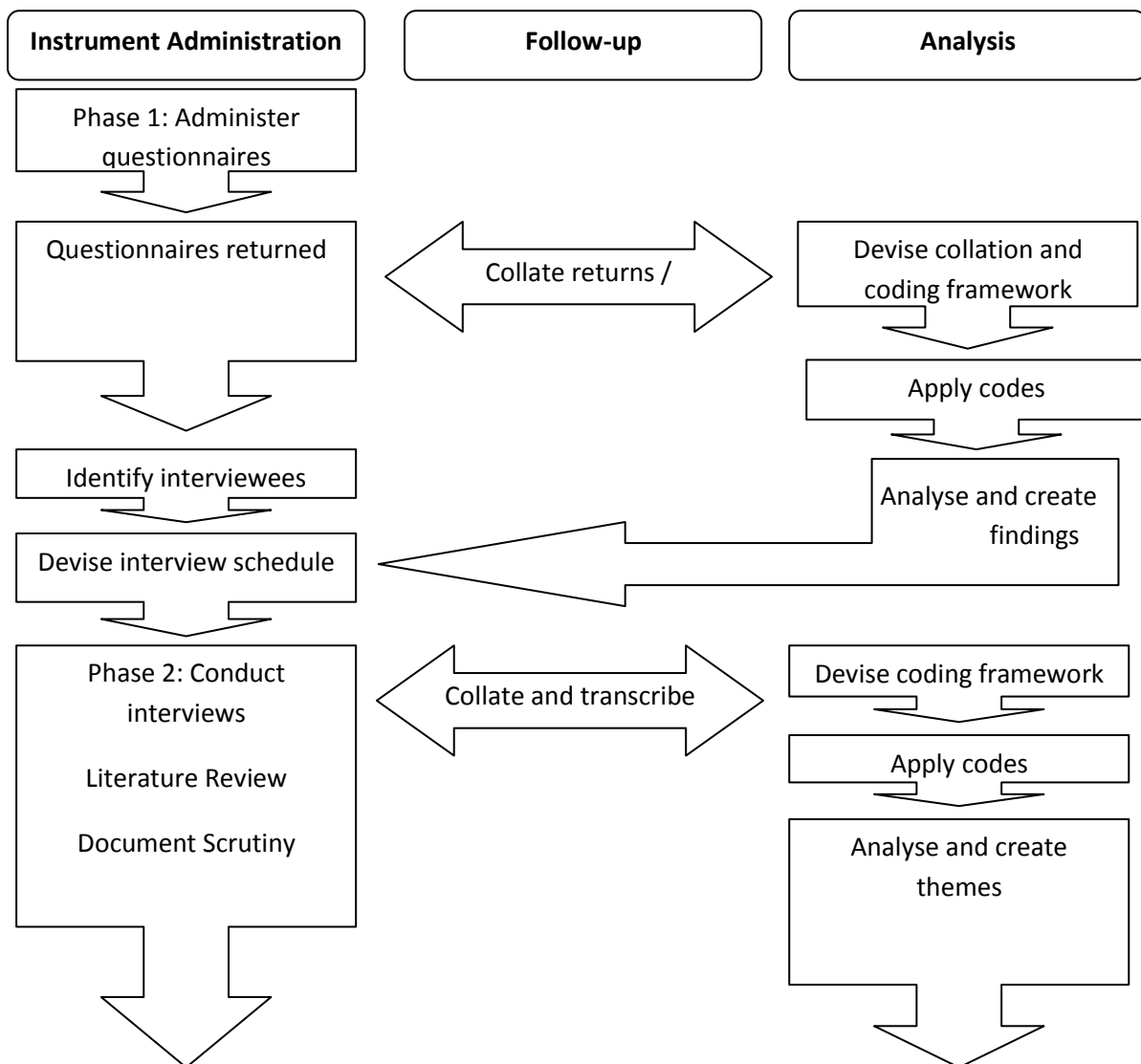
On a more pedantic note, during both the SENCOs' and teachers' pilots, I also learned the lesson that it is important to have a clipboard as a base for the notepad on which I jotted down notes during the interviews. I observe this good practice of taking notes during interviews, despite having two audio recorders also recording the interview, as it helped me refer to certain points of the discussion when I was transcribing interviews, particularly when participants used terms or acronyms that I was unfamiliar with.

#### 5.4 Data Collection

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Data for the purpose of this project was collected in person, as the questionnaires were self-administered, and the semi-structured interviews were all conducted face-to-face at a location convenient to research participants.

The Figure 5.1 that follows on the next page gives an overview of the pilot and resultant data collection process:



**Figure 5.1: Instrument administration, follow up and analysis process**

#### 5.4.1 Triangulation

The process of triangulation had been defined by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.141), as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour.”

In my view, triangulation was crucial to the research process as it assisted in the development of not only knowledge, but served as a tool to review researcher



perspective and understanding of the status quo regarding possible answers to the project's research questions. There were several various types of triangulation identified by Denzin (1998, cited in Robson, 2002, p.174); Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.214); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.141): data triangulation; time triangulation; space triangulation; combined analytical levels of triangulation; theoretical triangulation; investigator or observer triangulation; and methodological triangulation.

Patton (1999, 2001) referred to four forms of triangulation, some of which overlapped with those proposed by Denzin (1998) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007). Patton's four forms are described as methodological triangulation; source triangulation; analyst triangulation; and theory and perspective triangulation.

Considering the time and resource constraints of the project, as well as my own access to the cohort, the financial as well as geographical implications, it was my aim to essentially undertake two types of triangulation: data triangulation (Denzin, 1998; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; ) – using a variety of data sources in the form of questionnaires, interviews and document scrutiny; as well as methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1998, Patton, 2001) – combining quantitative and qualitative approaches of data collection, and using demographic data to illustrate the key themes that emerged from the study. Through that multi-methods approach, it had been my intention to ensure a general “convergence of major themes or patterns in the data from interviews, (related literature)... and documents” thus lending strong credibility to my findings whilst ensuring a provision for the trustworthiness of my research (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 146).

#### 5.4.2 Trustworthiness

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Guba posited that:

*“... human behaviour is rarely if ever context-free; hence knowledge of human behaviour individually or in social groups is necessarily idiographic, and differences are at least as important as similarities to an understanding of what*

*is happening. To the extent that the conditions described are so, the naturalistic paradigm becomes the paradigm of choice” (Guba, 1981, p.78).*

The paradigmatic foundation that is mentioned above, therefore, forms the basis of my study, which may also cohesively be called a naturalistic inquiry. This is because my research project is not based on what Guba also referred to as ‘the rationalistic paradigm’, which relates to a line of inquiry in which assumptions and generalisations, that is, enduring truth statements that are context-free (Guba, 1981, p.77). As I acknowledged earlier in Chapter Four of this thesis, in Sections 4.3 and its sub-sections, the aim of inquiry within my doctoral research was to understand and interpret, or reconstruct the ‘constructions’ that my participants shared with me with regard to their realities. I endeavoured to report data that reflected a general consensus, whilst continually being mindful of the possibility of new interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 113). This idea of ‘generalisability’ and the concept of ‘commonalities’ and ‘exceptionalities’ within my data shall be later explored in the following chapter, within Sections 6.4 and 6.5 of this thesis.

Morse *et al.* reported that “a number of leading qualitative researchers argued that reliability and validity were terms relating to the quantitative paradigm and were not applicable to qualitative inquiry” (Leininger, 1994, cited in Morse *et al.*, 2002, p.14; Altheide and Johnson, 1998, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.283). Subsequently, Lincoln and Guba (1985), Leininger (1994), Rubin and Rubin (1995) proposed the adoption of new criteria for determining reliability and validity, and hence ensuring rigour, in qualitative inquiry.

In what Morse *et al.*, (2002, p.14) termed a piece of ‘seminal work in the 1980s’, instead of applying the terms ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’, Guba and Lincoln chose to employ the concept of “trustworthiness,” (Guba, 1981; Guba and Lincoln, 1982). This notion of trustworthiness as a more comprehensive descriptor for rigour in research was also echoed by Shenton. (2004).

I found this to be a particularly significant turning point for me in view of my own usage of terms such as ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’, because my earlier reading during the project, had

led me to Cohen, Manion and Morrison's 18 types of validity, most of which seemed relevant only to the quantitative paradigms! (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.133) I also had a similar issue with their allusion to the term of 'face validity' in terms of ensuring the loosely applied terms of 'validity' and 'reliability' with regard to data collected from interviews (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.150).

Silverman's contended that "'validity' is another word for truth... and that qualitative researchers have no 'golden key' to validity" (Silverman, 2010, p.275), and Hammersley further asserted that reliability refers to "the degree of consistency in which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions" (Hammersley, 1992, p.67). However, this also did not appeal to me because I believe there are fundamental differences in social situations and the application of such an overarching word as 'reliability' is not appropriate. Indeed, Silverman himself also conceded that "the social reality (is) always in flux" (Silverman, 2011, p.361). Consequently, I chose to apply Guba and Lincoln's term of 'trustworthiness' in terms of my research project.

Ensuring trustworthiness of data is based on criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Within these were specific methodological strategies for demonstrating qualitative rigour, such as the audit trail, member checks when coding, categorizing, or confirming results with participants, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, structural corroboration, and referential material adequacy (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1982; Creswell, 2003, p.196-197).

It is applicable at this stage to examine the associated challenges that occur in the context of what Guba termed the 'trustworthiness' of data. Guba's 1981 model, and indeed, Guba and Lincoln's more recent work with regard to establishing the trustworthiness of data is based on the identification of four aspects that are relevant to qualitative studies such as mine:

1. Credibility
2. Transferability
3. Dependability
4. Confirmability

(Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 114).

Guba (1981, p. 83) summarized the various criteria required to ensure aspects with regard to each of the four above-mentioned strategies to ensure trustworthiness as illustrated within Table 5.4 below:

Strategy	Criteria during data collection	Criteria after data collection
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use prolonged engagement</li> <li>• Use persistent observation</li> <li>• Use peer debriefing</li> <li>• Use triangulation</li> <li>• Collect referential adequacy materials</li> <li>• Do member checks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish structural corroboration (coherence)</li> <li>• Establish referential adequacy</li> <li>• Do member checks</li> </ul>
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect thick descriptive data</li> <li>• Do theoretical/ purposive sampling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop thick description</li> </ul>
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use overlap methods</li> <li>• Use stepwise replication</li> <li>• Leave audit trail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do dependability audit (process)</li> </ul>
Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do triangulation</li> <li>• Practice reflexivity (audit trail)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do confirmability audit (product)</li> </ul>

**Table 5.4: Adapted from Guba’s ‘Strategies to Establish Trustworthiness’ (Guba, 1981, p.83)**

I shall cover each aspect individually and explain how I have endeavoured to ensure the trustworthiness of my data accordingly, and in doing so, relate to the concepts of ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ that Morse *et al.* acknowledged as being more relevant to the quantitative paradigms (Morse *et al.*, 2002, p.15).

#### 5.4.2.1 Credibility

As my study was bound by the time-limitations of being a full-time doctoral student, I could not spend a large duration of time within school settings. However, my prolonged engagement with my participant cohort of SENCOs, teachers and head teachers came about as a result of my going to their various schools to interview them. Aside from the

duration of interviews, which were sometimes just under an hour long, in the midst of interruptions from teachers and students alike, I also spent time in school waiting areas observing the interactions amongst SENCOs and their teaching colleagues.

In terms of peer debriefing, I liaised regularly with my supervisory team, as well as presented my research findings and project at various national and international forums; as contended by Guba:

*“Inquirers ought regularly to detach themselves from the site and to seek out and interact with other professionals who are able and willing to perform the debriefing function...to provide inquirers the opportunity to test their growing insights and to expose themselves to searching questions”* (Guba, 1981, p.85).

This process also enabled me to establish ‘strategies to enhance my reflexivity’ by developing a structural coherence to my project, through self- and peer-critique (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014, p.334). I was also able to develop the ‘referential adequacy’ of my project, with regard to a review of the audio tapes, against transcriptions, and referring to them multiple times during the coding and data analysis process. Comprehensive triangulation of data and methods was undertaken, as already examined earlier in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Guba (1981, p.85) maintained that “The process of member checks is the single most important action inquirers can take, for it goes to the heart of the credibility criterion.” In this regard, I endeavoured to ensure that my data and interpretations were continuously scrutinised by members of the teaching community, including SENCOs, teachers and head teachers, as well as research experts within the field.

#### 5.4.2.2 Transferability

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Although Guba was of the opinion that generalisations cannot be categorically stated “on the grounds that virtually all social/behavioural phenomena are context-bound” (Guba, 1981, p. 86), my research is built on the premise of Bassey’s related concept of

“fuzzy generalisation” (Bassegy, 1995, 1999, p.51) as illustrated shortly in the following chapter, within Section 6.4 of this thesis.

However, with regard to the establishment of the trustworthiness of data based on the criterion of transferability, I ensured the collection of thick descriptive data through the 36 comprehensive semi-structured interviews that I conducted, which was based on a purposive participant sample. The ‘rich’ data that I collected was then put through a rigorous process of coding and thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Creswell, 2003, p.196, Braun and Clarke, 2006), as illustrated later in Chapter Six of this thesis, as well as the examination of the data with regard to past and current research of a similar nature, so as to ensure the trustworthiness of the matter.

#### 5.4.2.3 Dependability

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Dependability is a concept concerned with the stability of data. Guba maintained, however, that qualitative researchers have a responsibility to also:

*“...make allowance for apparent instabilities arising either because different realities are being tapped or because of instrumental shifts stemming from developing insights on the part of the investigator-as-instrument” (Guba, 1981, p. 87).*

Subsequently, in the context of my research project, I endeavoured to build a comprehensive audit trail through the intricate process of data and methodological triangulation as described earlier in this chapter in Section 5.4.1. This process therefore, ensured that I was able to develop a ‘dependability audit’, which has formed the basis of data analysis as a result of which my research project findings were reported (Creswell, 2003). Some documents relating to this audit can be found in the Appendices 4-22, which contain the instruments through which data was collected, as well as the working copies and final coding and thematic derivative documents, and a sample transcription, analysed along with associated codes.

A concept associated with dependability is also the notion of 'integrity', which I understand as the manner in which the data generated for this project has been appropriately and relevantly used to inform the research. This notion of integrity has been uppermost in my priorities, as I have endeavoured to correlate the various utterances of participants with the themes and codes that are most closely associated with the ideas that they are trying to convey. As part of this process, in keeping with good practice as recommended by my supervisor, I have endeavoured to question my interpretation of the data at various stages of the coding and analysis process. This involved questioning the 'strength' of the data, in terms of relevance to themes, as well as the information that I interpreted the participant to be relaying to me. Subsequently, the themes derived from the codes, have undergone various iterations, as already described, so as to ensure the most comprehensive and integral relation to interpretation, as intended by the participant. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge here, that whilst multiple sources of triangulation, as already discussed, are illustrations of good practice, ultimately, as a qualitative researcher, I am still dependent upon my own perceptions of the participants' views and my ability to interpret those effectively.

#### 5.4.2.3 Confirmability

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Guba ascertained that the fourth measure of trustworthiness of data was that of confirmability. He asserted that investigators should undertake a confirmability audit, which is "an audit certifying that data exist in support of every interpretation and that the interpretations have been made in ways consistent with the available data" (Guba, 1981, p.88).

In this regard, I referred once again to the various routes through which my data was triangulated, as well as the formation of the audit trail as previously alluded to. Furthermore, to ensure the aspect of trustworthiness through this criterion, I had the added 'product' audits, which included the school documentation, of SEN policies, SEN support documents, such as provision maps, IEPs, and various other associated SEN documentation, as also described in Section 4.2.3 of the previous chapter within this thesis.

## 5.5 Ethical Considerations

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Robson (2002, p. 66) defined ethics as “general principles of what one ought to do.” Based on this definition, and specific recognition of the requirements of the University of Northampton’s Research Ethics Committee’s guidance (University of Northampton, 2011), as well as the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Researchers (2011), I developed an Ethical Code [Appendix 19] and Consent Form [Appendix 20] for the purposes of the project and the specific research instrument that was implemented.

### 5.5.1 Ethical Code and Interview Consent

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It was imperative to note there that, at every stage of the research project, all participation by members of the research cohort had and would continue to be voluntary. Informed and written consent had and would be obtained from all the subjects participating in the study. They had been and would be informed of the aims and nature of the research through a written Information Sheet [Appendix 7] and Ethical Code [Appendix 16] which was explained to them verbally, and written consent taken from them [Appendix 17]. I kept one copy of the Consent Form, and the participant received another. Each participant also received a copy of the Ethical Code for the project and the Information Sheet.

Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time during the research, up to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013 without reason and their record of participation would be destroyed. I also endeavoured to provide my contact details to all participants, including those of my Supervisor, should they wish to contact him directly. It was also important to mention here that I was in possession of a valid CRB check by the University of Northampton, and that I had offered to provide a copy upon request by the Schools in which I went to interview teachers, however, none was requested.

As a researcher, not just as a result of the BERA and University of Northampton Guidelines within which I operated, but also because of my personal principles, there



was no element of deception. The questionnaire dissemination and interviews had taken place in a venue and in a setting that provided private, comfortable and safe place for both the participant and myself. Interviews were recorded on my iPhone and a backup digital recorder with the participant's permission, to facilitate in-depth analysis of the information obtained. Those recordings were accessible by myself, the primary researcher, and were held in a secure place, including my password-protected phone. The interview transcripts were also held securely, and were only accessible to myself and my supervisory team. Individual participants however were given the option of having access to the information collected about them and provided with the opportunity for verification through the transcribed documentation of the interviews to ensure an accurate representation of their narrative, as per the ethical parameters laid out in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) 'Good Practice in Educational Research Writing' (2000); however, no participant availed that opportunity.

All information collected throughout the research process was stored and transported according to the *Data Protection Act 1998* (National Archives, 1998). Participants' personal details were kept confidential and separate from the data, and stored in password-protected computers both at home and at my School of Education office.

Furthermore, I emphasised to respondents that they were not obliged to answer any question or respond to any statement unless they wished to do so, and that they could stop the interview at any time, in addition to withdrawing from the research at any point up to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013, an option which was not taken up by any participant during the course of the project. I selected the date of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013, as I intended that to be the date by which I had undertaken the main portion of data analysis for this project.

Anonymity and confidentiality of all individual subjects, including locations and names of schools, was guaranteed and maintained at all times, and was known only to myself and my supervisor.

### 5.5.2 Ethical Risk Assessment

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Each participating school's health and safety policy was adhered to at all times. I read these policies in advance of my visits to the school, as almost all were available online, and in the cases where they were not, the SENCOs or teachers kindly emailed them to me in advance of our meeting, as they did their respective School SEN Policies. However, despite my work being largely based on interactions with SENCOs and teachers, and the bare minimum of direct contact with children, I had undertaken a Risk Assessment at the beginning of the research project so as to ensure that my supervisors and I planned for any additional health and safety issues that might arise [Appendix 21].

Disclosure of problems by interviewees was an also issue I took into consideration prior to the project commencing [Appendix 18], about which I had decided would be addressed in confidence and if necessary, the interviewee would be withdrawn from the research data set. Fortunately though, that difficult situation did not occur.

### 5.6 Chapter Five Key Points

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Chapter five provides a comprehensive overview of the pre- and post-pilot, as well as the execution of the research instruments and the subsequent elements involved in the data collection process, the key points of which were:

- Both the survey questionnaires as well as the semi-structured interview instruments were piloted before final implementation. Changes were made accordingly, as I considered things that went well, as well as problems in implementation and their resolution during the process.
- A comprehensive overview of triangulation and the formation of an audit trail, including documentary evidence in the Appendices 4-22 are referred to, so as to establish the 'trustworthiness' of the project.
- Ethical considerations, an ethical risk assessment and the ethical code for the project are discussed, along with the conventions for the informed consent and anonymisation of data collected from participants.

## CHAPTER SIX: DATA CODING

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### Chapter Summary

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Chapter six provides a review of the comprehensive process of data coding that was undertaken for this project. Challenges in coding data are also discussed, along with the manner in which code reduction was implemented, so as to develop the final frame of thematic analysis from the original codes that were assigned during the first level of data analysis.

### 6.1 Introduction

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A comprehensive description is given of the coding process, commencing with the initial codes allocated to data. As is commonly experienced with research of this type, initial coding produced a great number of codes, far too many to handle efficiently. A code reduction process and the final framework of themes was therefore implemented. Whilst undertaking the process, I was mindful of the assertion made by Cohen, Manion and Morrison that “there is no one single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data; how one does it should abide by the issue of ‘fitness for purpose’” (2011, p.461). It was with this in mind therefore, that I had my three research questions always at the forefront during the coding process.

### 6.2 Data Analysis and Narrative

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Silverman’s and Bell’s views respectively, that it was not the words of an interviewees that matter, but the “meanings” (Silverman, 2006, p.101; Bell, 2005, p. 214), enabled me to ensure that I was able to coherently and meaningfully “cluster” key issues as I went through my data. That process took me one step further towards drawing conclusions from the clusters, in view of the original themes that I had identified through my literature review, which were applicable to my research, as outlined shortly within this chapter.

Before commencing with the process of coding the data collected for the purposes of my research through interview transcripts, as well as School Special Education Needs

(SEN) Policies and related documentation (from the schools where interviewees worked), I also reflected on Silverman's contention that "(researchers) should not take for granted what it is (they) appear to be 'seeing' " (Silverman, 2006, p.100). I felt that to be a particularly noteworthy reflection, as most of my interviews took place within the schools that the SENCOs and teachers worked in – from classrooms to staffrooms or specially-designated SEN rooms.

It was also important to note there that because my thesis was based on an examination of perceptions and challenges relating to the SENCO-teacher dynamic, which were of a subjective nature, it was neither possible nor practicable to quantitatively assess the resultant data. I had made reference to that justification in Section 4.2 within my methodology chapter earlier in this thesis. I am therefore of the view that as a result of my research findings, it was more appropriate in that particular situation, to present my data in prose, rather than as a series of quantitative graphics or case studies. Indeed, that view was reaffirmed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 149) who posited that reliability, or rather, the more apt term of 'trustworthiness' in qualitative methodologies "includes fidelity to real life, context- and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents."

I was also particularly mindful of Lindsay's caution, in a publication about approaches to research in inclusive education, in which he welcome the use of qualitative approaches to research, whilst also contending:

*"It is for the research and professional community, in consultation with users and voluntary bodies, to design research appropriate to the question for which answers are sought and their responsibility to interpret findings for the benefit of other researchers, practitioners, parents and children" (Lindsay, 2003, p. 9).*

To begin the stages of data analysis, I revisited the interview transcripts several times and looked for natural units of meaning. That process enabled me to classify, categorise and code data depending on various key words or concepts that were uttered, or that I identified through various conversational units of the interviewees' responses. The

codes that I applied to the original interview transcript data were more than simply descriptive codes. I attempted to apply interpretive codes that suggested an initial interpretation of the data. Silverman (2010, p.219) alluded to this recommended practice in his argument about the importance of beginning data analysis at the initial stages of a research project, rather than allowing the data to accumulate from the outset, in what he termed “kick-starting data analysis.”

Consequently, therefore, it was my intention to draw from my ‘raw’ primary data analysis, further inferential codes that offered links between codes, themes and categories so as to afford myself a degree of ease in the ultimate interpretation of the research data and the conclusions derived thereafter. I also made specific note of the patterns or themes that emerged from the data. Based on those ‘emergent themes’, I then looked for relationships and inferences between variables. Sometimes, as was necessary, at various stages, I had to recode existing data for the purposes of clarity in understanding the relativity of the variables (Creswell, 1994, p.155), or ensuring the matter of “articulation” as coined by Silverman (2010, p.222), in view of my original research questions.

Indeed, at this stage, it was necessary to discuss the considerations that existed in that coding and thematic approach to the research methodology and data collection. Silverman alluded to that status quo in his assertion that “by abandoning the attempt to treat respondents’ accounts as potentially ‘true’ pictures of ‘reality’, we open up for analysis the culturally rich methods through which interviewers and interviewees, in concert, generate plausible accounts of the world” (Silverman, 2010, p.225). Silverman further went on to examine data analysis from a constructionist approach in which participants were assumed to actively create meaning as they presented different aspects of themselves in varying contexts (Silverman, 2010, p. 226). That notion was challenged by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 25) who referred to the “inaccuracy” of an interpretative approach, as being:

*“...the very process whereby one interprets and defines a situation is itself a product of the circumstances in which one is placed.”*

My view of Cohen, Manion and Morrison's assertion above, was to acknowledge their point, and to also reiterate that while it was undeniable that our understanding of the actions of others in the various school environments necessarily required a deeper understanding of situational factors, that, as Cohen and Manion themselves earlier maintained, "cannot be said to compromise *the* purpose of a social science" (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 35). In the case of my project, the main purpose being an investigation into the impact of SENCOs on teachers' abilities to address the needs of children with SEN.

In view of those factors, it was therefore my intention to present information derived from my research data findings in textual form that compared and contrasted resultant themes as and where appropriate (Creswell, 1994, p.159).

### 6.3 Coding the Data

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Initially, I colour-coded the data as per my original research questions, which I revisited a number of times as I examined the research data:

- 1) **Motivation**: Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
- 2) **Effective Teachers**: Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
- 3) **Impact Assessment**: How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

An example of this is illustrated in Appendix 22. The relationship between the coding pattern above and my original research questions was that each research question of mine focused on the respective highlighted element, i.e. motivation, teacher effectiveness and the assessment of SENCO impact within schools.

That was the first level of coding that I undertook, as it was my view that tackling the data initially through larger, overarching codes, would be more manageable, as I could

then later break them down into relevant and specific codes. That view came about as a result of my reading of various texts relating to coding, particularly Silverman's contention about kick-starting data analysis through firstly analysing data which was already in the public sphere – in my case prior research which had been conducted in the field as regarded SENCOs and teachers; secondly, seeking advice from my supervisor; thirdly, analysing my own data as I gathered it; and fourthly, asking key questions of my data, and reviewing whether or not they sought to answer my original research questions (Silverman, 2010, p.219). As a result of that process, I developed a comprehensive tabular summary, as indicated later in this chapter. Following this, I undertook a process of 'data reduction' (Silverman, 2010, p.234), when the derivation of themes was made easier as I was able to again cross-reference the resultant specific codes with the main three codes that I had derived from my research questions.

That process, was how I adapted Tesch's (1990, p.142-145, in Creswell, 2003, p.192) eight steps towards the analysis and interpretation of data. Firstly, I skim-read all my transcribed interviews. Secondly, I jotted down ideas as they came to mind. During that time, I also attended a number of Conferences where I would get ideas from the presentations about SENCO issues, and so made note of further ideas for codes and themes, along with those that developed as a result of my reading, as common themes brought up by researchers in the field of SEN support and inclusion. Thirdly, I formed clusters from similar codes, so as to develop "arrays of major topics." The fourth step involved returning again to my key research questions and then reviewing them against the codes I had developed, along with another in-depth look at the data (the colour-coded process of this is illustrated in Appendix 22). Fifthly, I endeavoured to reduce the codes by grouping ones that I felt were common, as a result of my background reading and literature review for that project. In the sixth stage, I finalised the abbreviations for the shortlisted codes. The seventh step involved another trawl through my data to ensure that it was all coded as per my categories. Lastly, I performed a preliminary analysis, which was done under my supervisor's direction, and as a result some of my data was re-coded.

## 6.4 Challenges in Coding the Data

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One of the primary challenges that I initially faced was having to review just over 148,000 words comprising of interview transcriptions, in addition to the qualitative data gathered from questionnaires earlier in the research project. Each sentence, if relevant to the research questions, was coded, and recoded as necessary, following multiple reviews. Although I started off the data analysis during the period in which I was simultaneously also transcribing my interviews, the sheer magnitude of the volume of interview data, along with the coding of my questionnaire data resulted in an often 'messy' coding process, more so because I had made a decision to undertake the process manually, rather than use an electronic programme to aid in my data analysis [Appendices 10, 11, 12 and 22]. Silverman (2010, p.222) alluded to this issue in his contention that no matter how "elegant" an initial research proposal, the first batch of data was always "salutary", hence the usefulness of the process.

Another challenge involved the identification of key codes. My supervisor guided me through the process of asking key questions of my data, with my research questions at the forefront at all times. Along with that mindset, I also considered articles in the same research area, conducted qualitatively, and analysed through a thematic framework. During the process, it was crucial for me, as also counselled by Silverman, (2010, p.222), to be cognisant of the fact that I did not want to begin with my own categories at the outset, but instead allow them to develop from the data that I was analysing.

A further challenge whilst coding data was that of "articulation" (Silverman, 2010, p.233), in that I had to be aware of how the main units of my data related to one another, as the analysis was dependant on a cohesive structure of findings in which themes and codes relate directly or indirectly to the research questions of the project. That was particularly manifest as there were instances when research participants did mention key aspects of their specific roles, but which were not particularly relevant to the project at hand, thereby restricting the potential for me to probe further, or code within the data transcribed. Mention will be made of such examples later in the thesis



when I discuss implications for possible future areas of research as a result of that project.

In addition to the aspects mentioned above, a major challenge in coding the data, which also came up in repeated discussions with my supervisor, was the issue of 'representativeness' or 'generalisability' of the data (Myers, 2000) through the resultant derivative codes. Silverman (2010, p.270) and Bassey (1999, p.51) alluded to the relevance of the assumptions being made in terms of the quality of data being coded. It was important for me that there be no doubt in terms of the extent to which my participants' responses were actually reflected in their practice, and that the "fuzzy generalisations" (Bassey, 1995, 1999, p.51) be as accurate as possible, so that later on during the process whereby I triangulated my codes with other sources, there would be more "commonalities" in the resultant themes, as opposed to "exceptionalities."

For the purpose of my research project, I made the decision to use Rose and Shevlin's definitions of these two terms, which they present as follows:

- Commonalities: Phenomena that were seen to be common across schools and might therefore be used to formulate 'fuzzy generalisations'
- Exceptionalities: Phenomena that were seen in only one or a small number of schools and cannot therefore be generalised beyond the specific location

(Rose and Shevlin, 2014, p.3).

My decision to use the specific words 'commonalities' and 'exceptionalities' is a result of Creswell's work with regard to research design, as he specifically referred to the importance of an investigator mentioning specific data analysis procedures utilised within the inherent qualitative designs (Creswell, 1994, p.156).

#### 6.4.1 Identifying the Codes

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I chose to undertake thematic analysis of my data, because as my project is an interpretivist study, I was of the opinion, as Boyatzis (1998, p.145) also affirmed that, “thematic analysis... allows the interpretive social scientist to generate qualitative hypotheses...”

I opted for thematic analysis, because the traditionally described process of ‘content analysis’ related more to quantitative aspects of research, which were not relevant for my particular project (Robson, 1993, p.274; Willis, 2007, p.88; Silverman, 2011, p.213). However, I was cognisant of Wilkinson’s presumption that content analysis, in its most fundamental form, refers to the inspection of data for recurrent instances of some kind, whether these instances be labelled as ‘items’, ‘categories’, ‘themes’, ‘discourses’, and so on (Wilkinson, 2011, cited in Silverman, 2011, p.171).

The concept of discourse analysis, also sometimes known as conversation analysis (Robson, 1993, p.287) was also not relevant in my research context, as the focus of my research was not so much to do with the language used by the participants and its application to the social and cognitive contexts. Discourse analysis further involves the detailed analysis of small fragments of discourse, which is not what forms the basis of my research data, which I have earlier discussed to be rich and comprehensive in its relevance to the research questions, as earlier discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

I therefore opted for the applying themes to the “richness and uniqueness of the qualitative information” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.145) gathered as a result of data collection for this project. Furthermore, as described by Creswell (1994), the process of converting themes into codes, and then attributing incidences of presence, frequency or intensity, forms a desirable link between the data collected, and the commonalities that can be thus associated with it. Yin (2014) also discussed this concept in a description about the search for ‘patterns’ that arise through a comparison of results derived from primary data, with those patterns predicted from the literature. It was thus within this

framework of coding and thematic development that I approached the stages of data analysis for my project.

Whilst undertaking the coding exercise for my project, as described above, it was relevant to mention there that I was aware of the fact that the manner in which I interpreted data to be relevant to the codes was unique to me, in the face of my own personal background and my educational experiences and knowledge of the topic. My experience had therefore enabled me to be mindful that were someone else in the same position as me, to undertake that very same exercise, there might be variations in some portions of the coding. Furthermore, were my research questions different, or phrased in a different manner with variations in semantic emphasis or a research focus, that would be reflected in the resultantly coded data.

During the colour-coding/ highlighting, exercise, as explained in earlier in Section 6.3, I reviewed all the data in view of data that was relevant across research questions. A total of twenty-four codes were initially identified which depicted the common themes resulting from the data collected through interviews. The codes in their raw form were as follows (in alphabetical order):

#	Raw Code	Data
1	ADS	Deployment of adult support, i.e. TAs, LSAs
2	ATT	SENCOs' perceptions regarding teachers; attitudes towards inclusion; staff resistance versus teacher willingness
3	CSB	Support for ICT, literacy and Numeracy
4	DAT	Organising and making sense of data: number crunching by SENCOs; whether or not on the SMT
5	ENG	Levels of SENCO engagement with school staff
6	ENV	Environmental factors; School ethos → working in a target-driven environment; teachers' belief that SENCOs are qualified/ capable of ensuring appropriate provision for all children with SEN
7	INT	Interventions – effectiveness and evaluation of interventions, planning and assessments and their contribution to teaching; monitoring the impact of provisions: a. Who writes the IEPs? (move from IEPs towards provision

		<p>mapping)</p> <p>b. How, what, when, why?</p> <p>c. Diversification of the sources of external support</p> <p>d. Funding and resources</p>
8	KNO	Application of knowledge → knowing versus doing versus believing
9	MGT	SENCO role within management; School organisation and support management
10	PID	SENCOs' sense of professional identity/ negotiating identity; being 'agents of change' – tensions around the idea of 'identity' as a 'SENCO'
11	PPL	Preparation and Planning
12	PRM	Procedural issues; performance management parameters
13	PRO	SENCOs or teachers taking ownership of the work/ teaching – becoming active professionals; being RESOURCEFUL – looking for new ways to support learning; productive discussions; over-reliance versus under-reliance → “fighting fires” within the classroom → evidence of children’s progress and outcomes
14	QSP	Lack of 'quantifiability' of SENCOs input to teachers (consider withdrawal) → difference between 'usual' support and 'SEN' support
15	REF	Reflections on past/current/future practices – SENCOs reflect on their practice and innovate – the duality of their roles as teachers and SENCOs respectively
16	REL	Establishing good relationships
17	SPL	'collective specialisations' versus professionalisation of the role; SENCO workload versus having a variety of skills – defining responsibilities; multiple role responsibilities of SENCOs → time! (time with children, etc – how majority of the SENCO time is spent)
18	SPR	Pressures and issues eg: personal or professional
19	STA	Status within schools: where do they work from; physical space
20	TNT	Teaching versus non-teaching SENCOs
21	TPD	SENCO training or support of teachers' PD activities – dissemination of knowledge → impact of staff meetings
22	TPE	Levels of teacher participation and engagement
23	VAL	Underlying values of teachers
24	WEL	SENCOs' perceptions of teachers' wellbeing – staff turnover

**Table 6.1: Original 'raw' codes generated from the first level of data analysis**

Once these 24 codes had been developed, my next step was to cross-reference them with each of my three research questions. The resultant Table 6.2 is illustrated as follows:

MOTIVATION	EFFECTIVE TEACHERS	IMPACT ASSESSMENT
ATT	ADS	ADS
ENG	ATT	ATT
ENV	CSB	CSB
INT	DAT	DAT
MGT	INT	ENG
PID	KNO	INT
PRM	PID	KNO
PRO	PPL	MGT
REL	PRO	PID
SPR	QSP	PPL
STA	REF	PRM
TPD	REL	QSP
TPE	SPL	REF
VAL	SPR	SPL
WEL	STA	STA
	TNT	TNT
	TPD	TPD
	TPE	

**Table 6.2: Initial code frame cross-referenced against research questions**

As part of the above-mentioned process, each interview transcript was reviewed multiple times and every relevant utterance coded, as per those parameters indicated in Table 6.2 above. An example of a transcribed interview that underwent this process has been included in Appendix 22.

#### 6.4.2 Reducing the Codes and the 'New Code Frame'

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Upon consultation and discussion with my Supervisor, and the reflection of actual research data analysis, as illustrated by Bell and Cohen and Manion who maintained that the identification of key clusters of codes enhanced the process of translating respondents' responses into analysable content for the purposes of research findings, (Bell, 2005, p. 214; Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 286), I was able to reduce these original codes into only eight primary codes.

I did that by combining similar codes, so as to reduce the variety in data content that I needed to analyse with respect to my original research questions. At this stage, I reviewed Creswell's (1994, p.155) original eight stages of data coding, as already explained in Section 6.3 of this chapter. However, because I was now at the more advanced stage of thematic data attribution, I was also mindful of Boyatzis' four stages of thematic development and analysis:

1. Sensing themes
2. Applying the themes consistently
3. Developing appropriate code-related themes
4. Interpreting the information and themes in the context of the conceptual framework at hand

(Boyatzis, 1998, p.11).

The resultant eight codes were then further grouped as per four key emergent themes, as follows:

##### **A. TRNSPLC: (SENCOs' training; skills and dissemination to teachers)**

1. TRNSPLC-TRD: SENCO training/ support of teachers' PD activities – application and dissemination of knowledge → impact of staff meetings
2. TRNSPLC-SPL: 'collective specialisations' versus professionalisation of the role/ SENCO workload versus having a variety of skills – defining the multiple responsibilities → time

**B. PROFID (SENCOs' and teachers' professional identity)**

3. PROFID-IDT: SENCOs' sense of professional identity/ negotiating identity; being 'agents of change'; Reflections on past/current/future practices; duality of roles as teachers/SENCOs
4. PROIDF-MGT: SENCO role within management; organising and making sense of data: number crunching; environmental factors: status within schools

**C. ENGINCL (SENCO-teacher engagement and perceptions of inclusion)**

5. ENGINCL-ENG: Levels of SENCO engagement with school staff (teaching versus non-teaching SENCOs); establishing good relationships; SENCOs' perceptions of teachers' wellbeing – staff turnover
6. ENGINCL-ATT: SENCOs' perceptions regarding teachers' values and attitudes towards inclusion; → staff resistance versus teacher willingness; over-reliance versus under-reliance; school ethos

**D. INTPROV (interventions and provision made for children with SEN)**

7. INTPROV-PDI: Preparation and Planning/ Delivery of Interventions, their effectiveness and evaluation; assessments and their contribution to teaching; → Lack of 'quantifiability' of SENCOs input to teachers → difference between 'usual' support and 'SEN' support:
  - a. Who writes the IEPs? (move from IEPs towards provision mapping)
  - b. How, what, when, why?
  - c. Diversification of the sources of external support – no centrally-driven strategies
  - d. Funding and resources
8. INTPROV-ADS: Deployment of adult support, i.e. TAs, LSAs

My final stage in the process of coding and thematic development involved cross-referencing the above-mentioned themes in view of my original research questions, which were as follows:

- 1) **Motivation**: Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
- 2) **Effective Teachers**: Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
- 3) **Impact Assessment**: How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

The manner in which I arrived at the table below was that when I felt I had attained “theoretical sufficiency” (Andrade, 2009, p. 53), that is, the point at which I could confidently say that a core theme was significantly representative or indicative of the underlying meanings and patterns found in the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Yin, 2014).

### 6.5 Final Frame of Thematic Analysis in view of Original Research Questions

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The cross-referenced grid below depicts not only the new reduced codes, but a more meaningful illustration of their commonalities as regards the themes, as depicted in Table 6.3 on the next page:



#	CODE	MOTIVATION	EFFECTIVE TEACHERS	IMPACT ASSESSMENT
<b>TRNSPLC: (SENCOs' training; skills and dissemination to teachers)</b>		✓	✓	✓
1	TRNSPLC-TRD	✓	✓	✓
2	TRNSPLC-SPL	✓	✓	
<b>PROFID (SENCOs' and teachers' professional identity)</b>		✓	✓	✓
3	PROFID-IDT	✓	✓	
4	PROFID-MGT	✓		✓
<b>ENGINCL (SENCO-teacher engagement and perceptions of inclusion)</b>		✓	✓	✓
5	ENGINCL-ENG	✓		✓
6	ENGINCL-ATT	✓	✓	✓
<b>INTPROV (interventions and provision made for children with SEN)</b>		✓	✓	✓
7	INTPROV-PDI	✓	✓	✓
8	INTPROV-ADS		✓	✓

**Table 6.3: Finalised Code Frame**

The figure above attempts to portray the relationship between the four overarching themes which I had originally identified through my extensive literature review, and the eight key codes, as elucidated earlier in Section 6.4.2:

1. SENCOs' training; skills and dissemination to teachers
2. SENCOs' and teachers' professional identity
3. SENCO-teacher engagement and perceptions of inclusion
4. Interventions and provision made for children with SEN

As illustrated above, my research findings indicated a number of commonalities across my original research parameters. I made the decision to group certain codes on the basis of their 'commonality' which I based on my reading as a result of the literature review, (Bassey, 1995, 1999, p.51; Rose and Shevlin, 2014, p.3), and also what authors in the field mentioned during the discussion sections of papers based on their research relating to SENCOs and teachers.

Willis further maintained that in interpretivist studies – such as my doctoral research – “meaning (derived from the coding of findings) resides in the context, and it cannot be completely removed from it. Therefore, any conclusion must be made with the context fully in mind” (Willis, 2007, p.222).

It is relevant to mention here that I also encountered the converse of commonalities in my data: the exceptionalities as coined by Rose and Shevlin (2014, p.3). These related to codes that I derived, but which were not much discussed or alluded to within the present research scenario around SENCOs and their impact on teachers. For instance, one of the codes that I identified as a result of comments from a few of the SENCOs who were members of their respective Senior Leadership Teams, was that of procedural issues relating to their setting performance management parameters for teachers and whether or not those parameters related to SEN. Indeed, as affirmed by Thomas (2013, p.474):

*“For inclusive education to be at the core of education – as it should be – it has to be a truly inclusive education, not one that is narrowly defined.”*

However, I chose not to discuss that code, because SENCOs' views as a whole did not reflect that as a noteworthy factor that impacted the SENCO-teacher dynamic, or specifically, the impact that SENCOs had on teachers' abilities to address the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms.

It was relevant to mention there that Thomas' views regarding qualitative inquiry were in direct conflict with Bassey's views of 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey, 1995, 1999, p.51). Thomas (2011a, p.514) and Hammersley (2001, p. 224) both maintained that it

could never be definitively claimed that a study was entirely accurately reflective of a larger set of the same cohort. Both authors, whilst acknowledging the challenges faced by educational researchers in the social domain, argued that the idea of “commonalties” in data could not be affirmed to clarify or resolve what “will” happen in specific cases, as particular research outcomes. Interestingly however, Thomas did concede that “the construction of *generalised* and *generalisable* knowledge of a particular quality is the cynosure of the social scientist” (Thomas, 2011b, p.22). This lead me to conclude that despite his arguments against Bassey’s concept ‘fuzzy generalisations’, Thomas himself partially acknowledges that there is a recognition of the aspect of contextual applicability within social research that is not restricted simply to case studies.

Nonetheless, I had approached my research project, not from a single case-study standpoint, but from the source of multiple questionnaires and interviews, further triangulated by past and recent research in the field, which enabled me to make specific decisions whilst coding the data, to ensure the formation of “patterns” (Yin, 2014) in view of research participants and their roles in terms of answering the research questions at hand. My strategy to triangulate, or cross-examine the research data is supported not just through interview transcripts, but through the schools’ SEN policies, and SEN-related documentation, as well as a continual review of the relevant literature. These various sources shall be referred to later in the ‘Findings and Analysis’ Chapters 7, 8 and 9 of this thesis.

I have endeavoured to avoid bias in my research findings by reporting the words and ideas of the interviewees and co-relating them with the themes that I have derived. I undertook this exercise whilst being mindful of Robson’s assertion that to enable ‘trustworthiness’ of answers to research questions, the process of data analysis should be “fair and without bias, and the conclusions must be compelling, not least in ruling out alternative interpretations” (Robson, 1993, p.372).

In the following Chapters 7, 8 and 9, I shall discuss my research findings in view of my original research questions, cross-referenced with a data derived from interviews, presented primarily in the form of a selection of quotes from the research participants.

It was necessary to bring attention to the fact that the quotes were carefully selected by me after multiple reviews of my data, whilst concurrently keeping in mind those quotes that were highlighted in previous studies that had been carried out in a similar area of SENCO-teacher dynamics. My selection of quotes was therefore based not only on the relevance and appropriateness for the specific theme or code being discussed, but also because the context and matter of the quotes were similarly alluded to in studies conducted in similar settings.

The three chapters that follow consist of an in-depth analysis of the research findings in light of the finalised code frame above. Each research question is examined in a separate chapter as indicated in Table 6.4 below:

#	CODE	MOTIVATION (Chapter 7)	EFFECTIVE TEACHERS (Chapter 8)	IMPACT ASSESSMENT (Chapter 9)
<b>TRNSPLC: (SENCOs' training; skills and dissemination to teachers)</b>		✓ 7.2	✓ 8.2	✓ 9.2
1	TRNSPLC-TRD: SENCOs supporting teachers PD activities	✓	✓	✓
2	TRNSPLC-SPL: 'Professionalisation' of the role; multiple roles	✓	✓	
<b>PROFID (SENCOs' and teachers' professional identity)</b>		✓ 7.3	✓ 8.3	✓ 9.3
3	PROFID-IDT: SENCOs as 'agents of change'	✓	✓	
4	PROFID-MGT: SENCO role within management	✓		✓
<b>ENGINCL (SENCO-teacher engagement and perceptions of inclusion)</b>		✓ 7.4	✓ 8.4	✓ 9.4
5	ENGINCL-ENG: Degree of SENCO-teacher engagement	✓		✓
6	ENGINCL-ATT: SENCOs' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices	✓	✓	✓

#	CODE	MOTIVATION (Chapter 7)	EFFECTIVE TEACHERS (Chapter 8)	IMPACT ASSESSMENT (Chapter 9)
<b>INTPROV (interventions and provision made for children with SEN)</b>		✓ 7.5	✓ 8.5	✓ 9.5
7	INTPROV-PDI: Preparation, planning and delivery of 'measurable' interventions	✓	✓	✓
8	INTPROV-ADS: Deployment of other adult support and the impact teaching practices		✓	✓

**Table 6.4: Finalised Code Frame cross-referenced with relevant chapter sections within this thesis**

## 6.6 Chapter Six Key Points

Chapter six thus summarised the development of coding and thematic analysis that was applied to the data collected, including challenges encountered during the process of code-reduction and the finalisation of the thematic framework, the key points of which were:

- Analysis was conducted keeping in mind Cohen, Manion and Morrison's assertion of data having a "fitness for purpose" (2011, p.461), and the subsequent referral to the projects research questions throughout the process.
- Data from over 148,000 transcribed words of interviews with SENCOs, teachers and head teachers was colour-coded as per various parameters at the different stages of coding [Appendices 10, 11, 12 and 22].
- Commonalities: Phenomena that were seen to be common across schools and might therefore be used to formulate 'fuzzy generalisations'; and exceptionalities: Phenomena that were seen in only one or a small number of schools and cannot therefore be generalised beyond the specific location (Rose and Shevlin, 2014, p.3) were identified within data. These then formed the basis of development of the final thematic framework consisting of eight major codes which were then further grouped as per four key emergent themes.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS PART 1 – MOTIVATION IN THE SENCO-TEACHER CONTEXT

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### Chapter Summary

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Chapter seven presents an in-depth review of the findings of the project in the context of each theme that was previously identified in Section 6.4.2 within Chapter Six. The findings are also discussed at length with regard to the question about whether SENCOs are able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms. An analysis is undertaken in which I express my own views, as well as correlate those with past research that is relevant to the points of discussion.

### 7.1 Introduction

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It is appropriate at this stage to briefly recap the research questions of my research project:

- 1) Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
- 2) Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
- 3) How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

As seen above, the first research question of my project related to whether or not SENCOs are able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms. In the following sub-sections within this chapter, I use data collected during my research, with regard to this question, as evidence to develop each theme and related codes along with references to existing literature.

In terms of the interpretation that I made of the data as transcribed from my interviews with teachers and SENCOs, I selected these particular quotes because of their relevance to my short-listed themes and the descriptive aspect of each quote. It is relevant to note that for all themes, there were a number of similar quotes that I could have selected

from the transcribed interviews, however, giving due consideration to the manageability of data and word constraints of the thesis, I made a selective decision with regard to which quotes would be included in the thesis on the basis of their relevance to answering my research questions.

## 7.2 SENCOs' training; skills and dissemination to teachers

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The codes that I identified relevant to this particular theme included two sub-themes:

- a) TRNSPLC-TRD: SENCOs supporting teachers professional development activities
- b) TRNSPLC-SPL: 'Professionalisation' of the role; multiple roles

Each sub-theme is discussed in relation to the ability of SENCOs to motivate teachers to address the needs of children with SEN.

### 7.2.1 TRNSPLC-TRD: SENCOs supporting teachers Professional Development Activities

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#### 7.2.1.1 The motivational consequence of training

Data from the interviews that I conducted showed that participants felt that a variety of training and development initiatives positively impacted upon the SENCO-teacher dynamic. All of the interviewees expressed sentiments that echoed Garner's (1996, 2000) views that support the development of more adequate training in terms of knowledge, understanding and practical skills in the management of pupils with SEN. For instance, one SENCO commented:

*"No, we haven't had anything like that (whole staff training) as yet, I've done just some bits and pieces... it was more about, this is what we need to be doing, rather than I would say it was training, but again... I want to give teachers their class list... and I want them to split them into children who they think are SEN and children who they think aren't, then I want them to think about well OK, out of that group of SEN, which ones are actually low attainers and which ones are SEN, so I almost want to move this shift in identifying SEN over to the teachers so they can do it and see, so*

*that's my plan, so that will be more actually training and identifying rather than talking about what I would like you to do"* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

A particular point, stated by Pearson (2011c, p.517), in a review about professional development in England as relates to inclusive education, that "the professional development of those involved in the preparation, support and evaluation of teachers... may be the key to effective inclusive education." This was also echoed by a teacher who, when asked about whether training by SENCOs had any impact on her practice, said:

*"Recently she showed us this programme and it was all about the children on the P Scales, and exactly broken down, more than just the level descriptors you get, it is really, really broken down into what they should be doing at each P Scale, I think it's called B Squared, and that was really helpful, and now that's what we're using to assess our children, and that was explained in a staff meeting for 20 minutes"* [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T11].

Other teachers spoke of the positive aspects of training that the SENCO had imparted in school which also included support staff who work with children with SEN, as also affirmed by research conducted by Clough (1998), and more recently by Burton and Goodman (2011) and Pearson, Mitchell and Rapti (2014):

*"Well, she's (the SENCO has) helped; she's done staff meetings with us where we've gone through how to fill in your forms basically for each child because paperwork is essential... When the new Code of Practice was introduced, she went through that, everything that's new involving SEN, she explains it all to us, so she also has meetings with TAs as well, so as well as the teachers being aware, she will also hold meetings with the TAs"* [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T5].

My own interpretation of the data as evidenced above, is that for training to have motivational consequences, there is a need for SENCOs to regularly have brief reviews of specific items of professional development, so as to keep teachers engaged with the various provisions put into place for the support of children with SEN.



### 7.2.1.2 The need for differentiation in training

Interestingly, as per exemplary practice detailed in a SENCO Case Study, Morewood (2009, p.8), as well as research conducted by Griffiths and Dubsky (2012), participants also made reference to the need for differentiation within the training, as is similarly done for children in their classrooms. One SENCO declared:

*“I think you probably need to approach different people in different ways, so you can lead some teachers, you have to inform some teachers, and you have to instruct some teachers, so I think you learn which ones need to be”* [Participant: I:NT+DH/PS:38/412(SMT)-S2].

This assertion was further supported by a teacher who commented:

*“I think she (SENCO) possibly does more training with the TAs because they will be the ones delivering the programmes, but I think from a teacher’s point of view, it would be quite nice to have updates of the up to date thinking of difficulties, and no that would give us more of an idea of where we should go with these children because you’re using your own experience but all children are different, no two cases are the same”* [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T1].

And another comment by a teacher who expressed a concern about not being fully kept in the loop by the SENCO in terms of the actually delivery of a provision, even if the teacher may not be directly involved in it:

*“Well, teachers are control freaks, so I... (must) understand what I’m doing, how is this helping. There’s one particular child that I’ve identified, and he’s got great vocabulary, but his spelling is really, really poor for his age, so I’m working on vowel diagraphs with him. She (the SENCO) has given me this pack, and I’ve had to ask her because I don’t know how to deliver it. So I think maybe there’s an assumption from the SENCO’s point of view that we know what the programmes are which we don’t, because it’s more focussed on the TAs that deliver the programmes, and even in Reviews, I will say I don’t know because I don’t deliver the programme, and we should know as teachers, I find that quite difficult”* [Participant: I:FTT+DH:62/407-T2].

The quote above powerfully reflects the quandaries faced by both SENCOs and teachers in terms of the dissemination of training and its subsequent impact on teachers' practice. Issues that affect these shall be discussed in the next chapter, but essentially relate to constraints involving time, material and financial resources, as well as attitudes and perceptions of inclusion.

### **7.2.1.3 SENCOs themselves first need to be trained**

It is important to note that the contention for differentiation in training is also impacted by what Lipsky and Gartner (1996) termed 'successful training' as that which occurs when training is imparted by professionals who are familiar with the needs of children with SEN, and have experience of supporting them. This is further affirmed by Robertson (2010, p.10) who asserted that "the value of continuous professional development in this context (the new National Award SEN Coordination training) cannot be overestimated - even for the most confident of SENCO practitioners."

One particular teacher alluded to this stipulation of a relevant and expansive knowledge base as follows:

*"I think the SENCOs need to have lots of training before they become SENCOs, they need to understand all the different difficulties that are out there, that are blocking children from learning, because a lot of them are just teachers, I think they need to be a bit more specialised than teachers"* [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T3].

This contention about SENCOs having to be first trained themselves, before they can go on to further disseminate training to other members of staff is also emphasised in the changing current educational policy and legislative climate. The legislation in England, *The Children and Families Bill* (DfE, 2013a) lays out landmark reforms to SEN provision, which are further underpinned by the new *(0-25) SEN Code of Practice* (DfE 2014a). Both legislative articles were implemented in schools from September 2014, and contain "much for practitioners to familiarise themselves with" (Eldridge-Hinmers, 2014, p.251). One major implication for the role of the SENCO will be the introduction of a family-centred system in which the collaboration of Support Services across Education, Health

and Care will be required to support the early identification and assessment of children with SEN from birth to 25 years (DfE, 2013c), in what Wedell termed as “a significant contribution (in terms of) extending special provision up to the age of 25” (Wedell, 2013, p.197). Indeed, one SENCO put forward her ‘take’ on the status quo as follows:

*“I think if all this, you know about the identification of special needs, if all that continues to be giving the same message, I think you will almost become more specialised because instead of it being about a lot of children, it’ll be about a few children, and it’ll be about you really understanding and working on what their barriers are. I also think that SENCOs are going to be expected to become much more specialist because with the disbanding of all of the people or specialist teachers, everything else, I think you’re going to be almost expected to draw on your prior knowledge and situations and children that you’ve that you’ve taught before to try and put into place what’s there so that’s a bit of a scary thought because I think you are going to be expected to become a dyslexia specialist, so although you won’t necessarily have a diagnosis, you’ll be acknowledging that this is where the issue is, and this is now what we’re going to try and put into place”* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

Another teacher supported this view, with the additional argument that for a SENCO to be truly successful in the role, training must be reinforced with additional years of experience in the role, as also affirmed by Robertson (2010, p.10), so as to enable more in-depth professional considerations which would assist in supporting the child:

*“You’re only as good as the amount of time you are doing the job... you get a particular child through, and there’s something about the way that they learn, and if you’ve been doing the job for 20 years, she (the SENCO) would say, ‘Do you remember so and so - well he reminds me of him, and what worked for him, do you remember, what worked for her?’, so it’s just all that knowledge and all that experience and the sharing of it, not necessarily in a formal way, in a structured way, there’s not necessarily a training session where the SENCO stands up and delivers about this particular aspect of whatever, but it’s just that sharing of information of knowledge and people going on courses and bringing that*

*information back and accessing the latest information, and bringing that back”*

[Participant: I:PTT:96/433-T9].

I concur with the views of both the SENCO and teacher above, that in addition to a specific mode of training – in the case of this research project, the National Award for SEN Coordination – there must also be a number of years of experience, as it is this practical element of dealing with SEN issues that enables one to be a better practitioner.

While conducting interviews for this research, which support my argument for a SENCO to have a comprehensive base of experience, I posed the following question to a practising SENCO, who had been appointed to the role a year after her NQT year: “Do you think, because you have become a SENCO early on in your career that this in any way impacts your ability to reflect on your experience?” She responded that:

*“This is something that I have always wanted to do ever since an NQT, and I have spent a lot of time shadowing 2 different SENCOs, and visiting different schools, and there was reluctance because of my age and my experience, because of that reason, can I reflect, do I have a link with children that have been like this, or like this, and really I think the only thing that I can do is just spend more time learning and learning about it as I go, by doing exactly the same things, by talking to other people seeing other people, other children”* [Participant: I:PT/PS:15/90(SMT)-S5].

This participant’s justification for her appointment, in my view, serves only to underline what Pearson, Scott and Sugden (2010) termed the “non-linear and complex” relationship between CPD and the resultant impact on professional practice. Both these aspects are substantially enhanced by an experienced background within practice, involving varied interactions over the course of time, thereby enhancing the agency of a SENCO. I shall explore this notion of agency through experience and contact time in Chapter Ten, sub-section 10.2.1 later in this thesis.

#### **7.2.1.4 Teacher attitudes regarding training**

Despite the general concurrence by all teachers about the significance of training that they feel should be imparted by a SENCO, there is sometimes an element of resistance that rises to the fore on some occasions in this regard. This is reflected in this research, as evidenced by SENCOs' comments:

*"We had some training booked for school, for a dyslexic friendly classroom, and it was 3 consecutive twilights, now my Head Teacher booked this, and I was involved in being enthusiastic about it, and as I walked into the staff room, I heard other teachers mumbling, "Oh let's not ask any questions and get this over and done with as fast as we can," and then I automatically thought, no let's try and make this a positive thing, and actually it did work, there were loads of questions, and teachers stayed later"* [Participant: I:PT/PS:15/90(SMT)-S5].

And another SENCO who told me about how the issue of resistance is addressed:

*"Last week we had a staff meeting and I was leading the staff meeting on how to manage children with BESD, and some of the practical things I do in school... and during that meeting, there was arguments, questions toward me, what do I do when a child is under a table, how on earth am I going to do all those things that you are suggesting, and the child's on the table and so facing the challenge and saying what will happened half an hour before that to cause that escalation, what happened an hour before that, what are you doing first thing in the morning, then the staff members are in tears, another argument started, this is the resistance but not everybody, there are some fantastic teachers here, and many are excellent, but there is some challenges"* [Participant: I:FT/PS:11/67(NSMT)-S11].

As indicated by the different responses in the two situations, despite resistance, as mentioned by the first SENCO's response, there was engagement between her and the teachers. However, in the latter quote, the emotional impact of dealing with a difficult child seemed overwhelming, and has an associated effect on teacher attitudes, as similarly illustrated in Mackenzie's research about SENCOs and SEN teachers maintaining their professional resilience across their careers (Mackenzie, 2012b).

## 7.2.2 TRNSPLC-SPL: ‘Professionalisation’ of the role; multiple roles

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### 7.2.2.1 ‘Connective specialisations’

However, it can also be argued, as my data illustrates, that there is a trend towards the notion of ‘connective specialisations’ (Young, 1995; Young 1996, p.121; Norwich, 1996). The term was initially coined by Young (1995) who posited that there is a growing trend in education in which a shift is occurring from insular to connective specializations. By this term, Young inferred that the increased integration and collaboration amongst educational professionals resulted in roles that are becoming more and more demanding of individuals to be versed in a diverse array of skills, as well as a broader scope of knowledge. This argument is further alluded to by my research participants who discussed how SENCOs’ and teachers’ roles revolve around a multitude of generic tasks and responsibilities that require a variety of knowledge-based as well as practical skills, such as time management:

*“... it’s even you asking me these questions in my mind I’m thinking, “Oh no, I need to write another action plan for something else,” but I feel... after Easter, I think, life will get a lot easier. However I feel at the minute I am in the puddle without a canoe; I’m really the jack of all trades, master of none. I’ve always felt ... (that) I’ve dealt with SEN children very well myself, and I think that’s been reflected from parents’ comments as they’ve gone through school. ...it’s being able to impact that enthusiasm to others is an area that you can’t really do. And from the point of view of being in Year 3, it’s a good eye opener because it lets me see what’s coming up to me and where they are going to, but I feel as though I need to know more (about) what’s going on downstairs first, so it’s a lot of questions for me really, as in, “how can I do this?” and “when?” and “how?” And a lot of those answers are not being answered at the moment” [Participant: I:PT/PS:12/210(NSMT):S17].*

I concur with the participant quoted above, about how time constraints impact the quality of provision and the SENCOs understanding of what is happening in classrooms, as was similarly argued by Pearson (2008b) and Pearson *et al.* (2015).

### 7.2.2.2 Time to develop SENCOs' skills whilst dealing with multiple responsibilities

Another factor that was found to impact the degree to which SENCOs are able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with SEN, was the time taken to further SENCOs' own professional development. This was illustrated not only by the published case study testimony of a practising SENCO (Morewood, 2009) who referred to time as being a SENCO's most valuable asset, but also in this participant's comment when asked what aspects of the role would maximise her abilities to motivate teachers:

*"Just to be able to do the role properly, especially at the moment as I am training as well, and obviously all the things are coming to me brand new, I'm really spending a lot of my own time at home going back over things that I've got out of the training days, so that I can start putting in some of them in practice. I only have half a day a fortnight actually as dedicated SENCO time"* [Participant: I:FT/PS:13/195(SMT)-S4].

Other participants also commented about how time is a major factor behind their own motivations to optimally perform the role, as one SENCO commented:

*"... you have 4 or 5 teachers or TAs coming to you asking for advice, asking you for help to do thing - just yesterday I had a teacher and a TA come and observe a lesson, that they would like to be able to teach in their classroom, with their children on School Action to help them, so I had to fit that into my day, as well as being responsible for my own class, and then also had to use my PPA time after school with those people to bring it all together and help them choose, and go through the assessments that assessments that they've already made, so time is a challenge"* [Participant: I:PT/PS:15/90(SMT)-S5].

Whilst another talked about the conundrum of 'quick-fixes' as a by-product of the pressures on both teachers' and SENCOs' time:

*"I do two and a half days in the class, and then a day and a half of SENCO. But once you become SENCO, it's almost like everybody needs you all of the time, so you're in the middle of teaching or something like that, and somebody wants to ask you about a specific child or check in or something, or things like that then, just becoming*

*SENCO, people expect you to be an expert on sort of everything, and I'm like I don't know but I can find out, and rightfully so, teachers want somebody to help them and they want them to help them there and then and they want you to give them suggestions and a quick fix, but it's not always like that, you can't always just say yes, do this and then this will happen, so you sort of yes get waylaid quite easily. I think as well that a lot of people are almost coming to me as a SENCO for advice on things really that aren't always SENCO issues, they're things that perhaps they could be dealing with as a Class Teacher rather than needing the SENCO involvement"*  
[Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

Interestingly, a teacher's perspective about time, also made reference to the issue of timing the instances of when it is necessary to approach the SENCO, essentially with what she termed 'an urgent need':

*"...we all have time constraints, I am very aware in our situation here that the SENCO... is also an Assistant Head... so I am very aware of when or how I approach that person for help, for example I would rarely, unless I had an urgent need, I would rarely approach that person in the morning, because I know that with the Assistant Head meeting, they would be teaching literacy and numeracy, that would be the worst time to try and take some time whereas if it's less urgent, and manageable, I would probably email a request, or seek in the afternoon because they don't have the classroom responsibility in the afternoon. But of course I have a time barrier too, because most of the time I should be in the class, so that can be a difficulty, a difficulty that you can overcome if it's urgent, but if it's less urgent, I tend to prioritise what I need, when I need it, why I need it, you know, make a selection through there"*  
[Participant: I:FTT:96/433-T8].

As a researcher, I myself recognise the resultant limitations upon practice that time constraints can have, but I also concur with the views of teachers, which were succinctly summarised in the following assertion by a participant:

*"I think the biggest problem for SENCOs is time, because if they haven't got time to sort things, it's ineffective, so time is massive. I would say in all fairness you should be in the class if you're a SENCO, you lose touch otherwise, I think you need to be still*



*going into classrooms, and seeing, ‘Well this is what it’s like. This is what we (teachers) have to deal with on a daily basis. This is the curriculum.’ I think a SENCO should still be able to go into a class and see what it’s really like. Otherwise you lose touch, it’s like advisors, you know they leave the classroom, become advisors and then start advising and have lost touch of exactly what it’s like teaching on a day to day basis” [Participant: I:FTT:96/433-T8].*

The contention above therefore, leads on to an issue of wider impact, which is how SENCOs and teachers relate to their respective professional identities and the consequent impact on how teachers are motivated to address the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms. This shall be elaborated upon later in Chapter Ten, in sub-section 10.2.1 of this thesis.

### 7.3 SENCOs’ and teachers’ professional identity

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Pearson, Mitchell and Rapti (2014) allude to the turbulence in SENCOs’ professional identity in light of the dynamic policy context. In terms of answering the first research question about whether or not SENCOs are able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms, two key themes emerged from my data regarding SENCOs’ and teachers’ professional identity are:

- a) PROFID-IDT: SENCOs as ‘agents of change’
- b) PROIDF-MGT: SENCO role within management

Each sub-theme is discussed in relation to the ability of SENCOs to motivate teachers to address the needs of children with SEN.

#### 7.3.1 PROFID-IDT: SENCOs as ‘agents of change’

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##### **7.3.1.1 Years of the SENCOs’ experience/knowledge**

Shuttleworth (2000, p.6) affirmed that “it is unlikely that any school would appoint a SENCO who was not an experience teacher. This means at least five years’ classroom teaching, preferably more.” Indeed, when research participants in this project were

questioned about the direction in which they see the role of the SENCO to be heading in terms of professional identity, SENCOs comments were in tandem with the role being one that should be taken on after some years of practical experience as a teacher:

*“I think it will make it very difficult to become a SENCO too early in your career because I’ve noticed just on the [National Award for SEN Coordination] course there are a couple of young people on it, and I do think that’s going to be difficult because I think that you are going to need to have prior experience of children and how you have dealt with that and what you have done, and although obviously you get certain experience through doing your degree and all those bits and pieces through a teaching practice, I think you’re going to be needing to base so much around your previous experience that you’re going to need to have done that for longer”* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

However, one of my research participants actually took on the SENCO role within three years of being an NQT, and had the following comments to make:

*“I think with regards to changes of the role, it’s difficult because when you’re new to something, as you do it opens more doors almost of what you need to do so I think before you become a coordinator, you know that you’re going to be looking at children with SEN and supporting people and I think then when you get into it you realise there’s all that background of the paper work that goes with it and the referrals and all those things so I think because you almost come into it without knowing, it’s changed as I’ve realised what I need to do”* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

My own view of this aspect of SENCO knowledge, versus years of teaching experience is that it is essential for a SENCO to have an expansive background of teaching practice, and indeed, as I contended in the previous section, that once in role, a SENCO should still endeavour to have a certain number of teaching contact hours with children, so as to stay in touch with the ground realities faced by teachers. Indeed, this practice can and should be undertaken even by those SENCOs with multiple role responsibilities within a school, as evidenced by one participant who stated:

*“As a Deputy and not with my own class - sometimes that can be negative because people think, well you don’t know what it’s like to be a teacher and you know. Although I teach, I don’t have a class,... (but) I think if you are a teaching SENCO, you are able to approach them (teachers) in a way they will think you understand them, so I think that could be positive, but I also think that can be the opposite where you have, well, why are you telling us what we need to do (if you are not a teaching SENCO)” [Participant: I: NT+DH/PS:38/412(SMT)-S2].*

The quote above indicates to me that teachers respect those with ongoing classroom experience, as also illustrated in research conducted by Pearson (2008a, 2013, 2014) and Brown and Doveston (2014). Thus the evidence from my research project data suggests that without their current practice, qualifications and experience then perhaps a SENCO would not gain some teachers’ respect.

### **7.3.1.2 Reflecting change: the ability to take on board change (“changing hearts and minds”)**

In terms of whether or not teachers are able to take on board changes recommended by SENCOs, as part of the process of motivation to take the initiative in managing the needs of children with SEN, this notion was alluded to by Pearson, Mitchell and Rapti (2014, p.6), whose research into SENCOs’ role predictions in the changing English policy context, affirmed that SENCOs seem themselves as “moving from the periphery to the heart of school processes.” Indeed, one participant spoke of the challenges of this occurrence as she commented:

*“It’s very difficult because obviously some people are more willing to take on board changes and new things, and other people think, “ I’ve been doing this for a long time and it works so why re-invent the wheel?” And it is very difficult, I think you’ve just got to be there supporting people and obviously monitoring it is a good way of seeing what exactly is happening... (I undertake) pupil interviews as well to see if it’s actually happening” [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].*

Whilst another discussed how she manages this challenge:

*“Basically I would say that lots of people don’t like change, so many changes are happening at the minute – a lot of change – it is difficult for some of the teachers to accept, and I understand that as a teacher myself, you know it’s hard to understand that you know statements are changing... we will think well what is an SEN child, and when we’re finally given a definition of it, we come back here and we’re like oh my God, that’s not right and actually it’s not me saying it, it’s a general trend. Explain why, a clear explanation, and give them time to adapt to it really, it’s not telling them to do something, but saying to them you know this is how it is, please go away think about it and we’ll discuss it further”* [Participant: I:FT/PS:20/115(SMT)-S13].

From my personal perspective, I would agree with the following participant’s summary about how she perseveres with the notion of being a change-maker within her school, in the face of the dynamic SEN environment:

*“I think it’s changing the hearts and minds of people is my issue at the minute, as I said before, I think we’ve traditionally done IEPs a certain way, and it’s nobody’s fault, but I think it’s more to do with you know we need to change that this is how we need to do it, we need to look at how we’re doing things again, and I think having done the course, it’s opened my eyes again as I said to what actually needs to be done, because previously it was just like a piece of paper exercise, you know IEPs were just sent and that was it, whereas it’s really trying to get them to understand that, you know the classroom, the LSA, the teacher and the child are all involved in this process to make progress”* [Participant: I:PT/PS:12/210(NSMT):S17].

Indeed, this firsthand view from a SENCO links the research position that previously SENCOs may have been on the periphery, now that are in the lead in enacting policy changes, as also evidenced in research conducted by Cowne (2008) and Pearson *et al.* (2015).

### 7.3.1.3 SENCOs'/ teachers' understanding of the roles

Mittler (2000, p.113) referred to inclusion as “a journey without an end.” Indeed, in the face of the ever-changing SEN setting, SENCOs' and teachers' alike, also have ever-shifting perceptions and understandings of their roles. One SENCO, when asked about her role in motivating teachers to take the initiative to address the needs of children with SEN, told me:

*“I am literally trying to get to grips with what I am doing and there are certain boxes that have to be ticked, there's certain paperwork that has to be done, there are certain time constraints that have to be met, and although I want to open that up, I think I need to be a little bit more secure in what I am doing before I can do that, but I certainly think, I will say I've been quite lucky because we've got open staff who will come up to me and say you know, what do you want me to do to help? I would say would it help if I came along, do you want me to bring things, but it's only on a very very minimal level at the minute, it needs to certainly be developed further”* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

This notion of evolving roles was further substantiated when I asked teachers to tell me what they saw as the most significant motivational aspect for practice within the SENCO's job description, one participant commented:

*“All I can say is that the SENCO role does change because of different things within the government saying about over-identification of SEN children, and so suddenly you're telling teachers well it's all changed. I think the main thing is that the SENCO has got to be respected and that SENCO has to have the knowledge as well because I know in a lot of schools the SENCO's just plucked out and told oh we've got no one to do SEN, you can do it, and then you don't know where you are”* [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T10].

The knowledge aspect with regard to SENCOs' own perceptions of their roles is explored in research conducted by Griffiths and Dubsky (2012), who alluded to a developing strategic vision that is embodied within the SENCO role, and indeed, the need for SENCOs to ensure equitable 'social justice' in terms of “equitable school practices, procedures and outcomes for learner diversity” (Liasidou and Svensson, 2014, p.9). This

over-arching aspect of the role in the context of the extent that SENCOs can motivate teachers to take the initiative in managing the needs of children with SEN was elucidated by one teacher who said she thinks a SENCO is:

*“Somebody that can support staff in order to ascertain where children are, and what potential problems they have that are stopping their learning and progressing. And then somebody that can coordinate the right people to support and the right type of support, and can manage that support in terms of pupil outcomes. Pupil outcomes, so that they know the programmes they are on are having a positive impact, or not in which case they need to change the programme. I guess it depends on the need of the child, if you’re looking at a physical OT type of programme, I guess that’s when you’ve met all the goals of that programme, if you’re looking at academic goals, then we measure in points”*  
[Participant: I:FTT+HD:6/105-T15].

My personal view is that it is imperative for both SENCOs and teachers to understand the fluidity in their roles, and the increasing necessity for teachers to take more ownership of executing SEN initiatives within their classrooms. Indeed, I propose that this aspect can and should be enhanced with the additional role responsibility of a SENCO being on the Senior Leadership Team, as discussed in the following section within this chapter.

### 7.3.2 PROIDF-MGT: SENCO role within management

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Layton (2005) undertook research into the management role that was, at the time, recommended for SENCOs. Although the requirements for the role may have changed, Layton’s (2005) findings are reflected in more recent research, such as Rosen-Webb (2011), Morewood, (2012) and Robertson (2012).

#### 7.3.2.1 Observing/feeding back on practice

In terms of the motivational impact that SENCOs have on teacher’s abilities, one teacher commented:

*“If we’re doing all these interventions and it would be nice if the SENCO could come in and observe us to see that the interventions that are being put in place are correct, because I know TAs are the ones that mostly run the Interventions, but a lot of the time they are looking at us to see if they’re doing it correctly whereas we are thinking, ‘well it works for us, but will the SENCO agree if what we’re doing, so if she could observe sometimes that would be good”* [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T5].

However, my own perception, and indeed, this is reflected in my findings, is that this first-hand observation by SENCOs is a practice undertaken in some schools, as affirmed by one SENCO who explained how the observations were linked not only with being on the Senior Leadership Team, but also, how she (the SENCO) is looking to build such observations into performance management parameters for teachers:

*“Yes, I am one of the people who does observations, now I don’t have a team that I specifically set performance management targets for, but being on the Leadership Team now, one of my things, I mean our teachers have different observations, so we do monitoring for whole school literacy, monitoring for whole school Maths, your performance management objectives, things like that, because I am now part of that team, I am starting to build into that, and starting to do those discussions and things like that, so I don’t set targets, but I am involved in the process to get there, and the monitoring of it”* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

I found the two points of views as expressed by teachers and SENCOs respectively to be an indicator of how the SENCO sees observations differently to the teacher, who seemed to be looking for confirmation of her actions and interpretation of the programme. Morewood (2012, p.76) alluded to this issue as he maintained that “the SENCO needs to transcend and resist, and therefore be empowered in raising the capital of those who are in positions (often, self-perceived) of alleged weakness”. I shall elaborate on this shift towards professionalism and the conflict around the boundaries of roles and power relations between SENCOs and teachers later in Section 10.2.2 of this thesis.

## 7.4 SENCO-teacher engagement and perceptions of inclusion

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In terms of the nature of the SENCO-teacher dynamic, and its relational impact on the abilities of SENCOs to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with SEN, two themes became apparent:

- a) ENGINCL-ENG: Degree of SENCO-teacher engagement
- b) ENGINCL-ATT: SENCOs' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices

### 7.4.1 ENGINCL-ENG: Degree of SENCO-teacher engagement

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Ellis and Tod (2012) alluded to the complex interactions between SENCOs and teachers in their research about whether or not consistency was a realistic aim in the identification of SEN. This was also reflected in my research finding as elaborated in the following sections.

#### 7.4.1.1 “The advice you give is only as good as it’s received”: asking the right questions

When discussing how teachers implement SENCO-recommended SEN provisions, SENCOs expressed concern about the degree of engagement of teachers with the actual initiatives. One SENCO asserted that:

*“The advice you give is only as good as it’s received, so you may think that’s good advice (that is given to teachers), but that advice has to be workable and manageable within that classroom, so I think there has to be some flexibility around that and I think a lot of the time it’s about giving a range of advice that then that teacher can take. So much of my monitoring is in formal discussions with teachers, how’s that going, how are you getting on, is that working? I also talk with the children, I was talking to a child this morning, he’s been doing a programme, how do you feel, how’s that going, how’s it making you feel, are you finding it’s having any impact in the classroom, so, so much of it comes from that, or we’ve put bits and pieces in place, you know a child is struggling with their phonics and we have the privacy boards that you can put up, and they made one up where it’s got all the bits and pieces in it that a child might need, you know, oh how’s that going? Are you using that? And he mentions ‘Oh I never use that’. And*



*go back, ask, he mentioned he's not using that, you know, why is that?"*  
[Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

Whilst another SENCO, further evidencing Tissot's inference that SENCOs have a responsibility to work comprehensively with their teaching colleagues so as to ensure the optimal provision of differentiated teaching approaches (Tissot, 2013, p.35), stated that her role as SENCO is essentially about:

*"...asking the right questions isn't it, so you know, you're saying to me that this child can't do this, can't do this you know, have you tried this, have you tried this, have you done this, did that make a difference if you did that you know, but the child can't listen, well can they not listen as a whole class, can they not listen as a one to one, are they better in the morning, does it make a difference in the afternoon, are there dips?"* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

With regard to my own views of how the importance of asking the right questions relates to SENCOs abilities to motivate teachers, the contention that Tissot also referred to as the precarious position that SENCOs are placed in "as they attempt to manage the tensions that exist when guiding the practice of teachers..." (Tissot, 2013, p.35), is perhaps best summarised by one SENCO who told me that for her, with regard to this delicate dynamic and how it impacts the motivation of teachers:

*"I think a lot of it is people skills and it's about going about it in the right way, it's about picking your moment, almost in a way sort of being sympathetic, I know this is really difficult but what we want to try and do is make it less difficult, like I don't know the answers, this is what I would suggest, how would you feel about that? And then when they say, no I don't feel this, I don't feel that, I can't do this? Well OK then talk with me, what do you think might be manageable, do you think it might be, and I do think it's so much about almost turning people's opinions round in a way so getting them to come up with it as their ideas, so they would say yes, do you know what actually, I could try it that way and if I did that then I could do that"* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

Having observed SENCOs and teachers in-situ at their respective schools during the course of my research, as I travelled to their places of work to interview them, I am also of the view that motivating teachers is not a simplistic task. Indeed, SENCOs must constantly strive to think out of the box in terms of finding ways and means to achieve this. Tissot (2013, p.35) alluded to this, as did Kearns (2005), in his contention that SENCOs function as arbiters, “negotiating, rationalising and monitoring the use of SEN resources in their schools.” One SENCO, when directly asked about the process through which she motivates teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with SEN, said:

*“I think it’s very difficult, I mean the boosting of them (the teachers) is difficult because I’m not sure how much boosting you do. I mean at our school, the expectation is that children come first, I know we look at staff wellbeing and all things, I think if somebody is struggling with it, we might offer support, we might get somebody to go and chat with them who is managing, say for example Readers, so say for example, I can’t get these extra readers done, I might say to them, well what about if I get Bob to come and chat with you because Bob does it every day, and he can perhaps share how he manages it, so it’s not saying you’re not doing you’re not doing,... you know, let’s support... (trails off...) If they’re finding it difficult with the differentiation, then we would give support there, so it’s probably more on a practical basis, rather than a morale boost. Sometimes I think the negativity could be work life balance sometimes, because they’re stressed or they’re at a stage where something’s going on in their life, this is just an added burden, so you have to think about how you’re going to cope with that, but also it may be that they have a right to have differentiated work. So it’s a tricky one, it depends on the individual, if they are feeling stressed, we would then give them support and training, and do some things and help them”*  
[Participant: I: NT+DH/PS:38/412(SMT)-S2].

Indeed, this raises further questions about teacher well-being in relation to the inclusion process. However, as this particular topic does not fall within the remit of this research project, I did not further prompt and probe with regard to more details. It is worth

mentioning though, that one SENCO spoke of this issue in a more positive context, saying:

*“I think you probably need to approach different people in different ways, so you can lead some teachers, you have to inform some teachers, and you have to instruct some teachers, so I think you learn which ones need to be...(approached in distinct manners)”* [Participant: I: NT+DH/PS:38/412(SMT)-S2].

The views above indicate to me that diplomacy and taking the teacher’s perspective is a key skill for SENCOS and supports Tissot’s findings that SENCOS need to be creative and treat teachers as individuals – negotiating whilst providing direction for staff, and not simply instructing (Tissot, 2013, p.35).

#### **7.4.1.2 Talking through challenges to inclusion**

In terms of the communicational aspect of how SENCOS impact the motivation of their teaching colleagues, there were a number of SENCOS who expressed affirmative interactions with the teachers. For instance, once SENCO told me:

*“I have to say that they teachers in here are very passionate about SEN, there has been one case where there was one teacher who felt that she was failing her class and so she went sort of downhill, but I sat with her again and we looked through and I tried to encourage her that what she’s doing with them isn’t as bad as she can see it, you know they’re doing very well, and she said really thank you for telling me that, I really feel better, so it’s giving positive feedback to them (teachers) as you actually would a child I suppose”* [Participant: I:FT/PS:20/115(SMT)-S13].

And another SENCO who said:

*“... we (all teaching staff) are very open with one another, so we are happy to go to each other with issues and advice, I mean for instance our Numeracy Coordinator, if I felt that something wasn’t quite right in my class and I wasn’t dealing with a certain area in that way, I’m quite happy to go to her and chat to her about it, we’re a very open school and in that respect I am very lucky that it doesn’t ever have to be done on a formal basis as such so, but no I haven’t you*

*know, the teachers are very open, well as far as not changing, but in general, but asking for advice and doing that sort of thing” [Participant: I:FT/PS:20/115(SMT)-S13].*

Conversely, there were a number of SENCOs who discussed the challenges involved in communicating and engaging teachers in the review of planning and implementation of optimal SEN provisions, as referenced by Kearns (2005, p.142). This was evident as one SENCO said:

*“I have asked if I could have a staff meeting... where I am kind of going to put my stall out and say this is what we’re doing and this is what I am expecting to be done, because I haven’t had the chance to kind of monitor what’s going on, so that’s something that I really need to get on top of, and again this is where the course has opened up my eyes to the job because basically, I mean previously it wasn’t as in depth as I am trying to do it, and that’s kind of, it’s a much bigger role than I envisaged, and because I am not a member of the Senior Management Team as well which has been an issue I feel because I can’t go banging on the door and say look this needs to be done, whereas if I we have something from the Deputy Head, who’s just come in here a minute ago, she’s the Maths coordinator people do that because they know they’ve got to do it, whereas if it tends to be just the class teacher, and it’s not anyone’s fault, it’s just, you know and she will be far more direct than I would be probably, so it’s probably a bit of my fault as well for not being firm enough” [Participant: I:PT/PS:12/210(NSMT):S17].*

This situation is further echoed by teachers themselves, one of who said:

*“Well I see the (SENCO) role as not somebody who’s going to do it for me, but somebody who’s going to help me do it for myself because I see that the individual child whether I’m teaching them as a class teacher, or as literacy numeracy teacher, I have the duty and care of that child and responsibility. So the responsibility lies with me to be skilled up, I don’t see it as something that I can pass to the SENCO, does that make sense, and I think that you have to take ownership of it very early on and say no, it’s my responsibility, I accept I am not*

*the world leader in Asperger's syndrome as an example, but I know a man who is, who can give me some top tips, and as long as I ask the right questions, and go back with feedback if it's not working, as I say, I see that that ownership is relying on me, so I can't be over reliant on them, it's not a case of, oh this is an SEN question, it's got to be yours, because if the child is in my class, of course it has to be me, and it's up to me to ask around and get what I need from those other people" [Participant: I:FTT:96/433-T8].*

And another teacher who told me:

*"... I think she (SENCO) does a remarkable job because she also teaches sets in the morning and that's quite exceptional, we often say to her you know you've got enough on your plate without having to do that, it does mean you've got to handle all the children, you know, you absolutely know the particular child that you're talking about, it's not just paperwork exercise when you come to you know assessing or setting new targets, you know that child, and we meet weekly, with all the other specialist teachers in the school and we do, we chew over situations that have cropped up, you know a particular child is struggling here, or this particular programme isn't working here, or they're not keeping up with the national curriculum, or the national curriculum is moving too slowly, so we meet every week, all those teachers that work with the SEN children, and the SENCO, and yes it's very relaxed and it's quite informal and everybody has got the support of everybody else really" [Participant: I:PTT:96/433-T9].*

On the whole therefore, my own views are corroborated through the quotes above with regard to the importance of the communicational dynamic between SENCOs and teachers and how this subsequently affects motivation in terms of teachers imparting SEN provision to those children who need it, as similarly evidenced in research by Burton and Goodman (2011).

#### 7.4.2 ENGINCL-ATT: SENCOs' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices

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In the context of SENCO-teacher engagements and perceptions of inclusion in relation to motivation, two key factors came to light: the issue of over-reliance by teachers on SENCOs, and also teacher attitudes in this regard. Each shall be examined separately within this section.

##### **7.4.2.1 The barrier is that SENCOs exist: overreliance**

Ainscow (2000b) had cautioned against the over-reliance of teaching colleagues on SENCOs and SEN-support staff to deliver and implement SEN provisions, as the situation created what he deemed to be obstacles to inclusion, through the distinctions that are made manifest between support for SEN versus non-SEN pupils. Indeed, Ainscow's views were apparent in comments made to me by one teacher acknowledged that teachers are over-reliant on SEN-support staff to implement SEN provisions, as opposed to the recommended practice where "teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of all the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff" (DfE, 2014a, p.88). The teacher told me:

*"SEN children receive lots of support, and because SEN children feel, often in my experience feel that they're not as good as other children that they then have low self-esteem to actually have somebody sitting beside you encouraging you and praising you, and helping you through the work, is quite easy for them to become dependent upon that, and one of the things that I always bear in mind, particularly because I teach older children is that the nature of SEN support in secondary schools is often very different and we have to break that reliance on that, I've seen children across my career say I can't do it because Mrs So and So is not sitting next to me, and then that's not effective use of SEN provision and particularly support staff" [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T13].*

However, this quandary of the delicate balance between an over-or under-reliance on SEN-support is exemplified by one SENCO's assertion that:

*“I think sometimes the barrier is the idea that SENCOs exist, and therefore they have the answers to all the questions, but actually it should be quality first class teaching first, and I think maybe in the climate in Education, we’ve got the situation where, because you’re the SENCO they think you’re going to sort everything out”* [Participant: I: NT+DH/PS:38/412(SMT)-S2].

However, whilst some SENCOs echoed this assertion, others also spoke of the added implication of an almost latent effort on the part of teachers to first attempt to address a possible SEN-related issue within the classroom before turning to the SENCO:

*“We’re a very small school, and teachers are very sort of, these are the children in my class, and they do feel that they are responsible for all of the children in their class, even children with SEN, they will come to me for help and advice, but they do feel that they are responsible for those children in the class. Definitely, and from discussions in one of the dyslexic friendly classroom training that we had, teachers were describing fantastic things that they just automatically thought up, and differentiated for the children in their class, without having to come to me and ask for every little thing, they are very good at doing that”* [Participant: I:PT/PS:15/90(SMT)-S5].

This latter situation was qualified further by a teacher who told me:

*“It depends how effective the SENCO is, you know if you’re a good SENCO, you would not intimidate or make anybody feel that they can’t do something, your role there is to help support the teachers and not to, you know... The SENCO here... (is) to manage and oversee everything, and it’s the class teacher’s ultimate responsibility for that child”* [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T10].

And another one who also expressed views that were concurrent with the challenges that I also see as facing them in the context of a possible issue of over-reliance on the SENCOs, particularly in view of the DfE’s emphasis since 1994, on ‘all teachers (being) teachers of SEN’ (DfE, 1994, p.44):

*“I think that, although you differentiate, class teachers can differentiate for classes, it’s often quite difficult for class teachers to understand the complex*

*nature of a child's particular SEN, if it's something more than just low ability, then, you actually having that SENCO on hand to actually run through those, just to give advice and support for particular needs, and also as a bit of a nag to remind you that that child's there, because sometime the children want to hide and it's easy for teachers to lose them in a classroom" [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T13].*

In my opinion, the quotes above are indicative of the divergence of attitudes that exists among SEN practitioners, about whether or not teachers see the children in their class as their responsibility or whether they are prepared to abdicate responsibility for seeking solutions due to other pressures. This issue of a 'culture of expectations' and teachers feeling that others are better able to meet the responsibility of meeting the needs of children with SEN was also alluded to in research by Florian and Black-Hawkins, K. (2011) and Layton (2005), and shall be further discussed in Section 10.2.2 of this thesis.

#### **7.4.2.2 Professionals' own beliefs about how children progress: fixed attitudes**

In terms of motivation with regard to the beliefs and attitudes of teaching professionals and SENCOs about how children progress, Derrington (1997), initially highlighted the growing body of evidence at the time that depicted varying attitudes towards inclusion, with specific emphasis on the progress of children with SEN. This was further elaborated by Cowne (2005), who discussed the key role at that time, of SENCOs as being, to "encourage changes in staff attitudes by offering strategies and information as well as playing their part in improving the strategic management of resources" (Cowne, 2005, p. 67). However, the issues around this are not as simplistically solved, as implied by Cowne, as evidenced by the testimony of one SENCO who said:

*"I think sometimes people have their own beliefs and thoughts about how children will progress and what they need, or what is wrong with them, and sometimes however hard you try you can't get past what someone actually thinks. We've got quite experienced staff who are more experienced than me in teaching, so I think sometimes people don't always listen but that does happen very rarely. I think I just keep going really and keep plugging away, that's my*



*nature, is to eventually wear them down and I'll get there. Because I am quite quiet, and sometimes people think she won't say anything because she's quiet, but I do keep going and get there in the end, and I think although when we do have the IEP meetings with the parent, that gives you another way of talking about it because parents will bring up that you've got the same concern, or you can see it and they can, so that can help" [Participant: I:NT/FS:28/160(SMT)-S8].*

Whilst another SENCO brought up the issue of teacher attitudes on the context of the length of their teaching experience, saying:

*"It's mainly problems with mainly older teachers who kind of blame the child, to see if that child has got to fit in with me rather than the other way round is the main thing, and I don't know what the answer is to that because you just keep trying, but they just want to say this child is SEN so that it's not her problem anymore, in a way that's one of the main problems I have. Younger teachers are much more generally wanting to learn and wanting to find out, older teachers can be a little bit stuck in their ways, they want children to fit in around them, rather than the other way round. So yes, there's a little staff resistance" [Participant: I:FT/PS:56/313(SMT)-S9].*

However, my own personal view of the matter is echoed by the same SENCO who later said to me:

*"The only thing I can think of is that we have to look at SEN as something that is just constantly changing and developing and children are constantly changing and developing in just ways that I don't think especially a lot of the older teachers, when you could just say children had learning difficulties, now it's just huge, and I think we've got to start because like I said the agencies to be honest don't really want to know , there's a lot of, I am really finding it hard to get anybody in to help at all, so the only thing that we can do is all of us have got to be really good teachers for SEN and we're going to have to do it ourselves, I think that's going to be the way forward really because even when you do get somebody come in, they don't have the answer either, and the amount of times*

*that I come out of a meeting and think, I am no better off, I don't know any more than I did when I went in" [Participant: I:FT/PS:56/313(SMT)-S9].*

Whilst another SENCO also spoke of specific examples of teacher's attitudes and language:

*"There are examples like, I mean there is that issue of dealing with children with attachments disorders in our school, there is the issue of generally dealing with behavioural issues in our school, teachers have a very fixed attitude about what is right and wrong, and the difficulty they face is changing their practice to adapt to those children... And the other thing I hear is examples of teachers language, that there is still the attitude that there's something wrong with the child with SEN, so that deficient theory, physical deficient theory, I hear it in staff meetings all the time, they're never going to do that, they are never going to achieve this and so on" [Participant: I:FT/PS:91/509(NSMT)-S10].*

However, this particular SENCO discussed the importance of dialogue with teachers who present with fixed attitudes regarding the inclusion of children with SEN. Telling me about a staff meeting that she had called to address this issue, she said:

*"Part of the strategy – this meeting where this happened last week – was like lancing the boil... I knew that would happen, I was expecting the response that I got, so... from now we start to see some shifts, and some cracks in those attitudes slowly, slowly throughout the year" [Participant: I:FT/PS:91/509(NSMT)-S10].*

Indeed, this contention was further echoed by a teacher who acknowledged:

*"Well teachers not taking on board advice, that's a barrier, not here, not necessarily in this school, because we are very proactive, and we are, you know everyone's on board, but in some schools I would know that the teachers' reluctance to treat children differently, because of their different needs, no we treat them all the same, well that's not fair. Lack of understanding, lack of knowledge and, just lack of understanding about the child's needs, having the*

*view, oh no we shouldn't treat children differently, well we should" [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T10].*

However, it is interesting to include a quote by a SENCO who expressed her frustration and linked teacher attitudes with her status which has evolved over the years. This theme shall be further discussed in depth in Section 9.3 of this thesis, but the relevant quote which depicts the perceptions of inclusion with regard to SENCO-teacher engagements, is:

*"I have the majority of staff onboard, and there is a particular member of staff that nobody can get onboard, so I have to be realistic and realise that we can't do everything at once, some people really, so people are very hard to shift, and in the end... school's there for the children, not for the staff, and it is hard, it's hard, I feel like I am a junior member of staff, because 6 or 7 years ago, I was a parent at the school, and I worked half a day a week, and over 6 years I've built up the hours and I've offered more and more to the school, but in some ways I'm still seen as, do you know what I mean, people's attitude to me is covered by the fact that I haven't always had the status that I've got now, and it's very difficult for people to give you that, they treat you with a particular status when they haven't been used to it" [Participant: I:PT/ PS:35/100(NSMT)-S14].*

The argument that I would make in view of the quotes above, is that the ability of SENCOs to motivate teaching professionals is impacted by the professionals' own beliefs and fixed attitudes about how children progress, as also supported by Broomhead's (2014) and Armstrong's (2014) research. This shall be further explored in Section 10.2.2 of this thesis.

## 7.5 Interventions and provision made for children with SEN

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With regard to how SENCOs are able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms, and the associated interventions and provisions that will have to be made in this regard, one SENCO aptly summarised the status quo, telling me that:

*“One of the things that is definitely going to come up for us is this over identification of SEN and looking at targets specifically based around the Special Educational Need, rather than, you know some of our targets I think are based around what we want the child to achieve, so what they haven’t been able to do, what we want them to be able to do, rather than looking at what their barrier is, and what we’re doing to support that barrier” [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].*

Indeed, it is possible thus, to link the research findings as indicated through the quotes above, to Tissot’s (2013) previous research about how negotiation is a key skill for SENCOs and how SENCOs need to treat teachers as empowered individuals by enabling them to have say in SEN interventions. This was similarly maintained by Kearns (2005) who defined the SENCO as a ‘Collaborator’, engaging teachers in inclusive practices and the development of innovative approaches to teaching and learning for children with SEN. This gives rise to the main theme of the preparation, planning and delivery of ‘measurable’ and ‘relevant’ interventions, as detailed in Section 7.5.1 which follows.

#### 7.5.1 INTPROV-PDI: Preparation, planning and delivery of ‘measurable’ interventions

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##### **7.5.1.1 Involving staff in implementing provisions to give them ownership**

Teachers spoke of the significance of SENCOs involving them in the development and implementation of provisions as a useful tool in their motivation to then address the needs of children with SEN within their classrooms. One teacher said:

*“Well, what the SENCO has normally done is given us advice, particularly if it is something that we’re not so sure on, sometimes we get a child who has got a difficulty that even I haven’t picked up in all those years, it might be somebody with something quite specific that’s quite different like a visual problem, or a hearing problem, so we have them really for consultation advice, also SENCO now does the IEP programmes for the children with a Statement so they would go through with starting a Statement, the RSA, that type of thing, the gathering*

*of the evidence, they also suggest programmes we can use with the children, they suggest games we can use, words we can use, organisation we can use, and our SENCOs would also decide on which adults can support which children, so a big role really. Well last year I had a little boy in Year 4 who had got tremendous problems, both physical and mental problems, mental health problems and so he was quite a big issue, so it was very good to talk to Joe our SENCO and she suggested a lot of things that we could do with him in class when he wasn't supported, because there were times when he wasn't supported, she gave me strategies to try different approaches to work, things that he could do if he couldn't access what the rest of the class were doing. He was quite an able little boy academically, but we had a lot of problems that were a barrier to his learning" [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T14].*

However, there still remains much to be done in this regard, Berry (2014, p.38), stated that "data on student progress is only useful if it drives the actions you take." This was also acknowledged by a number of SENCOs (Wedell, 2014b), and those in this study, one of who said:

*"I do actually need to involve staff more, but I think the things that I am hoping to do in the next few months will address those things such as doing the audit of special needs, it will give us a chance to talk, plus before we've never really been involved as a staff in monitoring children's progress, but now we've all gone live on target tracker which we didn't have access to everybody's results before, I can now really monitor the progress of the special needs children throughout the school. We're also hoping to have progress meetings with the Head every term, which again is something new which has never been happening before. So I think we're going to be keeping a much closer eye on the progress of these children" [Participant: I:FT/PS:13/195(SMT)-S4].*

Indeed, participant quotes such as those previously mentioned, lead to me to question whether there is a disparity with regard to whether SENCOs indirectly devolve responsibility to teachers, or centralise the monitoring of SEN children as something they do as part of their remit. This issue was originally examined by Frankl (2005), and

later revisited by Norwich (2010, p.44) who contended that coverage of the coordination aspect of the role did in fact relate to SENCO having a shared input with teachers into the monitoring and execution of provisions for children with SEN.

However, the dilemmas involved in this sharing of responsibility was echoed by another SENCO who told me:

*“So at the moment I still do all the IEP reviews and things like that, and it would be good if I could pass that aspect on to the teachers, I am still checking with the IEPs before they go out and helping them write them, and they’re not feeling confident to do that on their own, so that’s quite a big job if I could hand that over to them, and the general supervision of what’s going on in class if the class teachers, with the interventions groups, if the class teacher could take more responsibility for that, that would be useful as well”* [Participant: I:PT/PS:14/137(SMT)-S7].

To conclude this section therefore, it is relevant to acknowledge, that although SENCOs have a crucial role in the implementation of SEN provisions, (Cole, 2005), the optimal implementation of such provisions “depend largely on teachers having the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to make it work” (Winter, 2006, p.85). Thus, the next section of this thesis details the significance of teachers’ skills as enhanced by SENCOs, so as to enable them to become effective teachers of children with SEN.

## 7.6 Chapter Seven Key Points

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Chapter seven summarised the findings within the thematic context of motivation in the SENCO-teacher context, the key points (including participant testimonies within various sections of the chapter, as highlighted in brackets) of which were:

- For SENCOs to positively impact the motivation of their teaching colleagues through professional development activities, it is necessary to consider the need for differentiation in training (Section 7.2.1.2), the evidence that illustrates the importance for SENCOs first needing to be trained themselves (Section 7.2.1.3) and teacher attitudes regarding training (Section 7.2.1.4).

- As SENCOs' roles become increasingly multi-faceted, consideration should be given to the notion of increasing 'connective specialisations' (Section 7.2.2.1) and the time taken to develop SENCOs' skills as they deal with varied responsibilities (Section 7.2.2.2).
- Although SENCOs are increasingly being viewed as 'agents of change' (Sections 7.3.1.1 and 7.3.1.2), there are complexities associated with this shift in perception of their own professional identities (Section 7.3.1.3) and the subsequent impact they have on teachers' skills (Section 7.3.2.1). These are impacted by the degree of SENCO-teacher engagement (Sections 7.4.1.1 and 7.4.1.2) and SENCOs' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices (Sections 7.4.2.1 and 7.4.2.2).

## CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS PART 2 – THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHERS’ SKILLS AS ATTRIBUTED TO SENCOS

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### Chapter Summary

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Chapter eight presents an in-depth review of the findings of the project in the context of each theme that was previously identified in Section 6.4.2 within Chapter Six. The findings are also discussed at length with regard to the question about whether SENCOS are able to enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms. An analysis is undertaken in which I express my own views, as well as correlate those with past research that is relevant to the points of discussion.

### 8.1 Introduction

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It is appropriate at this stage to briefly recap the research questions of my research project:

- 1) Are SENCOS able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
- 2) Do SENCOS enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
- 3) How is the impact of SENCOS currently assessed within primary schools?

As seen above, the second research question of my project related to whether or not SENCOS enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with SEN. One teacher, in her final comments to me during the interview, when I asked the last question of, “Is there anything else you would like to tell me, whether prompted by what we have discussed during this interview, or as a result of your personal experience in addressing the needs of children with SEN?” said:

*“It’s really hard to manage with children who are supposed to be included in the school because of the special schools closing down and we need more SENCOS and more specialist teachers in the school with us to help us, you know to provide*



*what the children need. To prove that when they go up further, that there is progress... so we've got all very different needs, that goes all the way through the schools so you can't be a specialist in all of them, but it helps somebody else who can, who has the time to bring these people in... so we try and keep an eye out for the children, I am not dyslexic trained, though I've got, my nieces and nephews are dyslexic, so if you pick it up via sideline, you can then go to the SENCO and say, help I think, and they'll go whatever, so I think that's how the SENCO helps, she's the specialist in the school, but I think the government will probably cut the money, they find every reason to" [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T3].*

The various challenges involved in the enhancement of teachers' skills by SENCOs, as discussed in the quote above, shall be examined separately in the following sections within this chapter.

## 8.2 SENCOs' training; skills and dissemination to teachers

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The two key themes that were highlighted in this regard focused on how SENCOs support teachers' professional development, and also included the concept of "connective specialisations" as earlier referred to within Section 7.2 of this thesis, on motivation in the SENCO-teacher context.

### 8.2.1 TRNSPLC-TRD: SENCOs supporting teachers' professional development activities

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#### 8.2.1.1 Identification of training needs

SENCOs discussed the importance of their role in identifying training needs for teachers, so as to enable a more stream-lined process of subsequent identification of SEN in children. Wedell (2011a, p.150) reiterated that SENCOs "see their task as increasing the schools' responsiveness to pupils' learning needs, especially where SENCOs are in positions of sufficient authority to create a school's 'provision mapping.'" However, because most SENCOs involved in this project had recently been appointed so were still at the stage of understanding their role, data indicated that this training and development aspect was not an aspect that they had considered to a large extent:

*“I’ve done just some bits and pieces on like, this is what we need to be doing with regards to the provision map, this is what we need to be doing to check with children, but I’ve only done one staff meeting at the minute, but it was more about, this is what we need to be doing, rather than I would say it was training, but again, following on from the SENCO course last week, one of the things that I want to do and we’ll talk about this in the Leadership Team next week, I want to give teachers almost their class list, and then they’ll take their class list, and I want them to split them into children who they think are SEN and children who they think aren’t, then I want them to think about well OK, out of that group of SEN, which ones are actually low attainers and which ones are SEN, so I almost want to move this shift in identifying SEN over to the teachers so they can do it and see, so that’s my plan, so that will be more actually training and identifying rather than talking about what I would like you to do” [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].*

SENCOs were generally of the opinion that there had to be specific usefulness to the training, otherwise there would be a lack of engagement from teaching staff with the training:

*“...Every staff meeting, I get time, I’ve got a permanent slot on the agenda if there’s anything I want to do, but people really have to see the value in what I’ve been asked to do, some of the things that I’ve been told that the school should be doing this, some of our staff don’t see the value in it...” [Participant: I:PT/PS:35/100(NSMT)-S14].*

Generally however, the consensus among teachers was that they looked to the SENCO for general as well as specific training, regardless of their prior experience, as teachers acknowledged, in keeping with research by Ellis and Tod (2014), that each child with SEN is unique, as illustrated by the following comprehensive quote from a teacher:

*“I think the SENCOs need to have lots of training before they become SENCOs, they need to understand all the different difficulties that are out there, that are blocking children from learning... I think they need to be a bit more specialised than teachers. I am a teacher, but I cannot say that I can help with a child who is*

*dyslexic, though I have taught dyslexic children, I've taught autistic children, and I've taught children with all sorts of difficulties, but I would never put myself as a specialist and go and say right, I know what to do with this child, I think it would be, I think if the SENCO had the right sort of training, then she can say yes I can class manage, I can do all that, but now I can zone in on, the difficulties are there. If the SENCOs had the training for, I mean there are so many diverse SENs out there and now that we have Inclusion, we have children with quite severe difficulties here, and we have the specialist come in, we try and have training for the whole staff, but of course you know it's 2 or 3 years when the child first comes to school, the staff have that training, by the time the child filters up to Year 3 or 4, you need fresher courses, and that's perhaps where the SENCO could do that, you know organise that, and think of ideas, or other ways of training the staff, but it's more relevant if the child is in your class, it's not so relevant if the staff are learning how to deal with a child with down syndrome whereas if it's going to be in your class, that helps to have training, and what is good and what helps a child" [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T3].*

Indeed, this quote can also be contextualised by the further argument made by Ellis and Tod (2014, p. 208) that "training in relation to individuals with SEN does not necessarily help in teaching individuals with SEN in groups." This, therefore, leads on to the question of empowerment of staff through the knowledge that a SENCO imparts, so as to enable them to make optimal provision.

#### **8.2.1.2 Empowering staff through knowledge**

A noteworthy quote which summarised the views of a number of teachers in terms of the impact of SENCOs' training on the teachers' own abilities is:

*"For me it (empowerment) would be implementing some of the strategies that have been deployed by some of the TAs, the SENCO having a bigger hand on them rather than directing them because in our school we've been given like certain children have, and even our SENCO herself, been on courses, but then those courses aren't then being passed down or cascaded down to the children, and I find that frustrating because she's held up with paperwork, she works 3 days a week, so she's pushing*

*through all her paperwork so she doesn't have time to work with a group, but no one else has been trained on that specific package that's meant to be delivered to the children, so I find that very frustrating, and so I question whether the SENCO is the right person to go on the training, if they're not going to facilitate it. So that's something we're actually looking at as a management, and really saying well, I understand why the SENCO wants to go on it because she needs to have an overview, to cascade it down to the TAs, but if she's going on a course, she's out of school for a day, does she have time then to deliver that to the TAs and train the TAs, you know is it effective use, and I probably think not in this school" [Participant: I:FTT+DH:62/407-T2].*

Whilst another teacher maintained:

*"The SENCO needs quite a wealth of knowledge of difficulties encountered by specific children, and if they haven't got that wealth of knowledge, they also need to have the contacts that they can reach out to, the outside agencies, in order to be able to advise the teachers in the right way. A lot of that is quite difficult to do because a lot of teachers don't realise that you can't just reach out to the SENCO and say I am having difficulty with this child, without having evidence of Interventions that you've put in place already, and how they've worked" [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T1].*

And another teacher's view that SENCOs are the bulwarks of up-to-date information and knowledge:

*"SENCOs have to be kept up to date with initiatives, because things do change, what we used to do years ago, programmes that we used to implement for children to help them, are considered now useless and outdated. I remember doing what we used to call the PAT programme 15 years ago, and you look at it now and you think it must have confused the children more than it helped them, but at the time it was considered this is the best way of approaching phonics, but now you look back on it, so to have greater impact, the SENCO has to know of the best programmes to implement, and what's best for that child, and what's best for one child is not best for another child, so they have to keep up to date with training" [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T10].*

Whereas another teacher spoke quite bluntly about what she considered to be optimal skills dissemination by what she termed as “a good SENCO”:

*“A good SENCO would be there if you went to her as a class teacher and said right I’ve got child X in my class, they’re not progressing, we’ve tried this programme, we’ve tried that programme, will you come and have a look at some of his work, will you come and have a look at him in class, and the good SENCO would come and do that and perhaps point the teacher in another direction. And yes there’s a SENCO that would say I’ve got a book on that, well I don’t want a book, I don’t want to be told what to read, I want some active support so that they can say this would make it better for the child”* [Participant: I:FTT+HD:6/105-T15].

My personal view is that this raises a valid point: that if SENCOs are to achieve teachers taking responsibility, then the teachers need practical action-orientated advice. Therefore, in an example such as the PAT programme which was deemed to work at the time, but in fact was not based on good practice, as evidenced by the testimony of [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T10], above).

Thus, as reflected from the participants’ quotes, there is a quagmire in which SENCOs are looked to as the “founts of all knowledge”, but that they face challenges themselves in not only collating information and making specific decisions about the transfer of knowledge to teachers, but also in their role as liaisons between stakeholders, as shall be later discussed in Section 9.5 in this thesis. In the meanwhile, a relevant quote from one SENCO with regard to the complexities of the process, as was generally alluded to by the various SENCO participants in this project, who were generally of the opinion that:

*“I have interpreted information that people from various agencies have given me, where they have sent me a letter and a report of stuff, I have interpreted it and put it into a plan so that it’s more accessible to them (the teachers). They would then take that information and if it was an Intervention Plan for an individual child, they would go and probably ask the TA to work on it, or one of the Class*

*Teachers for example had a child who came in with problems with speech and sound, and I liaised with the Speech and Language Therapist, and she told me what to do, I told them what to do, they do, they feedback to me, I am that link between them” [Participant: I:PT/ PS:35/100(NSMT)-S14].*

The issue of whether SENCOs are able to enhance teachers’ skills in relation to teachers’ professional development activities is impacted to an extent by the teachers’ desires are conflicting with the SENCO’s need to motivate them to take responsibility. This issue was raised by Kearns (2005, p.138), in his delineation of the SENCO as an Arbiter, seeking to boost the confidence of teachers, and Rosen-Webb’s (2011, p.166) subsequent contention of the SENCO’s role as being one of “a teacher-leader practitioner with good analytic skills who can balance ‘on the job’ activity, strategic thinking and planning proactivity and ‘fire- fighting’ reactivity.” This raises further questions about the conflicting demands on the SENCO, and the associated issues of how, for instance, just as children need to be treated as individuals so do teachers, so as to enable the optimal execution of inclusive teaching practices by them, as earlier illustrated in my findings and analysis in Section 7.4 in this thesis.

## 8.2.2 TRNSPLC-SPL: ‘Professionalisation’ of the role; multiple roles

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In the context of how the increasing ‘professionalisation’ of the role, or what Liasidou and Svensson (2014, p. 785), termed as “SENCOs’ capacity to lead transformative change towards inclusion”, it is relevant to consider the manner in which SENCOs are able to identify those needs within their teaching colleagues.

### 8.2.2.1 Identifying the need for teachers to be supported via the dissemination of specialist knowledge

One SENCO succinctly summarised the dilemma involved in their own experiential learning, also echoed in Kearns’ research (2005), in which he posited five SENCO roles in the context of continuing professional development, as alluded to earlier in Section 2.5.2.2 of this thesis, including that of SENCO as Arbiter, Rescuer, Auditor, Collaborator and Expert, by saying:

*“I think if all this, you know about the identification of special needs, if all that continues to be giving the same message, I think you will almost come more specialised because instead of it being about a lot of children, it’ll be about a few children, and it’ll be about you really understanding and working on what their barriers are. I also think that SENCOs are going to be expected to become much more specialist because with the disbanding of all of the people or specialist teachers, everything else, I think you’re going to be almost expected to draw on your prior knowledge and situations and children that you’ve that you’ve taught before to try and put into place what’s there so that’s a bit of a scary thought because I think you are going to be expected to become a dyslexia specialist, so although you won’t necessarily have a diagnosis, you’ll be acknowledging that this is where the issue is, and this is now what we’re going to try and put into place” [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].*

Supported by statements from teachers corroborating this view:

*“Yes, I mean just continue what she’s doing, keep sharing her knowledge. The thing is with a SENCO, a SENCO is like a vast amount of knowledge all compacted into one person, and me as a person, I would only go to her regarding maybe one issue that I have in particular with one child, and she will then give me that knowledge and understanding of how that child works, so I don’t have the overall knowledge that she has, I’ll just, does that makes sense, you just have a bit of that knowledge. I think with the SENCO, obviously their experience builds over years as well doesn’t it, you know the training that they have, so obviously training that they have, that they’re given, maybe an opportunity to share that training with the rest of the staff on a more regular basis would be good” [Participant: I:FTT:96/433-T7].*

Whilst another SENCO apprehensively told me:

*“I think that the SENCO role in particular is going to be one where the government are going to expect a lot of skills from a SENCO, in that they will become the main source of advice, if you like, for the whole school, and that will be day to day advice, but it will also be more specialist advice as well, because of buying in outside agencies as well and so on, so I think for teachers, you’re going to need a good*

*SENCO I think for teachers to feel comfortable and go and ask for help” [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T1].*

However, concurrently, there was a view from SENCOs about the impending reduction in organisational resources for training and development. This factor was mentioned as early as 1996 by Bowers (p.15) who discussed the “opaque element of SEN funding” in terms of how monetary allocations are made to fund training, and indeed, the necessity for “audit-based funding” (Bowers, 1996, p.16), an idea similarly echoed by one participant who said:

*“I think I am going to have to become more of an expert in certain difficulties because I don’t think that the people would be there to call upon, if you know what I mean. At the moment, if I don’t feel that I know what to do with a child who I think has got dyslexic difficulties, I can ask people to come in from outside, but I don’t think those people are going to be there because of the funding, or if they are there we perhaps won’t be able to afford them. So I think I will need to be much more knowledgeable, constantly developing my knowledge and go for more training programmes” [Participant: I:PT/PS:16/203(NSMT)-S3].*

Indeed, the frustrations associated with “inconsistencies in funding values, statements and placements” (Richardson, 2015, p.64) of children with SEN as per legislative guidelines is also evidenced by a teacher who commented:

*“I think one of the biggest barriers we have is the communication within the school is excellent, the support within the school is excellent, however, government legislation changes depending on who’s in power, who’s not in power, opinions change, I mean in just my short career, there was special school, then there was no special school, then there was a mainstream school, then it was inclusive, then it was exclusive, and so things change, which makes it very difficult for the SENCO to react and quickly put in place any new initiatives that we have but also, we’re finding that there are less and less of the support network outside. Many, many agencies have had massive redundancies, people have completely disappeared off the chart, so although that isn’t inhibiting me now, it will eventually because sooner or later we’d have a problem that we don’t*



*know, that we haven't experienced before, and we don't have the experts outside of our school to call upon in the way that we did. And I'm just about seeing the effect now, for example the Educational Psychologists, the team in Northamptonshire has been cut dramatically, we already have in place for the children we've got, but what if next year we have more come through, so I can see that there is going to be an issue, it's not immediate, but it's not very far in the future either, and that would have a negative impact on how the SENCO can then filter down to me" [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T5].*

Whilst interviewing various participants for this research project, I felt that the impending reduction in resources both in terms of finance and knowledge, that is, the disbanding of various support agencies, such as BACIN (Northamptonshire Behaviour and Inclusion Team) had an effect upon the SENCO role. Furthermore, as illustrated in the testimony above, by [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T5], teachers also specifically indicated that they required need more support from specialists, or at least that the SENCOs need access to them if they are to cascade knowledge in a way which is accessible to teachers and includes practical suggestions which they can implement. The impact of trends such as the disbandment of SEN support agencies shall be discussed later in Section 10.2.1 of this thesis, in the context of changing school cultures. However, the next section is a reflection of SENCOs' and teachers' views with regard to the implementation of resources in terms of disseminating specialist knowledge.

#### **8.2.2.2 Resources to disseminate specialist knowledge**

When asked about their role in disseminating specialist knowledge, SENCOs were generally of the view that the biggest constraining factor that impacted this was time, as illustrated in the following quotes. Some SENCOs alluded to time actually negatively impacting on the provisions with children:

*"I haven't yet, because I have had 2 afternoons, of actual SENCO time, so I haven't actually sat down and worked with any children yet, which is really bad, but it's just taken me so long to even get certain things up and running like I really wanted to get this handwriting club up and running, handwriting has been quite a big issue here, so I've been more involved in the setting up rather than*

*working with it at the moment, I'm sort of waiting to be able to do that"*  
[Participant: I:FT/PS:13/195(SMT)-S4].

Whilst others spoke of time constraints with regard to being able to discuss matters with teaching and support staff without this having a knock-on effect on those professionals' own time with the students, as also reported by Morewood (2009, p.7), and one research participant who said:

*"Really time I think, time to talk to the teachers without interrupting their lessons, that's what I have initially found on the Provision Map, I need to speak to the TAs so unfortunately I've had to knock on their door and say can just have 5 minutes, which has taken them from the children they're working with because they're not around in the lunch time, so it's actually trying to find the time to catch them, and then the teachers I just have to try and catch at the end of the day or in the lunch break and time really to set things in motion to, I want to get files prepared for the teachers, I have to do a lot over the Easter holidays for that, updating the IEPs with, and really to getting to learn the job and finding out where everything is"* [Participant: I:FT/PS:15/126(NSMT):S16].

My interpretation of the difficulties that SENCOs and teachers alike faced with regard to time, was that essentially because SEN is an ongoing matter, which cannot be addressed simply at specific points in time, but is manifest in daily activities all through the school, time will continue to be a barrier, regardless of what meeting and planning slots are given to SENCOs and teachers with regard to the support provisions that they implement for children with SEN. This is also supported by Pearson *et al.* (2015, p.55) whose research indicated that although teachers and SENCOs want to provide appropriate support, the number of actions and knowledge required of them is insufficient for the time they have available, because, for instance, "a vast amount of time, energy and other resources have been diverted away from teaching towards data gathering." It therefore becomes a question of prioritisation, as suggested by the SENCO [Participant: I:FT/PS:13/195(SMT)-S4] above, who felt that setting up the handwriting club was a whole school issue and potentially would benefit a greater number of children.

### 8.3 SENCOs' and teachers' professional identity

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SENCOs and teachers have evolving professional identities, as documented by various researchers over the years (Layton, 2005; Pearson and Ralph, 2007; Rosen-Webb, 2011; Woolhouse, 2012; Qureshi, 2014; Pearson *et al.*, 2015).

#### 8.3.1 PROFID-IDT: SENCOs as 'agents of change'

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##### **8.3.1.1 Complexities in being 'agents of change'**

In the context of SENCOs seeing themselves as agents of change, participants largely spoke about the reactive, rather than proactive nature of the role, as was documented in Hackney's research (1997, p.120). This was summarised by the following example of responsibilities that a SENCO described to me:

*"Sadly I tend to think of what I am doing as sort of red, amber, green, and I have to just address the red things, and quite often the SENCO role is an amber, which to me is the sort of thing I go home at night and worry about and think I really should have done something about that today, but I had to do the thing that was more urgent. For example I had Ofsted 2 weeks ago, and when they were coming, there were certain things I had been addressing, like the red things, when they were coming I thought oh my gosh, I need to write these new IEPs so the weekend before they came, I wrote new IEPs for the children. Now of course I only did that because I know in my heart of hearts I should have done it already and it was towards the top of my amber list, and was nudging into my red, but I hadn't done it. So I suppose there's a lot of guilt around my SENCO role because yet I don't feel I am doing it well enough. I think coming on this course that I am doing will help. Also, I have been in the role a little longer, I am going to give myself more dedicated time because there are time issues, I am obviously working on a budget that was set before I was Head Teacher, and next year I am going to give myself dedicated SENCO time, but that will be from September where I give myself so many hours a week to literally address those issues. But at the moment unfortunately I just think oh gosh, I really ought to do that, which is*

*not really ideal, but it's just trying to prioritise things"* [Participant: I:PT+HD/PS:12/61(SMT)-S6].

The quote above was indicative of the general consensus among teachers and SENCOs about the pressures on both groups in terms of addressing the needs of children with SEN, within the school environment where all initiatives come under scrutiny of the inspectorate body, which consequently also impacts the manner in which the needs of children with SEN can be prioritised (Landy and Gains, 1996, p.23; Mackenzie, 2012b, p.1080). This fact thus leads to the perceptions of inclusion amongst the two groups, as detailed in the following section within this chapter.

#### 8.4 SENCO-teacher engagement and perceptions of inclusion

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Ellis and Tod (2014) and Pearson *et al.*'s (2015) research into the views and reflections of SENCOs own identities, along with those of their teaching colleagues, reflects a number of issues which relate to SENCOs' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices. These shall be evidenced with quotes from participants in the context of how SENCOs address the issue of absolution of responsibilities on the part of teachers, as well as the manner in which a positive school ethos towards inclusive education can be promoted.

##### 8.4.1 ENGINCL-ATT: SENCOs' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices

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###### 8.4.1.1 Addressing the issue of absolution of responsibility

A number of SENCO participants discussed the at-times recalcitrant attitudes of teachers which impacted upon the SENCOs' abilities to disseminate their skills, so as to ensure the optimal provision of children with SEN, as illustrated in the following comprehensive quote:

*"Sometimes you can have very closed teachers can't you, who are, well, sort of almost absolvent with responsibility and they are expecting me or the people who work with me, our team, to make a difference, and it can be quite hard sometimes to get teachers to take their own responsibility for it, so that can sometimes be a little bit of a barrier. Another thing that can be a barrier is everybody is just so busy that when you try and say, I set up a new system where*

*if you had somebody doing, if you had an LSA dealing with an intervention, you had to set them specific measurable targets, you had to give them suggestions of how to meet that target so you could then review it and see if it worked, and that's been a little bit of a challenge getting some people to actually do it. We started a provision map, my predecessor started that, so this is its second year of running, and that's a battle to get people to fill it in, so that's our evidence and people aren't always doing it, and I know it's half the time because people are just so busy it's another thing, and whatever you're doing, whatever you coordinate whether it's SENCO or other subjects, that becomes your passion doesn't it, what you want, whereas for everyone else, they're juggling absolutely everything, so I understand it's difficult but that can be hard. I mean we haven't got to write IEP's anymore, so fill out the provision map - no, still not filled out the provision map, you need to fill out the provision map, so that can be difficult, so again resistance - resistance I don't know if that's the right word, I don't want to be unfair on the teachers" [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].*

Although interestingly, teachers were generally of the view that they were accommodating of their own responsibilities towards children with SEN, whilst acknowledging that SENCOs "don't necessarily deliver everything", as detailed in the following quote:

*"The main role is to make sure that the children who need additional support in any way receive the support and the teachers are able to deliver that support. That's the main role, obviously there are a lot of roles within that, with parental involvement, making sure that the children have got all the resources that they may need, regular review meetings with parents, but the main role of SENCO is coordinating everything and making sure that, the SENCO doesn't necessarily deliver everything, but make sure the teachers feel confident and capable of supporting the children. A very positive impact because you have a proper understanding of the needs of the children, and a real insight, and it makes you realise how much more you know, than regular teachers. Yes, a real positive impact, because when you do the role you realise how much information you're gathering, and how much expertise you have really, and you expect everyone else*

*to have that, but they don't, and so it's a really important role. Well, a much better understanding of the difficulties that some children with SEN have, and how to address those, and understanding exactly what the difficulties are, so for example if a child is dyspraxic, making sure, it's the understanding of what they find difficult and the arrangements that need to be put in place whereas some class teachers would just, you know don't need to necessarily put anything into place, but it gives you a much better understanding of children's individual needs, and able to identify other children with similar difficulties" [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T10].*

This difference in views between SENCOs' and teachers' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices in terms of absolution of responsibility led me to explore the issue of school ethos, which was a 'commonality' (Rose and Shevlin, 2014, p.3) that arose within the discussions that I had with SENCOs and teachers. My research data indicated that the issue of absolution of responsibility on the part of teachers was impacted by the degree to which SENCOs and teachers took ownership of the implementation of the concept of inclusion within their academic settings, and the fact that this was related to the school ethos, as explored in the following section.

#### **8.4.1.2 Promoting a positive school ethos**

SENCOs were generally of the view that teachers endeavoured to have positive attitudes towards inclusion, as one SENCO commented about the work ethos of her teaching colleagues:

*"I think their intentions are good, I just think you know when you've got so many other things to do, I think sometimes your priorities might go somewhere else"*  
[Participant: I:PT/PS:12/210(NSMT):S17].

Indeed, teachers too, reflected the generally positive trends towards whole-school attitudes with regard to inclusion, and how that subsequently impacted the SENCO-teacher engagements, and the manner in which skills could then be disseminated amongst teaching professionals. This was illustrated by one teacher's quote:

*“I think because of our ethos and our, the whole our inclusiveness, I think the SENCO role is up there, and I think I know in some schools it’s not up there, but I think it needs to be and where it is, then I feel that the impact is greater and it’s more positive, so I think, and I might be totally wrong, because one never knows, does one? But that is what I think. Yes definitely, I think we have a lot of respect, and we wouldn’t be able to manage the children we have the way we do if it wasn’t for having the SENCO doing what she is doing. I know that she works extremely hard, I know that. I think, I mean one of the things that I love about working here, is that inclusiveness, and the fact that children are hearing impaired, you have, say we have children with cerebral palsy, we have children on the autistic spectrum, and I think through the SENCO, part of her role has been to enable us to work with those children, and they’re not ‘add-ons’. You see in some schools that those children perhaps aren’t included in, for e.g. in all our assemblies everything is signed, and if all our children can sign, and that’s not come directly from the SENCO, but it is certainly being supported, and yes, I just love working with the children in this school, and our SENCO I think she does a fantastic job” [Participant: I:FTT+DH:96/433-T6].*

And another teacher who, interestingly, even mentioned additional staff that have hitherto never really been included as ‘support staff’ for children with SEN, but do in fact, play a part in their daily interactions – the dinner ladies – as evidenced in the following comment:

*“...Everyone’s seen as equal, and all having their parts to play, then you do get that feeling as soon as you walk into a place, and that’s very much here, you feel that you could approach anybody absolutely anybody to talk to you know, and they would all care. Yes, the dinner ladies have got as much information if not more knowledge and experience of the children, and the SENCOs and the Head Teachers know the children as well, you know we all know the children and I know and I’ve seen in some schools, where it might be the SENCO’s responsibility for assessing how the child’s doing and setting new targets, but they’ve not spent more than half an hour with that child, so do you have the right to even talk about them when you haven’t spent enough time with the children, I mean I*

*would say no, you know because it's not an administrative job is it, it should be a hands on job. And yes, in some places you just don't see that, which is shocking, in my eyes"* [Participant: I:PTT:96/433-T9].

The quotes above served to underline for me the holistic attributes of a positive whole-school ethos towards SEN and how when this filters into the responsibilities and daily duties of every professional within a school, academic or non-academic, there is the provision of what can be termed optimal inclusion within that environment. This was further supported in research by Lawson *et al.* (2013) who highlighted the vital role of the values and ethos in the school practices, and the attitudes of individual staff members who work with children with SEN. Data from research participants in my project as a whole, had positive comments to make with regard to measures being taken to promote positive SEN ethos within their schools. This therefore had a subsequent positive impact on the occasions during which SENCOs felt a degree of absolution of inclusive-teaching responsibility on the part of teachers and their ownership of the implementation of the concept of inclusion within their academic settings.

## 8.5 Interventions and provision made for children with SEN

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In terms of how SENCOs' training, skills and subsequent dissemination of these to teachers impacts the interventions that are actually delivered to children with SEN, there were two key themes that arose. The first was around the preparation, planning and delivery of these interventions, and the second was the nature of dissemination via the deployment of appropriate adult support for children with SEN. These shall each be examined in sub-sections 8.5.1 and 8.5.2 within this chapter.

### 8.5.1 INTPROV-PDI: Preparation, planning and delivery of 'measurable' interventions

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The delivery of what may be termed 'measurable' interventions, in view of the targets that are set for pupils with SEN, and their achievement or lack thereof of them, are influenced by two key factors. The first being the actual hands-on implementation of



interventions by teachers, and the second being the voice that teachers have in the interventions themselves.

#### **8.5.1.1 Hands-on implementing provisions that enable effective teaching**

Generally, SENCOs were mindful of regularly meeting with teachers so as to enable the appropriate implementation of relevant provisions for children with SEN as illustrated in the following quote:

*“Once or twice a term, ... we go through the whole class for Reading, Writing and Maths, and we look at anybody who’s under-achieving, anybody who hasn’t made any progress in that term.....Then we identify any children that, we sort of make a list really of anybody who we are concerned about who hasn’t either made progress, or who is under-achieving, and then for the majority of those children, we sort out interventions for them, occasionally we don’t, if they’re like a new arrival from another country, or they’ve been absent a lot, you know, if there is an obvious reason why they have not made any progress, then they probably wouldn’t go into an intervention, but if there is no obvious reason, then they would be put in an intervention group”* [Participant: I:PT/PS:16/203(NSMT)-S3].

Whilst some SENCOs spoke about the need for more specific and consistent tracking of assessments:

*“There’s also issues in the school that assessments have been incorrect in the past, so incorrect assessments have led to the assumption that they are making equal progress to children who aren’t on the Register actually delving a little deeper, and now we are tracking a bit more consistently, and assessing a bit more consistently, we’re now able to see that there is underachievement of certain children. For example, I have a child who has no fine motor skills not making any progress it seems, but really they are not able to record and we’ve now bought them a Netbook so that they can record. So it appeared that they weren’t making progress, but how did we record their progress, if we’re only recording it through writing?”* [Participant: I:PT+HD/PS:12/61(SMT)-S6].

However, significantly, a number of participants alluded to school size in terms of the impact on their abilities to deliver provision that they regarded as enabling effective teaching, as illustrated in the following two quotes:

*“I think it’s probably trying to help with my job because obviously being a Deputy and with the daily running of a school of 400 children is a lot of work, so it’s a case of trying to delegate a little bit more. I do delegate some of the planning of particular interventions because some of my LSAs in my team are very experienced and they’ve been doing it for a long time so therefore you can have that termly conversation with them, and say right, well we’ll carry on with that, we’ll do that”* [Participant: I: NT+DH/PS:38/412(SMT)-S2].

Whereas in keeping with my own observations of the various schools that I visited during the course of my research, one SENCO participant spoke of “the beauty of a (small) school”:

*“The beauty of a school of 61 children is we don’t have to treat them as groups, we can treat them as individuals, and we can meet their, we don’t have to say how do you meet the needs of children with this, it’ll be a child. So we can individualise that way...”* [Participant: I:PT+HD/PS:12/61(SMT)-S6].

The participant comments above suggest that the preparation, planning and delivery of what may be termed ‘measurable’ interventions, are influenced by the actual hands-on implementation of interventions by teachers, which is impacted to an extent by school size and pupil population, as also acknowledged within the original *Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (DfE, p.ii), and later in research conducted by Ellis and Tod (2012, p.63-64).

#### **8.5.1.2 Enabling teachers to have a say in interventions**

Another factor which affected the manner in which SENCOs disseminated their skills, was teacher input into the nature of interventions that were put into place for children with SEN. For instance one teacher said:

*“Well we meet termly because what we have to do now is like an Intervention grid, so we can track the progress of children that we feel are under performing*

*and equally we've got a Provision Map, so we need to talk through like with our SENCO, about the progress that the children have made, or what's hindered them, what are the barriers, and it could be that she's got other information for example like child protection, because it just so happens our SENCO is also child protection officer, that we're not privy to, but she can guide us, so have quite regular dialogue with our SENCO, and I say that's throughout school really, so if there is a problem, I mean the first thing we do is probably talk to our colleagues in our team, it might be that we go and then ask the previous teacher, and then failing that, so we've got certain avenues before we go to our SENCO, but obviously she's there 3 days a week and we can go and see her. She also supports us as teachers to sort of get reports ready for reviews and things like that"* [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T1].

And when queried further about whether they thought possibly that SENCOs could hinder teachers' skills in terms of the interventions they had put into place, one teacher told me:

*"They (SENCOs) don't inhibit – definitely not – because they give you those targets, and you do discuss ways of moving it forward. So you're always think about if things are working or if they are not working, so it definitely helps, you know, because you've got that focus and without it, I think you'd kind of... forget where you're trying to get them to sometimes, and get bogged down with other stuff. You forget that their targets are very different from the other children. You do need that written down in black and white and broken down... What we do is, we have IEPs and... if it's a new child, we'll sit down and... we'll... kind of go from where I say they are and where I'd like them to be, and we kind of look at what's manageable. So we do the targets... together, and what we can achieve in the class because obviously you have to work with the support that you've got. You can't say "they can have this, this and this," if you haven't got the TA support as well. So we go through what's manageable and what we can achieve with them, and they we write it up... Then if it's a child with existing targets, we review them first: Have they achieved them? Do they need something more challenging? Do we need to break it down and make it more manageable? So yes, we do that before a review"* [Participant: I:FTT:6/105-T16].

The evidence from the quotes above suggests that when teachers are given the opportunity for planning SEN interventions, and being involved in the hands-on implementation of SEN provisions that enable effective teaching, they are then able to actively monitor and assess children's progress. This was similarly alluded to in the *Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice* which emphasised teachers' duties of "monitoring the progress of children with special educational needs towards identified goals" (DfES, 2001, Preface). Kearn's (2005, p.142) typology of the SENCO as Collaborator and Cole's (2005) work about SENCOs with teachers to plan activities relating to reviewing and evaluating SEN provision, further underpin my findings, as does Tissot's (2013) research into the role of SENCOs as leaders.

#### 8.5.2 INTPROV-ADS: Deployment of other adult support and the impact teaching practices

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With regard to the deployment of adult support, it is relevant to mention here that this theme arose as a factor impacting how SENCOs skill teachers, because support staff do aid teachers in imparting SEN initiatives. Webster and Blatchford asserted that, "whilst teachers must assume the primary responsibility for planning and teaching pupils with high-level SEN, more is certainly needed by way of research into effective pedagogical approaches for such pupils" (Webster and Blatchford, 2014b, p.16). Thus, in terms of the deployment of adult support to ensure the effective delivery of interventions, both SENCOs and teachers alike were of the view that it depended on the skill of the SENCO, as well as any possible additional human resource, for instance in the form of a SEN Assistant, as illustrated within this section of the thesis.

##### **8.5.2.1 SENCOs skilling support staff to deliver effective interventions**

The enhancement of teachers' skills as attributed to SENCOs, is also directly associated with the manner in which support staff who work within classrooms deliver these interventions, as also reiterated in Webster and Blatchford's research (2014b). In terms of the ensuring the effective deployment of these staff, SENCOs were generally of the view, as surmised by the following SENCO, that:

*“That (deployment of adult support) is very much measured on the impact it has on the children...”* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

Indeed, SENCOs did generally speak of challenges associated with this task, which was not as simplistic as implied by the earlier quote:

*“First of all I deploy the TAs and that’s needs driven so first call it is a Provision Map and how many SEN children are in each year group, so first of all, I sort out my Statements because they must have their designated one to one, then I will look at in Year 4, we’ve got more School Action Plus, so they would need extra support, so it is driven by the children. What we generally do though is, if we can we try to get because of the support for the children generally, we are trying to get 1 TA in each class at least for mornings, in the afternoons, they are more flexible, so they might be working across a couple of year groups or whatever to deliver things like catch up or extra Maths support, or handwriting programmes or whatever, so they’re more flexible in the afternoons, that’s the move forwards, because what we were finding was as people were become very territorial about being in a particular year group with a special, with a teacher, so you might have a teacher who hasn’t got Special Needs, but they’ve got this person who’s there all day, so we’ve just sort of moved away from that so we can look at”* [Participant: I:NT+DH/PS:75/410(SMT)-S12].

Teacher participants also spoke about the noteworthy role that other adult support plays within a class, and why it is a relevant factor to consider when examining teachers’ own skills with regard to the optimal provision of SEN initiatives. This is reflected in the following quote:

*“I mean the teacher has the ultimate responsibility, yes, but I’m talking really about children who have very specific learning difficulties, I’m not really talking about children who can be managed easily within the class, so for instance if you’ve got a child with very specific speech and language difficulties, which I have a child like that who needs a very structured programme on a day basis, I’m thinking more in that respect, yes the teacher knows what those children need, but the teacher’s not in a position to deliver it because it’s a one to one. So if you*

*had a TA who was specifically responsible, they would become very knowledgeable about the speech and language needs within the school”*  
[Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T1].

#### **8.5.2.2 SEN Assistant**

Interestingly, a number of SENCO participants alluded to another person within what they termed the ‘SEN Support Team’, whether as a SENCO Assistant, or even, as a hypothetical second person there to support SENCOs, as some teachers had suggested there should be, as indicated by the following quotes:

*“I do have a SENCO Assistant who takes on the majority of the actual working with the children and does some of the paperwork as well”* [Participant: I:PT/PS:14/137(SMT)-S7].

And another SENCO who had a specific SEN TA, and told me about her role, and the possibilities for further TA monitoring of implemented interventions that were planned:

*“I only know what the SEN TA is up to, and we meet regularly and she keeps me informed of what’s been happening and plus the fact that I know she’s here and that she’s running the intervention programmes very interestingly on Wednesday, actually... (the SEN TA) said it would be very interesting to give the other TAs who are running the interventions programmes a calendar and to tick off every time they actually do the intervention because you can think, well why isn’t this having any impact, but if you look back and see how many sessions were actually delivered out of the 16 weeks or so, and you think there’s only been 2 that week, and 3 that week, and 1 that week, and you suddenly realise that actually, the sessions haven’t actually run as regularly as they should have for impact to be manifested. So I am mindful of that now, and I am going to give people just a calendar so that they can literally just highlight when they’ve actually run the session”* [Participant: I:FT/PS:13/195(SMT)-S4].

This notion of additional members of a ‘SEN Support Team’, as I have termed it, is an interesting one that was also alluded to by a teacher who spoke of an “ideal world” of SEN provision:

*“I think if you had a team, rather than just the one person, so you have the SENCO who led in an ideal world a team of TAs who were almost experts in the areas that needed support so whereas at the moment within our school we have TAs attached to our class, and they have to manage the support systems that are in place, the support needs of the children in that class however many or however complex they are. Whereas if you had a SENCO and perhaps a team of 4 trained TAs, perhaps one who was trained in speech and language, one who was trained in the numeracy support or the literacy support, and they delivered to the children within the school, I think it will be much easier then to actually discuss those children and the progress they are making, it will be easy for the SENCO to keep a handle on everything that is going on, because it would only be that team that would be supporting those children” [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T1].*

The evidence above therefore indicates the importance of monitoring to ensure that planned action has occurred. Indeed, my argument to this effect would be, as later discussed in Section 10.2.2 of this thesis, that there is a marked shift towards professionalism and the redefining of boundaries of roles and power relations between SENCOs and teachers, as has been also indirectly alluded to in research carried out by Burton and Goodman (2011), Rosen-Webb (2011), Tissot (2013) and Pearson *et al.* (2015).

## 8.6 Chapter Eight Key Points

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Chapter eight summarised the findings within the thematic context of the enhancement of teachers’ skills as attributed to SENCOs, the key points (including participant testimonies within various sections of the chapter, as highlighted in brackets) of which were:

- SENCOs can empower teaching staff through the dissemination of specialist knowledge (Section 8.2.1.2), however there must be resources clearly identified for such dissemination to take place (Sections 8.2.2.1 and 8.2.2.2).
- It is imperative that both SENCOs and teachers alike address the issue of absolution of responsibility that arises when the ownership and accountability for the planning and implementation of SEN provision are not clarified (Section

8.4.1.1) so as to ensure the promotion of a positive school ethos around inclusive practices (Section 8.4.1.2).

- Optimal outcomes through effective SEN interventions and teaching practices are positively correlated with the inclusion of teachers in the planning and execution of SEN provisions (Sections 8.5.1.1 and 8.5.1.2), This is further enhanced when SENCOs have appropriately disseminated skills and knowledge to other support staff who help to deliver effective interventions (Sections 8.5.2.1 and 8.5.2.2).



## CHAPTER NINE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS PART 3 – SENCO IMPACT IN CURRENT SCHOOL CONTEXTS

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### Chapter Summary

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Chapter nine presents an in-depth review of the findings of the project in the context of each theme that was previously identified in Section 6.4.2 within Chapter Six of this thesis. The findings are also discussed at length with regard to the question about how the impact of SENCOs is currently assessed within primary schools. An analysis is undertaken in which I express my own views, as well as correlate those with past research that is relevant to the points of discussion.

### 9.1 Introduction

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It is appropriate at this stage to briefly recap the research questions of my research project:

- 1) Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
- 2) Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
- 3) How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

As seen above, the third research question within this project relates to SENCO impact in current school contexts. The four emergent themes as relate to SENCOs' training and skills dissemination; SENCOs' and teachers' professional identity; engagement and perceptions of inclusion; and the nature of interventions and provisions made for children with SEN shall be discussed in separate sections which follow in this thesis.

## 9.2 SENCOs' training; skills and dissemination to teachers

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The impact of SENCOs with regard to their skills and associated dissemination is two-fold. The first relates to the impact of the identification of these training needs, and the second, the subsequent impact of the teachers to their identify children with SEN as a result of this training. These two factors shall be evidenced in more detail below.

### 9.2.1 TRNSPLC-TRD: SENCOs supporting teachers' professional development activities

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In terms of the direct impact that SENCOs have on teacher's abilities, training is the first aspect that forms part of the process, as recognised by a number of researchers throughout the years (Layton, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007; Hallett and Hallett 2010).

#### 9.2.1.1 The positive impact of identifying training needs

SENCOs discussed the positive impact, and indeed, the marked need to identify training needs:

*"One thing I want to do next year, is take a skills audit at the beginning of the year, and I'll put in place planning for everybody. But no, whenever I mention, when I have been talking to teachers and they'll say I think this child is dyslexic, and I will say well what do you know about dyslexia, and actually they know very little, and then they'll say I think this child is dyspraxic, and then I'll ask what do you know about dyspraxia, very little" [Participant: I:FT/PS:56/313(SMT)-S9].*

Whilst this frustration with a lack of knowledge was also echoed by teacher participants, one of whom said:

*"...this is probably going to sound unfair, and I don't mean it to, but from my personal point of view, very often you've raised a concern and it will be try out that pack, give it to your TA, and quite often the TA and the teacher is not familiar with the pack that's given to us. So from that point of view, yes the onus should be on us, but sometimes there simply isn't time to familiarise yourself with a completely new programme, and that's where I'll probably come back to the team where perhaps if there was a TA who was responsible for that, they could*

*then do a little bit of training. I do feel that the training side is vital, because if we knew far more about the specific support, and I'm talking about your really difficult children, that you've tried all sorts of things and they haven't worked, from my point of view that I would like to be far more familiar with those sorts of support systems in order to be able to deliver that effectively, and from my TA's point of view, if we do get a pack like that, I then have to make a decision which I do, to give her time to either, first of all to familiarise herself, but also quite often involves preparing a lot of resources for the children to work, which means I am taking her away from the rest of the class. But again it's a priority, so that's perhaps being unfair to a SENCO but I don't feel from my point of view that I am being skilled, I'm not having enough training to deal with, and there are more and more children as I go through, and you know I've been teaching a long time, but that doesn't mean I know about every child, and I don't, I would actually say that we've got far more complex difficulties now than say 20 years ago, so from my point of view, that's the training, they are my training needs in order for her to deliver" [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T1].*

As evidenced from the quotes above therefore, there is a discernible need for appropriate training in terms of being a key factor regarding SENCO impact in current school contexts, as also maintained in Cowne's (2005) and Rosen-Webb's (2011) research findings. Furthermore, data indicates that training is a necessary factor for the successful enhancement of teacher's skills as attributable to SENCOs (as mentioned earlier in Section 8.2.1 of this thesis). These issues shall be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, in Section 10.2.3 of this thesis.

#### **9.2.1.2 Enabling teachers to identify SEN children as a result of training**

Related to the importance of teachers' training needs having to be positively identified, is the associated benefit of teachers subsequently being able to appropriately identify needs within children who have SEN. This was exemplified in one SENCO's comments:

*"Well I've worked as a consultant as well, I've worked in schools that are on special measures so I think more than anything, it's about education obviously, it's about teaching teachers the specifics of a particular diagnosis for example,*

*teaching them to look at what problems children might have if they know there is an issue, having equipment available for children, and the right equipment at the right time, we try and make all of our classrooms dyslexia friendly and autism friendly and that results in pretty much hit everybody then because you're looking at communication and speech and language, and understanding, and having children in the right place in the classroom, we use visual timetables in every classroom, we use overlays if the children need them for dyslexia, and all that training is the key thing I think for teachers, we have lots of NQTs that come through, and I tend to mentor them as they come in so they get a good input of SEN right at the beginning" [Participant: I:NT/FS:24/210(SMT)-S18].*

Supported by an eloquently described example of one teacher who told me:

*"...I had one child a few years ago who had behavioural issues, and lots of behavioural problems, which I was coping with in the classroom, but she had lots of input on that, you know we had meetings and she came up with suggestions and also targets, it helps with a child like that if you've got specific targets that are measurable, and we put that child on a behaviour chart, and she was very involved in that, we worked on that together, and that did have quite an impact on, I could actually teach him after that because the impact was so great that I was able to teach him. Before that it was very difficult, it was all about managing behaviour rather than teaching. I think setting targets is something that she (the SENCO) is particularly good at, because other children have had, and sometimes it's hard to sit down and actually come up with measurable targets, and how you are going to measure them, and how you are going to give a reward if they are met without being over the top, so I think just in terms of her vast experience, she's had significant impact on my teaching. No, I don't actually because I think once you've had that input, the input I had with the child I spoke about with behaviour, that was about, he's about 16 now, so that was about 8 years ago and I haven't had to go back, and I have had other difficult, I mean this year I have had some difficult children, and I'm using what I learnt from that, to put into practice my own way of sort of targets now, because I've learnt from sort of having that support from her. Yes, I would say, I mean it is good to have someone*

*that you know you can go and have a chat with, and I know we're very lucky in our case that we have somebody who is so experienced you know, not everybody has that, I do know"* [Participant: I:FTT+DH:96/433-T6].

The quote above epitomises the direct impact that SENCOs have in current school contexts through their skills of SEN knowledge dissemination. My argument thus, is that there are marked changes that are brought about in teachers' practices which are reflected on the SENCOs' abilities to ensure optimal provision for children with SEN , as also reiterated in Rosen-Webb's (2011, p. 160) research. Further evidence with regard to the enhancement of teachers' skills as attributable to SENCOs, as reflected earlier in Section 8.2 of this thesis, are teachers' own testimonies about the productive value of specific instructions from SENCOs.

### 9.3 SENCOs' and teachers' professional identity

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In terms of answering the third research question about how SENCO impact is currently assessed within primary schools, the central theme that emerged from my data related to SENCOs' professional attributes that derive from their role within management. This shall be elaborated upon in the following sub-section of this chapter:

#### 9.3.1 PROIDF-MGT: SENCO role within management

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With regard to the development of the SENCO role within management, my findings indicate data that supports an argument very much in favour of SENCOs being given active roles within senior leadership teams, as a positive enabler for them to fulfil their roles of planning and executing SEN strategies and provisions, even though Hallett and Hallett (2010, p.53) caution that this would be "a necessary response to a flawed system," in that it might result in further bureaucracy within schools, as opposed to facilitating productivity within the SEN system.

##### **9.3.1.1 Being sure of the SENCO role remit and how this positively impacts practice**

A central factor in clarifying the SENCO role within a school and the subsequent impact on practice would seem to lie within the job description, as also affirmed by Cheminais

(2010a, p.24). However, interestingly, most participants had either no idea about it, or did not have a current one at hand, as illustrated by the following SENCO testimonials:

*“No I wasn’t (given a job description), but as a result of you coming to interview me, I did go to the Head and ask if there was a SENCO job description and she initially she said no there wasn’t because it was part of her role, and then, when I went to get some other information to bring to you, one appeared on my chair, so I have got one in my file to show you, I’ve got a copy of it for you. No, I think it’s quite comprehensive, I think if you, I read it through and I think that is an awful lot to fit in, but no I think it covers everything, I don’t think there is anything additional I have picked up that isn’t on that job description”*  
[Participant: I:FT/PS:15/126(NSMT):S16].

And another SENCO who told me, as Morewood (2008, p.8) had also argued, in terms for a greater clarification of the role of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century SENCO:

*“No I didn’t particularly (have a job description), I asked for it when you asked me, but there isn’t one in particular. It’s quite vague, but I have a very good relationship with the Head Teacher, and so I don’t mind that flexibility”*  
[Participant: I:NT/FS:24/210(SMT)-S18].

However, a majority of SENCOs and teachers alike were of the view that being sure of the SENCO role remit, particularly with regard to membership of the senior leadership team, had resultant collaborative benefits on the impact that SENCOs had as a whole, as echoed by Szwed’s research (2007c, p.441) and as reflected in the following comment by a SENCO:

*“...When I took on the role, the Head made me part of the Senior Leadership Team, which the previous SENCO hadn’t been on and I think that has been a positive move forward because it means obviously I am now involved in that, so our teachers track their children termly and now I get copies of all of that and I can then track the, what you know the children who are on the Register and those ones, and look at the children who aren’t making progress and I can look at the interventions and see what’s happening and where they’re impacting and then we sort of, I would say it’s almost sort of like we do specialist things in here*

*and we have the children on a sort of one to one so our children who have been diagnosed with dyslexia and are doing specific programmes, so we then organise the time for those” [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].*

Data above indicates that teaching professionals being sure of the SENCO role remit and how this positively impacts practice is a key factor in ensuring optimal SENCO impact in current school contexts. This is related to SENCOs’ membership of the Senior Management Team, as argued by Cole (2005, p. 304), Szwed (2007a, p.96) and Tissot (2013, p.34), who maintained this positioning as a key tool when fulfilling the SENCO role.

### **9.3.1.2 Empowering teachers to discuss role uncertainties/ ‘grey areas’ / cross-overs (dualities)**

In terms of SENCOs having teaching responsibilities, as well as being members of senior management teams, and the resultant ‘grey areas’ that possibly arise in the dualities of their roles, one SENCO opined:

*“I am very much finding my feet in this sort of Senior Management world, there’s one thing being in the classroom, isn’t it, and just being a teacher, and having that experience, but I have now stepped on to another level, and I am having to sort of move into that mind-set as well which I am not quite there yet” [Participant: I:FT/PS:13/195(SMT)-S4].*

And another SENCO who commented:

*“Yes, it’s very hard to separate things with me because the SENCO should be part of the Leadership Team, but I often find it very difficult to separate the two roles, or I would say is as a SENCO, as I am the Deputy, I am very much the needs of the SEN and the Vulnerables, so that’s what I am particularly looking at because I can’t help it” [Participant: I:NT+DH/PS:75/410(SMT)-S12].*

Supported by the views of teachers, who were generally of an opinion similar to that told to me by one teacher:

*“Probably if the SENCO didn’t have any teaching responsibilities, I think that would be a massive difference (in the time that the SENCO can give to teachers). That’s obviously a two edged sword as well, because obviously the SENCO with the experience that the SENCO has, that’s a valid resource to have in the classroom with the children who are very low ability, who are Statemented children, so dealing with it is harder isn’t it. If she didn’t have teaching responsibilities, then obviously she could support the staff a lot more across the whole school because the time element wouldn’t be so much of an issue, but what I’m saying is that on the same token to have a teacher SENCO because that’s what she is, and all that valid experience that she’s got, and experience that she’s got to be able to put that in place as a teacher and support the children with Statements, do you understand what I’m saying. So she can use her qualities as a teacher very well” [Participant: I:FTT:96/433-T7].*

This raises apparent questions about the extent to which SENCOs should have teaching responsibilities, and indeed, whether or not their membership of the senior leadership team is associated with this in any way. My personal view is that having a SENCO on the SLT, as indeed, recommended by research (Cole, 2005; Szwed, 2007a; Tissot, 2013) legislation as well, (DfE, 1994; DfE, 2014), whilst considering the overall work burdens on a SENCO, as cautioned by Pearson (2008c, p.36), would facilitate the development of an overall optimally inclusive school ethos.

#### 9.4 SENCO-teacher engagement and perceptions of inclusion

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With regard to the impact of SENCOs on SENCO-teacher engagements and perceptions of inclusion, two aspects that are relevant in this regard relate to the degree of SENCO-teacher engagement, as well as SENCOs’ perceptions of teachers’ values towards inclusion. These shall be explored with regard to testimonials from both groups in the following sub-sections of this chapter.



#### 9.4.1 ENGINCL-ENG: Degree of SENCO-teacher engagement

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SENCO impact in current school contexts is affected by the nature of teachers' responses to SENCOS' suggestions with regard to various SEN initiatives, as well as the manner in which teacher interpret and implement SECNOs' advice. The relevance of these didactic interactions is further examined below.

##### 9.4.1.1 Positive responses to SENCOS' suggestions re: new initiatives

The manner in which teachers respond to SENCOS' suggestions has a cascading effect on the extent of impact that SENCOS ultimately have on optimal SEN provision, as evidenced by a SENCOS' quote below:

*"Yes, I think everybody's very positive and if I say to them, should we try this, or how do you think about having a go with this, it's very positive yes. We haven't got a massive amount of children on the SEN list, but we have got quite a lot of children who are under-achieving, or from English additional language who are needing specific individual things, so I think people, they don't see it as oh now, she's nagging me about that again, everybody's very positive about anything that we can provide, or work together to put in place for those children, everyone perceives that as a positive rather than a negative"* [Participant: I:PT/PS:16/203(NSMT)-S3].

This contention by SENCOS was generally echoed by teachers who were most of the opinion that:

*"We've got Provision Maps that we use, we put the names down, it's says which way of support they need, and then we fill them in, they're really good. They're quite easy whereas before we had a lot more paperwork to do, but no if you go to the SENCO and say you need help with something, she will always find time to sit down and talk you through something, if you're worried about something, or concerned about someone, she's got numerous resources that we can use to help children, like puppets, all sorts so you can go in, access the resources, so yes it is complete support. Just to say that they are a necessary support within school, you need to have the SENCO there because as long as you have your Head teacher, and whoever's above*

*you, a Key Stage Manager, it's nice when you've got a problem you can go to that SENCO, and often they would have encountered something before that you may not have so they'll say so and so has had this, and they can put you up with another teacher to go and talk about things" [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T5].*

The evidence suggests therefore, that there are wider practical applications for the suggestions about improvements to practice that SENCOs initiate. As asserted by Pearson (2000, p.148) and Cowne (2003), the manner in which school culture develops around innovative practices, will also depend on the extent to which exists a collaborative atmosphere between teaching professionals and SENCOs.

#### **9.4.1.2 Interpreting and implementing SENCOs' advice in a different manner than intended: clarifying expectations**

However, whilst SENCOs and teachers were generally in agreement about the mutual positive response to the suggestions with regard to implementation of SEN initiatives, both groups were simultaneously cognisant of the associated risk that occurs when advice is interpreted in a manner different to that in which it was originally intended, as illustrated by this quote from a SENCO:

*"I can think of a number of examples since after Christmas when that has happened, not only through things that I have said, but things that my Head has said to TAs and to teachers and how they've interpreted it differently. One example was on a statement this child needed to write 2 sentences independently within a week in any subject, and the TA said, yes, he can do that look, but the work that he had done, was copied from 2 sentences that she had written, so therefore it wasn't independent writing, so she'd interpreted that told to her and written down completely differently from what was expected, he was supposed to do it completely on his own, luckily we caught that she had done that, and so we've explained again" [Participant: I:PT/PS:15/90(SMT)-S5].*

And another SENCO who confided to me:

*"It is a worry because I want to do a good job and I want to be able to help the children that are on the Register and I want to know that I am helping them and I*

*am doing the right thing, but I do worry that either I am not, or the other teachers are saying they'll do it, or they are doing it, and they fill the paperwork in for me and things like that, I hope they are actually really doing it, I haven't had any time yet to go and observe in the classroom"* [Participant: I:FT/PS:11/67(NSMT)-S11].

A similar situation was also reflected in the opinions of teachers, summarised by one who said:

*"I think it's quite important that the SENCO gets to sort of see the child in action and see if you can notice anything that hasn't been picked up, you know to do a little assessment if you can even if it's very informal and you're doing it through game play or whatever, just to see that Interventions are working because a SENCO relies on other people's judgement and see how well things are going, it's not that she doesn't trust them, because everybody delivers a whole different way of applying their knowledge don't they, so I think it's quite important to sort of see that everybody's on the same sort of page"* [Participant: I:FTT:6/105-T18].

On the whole, in tandem with my own focus of interest, both groups of participants expressed concerns about the importance of the need for advice to be implemented in the most optimal manner for children with SEN, as summarised by one SENCO who said:

*"I think the key thing at my school is that you've got to put the child at the centre of everything that you do, even though it's not about the teachers that we have concerns about, it's about what is good for that particular child, and the teachers know that I won't rest until I get what's right for that child, and the Head is exactly the same, it's that we're tenacious and we are rigorous and we will check on things, but also it's about for example we're doing something on reducing anxiety for children, and for people to recognise what's happened at home that children don't come in to school having had a good breakfast, they all have experiences of what it's been like at home, and so just trying to see things through the child's eyes really, I think that tends to do it and people tend to change their opinion"* [Participant: I:NT/FS:24/210(SMT)-S18].

As is suggested by participants' quotes above, my contention would be that there is a marked need for clarity in terms of expectations that arise through the interpretation and implementation of SENCOs' advice with regard to teachers' practices, as also supported in Pearson *et al.*'s research (2015, p.49).

#### 9.4.2 ENGINCL-ATT: SENCOs' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices

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##### 9.4.2.1 Taking on board advice that impacts practice

SENCOs spoke of the challenges involved in getting staff on board with regard to advice that impacts practice:

*"I think everyone's intentions are really good, it's just again they feel snowed under other things as well, so that can be. I try to see it from their point of view if I was on the receiving end of something, I can try to do it as informally as I can, which is probably something I need to step up really and be more formal about it. I personally try and do it, I do it in my own class, but no I just rely on them really hoping that they would be, when I have had the children, to the next teacher I try and highlight the positive aspects of the ones who are really weak, so that she's got something to build on, and something particularly that their hobby or something that they can use that to, you know some kind of engagement..."*  
[Participant: I:PT/PS:12/210(NSMT):S17].

This general trend by SENCOs to positively make an impact on practice was reflected by teachers, one of whom categorically stated:

*"I think my personal experience is that the SENCO has supported me a great deal, and empowered me as a teacher by allowing me the opportunities to experiment with my teaching using the strategies that she showed me, and that itself has gained me the knowledge, you know working with low ability children. So I don't think it inhibits my teaching, I don't think that at all, I think if anything it's empowered me, because she's shown her knowledge with me, and I am then taking that, I am transferring that into the classroom..."* [Participant: I:FTT:96/433-T7].

Indeed, my own observations as well as experiences with regard to the general view that teachers have of SENCOs' impact on their own practice and the manner in which advice is imparted, is that SENCOs have a markedly positive influence on the practices of their teacher colleagues, and therefore, have an integral place within the school structure. The characteristics that are most helpful to ensure the centrality of SENCOs' positioning as advisors for optimal SEN practice, relates to the strategic aspects of their roles as advocates and promoters for SEN provision in schools (Tissot, 2013, p.34; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014, p.788).

## 9.5 Interventions and provision made for children with SEN

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The final theme that was identified with regard to the impact that SENCOs have on teachers' abilities, and the resultant effect on the interventions and provisions that are made for children with SEN, is sub-categorised into the nature of planning and the implementation of appropriate interventions, as well as the deployment of adult support. Each shall be examined within the relevant sub-sections that follow:

### 9.5.1 INTPROV-PDI: Preparation, planning and delivery of 'measurable' interventions

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#### 9.5.1.1 Implementing evidenced provisions with indicative/ measurable results

The most common manner in which SENCO impact is currently evidenced within schools relates to the measurability of the provisions that are put into place for children with SEN and the subsequent sharing of that data with individuals such as the SEN Governor who can be a "crucial advocate to whom the SENCO can turn if management issues arise" (Wedell, 2011b, p.209). However, although this is an area which is not comprehensively researched (Pearson, 2011b, p. 710), there was a vast amount of evidence provided in this context, by SENCOs participants in this research project. Factors related to the implementation of provisions with indicative results are alluded to in the following quote from one SENCO:

*"...There's a whole range of observations and being on the Leadership Team, it helps that because even if I'm not doing the observation, other people are, and we're feeding back on that and we're talking about what the provision is we do*

*triangulation where you look at the planning and the lesson observation and then we look at books and sort of assessment opportunities and marking too see whether all the sort of, the sets of children are being... So obviously my specifics when we're doing something like that is to look at, are the Special Educational Needs children catered for, are they appropriately differentiated for, in the lesson observations, are there activities as they should be, and does the assessment pick up where there are issues. Every teacher also has to do an end of term review where you look at your children's attainment, you look at children who are struggling, which often is your SEN children isn't it, and then we look at why they are, what interventions are in place, and whether they're having an impact and if not, we look at changing those and doing that, so that also gives you a way of monitoring what's happening. And then one of the things I've started to do and want to do this more is actually go in and watch specific children so go in and see children in action, see what's happening, have that sort of step back because I'm trying to get the SEN Governor involved more, next week we're going in to look at observe two of our statemented children, just to watch them within that environment, talk about them, and then we're going to come back and look at their targets and look at what was being done in relation to that... if you've got less children on your Register, you've got more time to observe and identify the barriers and things like that rather than being bogged down with paper work..."*

[Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

Whilst another SENCO maintained:

*"I do think generally with that we as a school, we just need to be a little bit more specific when we're looking at like measuring impact because I mean the IEPs is a good example, because people have their sheets and they have written on their IEPs and you can see it, with some of the interventions, if it's a level progress, you can see it, if it's sits quietly in class, I mean have you got evidence of that, so I think a lot of it comes down to evidence"* [Participant: I:NT/FS:28/160(SMT)-S8].

However, this was corroborated by a teacher who also reiterated that success of a SENCO's impact is measured in terms of children's attainment, through this example of a SENCOS' initiative that was implemented in her school:

*"I'll give you an example: our Key Stage 1 invested in Numicom, which is a maths Intervention. And actually we found that the children that sort of were using it to help them and assist them with their number work, were making really good progress, and so then we sort of looked into how it would filter through into Key Stage 2, even into upper Key Stage 2, what sort of different processes and packages they had and how it could be used and applied throughout the school. And it all looked very good on paper, so we had 2 members of staff that went on a 3 day course. They came back absolutely full of how marvellous it was. They got the interactive packages; they got all different things. So we all had a staff meeting about it and they showed us how it works and how we would apply it in class, and now every class has got an ample supply of Numicom. So that's just one small sort of example, but that's a really good investment because it doesn't matter whether you're in Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2, wherever you are, hopefully at some point you'd be able to understand the maths in the classroom because this resource is going to help you [Participant: I:FTT:6/105-T18].*

The evidence therefore suggests that whilst there are measures in place to ascertain the impact of SENCOS' input into teaching practices, these must be considered within the holistic complexities of the role and the SENCOS' responsibilities to impart varying provisions, whilst considering SEN policies and procedures, as also evidenced in Ellis and Tod's work (2012, p.61).

## 9.5.2 INTPROV-ADS: Deployment of other adult support and the impact teaching practices

### 9.5.1.2 Planning and execution of SEN provisions on the SENCOs' advice by adults who support teachers

With regard to the execution of SEN initiatives by other adult support staff within schools, one powerful example in terms of a SENCO's role in this regard is depicted in the following example:

*"I did have a situation a few years ago where a parent came in and said you've said that this girl's doing this and she hasn't done it, I know she hasn't done it because I ask her every day, and so I went to the teacher, because ultimately the teacher is responsible for SEN in their class, so they are the manager of the SEN in their class, even though I do the IEPs, they're responsible. Some of it was the TA time, but because the teacher is the manager of the people in her class, then she is the manager of the TA, and it's her responsibility of the TA that she'd done it. I took responsibility for it because I felt as though it was me that asked him to do it, and I didn't check on the teacher, and the teacher didn't check on the TA, so that as a result of that, we now have working records and keep them all the time and I see them every half term and the TAs have to write if there's a reason why they haven't been able to address the target, so it might be that it's Harvest festival rehearsal or whatever, but there always has to be a reason why they are not being addressed so that I can confidently go back to parents and say actually I can prove he's had this Intervention, and he still hasn't made this progress, and also with outside agencies I can do that as well. And if I am requesting a Statement, I can say look at what he's had. I think ultimately that teachers are fabulous people and that TAs are equally fabulous, and really people always want to do what is best for the children, and I think with good strong leadership that comes from the Head, and filters down with the management team, then you do get that, and we really see good results from our teachers as well as from our children, and it's a really happy school and it's lovely, so it all works OK"*  
[Participant: I:NT/FS:24/210(SMT)-S18].



For me personally, the quote above is a prime example which reflects my own views of the increasingly proactive and accountable role taken by both SENCOs and teachers alike to ensure that they are aware of the implementation of provisions by TAs within their remit, as reflected by this quote from a teacher:

*“... (the SENCO) will often pop in when children have an Intervention and she talks a lot with the TAs and sees how progressive the Interventions are being for the children, so obviously if they’re not working then we need to change the Intervention”* [Participant: I:FTT:6/105-T17].

To conclude this section therefore, it is relevant to acknowledge, as evidenced by the participants’ quotes above, that SENCOs do indeed have an impact on teachers’ practices through the deployment of adult support staff. This is enhanced when there is the involvement of both SENCOs and teachers in the decisions made about the deployment of support staff and the subsequent production of meaningful outcomes for children with SEN, as maintained in research conducted by Ellis *et al* (2008, p.155) and Webster and Blatchford (2014b, p.14).

## 9.6 Chapter Nine Key Points

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Chapter nine summarised the findings within the thematic context of SENCO impact in current school contexts, the key points (including participant testimonies within various sections of the chapter, as highlighted in brackets) of which were:

- Conditions are optimal for SENCOs’ training, skills and dissemination to teachers when there are specific measures in place to identify training needs (Section 9.2.1.1), and the subsequent identification of SEN children by teachers as a result of that training (Section 9.2.1.2).
- Both SENCOs and teachers alike need clarification about the SENCO role remit and how this positively impacts practice (Section 9.3.1.1), so as to empower teachers to discuss role uncertainties, or ‘grey areas’ that occur as a result of cross-overs in responsibilities of SEN-provision and implementation (Section 9.3.1.2).

- Teachers generally have positive responses to SENCOS' suggestions with regard to new initiatives (Section 9.4.1.1), but sometimes they interpret and implement SENCOS' advice in a different manner than intended, as a result of which expectations need to be clarified (Section 9.4.1.2).
- There is evidence to suggest that indicative/ measurable results in terms of the manner in which children are supported (Section 9.5.1.1) is positively correlated with the degree of SENCO/teacher involvement in the dissemination of SEN provision (Section 9.5.1.2) and the planning and execution of SEN provisions on the SENCOS' advice by adults who support teachers (Section 9.5.2.1).

## CHAPTER TEN: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

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### Chapter Summary

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Chapter ten provides an overall conclusive discussion with regard to the themes that emerged from the research, as evidenced by data obtained from participants and presented in the previous chapter. Reference is made to implications in relation to the findings as per the original three research questions. The contribution to knowledge and limitations of the project are also discussed, along with implications for the stakeholders involved in the project and recommended areas for further research.

### 10.1 Introduction

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It is important at this stage to review the project's original research questions, which were:

1. Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with Special Educational Needs in their classrooms?
2. Do SENCOs enhance teachers in becoming effective teachers of children with Special Educational Needs?
3. How is the impact of SENCOs currently assessed within primary schools?

The findings related to these have been presented in previous Chapters 7, 8 and 9 of this thesis, and the implications for the associated emergent themes are elaborated within this chapter.

### 10.2 Discussion of Implications Regarding Emergent Themes

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This research project produced specific themes which became more and more apparent as the data was analysed. As such, these themes are collectively unique to this project. The research questions shall therefore be discussed in relation to the implications of key

findings. The discussion will be juxtaposed with the emergent themes which were as follows:

**A. TRNSPLC: (SENCOs' training; skills and dissemination to teachers)**

1. TRNSPLC-TRD: SENCO training/ support of teachers' PD activities – application and dissemination of knowledge → impact of staff meetings
2. TRNSPLC-SPL: 'collective specialisations' versus professionalisation of the role/ SENCO workload versus having a variety of skills – defining the multiple responsibilities → time

**B. PROFID (SENCOs' and teachers' professional identity)**

3. PROFID-IDT: SENCOs' sense of professional identity/ negotiating identity; being 'agents of change'; Reflections on past/current/future practices; duality of roles as teachers/SENCOs
4. PROIDF-MGT: SENCO role within management; organising and making sense of data: number crunching; environmental factors: status within schools

**C. ENGINECL (SENCO-teacher engagement and perceptions of inclusion)**

5. ENGINECL-ENG: Levels of SENCO engagement with school staff (teaching versus non-teaching SENCOs); establishing good relationships; SENCOs' perceptions of teachers' wellbeing – staff turnover
6. ENGINECL-ATT: SENCOs' perceptions regarding teachers' values and attitudes towards inclusion; → staff resistance versus teacher willingness; over-reliance versus under-reliance; school ethos

**D. INTPROV (interventions and provision made for children with SEN)**

7. INTPROV-PDI: Preparation and Planning/ Delivery of Interventions, their effectiveness and evaluation; assessments and their contribution to teaching; →

Lack of 'quantifiability' of SENCOs input to teachers → difference between 'usual' support and 'SEN' support:

- a. Who writes the IEPs? (move from IEPs towards provision mapping)
- b. How, what, when, why?
- c. Diversification of the sources of external support – no centrally-driven strategies
- d. Funding and resources

8. INTPROV-ADS: Deployment of adult support, i.e. TAs, LSAs

### 10.2.1 Motivation in the SENCO-Teacher context

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With regard to the parameters by which motivation in the SENCO-teacher context can be gauged, five discussion points arose: development of a sense of agency; recognition of changing school cultures/ ethos; the manner in which SENCOs see themselves as having a didactic role with regard to teachers and their evolving professional identity; issues around application/dissemination of knowledge and time associated with this; and teachers' expositions of how their practices have changed because of SENCOs. Each shall be briefly reviewed under sub-headings within this section of the thesis:

- **Development of a sense of agency**

I suggested that that key indicators for successful teaching of children with SEN include SENCOs skilling teachers in their roles as 'agents of change' in relation to their views of their teaching colleagues. (Qureshi, 2014). This plays a key factor in the manner in which SENCOs are able to motivate teachers, as it is reflective of the complexities involved with regard to this. An illustration of this is explained by one SENCO who spoke of the importance of having a dialogue with teachers in this regard:

*"I think they (teachers) all want to (do the best for children with SEN). I think they just don't know how to, and they don't necessarily want to change the way they do it, but I think with all the teachers here really, they want the very best for their children, so... (it's about talking about changes to practice) [Participant: I:FT/PS:56/313(SMT)-S9].*

Therefore, the implications for SENCOs increasingly being viewed as agents of change (Cole, 2005, p.301; Cowne, 2005; Cowne 2008; Morewood, 2011, p.26; Morewood, 2012; Pearson et al., 2015), upon teachers' practices means that there will be resultant changes in their teaching styles and approaches to pedagogy. Indeed, current legislation recommends "high quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised (to) meet the individual needs of the majority of children and young people" (DfE, 2014a, p.25) which is provided "every day, in every classroom, for every pupil" (Friswell and Petersen, 2013, p.4). This is further supported by the comments from a SENCO [Participant ID: I:NT+DH/PS:38/412(SMT)-S2] in this project who, as mentioned earlier in Section 7.4.2, testified that SENCOs have a responsibility to ensure "quality first class teaching first."

- **Recognition of changing school cultures/ ethos**

A very real concern of SENCOs relating to their roles and associated impact upon teachers' practices is the fact that government policies already having undergone a major overhaul (DfE, 2013a; DfE, 2014a) suggest yet further changes in budgets and support in general for SEN Provision in schools, as illustrated by one SENCO's assertion to me:

*"When I first took over the role, I wrote every single IEP for every child who is on the Register, and we had over 100 then, or 150. It was ridiculous how many children that we had on IEPs, so with the new Code of Practice, as well, it has been made quite clear that they have to be over and beyond before they needed an IEP"* [Participant: I:NT+DH/PS:75/410(SMT)-S12].

The implications of the disbandment of agencies such as BACIN, which was discussed in Section 8.2.2 of this thesis, has a resultant impact on the pressures faced by SENCOs and their teaching colleagues in terms of managing the needs for children with SEN. The burden upon resources, particularly as allocated to SEN, also has a subsequent impact on the school ethos and values placed upon inclusive practices, as similarly highlighted in Lawson *et al.*'s (2013) research.

- **SENCOs see themselves as having a didactic role with regard to teachers; evolving professional identity**

Regarding motivation in the SENCO-teacher context, the research findings indicated that SENCOs and teachers alike view the concept as being a two-way process, and this has implications for the manner in which both groups view their respective professional identities. Indeed, this aspect has been documented not only in the various school policies (example in Appendix 1) that discuss the significance of SENCO responsibilities to act as liaisons between various stakeholders around children with SEN; along with concurrent literature (Pearson and Gathercole 2011; Mackenzie 2012b; Stobbs, 2012; Wedell 2014b), but in landmark legislative documents too (DfE 2013a; DfE 2014a).

- **Issues around application/dissemination of knowledge and time associated with this**

Furthermore, other points of discussion that both SENCOs mentioned as having marked impacts on their abilities to successfully perform their roles as motivators for teachers of children with SEN, related to their abilities to disseminate knowledge and associated time-constraints. One SENCO summarised this notion as follows:

*“Sometimes as a SENCO you don’t always know the answer. And that’s hard, I mean that’s fine for me if it’s somebody in my class, but when it’s for somebody, a teacher coming to ask me for my advice, and it’s their child that they’re talking about in their class, that’s you know you feel useless, you can’t offer an answer, so it’s constantly evolving, the role of SENCO, you’re always learning, no situation is the same and it is interesting, it is time consuming and it is quite a responsible job. So a lot of people don’t realise that I don’t think, what’s involved, all the paperwork, and talking with parents, and sometimes you’re saying things to people that they don’t want to hear or they don’t like, and even if it’s in the best interests of that child, sometimes it’s quite difficult situations that you are in. So it’s hard, but it’s very diplomatic as well” [Participant: I:PT+HD/PS:12/61(SMT)-S6].*

The comment above illustrates that increasing challenge, which is also addressed by Cowne (2005, p. 66) and Cheminais (2005, p.79); the latter who maintains that as “the

SENCO role continues to grow all out of proportion,” it is essential to examine whether SENCOs are actually receiving enough non-contact time, or whether they are possibly not utilising such time efficiently.

- **Teachers expositions of how their practices have changed because of SENCOs**

All teacher participants in this research project testified positively with regard to SENCOs’ abilities to motivate teachers by directly impacting teachers’ practices. This was exemplified by one teacher’s testimonial:

*“Last year... I had a lot of children who couldn’t work, or concentrate in a group situation, I think I had about 4 or 5 who had to have individual spaces dotted around the class and who each had specific times, for independent work and who had to do a focus task, and who had to do something different from the rest of the group and it was just (the SENCO who helped) making sure that that all balanced and fitted in with the rest of the teaching which was going on, because she (the SENCO) made sure that everybody’s getting the best out of you and not just the group of children” [Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T12].*

The positive implications on teachers’ motivation that SENCOs have had, by empowering the skills and practices of their teaching colleagues is not only evident in past research (Layton, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007; Hallett and Hallett 2010; Brown and Doveston, 2014), but also by the powerful participant testimonials as earlier discussed in Section 7.2 of this thesis. This illustrates the due consideration that should be given towards the potential of SENCOs to empower their teaching colleagues by focusing on the development of their skills and knowledge, and not simply instruction of practice.

#### 10.2.2 The Enhancement of Teachers’ skills as attributed to SENCOs

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In the context of how SENCOs enhance teacher’s skills in addressing the needs of children with SEN, three major discussion points were extrapolated from the themes relating to this: emphasis on interpreting and identifying indicators for SEN rather than labelling SEN; the shift towards professionalism and the conflict around the boundaries of roles and power relations; and the rise of a culture of expectations as SENCOs transition from being ‘fixers’ to



the role of 'enablers' of teachers. Each shall be briefly reviewed under sub-headings within this section of the thesis:

- **Emphasis on interpreting and identifying indicators for SEN rather than labelling SEN**

A key discussion area revolves around the increasing trend away from labels (Ellis and Tod, 2012), and the manner in which SENCOs have enabled teachers to delve deeper into the factors behind the manifestations of SEN, rather than the convenient ascription of a label, as succinctly summarised by one teacher:

*"Sometimes you label the children, you label them because you want to get one to one support for them, not because you want to label them, because you know there's something not right, and if you can get support, I mean it's taken her 2 years to get evidence for a Statemented child, which is a lot of time really, so they go into Reception and they don't realise that something is not right, and by the end of Year 2, we have to have 2 years of evidence to try and prove something's not right, so for 2 years we've tried to cope with them but we haven't got the money to have one to one support for them, or to actually understand what the difficulties to the child are"* [Participant: I:FTT:62/407-T3].

The implications of the shift towards initiatives such as provision mapping as opposed to individual IEPs for children with SEN (Wedell, 2011a, p.150), indicates the increased responsiveness of SEN professionals towards the trend of identifying underlying causes, as opposed to the attribution of generic SEN labels. Consequently, there is a resultant impact upon how teachers and SENCOs approach the planning and execution of interventions for children with SEN, which are increasingly focused around the needs of the child, whilst providing a basis for the development of the teacher's skills and abilities.

- **The shift towards professionalism and the conflict around the boundaries of roles and power relations.**

Another particularly evident indicator of the enhancement of teachers' skills as attributable to SENCOs, relates to the changing manner in which professionals view the role and power dynamics. I had initially approached my research from a

phenomenological perspective whilst working within an interpretivist paradigm. Therefore, the view that the current SENCO role is much more that of a relationship-creator and relationship-maintainer between the various stakeholders involved in the support of children with SEN, indicates that there has been a slight shift in focus compared to the originally-intended SENCO role. In the *Revised SEN Code of Practice* this was defined as:

*“... working closely with the head teacher, senior management and fellow teachers, should be closely involved in the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision. The SENCO has responsibility for day-to-day operation of the school’s SEN policy and for coordinating provision for pupils with SEN...”*  
(DfES, 2001b, p.11).

Recent research (Burton and Goodman, 2011; Rosen-Webb, 2011; Tissot, 2013; Pearson *et al.*, 2015) also indicates this shift, as the SENCO role becomes increasingly geared towards being leading role-players in the provision of SEN. However, the implications for this, as discussed earlier in Section 8.5.2 of this thesis, and also asserted by Webster and Blatchford, are that “whilst teachers must assume the primary responsibility for planning and teaching pupils with high-level SEN, more is certainly needed by way of research into effective pedagogical approaches for such pupils” (Webster and Blatchford, 2014b, p.16).

- **A culture of expectations: SENCOs transitioning from being ‘fixers’ to the role of ‘enablers’ of teachers.**

Also related to the afore-mentioned point is the evolving culture of expectations within schools, as elucidated by one teacher’s testimonial:

*“Well in the past, whenever I’ve had a concern, I’ve always sought their advice, and they’ve sort of recommended a programme or a different way of applying your teaching strategy, or whatever so it has had an impact. As a class teacher I am quite sort of prepared to have a go when I do my own research and talk about amongst colleagues, not necessarily the SENCO, but I think when there’s a glaring gap in somebody’s learning, or you’re concerned that they’re falling behind, I would call in for the SENCO”* [Participant: I:FTT:6/105-T18].

The implications of this transition in terms of SENCOs being seen as ‘teacher-enablers’, and having a subsequent impact on the enhancement of their skills with regard to supporting children with SEN, should be one that is treated with caution. Research data from my project indicated the inherent dangers of teachers becoming over-reliant on SEN-support staff to implement SEN provisions, as discussed earlier in Section 7.4.2 of this thesis. Norwich (2010, p.37) had also commented about the “unrealistic policy expectations about what teachers in this (SENCO) role can do for children with SEN and disabilities.” My own contention would be to argue that the ability of SENCOs to enhance teachers’ skills is impacted by teachers’ own beliefs and attitudes about how children progress, as also supported by Broomhead’s (2014) and Armstrong’s (2014) research.

### 10.2.3 SENCO Impact in current school contexts

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With regard to the understanding of how SENCO impact is currently being measured in school contexts, five discussion points arose: there is no formalised process for measuring SENCO impact; there are differences between working relationships of teachers and teaching versus non-teaching SENCOs; the question of how SENCOs and teachers know what they don't know and the associated challenges in preparing professionals for a role that is so different in diverse settings; possible implications for SENCO recruitment and retention; and a final note on SENCO reflections as part of the inclusive process. Each of these points is reviewed under sub-headings within this section of the thesis:

- **No formal process for measuring SENCO impact**

All SENCOs and teachers involved in this study were unanimous in their views that the impact of SENCOs’ upon teachers’ practices “*is very much measured on the impact it has on the children...*” [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1]. When further queried about how the impact of various SEN provisions on children is measured, participants generally commented, “*We look at the information on the SIMS (database software) system (which tabulates and charts) the grades for the children*” [Participant: I:FT/PS:15/126(NSMT):S16].

However, Wedell (2009, p. 222) summarised SENCOs' conversations about the issue of to what degree test scores can be used to answer questions about supporting children with SEN, in his assertion that "Individual experimental teaching offers more direct answers about next steps for pupils' learning." This is therefore, the most plausible reason why there has not been and to date, cannot foreseeably be a holistic, formalised and tailor-made measure of SENCO impact in terms of imparting provision for children with SEN.

- **Differences between working relationships of teachers and teaching versus non-teaching SENCOs**

All participants who formed the research cohort were of a similar opinion, in that there are pros and cons to having both teaching versus non-teaching SENCOs, and that, as maintained by Morewood (2009, p.7), SENCO time can be optimised, but there must be support from teaching colleagues. One non-teaching SENCO spoke of the associated challenges thus:

*"I think more than anything in the last 6 months I've made them (teachers) more aware of what I do, and how I do it and why I do it, whereas before I think there was this is SEN, and this is teaching, and we weren't really working alongside each other, whereas now we are very much"* [Participant: I:NT/FS:45/200(SMT):S15].

Whilst another part-time teaching SENCO, told me:

*"I'm very lucky I've got a very supportive team behind me so... (for example) when I'm teaching... (the teachers) know where all the resources are and where we can have groups individual children. People will come in to here (to use this SENCO room) constantly, so it's just not me that gets (to use) it. I've got one designated TA who is specifically a SEN designated TA, and... she will come to the meetings and she will take minutes.... She does all of those bits and pieces and then she also works with children and she works with me... (on) things like the census data and those sorts of things. So yes so she works with me and sort of does all those bits, but equally people will just sort of drop (in) whilst she is in the middle of doing groups as well. So it becomes sort of like a club where everyone expects you to know everything about*

*anything to do with children who aren't learning or behaving really"* [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1].

The implications for the working relationships of teachers and teaching versus non-teaching SENCOs, and the associated impact on how SENCO time can be optimised, would result from greater clarification in terms of a SENCO's role remit, as similarly argued by Morewood (2008, p.8). Furthermore, increased consideration of SENCO workloads by teaching colleagues (Pearson, 2008c, p.36), also evidenced by participants' comments as reported earlier in Section 9.3.1 of this thesis, and the related school culture around innovative SEN practices (Pearson, 2000, p.148; Cowne, 2003) would contribute towards the development of a collaborative atmosphere between teachers and teaching or non-teaching SENCOs.

- **How do SENCOs and teachers know what they don't know; and how do you prepare professionals for a role that is so different in diverse settings?**

This particular discussion point is possibly one of the most ambiguous ones that arises from my doctoral research. One teacher interviewee empathised with SENCOs, whilst talking about the diversity in the external and legislative SEN environment, with specific emphasis on funding:

*"I think, I don't know if this comes down to SENCO, but I was going to say like I think funding generally for those children who, I know they are changing it now, so the schools have got the funding upfront, but it's not the SENCO's fault, but it's getting the other agencies in, for those children who need the Statements, like the Educational Psychologist, and sometimes it feels like they come in at Reception that they haven't got the Statement until Year 3, and there's all that time, whereas schools are putting things in place, of course they've got things in place, but I know they're changing that now, but it's not really the SENCO's fault, it's just... (trails off)"*

[Participant: I:FTT:76/480-T11].

It could be argued that the challenges involved in the task of preparing professionals to support children with a diverse range of SEN, are similarly applicable to those that arise whilst preparing teachers in a general context. The implications for this in a SEN-specific

context however, would be to focus on the development of practitioners' skills, knowledge and understanding. This is also reiterated by Brown and Doveston who maintained that there is a "fundamental need for all educators to embrace inclusive principles as part of their everyday practice," and as such, "professional development is required for all teachers to implement practices that will accommodate diversity and difference within all classrooms" (Brown and Doveston, 2014, p.506). There is an indisputable attention that must be given to ongoing training and development for SEN practitioners, particularly in view of the declining powers of Local Authorities, as earlier mentioned in Sections 1.4.1 and 4.4.3 of this thesis, and reduction in resources that are made available to support optimal SEN provision. This contention was further evidenced by a SENCO [Participant: I:PT/FS:69/412(SMT)-S1] who commented on "...this big changing period... where services are being disbanded, so how are you going to get that help? What are you going to do as resources disappear? You must keep up to date with your skills and knowledge."

- **Possible implications for SENCO recruitment and retention**

In the context of SENCO impact and the associated implications for SENCO/ teacher recruitment, one SENCO spoke of her challenges thus:

*"...(I am) a part time teacher for a start who's covered for 6 months for a job share, I've also got 2 young children at home, and it's getting the balance, the job is hard enough without having to write a mini thesis on something. So from the point of view, the course as good as it's been, it's given me lots of eye openers that I've said to the mentors, it's been too heavy weighted in the written area and that's put a lot of it this year as well, I know it isn't part of your question, but having done that, that has impacted massively all over Christmas the first assignment we had completely took over, so I lost about 4 or 5 weeks panicking over that when I should have been doing stuff in here, so that's, it's probably putting too much pressure on yourself but you know, you've not done anything for 15 to 16 years and suddenly you're supposed to be writing, you know when I was a student, I didn't have a family, didn't have a mortgage, didn't have a job, so all of those factors, that's been a massive thing this year as well"* [Participant: I:PT/PS:12/210(NSMT):S17].

The implications of the pressures associated with being a SENCO as mentioned above, are that schools must recognise that there is a high degree of resilience and commitment to SEN that is required of a professional who takes up the role. Mackenzie's (2012a, p.159) research also evidenced the "the huge commitment (of SEN professionals) to working with children with SEN... (as a) factor which motivated them throughout their careers." Indeed, it is essential for schools to investigate the factors that both contribute to and hinder the development of such deeply-felt commitment to the support of children with SEN. Potential associated implications of this could also be that SEN practitioners may need different kinds of professional and/or emotional support at varying stages of their professional careers, as evidenced in research by Griffiths and Dubsky (2012) and Mackenzie (2012a; 2012b; 2013).

- **Reflection as good practice on the part of the SENCOs**

Shuttleworth (2000, p.25) confirmed his assertion that as key players in the process of the movement towards inclusion in mainstream schools, SENCOs are increasingly being expected to "manoeuvre their schools into positions of maximum receptiveness to the challenges that lie ahead." More recently, Tissot's (2013) examination of the role of SENCOs as leaders and Pearson *et al.*'s (2015) research demonstrate how the SENCOs increasingly strategic leadership role clearly necessitates the need for reflection by SENCOs as 'change-makers' and harbingers for optimal inclusion and SEN provision within their respective settings.

To conclude this discussion section of the implications of the research findings, I feel it is appropriate to quote a SENCO from Pearson's research into the recruitment, induction and retention of SENCOs in England:

*"SENCOs must be listened to and taken seriously to be able to do their job most effectively and therefore retain their enthusiasm (and) motivation for the role"* (a SENCO in Pearson, 2008, p. 107).

### 10.3 Originality of this Research Project and Contribution to Knowledge

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The concept of 'originality of a PhD' has been defined by different researchers by various parameters. Denicolo asserted that:

*“The criteria for attainment of a doctorate are most commonly couched at a very general level in terms of the work making an original contribution to knowledge and having the potential to be published in some form”* (Denicolo, 2003, p.86).

The publication of my article based on my doctoral research in a peer-reviewed journal, (Qureshi, 2014) and various other outputs of my work at various stages of my PhD as illustrated in Section 11.2 of this thesis would serve as evidence of my contribution to knowledge with the potential for publication. However, various other authors, as catalogued by Clarke and Lunt, argue for a distinction between 'originality', which can take different forms in different subjects; in the social sciences, more of an emphasis on 'intellectual originality' (Clarke and Lunt, 2014, p.810), and a 'significant contribution to knowledge' which may be harder to achieve. Lovitts (2007, p. 31) in a research project focused on the evaluation of PhD theses, including those in the social sciences, maintained that a contribution to knowledge arises as a result of the 'creation of new knowledge' in an existing field. Indeed, the University of Northampton's own Research Degree Handbook 2014-2015 (Section A) also reiterates that the measure by which 'doctorateness' can be ascribed, is when:

*“The thesis... demonstrate(s) a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers. It should contain work which is deemed worthy of publication although not necessarily in the form presented”* (The University of Northampton, 2014, p. 20).

Therefore, with this focus, I explored previous research into the area of SENCOS' impact upon teaching practices. As illustrated in the literature review of this thesis, a gap in current knowledge and understanding of the specifics of the SENCO-teacher dynamic was highlighted. The main messages that are derived from this research project in terms of its originality and contribution to knowledge is multi-faceted. By identifying the evolving



professional identity of the SENCO as ‘agents of change’ in relation to their teaching colleagues, and evidencing this with testimonials from teachers, I have endeavoured to create a new understanding of an issue that has been alluded to, but not researched to this extent in the past. This is particularly notable in wake of the recent changes in legislation in which SENCOs are seen as central proponents for inclusion (DfE, 2013a; DfE, 2014a).

Additionally, there is the more immediate and associated practical value of this research, particularly for the participants who formed the cohort for the project, as a useful tool for reflection upon their practice and a point for future improvements in this regard. For instance, one participant in this project [Participant ID:I:PT/PS:16/203(NSMT)-S3] informed me about the changes she had made to her practice following my interviewing of her. This particular SENCO told me that my questions had prompted some insightful reflections on her practice, and that as a result, she had now initiated a SEN-skills audit for all teachers in her school, which is completed termly. She asserted that on the basis of this audit, she is now able to plan various CPD activities for the teachers in her school, and also accordingly undertake her own CPD externally, or call in specific experts as so required.

Furthermore, the head teachers of two of the schools participating in this project, have specifically requested for a copy of my thesis findings, discussion and conclusion, as they are keen to incorporate them into the improvements made for professional practice around the provision for children with SEN. This particular feature is an example of my endeavour towards good practice, in direct contrast with a general accusation made towards academic researchers as “maintaining closed systems of communication – disseminating... findings primarily to other researchers”(Schiller and Malouf, 2000, p.252), as I hope to broaden the impact and accessibility of my research to a non-academic audience.

I have also applied the conventional research instruments of questionnaires and interviews to develop unique themes which evolved as a result of my triangulated base of interpretation of the data. The questionnaires were a useful to establish a knowledge base,

upon which my semi-structured interviews were then developed, subsequently yielding data which answered my research questions.

The findings of my research confirm and extend the work of researchers such as Garner(2001b), Mackenzie (2007, 2012a, 2012b), Morewood (2008, 2009, 2011, 2012), Pearson (2000, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), Robertson (2010, 2012) and Szwed (2007a, 2007b, 2007c) with regard to the impact that SENCOs have on the skills of their teaching colleagues.

On a final note for this section, it is relevant to reiterate the eight parameters by which Clarke and Lunt (2014, p.813-814) maintained that examiners seek to clarify within a doctoral research project, each aspect of which I have endeavoured towards at various points within my doctoral journey:

1. *Originality and/or a contribution to knowledge* (as detailed earlier within this section of the thesis)
2. *Academic level and intellectual rigour* (referred to within the various chapters of this thesis, and accompanying Appendices)
3. *Quality of data and its analysis* (covered by Chapters 5-10 of this thesis)
4. *Methodological approach* (covered by Chapters 4-5 of this thesis)
5. *Knowledge and understanding of the student's own work and the field of study* (referred to within the various chapters of this thesis, and accompanying Appendices)
6. *Publication and publishability* (Qureshi, 2014; Dampson *et al.*, 2014; and an article of mine currently under review for the European Educational Research Journal)
7. *Candidate's ability to analyse their own work critically and to defend it* (Chapters 7-10 and *viva voce* examination)
8. *Quality of thesis and ownership of the work* (this thesis, accompanying Appendices and *viva voce* examination)

## 10.4 Reflection: What I Have Learnt by Undertaking the Research

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Undertaking this research project has been extremely edifying for me as there have been a number of learning points involved at various stages of the process. I have been able to identify areas where certain limitations impacted the parameters for discussion, as well as specific things that I would do differently if I had the opportunity to undertake this project again from its inception. These are examined in the following sections within this thesis.

### 10.4.1 Research Limitations

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It is important whilst reviewing the process, to acknowledge that there are a number of limitations associated with various aspects of research. The limitations that stood out as regards this research project into the impact of SENCOs on teachers' abilities to address the needs of children with SEN, were that, in view of the limited sample size, the applicability to a more holistic point of view, or defining conclusion is reduced. Additionally, most of the factors discussed by the interviewees are context-specific, thus limiting the opportunities to what Bassey (1999) termed 'fuzzy generalisation' with regard to the findings.

I was also limited in geographical constraints, as the SENCOs whom I interviewed belonged to schools within Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, as opposed to large, more cosmopolitan, and socio-economically diverse cities such as London and Birmingham where the school environment and SEN demographics may be markedly different for a SENCO. Additionally, as my research relates to the 'Impact that SENCOs have on teachers' abilities, another limitation was that there has been no prior research conducted directly within this specific geographical area, relating to the topic. Therefore, the historical literature and research that I reviewed relates to England in general, as opposed to being Northamptonshire- or Leicestershire-specific.

#### 10.4.1.1 Methodological Aspects

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In terms of the research cohort, as has already been acknowledged, SENCO participants were all those who were enrolled on the National Award for SEN Coordination at the University of Northampton. The weighted average number of years of experience of this

research participant cohort for the questionnaire phase of the project, as per the data present in Section 4.4.2 of this thesis, is 1.5 years. This number is similarly reflective of the years of experience of the rest of the interview participants too. Therefore, it is important to point out that the data derived from this project needs to be understood in that context.

Indeed, as the primary researcher within this project, I acknowledge that results may be different if the same questionnaire and interview process is applied to SENCOs who have been in the role for more extended periods of time, and therefore, have more of a breadth of experiences upon which to call.

It is also relevant to mention that this was a relatively small-scale project, which was reflective of a cross-section of participants, as opposed to a project of this nature that could be longitudinal and therefore, trace the experiences of SENCOs during their years in role, to report upon the differences in impact that they have upon the practices of their teaching colleagues.

#### 10.4.1.2 Aspects of Analysis

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In terms of the manner in which data was analysed for the purposes of this project, it is relevant to point out, as already illustrated in Chapter Six of this thesis, that had another researcher undertaken the same project, and analysed the same data to seek answers for the same research questions, their analysis would most definitely not be exactly the same as mine. This being an interpretative study, I am mindful of the limitations imposed by the unique lens that I bring to the analysis process.

With regard to the quality of my data, I also acknowledge that all of my interviews were undertaken within school settings. Interviews were mostly conducted in a secluded staff room or meeting room, but there were the rare occasions where SENCOs and teachers were interrupted either by colleagues or pupils during the interview, and this may have affected the data. I am also mindful that being interviewed on location within their formal work settings, SENCOs, teachers and head teachers may not have been as completely forthcoming about issues they face, regardless of the anonymity and confidentiality that I

assured them. The nature of data that I collected could potentially have been different had the location been more informal or distinct from their professional settings.

Furthermore, another factor to consider in the interpretation of data has been that the focus of the project has been around the SENCO-teacher dynamic. As such therefore, the interpretation of data does not take into consideration the impact of other stakeholders who may also impact these interactions, most notably, the views of children themselves, parents, professionals who are external to the school, and various other stakeholders who form part of the primary SEN environment in England.

#### 10.4.1.3 What I Would Do Differently If I Could Undertake the Research Project Again

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In my capacity as an educational researcher, I assumed a “learning role” (Silverman, 2006, p.65) from the very inception of the research project. It was important to me to understand the context and process of the parameters involved in the central research questions. I therefore resolved to be reflective at every step of the way, and as such, would categorise my reflections as follows:

- *Interviewing:* I would have also asked my interview participants my three actual research questions during the interviews, so as to gain their direct answers, which I could have then probed more, instead of simply relying on my own interpretations and derivation of themes from the diverse nature of answers that they gave to my questions. This is because, despite being invited to email any follow-up questions I had for any interviewee, I felt it inappropriate to ask my research questions directly, as opposed to questions asking for clarifications of interviewee’s opinions based on what we had already discussed. Robson (2002, p. 291-292) alludes to this quandary in his assertion that “the less the degree of structure in the interview, the more complex the performance required by the interviewer.” Therefore, in the future, I will endeavour to be more mindful of the complex nature of semi-structured interviews, and the manner in which it is possible to seek answers directly from participants in relation to the specific research questions.

- *Transcribing:* I would set more time aside for the process of transcribing my audio-recorded interviews. This is because I realised that it was a more time-consuming process than I had initially anticipated, as warned by Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 100) who maintained that “words are the data of qualitative research.” The process of transcribing over 35 hours of interviews, and also manually entering data from each of the 42 5-page questionnaires that were returned to me, into Microsoft Excel.
- *Questions:* Although I would not change my methodology, which certainly yielded data that enabled me to satisfactorily answer my research questions, I would revise my interview schedule of semi-structured questions by making them more specific, with more directed prompts and probes. This is because were a number of questions that I realised led to unrelated aspects of the SENCO role, which were not necessarily reflective of answers to my research questions; for example my questions about the SEN governors in schools, and the nature of SENCOs’ interactions with them. However, I acknowledge the potential usefulness of this data for possible future publications.

It is however, relevant to mention that despite the afore-mentioned limitations, particularly, with regard to the methodological and analytical aspects of the research project, the value of the project remains as originally intended; along with the associated contribution to knowledge. Indeed, there are a number of implications that arise as a result of this project, which can be beneficially put to use by a variety of stakeholders, as well as form the basis for further areas of research. These are detailed in the section 10.4.2 that follows within this thesis.

#### 10.4.2 Implications

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There are varied implications for stakeholders who are either directly or indirectly involved in this research into the impact that SENCOs have on teachers’ abilities to address the needs of children with SEN. Furthermore, a number of possible future areas of research have also been highlighted, as detailed in the following sections.

#### 10.4.2.1 Implications for Stakeholders

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It is intended that research outcomes will inform the nature of support mechanisms for SENCOs, teachers and head teachers through the identification of factors that influence their own motivation, professional- and self-development initiatives, as well as those of their colleagues.

The research outcomes of this project indicate a number of aspects relating to the impact that SENCOs have on teachers' practices in supporting the needs of children with SEN. These aspects would be of interest to a number of various stakeholders, such as practising SENCOs and teachers anywhere in England who may be interested to explore any similarities or differences in the impact that they have with those of their colleagues in other schools.

Head teachers and other members of the SLT may also find it particularly revealing to read about the views of SENCOs themselves about their positions as members or non-members on the SMT.

Members of the Local Authorities may also want to refer to this research project as a base of information regarding the increasing diversity of the SENCO role and the challenges associated with the SENCO-teacher dynamic, particularly in view of the recent changes in legislation (DfE 2013a; DfE 2014a), as also earlier mentioned in Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of this thesis.

Indeed, I would consider myself a key stakeholder too, as for me personally, undertaking this research project, and the ensuing process has been extremely useful in enabling me to solidify my key concepts and reading of themes and issues associated with the complex SENCO-teacher interactions that exist within English Primary Schools. This is a particularly relevant point, because the role of SENCOs is still non-existent in my home country of Kenya and in Pakistan, where I have lived for a number of years, and where I will perhaps one day have the opportunity to contribute towards SEN-support initiatives in schools.

Furthermore, a broader European audience can consider how the key findings are being manifest in a pan-European context, with reference to their own educational settings. Research outcomes can aid the development of specific competencies needed to develop optimal inclusive settings in accordance with the priority of 'Raising Achievement for all Learners' as set out in the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) Framework at a European level (CEU, 2009; EADSNE, 2012).

#### 10.4.2.2 Implications for Possible Future Areas of Research

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As a result of some of the comments made by interviewees regarding the time constraints, it might be worthwhile undertaking further research into their use of non-contact time and how it impacts upon their bureaucratic workload. This is particularly noteworthy because a number of researchers in the field, such as Cheminais (2005, p. 79) and Pearson (2008, p.104) indicate that such an examination would be advisable, and may result in a reprioritising of SENCO workloads in connection with any associated teaching and learning responsibilities. However, such studies would be recommended to be undertaken from a comparative point of view in wake of recent legislation, *the Children and Families Bill* (DfE, 2013a) and the impact that the new *SEN Code of Practice* (DfE, 2014a) will have on SENCOS' time.

Furthermore, another aspect of possible future research may relate to that of SENCO training. This is predominantly in the wake of the changes to legislation as of 2010, whereby all SENCOS will be required by law to have attained QTS (Qualified Teacher Status), so as to be able to complete the TDA (Training and Development Agency) accredited National Award for SEN Coordination, which is a mandatory qualification for the role. This is in view of the differing opinions that were aired by the interviewees (despite training not being one of the essential research questions of this project). Whilst referring to the mandatory training, one interviewee commented:

*"Having been on this course it's opened up my eyes to exactly what the job entails, so it's far more than I thought initially, 2 years ago..."* [Participant: I:PT/PS:12/210(NSMT):S17].



While another SENCO interviewee said:

*“...and it’s (about) getting the balance; the job is hard enough without having to write a mini thesis on something. So from the point of view, the (SENCO) course as good as it’s been – it’s given me lots of eye openers – that I’ve said to the (SENCO Course) mentors, it’s been too heavy weighted in the written area”* [Participant: I:PT/PS:14/137(SMT)-S7].

The above-mentioned points of view indicate that there are mixed opinions about the effectiveness of the TDA-accredited training in terms enhancing the efficiency of SENCOs executing their roles. It might therefore be worthwhile to undertake further research to explore whether or not indeed SENCOs are deriving the planned benefits from the course, as originally intended.

As regards my own personal intended area of continued research as a post-doctoral research assistant, I am currently working on a project that investigates the experiences of students from the ‘widening participation’ cohort, whose study includes the opportunity for Erasmus visits within the Education, Children and Young People (EC&YP) Division of the School of Education, University of Northampton. Throughout this process, I intend to utilise the research skills of developing data collection instruments, data analysis and reporting techniques, and the resilient attitude that I have honed as a result of undertaking this PhD.

## 10.5 Chapter Ten Key Points

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Chapter ten thus consisted of a concluding discussion around the findings and implications of the research project, the key areas of which can be summarised as follows:

- This thesis sought to answer some fundamental questions about SENCOs’ impact on their teaching colleagues. It looked at how SENCOs undertake their role with regard to motivating teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with SEN; how effective teachers feel with regard to managing the needs of children with SEN; and how SENCO impact is currently being measured within school contexts.

- As illustrated in this thesis, the SENCO role is embedded within a highly dynamic and fluid environment. The impact of person holding the title of SENCO is influenced to a degree by the dissemination of skills that they impart within school settings, the sense of teachers and SENCO's professional identities, their engagement and perceptions of inclusion, and the nature of interventions and provisions made for children with SEN.
- There is therefore evidence that SENCOs do have a positive impact on teachers' abilities, but data indicates that this impact varies from school to school, as the SENCO–teacher dynamic is influenced by a various emergent themes and impact factors as mentioned in Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 within this thesis.

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## Appendix 1: Example of an anonymised SEN Policy from a research participant's school

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### SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY

May 2011

#### Introduction

The aims of [REDACTED] School are based on the values derived from the Statement of Principles adopted by the local Education Authority and guided by the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all our pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs, and ensures full curriculum entitlement and access. We are committed to maximum integration commensurate with meeting individual needs, the highest quality of education for all students and the efficient use of resources. To support these aims, the following structures, procedures and systems are in place.

Admission arrangements for maintained schools are determined by the Local Education Authority and Schools cannot refuse admission to pupils with Special Educational Needs, without statements of Special Educational Needs, within their catchments areas nor discriminate against pupils out of catchments on the basis of their Special Educational Needs. For pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs the LEA determines admission, having regard to parental preference and in consultation with governing bodies.

All staff are made aware of their responsibilities towards pupils/students with Special Educational Needs and clear communication lines between them and specialist staff are established. A programme of staff development, included in the school/college development plan is implemented for both Special Educational Needs specialists and subject/class teachers. Special Educational Needs issues are regularly discussed at year group meetings.

#### The policy of [REDACTED] Primary School is to:

- give priority to pupils with Special Educational Needs in allocating places to out-of-catchment area pupils when places are oversubscribed.
- offer facilities, in particular for pupils with physical disabilities because of its design and facilities.
- offer expertise in the education of pupils with hearing impairment supported by specialist resources/training provided by the Special Needs Teaching Service of the Local Education Authority.
- provide expertise in the education of pupils with visual impairment in school, supported by the Special Needs Teaching Service of the Local Education Authority.
- provide expertise in the education of pupils with learning difficulties, supported by the Special Needs Teaching Service and Educational Psychology Service of the Local Education Authority.
- provide expertise in the education of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties supported by the Educational Psychology Service of the Local Education Authority.
- provide expertise in the education of pupils with specific learning difficulties/dyslexia, supported by the Special Needs Teaching Service and Educational Psychology Service of the Local Education Authority.

### **Specialist facilities**

The design of the school is such that the Infant and Junior departments have full access to pupils with mobility impairment. The design of the Reception Unit limits access and would deny such pupils full and free access to the school without assistance and support although improvements in this area have been made and future improvements have been planned.

### **Identification and Assessment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs**

Pupils with Special Educational Needs are identified as early as possible consistent with thoroughness. In practice Health Service practitioners such as health visitors will have identified many of those pupils with significant special needs. The majority of children now attend some sort of pre-school group where their needs may have been identified and this information will have been passed on to school.

Within a few weeks of entry to [REDACTED] 4+ unit, the pupils will be assessed on initial baseline skills assessment. The results of this assessment may trigger concerns, as may concerns expressed by parents or carers.

A clear common system of record keeping and communication is established with our:

- Feeder Play Groups
- Transfer Primary schools
- Transfer High schools

to ensure that pupils are known to us at transfer and known to schools to which they will transfer.

*At present [REDACTED] uses a system of monitoring for identification, assessment and provision of all pupils about whom issues of concern have been raised. This approach recognises that there is a continuum of Special Educational Needs and that some pupils, who do not fall within the criteria of need as set out by LEA, may, nevertheless, need monitoring at some stage during their school life to ensure their progress and/or well being. From these pupils will be drawn those children who fulfil the criteria of Special Need as laid down by the LEA following Government guidelines and these will be placed on the Register Of Special Educational Need.*

- Termly meetings are held to discuss all children throughout the school who are in the monitoring file. These are convened by the head teacher and attended by representatives from both infant and junior departments, senior staff, learning support assistants, governors and the SN teaching staff, with written comment being submitted by class teachers. Parental contributions are also included.
- If the class teacher, or parents, has concerns about a pupil's Special Educational Needs the class teacher gathers information and take initial action to address those needs. There is discussion with parents at this stage and the pupil is included on the monitoring file. Once concerns have been expressed that a pupil may have some special need, a monitoring review form will be generated on which these concerns will be noted. These forms are kept by the class teacher and contain basic information. (See enclosure A) Those pupils who fulfil the criteria of Special Need will be entered on the Register of Special Educational Need and additional information will be recorded about provision and progress. These termly monitoring meetings will aid the function of monitoring provision and informing the allocation of resources.

- Where it has been decided that the provision already in place has not succeeded in resolving the pupil's needs, the Special Educational Needs becomes involved in reviewing the provision and progress of the pupil in consultation with the class teacher and parents. At this point the pupil is noted as being at the stage of School Action.

### **School Action**

- If the class teacher has concerns about a pupil who may have special educational need they will gather relevant evidence which may include:
  1. cohort assessment results e.g. Baseline, SATs, Vernon Spelling, teacher assessment;
  2. analysis of progress/lack of progress from teacher's mark book records;
  3. notes from observations;
  4. work samples;
  5. notes from discussions about the pupil with parents/carers;
  6. notes from discussions with teaching assistants;
  7. notes from discussions with pupil;
  8. records from previous schools, teachers or outside agencies;
  9. evidence of differentiated provision that has been in place over time.
- The class teacher meets with the SENCo and they review the evidence and a decision will be made as to whether the pupil meets the LEA criteria for placement on the SEN record.
- If the pupil does not meet the criteria advice will be provided on strategies for supporting him/her through class differentiation and the pupil will be monitored to ensure that satisfactory progress is made or systems will be put in place to ensure their well being.
- If the pupil does meet the LEA criteria he/she is placed on the SEN record and if further evidence is required to confirm judgement, the SENCo may carry out further diagnostic assessment.
- At this Stage the class teacher and SENCo jointly draw up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and progress is reviewed at least termly. Parents/carers and pupils' views are invited as a contribution to the implementation and review process. The school values highly and responds positively to parents' views. Parents are informed about their child's learning and encouraged to participate fully in their child's education at all stages. Records of evidence, copies of IEPs and notes from discussions will be held in SENCo held pupil files.
- The class teacher will implement the IEP and will monitor the outcome in liaison with support staff, pupils, SENCo and parents/carers.

### **School Action Plus**

Should the pupil fail to make satisfactory progress then the class teacher, SENCo and parents/ carers will jointly decide whether the pupil now falls within the LEA criteria for placement at School Action Plus and additional external advice will be sought.

- The IEP will be revised to incorporate the advice given by the relevant external agencies and the SENCo will become more closely involved to liaise with external agencies and to enable more regular contact with parents/carers.

- At this stage it is likely that the school's SN team will be involved in implementing additional input and support.
- The progress towards agreed goals will be monitored and reviewed. At the termly monitoring meetings, with due regard to the parental contribution, the level of input will be considered. If progress has been satisfactory the pupil may be returned to School Action or the amount of school-based input may be adjusted.

### **Assessment**

Following 3 reviews at School action +, where it was decided that the provision already in place has not succeeded in resolving the pupil's needs the school will consider whether the pupil meets the LEA criteria for statutory assessment.

- Evidence will be presented to the LEA that the pupil, despite appropriate action at School Action and School Action Plus, is experiencing a much higher level of difficulty than their peers in making progress in their education.
- The Local Education Authority considers the need for a statutory assessment and, if appropriate, makes an interdisciplinary assessment within the provisions of the 2002 Code of Practice.
- The school will continue to provide provision for the pupil until advised of the outcome of the referral.

### **Statement**

If the Local Education Authority considers the pupil has special educational needs that are so significant as to require the LEA to share formal responsibility with the school for determining the appropriate special educational provision then it will set out a Statement Of Special Educational Need. It then becomes involved in arranging, monitoring and reviewing provision.

- However in exceptional circumstances, pupils may demonstrate such significant or unforeseen difficulties that with multi-professional and parental agreement an assessment may be considered immediately without proceeding through School Action and School Action +.

### **Staffing**

██████████ is our Special Educational Needs co-ordinator.

In addition to her teaching qualifications she has a Dip.Ed. (S.E.N.) and her experience comprises over 20 years class and specialist teaching throughout the primary age range and in both mainstream and special schools.

The SENCo's responsibilities are:

- The day to day operation of the school's Special Educational Needs policy.
- Advising class teachers and learning support assistants..
- Taking the lead in managing provision for pupils at School Action and School Action+.
- Updating and overseeing the records of all pupils with Special Educational Needs.
- Working with parents of pupils with Special Educational Needs.
- Liaising with external agencies including the educational psychology service and other support agencies, medical and social services and voluntary bodies.

██████████ supports her work.

### **Resources for special educational needs**

Approximately 6% of the staffing budget is used to support pupils/students with Special Educational Needs and is supplemented by the additional hours provided by the Local Education Authority for students with statements of Special Educational Needs. 6% of the school's/college's materials allocation is earmarked for books and equipment for these pupils/students. This financial year a further allocation of resources is as follows: Local Education Authorities are providing 18.10 hours of teaching time and 40 hours of ancillary time to meet the extra needs of pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs which the school cannot reasonably be expected to provide *from its own resources*.

These resources are allocated both to the Special Educational Needs department and all other departments. The principle informing Special Educational Needs resource deployment is one of ensuring access to the curriculum and therefore taking account of individual need.

### **Resources include:**

- A wide range of books, materials and tasks to suit students/pupils of differing abilities.
- A range of information technology facilities including overlay keyboards, spell checkers and lap top computers.
- An appropriately stocked Special Educational Needs resource base.
- Library provision, which reflects the needs of pupils/students with Special Educational Needs.

### **Organisation of support**

We make every effort to achieve maximum integration of pupils/students with Special Educational Needs and their peers, while meeting students' individual needs. In this school pupils, wherever possible, are taught in classes of mixed ability and arranged by age. Teachers provide learning opportunities for all pupils within this environment and provide materials appropriate to pupils'/students' interests and abilities. This ensures that all pupils/students (including those with special educational needs) have a full access to the National Curriculum. The structures and systems in place are:

- Individual tuition to raise attainment in literacy/numeracy/information technology skills.
- Small group tuition to raise attainment in literacy/numeracy skills.
- Classroom support to increase curriculum access and pupil/student achievement.
- Differentiated provision within a mixed ability setting.
- Differentiated provision within a banded setting.
- Peer tutoring
- Counselling as part of our pastoral responsibilities
- A range of clubs/leisure activities for all pupils/students
- An equal opportunities policy
- Clear guidelines on behaviour
- A Special Educational Needs department at the heart of the school with open access.

### **External Support**

The school/college has a named medical officer and school nurse within the District Health Authority to whom references are made in accordance with the Staged Procedure for

assessment. Similarly, contact is made with the Social Services Department and Education Welfare Service as appropriate. We also work with the following services provided centrally by the Local Education Authority and the Health Authority:

- Educational Psychology Service
- Child Guidance Services
- Special Needs Teaching Team - staff specialising in supporting pupils/students with:
  - Hearing impairment
  - Visual impairment
  - Autism
  - Learning difficulties
  - Specific learning difficulties
  - Pre-school team
- Student Support Service
- Advice and Inspection Unit
- Special Educational Needs Assessment Service
- Specialist Careers Officers
- Speech Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational therapy

### **Links with Special Schools**

We liaise with LRI Hospital School for specialist advice.

The school/college also has good contacts with the following voluntary services:

- Centre for Deaf People
- Royal Leicester/Rutland and Wycliffe Society for the Blind
- RNIB
- National Charities
- Local Charities

### **Governors**

The governing body will use its best efforts to ensure the best possible provision for Special Educational Needs in this school/college. All governors are aware of their responsibilities for Special Educational Needs and discuss the issues regularly.

The Governing Body has a nominated Governor for Special Educational Needs. The governing Body evaluates the success of the education we provide, using the following criteria:

- The existence of accurate, up to date record keeping.
- The number as % of review meetings held at least termly for pupils/students at stages 1-3 of the assessment procedure.
- The number as % attendance by parents at Review meetings.
- Parental requests for the school/college to be named on the pupils'/students' statement of Special Educational Needs.
- Number of pupils/students remaining at a stage of assessment or reverting to the previous one.
- The number as % of pupils/students for whom a statement of Special Educational Needs is no longer necessary.

- The amount as % of the budget allocated to pupils/students without statements of Special Educational Needs.
- Adjustments in budget allocation to reflect changing needs.
- Amount of school/college budget spent on equipment/building modifications.
- Pupil/student achievement through the Record of Achievement.
- Pupil/student attainment e.g., increase in Reading Ages over time.
- Numbers of students with Special Educational Needs who pursue post 16 education.
- Links with Special schools.
- Regular updating of the information pack for parents.
- Annual Special Educational Needs policy review.
- Senior management involvement in Special Educational Needs issues.
- OFSTED Inspection reports and the Local Educational Authority Review Process.
- Inclusion of Special Educational Needs issues in development planning.
- Time allocated to planning for pupils/students with special educational needs.
- Feedback from pupils/students and parents.
- Routine examination by the Governors of individual but anonymous case studies of students with Special Educational Needs.
- Attendance at involvement/leadership of INSET courses by all staff.

The school's/college's annual report contains a report of the effectiveness of provision and any amendments made or proposed over the year to our Special Educational Needs policy. Parents are encouraged to offer their views on Special Educational Needs provision at the annual meeting for parents, which are arranged by the governing body.

Parents are encouraged to discuss any problems or concerns with school. These should be raised initially with the pupil's/student's class teacher. Most problems can be resolved in this way. But if this does not happen, parents may raise concerns with the head teacher. The LEA has a parent Officer who can give impartial advice and mediate on the parent's behalf and can be contacted through the school or directly from the LEA. If necessary parents may complain to the governors and, if they are still dissatisfied, may take their complaint to the LEA.

*Prepared: 2 May 2011*

## Appendix 2: Introductory email about my project to Partnership Schools with the University of Northampton

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 10 September 2012 11:50

**Subject:** EDU-SchoolPartner: PhD Research Project - The University of Northampton

Dear Schools

I am contacting you on behalf of Saneeya Qureshi, who is one of our PhD students based within the School of Education at The University of Northampton. Saneeya is researching the role of SENCOs in the classroom with the specific title of her thesis

'An Investigation into the Impact of Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) on Teachers' Abilities to address Special Education Needs (SEN) in Primary Schools'

In order for Saneeya to complete her research she would like to interview 5 teachers from your school. Each interview would be:

- a) between 10 minutes , to a maximum of 20 minutes in duration
- b) audio-recorded with the consent of the teacher
- c) anonymised and will remain completely confidential, and in no way at all

will either the person or the school be identifiable in the write-up.

Saneeya could offer the school her time in speaking to the pupils about life in Kenya or teaching them basic Swahili if you would like a cultural exchange.

Please could you let me know if a date and time is convenient and I will put Saneeya in touch with you.

Many thanks

[REDACTED]  
The Partnership Office  
The School of Education  
The University of Northampton  
NN2 7AL  
01604 89 [REDACTED]



### Appendix 3: Information Sheet for schools (sent with email from the University of Northampton's Partnerships Office)

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#### **An Investigation into the Impact of Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) on Teachers' Abilities to address Special Education Needs (SEN) in Primary Schools**

**What is the purpose of the research/study?** This research is being conducted independently for the purpose of data collection for a Higher Degree by Research. The focus of the study is the role and impact of SENCOs. It is intended that the dissemination of the research findings shall be to SENCOs, teachers, headteachers and fellow researchers in Education.

**Who are the researchers?** The research team consists of myself as the primary researcher and my two supervisors.

**What does the study involve?** The research team are going to undertake a comprehensive study involving interviews of SENCOs, teachers and headteachers, and also a review of documents relating to SEN provision.

**What are the benefits to me if I participate?** You will have the opportunity to have your opinions included in the report about the impact of SENCOs on teachers' skills and abilities to address the special needs of pupils in their classrooms. The report will be a channel through which you will be able to voice your views regarding all aspects of your working conditions.

**Are my rights protected?** Your feedback will be analysed for the purpose of the research project. All possible attempts will be made to ensure that data collected will be anonymised and confidential.

**What are the implications of my participation?** All of your survey feedback will be treated with utmost confidentiality and all individual and school data anonymised.

**What will happen to the information?** The information given will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Your feedback form will be assigned a number for the purposes of the research process and the reports that will be produced. Once the research is completed, the information will be destroyed. When we write any report of the study, it will not be possible to identify you or anyone else who participated in the study.

The information from your feedback will be for research purposes only. It will not be given to any other party. The researcher is aware of all guidance with protection issues.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at:

**Saneeya Qureshi** (Research Student) [abcxyza.abcxyza@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:abcxyza.abcxyza@northampton.ac.uk)

c/o The School of Education, University of Northampton, Park Campus, Boughton Green Road, Northampton NN2 7AL

**Prof. Richard Rose** (My Research Supervisor) [\[REDACTED\]@northampton.ac.uk](mailto: [REDACTED]@northampton.ac.uk)

**Thank you for your participation in this research project.**

**SENCO IMPACT RESEARCH**

**For the purpose of this project I am using the following definition of 'Impact':**

A sense of progression or regression which enables an individual to bring about a resultant change (whether positive or negative) in a status quo.

**Section A: Demographic Information**

A1: County:

A2: Range of special needs of pupils within your school

A3i: Number of pupils with special needs in your school:

A3ii: Total number of pupils on role?

A4: Does the school you work in have additional SEN provision, such as a unit, that increases the number of pupils with SEN? Yes/ No

**Section B: Questions related to how you are employed**

B1: Position of the person completing this questionnaire:

B2: Please indicate how you are employed:

- Employed FT\* and work FT as SENCO
- Employed FT and work PT as SENCO
- Employed PT and work wholly as SENCO
- Employed PT and work partially as SENCO
- Employed as TA but work as SENCO when requested
- Not employed as SENCO or other (please explain)

\* Ft = 5 hours a day or over, 5 days a week, term time only or more

B3: Approximately how long have you held the SENCO position? (years and months)

B4: What age range of pupils do you cater for in your role at SENCO?

B5: Do you manage the work of one or more support staff? Yes/ No

*If you answered yes, please give some details below:*

B6: Do you have any responsibilities with regards to the curriculum? Yes/ No

*If you answered yes, please give some details below:*

B7: Do you have any other responsibilities not mentioned above? Yes/ No

*If you answered yes, please give some details below:*

B8: Are there any barriers that prevent you from using your skills?

*If yes, then it would be helpful if you said what they were, below:*

B9: What changes, if any, would you like to make to your current role and conditions?

B10: Please give any additional details that you think might be relevant about your particular role as SENCO

### Section C: SENCO-Teacher Interactions

C1: How do you interact primarily with teachers in your school?

C2: How do you perceive the benefits of teachers having the guidance of a SENCO?

C3: What, in your opinion, are the barriers to effective use and impact of SENCOs?

C4: In your estimation, how knowledgeable are teachers about the special needs of pupils in their respective classrooms? (Please circle only one)

*Very knowledgeable      Quite knowledgeable      Not very knowledgeable      Poor*

C5: How would you describe the partnership between you and the teachers in your school? (Please circle only one)

*Excellent      Good      Poor      Very poor*

C6: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which SENCOs impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in primary schools?

### Section D: Interventions

D1i: How do you and/ or your school currently assess the abilities of teachers to address SEN in primary schools?

*You (SENCO):*

*Your School:*

D1ii: Who is involved in this assessment?

D2: Are there other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN issues in the school? (If yes please specify their role in school?)

D3: Have any of the staff in your school received any of the following in relation to SEN issues: *Please tick the appropriate boxes and if you answer yes, then please specify who received the support and the provider or who else was involved*

*Yes      No*

*a) Training*

*b) Guidance*

*c) Networking*

*d) Other forms of support*

D4: What issues has the impact of SENCOs on teachers' abilities to address SEN in their classrooms raised in your school? *This could include staff interpretation of criteria, subjectivity of observations to support judgements, discrepancies between age phases, classes or on transition. Please comment*

D5: Are teachers involved in writing IEPs in your school? Yes/No

*Please give details about their degree of involvement/ non-involvement*

D6: How do you monitor the implementation of IEPs in your school?

*Please give details of any quantitative or qualitative monitoring techniques.*

D7: What would be useful to support your impact on teachers' abilities to address SEN in primary schools? *Please give as much information as possible.*

**Section E: Other**

E1: Are there any other comments that you want to make, either prompted by this questionnaire, or, as a result of your role as a SENCO?

**Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.  
Your involvement will be valuable to the project.**

As part of this research for my PhD, I would like to interview a few SENCOs about the impact on teachers' abilities to address SEN in primary schools. If you would be willing to be interviewed, then please put your name and contact details below. I will only interview a small sample, so please do not be offended if I do not choose you. Thank you again for your valuable participation in my research project.

**Optional information about you to enable me to contact you**

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

Telephone:

Appendix 5: Second draft of survey questionnaire format (dated 20<sup>th</sup> March 2011)

**SENCO IMPACT RESEARCH**

**For the purpose of this project I am using the following definition of 'Impact':**  
*"A sense of progression or regression which enables an individual to bring about a resultant change (whether positive or negative) in a status quo."*

**Section A: Demographic Information**

A1: County: \_\_\_\_\_

A2: What kind of school do you work in? \_\_\_\_\_

A3: Please indicate which of these terms would describe pupils in your school:

Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty (EBD)	
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	
Dyslexia	
Physical Disability	
Sensory Impairment (Visual, Hearing, etc)	

A4i: Number of pupils with special needs in your school: \_\_\_\_\_

A4ii: Total number of pupils on roll? \_\_\_\_\_

A5: Does the school you work in have additional SEN provision, such as a unit, that increases the number of pupils with SEN?     Yes    No

**Section B: Questions related to how you are employed**

B1: Position of the person completing this questionnaire: \_\_\_\_\_

B2: Please indicate how you are employed:

- Employed FT\* and work FT as SENCO
- Employed FT\* and work PT as SENCO
- Employed PT and work wholly as SENCO
- Employed PT and work partially as SENCO
- Employed as TA but work as SENCO when requested
- Not employed as SENCO or other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\* Ft = 5 hours a day or over, 5 days a week, term time only or more

B3: Approximately how long have you held the SENCO position? \_\_\_\_\_ years and \_\_\_\_\_ months

B4: Do you manage the work of one or more support staff?     Yes     No

<i>If you answered yes, please give some details below:</i>	<i>How many?</i>
Teaching Assistants (TAs)	
Learning Mentors (LMs)	
Other (please specify)	

B5: Are there any barriers that prevent you from fulfilling your responsibilities as a SENCO?

*If yes, then it would be helpful if you said what they were, below:*

B6: What changes, if any, would you like to make to your current role and conditions as a SENCO?

B7: Please give any additional details that you think might be relevant about your particular role as SENCO

### **Section C: SENCO-Teacher Interactions**

C1: How do you interact primarily with teachers in your school about pupils with SEN?

C2: How do you perceive the benefits of teachers having the guidance of a SENCO?

C3: What, in your opinion, are the barriers to effective use and impact of SENCOs?

C4: In your estimation, how knowledgeable are teachers in general, about the special needs of pupils in their respective classrooms? (Please circle only one)

*Very knowledgeable      Quite knowledgeable      Not very knowledgeable      Poor*

C5: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in your school?

### **Section D: Interventions**

D1i: How do you and/ or your school currently assess the abilities of teachers to address SEN in primary schools?

*You (SENCO):*

*Your School:*

D1ii: Who is involved in this assessment?

D2: Are there other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN issues in the school? *(If yes please specify their role in school?)*

D3: What kind of training (if any) has been provided in your school in relation to SEN?  
*Please specify who received the support and the provider or who else was involved, and the kind of support provided.*

### **Section E: Other**

E1: Are there any other comments that you want to make, either prompted by this questionnaire, or, as a result of your role as a SENCO?

**Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.  
Your involvement will be valuable to the project.**

As part of this research for my PhD, I would like to interview a few SENCOs about the impact on teachers' abilities to address SEN in primary schools. If you would be willing to be interviewed, then please put your name and contact details below. I will only interview a small sample, so please do not be offended if I do not choose you. Thank you again for your valuable participation in my research project.

### **Optional information about you to enable me to contact you:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone - Work/ Home/ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 6: Information Sheet for participants (dated 20<sup>th</sup> March 2011)**

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### **An Investigation into the Impact of Special Education Needs Coordinators on Teachers' Abilities to address Special Education Needs in Primary Schools**

**Purpose of the research/study:** This research is being conducted independently for the purpose of data collection for a Higher Degree by Research.

**Who the researchers are:** The research team consists of myself as the primary researcher and my two supervisors.

**What the study involves:** The research team are going to undertake a comprehensive study involving interviews of SENCOs, teachers and headteachers, and also document scrutiny of the work of children with SEN over the course of one school year.

**What will happen to me if I take part?** Your feedback will be analysed for the purpose of the research project. All data collected will be anonymous and confidential.

**What are the risks?** There are no risks involved to yourself, as all your survey feedback will be treated with utmost confidentiality and all individual and school data anonymised.

**What will happen to the information? ?** The information given will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Your feedback form will be assigned a number for the purposes of the research process and the ultimate thesis report that will be produced. Once the research is completed, the information will be destroyed. When we write any report of the study, it will not be possible to identify you or anyone else who participated in the study.

The information from your feedback will be for research purposes only. It will not be given to any other party.

In the unlikely situation where harmful practices are mentioned, we would be obliged to inform the appropriate agencies.

**Thank you for** agreeing to be surveyed as part of this research project. I, Saneeya Qureshi, as the only researcher working on this particular project, am required to abide by an ethical code of practice which protects the rights of all individuals involved in the research process and guarantees the safeguarding of data.

Should you have any questions following this survey, please feel free to contact me at:

**Saneeya Qureshi** (Research Student)

c/o The School of Education, University of Northampton,  
Park Campus, Boughton Green Road, Northampton NN2 7AL  
[abcxyza@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:abcxyza@northampton.ac.uk)

Thank you for your participation in this research project.



**Information Sheet**

**An Investigation into the Impact of Special Education Needs Coordinators on Teachers' Abilities to address Special Education Needs in Primary Schools**

**What is the purpose of the research/study?** This research is being conducted independently for the purpose of data collection for a Higher Degree by Research. The focus of the study is the role and impact of SENCOs. It is intended that the dissemination of the research findings shall be to SENCOs, teachers, headteachers and fellow researchers in Education.

**Who are the researchers?** The research team consists of myself as the primary researcher and my two supervisors.

**What does the study involve?** The research team are going to undertake a comprehensive study involving interviews of SENCOs, teachers and headteachers, and also a review of documents relating to SEN provision.

**Are my rights protected?** Your feedback will be analysed for the purpose of the research project. All possible attempts will be made to ensure that data collected will be anonymised and confidential.

**What are the implications of my participation?** All of your survey feedback will be treated with utmost confidentiality and all individual and school data anonymised.

**What will happen to the information?** The information given will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Your feedback form will be assigned a number for the purposes of the research process and the reports that will be produced. Once the research is completed, the information will be destroyed. When we write any report of the study, it will not be possible to identify you or anyone else who participated in the study.

The information from your feedback will be for research purposes only. It will not be given to any other party. The researcher is aware of all guidance with protection issues.

**Thank you for** agreeing to be surveyed as part of this research project. As the main researcher working on this particular project, I am required to abide by an ethical code of practice which protects the rights of all individuals involved in the research process and guarantees the safeguarding of data.

Should you have any questions following this survey, please feel free to contact me at:

**Saneeya Qureshi** (Research Student)  
c/o The School of Education, University of Northampton,  
Park Campus, Boughton Green Road, Northampton NN2 7AL  
[abcxyza.abcxyza@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:abcxyza.abcxyza@northampton.ac.uk)

Thank you for your participation in this research project.

**Appendix 8: Third draft of questionnaire (dated 25<sup>th</sup> March 2011)**

**SENCO IMPACT RESEARCH**

**For the purpose of this project I have created and will be using the following definition of 'Impact':**

*"A sense of progression or regression which enables an individual to bring about a resultant change (whether positive or negative) in a status quo."*

**Section A: Demographic Information**

A1: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

A2: County: \_\_\_\_\_

A3: What kind of school do you work in? \_\_\_\_\_

A4: Please indicate which of these terms would describe pupils in your school: *(please tick all that apply)*

- Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)
- Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)
- Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty (SEBD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Dyslexia
- Physical Disability
- Sensory Impairment (Visual, Hearing, etc)

A5i: Number of pupils registered as having special educational needs in your school: \_\_\_\_\_

A5ii: Total number of pupils on roll: \_\_\_\_\_

A6i: Does the school you work in have additional SEN provision, such as a unit?  Yes  No

A6ii: If you answered yes, please specify what range of needs it covers:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Section B: Questions related to how you are employed**

B1: Position of the person completing this questionnaire: \_\_\_\_\_

B2: Please indicate how you are employed:

- Employed FT\* and work FT as SENCO
- Employed FT\* and work PT as SENCO
- Employed PT and work wholly as SENCO
- Employed PT and work partially as SENCO
- Employed as TA but work as SENCO when requested
- Not employed as SENCO or other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\* Ft = 5 hours a day or over, 5 days a week, term time only or more

B3: Approximately how long have you held the SENCO position? \_\_\_\_\_ years and \_\_\_\_\_ months

B4: Do you manage the work of one or more support staff?  Yes  No

<i>If you answered yes, please give some details below:</i>	<i>How many?</i>
Teaching Assistants (TAs)	
Learning Mentors (LMs)	
Other (please specify)	

B5: What factors enable you to fulfil your responsibilities as a SENCO? *Please give details.*

B6: What changes, if any, would you like to make to your current role and conditions as a SENCO?

B7: What previous training have you had in relation to SEN?

B8: Please give any additional details that you think might be relevant about your particular role as SENCO.

### **Section C: SENCO-Teacher Interactions**

C1: What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be?

C2: What activities do you undertake in order to support your school colleagues? *Please give details of who is supported and how.*

C3: What are the barriers to effective use and impact of SENCOs?

C4: In your estimation, how knowledgeable are teachers in your school, about the special needs of pupils in their respective classrooms? *(Please circle only one)*

*Very  
knowledgeable*

*Quite  
knowledgeable*

*Not very  
knowledgeable*

*Very limited  
knowledge*

C5: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in your school? *Please give details.*

### **Section D: Interventions**

D1i: How do you identify the training needs of staff in relation to SEN?

D1ii: Who is involved in this identification? *Please give details.*

D2: Have you provided training to school colleagues in your school? *Please give details.*

D3: Are there other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN issues in the school? *(If yes please specify their role in school)*

D4: What kind of training (if any) has been provided in your school in relation to SEN? *Please specify who received the support and the provider or who else was involved, and the kind of support provided.*

### **Section E: Other**

E1: Are there any other comments that you want to make, either prompted by this questionnaire, or, as a result of your role as a SENCO?

**Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.  
Your involvement will be valuable to the project.**

For the purpose of the research project, I would like to interview a few SENCOs about the impact on teachers' abilities to address SEN in primary schools. If you would be willing to be interviewed, then please put your name and contact details below. Thank you again for your valuable participation in this research project.

**Optional information about you to enable me to contact you:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. (please circle as appropriate): Work/ Home/ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 9: Finalised survey questionnaire (dated 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011)

### SENCO IMPACT RESEARCH

**For the purpose of this project I have created and will be using the following definition of 'Impact':**

*"A sense of progression or regression which enables an individual to bring about a resultant change (whether positive or negative) in a status quo."*

#### Section A: Demographic Information

A1: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

A2: County: \_\_\_\_\_

A3: What kind of school do you work in? \_\_\_\_\_

A4: Please indicate which of these terms would describe pupils in your school: *(please tick all that apply)*

- Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)
- Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)
- Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty (SEBD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Dyslexia
- Physical Disability
- Sensory Impairment (Visual, Hearing, etc)

A5i: Approximate current number of pupils registered as having special educational needs in your school: \_\_\_\_\_

A5ii: Total number of pupils on roll: \_\_\_\_\_

A6i: Does the school you work in have additional SEN provision, such as a unit?  Yes  
 No

A6ii: If you answered yes, please specify what range of needs it covers:  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Section B: Questions related to how you are employed

B1: Position of the person completing this questionnaire: \_\_\_\_\_

B2: Please indicate how you are employed:

- Employed FT\* and work FT as SENCO
- Employed FT\* and work PT as SENCO
- Employed PT and work wholly as SENCO
- Employed PT and work partially as SENCO
- Employed as TA but work as SENCO when requested
- Not employed as SENCO or other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\* Ft = 5 hours a day or over, 5 days a week, term time only or more

B3: Approximately how long have you held the SENCO position? \_\_\_\_\_ years and \_\_\_\_\_ months

B4: Do you manage the work of one or more support staff?  Yes  No

<i>If you answered yes, please give some details below:</i>	<i>How many?</i>
Teaching Assistants (TAs)	
Learning Mentors (LMs)	
Other (please specify)	

B5: What aspects enable you to fulfil your responsibilities as a SENCO? *Please give details.*

B6: What changes, if any, would you like to make to your current role and conditions as a SENCO?

B7: What previous training have you had in relation to SEN?

B8: Please give any additional details, if any, that you think might be relevant about your particular role as SENCO.

### **Section C: SENCO-Teacher Interactions**

C1: What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be?

C2: What activities do you undertake in order to support your school colleagues? *Please give details of who is supported and how.*

C3: What are the barriers to effective use and impact of SENCOs?

C4: In your estimation, how knowledgeable are teachers in your school, about the special needs of pupils in their respective classrooms? *Please circle only one, using the following key:*  
**1: Very knowledgeable**    **and**    **4: Not very knowledgeable**

1

2

3

4

C5: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in your school? *Please give details.*

### **Section D: Interventions**

D1i: How do you identify the training needs of staff in relation to SEN?

D1ii: Who is involved in this identification? *Please give details.*

D2: Have you provided training to school colleagues in your school? *Please give details.*

D3: Are there other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN issues in the school? *(If yes please specify their role in school)*

D4: What kind of training (if any) has been provided in your school in relation to SEN?  
*Please specify who received the support and the provider or who else was involved, and the kind of support provided.*

**Section E: Other**

E1: Are there any other comments that you want to make, either prompted by this questionnaire, or, as a result of your role as a SENCO?

**Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.  
Your involvement will be valuable to the project.**

For the purpose of the research project, I would like to interview a few SENCOs about the impact on teachers' abilities to address SEN in primary schools. If you would be willing to be interviewed, please put your name and contact details below. Thank you again for your valuable participation.

**Optional information about you to enable me to contact you:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. (please circle as appropriate): Work/ Home/ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 10: 'First-glance coding' of questionnaire data**

<p>1) Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children w/ SEN in their classes?</p>	<p>2) Do SENCOs skill or inhibit teachers from becoming effective teachers for children w/ SEN in their classes?</p>	<p>3) How is the impact of SENCOs currently addressed w/ primary schools?</p>
<p>1. Support w/ provision incl. differentiation + assessments "OWNERSHIP OF THE ROLE" - taking on board advice - approachable</p> <p>2. training/CPD "EMPOWERMENT"</p> <p>3. liaising + arranging external support - staff turnover (school ethos)</p> <p>4. member of SLT / SMT support - related is multiple responsibilities of SENCOs</p> <p>5. time + staff resistance</p> <p>6. budget / money / resources - funding</p> <p>7. effective deployment of TAs / LSA's aka 'adult support'</p> <p>"move from IEPs towards provision mapping"</p> <p>"impact of staff meetings?"</p> <p>0. SENCO time w/ children</p> <p>teacher willingness ↓ depends on SENCOs' perceptions of teachers - i.e. As the class teachers' ultimate responsibility</p>	<p>1. support w/ provision incl. differentiation + assessments</p> <p>2. training / CPD "EMPOWERMENT"</p> <p>3. liaising + arranging external support</p> <p>4. time</p> <p>5. budget / resources</p> <p>6. effective deployment of TAs / LSA's</p> <p>performance mgmt parameters</p>	<p>- monitoring the impact of provisions?</p> <p>- provision of training/CPD by SENCOs "EMPOWERMENT"</p> <p>- member of SLT</p> <p>- how is majority of the SENCOs time spent?</p> <p>- this project is a good opportunity for them to reflect on current practices "duality of the role"</p>



## Appendix 11: Second stage coding of questionnaire responses

Saneeya Qureshi – SENCO Impact

<b>C1: What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be?</b>
Advise and support with provision. Aid differentiation. Liaise with other agencies/ parents. Arrange CPD for all staff as appropriate.
Support in identifying children with SEN rather than underachievement. Support in strategies Wave 1, 2 and in writing/ implementing IEPs, giving advice on these. Support in accessing further training/ advice from outside agencies. Skills sharing and training.
Link between Ed Psych and teacher; SLT and teacher. Support with suggestions/ info about target setting, writing MEPs (IEPs), behaviour management, interventions.
Understand SEN needs + make provision
share information on provision in school; to support teachers in writing IEPs, applying for statements and working with children with SEN.
quality teaching - leading by example; supporting them + giving guidance
give them support in handling/ supporting children with SEN
support in teaching of children with SEN; identifying children with SEN
guiding them and providing supporting strategies for children in their class with SEN.
support with interventions; assessment of the children; support with IEPs; advice on Quality First teaching; addressing the needs of all children.
support with IEPs; setting targets; training; resources
supportive person to support day-to-day professional development; hub to direct information
Support/ advice; analysis of data; effective deployment of TAs.
mentor; support; guidance; TA deployment
help organise agencies to help support staff and children; NOT to provide all of the answers.
Support with classroom practice for children with specific needs; deployment of TAs appropriate to cohort needs; review of IEPs + support in writing them; parent meetings.
Support; advice
guiding practice; giving advice; seeking help from outside agencies.
finding information or resources as requested; support for IEP writing; organisation of reviews.
to complete paperwork; meet with parents.
strategies - teachers; info on different areas of need; resources; paperwork support.
provide them with support/help identifying and dealing with children who require SE; putting them in touch with outside agencies.
Listening and support; Discussions, working in partnership with the class teacher to find best interventions for the child/what is manageable for the LSA and in the class situation; Feedback from outside agencies - keeping them fully informed
All primary teaching staff meet regularly to discuss problems, etc and/ or behaviour. Behaviour plans are shared. I am Primary Manager and facilitate these meetings.
Supporting with planning, resources, advice, assessment for the 2 children we have with statements as they have specific needs. To lead on referrals for expert support. To provide teachers with model for IEPs and check IEPs; monitor provision to feedback and audit staff needs for CPD.
organise classroom support; organise interventions; test students to pinpoint problems; sharing of knowledge
Support and advice; information giving + updating; leading; listening; supplying LSA support in the right place.
advisor; support; mentor; inspire; motivate
Help with assessment/support and advice. I am to make suggested programmes as easy as possible to undertake so that teachers are able to follow it without requiring additional time to prepare.
support and advice, re: strategies and resources for their pupils with additional needs; support and help with SEN paperwork; coordinating the involvement of outside agencies.
guidance and support to meet children's needs that may be challenging; additional assessment for specific learning difficulties to gain evidence for referrals; support with parental liaison; monitoring IEPs

10

Appendix 12: Working document based on second stage coding of questionnaire data

B5 what enables U to fulfil his responsibilities as a SENCO.

SENCO role  
 dict. causes  
 \* good teacher / SLT

SENCO-teacher interactions  
 \* motivation  
 \* skill / inhibit teachers.

SENCO - other agencies, interactions  
 incl parents

SENCO - impact on  
 teachers

changes to current role as SENCO

36. Time  
 Same as C3.

money paperwork / SENCO ext agencies teachers

37 previous training (not enough to analyse ??)

38 additional details.

experience SMT support job responsibilities personal qualities

1) SENCOs main responsibilities to teachers.

2) SENCO activities to support school colleagues.

support w/ provision  
 \* inhibitory  
 \* implementing IEPs  
 \* behaviour mgmt  
 \* identification of children w/ SEN.  
 \* assessments  
 \* paperwork

liaising w/ parents  
 \* SLT

deployment of TAs / LSAs

training + resources

differentiation + assessment  
 observation of children + analysis of data.

3) Barriers to the effective use and impact of SENCOs.

time money / budget paperwork / SENCO SLT member or support teachers

parental willingness perceptions abt role.

training / change

C5: Plans to improve how SENCOs can impact on teachers' abilities to address SEN.

C1+C2

moving towards provision mapping time w/ children / teaching

liaising deployment of TAs / LSAs training differentiation / assessment

**Appendix 13: First draft of SENCO interview schedule, cross-referenced with how each question adds to my understanding of the research questions (dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011)**

	<b>Questions</b>	<b>What does this add to my understanding of the research questions</b>	<b>Probes</b>
1.	How do you know that skills, knowledge and understanding provided in training is applied in classrooms?	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Can you give me an example of application?
2.	How do you motivate the teachers who have children with SEN in their classrooms to manage the needs of these students?	Impact Contributing to skills	How do you know when the teacher's need to be motivated/inspired?
3.	What measures do you use to gauge teachers' skills in dealing with students who have SEN?	Teachers' abilities	How were these developed? And how do you implement them?
4.	C1: What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be? (Please tell me a little bit about the relationship between a SENCO and the teachers in your school?)	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Have you faced difficulties in carrying out these responsibilities? How so? What steps did you take to overcome such difficulties? Did you take any measures to anticipate and avoid similar situations in the future? In your SENCO network meetings (?), has any other SENCO mentioned similar problems/situations?
5.	Were you given a written job description for your role? Has it ever been amended or updated and if so, what kind of changes were made?	Impact	Do the activities you undertake as part of your role come within the sphere of your job description? Please elaborate.
6.	Who are you responsible to, in your role? i.e who do you perceive as being answerable to – officially and unofficially? How so?	Contributing to skills Impact	

	Questions	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
7.	How do teachers approach you with issues?	Impact Teachers' abilities	Make appointments? What is the follow-on process?
8.	Would you say you receive support from teachers in carrying out your responsibility as a SENCO? Please elaborate	Impact Teachers' abilities	
9.	Do you have regular meetings with teachers to discuss the specific support for specific children with SEN?	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	How often? How are these meetings followed up?
10.	What kinds of issues have you come across, or have your teachers discussed with you, that affect their abilities to address the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms?	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Are there any common issues/ patterns?
11.	What does your school do to assist you in your interactions with teachers?	Impact	What are the attitudes of the teachers to this?
12.	How do you manage your time and responsibilities to teachers?	Impact Teachers' abilities	How do you spend majority of your SENCO time?
13.	C2: What activities do you undertake in order to support your school colleagues? <i>Please give details of who is supported and how.</i>	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	
14.	C5: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in your school? <i>Please give details.</i>	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	

	Questions	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
15.	Do you have a system for keeping track/record of the teacher's progress in handling children with SEN? (ask for copies)	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Is it a standard system for all teachers or do you personalise them? Who has access to these records?
16.	How do you evaluate your own work with teachers?	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Do you have a standardised system for this? Who has access to these records? Dissemination? How often is it carried out? Feedback to teachers? Do you ask teachers how they feel you are working? What do you do with this data?
17.	In your opinion, what is the general impact of SENCOs on teachers' abilities to address SEN in their classrooms? <i>(similar to question above – possibly contentious?!)</i>	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Why do you say that? Any reasons/ evidence/ examples? Has there ever been an occasion when you felt your role did not bring about a positive impact? Please elaborate.
18.	C3: What are the barriers to effective use and impact of SENCOs?	Impact	What solutions would you suggest for these barriers?
19.	What changes in legislation or specific school policies have impacted your interaction with the teachers? And how? (I.e whether legislation related specifically to you or to the teachers?)	Impact Teachers' abilities	Do you think these legislative changes have benefited the overall quality of SENCO-teacher interactions and subsequent impact on addressing the needs of SEN children in the classroom?
20.	D3: Are there other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN issues in the school? <i>(If yes please specify their role in school)</i>	Impact Teachers' abilities	

	Questions	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
21.	<p><u>(D4: What kind of training (if any) has been provided in your school in relation to SEN?</u></p> <p><u>Please specify who received the support and the provider or who else was involved, and the kind of support provided.)</u></p> <p><u>relevant???</u></p>	<p>Contributing to skills</p> <p>Impact</p> <p>Teachers' abilities</p>	
22.	<p>D2: Have you provided training to school colleagues in your school? <i>Please give details.</i></p> <p>D1i: How do you identify the training needs of staff in relation to SEN?</p> <p>D1ii: Who is involved in this identification? <i>Please give details.</i></p>	<p>Contributing to skills</p> <p>Impact</p> <p>Teachers' abilities</p>	
23.	<p>How do you see your role evolving in the next few years, as regards your interactions with teachers?</p>	<p>Impact</p> <p>Teachers' abilities</p>	<p>Please elaborate.</p>

**Appendix 14: Second draft of SENCO interview schedule, cross-referenced with codes derived from the first phase questionnaire data (dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2012)**

	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Questionnaire codes</b>	<b>What does this add to my understanding of the research questions</b>	<b>Probes</b>
1.	<p>How do you know that skills, knowledge and understanding provided in training is applied in classrooms?</p> <p>D1i: How do you identify the training needs of staff in relation to SEN?</p> <p>D1ii: Who is involved in this identification? <i>Please give details.</i></p> <p>D4: What kind of training (if any) has been provided in your school in relation to SEN? <i>Please specify who received the support and the provider or who else was involved, and the kind of support provided.)</i></p>	<p>Support with provision</p> <p>Training/CPD</p> <p>Move from IEPs towards provision mapping</p>	<p>Contributing to skills</p> <p>Impact</p> <p>Teachers' abilities</p>	<p>Can you give me an example of application?</p>
2.	<p>Were you given a written job description for your role? Has it ever been amended or updated and if so, what kind of changes were made?</p>	<p>SENCO time with children(?)</p>	<p>Impact</p>	<p>Do the activities you undertake as part of your role come within the sphere of your job description? Please elaborate.</p>

	Questions	Questionnaire codes	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
3.	C1: What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be? (How would you describe the relationship between a SENCO and the teachers in your school?)	Staff resistance Teacher willingness	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Have you faced difficulties in carrying out these responsibilities? How so? What steps did you take to overcome such difficulties? Did you take any measures to anticipate and avoid similar situations in the future? In your SENCO network meetings (?), has any other SENCO mentioned similar problems/situations?
4.	How do you manage your time and responsibilities to teachers?	Time Budget/ money/ resources	Impact Teachers' abilities	How do you spend majority of your SENCO time? Are you a member of the SLT and do you have multiple responsibilities as a SENCO, if so, what are they and how do you manage? How is the time that you spend with children evaluated? <i>(relevance?!)</i>
5.	What does your school do to assist you in your interactions with teachers?	Member of SLT	Impact	What are the attitudes of the teachers to this?



	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Questionnaire codes</b>	<b>What does this add to my understanding of the research questions</b>	<b>Probes</b>
6.	To what extent does liaising and arranging external support impact upon your abilities to skill or inhibit teachers from becoming effective teachers for children with SEN?	Liaising + arranging external support	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	
7.	How do you motivate the teachers who have children with SEN in their classrooms to manage the needs of these students? (i.e support with provision, incl. Differentiation, planning and assessments)	Staff resistance / teacher willingness Impact of staff meetings	Impact Contributing to skills	How do you address staff resistance? How do you know when the teacher's need to be motivated/inspired?
8.	What measures do you use to gauge teachers' skills in dealing with students who have SEN?		Teachers' abilities	How were these developed? And how do you implement them?
9.	Do you have any input or form of performance management parameters in relation to teachers' abilities to manage children with SEN?	Staff resistance / teacher willingness Member of SLT (?)	Contributing to skills Teachers' abilities	How is this implemented/followed-up? And how often are they monitored/updated?
10.	Do teachers have any input into your planning for the SEN budget and resources?	Budget/money/resources	Contributing to skills Teachers' abilities	How do you monitor the use of SEN budget/ resources by teachers?
11.	How do you ensure the effective deployment of TAs/LSAs?	Deployment of TAs/LSAs	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Do teachers have any input into this? Do teachers feedback in a formal way regarding this?

	Questions	Questionnaire codes	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
12.	How do teachers approach you with issues? What kinds of issues have you come across, or have your teachers discussed with you, that affect their abilities to address the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms?	Staff resistance/ teacher willingness Staff meetings	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Are there any common issues/ patterns? What is the follow-up process and what measures do you take to avoid these in the future?
13.	Do you have a system for keeping track/record of the teacher's progress in handling children with SEN? (ask for copies)		Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Is it a standard system for all teachers or do you personalise them? Who has access to these records?
14.	<i>D3: Are there other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN issues in the school? (If yes please specify their role in school)</i>		Impact Teachers' abilities	
15.	Do you have regular meetings with teachers to discuss the specific support for specific children with SEN?	Staff meetings	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	How often? How are these meetings followed up?
16.	Would you say you receive support from teachers in carrying out your responsibility as a SENCO? Please elaborate	Staff resistance/ teacher willingness Member of SLT	Impact Teachers' abilities	

	Questions	Questionnaire codes	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
17.	How do you evaluate your own work with teachers?	Training/CPD <i>(Becoming reflective?)</i>	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Do you have a standardised system for this? Who has access to these records? Dissemination? How often is it carried out? Feedback to teachers? Do you ask teachers how they feel you are working? What do you do with this data?
18.	C3: What are the barriers to effective use and impact of SENCOs?		Impact	What solutions would you suggest for these barriers?
19.	How is the impact of SENCOs currently addressed in your school?	Member of SLT	Impact	How is this monitored/evaluated? Followed-up?
20.	In your opinion, what is the general impact of SENCOs on teachers' abilities to address SEN in their classrooms? <i>(similar to question above – possibly contentious?!)</i>	Support with provision, etc	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Why do you say that? Any reasons/ evidence/ examples? Has there ever been an occasion when you felt your role did not bring about a positive impact? Please elaborate.

	Questions	Questionnaire codes	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
21.	C5: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in your school? <i>Please give details.</i>	Training/CPD Support with provision Liaising	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	
22.	What changes in legislation or specific school policies have impacted your interaction with the teachers? And how? (I.e whether legislation related specifically to you or to the teachers?) <b><i>(relevant?!)</i></b>		Impact Teachers' abilities	Do you think these legislative changes have benefited the overall quality of SENCO-teacher interactions and subsequent impact on addressing the needs of SEN children in the classroom?
23.	How do you see your role evolving in the next few years, as regards your interactions with teachers?		Impact Teachers' abilities	Please elaborate.

**Appendix 15: Final draft of SENCO interview schedule, cross-referenced with relevance to research questions on a sectional basis (dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2012)**

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**1. SENCO JOB DESCRIPTION**

	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Questionnaire codes</b>	<b>What does this add to my understanding of the research questions</b>	<b>Probes</b>
1.	Were you given a written job description for your role? Has it ever been amended or updated and if so, what kind of changes were made?	SENCO time with children(?)	Impact	Do the activities you undertake as part of your role come within the sphere of your job description? Please elaborate.
2.	C3: What are the barriers to the SENCO's role?		Impact	What solutions would you suggest for these barriers?
3.	How is the impact of SENCOs currently addressed in your school?	Member of SLT	Impact	How is this monitored/evaluated? Followed-up?

**2. RESPONSIBILITIES TO TEACHERS**

4.	C1: What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be? (How would you describe the relationship between a SENCO and the teachers in your school?)	Staff resistance Teacher willingness	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Have you faced difficulties in carrying out these responsibilities? What steps did you take to overcome them? Did you take any measures to anticipate and avoid similar situations in the future? In your SENCO network meetings (?), has any other SENCO mentioned similar problems/situations?
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	Questions	Questionnaire codes	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
5.	How do you manage your time and responsibilities to teachers?	Time Budget/ money/ resources	Impact Teachers' abilities	How do you spend majority of your SENCO time?  Are you a member of the SLT and do you have multiple responsibilities as a SENCO, if so, what are they and how do you manage? How is the time that you spend with children evaluated? <i>(relevance?!)</i>
6.	What are the factors that inhibit your ability to have an impact upon teachers?	Staff resistance / teacher willingness	Contributing to skills  Impact  Teachers' abilities	
7.	What does your school do to assist you in your interactions with teachers?	Member of SLT	Impact	What are the attitudes of the teachers to this?

	Questions	Questionnaire codes	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
8.	In your opinion, what is the general impact of SENCOs on teachers' abilities to address SEN in their classrooms?	Support with provision, etc	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Why do you say that? Any reasons/ evidence/ examples? Has there ever been an occasion when you felt your role did not bring about a positive impact? Please elaborate.
9.	C5: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in your school? <i>Please give details.</i>	Training/CPD Support with provision Liaising	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	
10.	How do you evaluate your own work with teachers?	Training/CPD <i>(Becoming reflective?)</i>	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Do you have a standardised system for this? Who has access to these records? Dissemination? How often is it carried out? Feedback to teachers? Do you ask teachers how they feel you are working? What do you do with this data?

**3. INTERACTIONS WITH TEACHERS**

	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Questionnaire codes</b>	<b>What does this add to my understanding of the research questions</b>	<b>Probes</b>
11.	Would you say you receive support from teachers in carrying out your responsibility as a SENCO? Please elaborate	Staff resistance/ teacher willingness  Member of SLT	Impact  Teachers' abilities	
12.	Do you have regular meetings with teachers to discuss the specific support for children with SEN?	Staff meetings	Contributing to skills  Impact  Teachers' abilities	How often? How are these meetings followed up?
13.	How do teachers approach you with issues? What kinds of issues have you come across, or have your teachers discussed with you, that affect their abilities to address the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms?	Staff resistance/ teacher willingness  Staff meetings	Contributing to skills  Impact  Teachers' abilities	Are there any common issues/patterns? What is the follow-up process and what measures do you take to avoid these in the future?



	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Questionnaire codes</b>	<b>What does this add to my understanding of the research questions</b>	<b>Probes</b>
14.	How do you motivate the teachers who have children with SEN in their classrooms to manage the needs of these students? (i.e support with provision, incl. Differentiation, planning and assessments)	Staff resistance / teacher willingness Impact of staff meetings	Impact Contributing to skills	How do you address staff resistance? How do you know when the teacher's need to be motivated/inspired?
15.	Do teachers have any input into your planning for the SEN budget and resources?	Budget/money/resources	Contributing to skills Teachers' abilities	How do you monitor the use of SEN budget/ resources by teachers?
16.	How do you see your role evolving in the next few years, as regards your interactions with teachers?		Impact Teachers' abilities	Please elaborate.

#### 4. TEACHERS' TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

	Questions	Questionnaire codes	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
17.	<p>How do you know that skills, knowledge and understanding provided in training is applied in classrooms?</p> <p>D1i: How do you identify the training needs of staff in relation to SEN?</p> <p>D1ii: Who is involved in this identification? <i>Please give details.</i></p> <p>D4: What kind of training (if any) has been provided in your school in relation to SEN?</p> <p><i>Please specify who received the support and the provider or who else was involved, and the kind of support provided.)</i></p>	<p>Support with provision</p> <p>Training/CPD</p> <p>Move from IEPs towards provision mapping</p>	<p>Contributing to skills</p> <p>Impact</p> <p>Teachers' abilities</p>	<p>Can you give me an example of application?</p>
18.	<p>What measures do you use to gauge teachers' skills in dealing with students who have SEN?</p>		<p>Teachers' abilities</p>	<p>How were these developed? And how do you implement them?</p>

	Questions	Questionnaire codes	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
19.	Do you have a system for keeping track/record of the teacher's progress in handling children with SEN? (ask for copies)		Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Is it a standard system for all teachers or do you personalise them? Who has access to these records?
20.	Do you have any input or form of performance management parameters in relation to teachers' abilities to manage children with SEN?	Staff resistance / teacher willingness Member of SLT (?)	Contributing to skills Teachers' abilities	How is this implemented/followed-up? And how often are they monitored/updated?

#### 5. DEPLOYMENT OF SUPPORT STAFF: TAs/LSAs

21.	How do you ensure the effective deployment of TAs/LSAs?	Deployment of TAs/LSAs	Contributing to skills Impact Teachers' abilities	Do teachers have any input into this? Do teachers feedback in a formal way regarding this?
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	Questions	Questionnaire codes	What does this add to my understanding of the research questions	Probes
22.	How do TAs/LSAs spend their time in terms of hours/week?			What is the breakdown in terms of whole class or small group or 1:1 support?
23.	D3: Are there other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN issues in the school? <i>(If yes please specify their role in school)</i>		Impact Teachers' abilities	

## 6. OTHER

24.	What changes in legislation or specific school policies have impacted your interaction with the teachers? And how? (I.e whether legislation related specifically to you or to the teachers?) <i>(relevant?!)</i>		Impact Teachers' abilities	Do you think these legislative changes have benefited the overall quality of SENCO-teacher interactions and subsequent impact on addressing the needs of SEN children in the classroom?
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**Appendix 16: Final draft of SENCO interview schedule as used for the project (dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2012)**

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**1. SENCO JOB DESCRIPTION**

1.	Were you given a written job description for your role? Has it ever been amended or updated and if so, what kind of changes were made?	Do the activities you undertake as part of your role come within the sphere of your job description? Please elaborate.	
2.	C3: What are the barriers to the SENCO's role?	What solutions would you suggest for these barriers?	
3.	How is the impact of SENCOs currently addressed in your school?	How is this monitored/evaluated? Followed-up?	

**2. RESPONSIBILITIES TO TEACHERS**

4.	C1: What do you see your main responsibilities to teachers to be? (How would you describe the relationship between a SENCO and the teachers in your school?)	Have you faced difficulties in carrying out these responsibilities? How so? What steps did you take to overcome such difficulties? Did you take any measures to anticipate and avoid similar situations in the future? In your SENCO network meetings (?), has any other SENCO mentioned similar problems/situations?	
5.	How do you manage your time and responsibilities to teachers?	How do you spend majority of your SENCO time?  Are you a member of the SLT and do you have multiple responsibilities as a SENCO, if so, what are they and how do you manage? How is the time that you spend with children evaluated? ( <i>relevance?!</i> )	

6.	What are the factors that inhibit your ability to have an impact upon teachers?		
7.	What does your school do to assist you in your interactions with teachers?	What are the attitudes of the teachers to this?	
8.	In your opinion, what is the general impact of SENCOs on teachers' abilities to address SEN in their classrooms?	Why do you say that? Any reasons/ evidence/ examples? Has there ever been an occasion when you felt your role did not bring about a positive impact? Please elaborate.	
9.	C5: Do you have any plans to improve the way in which you as the SENCO can impact teachers' abilities to address SEN in your school? <i>Please give details.</i>		
10.	How do you evaluate your own work with teachers?	Do you have a standardised system for this? Who has access to these records? Dissemination? How often is it carried out? Feedback to teachers? Do you ask teachers how they feel you are working? What do you do with this data?	

### 3. INTERACTIONS WITH TEACHERS

11.	Would you say you receive support from teachers in carrying out your responsibility as a SENCO? Please elaborate		
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12.	Do you have regular meetings with teachers to discuss the specific support for children with SEN?	How often? How are these meetings followed up?	
13.	How do teachers approach you with issues? What kinds of issues have you come across, or have your teachers discussed with you, that affect their abilities to address the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms?	Are there any common issues/ patterns? What is the follow-up process and what measures do you take to avoid these in the future?	
14.	How do you motivate the teachers who have children with SEN in their classrooms to manage the needs of these students? (i.e support with provision, incl. Differentiation, planning and assessments)	How do you address staff resistance? How do you know when the teacher's need to be motivated/inspired?	
15.	Do teachers have any input into your planning for the SEN budget and resources?	How do you monitor the use of SEN budget/ resources by teachers?	
16.	How do you see your role evolving in the next few years, as regards your interactions with teachers?	Please elaborate.	

**4. TEACHERS' TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

17.	<p>How do you know that skills, knowledge and understanding provided in training is applied in classrooms?</p> <p>D1i: How do you identify the training needs of staff in relation to SEN?</p> <p>D1ii: Who is involved in this identification? <i>Please give details.</i></p> <p>D4: What kind of training (if any) has been provided in your school in relation to SEN?</p> <p><i>Please specify who received the support and the provider or who else was involved, and the kind of support provided.)</i></p>	Can you give me an example of application?	
18.	What measures do you use to gauge teachers' skills in dealing with students who have SEN?	How were these developed? And how do you implement them?	
19.	Do you have a system for keeping track/record of the teacher's progress in handling children with SEN? (ask for copies)	Is it a standard system for all teachers or do you personalise them? Who has access to these records?	
20.	Do you have any input or form of performance management parameters in relation to teachers' abilities to manage children with SEN?	How is this implemented/followed-up? And how often are they monitored/updated?	



**5. DEPLOYMENT OF SUPPORT STAFF: TAs/LSAs**

21.	How do you ensure the effective deployment of TAs/LSAs?	Do teachers have any input into this? Do teachers feedback in a formal way regarding this?	
22.	How do TAs/LSAs spend their time in terms of hours/week?	What is the breakdown in terms of whole class or small group or 1:1 support?	
23.	<i>D3: Are there other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN issues in the school? (If yes please specify their role in school)</i>		

**6. OTHER**

24.	What changes in legislation or specific school policies have impacted your interaction with the teachers? And how? (I.e whether legislation related specifically to you or to the teachers?) <b><i>(relevant?!)</i></b>	Do you think these legislative changes have benefited the overall quality of SENCO-teacher interactions and subsequent impact on addressing the needs of SEN children in the classroom?	
25.	<b>Any other comments</b>		

## Appendix 17: Teacher interview schedule

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Designation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 School: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Interviews with Teachers

Research Q's	Interview questions	
Are SENCOs able to motivate teachers to take the initiative in addressing the needs of children with SEN in their classrooms?	7. What do you perceive as the role of the SENCO?	
	8. What impact, direct or indirect, do you feel the SENCO has had on your teaching practices? Please give specific examples. What support have you received from the SENCO?	
Do SENCOs skill or inhibit teachers from becoming effective teachers for children with SEN?	9. What barriers are there that prevent you from maximizing the SENCOs advice/ input?	
	10. <i>Do you think SENCOs skill or inhibit teachers from become effective teachers for children with SEN? (optional)</i>	
How is the impact of SENCOs currently addressed within Primary Schools?	11. What would make the SENCO role better/ more impactful?	
	12. Is there anything more that you would like me to know, either prompted by this interview, or about the focus of my research in general?	

**Appendix 18: School demographic information collection questionnaire for SENCOs' and teachers' interviews**

**SENCO RESEARCH**

**For the purpose of this project I have created and will be using the following definition of 'Impact':**  
*"A sense of progression or regression which enables an individual to bring about a resultant change (whether positive or negative) in a status quo."*

**Section A: Demographic Information**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

A1: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

A2: County: \_\_\_\_\_

A3: What kind of school do you work in? \_\_\_\_\_

A4: Please indicate which of these terms would describe pupils in your school: *(please tick all that apply)*

- Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)
- Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)
- Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty (SEBD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Dyslexia
- Physical Disability
- Sensory Impairment (Visual, Hearing, etc)

A5i: Approximate current number of pupils registered as having special educational needs in your school: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Please give some details below:</i>	<i>How many?</i>
Children with Statements	
SA+	
SA	
Other (please specify)	

A5ii: Total number of pupils on roll: \_\_\_\_\_

A6i: Does the school you work in have additional SEN provision, such as a unit?  Yes  
 No

A6ii: If you answered yes, please specify what range of needs it covers:

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**Section B: Questions related to how you are employed**

B1: Position of the person completing this questionnaire: \_\_\_\_\_

B2: Please indicate how you are employed:

- Employed FT\* and work FT as SENCO
- Employed FT\* and work PT as SENCO
- Employed PT and work wholly as SENCO
- Employed PT and work partially as SENCO
- Employed as TA but work as SENCO when requested
- Not employed as SENCO or other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\* Ft = 5 hours a day or over, 5 days a week, term time only or more

B3: Approximately how long have you held the SENCO position? \_\_\_\_\_ years and  
\_\_\_\_\_ months

B4: Do you manage the work of one or more support staff?  Yes  No

<i>If you answered yes, please give some details below:</i>	<i>How many?</i>
Teaching Assistants (TAs)	
Learning Mentors (LMs/LSAs)	
Other (please specify)	

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**Optional:** For the purpose of the research project, I would like to conduct a more in-depth case study about the impact on teachers' abilities to address SEN in primary schools. If you would be willing to be interviewed for the case study, please put your name and contact details below. Thank you again for your valuable participation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. (please circle as appropriate): Work/ Home/ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and for agreeing to be interviewed by me. Your involvement will be valuable to the project.**

## Appendix 19: Ethical Code for the Research Project

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### **An Investigation into the Impact of SENCOs on Teachers' Abilities to address SEN in Primary Schools**

**Research being conducted independently for the purpose of data collection for an PhD Thesis**

#### **Ethical Code**

This Code is informed by the principles established in the Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) issued by the British Educational Research Association (BERA)\*

No data will be collected until such time as this Ethical Code has received approval from the University Ethics Committee.

The researcher recognises the rights of all professional colleagues, parents/carers and students who participate in the research to have their confidentiality protected at all times.

Voluntary informed consent will be sought before any interviews are conducted with any respondent as part of the research process. In the case of school students, this consent will be sought through schools and obtained in writing before any direct contact is made with the student. Parents and carers have the right to refuse participation and will not be pressured or coerced into taking part in the research.

Participants in the research have a right to withdraw from the process at any time during the data collection, and within one month from a given date without reason. Their record of participation will be destroyed and they will be informed accordingly.

The researcher will work in accordance with Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and will ensure that the best interest of the children is served at all times. Children will be facilitated to give informed consent and this will be in addition to the consent given by parents or carers.

In circumstances where children use non-traditional orthography or alternative modes of communication, the researcher will take full account of this in seeking informed consent and will endeavour to provide support and full access to the information.

The researcher is under an obligation to describe accurately, truthfully and fairly any information obtained during the course of the research.

There is an obligation to incorporate accurately data collected during the course of this research into the text of any report or other publication related to the research, and to ensure that individual opinions and perceptions are not misrepresented.

The researcher will protect the sources of information gathered from interviews, focus groups, document scrutiny, observations and other data collection methods.

Data collected as part of the research process will be securely maintained and will be accessible only to the researcher engaged in this project.

The researcher has an obligation to report truthfully the findings of the research in any written or verbal report.

The researcher will report the procedures, results and analysis of the research accurately, and in sufficient detail to allow all interested parties to understand and interpret them.

The researcher will make herself available to discuss the procedures, conduct, or findings of the research with any party involved in the research process.

Data collected during the course of the research project which names individuals or institutions will be available only to the researcher and her supervisors and will be made secure both during and after the term of the project.

The researcher is obliged to communicate the findings of her research to other members of the educational research community through research seminars, conference presentation and proceedings and publication taking account of all issues of confidentiality and protection of research participants.

The researcher asserts her right to participate in any publication of the research findings in academic journals or other media which may ensue from the research.

Once agreed, no part of this ethical statement may be changed or modified without justification and recourse to discussion with all interested parties.

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\* BERA (2011) *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Researchers*. Southwell: British Educational Research Association.

\*\* The researcher refers to that individual named as part of this research process and will include academic and research staff from the university named in the research proposal along with a university administrator.

### ***Data Source for Ethical Code***

The source of material contained within this Ethical Code has been derived from the Ethical code for 'A Longitudinal Study of how Special Education is Provided within Irish Schools' (Research being conducted on behalf of NCSE, Ireland), along with the 'Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Researchers' (British Educational Research Association, 2011).

## Appendix 20: Consent Form

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### An Investigation into the Impact of SENCOs on Teachers' Abilities to address SEN in Primary Schools

Research being conducted independently for the purpose of data collection for an PhD Thesis

#### Interview Consent

Thank you for agreeing to be surveyed as part of this research project. I, Saneeya Qureshi, as the only researcher working on this particular project, am required to abide by an ethical code of practice which protects the rights of all individuals involved in the research process and guarantees the safeguarding of data.

Before any survey is conducted, I require you to sign this agreement:

I (please print your name) \_\_\_\_\_  
have had the purpose of the research explained to me and have been given a copy of the ethical code for this project.

- I agree to be surveyed for this research project.
- I have read this research participant consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research project and what it entails.
- I consent to the research data being collated and analysed.
- I understand that no individual who is surveyed for this project will be named in any subsequent reports.
- I give my consent for information which I give to be used to inform this research.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project and that I have the right to withdraw from this project upto 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013, and that to do so will not affect my treatment.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Should you have any questions following this survey, please feel free to contact me at:

#### Saneeya Qureshi

Research Student

c/o The School of Education, University of Northampton,

Park Campus, Boughton Green Road, Northampton NN2 7AL

abcxyza.abcxyza@northampton.ac.uk

Thank you for your participation in this research project.

## Appendix 21: Possible ethical risks

The study was undertaken with specific recognition of the requirements of the University of Northampton's Research Ethics Committee's guidance, as reviewed from the resources made available on the University website (University of Northampton, 2011). To this end, a grid of 'Possible Ethical Risks' was prepared to address the ethical issues that may arise:

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School/Dept: **School of Education**

Date of Assessment: **February 2011**

Assessor(s): **Saneeya Qureshi**

Activity: **Research for Higher Degree**

Possible Ethical Risks Arising From	People Affected And Any Specific Considerations	Control Measures That Will Be Put Into Place	Risk: Low Med. High	Further Control Measures Possibly Required	Implementation Date/ Person Responsible
<b>ETHICAL RISKS IN RELATION TO DATA COLLECTION</b>					
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher</li> <li>The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permission and consent will be obtained from the relevant personnel, e.g. head teachers, parents and participant teachers by signed consent form.</li> </ul>	<b>L</b>		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher and Research Participants
Tape recordings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher</li> <li>The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permission and consent will be obtained from the teachers, SENCOs and headteachers and any other personnel who may be interviewed for the purposes of this research project. Respect for everyone will be observed in accordance with BERA (2004) guidelines, as illustrated in the 'Ethical Code' for the Project.</li> </ul>	<b>L</b>		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher and Research Participants
Document Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher</li> <li>The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consent from children will be obtained as well as parents or carers; and arrangements made for those who may wish to be withdrawn from the project.</li> </ul>	<b>L</b>		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher and Participants



Possible Ethical Risks Arising From	People Affected And Any Specific Considerations	Control Measures That Will Be Put Into Place	Risk Level: Low Med. High	Further Control Measures Possibly Required	Implementation Date/ Person Responsible
Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher</li> <li>• The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security will be observed. Data will be kept under lock and key in the researcher's office and will be destroyed 12 months after studies are completed by the researcher unless there is justification for keeping the data in which case appropriate consent from the participant will be obtained.</li> <li>• The Data Protection Act (1998) will be observed.</li> </ul>	L		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher
Data Analysis and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher</li> <li>• The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participants' details will be held confidentially and securely and anonymised in reporting by the researcher including the name of the institutions / organisations unless permission is obtained to reveal names. No young persons will be named.</li> <li>• The Data Protection Act (1998) will be observed.</li> </ul>	L		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher

Possible Ethical Risks Arising From	People Affected And Any Specific Considerations	Control Measures That Will Be Put Into Place	Risk Level: Low Med. High	Further Control Measures Possibly Required	Implementation Date/ Person Responsible
<b>ETHICAL RISKS IN RELATION TO QUESTIONING PARTICIPANTS</b>					
Preliminary papers and authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher</li> <li>• The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher should have documentation to identify him or her self.</li> <li>• The researcher holds a valid CRB check must be carried out if dealing with children and/or young persons.</li> <li>• Permissions from the relevant schools will be sought and obtained before commencing research.</li> </ul>	<b>L</b>		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher and Research Participants
Choice/ recruitment of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher</li> <li>• The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age of participants will be considered and provision made for elderly, young, disabled or special needs.</li> <li>• The most appropriate method of approaching participants will be used, i.e. through associations with the University of Northampton.</li> <li>• No incentives monetary or otherwise will be offered to research participants.</li> </ul>	<b>L</b>		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher

Possible Ethical Risks Arising From	People Affected And Any Specific Considerations	Control Measures That Will Be Put Into Place	Risk Level: Low Med. High	Further Control Measures Possibly Required	Implementation Date/ Person Responsible
Involvement of Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each participant will be given the opportunity to positively decide to be involved in the research.</li> <li>There will be no coercion and ample opportunity will be offered to first decide to take part and secondly to withdraw at any time.</li> <li>A participant will be able to have a friend or relative present if he or she wishes and in certain circumstances this may be desirable for the safety of the researcher.</li> </ul>	L		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher and Research Participants
Rights, safety and wellbeing of participants and the researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher</li> <li>The research participants</li> </ul>	<p>An Assessment of risk to self and participants will be carried out in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health and safety of premises in which activity takes place for researcher and participant.</li> <li>Health and safety of researcher.</li> <li>Health, safety and well being of participant e.g. in relation to the questions asked and their psychological effect.</li> <li>The age mobility etc of the participant must be considered.</li> <li>Questions will not be asked unless they have a value.</li> </ul>	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Health and Safety Policy of the premises will be read in advance to by the researcher.</li> <li>The researcher will prepare for questions in advance of interviews, and if the participant express any discomfort or unease, will stop the interview immediately, until such time when the participant may be ready to resume the interview.</li> </ul>	Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher

Possible Ethical Risks Arising From	People Affected And Any Specific Considerations	Control Measures That Will Be Put Into Place	Risk Level: Low Med. High	Further Control Measures Possibly Required	Implementation Date/ Person Responsible
Permission from immediate authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher</li> <li>The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the research activity will be conducted on certain premises, permission for researcher and participant to be on those premises will be obtained e.g. if in school permission of headmaster.</li> </ul>	L		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher and Research Participants
Suitability of premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher</li> <li>The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position of the room furniture, etc, will be considered to as to ensure that the appropriate relationship between interviewer and interviewee is maintained.</li> </ul>	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Health and Safety Policy of the premises will be read in advance and adhered to by the researcher.</li> </ul>	Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher and Research Participants
Methods of recording data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher</li> <li>The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The appropriate consent will be obtained. The participants consent will also be to sought for the data to be retained for a specific period of time (12 months).</li> <li>An opportunity will be given to enable a participant to withdraw his or her material from the research.</li> </ul>	L		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher
Transcriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher</li> <li>The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher herself will transcribe the interviews.</li> <li>Copies of the transcriptions will be shown to the participants for approval.</li> </ul>	L		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher

Possible Ethical Risks Arising From	People Affected And Any Specific Considerations	Control Measures That Will Be Put Into Place	Risk Level: Low Med. High	Further Control Measures Possibly Required	Implementation Date/ Person Responsible
Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher</li> <li>• The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Particular note has been made of the comments in the University of Northampton's code in relation to covert and deceptive research.</li> <li>• Informed consent will be obtained: the researcher will ensure that the participants receive the information , understand it and be able to respond</li> <li>• The information will be written and it will be made clear precisely what the research is, what is being required of the participants and that the identity of the participants will be confidential and anonymous.</li> <li>• Consents will be clear and unequivocal and also in writing.</li> <li>• Consents from all those involved will be obtained e.g. parents as well as children where the children are involved; employees as well as employers.</li> <li>• The researcher will ensure that participants must positively agree and will also be given the opportunity to withdraw at any time.</li> </ul>	L		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher and Research Participants

Possible Ethical Risks Arising From	People Affected And Any Specific Considerations	Control Measures That Will Be Put Into Place	Risk Level: Low Med. High	Further Control Measures Possibly Required	Implementation Date/ Person Responsible
Confidentiality and Anonymity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher</li> <li>• The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure confidentiality participants will be allocated codes and their personal details kept separate and secure.</li> <li>• Personal contact details will be destroyed 12 months after the end of the research unless permission has been obtained to retain them for further research.</li> <li>• Codes or pseudonyms will be used when writing the thesis or report and names of places will be changed or fictionalised to ensure anonymity.</li> <li>• Data Protection legislation will be followed.</li> </ul>	<b>L</b>		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher
Issues arising from the activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher</li> <li>• The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should the research uncover matters that are of wider concern (e.g. participant's involvement in criminal offences, illness or condition in respect of which the participant may not have been aware), research participants will already have been made aware that the researcher will be obliged to inform the appropriate agencies.</li> </ul>	<b>L</b>		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher</li> <li>• The research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each Participant will receive a summary of the research together with contact details of the researcher should any subsequent issues arise.</li> </ul>	<b>L</b>		Duration of the Research Project / The Researcher and Research Participants

**Appendix 22: Example of a transcribed and anonymised SENCO interview that has undergone multiple coding processes**

**TRANSCRIPT**

Interviewee: [REDACTED]

PARTICIPANT ID: I: NT+DH/PS:38/412(SMT)-S2

Date: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2012

Q = Questioner

R= Respondent

	#	Utterance	Code
Q	1	Thank you for taking the time out. I will begin by asking you if you were given a job description when you took on the SENCO role, specifically for your SENCO role?	
R	2	I was given a job description, I tried to find it and I can't find a copy at school, so I think I must have it at home, but I apologise for not having it, but I was given an understanding. I was also given a 2 year induction with my Deputy that was then, so I worked as Assistant Head with her as the SENCO role with her and we did a 2 year induction basically. I also did a SENCO qualification at Oxford Brookes, so I did a year's course in SENCO.	PID, TPD, MGT
Q	3	What was the title of that course, was it different from the National Award for SEN Coordination that you're doing?	
R	4	Yes, it was a Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Educational Practice, Special Educational Needs	
Q	5	So in terms of what you do in your role today, have you ever gone back to that job description when it was given to you?	REF
R	6	Probably not, if I'm honest.	REF
Q	7	It's been 5 years now and you haven't revisited it?	
R	8	I think the role has changed, and probably the job description needs to change as well, there's a lot more required by SENCOs now than what was originally. I think the universal statement of to support children in Special Educational Needs ranging from children who need extra help to gifted and talented probably still fits the bill, as far as that is concerned, but I think there are a lot more requirements for SENCOs these days, in psychology, in therapy, in the things that we need to meet the need of, because financially, there isn't the funding at County level.	REF, PID, SPL
Q	9	I'll jump into a tough question now, what do you think are the barriers to your SENCO role in terms of your impact on teachers, because that's what I am really interested in looking at?	
R	10	I think for me, I don't feel there are many barriers, but then I am a Deputy Head and part of the Senior Team, and I also do have some time for that role.	SPL, SPR, PID, TNT, MGT
Q	11	Approximately how much time do you have for the SENCO role?	
R	12	2 days a week, but it sometimes works out more than that.	SPL
Q	13	What about the barriers?	

	#	Utterance	Code
R	14	I think the barriers for other SENCOs knowing from the team members in our cluster, is time. I think sometimes the barrier is the idea that SENCOs exist, and therefore they have the answers to all the questions, but actually it should be quality first class teaching first, and I think maybe in the climate in Education, we've got the situation where, because you're the SENCO they think you're going to sort everything out.	SPL, PID, PRO, KNO
Q	15	Then how has your impact assessed, like in this school, I presume you are the only SENCO within this role at the moment?	
R	16	We track children, so I track vulnerable groups, I do children who need extra support, I also track across the whole school spelling, reading, and I track their progress in a provision map.	INT
Q	17	OK, and is there any other way that your impact is assessed, any formal way?	
R	18	From my Performance Management point of view, yes, I have targets within that.	PRM
Q	19	What about, I don't want to lead you, but in terms of your interactions with teachers say, do you give out a questionnaire for example?	
R	20	No I don't actually. I see parents on a regular basis, so the impact that my job and my team, because I have people who support me, the parents often give feedback, because you're meeting them on a regular basis. I'm not sure that the teachers give me any input or feedback.	REL, REF,
Q	21	How do you go about asking them for it?	
R	22	We have an open policy here, people will come and ask questions, obviously if I am giving out an IEP, I will go through what it is that we are going to be doing, and what the expectation is that they will be doing. And then teachers will come back and say look, this has made a difference, or this hasn't made a difference.	INT, TPD, KNO, ENG
Q	23	So it's them who come back to you?	
R	24	Yes.	
Q	25	And one sentence, I'm just jumping here and there from my structure, it was in the SENCO forum a few weeks ago, someone said that 'I find that no matter how good the advice you give is, it will be interpreted so differently by different colleagues trying to implement it in their own classrooms' what comment do have to say about that?	
R	26	I think you probably need to approach different people in different ways, so you can lead some teachers, you have to inform some teachers, and you have to instruct some teachers, so I think you learn which ones need to be. But training wise, we would do a whole school training, so for example recently we had done an attachment training, and that would be teachers and LSAs and it will have the same message.	VAL, TPD, TPE, KNO, ENG
Q	27	How often is this training done, I mean not this particular attachment training, but you know just regularly for teachers and the LSAs?	



	#	Utterance	Code
R	28	Teachers at certain points in time will have, so when anything new comes up we might train, we might do a whole school training for like manual handling or something, how you deal with children with behavioural difficulties, so it could be a whole school training, or it may be that we decide that LSA's need a particular training, or particular children like for example, a teacher that comes into the school that's going to have an autistic child in their class, they will be sent on a training so that they are trained.	TPD, ADS, ENG
Q	29	And how do you monitor the impact of this training?	
R	30	I think to monitor that, I would, from the autistic side, is how the child is being, it might be the child is, are the coping, are the strategies being put into place, I would do learning walks.	INT, PPL,
Q	31	What is a Learning Walk?	
R	32	A Learning Walk is where you go round, we used to call them Observations, so you walk around and you might have a criteria that you're looking for. So say I'm looking at differentiation for children with Special Needs, you will go round on a particular morning to all classrooms or you may choose Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, depending on time, and then you will gather that information from the classrooms as to what's happening.	PPL, INT, PRO, KNO
Q	33	Right, so these Learning Walks, do you feedback?	
R	34	Yes, if you've walked round, and generally the majority are doing, you know, there is differentiation you are seeing, you might feedback to a whole staff, so you might feedback at a staff meeting, but if there are particular issues, then you might feedback to that teacher that there may be particular issues, or you might feedback to the Phase Leader who might say to you, you might say actually I noticed in Key Stage 1 this was happening, but I've seen in Key Stage 2 it wasn't happening, so you might feedback at Senior Management, and then they might feedback.	REF, KNO, QSP, INT
Q	35	So it's like a trail of things that you can get implemented. Right, what do you see your main responsibility, or responsibilities to teachers may be because I know that there is this thing about like you said in the beginning of the conversation that because you're there, it's sort of.....	
R	36	I'm trying to evolve it slightly differently that yes, I'm there to help and to find out information, I'm there to do the paperwork, and there's a lot of paperwork, I'm there to guide, but I'm not necessarily there to do all of it. And I think probably my role 5 years ago, I used to try and do it all, and help and do, and get it, and provide resources and everything, now it's a case of yes, we will try and lead you to where it might be and then you take responsibility.	ENG, ENV, INT, KNO, PID, PRO, ADS, REF, PPL
Q	37	And what is it that's brought about this shift?	

	#	Utterance	Code
R	38	I think it's probably trying to help with my job because obviously being a Deputy and with the daily running of a school of 400 children is a lot of work, so it's a case of trying to delegate a little bit more. I do delegate some of the planning of particular interventions because some of my LSAs in my team are very experienced and they've been doing it for a long time so therefore you can have that termly conversation with them, and say right, well we'll carry on with that, we'll do that.	MGT, ADS, PRO
Q	39	How is their time with children evaluated, the LSAs?	
R	40	We would look at progress that those children have made.	ADS, QSP
Q	41	So it's the tracking and as you said the Provision Map?	
R	42	And if it's something like self-esteem, then it would be how is the child, how is the child, how do they feel?	INT, PRO
Q	43	Do you talk to the children?	
R	44	Yes, a lot.	
Q	45	But again, all on an informal basis, apart from like you said, the termly, and are the parents present as well then?	
R	46	Yes.	
Q	47	Are there any factors that inhibit your ability to have an impact on teachers?	
R	48	Possibly now, but I wouldn't necessarily have said it 5 years ago, I think now, because there are, things seem to be getting very complex, we've got a lot of things now that are being diagnosed of things that we've never come across before.	INT, PID, SPL
Q	49	For example?	
R	50	Executive Function Disorder, Attachment Disorder, we've got children with, and Attachment is often to do with trauma, and we do have quite a lot of children who suffer trauma at some point, now if it's early trauma between naught and two, then that will probably turn into a disorder, if it's trauma later date, after the nurturing has taken place, then it might be that they have those difficulties. So it's not quite so severe or complex. Obviously there is a lot of autism, our school has quite a good reputation, so we tend to get quite a lot of children who come here, with that comes other difficulties, and so you're trying to get people, for example, I have just done a drawing and talking therapy session because my role and to support other teachers, is becoming more where you're almost becoming a social worker for parents, a therapist for children, anger management, all these things, behaviour programmes that we used to have outside providers coming in to do, there isn't money now, so from our point of view we need to train ourselves really, so that we're able to help and help the rest of the staff.	PID, INT, REF
Q	51	So is that what you see to be the solution to this, the ever complex environment?	
R	52	Is to get more knowledge and train and be able to offer and support.	KNO, PID, REF
Q	53	Do you have a SEN Governor, how often do you interact with them, and how do you interact?	

	#	Utterance	Code
R	54	Yes, I meet the SEN Governor once a term, sometimes twice a term, sometimes half termly. We go over what's happening within, how many children we've got, the sorts of needs they've got, we look at the provision map and the pricings, because now with provision maps, you have to show value for money, so you have to say right, this intervention is taking this amount of money, it's costing pus this much.	MGT, INT, DAT
Q	55	I'll stop you there sorry, do teachers have any input in this as well, in terms of the budgeting, as in money should be spent on this, or do the teachers, or your TAs, who has input into that?	
R	56	It's mainly me, I will say what we feel we need that year, and I will then get a budget, from that budget we will then work out the hours of support that we can have, so the Head will do that, the Head would say right how much do you need, can we afford to do that, and that works there, and then I allocate that out, the teachers don't actually get a say in how much, but they do have, for interventions, we have 2 tiers, we have a tier of children that will have an IEP that will be coming up for one to one, or small group work, we also have the next tier which are called year group interventions, and that's where we have allocated time where, that might be a 6 week intervention or it might be a 4 week intervention, a lot of the children that I am working with will be having intervention for some time, so the children that are on an IEP, at this age, will be quite complex children or children that have got long term need.	INT, TPE, ENV, DAT
Q	57	Is it Wave 1 interventions, is that it, or is it something totally different, the Tiers and the Waves?	
R	58	Right, Wave 3 interventions would be this, the individual, Wave 2 would be possibly the small group 6 week ones, and Wave 1 would be where the class teacher is putting input in her class. So a teacher will have influence on the children in her class, and they will put their Wave 1 interventions in class, so they have control of that, so if they feel that their children need extra spellings, extra reading, extra what, they will put that in, I will then look at it and say, well actually I think we need to do that, but we also do need to do a bit more.	PRO, INT, TPE, DAT
Q	59	And is this half termly that you look at all of this?	
R	60	Yes, it is termly.	
Q	61	So is that how you also evaluate your own work with the teachers?	
R	62	Yes, so we look at how is the progress, what is the progress like, so are they making progress? Now for our children that might be on an IEP, we would still expect good progress, but it may not be the same level as the progress, although they are saying that it should be, but I am not quite sure they get it (tails of, rolls eyes and looks at me...) So we would look at the progress and say well actually, this child has had this amount of intervention, is it working, if it's working, let's carry on for a little bit longer, let's see if we can push them on, if it's not working, what else can we do? Now if it's self-esteem, and they've got lots of things going on in their life that is outside, but actually is having an impact in school,	INT, PRO, QSP, ENG, ATT, DAT

		that may be just coming and having a chat with someone that they need to chat with, or having that opportunity to chat if they need to, so you would be judging how they are by how their progress is and also how are they feeling about themselves.	
Q	63	Would you say that you receive support from teachers in carrying out your responsibilities as a SENCO, or have there been times when.....	
R	64	I think I would say the majority, I think the odd, perhaps one person, or you know, two people... (tails off...) so I haven't got time to do all these things.	VAL, ATT, PID
Q	65	And how do you handle that?	
R	66	Well you have to, you know, we talk about a child and their rights to having differentiated work, it's no point giving a child.....	VAL, ATT, ENG
Q	67	So is that where you wear the Deputy Head Teacher hat?	
R	68	I probably still do it as a SENCO, I don't actually do it as a Deputy Head, I still do it as a SENCO.	MGT, PID, SPR
Q	69	But it's more like one to one sort of chats, because you said lead, inform and instruct, so that would probably be there more informing part of it, so one to one chats.	
R	70	Yes, I do take in records as well, we have what we call Red Readers, which are children that need to read as often as they can, now for some teachers, they'll read a day with them, other teachers would do it once or twice a week depending on how they are, I will then take those records in and check that they have been doing it.	INT, PRO, KNO
Q	71	So are they written records that the child's reading on a daily basis?	
R	72	Yes.	
Q	73	How do you advise teachers to use SEN information in their daily or weekly lesson planning?	
R	74	For maths and literacy there should be differentiated work already	CSB, INT
Q	75	And do you go through their lesson plans?	
R	76	I don't look at their plans, but I usually tend to look at it from that monitoring of learning, so I can do a Learning Walk and look at plans, or I can do either, so a Learning Walk is just basically informing you really, it's a buzz word that came out 2 or 3 years ago. It's the same with Working Walls as well, they've got such things Working Walls so on there would be work, the works that's ongoing, so you can actually look at a working Wall and see the types of things that have been going on, so there will be a WAGPLL there which is called 'what a good piece looks like' so they will have some examples of what good looks like, and that would be how we would work it.	INT, PRO, KNO
Q	77	And is a whole class thing, or is it just focussing on the children who have special needs?	
R	78	It would probably be looking at the children with special educational needs, we do have a gifted and talented coordinator at the moment who is going off for pregnancy, so it may be that I'll have to take that on, so she'll be looking at those, because a school of this size, the work load is... (tails off...)	

Q	79	Yes, of course, so in terms of teachers approaching you with issues, like we said, is it just informal?	
R	80	It can be formal, I do have a formal form, that if they have concerns.	ENG
Q	81	Aside from the termly meetings with you?	
R	82	Yes, so they can put a name on a piece of paper and say I've got worries about this, if they don't they tend to catch me, but they tend to catch me, but if they don't..... (trails off)	ENG, TPE
Q	83	Would it be possible to have a copy of that form please?	
R	84	A copy of an empty one you'd like?	
Q	85	If there is any writing, again, it's going to be completely confidential and anonymous, everything that I do collect.	
R	86	If I take this top bit off, it's a focus group activity that shows what they're doing in the class.	
Q	87	And is that something that you would also be monitoring while it's happening?	
R	88	Yes, they send them to me, so I know the other things that are happening in the class. I'll go and get my Red Reader thing so you can see that sort of thing. This is just an individual record of anything that somebody might do with a child, and that would obviously be in the one to one, this is additional read, so we might have names of children and their titles and their comments, then you might have a group one as well, so it's exactly the same but it has group on it. Because as a record for monitoring, say a child starts to have one of these interventions in class, and the class teacher's working with them, if we then go on later on and decide that they need more formal intervention, from us and it isn't all as a one to one, that is still evidence that they have done work. So if you were asking for somebody from County to come and have a look, that could be used as evidence because you'll say right, well they started off with this, this is what they've been having, because you need, to get interventions these days, you've got to prove how much extra you are giving them before they'll even become involved, so it's a way of monitoring what's happening in school, but it's also a way of.....	INT, PRO, KNO, REF, DAT
Q	89	And so you developed these forms?	
R	90	Yes.	
Q	91	Now we've spoken about reticent teachers so to speak, how do you keep up their motivation as well, because I imagine just like children also need to be nurtured and sort of bucked up every now and again, how do you, I'm sorry I know they're tough questions, but what do you do?	
R	92	I'm just trying to think.	
Q	93	Especially when it comes to making this extra effort with children with special needs.	
R	94	I think it's very difficult, I mean the boosting of them is difficult because I'm not sure how much boosting you do, I mean at our school, the expectation is that children come first, I know we look at staff wellbeing and all things, I think if somebody is struggling with it, we might offer	WEL, ENG, REL, PID, ENV

		support, we might get somebody to go and chat with them who is managing, say for example Readers, so say for example, I can't get these extra readers done, I might say to them, well what about if I get Bob to come and chat with you because Bob does it every day, and he can perhaps share how he manages it, so it's not saying you're not doing you're not doing,... you know, let's support... (trails off...) If they're finding it difficult with the differentiation, then we would give support there, so it's probably more on a practical basis, rather than a morale boost. Sometimes I think the negativity could be work life balance sometimes, because they're stressed or they're at a stage where something's going on in their life, this is just an added burden, so you have to think about how you're going to cope with that, but also it may be that they have a right to have differentiated work. So it's a tricky one, it depends on the individual, if they are feeling stressed, we would then give them support and training, and do some things and help them.	
Q	95	In fact that actually was my next question about what measures you use to gauge teachers' skills in dealing with children with special needs, because it's not guaranteed that everyone will come to you and say, well you know I'm having a tough time, so how is that monitoring done?	
R	96	We have a fairly open policy here, and it may not be that teacher that will come and say, but it could be the previous teacher that had him the year before, might be seeing the child in a slightly different light, so it's not like I am coming, they might come and say, I'm not sure that somebody is coping well with somebody who's got behavioural difficulties for example, you know, they seem to be very stressed about it, whatever, and then it would be a case of me going up and saying to them, how are things going, how do you feel, and if they say, well I can't seem to get them to do this, or whatever, and then supporting them in that way. We do also, at the beginning of every year, look at the personalities that are, when we're looking at which teacher goes into which year, we may decide on particular teachers for particular, so in the beginning of the year, if you know certain personalities are going into a particular class, you may then say well, actually of the two teachers that are going to be in this year group, which one do we think will cope with that child better than that child, but that could be more with someone who's autistic, somebody's got behavioural difficulties, for example one of our teachers is exceptionally good in bringing on reading, he is absolutely wonderful, so if you were looking at a group of children, and say well actually these need a boost, you might gravitate that class to him.	TPE, WEL, ENG, PID, MGT, PRM, KNO, REF,
Q	97	But would that be your Deputy Head role, that comes into force because as SENCO, or do you think it's just so grey, the area right now.	
R	98	I think it's very grey, because I think the difficulty is, because as a SENCO, it wouldn't happen, unless you were on the Senior Management Team, and I do think a SENCO should be, or have access,	MGT, PID,

		or a Champion for them on the Senior Management Team.	
Q	99	Well actually, this is again related to that, in terms of Performance Management, do you, well I presume you do, as Deputy Head Teacher, have input into the Performance Management parameters?	
R	100	Yes	
Q	101	Does every teacher have an annual SEN target, or a SEN part of their performance management?	
R	102	No, they don't necessarily have a SEN target, but they have a child target, so it could be that it might be their SEN children they've got to focus on, or might be the next group up, the next group up, or the top group depending on their figures and what happened, so their progress.	PRM, DAT,
Q	103	OK, we're coming to the last few questions, how do you again, in terms of effectiveness of TAs, LSAs and teachers, how do you ensure that there's an effective blend, that the TAs are being deployed properly and their time is being used the way it should be, do you get teachers' feedback in that as well?	
R	104	We do get teachers feedback and we also get TAs feedback, so in their Performance Management, we have feedback, but that could be working within the role that they're doing, so for example if, those are my LSAs, that's where they're working, some of them will be working in a year group, as a year group and they may end up doing some SENCO stuff, but I also have allocated adults who have allocated SEN time. So they are different, I meet with my SEN girls every half term, and we look at how children are getting on and where we want to move and what do we need, if they're having trouble getting access to those children because that can be an issue, then that's something for me to try and deal with.	PRM, TPE, SPR, ENG, MGT, ADS, ENV, REL,
Q	105	And you step in and talk with the teacher directly and such cases?	
R	106	Yes.	
Q	107	Are there any other staff who have direct responsibility for SEN in this school, or are you the main one?	
R	108	No.	
Q	109	That is the end of the interview, thank you very much for your time, is there anything else you feel that you'd like to mention to me, that would help me better understand, because as I said, the focus of my research is the impact of a SENCO on teachers and how they can start to take ownership and work independently?	
R	110	I think if you were a working teacher, because I think it has mixed things, as a Deputy and not with my own class, sometimes that can be negative because people think, well you don't know what it's like to be a teacher and you know. Although I teach, you don't have a class, you don't realise the things, although I was, but.....so I think if you are a teacher they may, and you are able to approach them in a way they will think you understand them, so I think that could be positive, but I also think that can be the opposite where you have, well, why are you telling us what we need to do. I think the qualification will help, I think the study that I did at Oxford Brookes, and the reading that I did was	REF, MGT, PID, ATT, KNO, REL

		invaluable for me. I would not have done that reading if I had not have done that course. I would never have found the time, but because I had to find the time, I did, and I think for lots of SENCOs, time to be able to do reading up on different things and different books.	
Q	111	Is that what you see the future of the SENCO to be as, not teaching, but more just getting the knowledge, getting the training and then?	
R	112	I've got a Deputy who is coming up to see me next week who's losing a few of his children, he teaches as well as SENCO, and he's coming up just to chat, to see what we do to keep our children, how do we get children with special needs coming here and why is that the case, because he feels that he doesn't have a lot of time and I think time is of the essence for him, that he doesn't have those times to be able to ring that parent, to be able to pop round and speak to them, I mean I have that time, you know if a parent is struggling with the diagnosis of something, and they don't know how to cope with it, I can spend time.	REF, PRO, INT, KNO, SPL
Q	113	Does he have teaching responsibilities?	
R	114	Yes.	
Q	115	And I do think it makes a difference because yesterday I was able to go round, have a cup of tea with this parent, talk to them, talk them through some of the issues that they had, or they were worried about, and then it calms. If you didn't have that, and you were always worrying, I wonder whether... how it would be. I don't know how, because I only know what we do, but I think it is making sure that they have enough time. The paper work in itself takes time, and with more and more CAFs being forced upon teachers to do rather than other agencies, and you're doing teams around the child, that is having an impact, because that is. Not as a negative thing.	TNT, REL, INT, KNO
R	116	Thank you, I will just stop this here.	



## Appendix 23: Dissemination Activities

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### 1 Publications Arising from this Doctoral Research

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1. Qureshi, S. (2014). Herding cats or getting heard: The SENCO-teacher dynamic and its impact on teachers' classroom practice. *Support for Learning*. 29 (3):1-13.

This article is based on two key findings of my doctoral research. I used data from questionnaires and interviews with SENCOs, teachers and head teachers to argue that key indicators for successful teaching of children with SEN include SENCOs skilling teachers in their roles as 'agents of change' in relation to SENCOs' views of their teaching colleagues, as well as the evolving nature of their own professional identity.

2. Dampson, D.G., Long, S., Murray, G., Odunsi, R. and Qureshi, S. (2014) Approaches to inclusive research in education: opportunities and challenges: round table discussion feedback, Group 1. *Inter University Symposium Journal*. 1: 68-69.

This article is based on my contribution to the round-table discussion within a symposium on issues about research in inclusive education including; challenges/opportunities; ethical issues with regard to vulnerable populations, researcher as 'insider'/'outsider' and interactive relationships. I discussed challenges relating to my methodological examination of the SENCO-teacher dynamic. These include sampling issues, cohort access, professional experience and identity, and the trustworthiness of research instruments. Implications are then considered with regard to emergent themes, and the construction of a meaningful image of how SENCOs affect the inclusive practices of their teaching colleagues. A key challenge that I currently face relates to the dynamic and fluid school environments and their impact on the quality of my data, and thus how SENCOs and teachers respectively construct their 'realities.'

### 2 External Presentations and Public Dissemination/Engagements Arising from this Doctoral Research

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In addition to the above-mentioned peer-reviewed publications, I have also disseminated my work at various forums around the UK and internationally. All of these outputs have been deposited and made available for public access, via 'Green Open Access' channels on NECTAR (Northampton Electronic Collection of Theses and Research), the University of Northampton's open access institutional repository of the University's research output, available at:

[http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/cgi/search/simple?q=saneeya+qureshi&\\_action\\_search=Search+NECTAR&\\_order=bytitle&basic\\_srctype=ALL&\\_satisfyall=ALL&\\_default\\_action=search](http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/cgi/search/simple?q=saneeya+qureshi&_action_search=Search+NECTAR&_order=bytitle&basic_srctype=ALL&_satisfyall=ALL&_default_action=search), some of which are highlighted below:

- Qureshi, S. (2014) *Special Educational Needs Coordinators or Teachers – Who's in the Driving Seat for Special Educational Needs Provision in English Primary Schools?* Paper presented at 'The Past, Present and Future of Educational Research in Europe' ECER 2014 Conference, European Educational Research Association. Porto: Portugal.
- Qureshi, S. (2013) *How do Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in England enhance Teachers' Classroom Practice?* Paper presented at 'Back to basics: Portfolio for

Practice' 25<sup>th</sup> Annual IATSE Conference, Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education. Dublin: Ireland.

- Qureshi, S. (2013) *An Investigation into the Impact of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) on Teachers' Abilities to Address the Needs of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in English Primary Schools*. Paper presented at the 'Educational Methodology Educational Research as Craft and Representation - Challenges and Possibilities' EERA Summer School Conference 2012, European Educational Research Association. Trondheim: Norway.
- Qureshi, S. (2013) *"Like a Cog in a Wheel..."* Poster presented at the University of Northampton Graduate School 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Poster Competition. University of Northampton: UK. **(First Prize in the Graduate School Competition)**
- Qureshi, S. (2012) *"An Umbrella that Covers Far Too Much": The Ground Realities of being a SENCO*. Paper presented at 'The Need for Educational Research to Champion Freedom, Education and Development for All' ECER 2012 Conference, European Educational Research Association. Cadiz: Spain.
- Qureshi, S. (2012) *The Impact of SENCOs on the Management of Challenging Behaviour in English Primary Schools*. Paper presented at 'Exploring Behaviours that Challenge' 24<sup>th</sup> Annual IATSE Conference, Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education. Dublin: Ireland.
- Qureshi, S. (2012) *Juggling Elephants*. Poster presented at the University of Northampton Graduate School 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Poster Competition, University of Northampton: UK; and also at the Vitae East Midlands Regional Poster Competition. Coventry: UK. **(First Prize in the University of Northampton Graduate School Competition)**
- Qureshi, S. (2011) *A SENCO for All Seasons*. Poster presented to Members of Parliament and members of the public at the Parliamentary Launch of the Million+ report on 'Research That Matters'. The House of Commons: UK.

### 3 Measures which indicate how my Dissemination has had Impact

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Besides my work being published in an internationally-renowned peer-reviewed journal, I have been invited to collaborate with a fellow- doctoral student whose area of research is around the development of a contextual understanding of the schooling of children diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum in mainstream schools in urban India. With my background of the support that is provided to children with SEN, we are in the process of developing a paper based on our mutual research interests.

In terms of public engagement, I have also been successful in engaging with a general discipline and non-specialist audience. A selection of these audience members judged me based on my answers to their questions. Subsequently, I have twice been awarded the first position in the University of Northampton Graduate School Poster Competitions. I also represented the University of Northampton at the East Midlands

Poster Competition in 2012, and earlier, was commended on the potential and utility of my work at the House of Commons in 2011.

With regard to an impact on practice, in April 2014, at an event organised by the Northamptonshire branch of PATOSS (the Professional Association for Teachers and Assessors of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)), I was approached by one of the SENCOs whom I had earlier interviewed for my doctoral research. [Participant ID:I:PT/PS:16/203(NSMT)-S3] (Participant ID Codes as referred to within this thesis are explained in detail in Section 4.4.2 of this thesis, and interview participants detailed in Table 4.4 within this thesis) came up to me to tell me about the changes she had made to her practice following my interviewing her. She told me that my questions had prompted some insightful reflections on her practice, and that as a result, she had now initiated a SEN-skills audit for all teachers in her school, which is completed termly. She told me that on the basis of this audit, she is now able to plan various CPD activities for the teachers in her school, and also accordingly undertake her own CPD externally, or call in specific experts as so required. Indeed, this particular outcome of my project is, as Clark *et al.* proposed in 1995, symbolic of “inquiry within the field of inclusive education... (being) reflexive... (and part of the process includes) asking, ‘why is it like this?’”, thereby giving rise to improvements in practice to ensure inclusive schools (Clark *et al.*, 1995, p.177).

Furthermore, I have taught various sessions in which I shared my research with undergraduate students on a variety of Education-related Courses at the University of Northampton. I received a vast range of feedback indicating that my presentations provoked some insightful thinking about the role in these future practitioners, such as this testimonial from one student:

*“I was really looking forward to the Educational Support/ Role of the SENCO lecture as this was something that I felt I wanted to pursue as a career after university. When the lecture took place we had a guest speaker and she went through her findings about SENCO’s job she was very engaging and I enjoyed it as it was not someone who was in that role as a job and selling it. She had some positive views from the people in role but also some negative issues which arise in the job. Personally I thought the role of the SENCO was a job on its own within a setting, but after listening to her research and watching videos about it soon noticed that there was a lot more to the job than thought of...”* [Second-year undergraduate student on the BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies course, 2014].

In terms of future dissemination, two of the schools in which I interviewed teachers for this project, have also requested to be sent a copy of my completed thesis, as their head teachers are very keen to improve SEN-practice within their schools. One head teacher in particular, keeps in regular contact with me via email, to enquire about my progress. I have sent her the PowerPoint versions of some of my presentations for her latest information. Indeed, this particular research outcome of my project, is reflective of Clark *et al.*’s assertion that the nature of examining issues within inclusive education “both requires and enables actors within those situations (inclusive education challenges) to determine their courses of action on the basis of a fuller realisation of the complexities within which they are enmeshed” (Clark *et al.*, 1998, p.171).